

**TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM**

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**HERITAGE ITEM NAME** Timaru water supply reservoirs [2]

**ADDRESS** Brookfield Road, Timaru

**PHOTOGRAPH**



(HNZPT)

**FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO.** No. 100      **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** 7266 / 2  
(at time of assessment)

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION** Lot 3 DP 23185

**VALUATION NUMBER** 2485013500

**DATE OF CONSTRUCTION** 1874-75 & 1910-12

**ARCHITECT / DESIGNER /  
BUILDER** James Fraser, supply network designer and reservoir excavator; Messrs Jones & Peters, contractors for lining 1<sup>st</sup> reservoir; WJ Black & Son, contractors for 2<sup>nd</sup> reservoir & enlarging 1<sup>st</sup>

**STYLE** Industrial vernacular

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

Two water reservoirs; oldest is rectangular in plan, other is polygonal. Formed by excavation and earth embankment. Lined with stone and concrete, respectively. Now empty and grassed.

**MATERIALS / STRUCTURE**

Earth; bluestone/basalt (first reservoir) & concrete (second reservoir).

**ADDITIONS / ALTERATIONS**

Original reservoir increased in height (1910-12).

**SETTING**

The reservoirs are on an irregularly shaped parcel of land, bounded to the east by 121 Brookfield Road, which is at the road's western terminus. The extent of setting is the land parcel as a whole.

## **HISTORY**

The fire that destroyed a large part of Timaru's CBD in December 1868 highlighted the inadequacies of the town's water supply and prompted renewed discussion about its improvement. In the early 1870s steps were taken by the borough council to create a town water supply sourced from the Pareora River via a water race. In 1873 the council accepted James Fraser's offer to build a 39 kilometre race from the river with a storage reservoir on the outskirts of town. The race and reservoir were completed within a few years but the scheme was a failure; no water reached the people of Timaru. The reservoir had been excavated by Fraser by April 1875 and was then lined by other contractors later that year. It was built to hold over 23,000,000 litres of water. It was not until 1880, however, that a loan to pay for building a new intake and to shorten and improve the original race was authorised. At the same time JT Thompson surveyed the water race reserve and the land was officially taken by the borough council. The new scheme opened on 16 December 1881. This system, designed by Christchurch engineers Edward Dobson & Son 'on scientific lines', provided the townsfolk with 'an abundant supply of water for domestic purposes' and also ensured the town's volunteer fire brigade had sufficient water to fight fires. For many years after the system was built the £60,000 water works loan was the borough council's only major liability. By 1903 scheme improvements had doubled the supply and there was surplus water which was used as a source of motive power, to drive pelton wheels and turbines, and for steam engines which contributed to the development of industry in Timaru. In 1910-12 the original reservoir was enlarged and a second reservoir built. Later improvements included a new intake dam in the upper Pareora gorge and the replacement of the open race by a pipeline in 1939. Two new reservoirs were built on Claremont Road in 1960 and the Brookfield Road reservoirs were subsequently decommissioned.

## **HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Timaru water supply reservoirs have high historical significance as component parts of one of the most notable engineering achievements of the district's early years. The reservoirs are associated with the growth and development of Timaru in the later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and with the men who built and then maintained the water supply system.

## **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Timaru water supply reservoirs have cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of Timaru residents brought about by access to a plentiful and secure water supply system.

## **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

The Timaru water supply reservoirs have aesthetic value for their geometric monumentality, which allowed both structures to be fit for purpose.

## **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

The Timaru water supply reservoirs have high technological significance for the evidence they provide of colonial water race technology. Noted Canterbury engineer Sir Arthur Dudley Dobson (1841-1934) advised Timaru Borough Council on the improvements made to the water supply, including building a second reservoir, in 1909. The Fraser/Dobson water supply system was a gravitation scheme, with a combination of water races, flumes, pipes, culverts and tunnels ensuring the fall of water from the Pareora River to the Brookfield Road reservoirs. Water was then piped in to town. The oldest reservoir predates with the Wellington water supply scheme at Karori, which has been assessed as having outstanding heritage significance and is listed on the IPENZ Engineering Heritage Register.

## **CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Timaru water supply reservoirs have contextual value as local historic features that are closely related to the water race tunnel at Adair (heritage item # 98). The 1874-75 reservoir

is also connected, more generally, with the numerous bluestone bridges and culverts built around the district in the 1870s and 1880s.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE**

As the first reservoir pre-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological significance relating to the development of the district's water supply infrastructure and the technology involved in its construction.

## **SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

The Timaru water supply reservoirs have high overall heritage significance to Timaru and to Timaru district as a whole. The structures have high historical significance as evidence of one of the district's most notable early infrastructure developments and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of those who benefitted from the water supply network. The Timaru water supply reservoirs have aesthetic value owing to their monumental design and high technological significance for their part in a notable colonial infrastructure project. The Timaru water supply reservoirs have contextual value as local historic features and potential archaeological significance in view of the date of the first reservoir's construction.

## **HERITAGE CATEGORY**

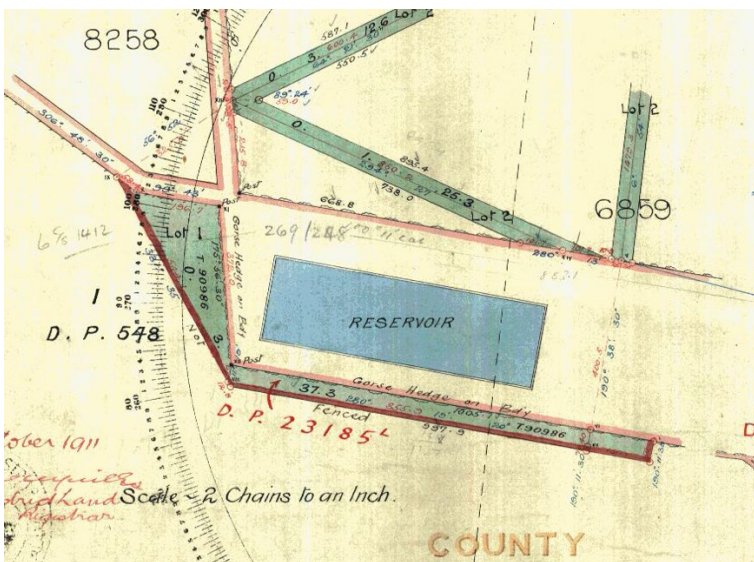
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Extent of setting, Brookfield Road, Timaru.



Detail of DP 3210 showing first reservoir, dated September 1910. LINZ.