

## Heritage Buildings Report

**Site ID**

**Building/Site Name**

Morley Street Tram Shelter

**Address**

NPDC Road Reserve, Morley Street, New Plymouth



### Statement of Significance

As the only surviving shelter from the era of trams and trolleybuses in New Plymouth, this building is of considerable local heritage significance. New Plymouth was the smallest municipality in the world to operate trams using the overhead system, with the network opening in 1916 and surviving until 1954. Both trams and trolleybuses were inextricably linked to the growth of New Plymouth's suburbs, with much of the city's current spatial layout directly attributable to these public transport routes developed during the 1910s-50s. The Morley Street tram shelter retains a high degree of integrity, contributes positively to the surrounding streetscape, and is representative of the many similar shelters that once existed across New Plymouth.



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### Legal Information and Heritage Status

<b>Legal Description</b>	?
<b>District Plan Item/ Map No.</b>	
<b>Heritage New Zealand List</b>	Not listed

### Construction Information

<b>Date of Construction</b>	Circa 1930s
<b>Principal Materials</b>	Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel
<b>Construction Professionals</b>	Unknown

### History

New Plymouth opened the first section of its tram network between Fitzroy and Weymouth Street on 10 March 1916, and in doing so, it became the smallest municipality in the world to operate one using the overhead system and also the last city in New Zealand to install one.<sup>1</sup> On 21 April 1916 the Weymouth Street to Breakwater section was opened, and a line from Egmont Street to Morley Street opened on May 20<sup>th</sup>; the official opening ceremony for the network was held on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1916.<sup>2</sup>

The Egmont to Morley Street line was criticised as being too short to be of use and Westown residents urged the Borough Council to extend the route to Westown.<sup>3</sup> After much consideration, the council decided to extend the Morley Street route up the hill, past the hospital and along Tukapa Street to the David Street intersection.<sup>4</sup> Work on the Westown line commenced on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1923 and was opened less than twelve weeks later on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>5</sup> The only other extension to the network following the opening of the Westown Line was a short track up Liardet Street to Pukekura Park opened in 1924.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst this shelter served the Westown line, it doesn't appear to have been constructed at the time the tracks were laid. A paucity of photographs and documentary evidence makes pinning down the exact construction date difficult, although it was probably erected during the late 1930s or early 1940s and certainly before 1949 when it appears in a White's Aviation aerial photograph.<sup>7</sup> A second tram shelter situated on the opposite side of Morley Street is thought to have been constructed at the same time as this shelter; it survived until 2018 when it was regrettably demolished by NPDC contractors.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rudd, Don. (2010). *New Plymouth Tramways 1916-1954*. D.H. Rudd, Paraparaumu

<sup>2</sup> Ibid; *Taranaki Daily News*, 2 June 1916, page 8

<sup>3</sup> Rudd, Don. (2010). *New Plymouth Tramways 1916-1954*. D.H. Rudd, Paraparaumu

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> 'New Plymouth Public Hospital', 24 August 1949, Whites Aviation Collection, Ref. WA-21724-G, Alexander Turnbull Library

<sup>8</sup> Hamish Crimp, 'Morley Street Tram Shelter', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 25 January 2019.

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Detail showing Morley Street and tram shelters, 'New Plymouth Public Hospital', 24 August 1949, Whites Aviation Collection, Ref. WA-21724-G, Alexander Turnbull Library



Circa 1940s view of Morley Street looking south-east towards ambulance bay and nurses' home with tram shelter at right, Caleb Wyatt, Puke Ariki, PHO2010-0720

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The Westown tram line was closed on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1950 and the entire New Plymouth network was closed July 23, 1954.<sup>9</sup> Only the body of one New Plymouth tram, Birney no. 3, survives at Whanganui.<sup>10</sup> The Westown route was promptly replaced with an overhead trolleybus network which remained in operation until the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 1967, after which diesel buses took over.<sup>11</sup> At least two former New Plymouth trolleybuses survive, with Crossley no. 1 awaiting restoration at Wellington Tramway Museum in Paraparaumu, and Crossley no. 3 in operational condition at Ferrymead Heritage Park in Christchurch; these are the only trolleybuses manufactured by Crossley known to survive worldwide.<sup>12</sup> With the closure of the Barrett Street hospital and relocation of services to the David Street site, the Morley Street shelter has sat unused for several decades.

Whilst the trams and trolleybuses have long since disappeared from New Plymouth streets, their legacy remains evident in the city's pattern of suburban growth. Electric trams ushered in the era of affordable, rapid public transport, and fundamentally changed the shape of New Zealand cities. Their speed and greater carrying capacities allowed the growth of extensive suburban areas around cities. In New Plymouth this saw the rapid development of the suburbs of Fitzroy, Moturoa and Westown and largely established the city's main suburban growth areas for the next century.

### Reference Sources

See footnotes.

### Description

This tram shelter is located on NPDC road reserve on the eastern side of Morley Street, opposite Western Park Reserve, and adjacent to the former Barrett Street Public Hospital site. The simple, utilitarian design is representative of tram shelters constructed for the New Plymouth Borough Council Tramways Department during the 1920s-1940s period.

It is a simple rectangular enclosure with a moderately pitched north-south gabled roof clad in corrugated steel and finished with plain bargeboards. The rear, eastern elevation, gable ends, and part of the north and south walls are enclosed; these are clad externally using horizontal bevel-back weatherboard with boxed corners, and internally with vertical tongue-and-groove lining.

Three square, equally positioned posts, support the two-bay veranda, and are minimally decorated with simple brackets. The eastern portion of the shelter is sited on a concrete footing, as are each of the veranda posts. A simple wooden bench-seat with a foot-rest runs the full length of the shelter.

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<sup>9</sup> Rudd, Don. (2010). *New Plymouth Tramways 1916-1954*. D.H. Rudd, Paraparaumu

<sup>10</sup> Hamish Crimp, 'Morley Street Tram Shelter', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 25 January 2019.

<sup>11</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 7 October 2017, page 6

<sup>12</sup> Hamish Crimp, 'Morley Street Tram Shelter', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 25 January 2019.



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### Assessment:

<b>Historical</b>	This tram shelter has historical significance as the last tangible reminder of the era of trams and trolleybuses in New Plymouth. New Plymouth was the smallest municipality in the world to operate trams using the overhead system, with both trams and trolleybuses inextricably linked to the growth of New Plymouth's suburbs; much of the city's current spatial layout is directly attributable to these public transport routes developed during the 1910s-50s.	✓
<b>Importance to Community</b>	Trolleybuses, and to a lesser degree trams, are still remembered fondly by older New Plymouth residents, with this tram shelter being a physical reminder of what is an important element in the community's consciousness.	✓
<b>Architecture &amp; Construction</b>	A good example of a simple utilitarian tram shelter from the 1930s-40s period.	✓
<b>Setting and Context</b>	Now situated in a rather isolated position, the tram shelter is a highly visible feature on the eastern side of the Morley Street hill.	✓
<b>Archaeology</b>	-	
<b>Representativeness, rarity and integrity</b>	This building has considerable rarity value as the only surviving shelter from the era of trams and trolleybuses in New Plymouth. It is representative of the many similar shelters that once existed along tram and trolleybus routes across New Plymouth. The shelter retains a high degree of integrity and contributes positively to the surrounding streetscape.	✓
<b>Meets threshold for listing</b> (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓