



# Timaru was gaining a reputation as a ships graveyard...

**30** Ships were wrecked or stranded off Timaru coastline  
1864 - 1892

6 x Barques, 6 x Brigantines, 4 x Iron Ships, 3 x Ketches, 6 x Schooners, 2 x Steamers, 2 x Brigs and 1 x Steamship.

**22** Wrecked

**8** Refloated

**100** Lives were saved by Timaru Volunteer Rocket Brigade

**43** Lives saved by Alexandra Lifeboat Crews

**15** People died

The harbourmaster kept a lookout during storms. They could give ship crews instructions by hoisting flags, and fire a signal gun to call for crews to race to the rescue.

The safety and efficiency of handling cargo and passengers had to be improved. So the locals funded their own harbour. It was only one of two independently owned ports in the country. The Port provided huge opportunity to Timaru and South Canterbury. It also impacted the way sediment moved up the coast. From 1880s sand built out from these Caroline Bay cliffs and created a new sandy Caroline Bay.

# SHIPWRECK HISTORY



 **Herald 1864**  
(10 miles north)

 **City of Cashmere 1882**  
(Ninety Mile Beach)

## Te Tihi-o-Maru TIMARU SHIPWRECKS 1864 - 1955

**REFLOATED**  
  
**WRECKED**  


 **Akbar 1879** †5  
(Washdyke spit)


### 1850s Shoreline

 **William Miskin 1868** †1

 **Collingwood 1869** †1

 **Aurora 1870**

 **Pelican 1878**


 **Melrose 1878** †2


 **Lyttleton 1886**

 **Duke of Sutherland 1880**

 **City of Perth 1882**  
**Benvenue 1882** †9

 **Glimpse 1878**

 **Lapwing 1878**

 **Susan Jane 1869**

 **Kaitoke 1958**

 **Lanyard 1870**

 **Fanny 1878**

 **Craig Ellachie 1877**


 **Fairy Queen 1873**


 **Wanderer 1873**

 **Isabella Ridley 1877**

 **Duke of Edinburgh 1873**

 **Prince Consort 1866**

 **Princess Alice 1875**

 **Cyrene 1875**

 **Lady of the Lake 1873**

### 2023 Shoreline

 **HOLMGLEN 1955** †15  
(6 miles from town)

 **ARMARANTH 1881**  
(6 miles from town)

 **John Watson 1879**  
(St Andrews)

 **S.S. Elginshire 1892**  
(Off Normanby Point)



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Volunteer Rocket Brigade  
**43** Lives saved by Alexandra  
Lifeboat Crews  
**15** People died

Here is a summary of the shipwrecks, with details on when they occurred, why they wrecked, whether the ship was wrecked or refloated, and key cargo details:

1842 Lady Mary Pelham (French whaler) - Sept 2, all hands perished, carrying oil cargo, wrecked on Long Beach.

1864 Herald - Jan 16, beached due to fire, carrying bottled beer, some cargo lost.

1866 Prince Consort (schooner) - Dec 20, wrecked when anchors dragged in Timaru, carrying no key cargo.

1868 William Miskin (steamer) - Feb 4, wrecked going ashore at Timaru, one drowned, carrying miscellaneous cargo.

1868 Despatch (brigantine) - Jun 13, Captain died after being hit on head, carrying livestock.

1869 Collingwood (barque) - May 23, wrecked with 1225 sacks of wheat after anchors dragged.

1869 Susan Jane (barque) - May 23, wrecked in harbor after anchors dragged, carrying timber.

1870 Layard (brigantine) - June 8, wrecked when cables parted, carrying 252 tons of coal.

1870 Aurora (schooner) - Refloated, no key cargo.

1873 Fairy Queen (brigantine) - Aug 27, wrecked, carrying coal from Australia.

1873 Wanderer (ketch) - Aug 27, wrecked with 208 bags of wheat after cables parted.

1873 Lady of the Lake (steamer) - Sept, refloated after springing leak.

1873 Duke of Edinburgh (schooner) - Refloated after beaching, carrying 39,956 feet of timber.

1875 Cyrene (barque) - May 9, wrecked, carrying 8,000 railway sleepers.

1875 Princess Alice (brigantine) - May 9, wrecked after dragging anchors, carrying 800 sacks of wheat.

1877 Isabella Ridley (barque) - Apr 19, wrecked, 10 rescued, carrying 2000 sacks of grain.

1877 Craig Ellachie (brigantine) - Dec 22, wrecked after parting cables in gale.

1878 Lapwing (brigantine) - Refloated, minor casualty of knocked false keel.

1878 Melrose (barque) - Sept 3, wrecked with one death, carrying coal.

1878 Fanny (ketch) - Wrecked after grounding.

1878 Glimpse (ketch) - Refloated after parting anchor chain.

1879 Akbar (brigantine) - 5 drowned, carrying 350 tons of coal.

1879 Pelican (schooner) - Refloated, all landed safely.

1879 John Watson (schooner) - Nov 20, wrecked with 220 tons of coal after striking reef.

1881 Amaranth (schooner) - May 5, wrecked after fouling another ship, no lives lost.

1882 City of Cashmere (ship) - May 14, refloated from beach after tow line failed.

1882 Duke of Sutherland (barque) - May 2, sank at anchor with wheat cargo, no lives lost.

1882 Ben Venue (ship) - May 14, wrecked, no lives lost.

1882 City of Perth (ship) - May 14, refloated but 9 died during rescue attempts in large swells.

1886 Lyttelton (ship) - June 12, wrecked with cargo of frozen meat, wool and other goods after striking wreck.

1892 S.S. Elginshire (steamship) - Mar 9, grounded in fog carrying 550 tons of meat and wool.



Interesting stories

## **Prince Consort**

*Was the first ship to receive help from the crew of the Alexandra life boat in 1866. She dragged her anchor, capsized when her ballast shifted, washed over the reef, broke up in the night. Three men were on board, and two were saved by the Alexandra.*

## **William Miskin**

*Went ashore in Feb 1868 was "smashed to atoms" near Ashbury Park. Fragments of the ship, iron plates, chests, luggage, tines of kerosine were strewn up the beach. The ship had visited the Timaru roadstead many times, including bringing gold, mined from the Westcoast. The wreck happened when the district experienced gales and floods."*

## **Despatch**

*Drifted ashore in a gale at Timaru on June 1868 carrying livestock, and the first European woman to South Canterbury, Mrs William Hornbrook.*

## **Isabella Ridley**

*The famous boxer Bob Fitzsimmons (26 May 1862 – 22 October 1917) who was born in the UK and grew up in Timaru, wanted to run away from home, so he made a plan with the captain of the Isabella Ridley. But when he arrived in the morning to jump on board, the ship had wrecked over night. He ended up staying and eventually working for his brother in a blacksmith's forge hammering horse shoes. This work helped him build his strength and give him a competitive advantage in the ring, helping him win three world titles. If the ship hadn't wrecked, perhaps Bob's life couldn't have turned out differently.*

## **Duke of Edinburgh**

*Arrived in Timaru 1873 carrying 39,956 feet of timber from Auckland for the Temuka bridge. It was sold at auction for £205, refloated from the beach and named the Euphrosyne .*



## Interesting stories

### **Cyrene**

*The Cyrene recently arrived from San Francisco with 18,000 sleepers for the Government railway then being constructed to Temuka. Every sleeper was saved, and from these alone Captain Cain must have made a good profit. The Cyrene was broken up for firewood.*

### **Isabella Ridley**

*About a thousand persons witnessed the wrecking in 1877 on sunny day. There was a heavy sea, but no wind and the ship dragged its anchors. A rocket was thrown, and the crew were safely landed. it had 2000 sacks of grain. 10 were rescued with the aid of the Timaru Voluntary Rocket Brigade.*

### **Duke of Sutherland**

*Sank in 1882 heavy seas. The wreckage was broken up by dynamite into handy pieces for lifting.*

### **Holmglen**

*This was a more recent wreck, and tragically 15 died in 1969 when it sank in a storm 40 km east of Timaru. The coastal trading ship was only three years old and a court of inquiry could find no explanation for the sinking. It remains one of New Zealand's maritime mysteries.*

### **Lyttelton**

*sank in just twenty minutes after striking the wreck of another ship while being towed out of Timaru in 1886. Loaded with a cargo including 9000 carcasses of frozen mutton, wool, flour, oats, and whiskey.*



Interesting stories

## ***The Benvenue***

*The Benvenue was built in the same ship yard as the City of Cashmere (refloated 1882) and the City of Perth. All three were in trouble on the same shore. The Ben Venue was carrying over 500 tons of coal onboard.*

## ***The City of Perth***

*the City of Perth also ran aground beside the Ben Venue after losing her anchors. The crew of the Ben Venue sought refuge on the City of Perth after their ship capsized. Was carrying over 5000 sacks of wheat,*

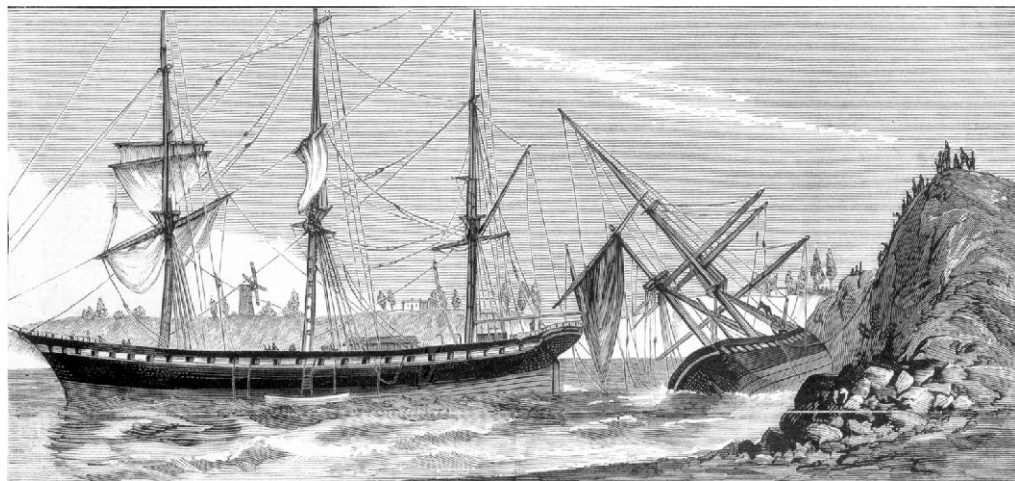
## ***The Benvenue and City of Perth disaster***

*In May 1882, two large ships called the Benvenue and the City of Perth were anchored off the coast of Timaru. There was no proper harbor at Timaru back then, so ships anchored out at sea.*

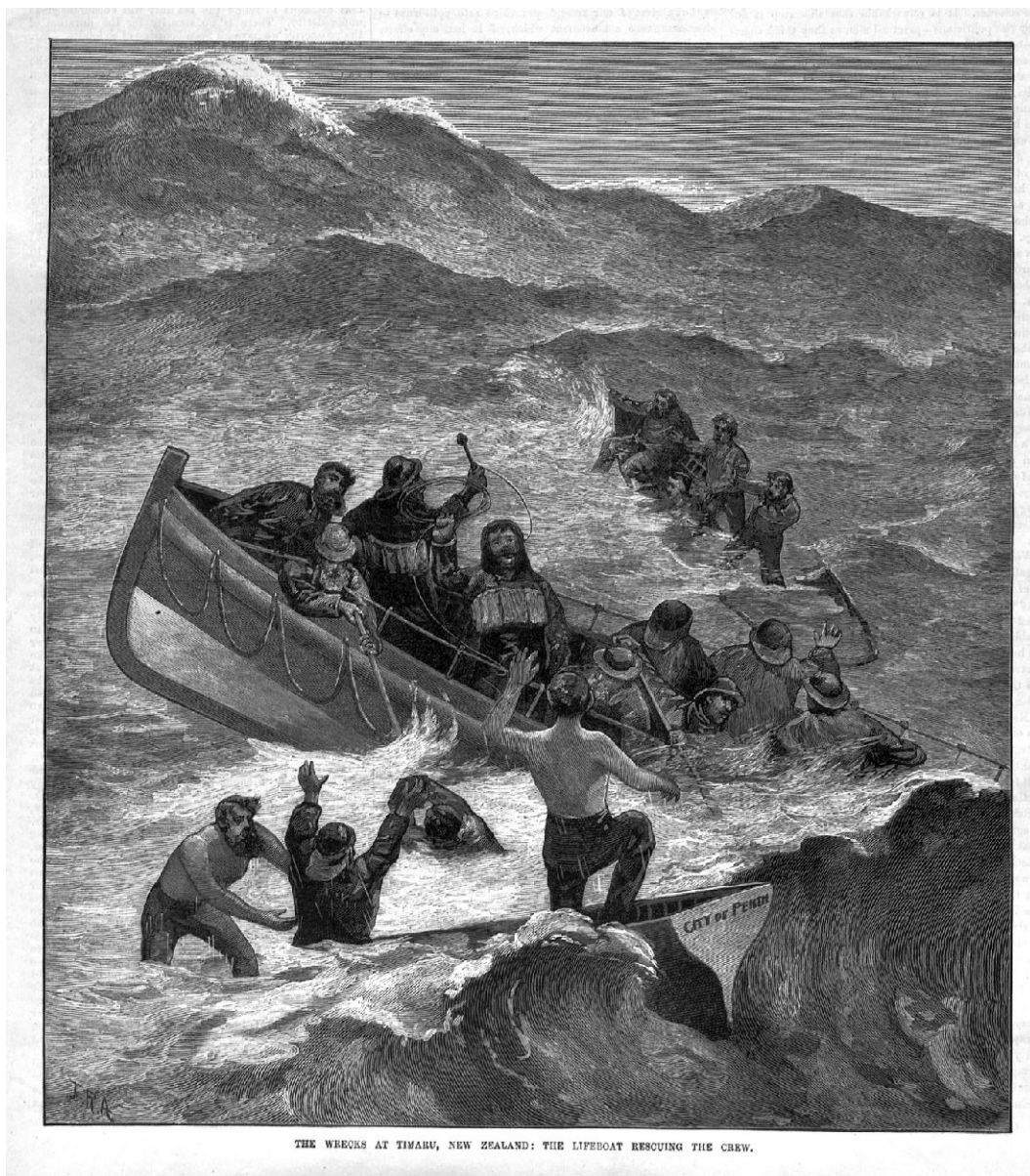
*On May 14th, a huge storm came with massive waves crashing against the ships. The signal gun had been fired to summon a sea rescue. This also attracted thousands of people to the cliffs who watched in horror as the two ships and crews got into trouble. The Benvenue's anchors broke first, and the ship drifted towards the rocky shore and cliffs now named after the shipwreck. All the crew safely made it off the Benvenue. The City of Perth started to drift. Both ships had successfully evacuated with everyone ashore, but the harbourmaster, Captain Alexander Mills, decided to attempt to salvage the City of Perth. Once aboard they quickly realized this was a fruitless endeavour. After launching their own lifeboats these too capsized, throwing 40 men into the water. The Alexandra life boat (which hadn't been used for many years) was the only boat left to rush to the rescue. Nine men drowned, including Captain Mills.*

*A monument was later erected on Perth Street to honor the men who lost their lives and the heroes who bravely tried to rescue.*

# SHIPWRECK HISTORY



Melbourne : David Syme and Co., June 10, 1882 Engraving published in Illustrated Australian news. <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/253140> - <https://viewer.slv.vic.gov.au/?entity=IE8283546&file=FL21663586&mode=browse> Illustrated Australian News (Melbourne, Vic. : 1876 - 1889), Saturday 10 June 1882, page 85 - [nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63185597](http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63185597)



THE WRECKS AT TIMARU, NEW ZEALAND: THE LIFEBOAT RESCUING THE CREW.

The wrecks at Timaru, New Zealand: Lifeboats rescuing sailors in heavy surf, one life boat named City of Perth. Wood engraving by Ashton, Julian Rossi, 1851-1942. [slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1cl35st/SLV\\_ROSETTAIE670476](http://slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1cl35st/SLV_ROSETTAIE670476)



The Ben Venue (left) and City of Perth (right) ships in Caroline Bay. The Ben Venue was wrecked at Caroline Bay in May 1882. The city of Perth collided with the wreckage and also ran aground but was eventually refloated carrying over 5000 sacks of milling wheat from newly broken in farms of the area. Photographer J Dickie Courtesy South Canterbury Museum 2014/056.01



The large painting (about four feet in length) of the wreck of 'City of Perth' and 'Ben Venue' at Timaru hung for many years in the Farmers tearooms and now the painting is at the Port Company Offices, Timaru at Marine Parade. The plate below the painting read : The Wreck of the Ben Venue and City of Perth 14 th May 1882. Presented to The Port of Timaru Ltd. By Arthur Bradley. Last surviving son of Issac Bradley a member of the rescue crafts crew. Located at Prime Port - Photo by Roselyn Fauth.



# SHIPWRECK HISTORY



*After the storm (Timaru Beach 1882, showing the wreck of the ships Benvenue and City of Perth, 1883). John Gibb 1883. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, bequest of Mr Thomas Peacock Esq, 1922*

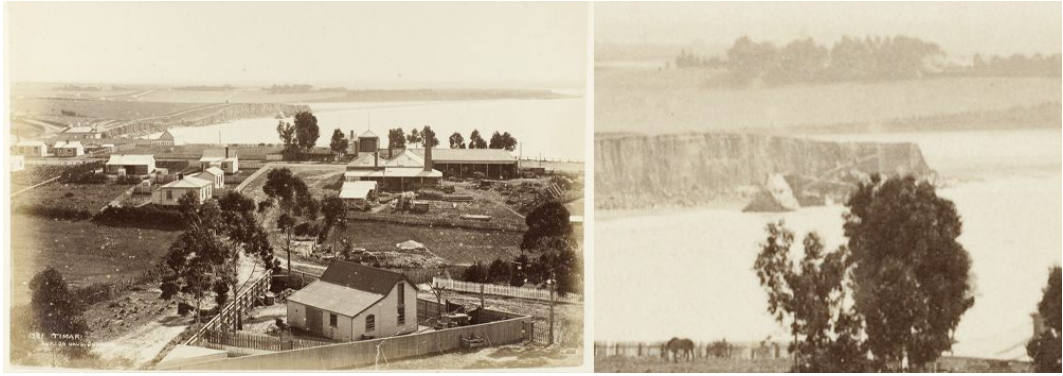


*Sketch of Caroline Bay, Timaru By E. Norman - Copied from original held in South Canterbury Historical Museum, Timaru, 1870*



*J. S. Browning, (1831 – 1909), Timaru Looking North West, 1860, file copy print, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago.*

# SHIPWRECK HISTORY



The wrecks at Timaru, New Zealand: Lifeboats rescuing sailors in heavy surf, one life boat named City of Perth. Wood engraving by Ashton, Julian Rossi, 1851-1942.  
[slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1cl35st/SLV\\_ROSETTAIE670476](http://slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1cl35st/SLV_ROSETTAIE670476)



Section from a photograph taken by the Burton Brothers circa 1882; of the "Ben Venue" stranded. In the distance you can see the Caroline Bay coastline before the sand started to accumulate. Courtesy Te Papa (C.025205). No Known Copyright Restrictions.



Timaru, "Ben Venue" stranded, bows. Photo by Burton Brothers; photography studio; circa 1882; Dunedin

Courtesy Te Papa (C.025204) No Known Copyright Restrictions

# SHIPWRECK HISTORY



The Rocket brigade badge and Distress Bell from South Canterbury Museum Display.



The South Canterbury Museum has an exhibit that includes the Benvenue Bell and medals, the rocket brigade lifesaving launch and the canon that summoned the rocket brigade. Photography courtesy of Roselyn Fauth.



Looking up Benvenue Cliffs to the Blackett Lighthouse. At the time of the disaster the Blackett Lighthouse was at Le Crens Terrace overlooking the Port. The lighthouse was later moved to this location. Photography courtesy of Roselyn Fauth.



Silver Bravery medal  
Gift of Mrs Olive Baker, 1969  
Registration  
Number NU006828  
Te Papa

14 May 1882, the ships City of Perth and Benvenue foundered in Caroline Bay, Timaru. They were victims of ocean swell and choppy sea. The Freemasons of St Johns Lodge awarded 42 medals for gallantry during the rescue on 3 July 1882 (this was a private award for bravery). James Henneker, to whom this particular medal was awarded, made two trips in a surf boat during the storm to rescue men on the ships. Several of his ribs were broken and he lay 'in a precarious state at the Royal Hotel' afterwards (South Canterbury Times, 15 May 1882, p. 2). The medal depicts a lifeboat on a rough sea, with the masonic emblem the Eye of Providence above. It was donated to the museum by the recipient's daughter in 1969. The medal was originally issued as a medallion (without a suspension bar or ribbon), so this version was converted to wear. The ships The Benvenue was wrecked, but the City of Perth was salvaged and returned to the United Kingdom for repairs. It was renamed the Turakina in 1882 by the New Zealand Shipping Co. Ltd.

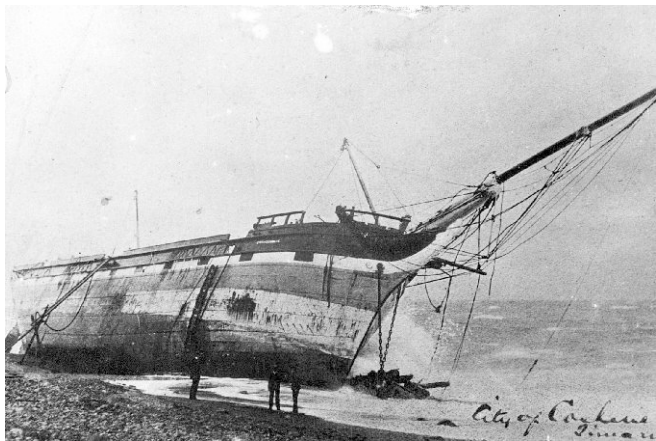
# SHIPWRECK HISTORY



1873 The schooner "Duke of Edinburgh" (foreground) and the brig "Fairy Queen" (background) aground at Timaru, after being swept ashore in a southerly gale on 27 August 1873. Photograph taken by William Ferrier of Timaru. - [natlib.govt.nz/132912](https://natlib.govt.nz/132912)



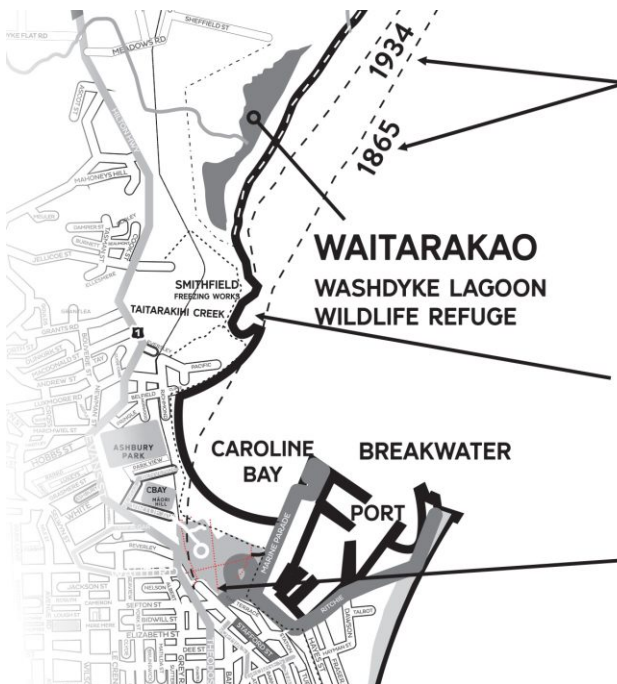
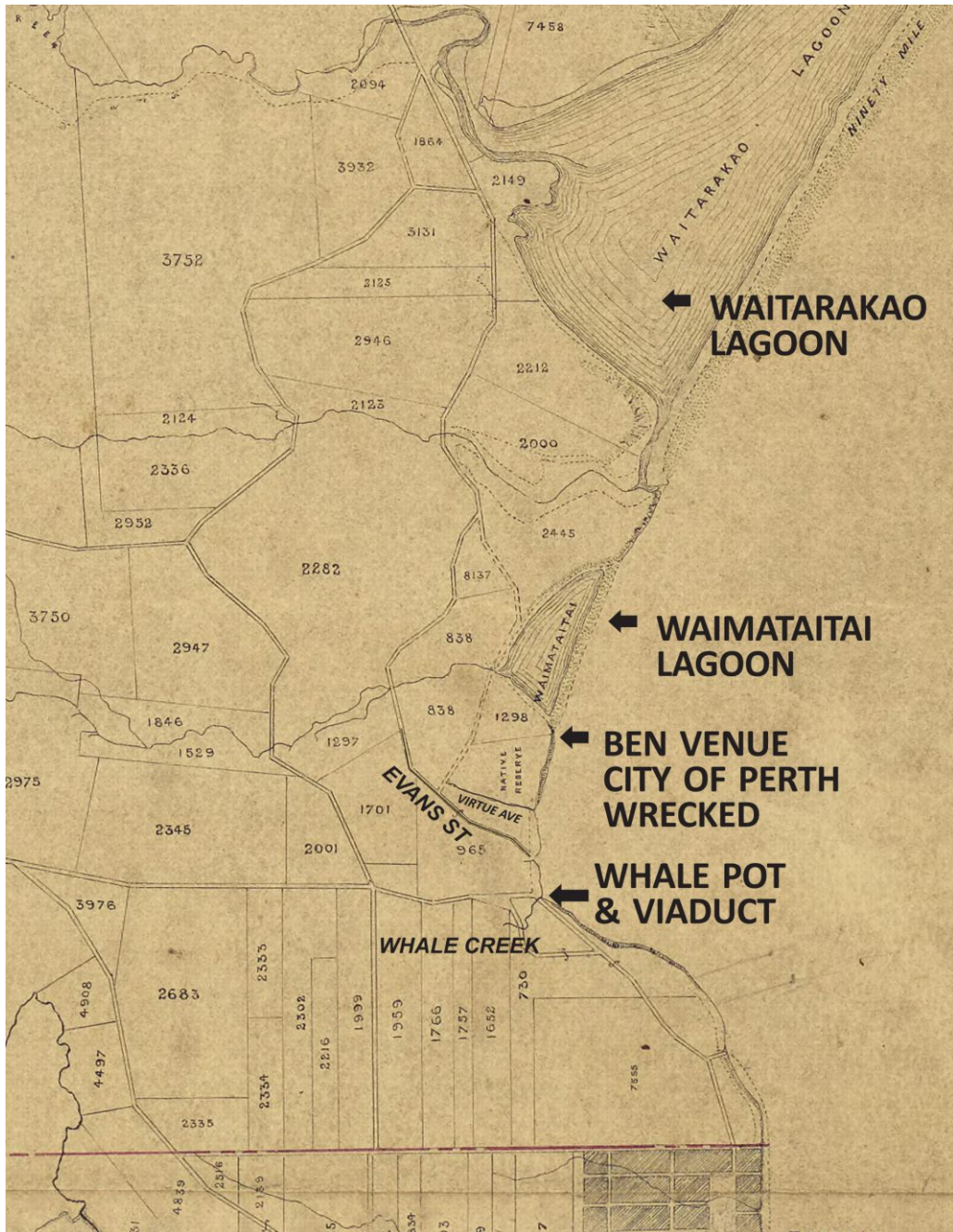
'Fairy Queen' wooden brigantine 214 tons [wooden 2 mast brigantine, 214 tons. ON45206, 111.4 x 24.5 x 13.4. Built Aberdeen Scotland, 1863. Owners: 1867 Henry Cook, registered London; March 1872 JG Punch of Sydney, registered Melbourne: May 1872 George Nipper. Wrecked at Timaru New Zealand August 27, 1873] From a volume titled 'New Zealand Owned Wooden and Iron and Steel Sailing Vessels'. <https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/PRG+1373/41/17>



City of Cashmere. Timaru - Brodie Collection, La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria. - [vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1cl35st/SLV\\_ROSETTAIE64399](https://vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1cl35st/SLV_ROSETTAIE64399)

The iron ship 'City of Cashmere', 980 tons, wrecked on the coast of New Zealand. [iron ship, 990 tons. ON45957. 212.0 x 31.5 x 21.5. Built 1863 (3). A. Stephens and Son, Glasgow, George Smith and Sons, registered Glasgow. Wrecked at Timaru New Zealand, January 14, 1882.] The caption gives the wrong year for the wreck. One of the ships owned by The City Line / John Smith and Son, Glasgow. - <https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/PRG+1373/14/4>

# SHIPWRECK HISTORY



Here you can see where the coastlines used to be. 250 ha of water was here and now there's only 20 ha.

Prior to the Port, the mouth of the lagoon was near Dashing Rocks (Taitarakihi Creek).

Ashbury Park was a major Waimataitai lagoon. The sea could reach the cliffs where the Piazza is.