

WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

2021 District Plan Item No. HH051
HERITAGE ITEM NAME former West Oxford Police Station lock-up
ADDRESS 72 Main Street, Oxford
PHOTOGRAPH



(DG McEwan, 10 July 2019)

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. H045 **HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY** 7196 / 2
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Pt RS 1839

VALUATION NUMBER 2153243900

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1879

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Colonial architect's office / Public Works Department

STYLE Victorian utility

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Single storey, two-cell building with rectangular footprint and hipped roof. Perforated steel plates above the doors for ventilation. No windows, two sturdy security doors with peepholes on principal (south-facing) elevation.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Timber framing and weatherboard cladding. Corrugated iron roof.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Relocated from Depot Road (1998 / 2002).

SETTING

The former West Oxford Police Station lock-up stands on the north side of Main Street, near the south-western corner of a large recreation reserve (Pearson Park) on which are also located playing fields, the Oxford Museum and Oxford Art Gallery. The building was relocated to this site in 2002. The building is set within a small garden with signage and replica stocks. The scheduled setting is limited to the immediate environs of the building, rather than the land parcel as a whole.

HISTORY

There was a police presence in Oxford by 1865 and the Oxford Police District, encompassing the Oxford road district as well as parts of the West Eyreton, Cust and Ashley districts, was established in c.1872. There was at least one lock-up in the settlement by June 1876. In late July 1878 a severe nor'westerly storm damaged the West Oxford lock-up. Both the East Oxford and West Oxford lock-ups were once again affected by nor'west gales in September of the same year; the latter, having been repaired, was blown off its piles and the former reportedly disappeared altogether. In November 1878 the Colonial Architect in Wellington requested authority to erect a new lockup at Oxford and it was reported in early February 1879 that the West Oxford police station lock-up had been rebuilt. The station was located at the corner of Commercial and Depot Roads, near the West Oxford railway station; by the turn of the 20th century it would appear that this was the settlement's only police station. The lock-up appears to have been in use until the early 1950s, after which the property passed in to private hands and the lock-up became a storage shed. The former lock-up was removed from Depot Road in March 1998 after its purchase by Keep Oxford Beautiful. It was restored by the local volunteer group and officially reopened on 3 March 2002 during the town's Heritage Day. The former lock-up continues to function as a visitor attraction and adjunct to the nearby Oxford Museum.

HISTORIC AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former West Oxford Police Station lock-up has historic significance for its association with policing in the district from 1879 until the mid-20th century. The building was used to temporarily accommodate prisoners before they were transferred to jail or to detain people who had been causing a public nuisance. The small-scale size and robust construction of New Zealand's Victorian lock-ups appear to have made them very easy to relocate. The relocation of Oxford's lock-up within the township has removed the building from its historic setting but maintained its connection to the community.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former West Oxford Police Station lock-up has cultural significance as a site of community identity and historic continuity. The relocation project received media attention and considerable support from the community.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former West Oxford Police Station lock-up has architectural significance as an example of a standardised Public Works Department design, one which retains a good level of authenticity. The department's standardisation of design in the later 19th and early 20th centuries led to a recognisable 'house style' for a wide range of governmental buildings throughout the country. Later lock-up designs, from c.1880, included a small anteroom from which the cells were accessed, as opposed to the direct entry provided at Oxford.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former West Oxford Police Station lock-up has technological and craftsmanship significance as an example of late Victorian construction methods and techniques, particularly in regard to the security of those housed in its cells.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former West Oxford Police Station lock-up has contextual significance as a local landmark, albeit a modern one given the relocation of the building in 2002. It has a relationship with other relocated and restored lock-ups in Duntroon and Darfield.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the former lock-up has been relocated, any potential archaeological significance of the site would likely relate to its earlier use and development. The building has scientific value given its physical evidence of Victorian and early 20th century policing practices.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former West Oxford Police Station lock-up has overall heritage significance to Oxford and to the district of Waimakariri as a whole. The building has historical and social significance for its association with district policing and cultural significance as an esteemed place of community identity. The former West Oxford Police Station lock-up has architectural significance as a standardised government building and technological and craftsmanship significance for the quality of its construction and detailing. The former West Oxford Police Station lock-up has contextual significance as a local landmark and scientific value given its physical evidence of historic policing practices.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

- *Press* 16 June 1865, p. 2; 14 August 1899, p. 2; 10 April 1917, p. 6.
- *Star* 22 June 1876, p. 2; 29 July 1878, p. 2; 26 September 1878, p. 3; 5 February 1879, p. 3.
- *Lyttelton Times* 23 January 1906, p. 3.
- *Akaroa Mail* 27 September 1878, p. 2.
- *Oxford Observer* 14 September 1889, p. 5.
- *Timaru Herald* 31 July 1878, p. 2.
- *Northern Outlook* 18 March 1998, p. 3; 9 February 2002, np.
- *North Canterbury News* 26 February 2002, np.
- <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc03Cycl-t1-body1-d4-d17-d1.html>
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7196>
- Archives New Zealand.
- WDC files.

REPORT COMPLETED

3 February 2019

AUTHOR

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Extent of scheduling, limited to immediate environs, 72 Main Street, Oxford.



Land parcel as a whole with former lock-up marked by pin.