




**HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA**

Greymouth Goods Shed, Gresson Street, Greymouth
Site Reference: P169282
File: 12021-103



Mike Vincent, Greymouth Goods Shed, 23 October 2013

Address	Gresson Street, Greymouth
Legal Description	Lot 2, DP 464046, Westland Land District
Extent	 <p>The extent is indicated by the red line on the Google aerial image above. Lot 2 DP464046, Westland Land District and the building known as the Greymouth Goods Shed thereon.</p>

Constructed by	New Zealand Railways Department
Local Authority	Grey District Council

Summary:

Greymouth Good Shed is a large shed with corrugated iron walls and roof, opened in 1907 alongside Gresson Street in the Greymouth Wharf area.¹ It was used to receive and store goods arriving and leaving the West Coast, and was built by the Railways Department. The work of the surrounding wharf and area surrounding the shed became dominated by coal from the 1880s, and the area between the shed and the Grey River is still covered in the remainder of the decades-worth of coal shipped from the site.

The building when built was 400 feet long (120 meters).² The shed stretches roughly west to east, parallel with the Grey River. On its long northern, river-facing, façade, tracks enter the building for the cargo trucks, and on its long southern road-facing façade it had a cantilevered verandah, and various entranceways for different goods vehicles. On its east façade is a large roller door, where the railway tracks entered the building. On its western façade is a small corrugated lead-to, presumably toilets.

Greymouth began as a shipping port in 1864.³ By 1906 an existing goods shed on Mawhera Quay was too small, and enlarging it was proposed.⁴ Instead it was removed and this current shed opened in 1908. At the time it was greeted as 'one of the most up-to-date in the Dominion'. Cargo trucks, specially built for Greymouth, carried goods from the ship into the shed on tracks, and goods were no longer required to be shipped along the wharf.⁵ Less than a month after the building opened a man working in the shed was killed by a falling beam.⁶

Attached to the Goods Shed on its eastern end was a goods office, connected by a small corridor with an external door; it has now been removed. Lighting in the shed was a continual issue, in 1948 40 skylights were removed and additional electric lights installed, and later the ceiling was whitewashed to reflect more light. Skylights have since been added back into the roof. By the 1950s the shed was in a bad condition, with rusted iron walls and shed doors; leading the Greymouth Stationmaster to claim that 'the shed is such that at night it is not safe for the custody of our goods after dark'. Eventually 1,000 sheets of iron were needed to make the repairs, and the roof was also replaced with cement asbestos sheeting.⁷ The concrete fire-wall partition in the centre of the building was damaged in the 1968 Inangahua earthquake.⁸

¹ The building was severely damaged by a storm in April 2014 and subsequently demolished. Paul McBride, '109 year history gone', *Greymouth Star* <http://www.greystar.co.nz/content/109-year-history-gone>, accessed 24 Jul 2014

² *West Coast Times*, 22 November 1907, Page 4

³ Gordon McLauclan, *The Saltwater Highway*, Auckland 2012, pp125-126; Ian Bowman, *Conservation Plan: Cowans Sheldon Cranes, Greymouth, 2013* and associated heritage report by David Stapleton

⁴ Local businessmen objected so strongly to the plan, as it would block their access to the wharf, that the Minister of Railways and the Prime Minister became involved. *Grey River Argus*, 28 Feb 1906, p3, 1 March, p3, 9 March, p3, 16 May, p3

⁵ *West Coast Times*, 22 November 1907, Page 4

⁶ *Dominion*, 30 April 1908, Page 7

⁷ This information is sourced from various pieces of correspondence in Railways Department files 'Greymouth Goods Shed', CAHL CH9 Box 15 Part 1 (1901-1952) and Part 2 (1953-1958), National Archives, Christchurch and 'Greymouth Goods Shed', CAHV CH226, Box 30, (1959-1975)

⁸ In a 1986 image this wall is still in evidence on the roof line; it is no longer in evidence.

Port trade peaked during World War One, and then gradually declined, brought about by the improved railway and road links to Canterbury; the port now mainly serves only the local fishing fleet. The Greymouth Harbour Board was abolished in 1989 and the port land, and the shed, is now owned by the Grey District Council.⁹ The council operates a port workshop from the shed; at the time of writing it is considering handing ownership of the building to the Greymouth Heritage Trust, so that the building could be included in a heritage precinct.

Along with the remaining two Cowans Cranes, the river wharf, the historic Harbour Board building in Gresson Street and the surrounding land, the Greymouth Goods Shed is testament to an aspect of transportation history, once crucial to the West Coast, and now largely gone.

Other Names	Greymouth Railway Goods Shed
Of Maori Interest	Not assessed
Key Dates	1907: Building erected 1908: Shed opened 1968: Damaged in earthquake ?: Building ceased to be used as goods shed 2014: Severely damaged by storm and demolished
Uses	Transport [Port Facility] (Former)
Current Protection Measures	None

⁹ From 1955 to 2000 the Cable and the Cowans Sheldon electric cranes handled 2.5 million tonnes, including 2.3 million tonnes of coal outward. David Stapleton, 'Greymouth's Cowans Sheldon Cranes', Greymouth, 2012, p67. In the 1970s the coal trade at the port had greatly reduced, and the cranes were largely used for timber. From 1988-2007 the shipments of coal were revived for a time.

Attachments

Images



Goods Shed in 1986. Note the line of the concrete firewall or the roof, in centre of the building. Grey District Library John Charlton Collection, Te Kete West Coast.

<http://ketewestcoast.peoplesnetworknz.info/site/images/show/1484-gresson-st-railway-goods-shed-kings-tower-blockgilmer-hotel>