319 Gordonton Road, Hamilton: archaeological assessment

report to
Horsham Downs Estate Ltd

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Prepared by: Matthew Campbell

Reviewed by: Arden Cruickshank

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1 Introduction

Horsham Downs Estate Ltd (the applicant) is proposing to develop 319 Gordonton Road (the Site) in Rototuna, Waikato (Figure 1), through the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA). An archaeological and heritage assessment is required in support of the referral application. CFG Heritage Ltd has been commissioned to provide this assessment.

At a high level, the Project seeks to enable the following activities:

a. Residential development and subdivision to provide for approximately 850-950 units
b. A neighbourhood centre
c. An open space and green–blue network, incorporating low-lying areas, a neighbourhood park, landscape buffers that enhance amenity and ecological outcomes.

The masterplan plan for the Project is provided separately.

1.1 Statement of qualifications and experience

1.1.1 Matthew Campbell, author

I am the Director of CFG Heritage, an archaeological and heritage consultancy. I co-founded CFG Heritage in November 2005.

I hold the qualifications of BA and MA from the University of Otago and PhD from the University of Sydney, which I completed in 2000. I am a member and former President of the New Zealand Archaeological Association.

I have 40 years of professional experience as an archaeologist, including roles such as lecturing in archaeology at the University of Auckland. My experience includes assessment, investigation and support at planning and Environment Court hearings for clients such as Auckland Council, Auckland International Airport, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, Transpower New Zealand and KiwiRail along with private developers throughout the North Island.

I confirm that, in my capacity as author of this report, I have read and abide by the Environment Court of New Zealand's Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses Practice Note 2023.

I confirm that I meet the criteria required to be an approved person to undertake an activity under the authority under sections 7(5) of the Act and 45(2)(a) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. I have been a section 45 approved archaeologist under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 (previously section 17 of the Historic Places Act 1993) for 25 years.

1.1.2 Arden Cruickshank, reviewer

I am a Principal Archaeologist at CFG Heritage, an archaeological and heritage consultancy. I have been employed at CFG Heritage since January 2014.

I hold the qualifications of Master of Arts with Honours in Anthropology from the University of Auckland, which I completed in 2011. I have been a member of the New Zealand Archaeological Association since 2014.

I have 16 years of professional experience in archaeology in both New Zealand and Australia. I have been an approved archaeologist under Section 45 of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act (2014) since 2015. My experience includes managing archaeological projects for a variety of clients including major projects, with several currently being conducted under the Fast Track Approvals Act (2014).

I confirm that, in my capacity as reviewer of this report, I have read and abide by the Environment Court of New Zealand's Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses Practice Note 2023.

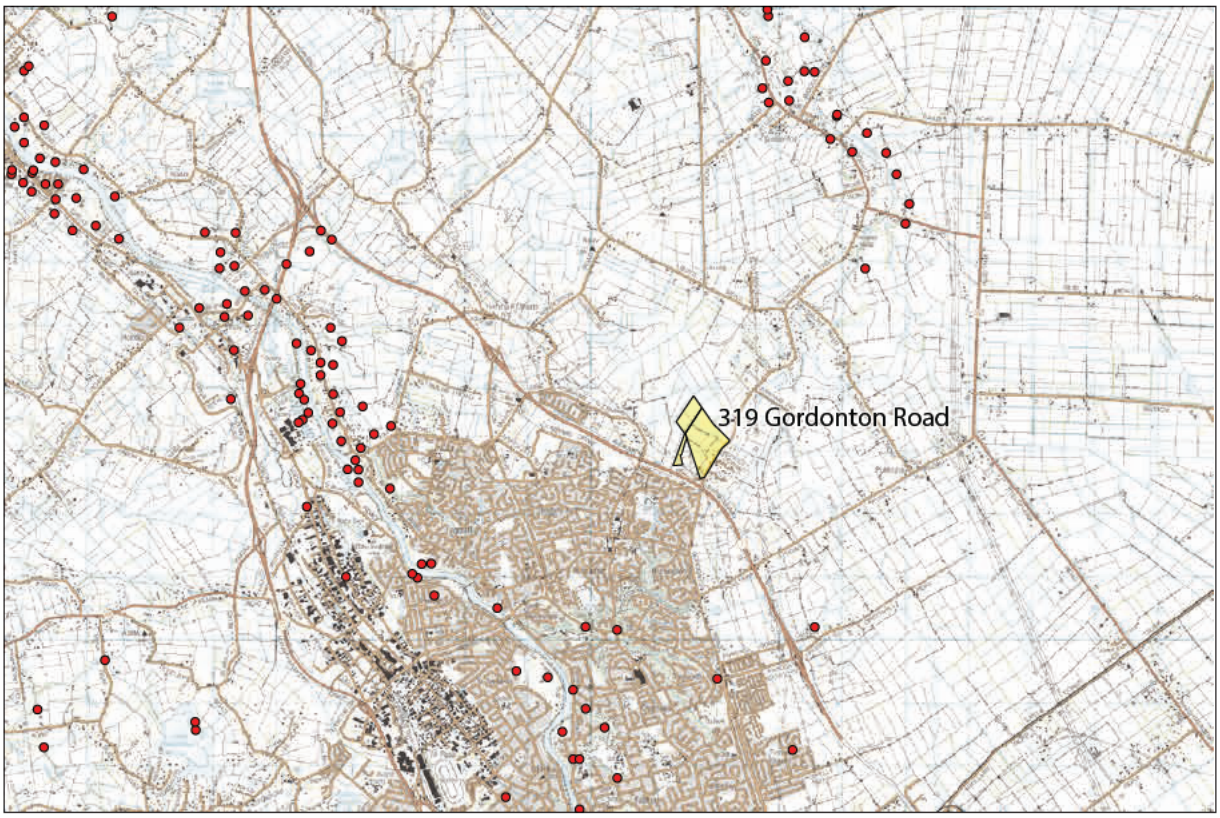


Figure 1. Location of 319 Gordonton Road and archaeological sites recorded in the vicinity.

1.2 Statutory requirements

All archaeological sites, whether recorded or not, are protected by the provisions of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 and may not be destroyed, damaged or modified without an authority issued by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT).

An archaeological site is defined in the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act as:

(a) any place in New Zealand, including any building or structure (or part of a building or structure), that—
  (i) was associated with human activity that occurred before 1900 or is the site of the wreck of any vessel where the wreck occurred before 1900; and
  (ii) provides or may provide, through investigation by archaeological methods, evidence relating to the history of New Zealand; and

(b) includes a site for which a declaration is made under section 43(1).

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) requires City, District and Regional Councils to manage the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way that provides for the wellbeing of today's communities while safeguarding the options of future generations. The protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development is identified as a matter of national importance (Section 6f).

Historic heritage is defined as those natural and physical resources that contribute to an understanding and appreciation of New Zealand's history and cultures, derived from archaeological, architectural, cultural, historic, scientific, or technological qualities.

Historic heritage includes:

- historic sites, structures, places, and areas
- archaeological sites;
- sites of significance to Māori, including wāhi tapu;
- surroundings associated with the natural and physical resources (RMA Section 2).

These categories are not mutually exclusive and some archaeological sites may include above ground structures or may also be places that are of significance to Māori.

Where resource consent is required for any activity the assessment of effects is required to address cultural and historic heritage matters.

2 Methodology

The following digital resources were accessed and, where appropriate, incorporated into the project GIS:

- old maps and plans
- aerial photos
- Parish Indexes and Deeds Indexes

The properties were visited and assessed by Matthew Campbell on 16 February 2026. This was a pedestrian survey only and no intrusive methods such as test pitting were used.

3 Background

319 Gordonton Road is located on the eastern outskirts of Hamilton City. It is currently zoned General Rural Zone and is primarily used for farming.

The Hamilton Expressway State Highway 1 forms the southern boundary of the project area, while south of this, new subdivisions show the growth of Hamilton.

The northern part of the property was previously under Lake Tunawhakapeka until it was drained in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There are no natural permanent watercourses (refer to the memorandum from Ecological Solutions) but this northern portion is drained, with the drains running north toward the Komokorau Stream. To the east is a paleochannel of the Waikato and the now drained Komokorau peat bog.

3.1 Pre-European Māori background

Pre-European Māori occupation of the area has not been reported on extensively, but within the wider Waikato basin pre-European Māori archaeological sites have given an insight into the occupation of the area (Campbell and Harris 2011; Gumbley et al. 2003). Much of the occupation was centred on extensive cultivation of kūmara, utilising modified garden soils created by mining and mixing Hinuera sands into the overlying Horotiu tephras. The mining of the Hinuera sands created large depressions known as borrow pits, which remain visible across the landscape.

The Waikato River and its tributaries were major transport systems, providing access from the coast into the central North Island. As well as settlements located along the rivers, prominent pā were situated in strategic locations, such as recorded archaeological site S14/16 which lies around 600 m north of the project area across the Waikato River.

This report does not attempt to replace or represent the kōrero tuku iho of the area. The cultural background and stories of the whenua belong to mana whenua, kōrero tuku iho is their information to share.

3.2 Historic background

Although traders and missionaries were moving into the Waikato from the early 19th century, European settlement and occupation of the area followed the Waikato War and confiscation of large blocks of land.

The invasion of Waikato in 1863–64 by British forces aimed to destroy the aspirations of the Māori King movement (the kīngitanga) to autonomy and self-determination (Swarbrick 2015). It targeted the stronghold of the movement in the middle Waikato basin – one of the most populated and productive Māori districts in the country (Swarbrick 2015). In the mid-1800s Māori gardeners had such a thriving agricultural industry in the Waikato that the Waikato was known as the granary of the province of Auckland, a food basket and a rich and valuable resource (HNZPT 2014). On 11 July 1863

the Crown issued an ultimatum to the 'chiefs of Waikato' to pledge allegiance to Queen Victoria or be declared rebels. The following day – before Waikato Māori had even received this message – a force led by Lieutenant-General Duncan Cameron crossed the Mangatāwhiri stream, a tributary of the Waikato River near Mercer. This waterway marked the aukati between the European settlement of Auckland and the lands under the mana of the kīngitanga. The key conflict of the New Zealand Wars had begun. By mid-1864 the Crown had gained power of the fertile lands of the middle Waikato. Some of the tāngata whenua who had survived the invasion but were now landless moved south of the Puniu to Te Rohe Pōtae / The King Country where there was a huge influx in population and pressure on the rohe's resources almost overnight. Legislation was passed to allow the confiscated lands of the Waikato to be taken over by military settlers, although much of the land was unsuitable and many walked off it, selling to Auckland speculators who amassed huge tracts, and had the capital to undertake drainage of the extensive bogs (O'Malley 2016; Belgrave 2017).

3.3 The Waikato horticultural complex

Most recorded sites in the Waikato Basin are pre-European Māori gardening soils and borrow pits, with occasional pā of the banks of the river. Archaeological sites are often identified from the remaining surface visible features, such as terraces, pits, ditches and, less often, shell middens. In the inland Waikato such surface visible features are not as apparent as elsewhere. On the low hills and plains there are often no surface visible features remaining, generally as a result of modern activities like ploughing or housing development. Small occupation sites that do not include substantial earthworks are often not observed and recorded. Additionally, almost all the recorded archaeological sites in the Lower and Middle Waikato Basins have been recorded on an ad hoc basis rather than as a result of systematic archaeological surveys. Many sites have been recorded off aerial photos but never ground checked by an archaeologist.

There are a series of typical feature types associated with the Waikato horticultural complex to contextualise the discussion of pre-European Māori gardening in the Waikato. The basic characteristics of features help archaeological examination of a site, and being able to compare them to other sites allows for a landscape approach to horticultural analysis of the Waikato. The following relies on Gumbley (2020).

The Hinuera formation is a coarse volcanic alluvium deposited by the ancestral Waipā and Waikato Rivers and derived from catchments in the central North Island around 100,000 to 22,000 years ago, forming a relatively flat plain. Before around 17,000 years ago, when it settled into its current channel, the Waikato flowed through numerous failed channels forming the low terraces of the Hinuera surface. Since then, numerous shallow tephras and alluviums have blanketed the Hinuera surface, forming the modern topsoils. The palaeochannels of the Waikato tend to form poorly drained swampy soils while the terraces above the channels form the well-drained, highly fertile soils that were the primary focus of pre-European Māori gardening. Māori dug 'borrow pits' down to the Hinuera gravels and then used these gravels in their gardens, either as a sheet mulch or by digging bowl-shaped hollows (BSH) in the soil above and filling these with gravel to grow kūmara in. It is assumed that these are the bases of mounds, and they are often erroneously referred to as such, or as puke, although only the bases of these purported puke remain. Modified garden soils in the Waikato are characterised by this admixture of Hinuera pumice and are usually found with 1 km of the borrow pits (Gumbley et. al. 2003; McCraw 2011; Campbell 2012; Gumbley 2020).

Borrow pits can be up to 40 m in diameter and they are generally 3–4 m deep, but can be over 5 metres deep and are the most visible aspect of the Waikato horticultural complex. They are often clearly visible on aerial photos, particularly photos from the mid-20th century.

3.3.1 Soils of the project area

The higher ground in the south is Hamilton Hills where the soil is medium to low fertility Hamilton clay loam, a deeply weathered alluvium around half a million years old (McCraw 2011). North of this are the soils of the Horotiu-Te Kowhai complex, which is essentially Horotiu soils that were previously located in the now drained palaeochannels of the river, or in this case, Lake Tunawhakapeka,

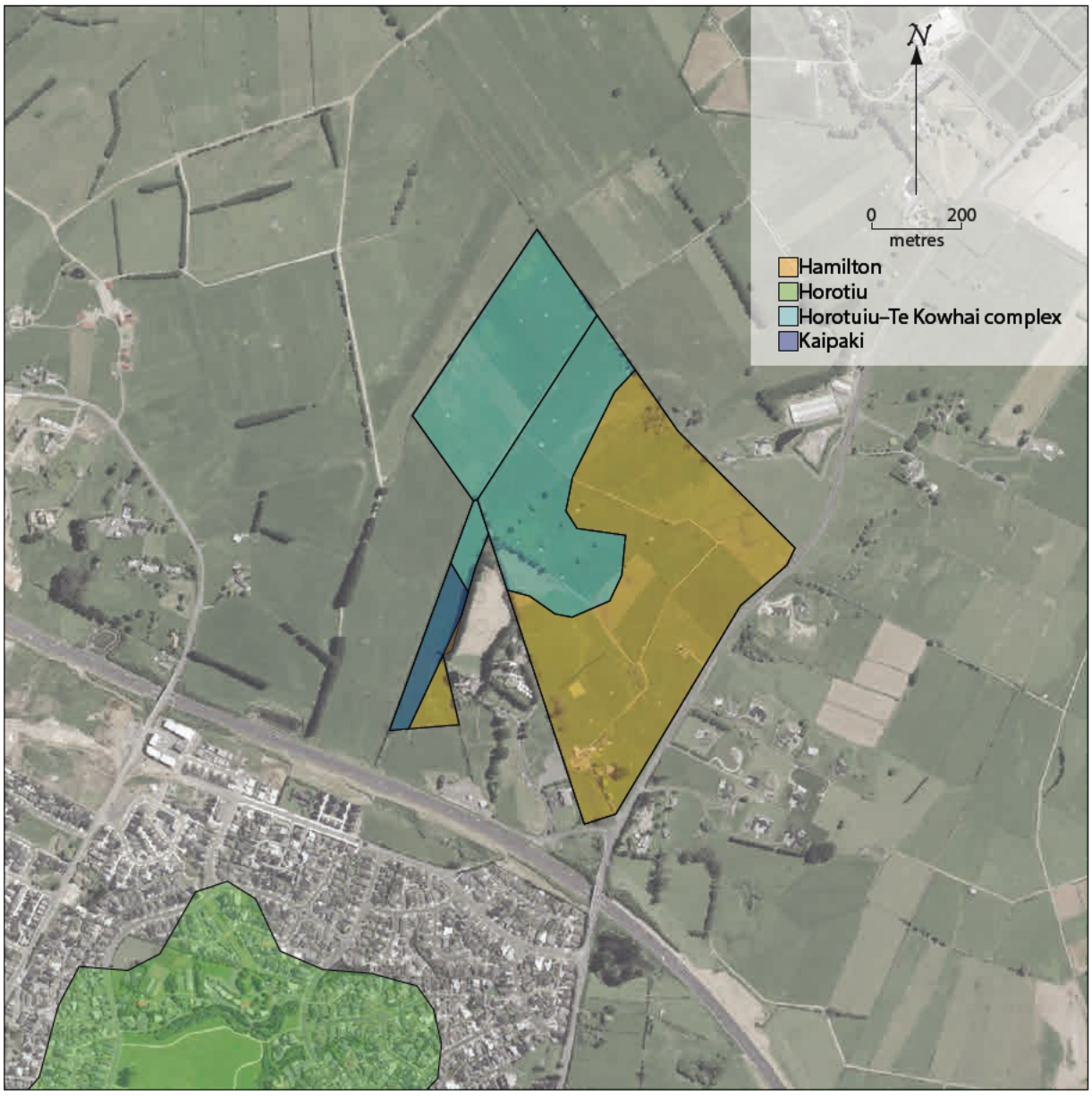


Figure 2. Soils of the project area (DSIR 1954), with nearby Horotiu soils also shown.

with a small area of Kaipaki peaty loam to the west, which would have been on the margins of the Komokorau bog (DSIR 1954). None of these soils would have been suitable for pre-European Māori kūmara horticulture although The Horotiu-Te Kowhai and Kapiaki soils may have been used for taro cultivation and the hills would have been well suited to crop storage. The nearest Horotiu soils are 500 m south the project area in the modern suburbs of east Hamilton (DSIR 1954) (Figure 2).

3.4 Land ownership

The project area was originally Lots 87, 88 and 89 Parish of Kirikiriroa, Komokorau Survey District. Land ownership following the confiscation can be traced through the Deeds Indexes online (noting that the Deeds themselves have not been accessed), and though subsequent Certificates of Title.

Lot 87 is recorded in Deeds Index 2F.189. It was granted by the Crown to George Reed in 1867, who conveyed it to David Bole in 1870, who in turn conveyed it to David Lock in 1877, who conveyed it to Butler in 1880. On 25 October 1885 Butler obtained a mortgage from the Bank of New Zealand

and the bank conveyed it to Rainer in 1890. By 1902 it was owned by Asplin who took out several mortgages, including to King Borman. The first Certificate of Title was issued in 1923 to Borman (CT SA375.71), who by 1929 had added Lot 1 DPS 9149, to the north of Lot 87 (CT SA603/52), to his holdings.

Lots 88 and 89 were both also granted in 1867 but the Deeds Indexes (1F.504, 1F.392) do not record who to. In 1878 both were conveyed to the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Ltd, whose directors included Auckland speculators and businessmen such as John Logan Campbell, Josiah Firth, Thomas Russell and James Williamson. It was then transferred to a successor company, the Waikato Land Association 1885 (CT SA40/163), who owned more than 87,000 acres of the Komokorau Bog (Figure 3), and began the drainage of the bog (https://teara.govt.nz/en/waikato-region/page-6; https://teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/27708/woodlands; https://natlib.govt.nz/records/22493512). The various companies formed to drain the Waikato swamps were only moderately successful and by the 1890s the government took them over and subdivided the lands for small farms. As late as 1935 the *Auckland Star* (10 January 1935: 11) reported:

> With the coming of drier weather good progress is being made with the work of excavating drains in the Taupiri swamp, and about 160 men are now engaged on the undertaking. Gangs are employed on the Central, Eureka, and Tauhei drains, on the eastern outlet, and along the Upper Mangawara. A start has been made on the Tunawhakapeka drain. The two private contracts for the draining of the Lower Mangara are now nearly completed.

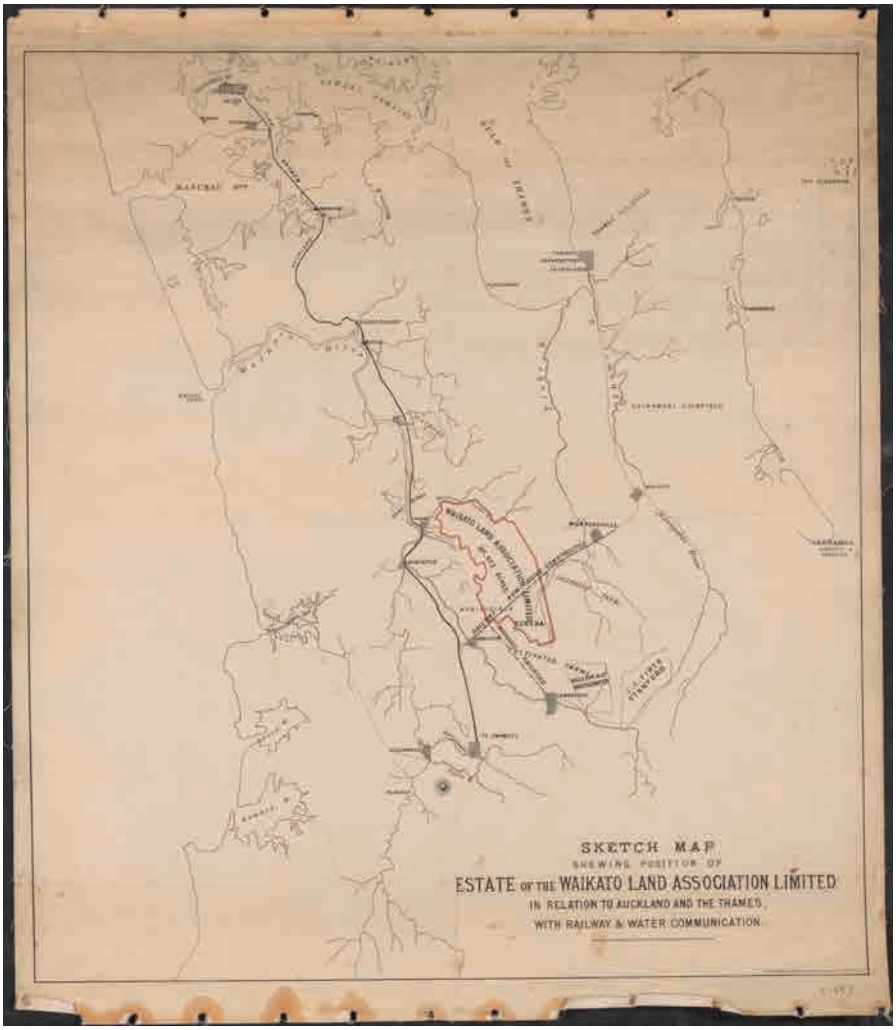


Figure 3. Undated plan showing the Waikato Land Association holdings (National Library of Australia MAP T 1553).

3.5 Old maps and plans

Two old maps and plans show the lots the west of the project area, or of the eastern lots, but not Lot 87. Both plans show the extent of Lake Tunawhakapeka prior to drainage, and CT 375/71 has a map of Lot 77 that shows the northern extent as "Original edge of lake." DP 1649 is dated 1896 and shows Section 83, owned by the Bank of New Zealand, under "Heavy Ti Tree" and, closer to the lake, "Flax swamp." Section 84 is owned, or at least occupied by Frederick Churches, while a ditch and bank hedge separates Sections 85 and 86 with a post and wire fence along the unformed 'paper' road boundary (Figure 4). These are all outside the project area, but show that the sections were well occupied by the end of the 19th century, and this probably applies to Section 87. DP 4154 shows Sections 88, 89 and 90, surveyed for the N.Z. Land Assoc. Ltd. In 1903. This plan also shows the extent of the lake, with the properties described as "Undulating Grass Land" but little other detail (Figure 5).

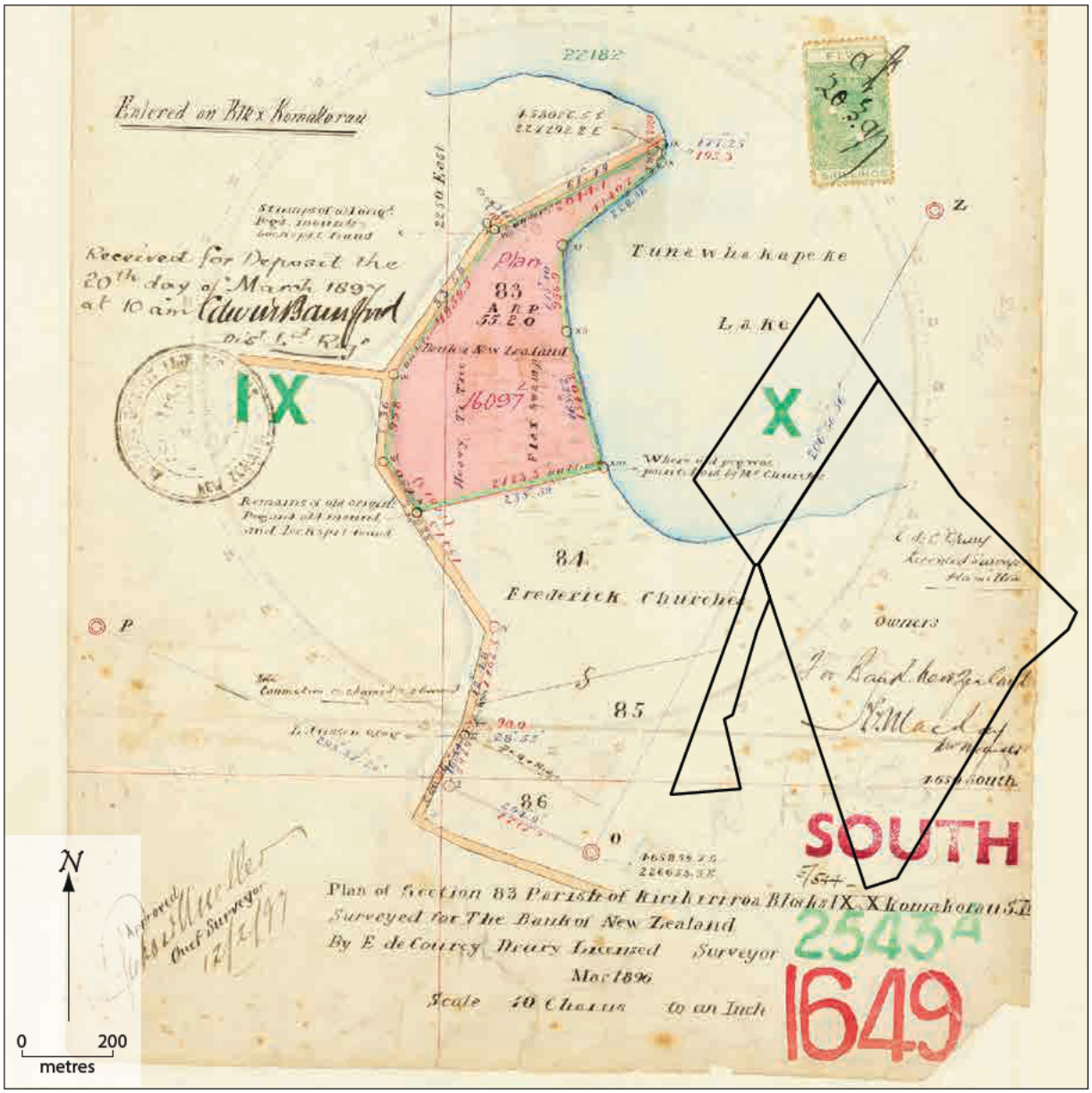


Figure 4. DP 1649, dated 1896, with the project area overlaid.

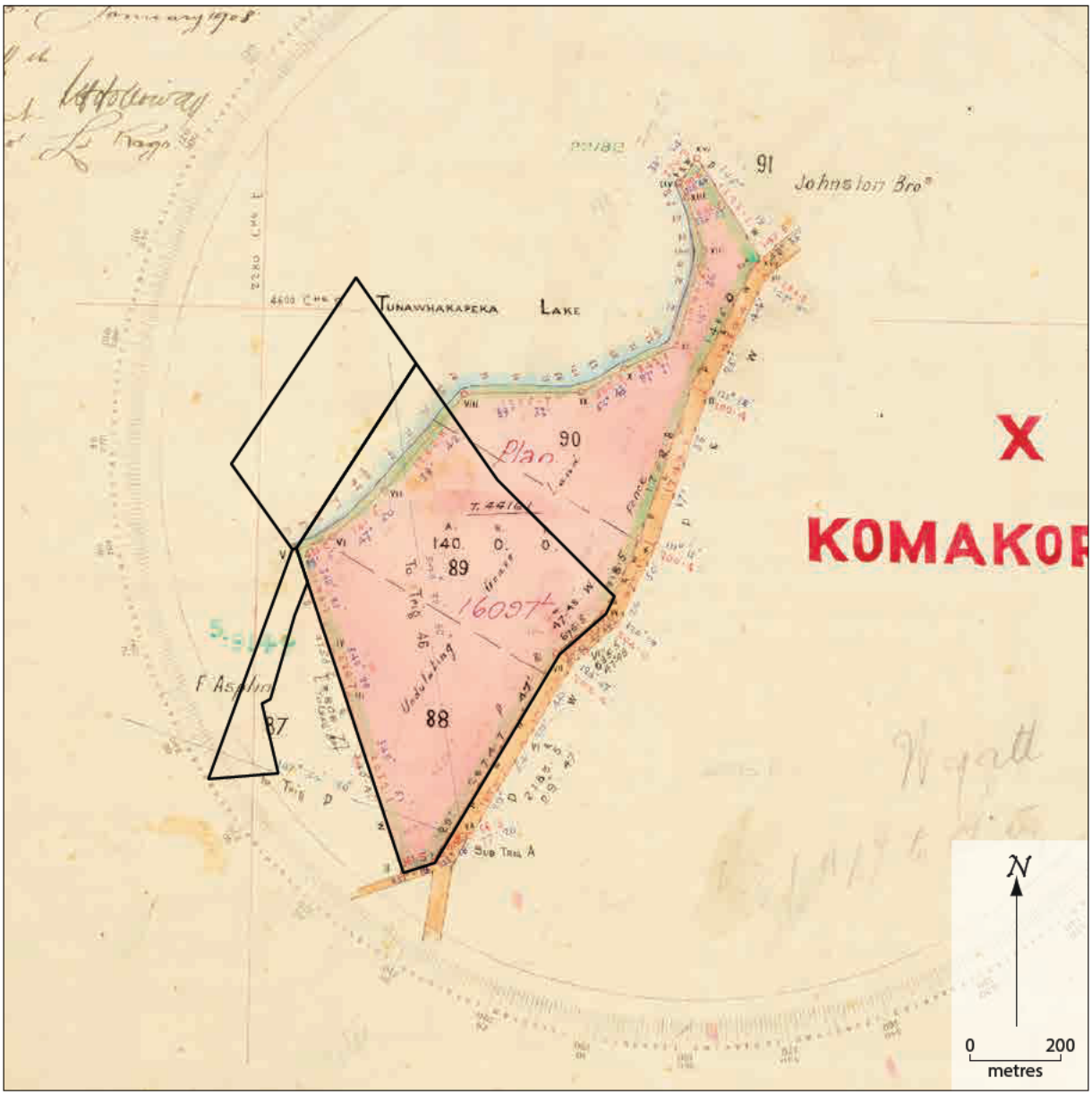


Figure 5. DP 4154, dated 1903, with the project area overlaid.

3.6 Aerial photos

None of the soils in the project area would have been suitable for gardening although the Hamilton clay loams could potentially have been suitable for crop storage, there are no borrow pits visible in aerial photos and the nearest recorded pits are S14/201 2.5 km to the south or S14/437 3.5 km to the northeast along the Komokorau Stream. In general, gardening evidence in the form of transported pumice gravels and bowl-shaped hollows are usually found no more than 1 km from borrow pits. The best early aerial photo that covers the R2 growth cell is SN525/1574/10, dated 26 September 1952. It shows no borrow pits at all in the wider area.

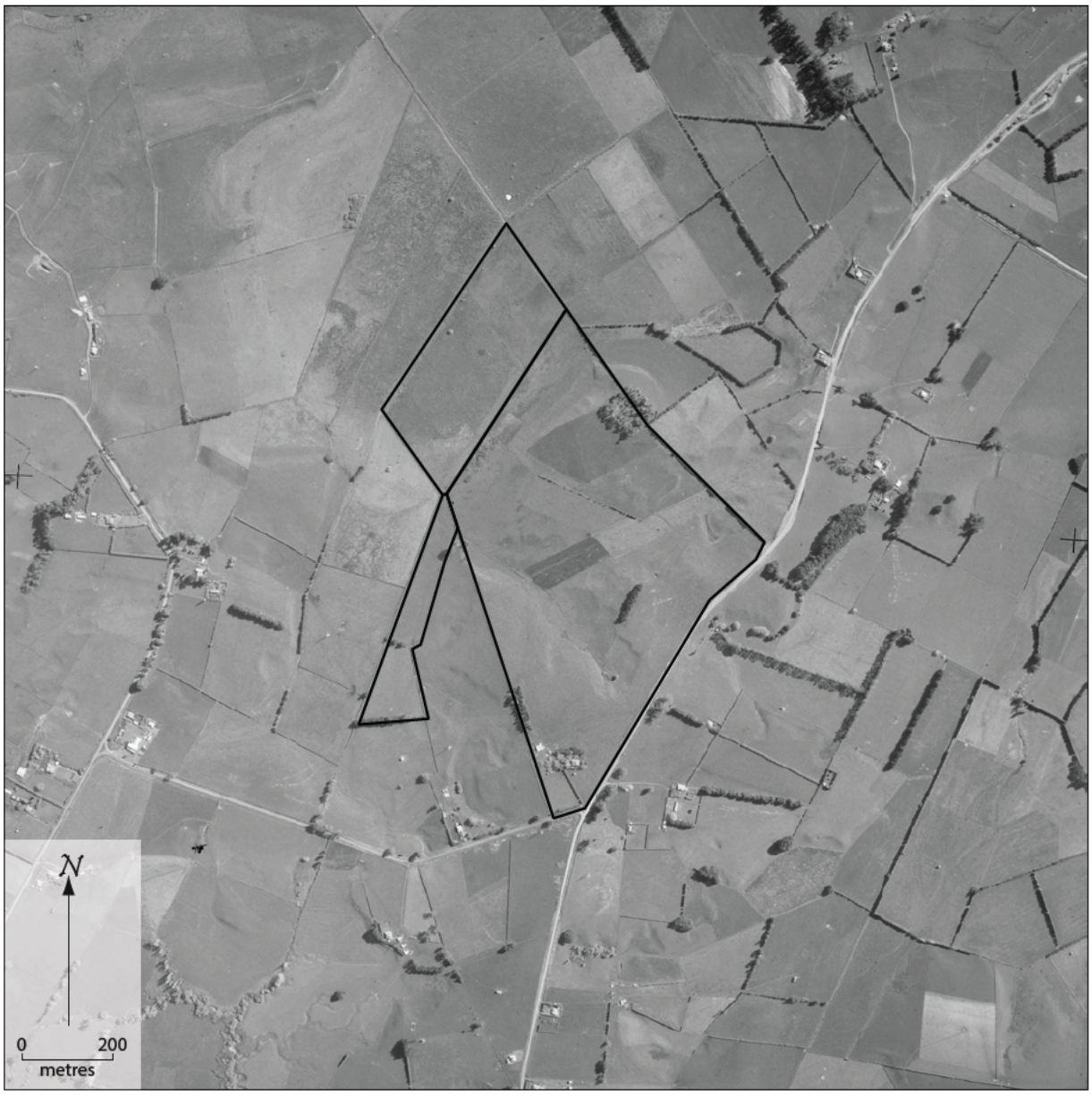


Figure 6. Detail of aerial photo SN525/1574/10, dated 1952, with the project area overlaid.

3.7 Archaeological background

Few archaeological sites are recorded close to the project area. Two borrow pit sites are recorded 1.5 km to the west along the Kirikiriroa Stream. One of these is S14/201 which is one of the first sites where the bowl-shaped hollows of the Waikato horticultural complex were first identified by Warren Gumbley and Tom Higham (Gumbley and Higham 2000; Gumbley et al. 2003). Other sites recorded in Hamilton city are generally riverbank pā or riverbank borrow pits, with the growth of the city since the late 19th century destroying most archaeological evidence away from the riverbank. To the north there are further borrow pit sites recorded along the Komokorau stream.

Few archaeological investigations have been carried out in Hamilton itself. Of those closest to the project area, some kākahi (freshwater mussel, *Hyridella menziesi*) was found by Alexy Simmons (2003) in retaining wall foundations near Miropiko Pā (S14/38). Also at Miropiko, Simmons (2007) found cultural layers, which she interpreted as the living surface of the pā, in postholes dug for refurbishment of the reserve. Later works uncovered a large posthole, a pit and two stone artefacts: a broken

toki and a stone pounder. The site was not dated but she suggested that the subsurface survival and integrity of Miropiko was good. At Te Totara papakāinga, a 19th century Māori site, Simmons (2008) monitored postholes for pou in 2007. During assessment Warren Gumbley had noted garden soils across the site and monitoring confirmed this. Creek remediation adjacent to Te Inanga Pā, S14/28, did not uncover any archaeological material (Simmons 2011). All these investigations are notably small in scale and, while they have been designed to avoid site damage and confirm the presence of archaeology with minimal site modification, don't really tell us much about the pre-European history of Hamilton. Although the construction of the Hamilton Expressway uncovered significant archaeology, none of this was near the project area (Keith 2019).

4 Field assessment

At the time of field assessment, the properties were grazed by young cattle, ground cover was generally low and ground surface visibility was good. The tops of the low Hamilton clay loam hills were closely inspected for evidence of kūmara storage pits, but none were observed (Figure 7). It should be noted that surface evidence of pits is often destroyed by ploughing and bulldozing but they can survive very well as subsurface archaeological features. On the low flat land, much of which was previously beneath Lake Tunawhakapeka or on the shoreline (Figure 8), the soil profile was visible in the open drains. To the south, where the soil type is the Horotiu-Te Kowhai complex, the bedded tephras and thin layers of pumice gravels were visible but these were not evidence of pre-European Māori gardening (Figure 9), while to the north, beneath the old lakebed, the soil remained waterlogged and the drains were full (Figure 10).

No evidence of pre-European Māori archaeology was observed.

The villa at 319 Gordonton Road is of unknown date but the evidence of the Deeds Indexes, where mortgages were taken out to the Bank of New Zealand in 1885 and by Asplin in 1902, along with the style of the villa, suggests it may have been built between these two dates. The building was only observed from the outside from the next-door paddocks.



Figure 7. View along the top of a typical low hill.



Figure 8. View north from the low hills across the drained flat land.



Figure 9. Soil profile of the Horotiu-Te Kowhai complex visible in the open drain to the south of the flat land.



Figure 10. Soil profile of the Horotiu-Te Kowhai complex beneath the former lakebed visible in the open drain to the north of the flat land.



Figure 11. The villa at 319 Gordonton Road.

5 Assessment

The following assessment of values and significance relate only to archaeological values. Other interested parties, in particular mana whenua, may hold different values regarding the project.

While there is no evidence of pre-European Māori archaeology in the project area, the area is on the margins of known garden lands and the margins of the Komokorau bog, as well the location of the former Lake Tunawhakapeka. The lake would have been a source of resources such as shellfish, fish, birds and plants such as harakeke. It would have been an attractive location for settlement, whether on the flat land or the lower slopes of the hills. Archaeological evidence of this in the form of shell middens, cooking areas and postholes outlining drying racks and even small houses may survive. There is reasonable cause to suspect that archaeological sites and features may be present in the project area.

The villa will date to the late 19th or early 20th centuries, it is not currently possible to tell. If it is 19th century it is an archaeological site under the definitions in the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. Further archival research and a close inspection of the building by a specialist could determine its likely date of construction.

6 Recommendations

These recommendations are only made on the basis of the archaeological values that have been outlined above. Any other values associated with special interest groups, including tangata whenua, can only be determined by them. It is recommended that:

- further research is undertaken into the history and occupation of the villa, including site visits;
- an authority to modify or destroy any archaeological sites and features in the project area be applied for from The Environmental Protection Authority under Section 42(4)(i) and Schedule 8 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 during the Substantive Application;
- since archaeological survey cannot always detect sites of traditional significance to Māori, or wahi tapu, the appropriate mana whenua authorities should be consulted regarding the possible existence of such sites, and the recommendations in this report.

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