

# Oamaru stone buildings



## Who's who

Thomas Forrester and John Lemon formed an extremely successful architectural partnership in Oamaru that lasted from 1871 to 1890. Forrester and Lemon were responsible for most of the commissions for public buildings in Oamaru between 1881 and 1884, and for a high proportion of the town's commercial buildings during these years.



## Stat attack

A 19th century analysis of the stone yielded the following results:

Carbonate of lime, 90.15%; alumina, 1.55%; soluble silica, 0.45%; insoluble matter, 7.15%; oxide of iron, 0.55%; loss, 0.15%



## Hey guess what?

The Oamaru Whitestone Civic Trust organises Oamaru's Annual Victorian Fete, the New Zealand National Penny Farthing Championships and the World Stone Sawing Championships.

The impact of the local limestone used as a building material in Oamaru was so great that in the late 19th century the town was known as 'The White City'. Oamaru's Victorian townscape is still a tribute to its local stone, and its architectural heritage is a major drawcard.

The first report of the Oamaru Harbour Board noted that the 'town itself is remarkable among colonial towns for the solidity of its structures as well as for the architectural beauty of some of its buildings'. Many of these buildings are registered with the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, including St Patrick's Basilica in Reed Street, designed by F W Petre; the National Bank in Thames Street designed by R A Lawson, and described in 1909 as 'without exception the finest building devoted to banking purposes in the colony'; and the Oamaru Courthouse, an example of the Oamaru Forrester and Lemon's architectural partnership, and which is still used for District Court hearings.

W N Blair read a paper before the Otago Institute in 1875 in which he noted that extensive quantities of stone from the quarries at Cave Valley and Kakanui were used for 'local wants and export to other parts of the country and Melbourne. The trade to Dunedin alone is sufficient to keep one or two vessels constantly trading to Moeraki.'

The Oamaru Whitestone Civic Trust was established in 1988. The Trust works to preserve the Harbour & Tyne Precinct – the original commercial district of Oamaru and the focal point for the trade through its harbour.



Blocks of Oamaru stone at the Parkside Quarry



Oamaru stone is in great demand by sculptors

