



Powerstation, PowerHouse Road

1901

Use	Old PowerStation (now empty)	Historic Value	3 out of 5
Materials	Brick, concrete	Architectural Value	- out of 4
NZHPT Registered	Not registered	Technical Value	2 out of 2
Valuation No	12360-153-00	Symbolic Value	1 out of 3
Legal Description	Lot 1 DP 1763, Secs 487 673, Pt Sec 491 Patea District Blk VI Carlyle SD	Rarity	2 out of 2
Reference	Pow1	Townscape Value	- out of 2
		Group Value	- out of 2
		Overall Cultural Heritage Value	8 out of 20

Description

The remains of the second powerhouse are constructed of concrete. A tunnel/hole provides the entrance from the top of the cliff down into the building. The original powerhouse was made of timber.

History

The Powerstation was the first municipally owned electrical plant in New Zealand. Transmission to Patea, a distance of three miles, was by a single-phase line at a voltage of 3,000 volts, distribution at 110 volts single phase. The station was at first for lighting only. But, later the plant was run on Monday afternoons to enable housewives to do ironing. Consumers had the choice of either being charged by meters or per installed point, with the former option being preferred.

The water supply for the Powerstation came from the Kaikoura Stream, on which was located Payne's Flour Mill Dam, which the Council bought for extra water storage at the time the scheme was being constructed. This was let to flax millers until the end of 1905, after which it was used to control the flow of water to the hydro. Locker & Dickson commenced the building of the dam in September 1901.

When the dam broke in 1920 the attendants' hut, attached to the powerhouse was swept into the sea along with its two occupants, leaving the powerhouse and machinery undamaged. At this time water rights had been obtained to the Mangaroa Stream and work was in hand to add this water supply to the system. The idea was dropped when the decision was made to build a new powerhouse lower down the cliff and install higher-powered machinery.

In 1918 a 65 horsepower suction gas motor was installed in York Street as part of the town water reticulation scheme. This supplied electricity to operate the pumps but could not be synchronised with the hydro, although the hydropower could be used to operate the pumps. This motor could supply the needs of the town when for any reason the hydro was closed down. In 1927 a Ruston Hornby Diesel Electric Set was installed, which could be run in parallel with the hydro or separately when required. This plant was sold to the government in 1941. Additional power was bought from South Taranaki Power Board.

At the meeting of the Council on 8 July 1952 the engineer reported that the hydro generator had burned out. He recommended that no further repairs be carried out. At the meeting of 13 January 1959 it was reported that the Borough Power enterprise had been sold to the South Taranaki Electric Power Board for £15,000.

Architect

Climie and Fairhall, Hawera

Builder

W M Aitchison

Turnbull and Jones supplied the required machinery for the Electric Lighting Works for Patea.

Statement of Significance**Sources**

Patea Mail (1981), *Patea Mail – Centennial Edition*, September 1981
Livingston Baker, Patea Heritage Working Party

Date

January 2000

D I and A L Honeyfield

Powerhouse Hazards

1. This site is not recommended for children under 10 years.
2. All children are the responsibility of their guardian at all times.
3. You enter this property at your own risk. Take care as this is an unstable area.

Hazards are:

1. Electric fencing approximately three-six metres from cliffs.
2. The cliffs are eroding badly becoming unstable. Do not stand too close to the edge and, when on the beach, keep well away from the cliffs as large pieces often fall off.
3. The tunnel down to the powerhouse is very dangerous. Extreme caution is required when going down and up. The floor is very slippery with slime and littered with timber (old wooden steps). There are also old semi rusted power lines on the side of the wall. Two years ago the tunnel steps were in good order but vandals wrecked them. There were also wooden ladders down the cliffs. They had been there for 20 years and someone also took them. What a shame.
4. When you are on the sand remember this is a West Coast beach, beware of the waves and do not get cut off by the surf.