

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former World War II Timaru Borough Council Public Air Raid Shelter

ADDRESS Station Street (23 Cains Terrace), Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(TDC)

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. HHI82 **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** n / a
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lot 2 DP 80381

VALUATION NUMBER 250008000

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1941

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** RJ Comrie, Timaru Borough Council engineer

STYLE Utilitarian

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

c.18 metre tunnel dug out of clay bank with three entries at right angles to the shelter tunnel screened by metal grilles. Boundary wall inset with brick panels opposite shelter entries.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Clay, metal, concrete & brick.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Unknown, if any.

SETTING

The former air raid shelter runs parallel to Station Street on its west side. It appears to be located both within the road reserve and beneath the car park at 23 Cains Terrace. The former Canterbury Farmers' Co-operative Association buildings are directly to the north, beyond them the former Customhouse (heritage item # 22). The Timaru Railway Station is to the south-east and the Port of Timaru is located to the east.

HISTORY

By 20 December 1941 air raid shelters had been constructed in Station Street, in Perth Street, at each end of Caroline Bay and at a number of other sites around Timaru. It appears at least 34 shelters were built in the town, including a number at local schools. The shelters were part of a nationwide programme of air raid shelter construction that took place in late 1941 and early 1942. The bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 likely expedited the provision of public and private air raid shelters throughout New Zealand but many, including the Station Street shelter, were already in place by the time of the air attack on Hawaii. No new shelters were built after 1942 and, with the threat of invasion receding, the council resolved to seal the Station Street shelter in March 1944, with a view to possibly using it as a carpark at the future date. Thus was the shelter preserved, whereas others were filled in during later 1943 and early 1944. The shelter remains much as it was built, although the incursion of water and silt has reduced the height of the structure over the years.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former World War II Timaru Borough Council public air raid shelter has high historic and social significance for its association with the town's preparedness for foreign invasion during World War II. While Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga lists a number of buildings at which air raid shelters were constructed, the former shelter in Station Street appears to be a rare example of stand-alone public shelter erected by the local council.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former World War II Timaru Borough Council public air raid shelter has cultural significance as a place of community identity and public esteem. The former air raid shelter demonstrates the way of life of Timaru people during World War II and is esteemed as a local historic place.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former World War II Timaru Borough Council public air raid shelter has aesthetic value in the ornamental treatment of the entry grilles and adjacent boundary wall, which contributes to the historic character of the streetscape.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former World War II Timaru Borough Council public air raid shelter has technological and craftsmanship significance for the nature and quality of its excavation, construction and detailing. Robert Comrie was appointed engineer to Timaru Borough Council in January 1940; he had previously served as engineer in charge of the northern division of Dunedin City Council's Works Department.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former World War II Timaru Borough Council public air raid shelter has contextual significance as a local historic feature in close proximity to the town centre, railway station and Port of Timaru.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

Although the former air raid shelter post-dates 1900, its site may have potential archaeological value relating to its excavation, construction and use during World War II.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former World War II Timaru Borough Council public air raid shelter has high overall heritage significance to Timaru and the district of Timaru as a whole. The former air raid

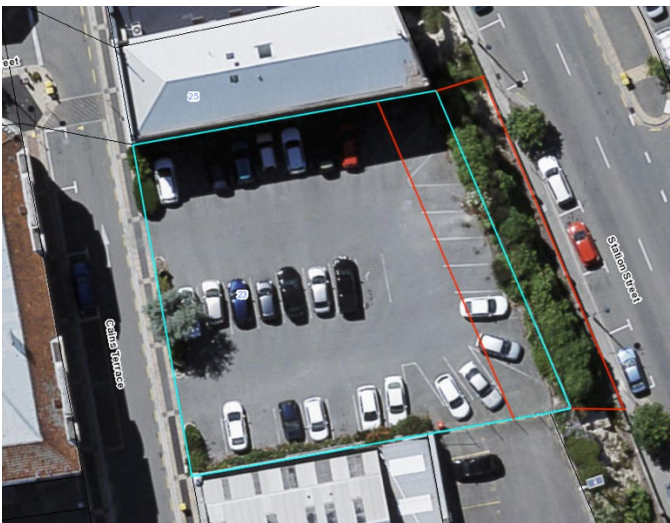
shelter has high historical and social significance for its association with the town's World War II preparedness and as a rare surviving example of a public air raid shelter. The former air raid shelter has cultural significance as a demonstration of the way of life of Timaru people during World War II and for the esteem in which it is held as a local historic place. The former air raid shelter has aesthetic value for the treatment of its gated entries and technological and craftsmanship significance for the quality of its excavation, construction and detailing. The former air raid shelter has contextual significance as a historic feature close to the town centre, the railway station and Port of Timaru; its site has potential archaeological value relating to the evidence it provides of human activity in building and using the shelter during World War II.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

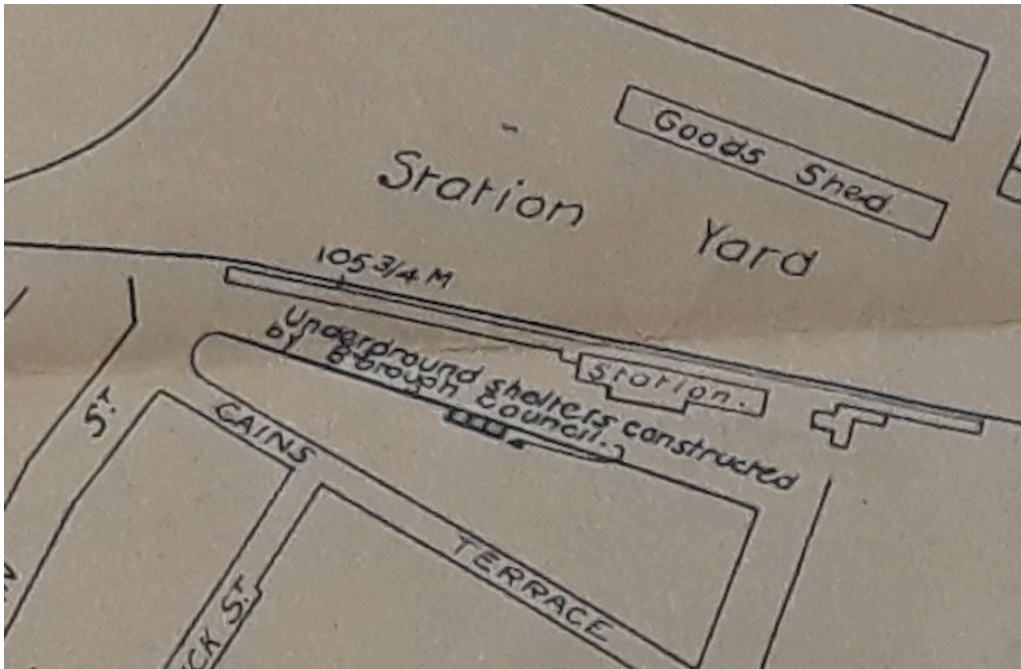
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REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 20 December 1941; 27 April 1942 & 22 March 1944, np.
- *Press* 5 January 1942, p. 4; 18 July 1942, p. 6.
- *Otago Daily Times* 16 December 1941, p. 8; 13 April 1942, p. 2.
- *Ellesmere Guardian* 19 December 1941, p. 4.
- *NZ Herald* 24 January 1940, p. 11.
- *Gisborne Herald* 24 January 1940, p. 4.
- National Archives, Wellington.
- Nancy M Taylor *The Home Front – Volume 1* Wellington, 1986, p. 455; available online.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7758>



Extent of setting, limited to extent of tunnel shelter and entries off Station Street, Timaru. West boundary subject to survey.



Detail from plan showing 'Timaru - Air Raid Shelters Near Wharves', c. May 1942. National Archives, Wellington.



Interior of shelter, 1996. South Canterbury Museum.