

3.5 CULTURE AND HISTORY

3.5.1 CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL VALUES

The Outer Green Belt is a rich cultural and historical resource that can only be partly described in this plan. Some of the highlights are listed below, along with suggested additional reading. The purpose of this Plan is not to be the repository for all historical and cultural information about the Outer Green Belt, but to explore issues and opportunities for the protection and appropriate presentation and enjoyment of these resources.

Maori history and significance

While European settlers gave names to different parts of the skyline, most of the central ridge was known to local Maori as Te Wharangi (broad open space). This ridge was not inhabited by Maori, but was traversed frequently by foot when moving between Te Whanganui-a-Tara and Owhariu (mainly via a route over the Kilmister Tops).

An excellent source of information on Maori place names and their significance in the Wellington area is *The Great Harbour of Tara, Traditional Maori Place-names and Sites of Wellington Harbour and Environs*²¹.

Karori Reservoir

Prior to becoming a wildlife sanctuary, this valley had a long history as part of the city water supply system. In recent years the catchment ceased to be a source of water for the water supply system, but the lower valley contained (and still contains) infrastructure forming part of the Wellington City water reticulation system. The remaining features of historical interest are the two dams and their associated structures, including the iconic valve tower in the middle of the lower dam. Development of the sanctuary provided public access to this formerly closed area and the opportunity to fund and carry out restoration and interpretation of these features.

Further information can be found in the *Karori Reservoir Wildlife Sanctuary Management Plan*.

Wrights Hill Fortress

Historically, Wright Hill is best known for its World War II fortifications, which are the most extensive in Wellington. The fortress was built from 1942 to 1949 to service the 9.2 inch battery gun that was to help protect Wellington from a potential Japanese invasion. This is one of three such installations built in New Zealand. The full history of this fortress (mostly an underground network of tunnels and rooms) is provided in the *Wright Hill Fortress Conservation Plan*.

Old Coach Road

Old Coach Road is the first road connecting Johnsonville and Ohariu Valley, built between 1856 and 1858. Its popular name is a misnomer as there would have been very few coaches along this route. Nevertheless it is recognised as one of the best preserved horse-era roads in New Zealand and has a category one Historic Places Act

²¹ Adkin, G. L., 1959

classification. The whole of the unsealed part, except for the altered section at the bottom of Carmichael Street, is well preserved. The recent purchase of the land either side of Old Coach Road allows the Council to protect and manage this area.

Gold prospecting excavations

A number of former gold prospecting excavations and other remains exist in the Outer Green Belt. The excavations mostly have the form of horizontal shafts 20 metres or more in length. They provide evidence of the former belief that the Wellington was likely to have significant gold deposits. Nothing of any significance was ever found.

History of the Outer Green Belt landscape

This could also be described as the history of European settlement and land use, or the history of the growth of Wellington City. Like much of Wellington, the Outer Green Belt has undergone considerable landscape and ecological modification following the settlement of the area by Europeans in the early 19th century. Areas resembling all the main phases can be found today in different parts of the Outer Green Belt.

These phases include:

- clearance of almost all the dense indigenous forest
- extensive sheep and cattle farming
- retirement of the poorer quality areas as profitability declined
- protection of some areas as reserves for the enjoyment of city residents
- active restoration of key areas
- encroachment of the urban environment up the eastern slopes.

The establishment of Otari – Wilton’s Bush is an important part of this, and the history of botanical study and plant conservation in New Zealand.

3.5.2 CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A wide view of the city

The size of the Outer Green Belt and the opportunity it gives to see the city as a whole provides an opportunity for interpreting, not just the history of the Outer Green Belt landscape, but the rest of the city as well. Submitters support the inclusion of information and interpretation to enhance the visitor experience and inform the community about the important history of this area.

Maori place names and history

Maori history and values associated with the Outer Green Belt need to be given appropriate recognition. In particular, the names of the various ridges and valleys that make up the Outer Green Belt, could be given greater prominence in Wellington City Council publications and maps.

Historical focal points

The main historical focal points should continue to be protected and further developed as visitor attractions. For Old Coach Road in particular, this will be associated with the provision of appropriate visitor facilities and management of the adjoining land

following its recent acquisition by the Council. A development plan for this area is under way.

Identification and recognition of secondary historical sites

In developing this Plan, many other less prominent historical and cultural features are being identified and will receive recognition. This information is included in Section 5.

Examples include the sites of early settler houses (often marked by an old chimney and a cluster of large macrocarpa trees); former gold mining excavations; logging pits; old farming relics and remains; original native treestumps; stories of former landowners and their relationship with the land; and so on. This information will be useful in telling stories about each part of the Outer Green Belt.