



Little Bay toilet block: final report (HNZPT authority 2022/085)

**report to
Thames-Coromandel District Council
and
Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga**

Arden Cruickshank

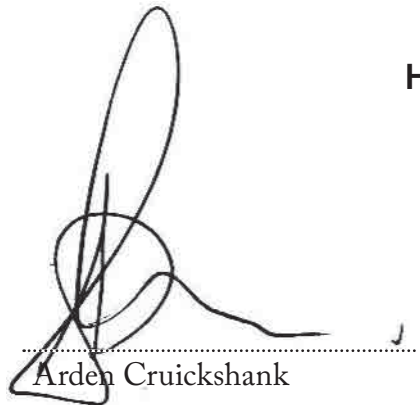


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Introduction

Thames Coromandel District Council replaced the toilet block at Little Bay Reserve (Lots 106 and 108 DPS 15818). The toilet block is located in an under-recorded archaeological landscape, with both pre-European Māori and 19th century land use well documented in the wider area. A burial (T10/269) is recorded in the New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) site recording scheme (SRS) in the vicinity of the toilet block. Ross Ashby of Thames-Coromandel District Council commissioned an archaeological assessment from CFG Heritage that recommended obtaining an archaeological authority under section 44 of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act (2014) from Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) to undertake the works (Cruickshank 2021). Authority 2022/085 was granted by HNZPT on 6 September 2021.

Due to a communication error, this project was undertaken without informing the project archaeologist who was not present for earthworks. This was a breach of Conditions 1–4 of the authority, and a site visit was undertaken on 3 March 2023 to inspect the area to see if any archaeological material has been disturbed and to satisfy Conditions 7 and 8 of the authority.

Background

Little Bay is located in the northeast of the Coromandel Peninsula, at the mouth of the Ngamoko Stream. The peninsula is formed in large part by the Coromandel ranges, consisting of a greywacke basement rock, with andesitic and rhyolitic volcanic eruptions dating from the Miocene and Pliocene forming the steep terrain (Homer and Moore 1992; Barker 1992). These later rhyolitic eruptions are responsible for much of the high-quality lithic resources that made the Coromandel Volcanic Zone a major source of obsidian and basalt for tool manufacture (Turner 2000: 271). There is a major basalt quarry located at Tahanga, near Opito Bay, and nearby obsidian deposits are located at Cooks Beach, Hahei and Aotea. These lithic resources were exploited by Māori, with Tahanga basalt and obsidian being exchanged and transported over hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of kilometres (Turner 2000: 7; Sheppard et al. 2011).

Pre-European Māori

Early settlement of the Coromandel Peninsula would have extended along the coastline and stream valleys where fresh water was available. Fish, shellfish and sea mammals would have been gathered from the foreshore or with the aid of canoes. Birds would have been snared and trapped in the surrounding bush clad hills. As population increased, resources would have become scarcer. Horticulture, including the growing of kumara, would have provided for a stable land-based food source (Mallows 2009).

Historic land use and settlement

Most of the European influence in the Little Bay area during the 19th century appears to be associated with kauri logging, beginning immediately after the granting of the 4000-

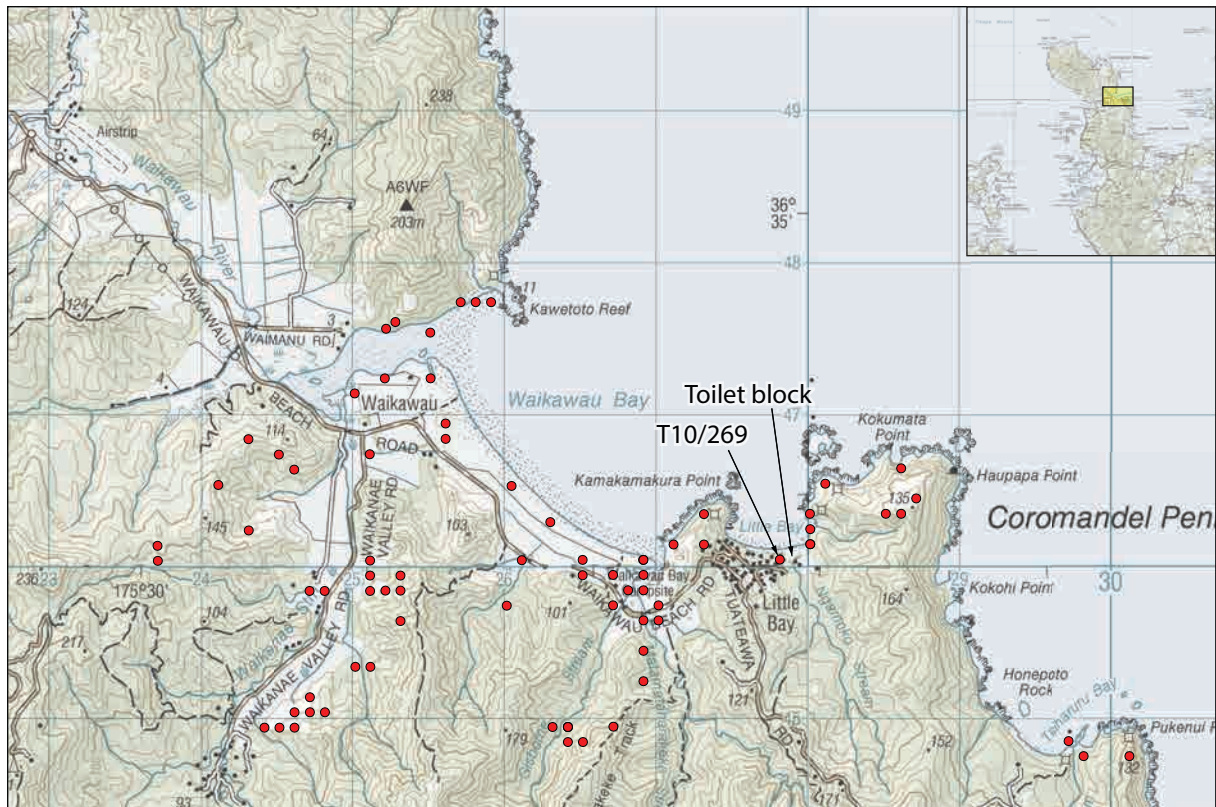


Figure 1. Location of Little Bay Toilet Block and recorded archaeological sites in the area.

acre Matamataharakeke block in 1871. The following year, a 700-acre kauri logging lease was issued to Cruickshank, Smart and Company, with the remaining 3300 acres issued to Alfred Cadman (Bassett and Kay 1998). The nature of the lease is likely to be financial, as £150 of the £450 paid by Cadman went towards the outstanding survey costs for the block.

The logging leases continued and changed hands multiple times before finally consolidated under the Kauri Timber Company in 1895. The Kauri Timber Company sold the block in 1911, after which it was slowly subdivided into smaller holdings. It is currently a mix of holiday homes, rural lots, state forest and recreation reserves.

Archaeological survey

Prior to the assessment for this project (Cruickshank 2021), there has been little in the way of archaeological research in the Little Bay area, with an archaeological survey of Waikawau Bay (Reynolds and Tippett 1976) and a coastal survey of the Coromandel (Easdale and Jacomb 1982) appearing to be the only surveys that mention the area. There are several sites that were recorded in 1971 and 1972 by Osbourne in Little Bay, but no report appears to have been written for it.

T10/269 was recorded by Osbourne in 1972, as a burial in the general vicinity of the proposed toilet block. The site description is vague, describing it as a burial 'on the corner of the sand area adjacent to stream', with the area covered in 'lupin and pohutukawa trees.' There is no further information available about the burial (including whether it was pre-European Māori or Historic), but it appears it is based on information provided by a local resident. The current grid reference for the site places it in a private property immediately west of the car-park area (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Carpark area showing location of old and replacement toilet blocks.

There are similar burial grounds reported in Waikawau Bay (T10/263 and T10/266) but these have associated cemetery reserves allocated. Ngāti Whanaunga were not able to provide any further information about burials or urupā in the vicinity of Little Bay or the Carpark.

Fieldwork method

Earthworks were undertaken between during November 2021. This included the removal of the existing toilet block, infilling and capping of the existing holding tank and excavation for the new toilet and holding tank. The toilet block required a total footprint of 4.5 x 5.3 m, with a cut depth of 300 mm for the concrete pad, and a depth of 2010 mm for the holding tank.

An archaeologist was not present for these works, but the area was inspected on 3 March 2023 to determine, if possible, whether any archaeological features were disturbed during the replacement of the toilet block.

Fieldwork results

The toilet block has been constructed in the location described in the effects section of Cruickshank (2021). The old toilet block has been removed and the holding tank has been filled (Figure 3). The only apparent deviation from the proposed methodology is that basalt boulders were used instead of bollards around the toilet.

Some beach shell was noted in the vicinity of the toilet block, but no midden or other archaeological material was noted in the area.



Figure 3. View east of location of old toilet block was located prior to works. Photo scale = 0.5 m.



Figure 4. View east of new toilet block. Photo scale = 0.5 m.

Discussion and conclusions

No visible archaeological material was identified. Although the project was very limited in terms of ground disturbance, it is possible that archaeological deposits or features were disturbed without leaving any surface evidence. Also, the results should not be viewed as representative of the wider area. It is possible that subsurface archaeological material is still in situ on the dune to the east of the toilet block, and in the vicinity of the toilet block and carpark.

As no archaeological material was identified during works or during the post works site visit, no further analysis is required. This report has been written to satisfy condition 7 and 8 of the authority.

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