

**Hutt and Wainuiomata/Orongorongo  
water collection areas**

**History**

**Drafted by Tony Walzl**

## B. HISTORICAL

As noted in the landscape assessment, the Hutt Water Collection Area consists of hilly and isolated land lying in the southern reaches of the Tararua Ranges. As such there is comparatively little evidence regarding the use of the land by Maori or Europeans. Considering the position of the Block, the land tenure situation with the block is uncertain. The Block lay outside of the area of land claimed by the New Zealand Company after 1840. Research has not yet indicated how the land passed from Maori to Crown ownership. It is unlikely to have been included in the Wairarapa series of purchases of the 1850s and may instead have been part of sales that took place along the Kapiti Coast before 1860. The exact process of what became of the land after it became Crown land has not been fully researched but it appears that at some time part of the land passed into private hands whilst part remained Crown land.

Research conducted to date records little evidence that the land within the Hutt Water Collection Area was used during the nineteenth century. It is possible that much of the land remained in Crown ownership. In 1927, amidst discussions over ensuring a permanent water supply for Wellington, the Wellington City and Suburban Water Supply Board was established. Catchment areas identified for the Board included the land currently within the Hutt Water Collection Area. Although some 3,000 acres were in private hands, being part of the Maymorn estate, the rest was held by the State Forest Service who vested the catchment land in the new Board.

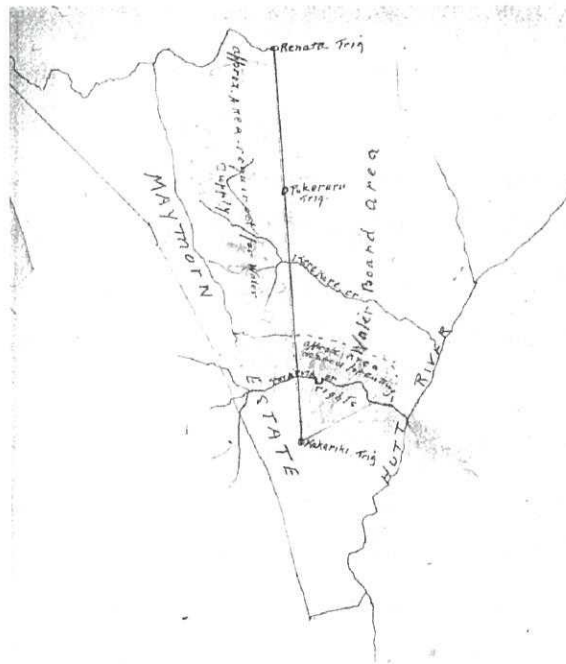
The Maymorn estate was a large block of land that stretched from the Kaitoke area across to the Otaki hills. Discussions by the private owners of selling the estate to interested local bodies began as early as the mid-1920s. Although this land sale had been supported at the time by the New Zealand Forestry League, which wanted to see the native forest on the block conserved, nothing eventuated. Then years later, in 1936, the possibility of acquiring the Estate from the English owners again came up and again the League attempted to act as intermediary in promoting a sale to local bodies:

Having realised the danger of the forest being destroyed, and in view of the recent serious flooding in the Hutt, they [the League] had felt it incumbent upon them to make another effort to take the

land out of private hands. This 9000 acres formed portion of the watershed. If there were floods now, what would happen if another 9000 feet of bare hillside were added to the watershed?<sup>1</sup>

It was found, however, that only 3,000 acres of the land being offered for sale was within the officially designated catchment area. Therefore there was no interest in acquiring the whole block. Furthermore, the price being asked for at the time was considered too high.

Nothing further occurred until 1950 by which time the Akatarawa Sawmilling Company had acquired 8,000 acres of the Maymorn estate. Knowing that 3,000 acres had been identified as being within the Hutt water catchment area, the Company offered the land to the Water Supply Board.<sup>2</sup> The offer was accepted and the land vested in the Wellington City Cororation on 20 November 1951.<sup>3</sup> Part of this land is now within the Hutt Water Collection Area.



**Rough Map showing the areas of the Maymorn estate included within the Hutt Water collection Area:**  
Wellington Regional Council

<sup>1</sup> 12 Mar 1936, *The Dominion*, WCC File 00001:1751:52/6 pt.1

<sup>2</sup> WCC File 00001:1751:52/6 pt.1

<sup>3</sup> WCC File 00001:1751:52/6 pt.2

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## B. HISTORICAL

The Rimutaka Ranges were said to be used as an important food gathering place for local Maori occupants and as a place of refuge during inter-iwi conflict. A number of trails traversed the range one of the main ones of which linked Waiorongomai with Lowry Bay crossing the upper Orongorongo River at its highest point on the Waiorongomai Saddle.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most recent arrivals before the advent of Europeans were the Ngati Ira who had come from the east coast of the North Island and had intermarried with the descendants of Tara. By the start of the nineteenth century a key area of settlement of Ngati Ira was along the east coast of Te Whanganui a Tara from Waiwhetu to Turakirae.

Early in the nineteenth century, the occupation of Te Whanganui a Tara was to change dramatically. In 1819 and 1821, war parties armed with muskets came from the north and fought with the resident people. Those who took part in these raids included, at different times, Ngapuhi, Ngati Toa, Waikato, Ngati Mainapoto and Ngati Whatua. Although several battles were fought and lost by the Wellington groups, their attackers from the north did not occupy the land.

Following these military excursions, a series of migrations to Te Whanganui a Tara came from Kawhia and Taranaki. These began in the early 1820s and continued for a number of years bringing groups such as Ngati Toa, Ngati Mutunga, Ngati Tama, Te Atiawa, Ngati Raukawa and several others to different places around the Wellington district. Te Atiawa hapu occupied the northern western and northern shores of the harbour with seasonal sites on the south eastern coast. By the time that Europeans arrived to settle Wellington in 1839, regular Maori occupation continued around the southern shores of Fitzroy Bay.<sup>2</sup> Parangarehu was a place that the Te Atiawa community from Pitoni went to seasonally to fish and collect berries. In addition, it was an important cultivation site.<sup>3</sup> Within this context of occupation, the upper Orongorongo valley

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<sup>1</sup> Brockie, Robert. *A living forest*. . . . . 1992, p.22

<sup>2</sup> Bagnall, Austin Graham *Okiwi: European Occupation of the Eastern Bays, Port Nicholson*, Eastbourne, Mahina Press, 1972, p.11

<sup>3</sup> Native Land Court, Wellington Minute Book No.3, p.226-7



would have remained an important hunting ground for birds and pigs and an area that provided tracks to move from the Hutt to the Wairarapa valleys.<sup>4</sup>

**(a) The Transfer from Maori Ownership**

Entries for other Regional Parks have fully described the processes through which Wellington and Hutt Valley land was transferred from local Maori to the ownership of the New Zealand Company and then the Crown. This involved a long complex process that extended from 1839 to 1850. A brief summary of that process will be given below to show where the land which is included in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area fits into this history.

In 1839, the New Zealand Company arrived in Wellington with plans of establishing a colony. A scheme to establish the town of Port Nicholson had been set out in a prospectus launched on 2 May 1839. Amid rumours that the British Government would soon intervene in New Zealand to seek sovereignty over the islands, the Company fitted out a ship named the *Tory* and their officials voyaged to New Zealand to buy land for their colonisation scheme. On 20 September 1839, the *Tory* sailed into Te Whanganui a Tara.<sup>5</sup>

The arrival at Te Whanganui a Tara of New Zealand Company officials on the *Tory* was soon followed by negotiations with local Maori to acquire land for settlement. On 27 September 1839, the Port Nicholson Deed was signed with Te Puni and others from Pito-one being involved in this land transaction. At this time, the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area was within the boundaries identified by the purchase deed. There were numerous difficulties with this attempt to purchase land, however. The deed was in English, the interpreter had only a basic grasp of te reo, the boundaries were so poorly recorded that they remain difficult to map, no plan of the land transaction was available during the negotiations and certain key groups of

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<sup>4</sup> Lane-Taylor, Joanna. *The history of the Orongoronga Valley and environs*, Wellington, E. Hambleton, 1970, p.32

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp.45-8

Wellington Maori did not sign. Later deeds signed with Ngati Toa chiefs on 25 October and with Te Atiawa at Queen Charlotte Sounds on 8 November had the same problems.<sup>6</sup>

Soon after the Company's arrival, Crown officials landed in New Zealand and, on 6 February 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi was signed. One of the first actions of the new Government was to set up a Commission of Inquiry to generally inquire into all the many hundreds of land transactions between Europeans and Maori that had allegedly occurred prior to 1840. If these were found to be valid, then they would be ratified by the Crown and a title awarded. During the hearings into the New Zealand Company's transactions for the Wellington district, the problems with the Company's purchase emerged. The Commissioner, William Spain, having heard this testimony, expressed his view in a preliminary report of 12 September 1843, that there were serious difficulties in the way of seeing the New Zealand Company's 1839 land transactions as being valid. Despite these findings, a major difficulty existed. On 21 January 1840, the first ships carrying the first Company migrants had arrived in Wellington and since then hundreds of colonists had settled in the town and countryside on the harbour's southern shores. Any finding that the Company's claims had no validity would have major ramifications for these settlers.<sup>7</sup>

With Commissioner Spain reaching a view that this purchase did indeed have problems a compromise was sought which entailed getting the various groups of Port Nicholson Maori to sign 'deed of release' giving up all their interests in Wellington, for a further payment and the granting of reserves. Recent evaluations of this arbitration process, which took place in February and March 1844, have found that it proceeded in a coercive manner.<sup>8</sup> However, following the completion of the arbitration process, Commissioner Spain issued his final report for the Port Nicholson claim in March 1845 recommending that the Company receive a Crown Grant for 71,900 acres of land which effectively equated with the sections that had been surveyed for settlement up to that time. This Grant was issued by Governor FitzRoy in July 1845.

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<sup>6</sup> Information on which this subsection is based has come from Waitangi Tribunal *Te Whanganui a Tara me ona takiwa*. Wellington: Waitangi Tribunal, 2003, pp.52-59

<sup>7</sup> Waitangi Tribunal, op cit, pp.60-65 and 199

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp.145-179

Within the Wainuiomata/Orgongorongo area, no sections had been surveyed in the initial layout of the settlement. By 1844, however, a string of sections had been surveyed at Wainuiomata following along valley floors and waterways. One group followed the eastern branch of the upper Wainuomata River – land that today is within the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area. Most of land within the Area, however, was not included in the 1845 Grant.<sup>9</sup>

Before FitzRoy's Grant could be accepted as having validity, further concessions of land had to be awarded to various groups of Wellington Maori who were losing important cultivation lands as a result of the Grant having been made. By 1847 a series of land exchanges were made following which a new Crown Grant was drawn up by Governor Grey and awarded to the New Zealand Company. However, rather than being based on the Company's surveyed land, as recommended by William Spain in 1844, Grey's grant covered the whole of the original block claimed by the New Zealand Company. Therefore, instead of receiving almost 70,000 acres as Spain had recommended after investigating the Company's claim and determining that this was the extent of land that had been paid for, the Company was granted all 209,247 acres of their original claim. This extended Grant included much of the hill lands around Wellington and the Hutt and includes the most of the lands currently in the Wainuomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area. When the New Zealand Company collapsed from financial ruin in 1850, that land became Crown land.<sup>10</sup>

Settlement in the Wainuiomata area proceeded soon after the first sections were surveyed in 1844. One of the first European settlers was Hugh Sinclair who soon began one of Wellington's first sawmilling ventures.<sup>11</sup> In 1853, Sinclair had purchased further land in the upper Wainuiomata catchment area.<sup>12</sup> By the 1860s, Sinclair was beginning to mill within Waterworks Valley, (then called Sinclair Valley) and even had a tramline running into the catchment area as the waterworks were later established on part of the tramway.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Kenneally, Joseph & Betty, *Wainuiomata: these passing years*. 1982, p.5

<sup>10</sup> Waitangi Tribunal, *op cit*, pp.227-278

<sup>11</sup> Kenneally, *op cit*, p.5

<sup>12</sup> Spearpoint, Owen. "The Last Lowland Forest: The Wainuomata Water Supply Catchment", p.2

<sup>13</sup> Lane-Taylor, *op cit*, p.36



The other threat to the native forest now within the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area that had arisen from ongoing settlement was the introduction of non-native animal species. As noted previously, pigs had been in the area before the arrival of Europeans and these were hunted by Maori and the earliest Wainuiomata settlers including Hugh Sinclair.<sup>14</sup> Goats were recorded in the Orongorongo valley in 1858, opossums were liberated in Wainuiomata in 1893 and deer, although released many years earlier, were being recorded by the 1920s.<sup>15</sup> Once acclimatised species such as opossums and deer were released into the Wainuomata district, hunters would have scoured the Orongorongo valley and ranges, including the area now within the Water Collection Area.<sup>16</sup>

#### **(b) Wellington's Water Supply**

In 1870, five years after becoming the country's new capital, Wellington was given Municipal Borough status. One of the first major issues for the new local body to deal with was finding a plentiful and healthy water source. In 1871, analysis of Wellington's water supply by scientist Sir James Hector revealed the drinking water being used at the time to be of bad quality and probably a major contribution to intestinal diseases then being experienced. The search for a safe water supply for the city then began.

Dams were placed on the Kaiwharawhara stream to develop a water supply at Karori. This work was completed in 1874. By 1878, however, severe water shortages were experienced in Wellington township. There was no night water supply and when the Wellington railway station caught fire, there was no water to fight the flames.<sup>17</sup> A new water supply was needed. The City Engineer chose the waters of the Wainuomata River as providing the best option and land in the area was purchased, presumably off Sinclair.<sup>18</sup> The Wainuiomata Catchment area was 6,888 acres.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.32

<sup>15</sup> Kenneally, op cit, p.14

<sup>16</sup> Lane-Taylor, op cit, p.32

<sup>17</sup> Wellington Regional Council, *History of Water Supply in the Wellington Regional 1872-1985*, Wgtn, Spectro Print Ltd, c.1985, pp. 1-2

<sup>18</sup> Spearpoint, op cit, p.2

A contract was let and up to 70 workmen were involved on the scheme which was centred in the upper reaches of the River behind the existing township of Wainuiomata. The 14-foot long pipes were brought over the Wainuiomata hill road by horse on specially constructed wagons. Earth dams were thrown across the River. Two reservoirs were constructed the upper one to hold 107 million gallons and the lower reservoir to hold 20 million gallons. The water was taken from the reservoir along a mile-long water race where it dropped into a well, 60 feet deep from where it was piped through to the city.<sup>19</sup> This involved building bridges across the Hutt and Waiwhetu Rivers to carry the water pipes.

The project experienced a number of difficulties. In 1881, a tunnel cave-in set back the work schedule. In spring of 1883, heavy floods were experienced which caused damage to the new dams that were being built. With the scheme due to be commissioned on 22 January 1884, the previous day's filling of the mains led to burst pipes on Petone Beach and a leak in the tunnel at Wainuiomata.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, however, the waterworks were commissioned and were soon supplying the city. The first manager of the waterworks was Joseph Quaintance who came to reside in Wainuiomata to take up his position.<sup>21</sup> The completion of this first set of waterworks soon created a popular picnic spot amongst local residents at the newly-created reservoir.<sup>22</sup>

The success of the scheme was short-lived. As early as 1888, the growing city of Wellington was experiences water shortages. Over a 20-year period from 1894 a 370% increase in population to 43,000 people made the situation worse. The solution was seen as the need to connect the Orongorongo water catchment system with that of Wainuiomata River by the building of a tunnel between the two waterways.<sup>23</sup> However, the proposal was not taken up at the time.

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<sup>19</sup> Lane-Taylor, op cit, p.36

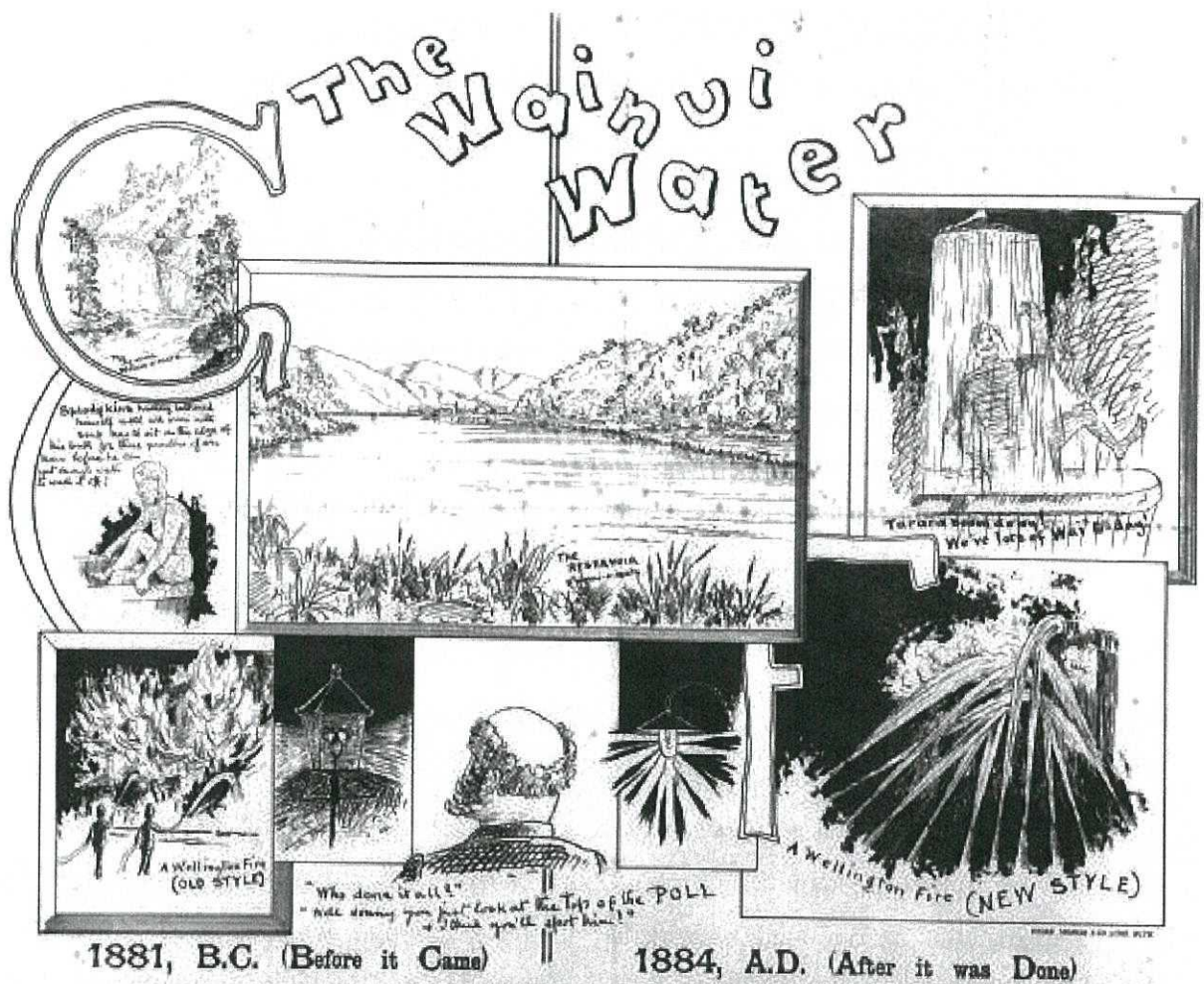
<sup>20</sup> Wellington Regional Council, op cit, p.3

<sup>21</sup> Kenneally, op cit, p.11

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.42

<sup>23</sup> Deyer, PF & Meyer, RJ. "The Orongorongo Waterworks Railway", *The New Zealand Railway Observer*, Winter 1987, p.63





Cartoon showing the hopes held that the new waterworks would supply Wellington's needs, 1884  
 Brown, Thompson & Co :The Wainui water., Litho. Wellington. Alexander Turnbull Library. B-034-020

By 1904, however, Wellington City Engineer W.H. Morton recorded the urgent need for additional reticulation and storage of water the estimated cost of which was £132,000.<sup>24</sup> He proposed the building of three new storage reservoirs, two at Wainuiomata and one at Karori. Morton's report came out in the same year that earthquakes, drought and floods were experienced in Wellington, all of which put extra pressure on the water supply system, His ideas, therefore, were readily approved. However, the full scheme Morton proposed was not implemented and in the end only

one dam was built at Wainuiomata.<sup>25</sup> Between 1908 and 1910, the dam, which was named after the City Engineer, was constructed. The dam was 585 feet long and 56 feet high. As a result, the reservoir that was formed stretched almost one kilometre upstream and had a storage volume of 90 million gallons. When the dam was first filled there was considerable leakage but this was soon rectified.<sup>26</sup>

The Morton Dam, however, still did not protect Wellington's water supply from exceptional circumstances. In the summer of 1917, after 134 days of very dry weather, the Morton reservoir was completely empty.<sup>27</sup> The decision was soon made to build on the Wainuiomata works by bringing in the waters of the upper Orongorongo River. Preparations were made to build a scheme which allowed for the taking of water from the river and piping it through a two-mile tunnel to connect it with the Wellington water supply. Although the initial 1919 plan was to create a larger reservoir at Wainuiomata and bring the Orongorongo water into this, when technical difficulties were realised it was decided that the water from Orongorongo be brought all the way into the Karori reservoir.<sup>28</sup>

West Coast miners, who formed into a workers' cooperative to undertake the work, dug the required tunnel which was started from both ends at the same time. Work began in October 1921 and the tunnels met on 23 October 1924. Whereas those working from the Wainuiomata end worked with air-operated rock drills, the Orongorongo workers used hand drills. Similarly, whereas the Wainuiomata workers had accommodation, a cookhouse and other conveniences, there were more basic living conditions on the Orongorongo side.<sup>29</sup> Almost 600 tons of heavy supplies – steel, cement, timber – had to be brought to the Orongorongo side of the scheme by landing it at the mouth of the Orongorongo stream and taking it by horse teams a distance of 22 kilometres up the bed of the river to the site.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Lane-Taylor, *op cit*, p.37

<sup>25</sup> Wellington Regional Council, *op cit*, p.6

<sup>26</sup> Kenneally, *op cit*, p.11. Also Wellington Regional Water Board, "Report on the Condition of Morton Dam Wainuiomata", Feb 1979, p.2

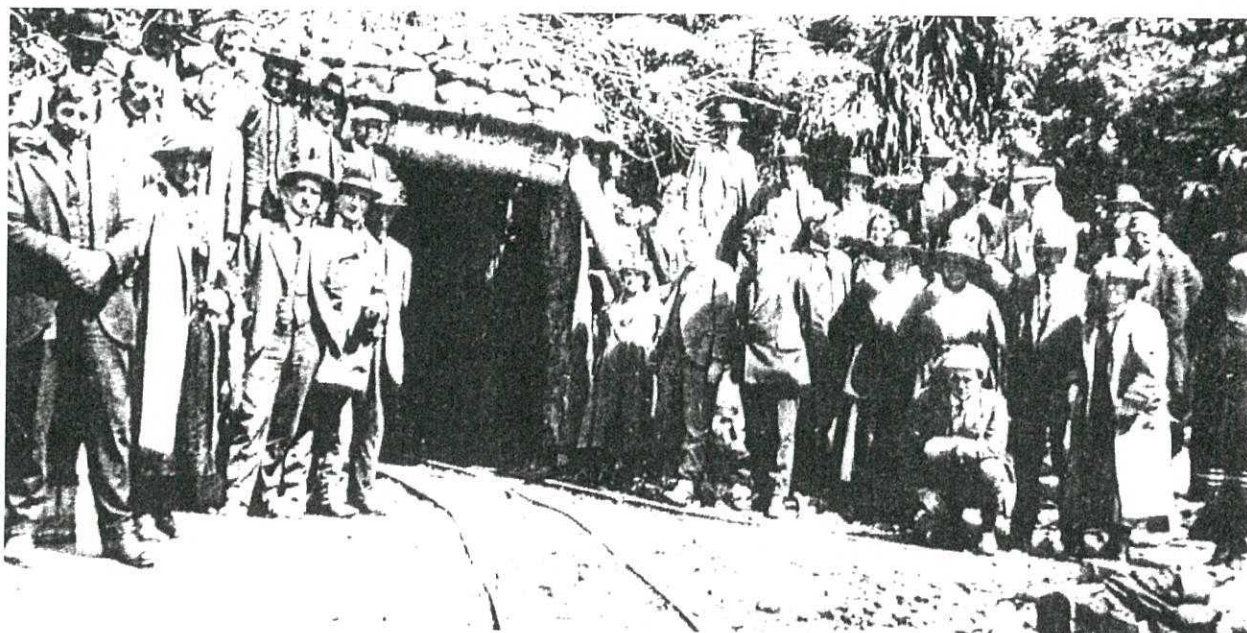
<sup>27</sup> 24 July 1929, Hart, G.A. "Report of the City Engineer", p.6

<sup>28</sup> Wellington Regional Council, *op cit*, p.13

<sup>29</sup> Deyer and Meyer, *op cit*, p.64

<sup>30</sup> Wellington Regional Council, *op cit*, p.13





**Entranceway to the Orongorongo Tunnel during construction:**

Wellington Regional Council

When the two tunneling teams met they were only 5 inches out of alignment. The tunnel was officially opened in 1924.<sup>31</sup> The scheme had also involved the construction of a weir and intake on the Orongorongo River, extensive piping, a further 338-foot tunnel and an 18-metre bridge to carry the pipes.<sup>32</sup> During construction a team of 22 horses from the Riddiford's Orongorongo Station were used.<sup>33</sup> A tramway was built in the long tunnel when the pipe was put through to improve communication around the works and this remained in service for many decades.<sup>34</sup> The last length of pipe was laid on November 1926 after which the Mayor of Wellington stated that he envisaged that the city now had a water supply that would guarantee the health of citizens for many years to come.

Within a couple of years of completion, however, water restrictions were still required in summer leading to questions as to why this should be the case.

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<sup>31</sup> Lane-Taylor, op cit, p.37

<sup>32</sup> Kenneally, op cit, p.11

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.43

Rightly or wrongly the plain Mr. John Citizen looked forward to a more free hand in the use of water for such an extraordinary purpose as keeping his lawn in good green order and making his wilting flowers to try again particularly as his water rates have more than doubled in eight years.... And when he reads advertisements prohibiting the use of the hose without a meter, rightly or wrongly again, he thinks upon the promises made for Orongorongo particularly if he should have lately spent a holiday in almost any of other New Zealand centres where the councils permit the use of hoses, possible within restricted hours, that individual homes and the towns as a whole may look the better for it.<sup>35</sup>

### **(c) Land Acquisition**

As the waterworks were being established, there was a need to establish a reserve to protect the water supply. In 1910, a deputation waited on the Government to urge the creation of a Forest Reserve at Orongorongo to protect the water catchment but nothing occurred at this point.<sup>36</sup>

Soon after the Orongorongo waterworks was completed, however, action was taken. In 1927, the Wellington City and Suburban Water Supply Board was established. Catchment areas identified for the Board included the land currently within the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area and this was transferred to the Board. From this time, the catchment area was closed to public access.<sup>37</sup>

Not all use of the area was stopped, however. During World War II, two sergeants of an army unit that was locally based built a hut from scraps of iron and wood gathered from the bush. Two bunks were located inside opposite a fireplace built in such a manner as to be smokeless. The hut also contained cupboards and furniture to make the stay more comfortable. It is said that this shack, known as the Deserters' Whare, is located within the Catchment Area. The plan was that before the sergeants' unit was to ship out overseas, they would abscond to the whare and sit the war out.

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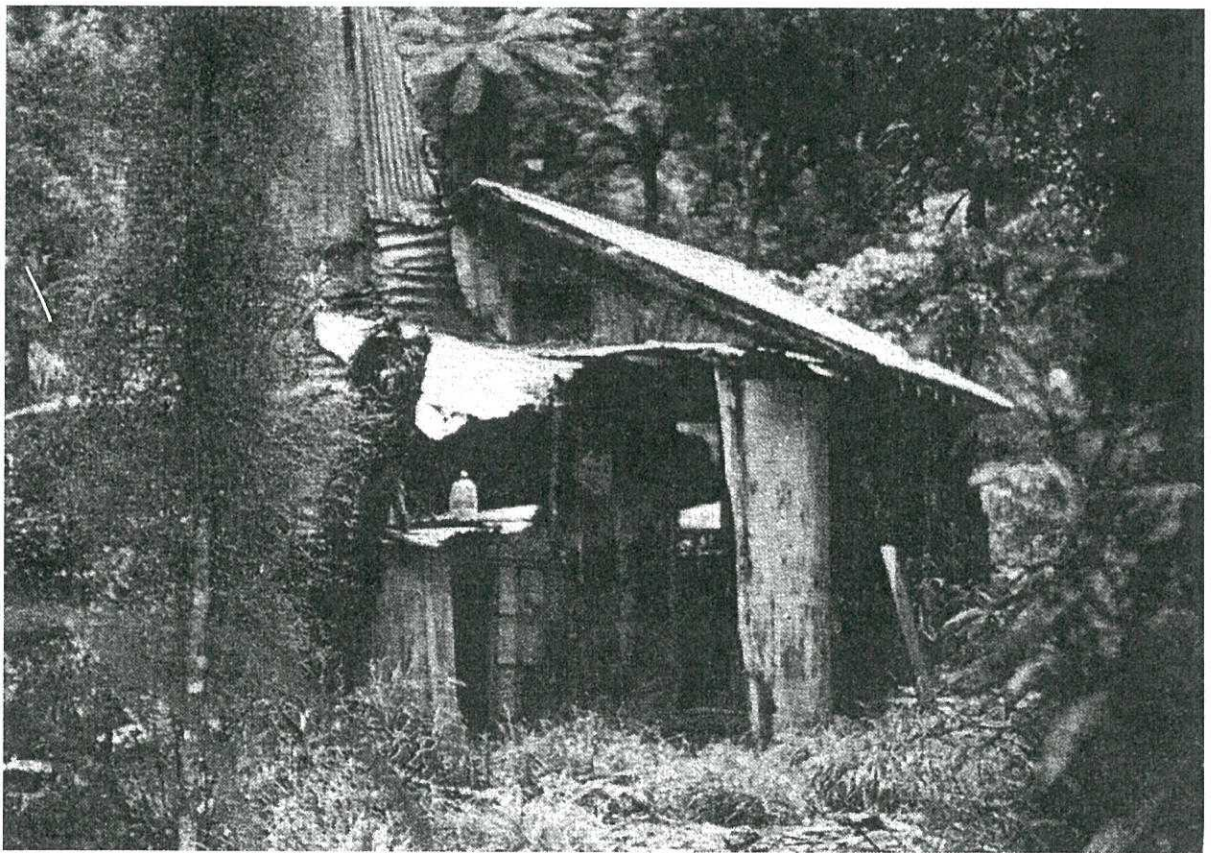
<sup>34</sup> Deyer and Meyer, op cit, p.65

<sup>35</sup> 13 Apr 1929, *Evening Post*, ABKK w4357 box 295, 50/214, Arch.NZ

<sup>36</sup> Deyer and Meyer, op cit, p.63



Unfortunately for the builders, their plan became widely known about. One afternoon, two privates were in a local hotel talking about their sergeants' scheme but were overheard by a lieutenant of a Bush Guides' platoon. Unfortunately for the would-be deserters, the Bush Guide lieutenant reported the matter and on the following weekend the army combed the area, found the hut and the sergeants in it, one of whom went to prison for three years and the other who was sent overseas after all.<sup>38</sup> Other than this incident, however, use of the Water Collection Area by the public remained restricted.



**The Deserters' Whare**

As found in W.L. Palmer, *Public Use of the Orongorongo Valley*, DSIR 1976, p.14

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<sup>37</sup> Wellington Regional Council. *Hydrology of the Orongorongo Catchment*. Wellington Regional Council, 1995, p.1

<sup>38</sup> Lane-Taylor, op cit, p.46. Another source put the Deserter's Whare as outside the Catchment Area



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