

Heritage Item 22

WWII Tarmac and Compass Rose, Ashburton Airport



Location

Address:	387 Seafeld Road, Ashburton
Co-ordinates:	Northing 5699861, Easting 2413631
Legal Description:	Lot 1 and 2 DP 9711 Res 39798/99
Owner:	Ashburton District Council

Purpose

Current Use:	Tarmac and Compass Rose
Original/Past Uses:	Tarmac and Compass Rose

Heritage Significance and Category

Heritage Significance:	Physical; Historic
Heritage NZ:	Not registered
Ashburton DC:	Category A

Site Assessment

Assessed by:	Arlene Baird, Davie Lovell-Smith Ltd.
Date Assessed:	27 November 2014

Detail	
Description:	<p>This item consists of a section of WW2 tarmac and a compass rose located at Ashburton airport.</p> <p>The tarmac is approximately 10m wide and runs for a distance of approximately 600m, running from the north-east to the south-west then turning on a 90 degree curve and heading towards the north east. The tarmac still retains the metal tie-downs which are positioned in the centre of the strip and appear about every 2 to 3m – these were used to secure the aircraft to protect them from becoming damaged in the area's notorious nor'west winds. The tarmac is in relatively good condition – it is no longer used for aircraft, but rather is used as a road for vehicles to access the hangars and other buildings dotted around the airfield.</p> <p>The compass rose is located to the east of the WW2 tarmac, approximately 120m to the north-west of the WW2 hangar. It is a circular area of concrete spanning approximately 8m in diameter and divided into sections. It is believed that the compass points of true north, south, east and west would have been identified by brass plates on the concrete, but these are no longer present. The compass rose was a functional tool whereby the aircraft was placed on the rose pointing to true north and from there, the magnetic north direction could be established and the individual readings for each plane altered. As magnetic north is a variable, these calculations needed were undertaken regularly.</p>
History:	<p>Compass Rose</p> <p>A compass rose is a figure on a compass, map, nautical chart or ground used to display the orientation of the cardinal directions—North, East, South and West—and their intermediate points. It is also the term for the graduated markings found on the traditional magnetic compass. This is a very rudimentary compass rose, standard for the time. A contemporary compass rose appears as two rings, one smaller and set inside the other. The outside ring denotes true cardinal directions while the smaller inside ring denotes magnetic cardinal directions. True north refers to the geographical location of the north pole while magnetic north refers to the direction towards which the north pole of a magnetic object (as found in a compass) will point. The angular difference between true and magnetic north is called variation, which varies depending on location. The angular difference between magnetic heading and compass heading is called deviation which varies by vessel and its heading.</p> <p>Ashburton Airfield</p> <p>Ashburton has a strong aviation history. The airfield is the former home of a World War II Royal New Zealand Air Force Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) station. This airport was used as a wartime training base and sent over 1100 pilots off to fight in World War II. At one time there were 50 Tiger Moths based there. The Tiger Moth is a 1930s biplane designed by Geoffrey de Havilland and was operated by the Royal Air Force (RAF) and others as a primary trainer. The Ashburton Aviation Museum displays a Tiger Moth as one of their exhibits, along with a large number of other aircraft and aviation items from throughout aviation history.</p> <p>The Ashburton Aviation Museum operates from the airfield and looks after these WW2 items. It originated in October 1974 and was initiated by 17-year-old aviation enthusiast Peter McQuarters, then a typographer for the Ashburton Guardian. Eight men joined him and the following month they gained their first charge: a Bofors AA gun donated by Burnett's Motors. Slowly over time the museum fundraised and obtained a number of serious exhibits including a North American Harvard, a McDonnell Douglas A4 Skyhawk and a British Aerospace Harrier.</p>

Detail	
Notable Features:	<p>As well as the WW2 tarmac and compass rose, the airfield is also home to an original WW2 hangar (heritage item H21)</p> <p>Compass rose; tarmac; tie downs; location.</p>
Condition:	<p>The tarmac is still in relatively good condition and is maintained and used as a vehicle access to hangars on the airfield. Ashburton airfield is a grass field and does not have a usable tarmac runway. Many of the metal tie-down rings are still evident – some in good condition, some broken or welded into the ground and some are missing.</p>
Setting:	<p>The compass rose is in average condition. The circular shape is still intact and the sections evident, however some of the concrete is becoming quite cracked with grass growing through the cracks and the cracked areas are starting to become uneven.</p> <p>The setting of the tarmac and compass rose are of high importance. During the WW2 years this was a large, incredibly busy airport and training camp which prepared and sent many pilots off to war. At that time the tarmac and compass rose where located centrally to all of the activity on the airfield. These items were practical and functional elements used on a daily basis. Today these items are unused but still form an important part of the airfield's history.</p>



