

Geology and Vegetation

Pourewa Valley Geological History

Auckland Isthmus is home to approximately 50 volcanoes that have erupted over the past 250,000 years. Ōrākei Basin, a geological site of national importance, is termed a phreato-magmatic volcano. Its violent explosion occurred when rising hot lava encountered water saturated rock and sediment at a shallow depth. This is seen by the inclusion of fragments of underlying rock and sediment in the deposited volcanic ash.

When the Ōrākei Basin erupted 120,000 years ago, the ejected volcanic ash showered over surrounding areas temporarily blocking the Pourewa Stream.^{1,2} Volcanic ash from the original eruption formed a steep edge around the sides of the basin called a tuff ring.



Auckland Council 2017 GeoMap of Ōrākei Basin

Some areas such as Kepa Road near Ōrākei Road Bridge and eastwards, are unstable with slips and gradual downhill movement, particularly during wet weather (shown as white in the soils diagram on the next page). Other areas within the valley become very soft during the winter months and local creeks often cut into soft deposits of silty clay materials. Resulting siltation in the Pourewa Estuary has led to the spread of mangroves.

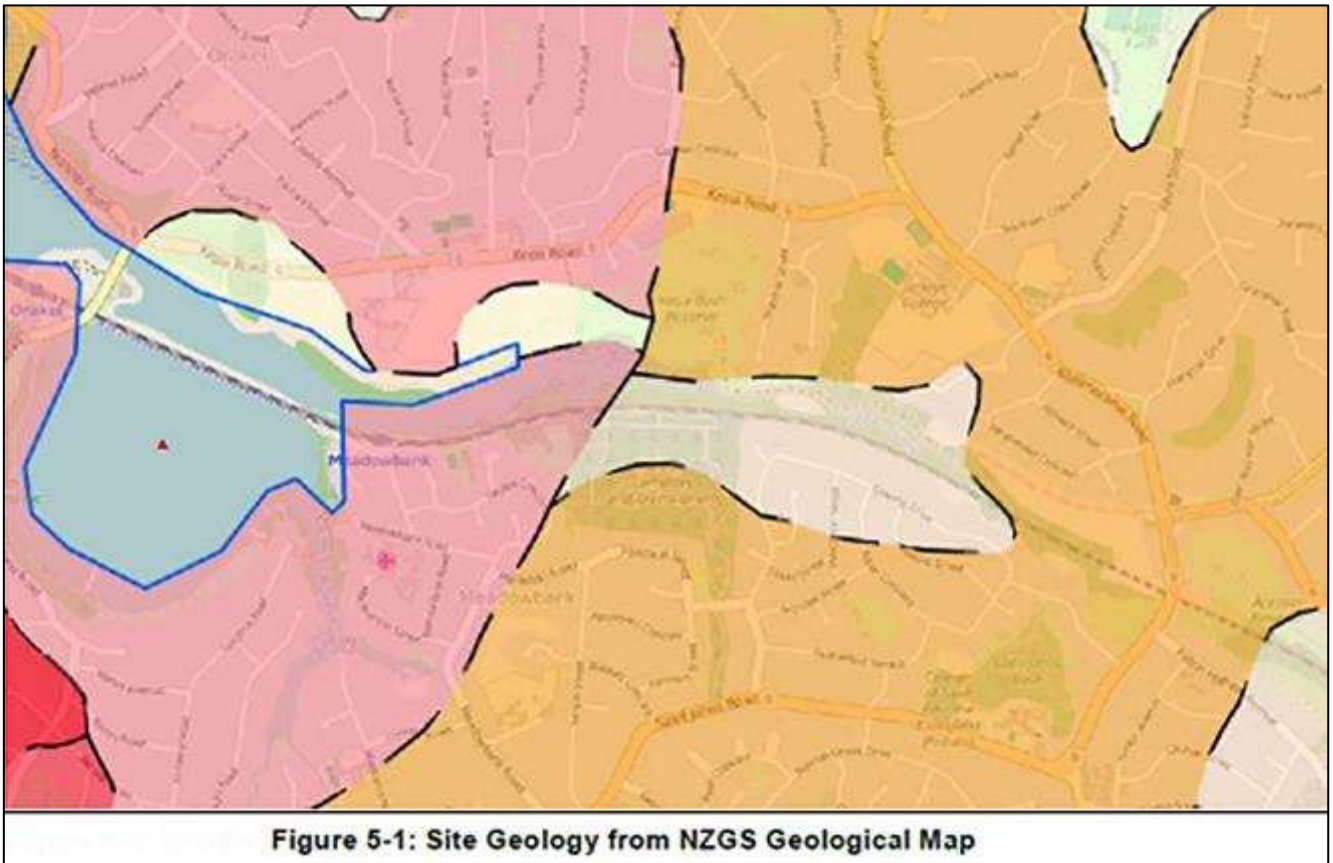
Other volcanic activity would have deposited ash across Pourewa Valley including Maungarei (Mt Wellington) which erupted approximately 10,000 years ago, and Rangitoto which erupted only 600 years ago.

Significant deposits of volcanic ash from the Taupo Volcanic Zone eruptions from 15,000 to 45,000 years ago have also been found. However, to large numbers of early Māori and later Chinese market gardeners, these volcanic soils, particularly near the Pourewa Estuary, were very fertile for growing crops.

Soil Types

New Zealand Geological Survey Geological map R11 of Auckland shows three different soil types in the Pourewa Valley as described below. Subsequent drilling in the area shows small remnants of post eruption lacustrine sediment (when the basin was a lake).³

- Post eruption lacustrine (lake) sediment comprising sand, silt and clay is shown as white.
- Auckland Volcanic Field volcanic ash, lapilli (volcanic rock fragments) and lithic tuff, (deposits of volcanic ash) is shown as the pink area surrounding Ōrākei Basin and Ōrākei heights.
- Alternating sandstone and mudstone layers with variable volcanic content and interbedded volcanic grit weathers to a sandy silty clay, known as East Coast Bays Formation, is shown as orange covering the eastern part of the valley.



Soils diagram: Courtesy Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency

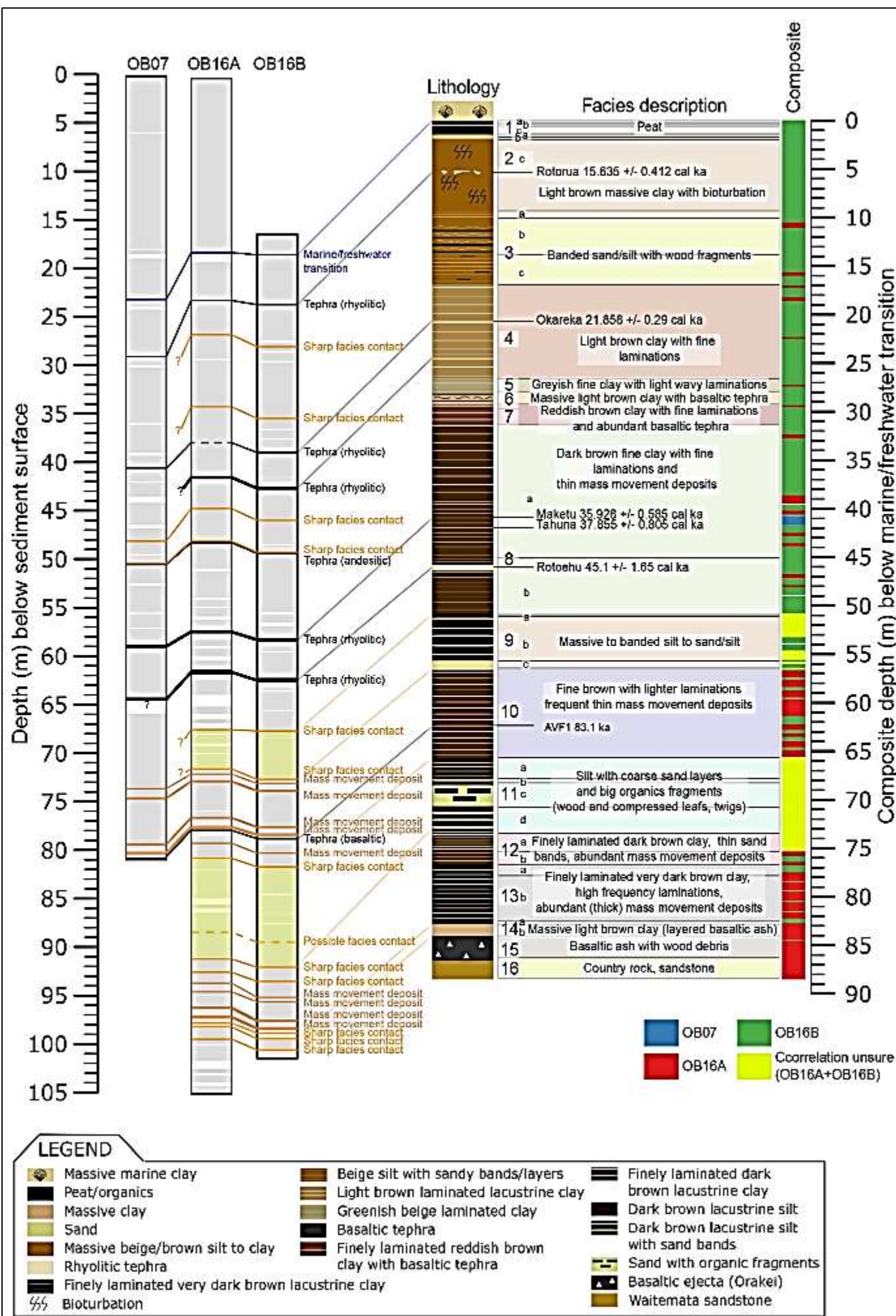
Ōrākei Basin Boreholes

Three Ōrākei Basin boreholes drilled to between 81 and 105 metres in depth, reveal more about the geological history of the area. Significant quantities of rhyolitic tephra erupted from the Taupo Volcanic Zone between 15,000 and 45,000 years ago have accumulated in Ōrākei Basin.

(Rhyolite is fine silica volcanic rock and tephra is fine fragmented volcanic material).⁴

The first borehole in 2007 revealed that the Ōrākei Basin's crater became a freshwater lake and then became a swamp as it filled with mud from Pourewa Creek over the next 75,000 years. As the sea level rose 9,500 years ago, Ōrākei Basin became a salt water lagoon and filled with sandy mud.

In the 1920s the railway was built, shutting off the basin from the tidal flows and separating it from Pourewa Estuary. A control gate was installed near Meadowbank railway station to retain the water within the basin for water sports, but allowing for periodic flushing by opening the control gates.⁵



Pourewa Valley Vegetation History

Governor Hobson and others noted that much of the isthmus in 1840 was covered in fern and mānuka scrub, except for valleys where native species were growing. Māori cultivation involved clearance of much native bush over the isthmus. On the north facing slopes of Pourewa Valley, Māori cultivation had been extensive.

It was only after the Ngāpuhi musket attacks of 1821 that the area became deserted allowing bracken fern and mānuka to take over. The picture below shows much of the north-facing southern side of Pourewa Valley was clear of larger vegetation in 1878.



Water colour by John Kinder of Pourewa Creek at high water 1878

*Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Harry Kinder,
1937 Reference 1937/15/36*

Māori Cultivation (Te Ara Encyclopaedia of NZ)

Maori had cleared the land of bush in order to cultivate crops of plants which had been introduced from their Pacific home lands. Special techniques were necessary with the cooler climate in Aotearoa (New Zealand) for such plants as kumara, yams and taro. Advantage was made of warmer, north facing slopes where possible. Large communal māra (gardens) were developed, often using sand, shell and charcoal easily found in Pourewa Valley.

The native cabbage tree, tī kōuka (*Cordyline australis*) was purposely planted and can still be seen in the bush today. Flowering plants, including flax were brought in to attract birds and Aruhe, bracken fern rhizomes were also an important food source.

Access to the sea from Pourewa Creek for fish and shell fish, also made this area ideal for growing and gathering food.⁶

Fuchsia in Pourewa Valley

Rev. Vicesimus Lush was staying with his family at St John's College in November 1850, probably in a raupō hut near Pourewa Estuary. He recorded in his Journal;

“After dinner we all went into a small wood to gather fuchsia berries. Five of the native boys from the College accompanied us, and we formed a merry party.

The lads quickly dispersed themselves over the wood and climbed up fuchsia trees, many of which were exceedingly lofty and were laden with a small black berry, the fruit of their small scarlet blossom. We gathered upwards of a gallon, collecting contributions from each little gatherer with an unusual basket made for us by our good neighbour's wife, who finished for us a capital door mat made from the flax plant.”

On 12 November 1850 on returning from Howick, Lush wrote;

“Reached St John's too late for Hall so had dinner at my own house, and tasted a pudding made from fuchsia berries we gathered yesterday; thought it good but the children with the exception of little Charlie did not like it.”⁷

Fuchsias are now quite rare in Pourewa Valley, probably due to the ravages of possums.

Dr Allan Davidson in his “*Selwyn's Legacy*” P 47, describes the College site which Selwyn called “Bishop's Auckland” as follows:

“The centre of the St John's site where the present College was established was on the highest point of Selwyn's purchase. It had panoramic views of the Waitematā Harbour, Rangitoto and the islands of the Hauraki Gulf to the west and north, the Tāmaki Estuary and Coromandel Ranges to the east and towards Manukau Harbour in the south. Its elevation, however, exposed it to all the prevailing winds. The land was covered with fern, providing no natural shelter. In gullies running down from the ridge there were streams and bush. At the western end access was by sea through Hobson Bay, the Ōrākei Basin and up the Purewa Creek, providing a good passage for heavily laden boats ... up to the lower end of the land. While St John's was close to Auckland, it was also sufficiently isolated to meet Selwyn's concern for separation from the undesirable attractions of the growing [Auckland] urban centre.”⁸

Pourewa and Kepa Bush

Celebrated Auckland botanist, Lucy Cranwell described Purewa Bush in “The Botany of Auckland” as follows;

“Between Kepa Road and Purewa Creek lies a longish narrow strip of bush which like Dingle Dell has charmed enthusiasts for over a century, but which has fared worse. An abundance of kowhai is one of its main features: in spring the masses of golden flowers show up along the whole western slope. This bush, which covers about 13 hectares, now known as Kepa Road Reserve was bought in 1962 by Auckland City Council from the Church of England. We are fortunate that some of it is still attractive. Much of the area is in grass, and the open nature of the bush itself in the many small, usually dry gullies must in part be due to browsing by cattle over many decades.

However, most of the native trees in these gullies have large-leafed crowns that cast a deep shade inimical to undergrowth.

Softwoods are lacking as in Dingle Dell. Common members of the coastal community are cabbage trees, karaka, kohekohe, karamu, karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*), kawakawa, māpou, mingimingi and the aromatic hangehange. Ponga ferns are frequent and mamaku or black tree ferns occur near the creek. Parsonsia grows here, often straggling along the ground where it has fallen from the kānuka. Clematis is present, and bush lawyer (*Rubus cissoides*) whose flowers scent the area so heavily in spring is common.”⁹

St John's College Trust Board was faced with severe financial problems including unexpected rate demands in the 1930s. Accepting an offer from R & W Hellaby Ltd., all unused land including Kepa Bush was leased as stock holding paddocks from 1937 until the start of 1960. Auckland City Council purchased 13.6 hectares of the Kepa Bush land from St John's College Trust Board in 1962. Since then, the damage caused by stock to the understory has been slow to recover.

Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei have recently established a nursery below Kepa Road. They are looking at the pollen analysis of soil samples from the region in an effort to grow appropriate seedlings for replanting cleared areas of Pourewa Valley in original native vegetation.



Retrolens aerial view of Kepa Bush taken on 28 March 1951

(Retrolens: <http://retrolens.nz>)¹⁰

The 1951 photo above, shows clear areas along the central ridge and other areas of Kepa Bush indicating stock damage when cattle were grazing the area.

At least two rectangular depressions found on the ridge are likely to have been used for stock watering. In 1951 neither Thatcher Street nor Colenso Place had been formed. Purewa Cemetery on the right had its own railway station, later closed and moved to Meadowbank.

We are fortunate that some areas of Pourewa Valley were not cleared of bush. Although cattle roamed the Kepa Bush area for 24 years to 31 December 1959, larger native trees in Kepa Bush particularly kohekohe, kānuka, rewarewa, taraire, karaka, kowhai and pohutukawa survived, slowly providing seedlings for regeneration.

Pre-Māori vegetation in the region has been investigated. Analysis of charcoal fragments from Maungarei (Mt Wellington) in 2011 revealed a wide range of the more common native shrubs, ferns and trees had been present.¹¹ At Lake Waatarua, *Dacrydium cupressinum* (Rimu), *Prumnopitys taxifolia* (matai), *Metrosideros* (pohutukawa and rata), *Agathis* (kauri), *Libocedrus* (kawaka) and *Phyllocladus* (toatoa or blue celery pine) were found in the pollen analysis.¹²

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Geological and Vegetation

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Pourewa Valley Development

Pourewa Valley Land Use from 1844

The St John's Theological College has been integral to the development and changes that have taken place in Pourewa Valley from 1844 right up to the present day. In spite of its turbulent history, the College remains in its original location almost 180 years after it was founded, still achieving its main objective, that of training clergy for the church. There are few organisations in New Zealand that could match this longevity of achievement.

The Eastern Motorway proposal dating from 1946, opposed by many, is why the base of the valley has remained an open space. In 2022 it has been prepared for a combined cycle and walkway path. When landscaping and native planting is completed and maintained, the valley has the potential to become a gem in Auckland's landscape.

Bishop Selwyn's 1844 vision for St John's was for a self-supporting College providing educational training at all levels for both Pākehā and Māori students, including the techniques of growing food and looking after the land. Regrettably Selwyn's initial vision did not provide the longer-term income needed to pay for staff and College maintenance. Soon after St John's was established, both tutors and students complained that the long hours of physical labour clearing the land, growing crops and preparing the food combined with academic learning was too demanding.¹

Dr Allan Davidson in "*Selwyn's Legacy*" described;

"While land endowments at St John's were considerable, the financial returns for many years were very small. Farmers struggled to make a living on heavy clay soil and there were often problems with rental arrears, defaulting tenants and bankruptcy. The College had very little working capital. The poor return on the College endowment meant there was no income to support the staff and maintenance."²



1892 map showing St John's College farmland outlined in yellow
Courtesy Judith Bright, St John's College Kinder Library

There were many difficulties in raising sufficient finance to keep the College open with periods of closure and moves to Parnell. In 1886 the Trustees, in the hope of raising income, set aside 52 acres for Purewa Cemetery. The cemetery began operating in 1889 but it did not bring in a large financial return.³ The Diocese of Auckland took over the cemetery in 1937.⁴



*John Kinder drawing of St Johns College in 1876
Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections Reference 4-3215*

On Selwyn's recommendation, a Board of Trustees was formed to run the College in 1859. Over the years there were many disagreements between the appointed governors, synod, staff and trustees. Buildings fell into a dilapidated state because of financial stringency.

Rev John Kinder's Influence and the College 1872 to 1900

With Dr John Kinder as Master of St John's College from 1872, he; "cleared and laid out the grounds so that by degrees, year after year the god-forsaken spot was transformed."⁵

Kinder resigned in 1880 and in 1883 the college again moved temporarily to Parnell, returning to Tāmaki in 1896.⁶ St John's Collegiate School for boys continued in the College buildings during this time, shifting in 1902 to "The Pah" in Onehunga.⁷ The Māori Boys School was located at St Stephens in Parnell from 1880 until it moved to Bombay in 1932.⁷

William Atkin, a Mission Bay pioneer farmer, wrote to the NZ Herald in 1892 that he was concerned about a request to clear the bush at St John's College. He said it was well known how careful and conservative the late Bishop Selwyn was with respect to this bush. Atkin was told a Māori chief had applied to the Bishop for a few "birch" poles. The chief was refused and told that the Bush was *Tapu*.⁸

College Plans and Financial Stringency from 1900

Archdeacon Harper in 1904 issued a statement signed by all the Anglican bishops of New Zealand that;

“Owing to circumstances which could not have been avoided, the old provincial College of St John stands in need of financial assistance. The present need is for £600 for the general fund. We estimate that £600, ie. £300 per year will be sufficient to carry on the College until the General Synod meets in 1907”⁹

Bishop Neligan told a public meeting in August 1907 about a scheme to build the Patterson Wing to accommodate 30 men at a cost of £4,000 and to eventually provide for 100 men.¹⁰ Lord Plunket laid the foundation stone for the Patterson Memorial Wing at the Selwyn Centenary celebrations on 21 May 1909. The cost was estimated at £6,000 to accommodate 30 students and a library.¹¹

Spirited bidding at an auction on 24 July 1911 saw three areas of 130 acres, 251 acres and 83 acres leased for farming operations. It was the first area of 130 acres that comprised Pourewa Valley below the college, including lots 33, 34, 35 and part of Lot 36. The bush covered area of Kepa Bush, Lot 39A was not included. The term of the lease was for 14 years.¹²



1930 Lands and Survey Department Map showing the St John's subdivision of 1926
Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections Map No 72

Residential Subdivision of St John's Land

In 1913, the first subdivision of the Tāmaki Estate began along St Heliers Bay Road [now St Johns Road] when 62 leases were taken up. The total rental for the first 21 years amounted to £516.19 per year.¹³ [A Glasgow lease is the term for ground a lease for period of 21 years].

The Trustees stated in October 1918, their intention to build a central block of buildings for students, tutors and lecture rooms. The cost was £24,350 to house 60 students and 3 tutors. An alternative for 36 students would cost £19,530. It was decided to borrow £10,000.¹⁴ But financial stringency meant building plans were changed to accommodate just 26 students at an estimated cost of £16,450.¹⁵ The partial rebuilding of St John's College was a 'matter of vital importance', pleaded Bishop Averill in 1919.¹⁶

In February 1925 there was a reserved judgement at the Magistrates Court for a claim of £136-15-0 by St John's College Trust Board against Thomas R W Gill and John A C Fleming for expenses in clearing 170 acres. Gill and Fleming were required under covenant of the lease to clear noxious growth. The Court awarded the Board £132-11-0.¹⁷

It was reported on 27 July 1926 that 79 residential, elevated and sunny sections with delightful views of the harbour would be offered for sale. There are full width metaled roads and foot paths. The new Purewa railway station will provide transport a few minutes away from town, and an excellent bus service passes the estate.¹⁸

These sections along what is now Chester Street and Rutherford Terrace, can be seen on the 1930 Lands and Survey map on the previous page. By 1932 only five of these leasehold sections had been sold.¹⁹

A major blow for the Trust Board came in 1932 when Auckland City Council demanded nearly £950 for rates over 4 years. The Trust Board believed that the College was exempt from rates under the 1925 Act. The case went to the Supreme Court which ruled that the College was not a "School" in terms of the Act and therefore liable for rates.²⁰

However, by appealing to the Auckland City Assessment Court, very substantial rate abatements were offered to the Trust Board. Over 100 properties, endowment lands and otherwise from the Remuera Tram terminus [at Meadowbank] on both sides of St Heliers Bay Road [now St Johns Road] as far as the Tāmaki River were covered.

Most of the areas were used for grazing at low rentals. Some of the rentals did no more than cover rates charges. Three subdivided properties contained 74 unsold allotments. The Magistrate reduced the assessment from £756 to £192 @ £55 per acre.¹⁹

The 1930's Depression Years

Depression years of the 1930s were very difficult for the College when significant numbers of the leases on agricultural land were surrendered, but the College remained responsible for an Auckland City Council requirement to clear noxious weeds. Mr F A Hellaby, one of the St John's College Trustees and a Director of R & W Hellaby Ltd, offered to assist by taking over all unleased land as stock holding paddocks.²⁰

This arrangement from 1937 included the Kepa Bush area. Stock was allowed to wander through the Bush until December 1959 when the lease was relinquished.²¹ Auckland City Council purchased 13.6 hectares for Kepa Bush from the St John's College Trust Board in 1962 as a public reserve.

To provide work for unemployed boys, a camp at St John's was approved by the Auckland Boys' Employment Committee in July 1932. The Church offered to meet some of the costs.

Up to 30 boys could be taken in to test their suitability for farm life.²² By 31 March 1933, work had been found for 594 boys in the town and 447 in the country. Since its inception, 113 boys had passed through the St John's camp and 67 had gone to positions. Sixteen boys in the camp in 1933 were paid a weekly wage of 5/- by the St John's College Trust Board, given free lunch and free transport to their homes.²³

However, in June 1934 a decision was made to discontinue the work at St John's College farm. There were letters of appreciation from boys who had been helped.²⁴

Failed Proposal for Agricultural Training

Seddon Memorial Technical College in 1937, saw a need to expand into agricultural training. They proposed to lease 36 acres from St John's College Trust Board along with another 13 acres close to the Remuera Tram terminus at Meadowbank Road.²⁵

Seddon Memorial Technical College sought a grant from the Government to build a hostel and other buildings, but the Government refused because the buildings proposed would be on leasehold St John's Trust Board land. Although there had been lengthy negotiations, by October 1940 St John's Trust Board stated that they wished to terminate any further discussions on a possible lease.²⁶



***Market Gardens north of the area proposed by Seddon Memorial Technical College
for an agricultural training centre in 1937***

Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 7-A13122

The area shown in the picture, originally Pukapuka No 2 Block to the west of Purewa Cemetery, had been farmed by various European owners from 1864 until it was taken over by the Bank of New Zealand as a bankrupt estate in 1883.

The Government Assets Realisation Board on behalf of the Bank of New Zealand, then subdivided the original block into lots of up to 18 acres, over half being leased to Chinese market gardeners. However, in the early 1940s there was a critical housing shortage so the Government Housing Division took over the area as the Tahapa Subdivision.

They built 180 state houses that were ready for occupation by late 1947. The present Tahapa reserves, originally gullies, were transferred to Auckland City Council as reserve areas.

World War 2 Naval Radio Station and St John's Trust Board Land Changes

During World War 2, the American Navy built a radio receiving station on St John's College Trust Board land between Kohimarama Road and the railway as shown below. The radio station comprised of seven buildings with a total floor area of 9,537 sq. feet (886 m²). Accommodation was provided for 60 men at the station which was completed under urgency in December 1942.²⁸



Aerial picture taken on 24 July 1943 of Purewa US Naval Radio Station adjacent to Kohimarama Road.

Image from the Internet <https://rnzaf.proboards.com/thread/24771/wartime-bases-auckland?page=2>

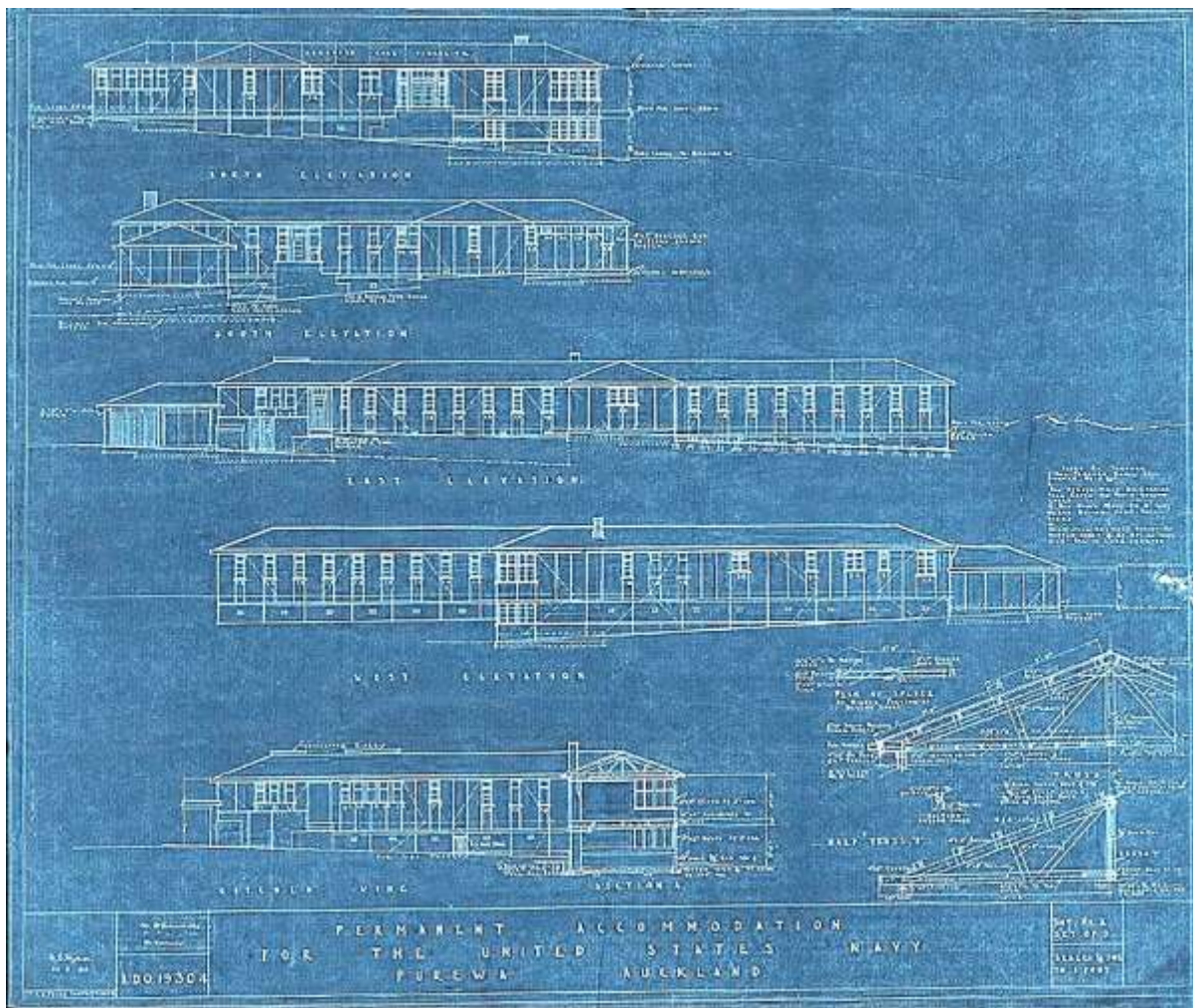
Note white spots and shadows indicating radio masts and anchor blocks.

The Pourewa Rail tunnel is at the top right and Telephone Exchange at the centre left.

The ruins of St Thomas' Church are still visible on the left.

During World War 2, the College was closed and buildings were occupied by the Auckland Hospital Board.

When the College was reopened in 1946, the Trust Board, still anxious to raise funds for the College, decided to develop land and to lease sections under the 21 year Glasgow principle. Considerable growth of new housing in the eastern area of Auckland meant for the first time in its history there was financial stability for the College.²⁷



Radio Receiving Station: Auckland: Purewa – Kohimarama

Reference: AAQB 889 W3950 202/ 23/749

Archives NZ R20122187.pdf Navy Department: United States Navy

When the Americans left in 1943, the station became a 48 bed rehabilitation centre for returned servicemen. The buildings continued to be used as a rehabilitation centre until 1952 when only 35 occupants remained.²⁹



Radio Station concrete anchor blocks dumped into the bush below the horse paddocks above the railway.

Photo: John La Roche 8/2/21

In March 1953, the buildings were transferred to the Government Stores Board who agreed to lease them to UK-based W J Simms Son and Cook Ltd. as accommodation for workmen erecting 500 imported, pre-cut houses from UK for the Point England area.^{30, 31}

By June 1955, when the buildings were no longer needed, they were sold for removal to Mr G Howarth who specified that he would not remove the concrete foundations and rubbish on the site.

The Commissioner of Works approved £400 for the urgent clearance of concrete foundations and rubbish. The site was cleared and returned to St John's College Trust Board on 17th January 1956.³²

This helps to explain the origin of the significant quantity of rubbish including the large concrete blocks pictured on the previous page that were dumped over the bank into the bush above the railway!

The Education Department took 8 acres 3 roods 37 perches of Trust Board land in Kohimarama Road under the Public Works Act in October 1943 for Selwyn College. St John's College Trust Board had to argue strongly in court to be fairly compensated for land taken.³³



Aerial picture of Pourewa Valley and St John's College farmland taken on 28 March 1951

Retrolens: <http://retrolens.nz>

Survey Number: SN583

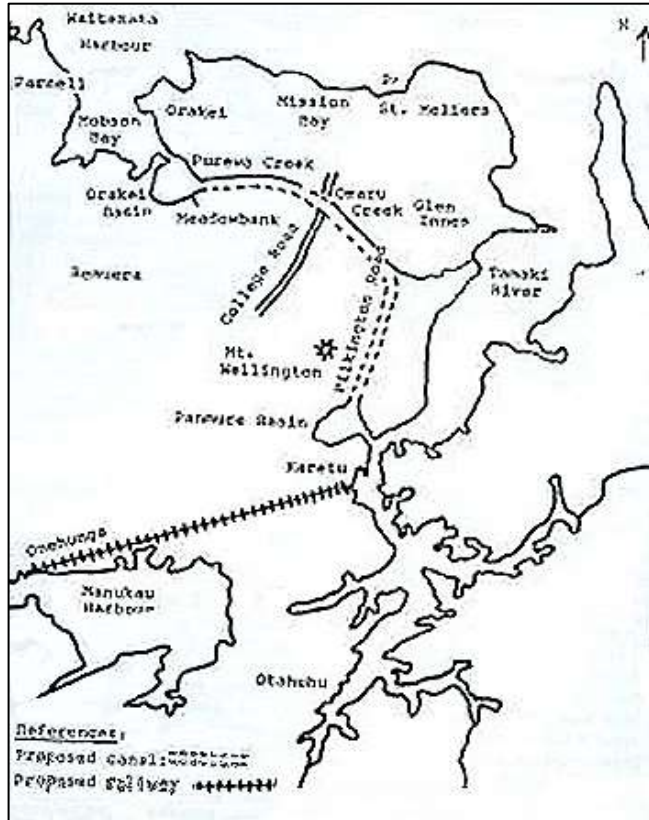
Run Number: 1918

Photo Number: 12

Felton Mathew Pourewa Creek Canal Proposal

Research by Brian Hooker in 1987, published in the Auckland-Waikato Historical Journal describes an interesting proposal by Felton Mathew, New Zealand’s first Surveyor General. He proposed a canal from Pourewa Creek to Panmure Basin.³³

Felton Mathew arrived in Auckland with Governor Hobson in January 1840. He is best known as the originator of Auckland's first town plan covering the area around Queen Street. Today he is represented only by a street name in Glen Innes and a memorial plate on the summit of Mount Eden; his papers are preserved in the Auckland Public Library.



Brian Hooker’s diagram of Felton Mathew’s proposal for a canal from Pourewa Creek to Panmure Basin

He proposed that the present suburb of Panmure would become Auckland’s Town Centre.

Mathew was asked by Hobson to recommend sites for the town of Auckland.

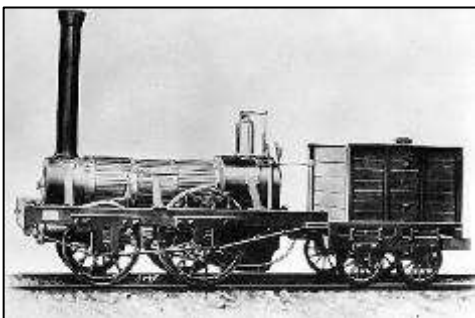
They proceeded up the Waitemata Harbour on the schooner *Trent*, past Herald Island, searching for a site for the new capital. At first, Hobson had his eye on the upper reaches of the Waitemata Harbour. But in Mathew's opinion, this was not the place for the principal settlement. In fact, he considered this area ill-adapted for settlement at all.

Mathew was concerned that the sand bar in the Tāmaki River could cause a problem for shipping. But a canal from the Pourewa Creek to Panmure Basin would allow vessels to pass from the Waitematā Harbour to a railway from Panmure to Onehunga, thus connecting to shipping on the Manukau.

If Mathew had been a more persuasive man, Auckland would have been a totally-transformed city. The Town Hall would be overlooking the Tamaki River with the main business area most likely surrounding Panmure Basin. And if Mathew had prepared and presented his plans more carefully in 1840, there could have been a canal linking the town centre and capital at Panmure

with a port at Parnell, making all the eastern suburbs along with Glen Innes virtually a large island.

Exactly when Mathew first thought out the idea for the railway link is not known, but in December 1841 he proposed, in a letter to the Colonial Office, London, facilities for a railway line from Karetu (slightly south of Panmure) to Onehunga.



The type of steam-powered locomotive envisaged by Felton Mathew for use on his proposed Onehunga-Karetu line.³³

There is no record of Hobson's comments, if any, on the canal scheme. Nor are there any reports that suggest Hobson was particularly interested in steamships and trains. Perhaps if Hobson had been physically stronger, he might well have climbed Mount Wellington, as Mathew had done earlier and better appreciated the project.

The remainder of the Felton Mathew story is a tragic one. He played an important part in the foundation of Auckland in 1840, but never received the credit he was due.³³

The Railway through Pourewa Valley

Proposals were made as early as the 1870s to re-route the Auckland–Westfield section of the North Island Main Trunk Railway via a new eastern line through Glen Innes. Referred to as the Westfield Deviation, this was a relatively level route compared to the steep uphill grade from central Auckland to Newmarket and Remuera. By the 1920s, increasing rail traffic and delays between Auckland and Newmarket made the new route necessary.

The tunnel under St Johns ridge was started in 1925 by experienced workers who had been constructing the railway north of Auckland.

Using horses and carts, the tunnel was excavated by mining workers, mostly British, with some Italians and Dalmatians from groups that were preparing the approach cuttings. Good progress was made by working triple shifts. Gelignite placed in drill holes was used to fracture the rock. The tunnel, while lit by electric lights during the excavation, was described as hosting a large number of glow worms, giving it a 'weird and fantastical appeal.'³⁴

The tunnellers reported that the glow-worms were unlike anything they had ever found in a working tunnel. They would have come from the nearby bush and gullies. The tunnel was also strangely attractive to a large number of sparrows that came in, living from pilfered horse feed and becoming quite used to the regular explosions. Break-through was in April 1926 and the tunnel was completed in March 1928. The Westfield Deviation, including the tunnel was opened for goods traffic on 1 September 1929 to Westfield Junction for single line working. Passenger trains began using the line from 11 May 1930.³⁵



Purewa Tunnel Construction in 1925
New Zealand Herald Glass Plate Collection;
Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections AWNS-19250507-54-4



***Newly formed railway in 1930 showing Purewa Railway Station (no longer in existence)
 Alongside Purewa Cemetery are market gardens, now Tahapa subdivision and Reserves
 Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 1370-U082-35***

Purewa Cemetery

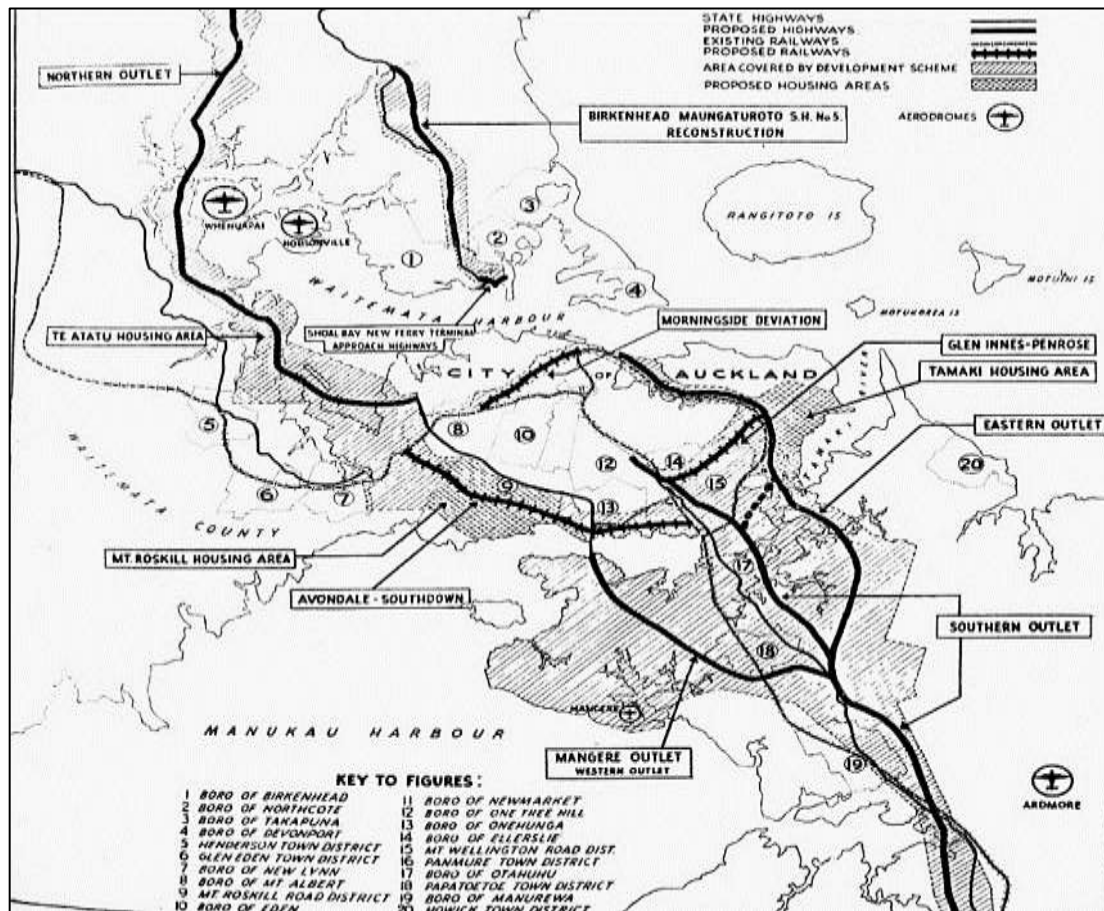
The St John's College Trust Board, following an 1886 request from the Auckland Diocesan Synod, in the hope of generating income, set aside 52 acres at Purewa for a cemetery. The cemetery began operating in 1889 but did not bring in a large financial return. In 1937 the cemetery was handed over to a management board set up by the Diocese of Auckland. The peaceful surroundings of this 45 acre cemetery are now administered by the Purewa Cemetery Trust Board.⁴

The cemetery is the final resting place for over 45,000 men, women and children, including many of Auckland's past business and political leaders, clergy and V.C. holders. Purewa Cemetery is set in peaceful, park-like surroundings. The well-kept gardens and extensive lawns create an air of solitude and serenity.³⁶

The Eastern Motorway Proposal

As part of a future Auckland highway network, the Eastern Motorway through Pourewa Valley was first proposed in 1946 by the then Minister of Works, the Hon. Robert Semple. Motorways were the fashion overseas, particularly in the US and Germany. After the war years, Auckland was growing rapidly and needed an expansion plan.

After receiving the celebrated De Leuw Cather Metropolitan Transportation Study in 1965, the Auckland Regional Planning Authority prepared a 20 year transport plan for Auckland's transport needs which incorporated the Eastern Highway proposal. The land required for the proposed Eastern Motorway was designated that year, and much of the Pourewa Valley was purchased from the St. John's College Trust Board. All of the land between the northern side of the railway and Pourewa Creek, and some of the north bank, extending from the estuary to St Johns Road is now owned by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency.



£5 million plan for the Government's proposal of motorways for Auckland in 1946
NZ Engineering 10 June 1946

John Banks when elected Mayor in 2001, gave priority to complete transport links including the Eastern Motorway with four lanes for traffic and two for buses passing through Pourewa Valley. Christine Caughey and Richard Simpson of Action Hobson, supported by the lobby group STEM ("Stop the Eastern Motorway"), were elected to Auckland City Council in 2004. With Dick Hubbard as mayor the project was abandoned after public opposition. AMETI (Auckland to Manukau Eastern Transport Initiative), the successor to the Eastern Motorway, has been implemented in 2022, but restricted to the corridor between Panmure and Pakuranga.³⁷

Meadowbank Pony Club

The Meadowbank Pony Club formed in 1968, now leases about 32 acres from Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency. A Ribbon Day held in December 1970 at the present site, led to formally signing a lease agreement with Transit NZ (now Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency) in April 1971. The club continues to develop the land and club facilities. They graze 25-45 horses per year, with about 40 families as members each season. Over the 52 years from 1970, that is upwards of 2000 members. Together the club parents and children voluntarily run this non-profit organisation as a working city farm.

Whilst it is primarily a pony club for those under 25, the Meadowbank Pony Club's development program includes leadership, mentoring, organisation and safety skills. Most of the members are also involved in other sports or community clubs. Several represent their schools in equestrian teams and also undertake various development endeavours, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

The Club is also the Auckland Central venue for New Zealand Riding for the Disabled (RDA). RDA is a registered charity that gives children living with a disability an often life-changing opportunity to ride a horse. RDA is all about providing goal-based riding activities that increase the ability, strength and confidence of the riders. Highly trained volunteers are an integral part of RDA including an NZQA qualified Coach.³⁸

Pourewa Creek Pathways

A pathway along the Pourewa Stream was built in 2003 by Graeme Easte with the intention of opening up the until-then-inaccessible valley to locals at a time of heightened interest because of the Eastern Motorway controversy.



Graeme Easte on one of his bridges

Photo: Roy Clements

About a quarter of the original pathway route was on the flatter southern bank but involved crossing the stream twice. To avoid users having to ford the stream, the path was rebuilt on the steeper northern bank, requiring extensive excavations and bridging of tributary streams. Over several years, with occasional help from Roy Clements and others, Graeme dug out embankments, wheel barrowed spoil away and brought in timber for five bridges crossing small creeks flowing into Pourewa Stream.

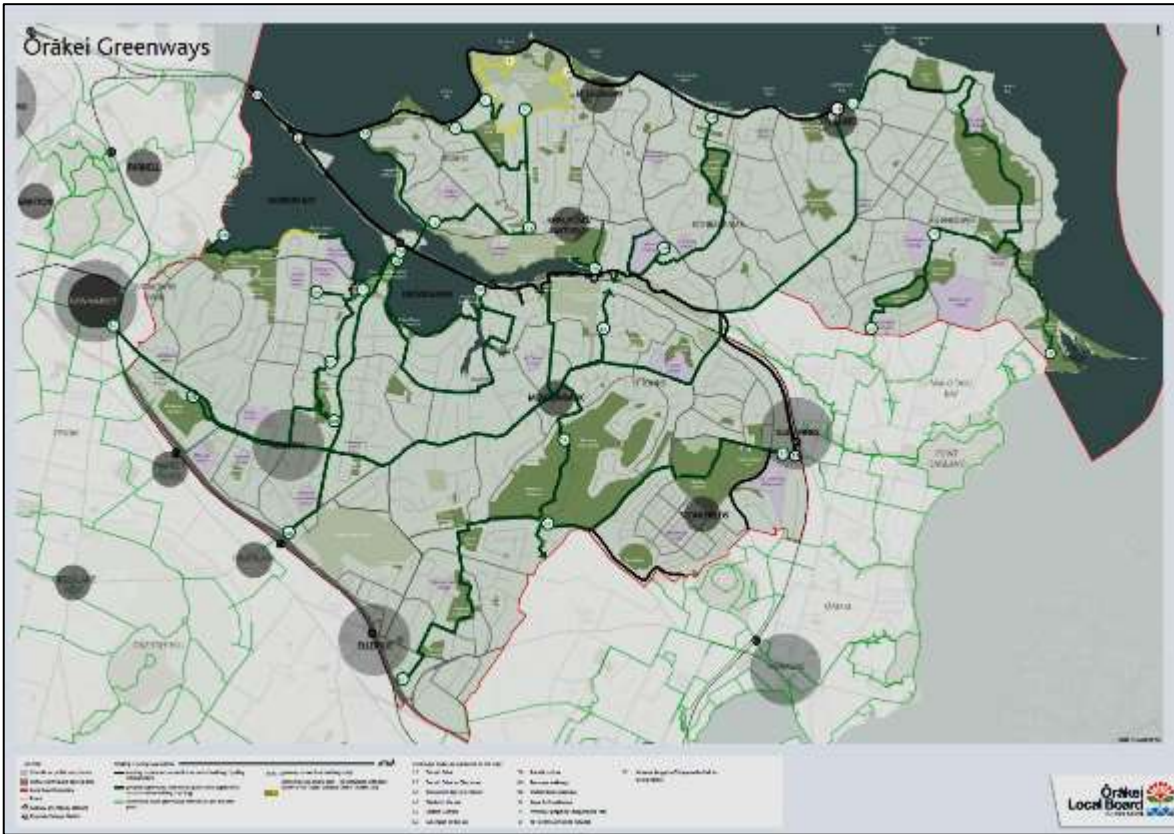
Many people now enjoy using this pathway that connects Kepa Bush, Selwyn Bush and the Pony Club area at the head of the valley. It is hoped the pathway will be improved and up-graded as part of Pourewa Valley ecological development – providing a pleasant bush walk alternative to the busy cycleway.³⁹

Greenway walking paths and Te Ara Ki Uta Ki Tai Shared Pathway

The idea for a pathway through Pourewa dates back to 1973 when the City Planners “greenprint” for planned walkways around the City, including Pourewa Valley, was adopted. A NZ Herald article dated 25 August 1981 stated that work had started but that “bush and undergrowth must be cleared”.⁴⁰

The Ōrākei Local Paths Plan in 2016 identified thirteen Local Path routes throughout the Ōrākei ward, creating a network of walking and cycling routes through parks and quiet streets with slow-moving vehicles.

These routes would provide safe connections to local destinations such as schools, town centres, public transport stops, and recreation spaces. A major part of this plan was the proposed cycleway from Glen Innes to Tāmaki Drive shown as a black line on the map on the next page.⁴⁰



Map from Ōrākei Greenways Planning Document, adopted 2016

A NZ Government press release on 22 October 2015, reported that the Transport Minister Simon Bridges had turned the first sod for the Glen Innes to Tāmaki Te Ara Ki Uta Ki Tai shared path, due for completion in 2018 at a cost of \$40million.⁴¹ The programme has got a little behind schedule, but with the completion of Stage 2 from St Johns Road to Ōrākei Basin in 2022 and a determination to complete the remaining section to Tāmaki Drive, this will be a very welcome boost to the Greenways plan.



**Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency 2021 plan
Glen Innes to Tāmaki Te Ara Ki Uta Ki Tai Shared Pathway**

Pest Control in Pourewa Valley

Pest Animal Control



*CatchIT Plan of traps and catches in Pourewa Valley
after one year's trapping in August 2019*

In July 2018 the Eastern Bays Songbird Project was given permission by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency to lay traps and bait stations to reduce the numbers of possums and rats in the valley. A group of volunteers was established and 76 poison bait stations for rats and 48 Timms traps for possums were installed. To 31 October 2021, 5,610 poison baits had been taken, equivalent to the number of rats killed, and 106 possums caught. Once the construction of the Te Ara Ki Uta Ki Tai shared pathway commenced in 2020, some of the bait stations and traps had to be removed, but the volunteers have continued. During the year ended December 2021, 3,836 poison rat baits were taken and 6 possums caught.

Pest Weed Problems in the Valley

As described in the Introduction, before contract work commenced, the lower valley was very badly infested with almost every pest weed imaginable. While the contractors for the new Te Ara Ki Uta Ki Tai shared pathway have done an amazing job on either side of their elevated pathway, there remain significant other areas yet to be cleared. These include along the southern stream-side section opposite Selwyn and Kepa Bush, as well as the bush covered area below the pathway eastwards from the John Rymer Place access.

There is huge potential, but much work will be needed to transform these areas in order to achieve the Ōrākei Local Board vision of restoring the valley.

The group carrying out trapping in the valley were grateful recipients of a \$15,000 grant to undertake weed spraying from the Motorway Alliance Section of Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency. The team who usually undertook weed spraying alongside motorways, came into the valley on a number of occasions to spray weeds, mainly in the native bush area beside Pourewa Creek east of the John Rymer Place access.

This work greatly benefitted the trapping programme, but is only a minor contribution to what needs to be done. Mature native bush on either side of the stream will be a delightfully tranquil feature when this area can be restored.



Weeds in profusion smother the creek east of the John Rymer Place access

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