

Naval Point, Lyttelton/Whakaraupō

Heritage background

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1. Introduction

This document provides an overview of the key heritage topics at Naval Point, Lyttleton. It begins by focusing on the area currently considered as Stage 1 of the Christchurch City Council redevelopment, and then explores the wider Naval Point story to provide context.

It was prepared during the Coronavirus lockdown so uses online and the authors' personal resources only (See section 6). Further research is recommended once access to relevant repositories is possible (See section 5). This should include the involvement of Te Hapū o Ngāti Wheke for a Māori perspective on the heritage of the area, and community consultation, particularly to cover more recent decades.

Appendix A lists the recorded archaeological sites in the Stage 1 area and shows their location on a map.

The heritage of Naval Point is characterised
by an incongruous mix of industry and
open-air recreation.

2. The Stage 1 redevelopment zone

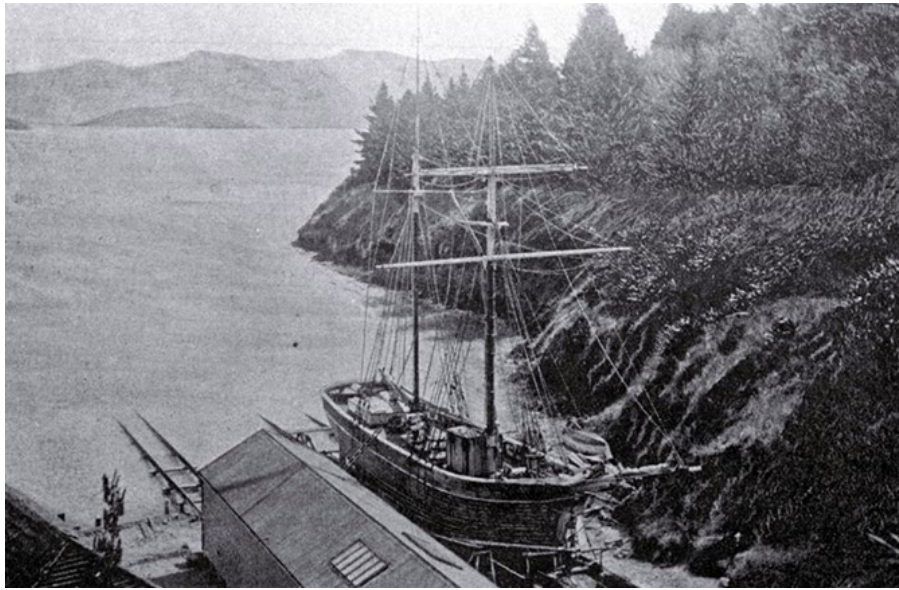
From a heritage perspective, the Stage 1 zone has three main parts:

- Tāpoa/Baker's Bay/Magazine Bay
- The Naval Point Recreation Reserve
- The Naval Point Club.



The Naval Point area, showing the Phase 1 project boundaries (in red) and the main heritage sites. (Image: Google Earth).

2.1 Tāpoa/Baker's Bay/Magazine Bay



Barker's Bay, 1897, Weekly Press.

Croydon Lass on John Grubb's slipway, his workshop at the left, torpedo boat storage shed centre (Image: Robertson).

The area was known to local Māori as Tāpoa. It was used as a mahinga kai (food gathering place) and as part of the access route between Rāpaki and Ōhinehou (Williams, 2017).

It was commonly referred to as Baker's Bay from approximately 1860, probably after an early resident although this requires further research. The name Magazine Bay became established from about 1910.

John Grubb had a slipway and boat-building workshop at Baker's Bay from the mid-1870s, and the slip was still present in the late 1890s. Grubb's home on London Street is now owned by the Christchurch City Council and is operated as a heritage facility by the Grubb Cottage Trust. He was a prominent early Lyttelton business owner and public figure.

The jetty at Baker's Bay was used to offload cattle and other livestock. In the 1860s the bay was also used as a site to weather animal bones (buried in the ground), and somewhere between Baker's Bay and Naval Point there was a slaughter yard and stock paddock (Star 12 Aug 1874).

Gun powder was stored in the vicinity from at least 1860, first in "a hole in the hill", then in a magazine next to the slaughter yard (LT, 9 Sept 1863). The Public Works Dept built an improved powder magazine at Baker's Bay in 1874, and a keeper's cottage in 1875 (Star 12 May 1875). This magazine was accessible only by boat.

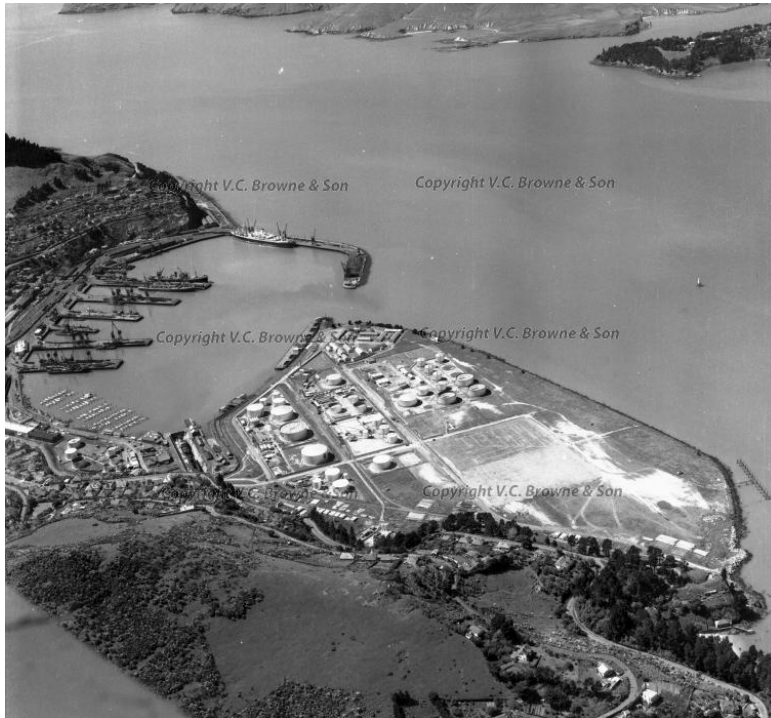
The 1874 magazine now houses the Lyttelton Torpedo Boat museum. A slipway and storage shed were built for the torpedo boat at Baker's Bay in 1885 as part of a harbour defence strategy. A gun emplacement, barracks and ammunition magazine were added above the powder magazine in 1890, creating Erskine Fort which was decommissioned in 1905. An anti-aircraft gun was installed on the site in 1939.

In the 19th century, Baker's Bay was used as a site to view vessels offered for sale (e.g. LT 18 Dec 1896). School swimming races were held there (e.g. Christ's College, 1885, Star 13

March 1885), and yacht races were run between the Bay and Lyttelton (e.g. Press 2 Jan 1872). The area has been mainly used for recreation since the mid-20th century.

A full archaeological assessment of the area was prepared in 2017 (Williams).

2.2 Naval Point Recreation Reserve



The Naval Point reclamation, 1952 (Image: © V C Browne & Son).

The flat land at Naval Point was reclaimed between 1909 and 1926. The stage 1 redevelopment zone includes the area that was set aside for a community recreation reserve.

Lyttelton had no other ground suitable for a sporting field so there was widespread support for this plan. However, protracted negotiations between the Harbour Board and the Council about title to the land and the cost of access and making it good for sporting use, delayed the transfer until at least 1940.

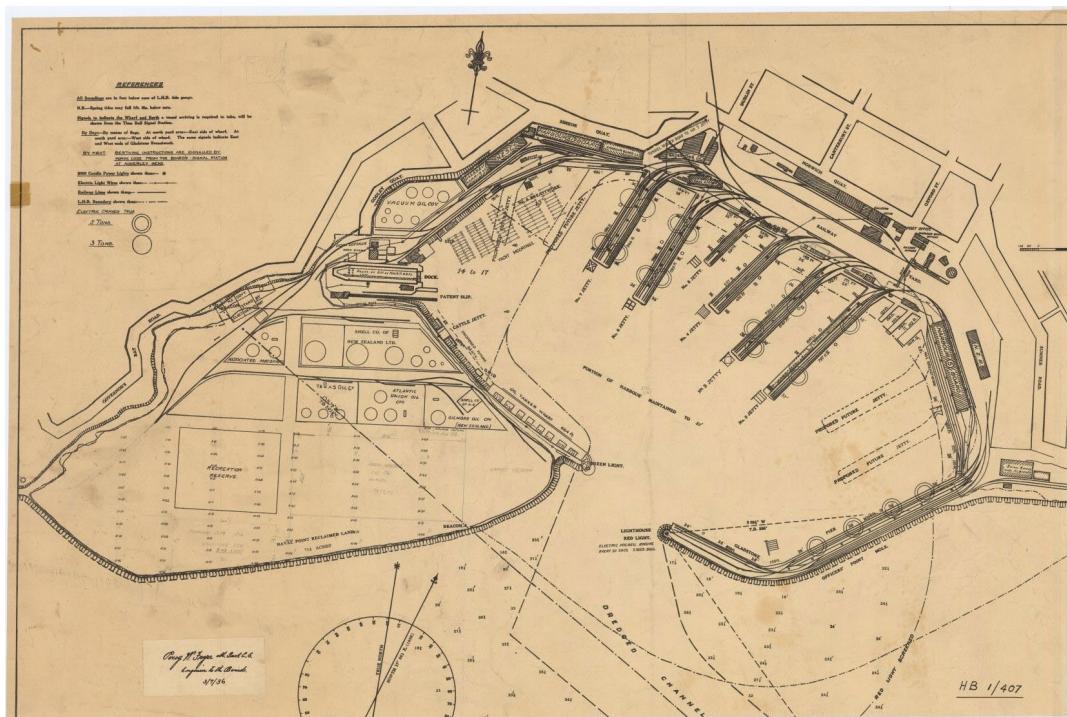
Undeterred, the community began using the recreation ground, with men's and women's Hockey Clubs playing there and local schools using it for sports days (e.g. Press 10 June 1930, 15 Oct 1937). The area is now primarily a rugby field for the Lyttelton Rugby Club. Four mid-20th century All Blacks from Lyttelton may have trained and played on the reserve (Stephen and Graeme Bachop, Robert Duff and Patrick Rhind). Further community research is required to develop this story.

The reclaimed land was prone to subsidence and an area of around 4 acres at the site of the proposed recreation ground dropped by over a metre in 1934. The Harbour Board engineer explained that this area was farthest from the points at which the soil was pumped by the

dredge and only very fine and soft material had reached it. The subsidence was repaired by dredging more spoil into the area for several months (Press 12 April 1934, 2 June 1934).

It was also boggy and had a very high salt content so grass would not grow on it (Press 2 Dec 1940). Council workers spreading better soil on the surface of the recreation reserve in 1940 found several old coins, one dating back to 1832. The soil had come from earlier excavations in other parts of Lyttelton (Press 4 May 1940).

A section of the rail line on the Charlotte Jane Quay boundary of the recreation reserve is warped and it is believed that this occurred in the February 2011 Canterbury earthquake.



Lyttelton Harbour, c.1936. (Image: LHB c.1943).

2.3 Naval Point Club



Clubhouse at Naval Point, 1964, Naval Point Club Archives. (Image: Robertson).

Lyttelton boaties advocated for a boat harbour from the early 20th century. The Banks Peninsula Cruising Club was established in 1932, and occupied sites on the Naval Point reclamation until they leased the land where the Naval Point Club now stands from the Lyttelton Borough Council in 1956. The Club levelled a rocky point and built a clubhouse and slipway to Magazine Bay in 1957. In 1960, a wharf was built for the club by the Lyttelton Harbour Board.

In 1972, they built new premises, designed by Peter Beaven, a nationally renowned architect who also designed the now demolished Lyttelton Road Tunnel building. The Cruising Club won architectural awards and was listed as a notable building by the Banks Peninsula District Council, but it was demolished in 1999 as part of marina development plans (Beaven 103).

A floating marina opened at Naval Point in 1982 and was upgraded in 1999, including the extant breakwater and public slipway. This probably included the extra 'toe' of reclaimed land opposite the marina on the edge of the original Naval Point reclamation. The marina was badly damaged by a storm in 2000.

The Cruising Club and the Canterbury Yacht and Motor Boat Club amalgamated in 2001 to form the Naval Point Club (Robertson).

From 1876, the mole became a race marker and viewing point for the annual Lyttelton New Year's Day Regatta, and the Council worked on improving road access to the site. The Harbour Board purchased several adjoining properties from private owners and removed houses (e.g. Star 2 Nov 1880).

The Naval Volunteers used the area for exercises, including gun practice with a howitzer and Armstrong gun, and skirmishes in the surrounding hills with the Christchurch City Guards – followed by refreshments at the Mitre Hotel (Globe 19 Dec 1881).

The Graving Dock opened in January 1883, providing maintenance and repairs for many vessels, including Robert Scott's Antarctic ship *Discovery* in 1901.

A public bathing facility was developed at Sandy Bay on the town side of Naval Point. This included bathing sheds, a caretaker's cottage and, briefly, a shark-proof fence. In the 1890s, bathing was allowed for men in the early morning and evening, and women during the day. (see e.g. Globe 27 Oct 1875, LT 22 Aug 1885). At least three deaths were noted at or near Sandy Bay (see Section 4). The area was filled in as part of the Naval Point reclamation.

An electric light was installed at the end of the breakwater in 1890 (LT 5 Nov 1890), and a cattle jetty and stockyard were operating there by 1892, adapted from an earlier structure built in 1880 (e.g. Star 23 Feb 1892, 2 Feb 1911). A second wharf on the breakwater was initially used to moor the dredge and later became the oil tanker wharf. And a skeleton wharf was built alongside it in 1904 to moor coal hulks (Press 17 June 1904).



The bathing shed and caretaker's cottage at Sandy Bay in 1895. (Image: Lyttelton Museum ref 14625.109).



Sandy Bay with its shark-proof fence around 1900. (Image: Lyttelton Museum ref 14625.108).

The dry dock and Naval Point breakwater are also visible with boats moored at the cattle jetty. This area was filled in by the Naval Point reclamation.

3.2. The reclamation

The Naval Point reclamation project began in November 1909. First, a wall was built to connect the breakwater to the coast, enclosing an area of approximately 72 acres. Spoil from the harbour floor was pumped into the enclosure by the dredge *Canterbury* from 1912 – around 12 million tons of it across 13 years. The cost of enclosing the mole was offset by the savings made on disposal of the spoil, so the Harbour Board engineer argued early on that the land was practically free (Star 1 March 1913).

But, like the breakwater before it, the reclamation was prone to sudden subsidence. At one time during construction, the wall sank 40 feet in one spot and the engineer estimated that a third of the spoil pumped into the enclosure escaped (Scotter 252).



The cliff face being quarried for the wall around the reclamation, c.1911. (Image: Lyttelton Museum ref 14985.111).

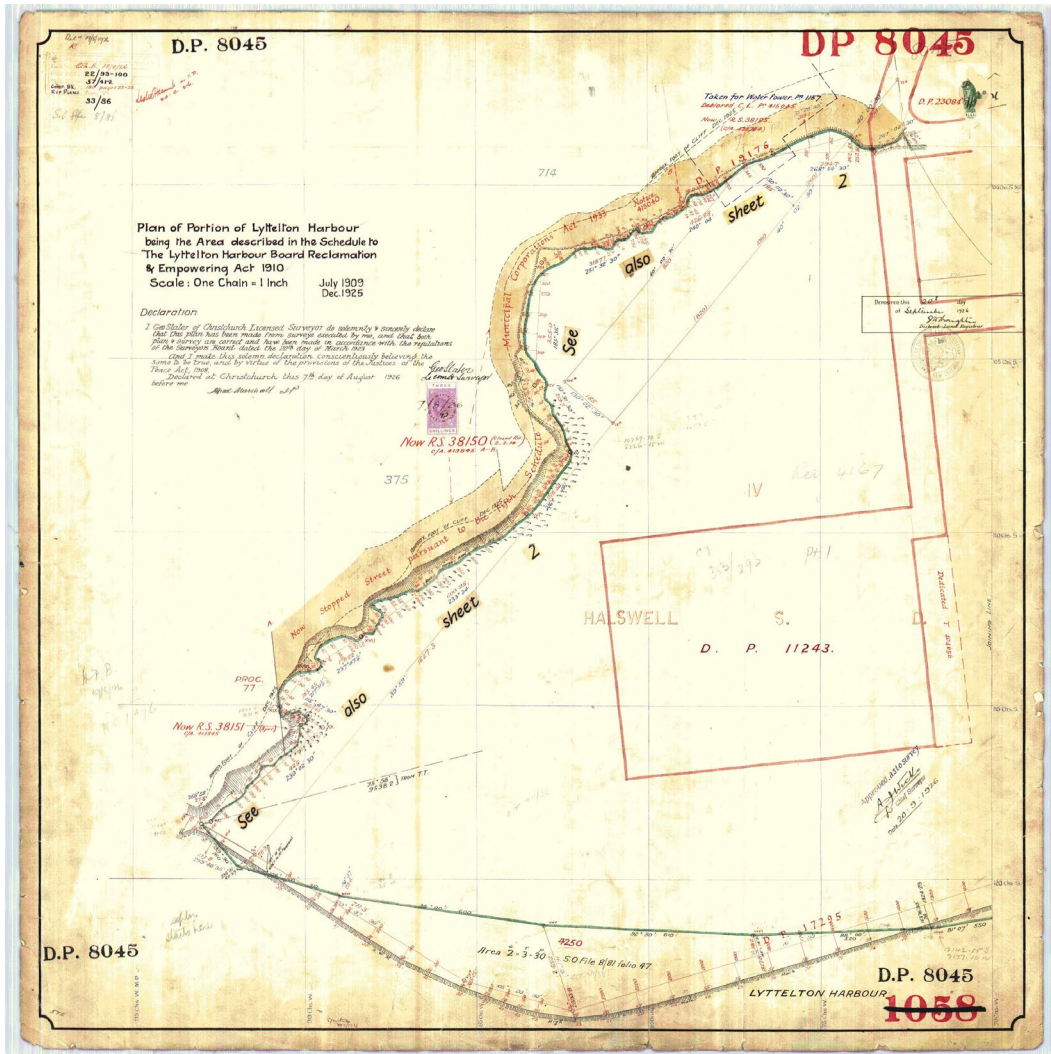
The reclamation was planned to take 5 years but lasted 15. When it was finally complete in 1926, the land had to be drained and levelled before it could be used, and road access had to be installed. The Harbour Board began advertising leases on the reclamation in the later part of 1926 (e.g. Press 2 Sept 1926) and in 1927 Vacuum Oil and British Imperial Oil took up sites for bulk storage of fuel and other oils. Railway sidings had been installed to these sites and pipes were being laid (Press 19 May 1927). The first bulk oil tanker to call at Lyttelton (the *Lincoln Ellsworth*) discharged 10,000 gallons of benzine into the Vacuum Oil tanks in October 1927 (Press 18 Oct 1927).

In 1930, a substation was installed to supply electricity to the reclamation, and Shell Oil and Atlantic Union Oil were granted permission to install septic tanks at their sites (Press 3 April 1930, 10 June 1930).

Discussions between the Harbour Board and the Council were ongoing about the recreation ground and responsibilities for roading, sewerage and drainage on the reclaimed land (e.g. Press 14 May 1929).

By 1933, 16 acres had been leased for 21 years (Press 28 Feb 1933), and the Harbour Board was working hard trying to find a use for the remaining land. A fish factory, airport, school and residential development were all investigated and abandoned (e.g. Press 6 July 1933).

In 1939, a tank was installed to store aviation fuel for defence purposes on the Vacuum Oil site (Press 16 May 1939).



Naval Point in 1926, showing the original shoreline. (Image: LINZ 1926).

4. Stories for further research

In addition to the topics covered above, these stories could be investigated for a better understanding of the area and possible future interpretation:

- 'Māori hostelry' at Dampier's Bay, near to slaughter yard (LT 13 March 1865)
- Shoot for dumping night soil at Naval Point (LT 1 May 1867)
- Beached whale from Quail Island processed for oil at Sandy Bay (Star 6 Aug 1872)
- Naval Point ochre assessed by Prof Bickerton (Star 16 Dec 1881)
- Offer to purchase flax growing on land at Naval Point (LT 5 Nov 1891)
- Working conditions and pay rates on the reclamation (e.g. Star 2 Nov 1910)
- Proposed airport at Naval Point (Press 7 Nov 1929)
- Depression era work schemes on the Reclamation site (e.g. Press 21 March 1933)
- Canterbury Aeroclub monoplane crash (Ashburton Guardian 30 May 1938)
- Proposed naval barracks, 1940s (Lyttelton Harbour Board plan 1-408-2-B, 1943; supplied by LPC)
- Deaths at Sandy Bay:
 - Frank Collins (boy) found in a small cave, accidental death (Star 3 April 1869)
 - George Preston, Master of the *Nightingale*, found deceased (LT 5 Sept 1879)
 - Thomas McCleary of Christchurch, unexplained death (LT 25 Nov 1884).

5. Repositories and collections

As well as community consultation, these resources may provide additional information:

Archives NZ

Records of:

- The Canterbury Provincial Council
- The Lyttelton Harbour Board
- Environment Canterbury
- The Lyttelton Orphanage

Christchurch City Libraries

Records of the Banks Peninsula Cruising Club, 1932-1994

Canterbury Museum

Pictorial and Manuscripts collections

Lyttelton Museum

Online image collection via eHive: <https://ehive.com/>

V C Browne Collection

Aerial photographs: <http://www.vcbrowne.com/VCBHome.aspx>

6. References

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- LHB, c.1936. Lyttelton Harbour map. Lyttelton Harbour Board (held by the Lyttelton Port Company).
- LINZ, 1926. DP 8045. Landonline, Land Information New Zealand.
- Lyttelton Museum image collection. (nd) <https://ehive.com/collections/5362/lyttelton-museum>
- Newspapers referred to are sourced from National Library of NZ (nd) *Papers Past*, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers> accessed April 2020.
- Robertson, Jane. (2019) Between land and sea: jetties of Whakaraupō/Lyttelton Harbour, <http://lytteltonharbourjetties.blogspot.com/2019/06/magazine-bay-bakers-bay-1.html>, accessed April 2020.
- Scotter, W. H. (1968) *A history of Port Lyttelton*, Christchurch, NZ, The Lyttelton Harbour Board.
- Williams, Hamish. (2017) *Naval Point/Magazine Bay, Lyttelton: An Archaeological Assessment*, Unpublished report for Christchurch City Council.

6.1 Other sources consulted

- Johnson, J. (1952) *The story of Lyttelton*, Lyttelton Borough Council/Caxton Press, Christchurch NZ.
- Lyttelton Harbour Board maps, held by the Lyttelton Port Company.
- Rice, G. (2004) *Lyttelton port and town: an illustrated history*, Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Survey maps and plans available from Landonline <https://www.linz.govt.nz/land/landonline>

Appendix A: Recorded archaeological sites at Naval Point

ArchSite no.	Description	Pre-1900*
M36/609	Naval Point breakwater	yes
M36/680	John Grubb's shipyard and slipway	yes
M36/681	Magazine building and seawall	yes
M36/682	Caretaker's cottage and grounds	yes
M36/683	Torpedo boatshed & slipway	yes
M36/684	Fort Erskine battery	yes

*An archaeological authority is required if an archaeological site formed prior to 1900 is going to be destroyed, damaged or modified.



The recorded archaeological sites in the Naval Point area. See below for detail of the Magazine Bay sites.



The recorded archaeological sites in Magazine Bay.