

Dunedin (Taieri)

291. Taieri aerodrome has been allowed to develop to a dangerous extent beyond its original purpose. Initially the aerodrome was developed as a flying club aerodrome, to be used and operated only in fair-weather conditions by light manoeuvrable aircraft. The site was chosen because it was the nearest area of flat land to the city of Dunedin suitable for that purpose. Inevitably, as the years passed and aviation developed, the aerodrome has had to be extended to meet contemporary aircraft demands. Buildings and ancillary services have also been developed, mainly for Air Force purposes during the war, so that to-day the capital investment in the aerodrome is quite considerable. But it is no longer a safe aerodrome for modern aircraft. Aircraft performance characteristics have become steadily more exacting in respect of aerodrome requirements, as wing and power loadings have increased through the years. To-day, in order to ensure safe operations, it is necessary to have unobstructed circuit and approach zones stretching out anything from three to five miles from the centre of an aerodrome.

292. Taieri is situated at the head of a valley and is surrounded on three sides by high hills less than a mile from the boundary of the aerodrome, making it virtually impossible for modern transport aircraft to take off in safety except in one direction—that is, down the valley. In the same wind conditions, the approach to land has to be made over the hills at the head of the valley. In any other direction, if an engine were to cut out soon after take-off, the aircraft would have a reduced or no rate of climb, and its chance of survival we consider would be very small indeed. This hazard is bad in fair-weather conditions, but bad weather, with low cloud and low visibility is frequently experienced in the vicinity of this aerodrome during the winter months. It is then dangerous. We therefore recommend that the aerodrome be abandoned as soon as possible and a new site developed in a less dangerous locality.

293. During our visit to Dunedin we undertook a brief and superficial survey of the country surrounding the city. Two sites were suggested to us by the local authorities—one at Green Island Beach and the other on reclaimed land at the head of the harbour. Both these sites we considered to be totally unsuitable for development as aerodromes, even for light aircraft. There is only one locality in the vicinity of Dunedin where an aerodrome for transport aircraft could be made with reasonable safety. This is further down the Taieri Valley, where open approaches from two opposite directions can be secured. An aerodrome with two opposed open approaches is at least four times as safe as an aerodrome with one open side only. The vicinity of Momona, in the centre of the widest part of the valley, on partially consolidated land protected by the flood-water stop-bank, and fifteen miles from Dunedin, appeared