

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former Timaru Main School headmaster's house
(‘Bluestone House’)

ADDRESS 34 Arthur Street, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. No. 52 **HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY** 2076 / 1
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lot 2 DP 60138

VALUATION NUMBER 2499129300

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1877-78

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Thomas Cane, architect; George Cliff, contractor

STYLE Domestic Gothic Revival

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Two-storey dwelling with rectangular footprint and gabled roof forms. Two, double-height boxed bay windows on north elevation. Contrasting white stone quoins and window and door facings. Gabled entrance porch on north elevation with open, Gothic-style timberwork. Lean-to entrance porch on west side with glazed doors and large windows. Tall brick chimneys and bracketed eaves. South wall is of brick with outline of chimneybreasts suggesting past alterations to this elevation.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Timaru bluestone (basalt), Oamaru stone, brick, timber & corrugated iron.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Concrete steps to footpath on Arthur Street installed after road lowered; lean-to additions to west and south walls (date unknown). Wrought iron fencing relocated from elsewhere on the site (c.1998?).

SETTING

The former dwelling stands on the south side of Arthur Street, immediately east of its intersection with Grey Road. The Timaru Main School War Memorial stands at the north-western corner of the property. Relocated historic concrete and wrought iron fencing

(c.1904?) borders the house site on either side of the memorial. The extent of setting is the same as for the War Memorial and includes the fencing on both street frontages.

HISTORY

The Timaru Main School opened in October 1874, having been preceded by an Anglican church school founded in 1859. Local architect FJ Wilson designed the school building (1873-74), which faced east and was accessed from Grey Road. A headmaster's house was built to the north of the school building in 1877-78. The first headmaster to reside in the house was John Wood, who was appointed in 1886; the previous headmaster having preferred to continue boarding and the house being used briefly as a temporary high school and then occupied by the local school inspector until Wood's arrival. In 1975 occupation by the Main School's headmasters ceased and management of the house was transferred to the neighbouring Timaru Technical College (est. as Timaru Technical High School in 1901). After a decade under the threat of demolition, the house was given back to the Department of Education by the college, by now known as Aoraki Polytechnic, in 1988. The house and fencing are subject to a heritage covenant that was registered over the property by Heritage NZPT in 2000. Four years later Timaru Main School closed, following the merger with Timaru West School at the latter's campus. The new school thus formed is called Bluestone School. The former headmaster's house was vacated in April 2012 due to concerns about its seismic resistance. It remains on the campus of Ara Institute of Canterbury (formerly Aoraki Polytechnic). Former staff and pupils of Timaru Main School meet four times a year to reminisce about their time at the school.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Main School headmaster's house has high historical and social significance as the home of the Timaru Main School headmaster for almost 90 years and as the last major building to survive on the former school campus. The later 20th century conversion of the house to office space is typical of a pattern adaptive reuse of historic houses after their original use has become redundant. Heritage NZPT believes that the building may be the oldest surviving headmaster's house in New Zealand, although the former Prebbleton master's house, for example, dates to 1875 and there may be other contemporary houses that have been identified as teacher's houses, rather than headmaster's residences. The Arthur Street house certainly illustrates the size of Main School and the status accorded to its headmaster.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Main School headmaster's house has cultural significance as a demonstration of the way of life of the Main School headmasters and their families who lived in the house as part of their employment package. The formation of the Bluestone House Trust in the late 1980s attests to the esteem in which the building is held by members of the community.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Main School headmaster's house has high architectural significance as the work of notable North Canterbury Education Board architect, Thomas Cane. Cane (1830-1905) was appointed provincial architect in 1874 and, following the abolition of the provincial government system in 1876, subsequently appointed architect to the Canterbury Education Board. Cane designed the Timeball Station in Lyttelton (1875) and the first Christchurch Girls' High School building (Christchurch Arts Centre, 1876) but undertook few architectural commissions after he was declared bankrupt in 1885. Maurice Duval, the architect to the South Canterbury Education Board, appears to have supervised the construction of the house. The house evokes FJ Wilson's earlier design for the Main School in its style and materials, that building being an educational Gothic Revival style structure built from bluestone with white cement dressings. It was demolished before 1970.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Main School headmaster's house has high technological and craftsmanship significance as a mid-Victorian bluestone and Oamaru stone building with Gothic Revival detailing. The contractor, George Cliff (c.1834-1923), was Mayor of Timaru at the time of the house's construction (served 1873-75 & 1876-79).

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Main School headmaster's house has contextual significance as a local landmark, as a reminder of the Timaru Main School and for its relationship with the Timaru Main School War Memorial (1921).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the building pre-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological significance relating to the building's construction and use, as well as the operation of the Main School from 1874.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Main School headmaster's house has high overall heritage significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The building has high historical and social significance for its association with Timaru Main School, its headmasters and their families and cultural significance as an esteemed heritage building and survivor of the Timaru Main School campus. The former Timaru Main School headmaster's house has high architectural significance as a Domestic Gothic Revival style building designed by Canterbury Education Board architect Thomas Cane and high technological and craftsmanship significance for its masonry construction using locally quarried basalt. The former Timaru Main School headmaster's house has contextual significance as a local landmark and in relation to other bluestone buildings in the central city. The former Timaru Main School headmaster's house has potential archaeological significance in view of its pre-1900 date of construction.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

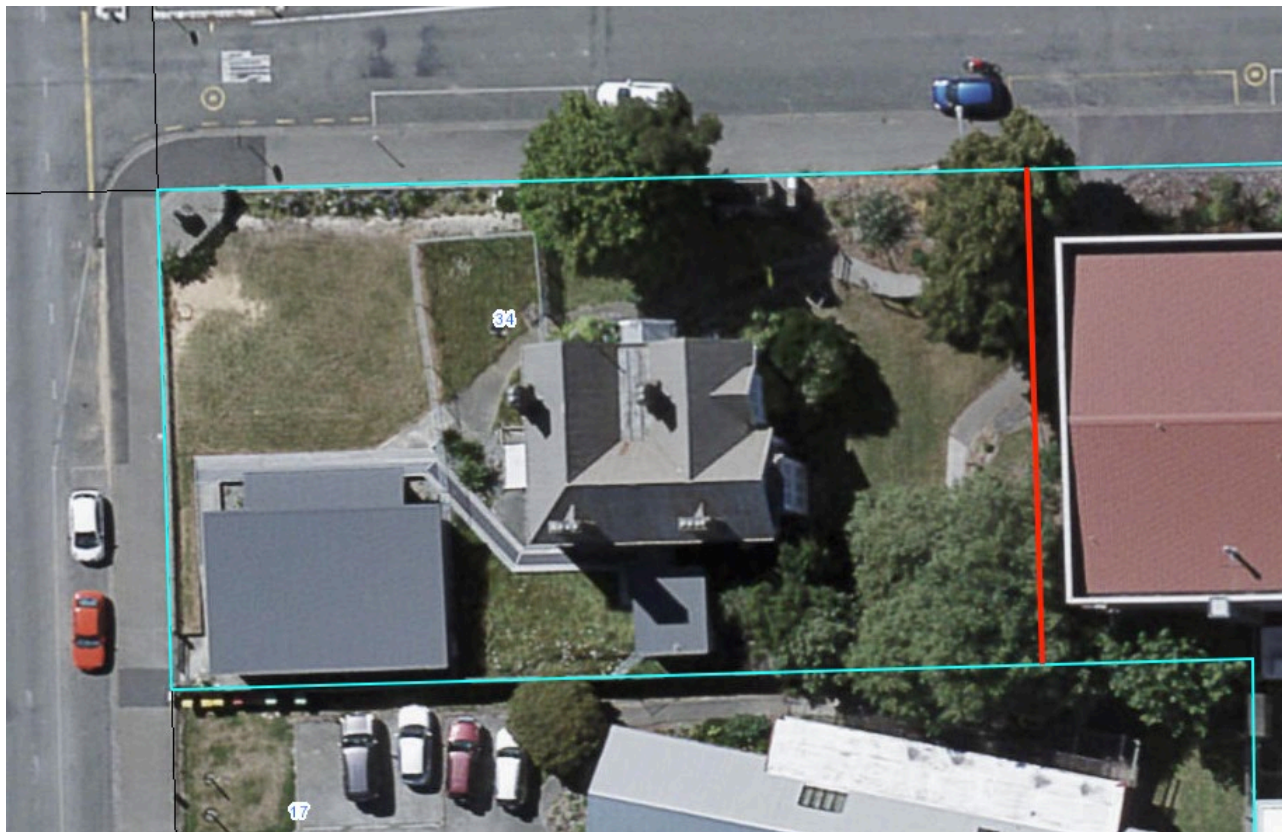
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REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 2 October 1877, p. 3; 21 December 1877, p. 3; 7 June 1904, p. 3; 14 December 1904, p. 4; 19 June 2012, 10 September 2016 & 13 December 2017 (available online).
- *Lyttelton Times* 6 June 1878, p. 2.
- *Globe* 23 June 1874, p. 3; 14 July 1874, p. 3; 24 November 1874, p. 4; 8 October 1875, p. 3; 6 March 1879, p. 3.
- *Temuka Leader* 17 March 1904, p. 3; 9 October 1923, p. 2.
- *South Canterbury Times* 7 July 1885, p. 2; 7 August 1888, p. 3.
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903; available online.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/2076>

REVIEWER

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Extent of setting, shared with Main School war memorial and including the relocated historic fencing on the north and west boundaries, 34 Arthur Street, Timaru.



Land parcel as a whole.