

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME Rangitata Traffic Bridge / Arundel Bridge [remnants]

ADDRESS Arundel Bridge Reserve, Bridge Street / Rangitata River, Arundel

PHOTOGRAPH



(www)

FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. No. 62 **HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY** n / a
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Road reserve / Rangitata River bank

VALUATION NUMBER xx

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1871-72

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** WN Blair, engineer; Messrs Bush & Smith, contractors

STYLE Industrial

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Remnant stone abutment and cast iron cylinder piers.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Stone, iron, concrete.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Dismantling of bridge (1970s).

SETTING

The remnants of the Rangitata traffic bridge are located on the west bank of the Rangitata River close by the Arundel Bridge Reserve at the eastern bend of Bridge Street. The extent of setting is limited to the immediate environs of the surviving bridge structures.

HISTORY

People and their goods were ferried across the Rangitata River before a bridge at Arundel was completed in late 1872. Built by the Timaru and Gladstone Board of Works, on behalf of the Canterbury Provincial Council, the Arundel bridge was designed by Dunedin engineer WN Blair and built by Timaru contractors William Bush and Edward Smith. Materials, including cement and iron, were shipped from London for the project in 1871. The bridge gave rise to plans for a settlement at Arundel, which was surveyed in 1874 but never achieved the size and scale anticipated at that time. An image of the new bridge was published in the *Illustrated Australian* newspaper in April 1873. Maintenance of the structure was subsequently shared by the Geraldine and Ashburton county councils and the bridge was only superseded as the principal crossing between Canterbury and South Canterbury with the erection of road and rail bridges near the mouth of the Rangitata in late 1930s. SH 72 over the Rangitata River was realigned in the 1970s and a new bridge erected to the south of the 1872 structure. Subsequently the first bridge was almost entirely removed from site.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The remnants of the Rangitata traffic bridge at Arundel have historical significance as one of the most notable engineering achievements of the District's early years. The surviving fabric is associated with the Timaru and Gladstone Board of Works (est. 1867) and the Canterbury Provincial Council.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The remnants of the Rangitata traffic bridge have cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of colonial bridge builders and they are esteemed by members of the community as a reminder of the settlement of Arundel.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The remnants of the Rangitata traffic bridge have aesthetic value as evidence of a mid-Victorian timber truss and iron girder bridge that was designed by a noted colonial engineer. Scottish-born William Newsham Blair (1841-91) became the first District Engineer for the Public Works Department in 1871. He had previously worked for the Otago Provincial Council, in which role he was responsible for the Rangitata traffic bridge. Blair later specialised in railways engineering and was promoted to Engineer-in-Chief within the PWD in 1890. His premature death in 1891 curtailed his successful New Zealand career.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The remnants of the Rangitata traffic bridge have technological significance for the evidence they provide of Victorian bridge building technology, particularly the use of pneumatic machinery to drive the iron cylinder piles into highly mobile shingle river beds.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The remnants of the Rangitata traffic bridge have contextual significance as local landmark features that are associated with other structures built for the Timaru and Gladstone Board of works, including the board's Stafford Street, Timaru offices (heritage item # 43) and the Saltwater Creek bridge on Coonor/Fairview Roads.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the Rangitata traffic bridge pre-dates 1900 its remnant structures have potential archaeological significance relating to the development of the district's transport infrastructure and the technology involved in constructing the bridge.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The remnants of the Rangitata traffic bridge have overall heritage significance to Arundel and to Timaru district as a whole. The surviving structures have historical significance as evidence of one of the district's most notable early engineering structures and cultural value for their association with the settlement of Arundel. The remnants of the Rangitata traffic bridge have aesthetic value as surviving elements from a bridge designed by noted colonial engineer WN Blair and technological significance for the methods and materials used in their construction. The remnants of the Rangitata traffic bridge have contextual significance as local landmark features and potential archaeological significance in view of the date of the bridge's construction.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

- *Ashburton Guardian* 23 March 1906, p. 2.
- *Lyttelton Times* 4 March 1871, p. 3; 24 June 1872, p. 2.
- *Timaru Herald* 6 March 1869, p. 2; 11 January 1871, p. 2; 14 January 1871, p. 2; 28 January 1871, p. 5; 25 February 1871, p. 5; 13 May 1871, p. 2; 7 June 1871, p. 2; 20 December 1871, p. 7; 3 July 1872, p. 5; 12 July 1872, p. 2; 25 September 1872, p. 1; 2 October 1872, p. 2.
- *Press* 19 February 1870, p. 3; 11 May 1870, p. 1; 10 August 1872, p. 3; 11 August 1933, p. 10; 18 January 1938, p. 8; 23 June 1939, p. 6; 16 April 1942, p. 3.
- *Temuka Leader* 13 March 1923, p. 3; 3 July 1923, p. 3; 6 November 1923, p. 1.
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand - Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903 (available online).
- 'Arundel' & 'Types of bridges' *Te Ara Encyclopedia of new Zealand* Available online)
- <https://www.ipenz.org.nz/heritage/bio-detail.cfm?id=78>
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2b27/blair-william-newsham>



Extent of setting [subject to survey], Rangitata traffic bridge remnants, Arundel.



'Construction of the Rangitata River Bridge; c.1870 [sic]. ½-037957-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.