

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME Wrecks Monument / *Benvenue & City of Perth* Memorial

ADDRESS cnr Perth & Sophia Streets, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(A McEwan, July 2018)

FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. No. 49 **HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY** 2045 / 2
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lot 1 DP 56548

VALUATION NUMBER 2500053900

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1883/1885

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** T Roberts, architect; S McBride, stonemason

STYLE Obelisk

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Obelisk mounted on stepped octagonal base; inset with memorial panels.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Concrete foundation, Bluestone and dolerite base, Aberdeen granite obelisk, bronze plaques.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Addition of fourth plaque engraved with the names of the two ships (date unknown).

SETTING

The memorial is set within a paved reserve bounded by Perth and Sophia Streets immediately adjacent to, and north of, the Timaru Telephone Exchange (1957). A flagpole relocated from Caroline Bay in 1989 stands between the exchange building and the monument. The setting is the triangular parcel on which the memorial is sited, which is consistent with the HNZPT extent of listing.

HISTORY

On 14 May 1882 two ships were wrecked at Timaru, the *City of Perth* and the *Benvenue*. This was the worst day in the district's shipping history with nine dead and the *Benvenue* lost. The dead men had come from the shore to attempt to sail the *City of Perth* out in to the harbour. The harbourmaster of the day, Captain Alexander Mills, was one of the men killed. The Benvenue Cliffs were subsequently named for the ship that foundered on them. Plans for a memorial to the lives lost were soon in train and public subscriptions raised to fund it. The monument was erected in two stages, the base being installed in March 1883 and the obelisk, once it had arrived from Scotland, erected upon it in August 1885. The monument was completed on 20 August 1885, in front of a large crowd, but Samuel McBride then made alterations to the setting of the bronze memorial plaques in early September. The 50th anniversary of the wreck of the two ships was marked with a procession of school children and an acknowledgement of the three survivors known to still reside in Timaru.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Wrecks Monument has historical significance for its association with a disastrous day in Timaru's shipping history and, more generally, the rigours and dangers of the harbour. It is directly connected to the people, their families and descendants, whose names are inscribed upon the memorial.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Wrecks Monument has cultural significance as a place of community identity and commemoration.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Wrecks Monument has aesthetic value as a memorial obelisk. Thomas Roberts called tenders for the monument in September 1882. He was the engineer to the Timaru and Gladstone Board of Works in the early 1870s and also advertised his services as an architect and licensed surveyor. Roberts also designed the Sealy house (1875), which is now known as Shand House at Craighead Diocesan School (heritage item # 9).

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The Wrecks Monument has craftsmanship value for the quality of its construction and detailing. The memorial was the work of local stonemason Samuel McBride who also designed and built the Timaru Troopers' Memorial (1904, heritage item # 18). The original three bronze plates on the memorial were engraved by N Wolfe of Christchurch.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Wrecks Monument has contextual significance as a local landmark set within its own grassed reserve. It is associated with the Ex-Royal Navalmen's Association flagpole (1955/1989) and the Post Office buildings located to the south of the memorial reserve.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the memorial pre-dates 1900, its site may have archaeological significance relating to the monument's erection and use.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Wrecks Monument has overall heritage significance to Timaru and the district of Timaru as a whole. The memorial has historical and social significance for its association with the men who died as a result of the wreck of the *Benvenue* and the *City of Perth* and cultural significance given its commemorative purpose. The Wrecks Monument has aesthetic value for

its design by architect and engineer Thomas Roberts and craftsmanship value for the quality of its construction and detailing by stonemason Samuel McBride. The Wrecks Monument has contextual significance as a local landmark in the town centre and its site may have pre-1900 archaeological value.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 21 September 1882, p. 2; 19 August 1885, p. 3; 21 August 1885, p. 2; 15 May 2007 (available online).
- *South Canterbury Times* 20 May 1882, p. 2; 21 September 1882, p. 3; 26 October 1882, p. 2; 19 February 1883, p. 2; 24 June 1885, p. 3; 19 August 1885, p. 2; 4 September 1885, p. 3; 5 September 1885, p. 3; 28 December 1886, p. 2.
- *Temuka Leader* 25 August 1925, p. 3.
- *Press* 16 April 1932, p. 2.
- *NZ Herald* 1 March 1883, p. 6.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/2045>
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/memorials-and-monuments/page-5>
- <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/timaru-shipwreck-memorial>
- <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/Bre01Whit-fig-Bre01Whit301a.gif.html>
- JM Morgan 'Sites of Memory - Memorialisation in the Landscape' MSc thesis, University of Canterbury, Christchurch 2001; available online.



Extent of setting, plot bounded by Perth and Sophia Streets, Timaru.

