

Heritage features

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

There are three main categories of heritage values - physical, historical and social/cultural, all three of which are present in the parks and forests.

Physical values associated with buildings and structures can be found in the early European settlement remnants, such as the graveyards. Many heritage features in the parks and forests of historical value are archaeological sites, which have the potential to contribute information about our Region's changing settlement patterns, economy and environment in the Region in the past.

Historic heritage provides New Zealanders with an understanding and appreciation of their history and culture. The parks and forests contain a diverse range of historic places that span the human history of the Region. Many of these places possess important values that contribute to the understanding of the Region's history and provide opportunities for visitor appreciation and education.

Most of the heritage sites in the parks and forests are of local, regional or national significance, e.g., the Rimutaka Railway in Pakuratahi Forest, the battle site at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park and the World War II magazines in Belmont Regional Park.

All of the parks and forests have social/cultural values associated with important historical processes, themes or patterns, such as early settlement or transport networks.

2. Examples of historic heritage

2.1 Maori heritage

The parks and forest areas contain many places relating to Maori land use and occupation over many centuries. Because of this special relationship, areas within the parks have been subject to the Treaty of Waitangi claim process. The dendroglyphs in the Parangarahu Lakes area have been transferred to the Taranaki Whanui, while other areas within the parks are being considered for other iwi in the Region, such as Ngati Toa, Kahungunui ki Wairarapa and Rangitane o Wairarapa.

The whole of Queen Elizabeth Park is regarded as an archaeological site because of the interrelated heritage values, such as the pa sites, burial sites, shell middens and cultivation sites.

The relatively unmodified dune system and archaeological site complex in public ownership in the park is an unusual and extremely valuable heritage resource. In East Harbour Regional Park's Parangarahu Lakes Area, places associated with Maori use and occupation include stone walls, middens, dendroglyphs, karaka groves and cultivation sites, as well as the dendroglyph sites.



In Battle Hill Farm Forest Park the 1846 battle site, camp and graves are associated with an engagement during the New Zealand Wars, which is a major theme in New Zealand history. The name of the park has retained the connections with the events of 1846, which were also highly important for the Wellington Region. The battle site is one of few surviving physical reminders of conflict between Maori and Government forces in the Region, and as a group the places tell the story of the engagement (see figure 1).

Figure 1 - The fight at Battle Hill, Horokiri, 6 August, 1846

3. Early European history

3.1 General

Many of the heritage places in the parks and forests relate to remnants of early European settlement and extractive industries such as timber milling, transport routes, pastoral farming and water supply management activities.

3.2 Settlement

The Abbot family homestead, graveyard and associated pastoral landscape in Battle Hill Farm Forest Park are evocative of early European settlement in the Wellington Region. The presence of three lighthouses, including New Zealand's first lighthouse located in East Harbour Regional Park is significant in heritage terms.

3.3 Timber milling

Kaitoke Regional Park contains historic places associated with timber-milling activities which commenced in the area in the mid 19th century. The Benge family established a saw mill and built a large two-storied homestead within the park in the late 1850s. Remains of these activities include dry stone walls and archaeological features relating to the timber-milling.



Figure 2 - Whiteman's Mill in Hukinga, Akatarawa Forest

In Akatarawa Forest, for a peak period of 1900 to 1920, many families associated with saw-milling moved into Hukinga (see figure 2). Small cottages or whares provided the bare essentials for the workers and their families. The forest contains a number of historic features

relating to those early 20th century timber milling, including tram lines and old sawmilling equipment.

3.4 Transport routes

Early transport routes in the parks include the original route to the Wairarapa through East Harbour Regional Park and the “old coach road” between Normandale and Pauatahanui in Belmont Regional Park.

The heritage places associated with the Rimutaka railway in Pakuratahi Forest have historic values as they illustrate the early expansion and development of transport and commercial networks in the Region and in the national economy. Much of the former railway is registered as a Historic Area in recognition of its significance. The Pakuratahi Bridge and the Ladle Bend Bridge (figure 3) are two of the oldest extant bridge designs in New Zealand. The rail formation, structures and features provide information about the engineering design and construction of the railway and also about the way of life of the people who built it and those who lived in the associated railway settlements.



Figure 3 - Ladle Bend Bridge

3.5 Military history

There are places in the parks associated with coastal defences, military camps and munitions storage. The World War II Belmont Magazines are unique in New Zealand as the first precast concrete structures and are the largest grouping of World War II magazines in the country.

The historic features associated with the World War II military encampment within Queen Elizabeth Park have high historic and social values, although there may be very little physically intact evidence of the encampment. These historic features illustrate New Zealand's participation in the World War, particularly in the Pacific campaign. They are a significant example of New Zealand's developing nationhood and international relations.

3.6 Water supply

The heritage places associated with the development of Wellington's water supply system possess historical and technological values. The Kaitoke Weir in Kaitoke Regional Park was built over the Hutt River in the 1940s. The weir and associated tunnels and pipes remain a key part of Wellington's water supply infrastructure.

Dams have historic value because of their association with early municipal works and industry in the Wellington Region, and are of interest for their design and construction methods. The Korokoro dam in Belmont Regional Park is an important early example of a gravity fed concrete dam, believed to be the first of its type constructed in New Zealand, while the Birchville Dam in Akatarawa Forest was the second arch dam built in New Zealand.



Figure 4 - Korokoro Dam

4. Greater Wellington Regional Council's approach to managing historical heritage items

Heritage places in the parks and forests are managed in accordance with the Heritage Asset Management Plan. Buildings or structures that require regular inspection and maintenance for health and safety purposes have also been included in the (Recreational) Assets Management Plan. There are three main levels of management under the Heritage Asset Management Plan. These are active management (e.g., Rimutaka Rail Trail bridges), stabilisation (e.g., repairs to graves at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park) and monitoring (e.g., midden sites at Queen Elizabeth Park). The appropriate level of management is determined by a number of factors, which include; significance, vulnerability to change and visitor pressure. Balancing competing uses and resourcing constraints must also be considered.

The Heritage Asset Management Plan is still in the early stages of development. While known sites have been recorded and documented by archaeologists and heritage planners, there will continue to be new heritage items or places discovered. Some stories have been recorded in the resource documents for each park but again new research will often add new information about an area. Conservation plans have been developed for some of the significant heritage items and the Parks Department works with the community where they request involvement in the restoration of heritage items. Interpretation of historic places/items is undertaken at appropriate sites.