

6.15 Waireka Cemetery

Description

Location:	Waireka Road West and Gardner Road; between Omata and Oakura
Legal description:	Part Section 14 Omata District (Block IV Paritutu Survey District)
Size:	1.01 hectares
Reserve status:	Subject to the Reserves Act 1977
Reserve classification:	Local purpose (cemetery) reserve



Physical description

Waireka Cemetery is located between Omata and Oakura, off State Highway 45 on Waireka Road West, at the junction with Gardner Road.

The site is slightly to moderately sloping with a flat lower field in the vicinity of Gardner Road, that is fenced off and grazed. The cemetery is in a rural setting and looks out toward the sea and Paritutu.

Tangata whenua interests

This reserve is within the tribal rohe of Taranaki Iwi. It is of historic and cultural significance to Nga Mahanga-a-Tairi hapu.

Land status and acquisition history

The Crown granted part rural section 14 (some two acres and two rods) on the plan of the Omata District, to George Augustus, Bishop of the Church of England and Ireland in New Zealand, on the second of July 1857, signed by Governor Browne.

On November 1929 the Church of England Trust Board were the owners of Part Section 14. The land was acquired by His Majesty the King in March 1932, from the Church of England Trust Board as a reserve for the purpose of a public cemetery (Transfer 57922)¹.

Governor-General Bledisloe in 1934, pursuant to section four of the Cemeteries Act 1908, delegated to the Taranaki County Council the powers to appoint and remove trustees of the cemetery at Waireka Road, Omata. Recorded in a gazette notice dated May 1934 (page 1217).

In July 1957 by way of gazette notice (page 1373), Governor-General Norrie pursuant to the Cemeteries Act 1908, appointed the Taranaki County Council as trustee of the Omata Cemetery, formerly known as the Waireka Road Omata Cemetery.

Underlying ownership of the land is with the Crown. Under section 11 of the Cemeteries Act 1908, the land is vested in the Council.

View of sloped area of the cemetery



History and cultural values

Church

A newspaper article indicates a church was built in 1848 and opened by Archdeacon Govett². The description of the church's location matches that of Waireka Cemetery, however, accounts through other documents such as the Church of England's and the

¹ This land was permanently set aside as a reserve under the Reserves and Domains Act 1908 and, through subsequent Acts of Parliament, is deemed to be a reserve for the purposes of the Reserves Act 1977.

² Taranaki Herald, 3 September 1894

map of the Battle of Waireka, indicate the church's location as elsewhere on Waireka Road. The church was known as St John's and was relocated in 1874 to the present day site, on the intersection Waireka Road East and South Road's (State Highway 45). The 1848 church demolished in a storm and this larger building was replaced in 1875, by the building which still exists.

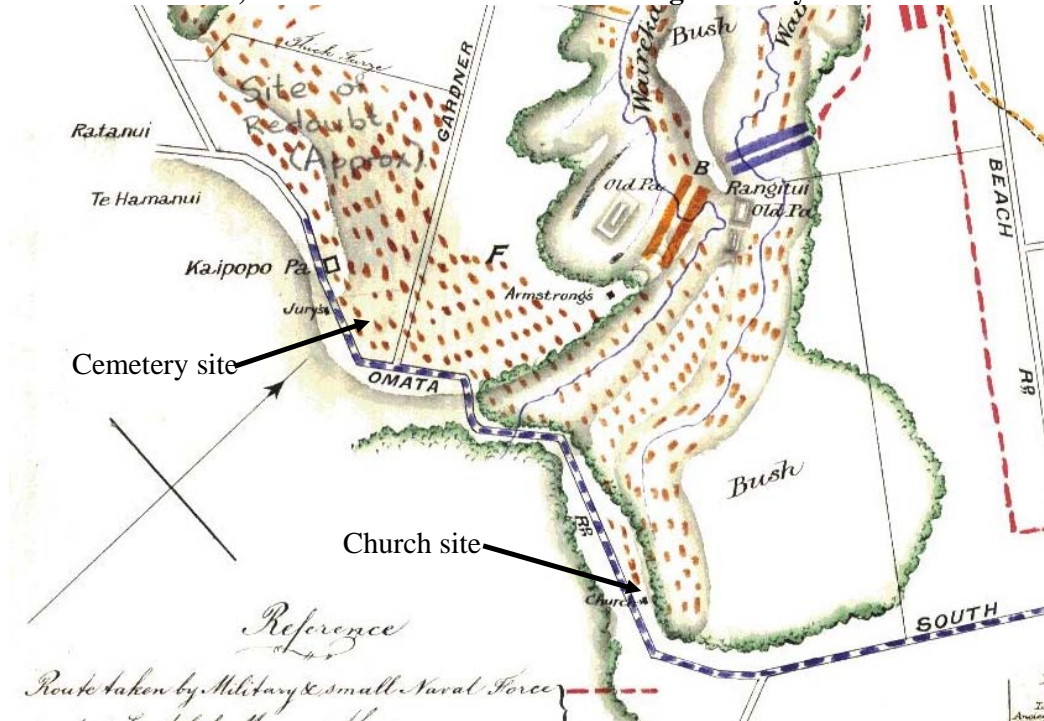
First Burials

The reserve has been used as a burial ground for many years, with the earliest burial being 1855 and some predating the Battle of Waireka in 1860. The Deposited Plan 1002 surveyed for H.T.Wood in April 1896, shows the Church of England as occupiers of Part Section 14. It will require research to find out if the cemetery was a private burial ground in 1855, or part of the church grounds, and that the Church of England administered it as a public cemetery as opposed to denominational burial ground.

Battle of Waireka

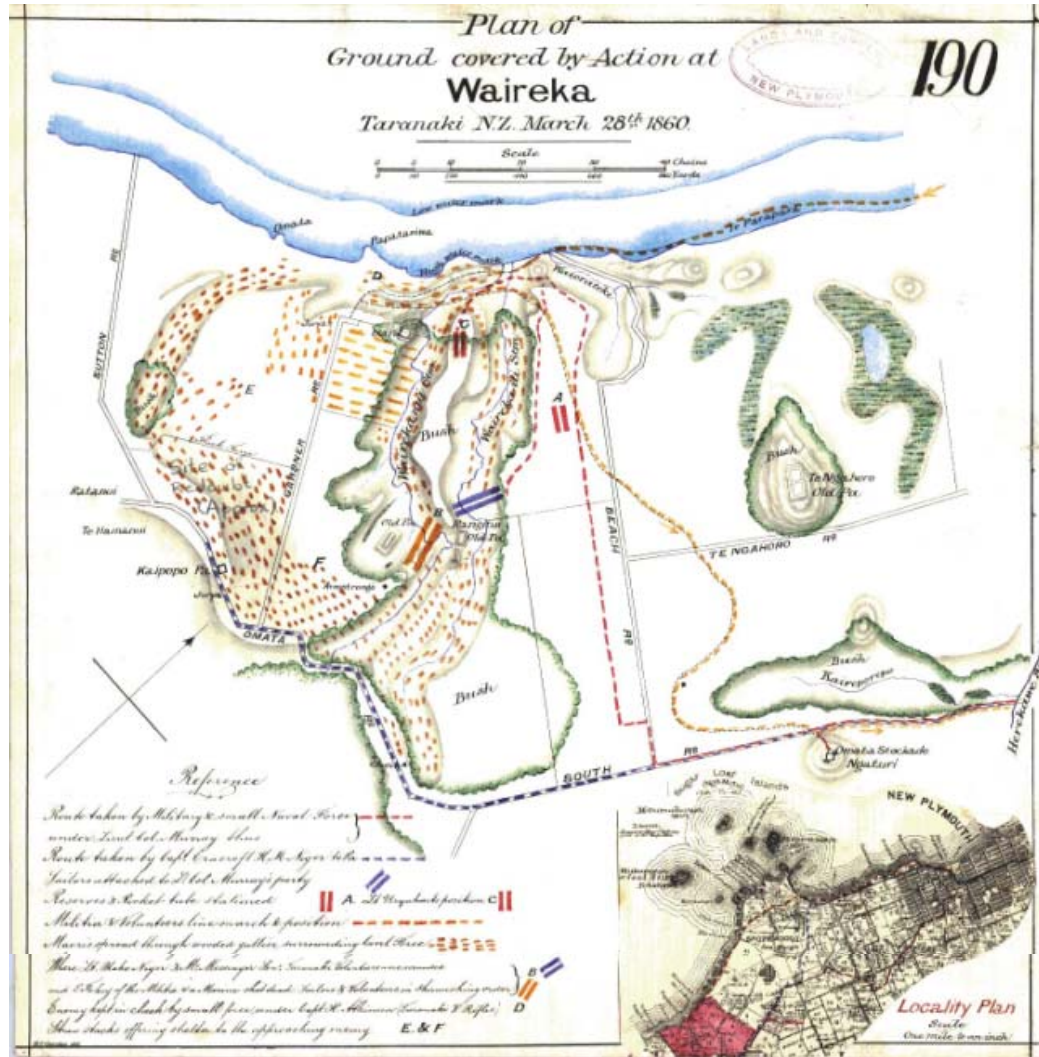
There is considerable history in the landscape about the cemetery. Back toward State Highway 45 near the junction of Waireka Road West and Sutton Road , are a cluster of Archaeological sites including a Pa (waahi tapu site 108 in the District Plan), a Military Redoubt (archaeological site 36), and the site of the Waireka Battle, 27 March 1860 (archaeological site 684). The Waireka Monument is located at the road junction and is a Category B in the District Plan.

Battle of Waireka, 28 March 1860 – detail indicating cemetery site



The site of the Waireka Cemetery is within the area of conflict in the Battle of Waireka. This plan of the battle shows Kaipopo Pa immediately to the north of the cemetery site and the positions of the fighting parties.

Battle of Waireka, 28 March 1860



Cemetery trustees

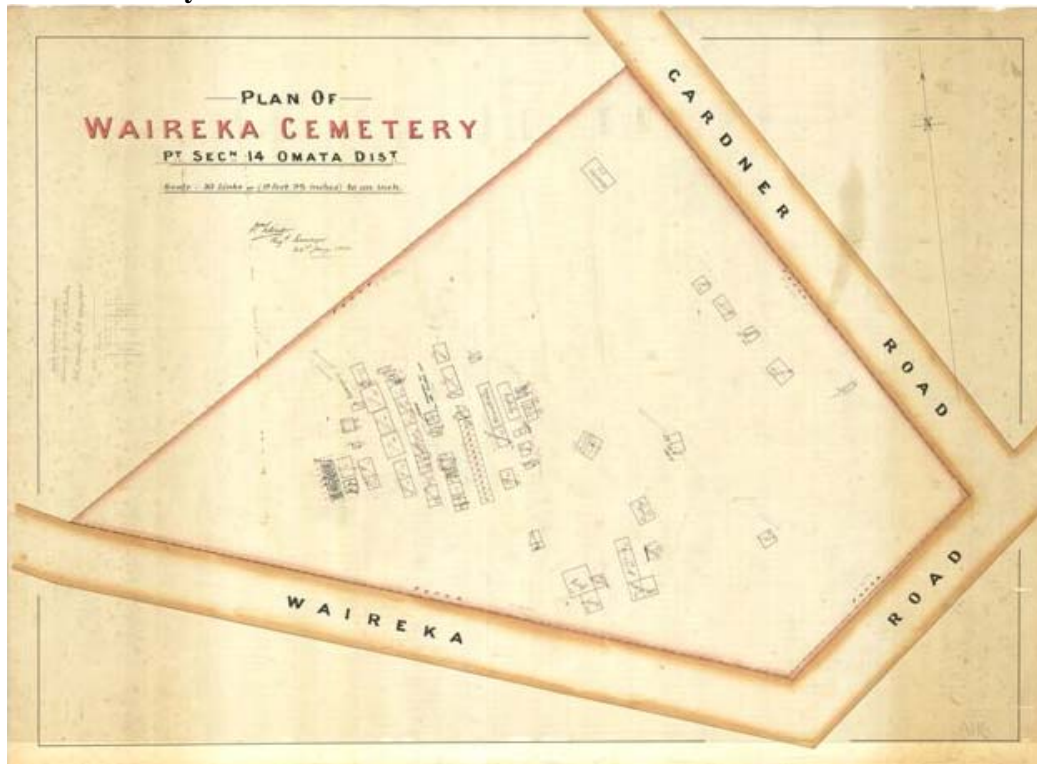
From 1929, when the Crown took ownership of the cemetery until 1957, trustees controlled and managed the cemetery. The trustees were appointed by the Crown up to 1934, when the appointing powers were delegated to the Council. In 1957, the Council was appointed to control and manage the cemetery.

The Taranaki County Council advertised in the Taranaki Daily News inviting relatives of persons buried at Waireka Cemetery to attend a meeting on 27 July 1974, at the cemetery to discuss the matter of repairs to surrounds of old graves and the closing of the cemetery. The meeting was brought about by the chairman of the Council noting the “deplorable condition” of the graveyard section of the cemetery, with generous growth of bracken fern, gorse and overgrown planted trees. The report

recommended closing the cemetery as a burial ground, clearing away of all surplus growth including overgrown trees.

The cemetery was not closed at this time and it can be assumed that the meeting persuaded council officers not to pursue this action.

1932 Cemetery Plan



Naming of the Cemetery

In July 1957, a gazette notice changed the cemetery's name from Waireka Road Omata Cemetery to the Omata Cemetery. The cemetery is accessed from Waireka Road which was previously named Omata Road, as shown on the 1860 map included in this plan.

Documents from the Council's archives include correspondence through the 1950s and 1960s that refers to the Cemetery as either Omata or Waireka. In 1950 the cemetery trustees referred to themselves as the Waireka Cemetery Board, from whom the Council took over the responsibilities to control and manage the cemetery in 1957. The Council's report and burial records of the 1970s refer to the reserve as Waireka Cemetery.

In the process of classifying this reserve, it is recommended that the Council rename this reserve as the Waireka Cemetery, to align it the currently acknowledged name.

Transcribing of headstones

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Genealogy Society transcribed the headstones in the cemetery and identified 140 people buried at Waireka. In 2005, approximately 50 headstones were standing.

Existing improvements

Memorial gates were installed at the cemetery in 1976. These gates were part funded by a grant from the Omata Hall Society (now defunct).

A car lay-by was constructed in 2009, at the western part of the cemetery and is accessed from Waireka Road West. It accommodates approximately six cars. A seat was installed near the car lay-by and a sign naming the cemetery in 2008.



The Cemetery is listed in the District Plan as a heritage site, Category B.

Management and administration

The Council currently controls and manages the cemetery with the land vested in the Council.

The cemetery had been grazed for a number of years by sheep. The sloped western part of the cemetery is no longer grazed and is mown by the Council; the lower flat area continues to be grazed. Damage to headstones including destabilising their footings, has been previously attributed to grazing sheep.

Two graves are cared for by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage: the historic grave of Trooper Antonio Rodriguez de Sardinha and the South African War grave of Private Lewis Oscar Newsham.

The Friends of the Waireka Cemetery was formed in 2006, with the goal of advancing the preservation and maintenance of the cemetery including its rural attributes.

The Friends of the Waireka Cemetery submission to the Council's 2008/2009 Annual Plan resulted in the Council resolving to advise the Friends of improvements to be carried out in the 2008/2009 financial year, to undertake regular maintenance of the

cemetery and to consider installing a car park and road frontage improvements as part of the 2009-2019 Community Plan process. Also that headstone conservation be considered under the Council's Heritage Strategy. A car lay-by has been installed at the cemetery and road frontage improvements and regular maintenance have also been actioned.

Geophysical survey (2008)

A geophysical survey of the cemetery including the historic churchyard was commissioned by a local resident with Council involvement and completed by Geometria Limited in August 2008. The purpose of the survey was to assist in determining the locality of any unmarked graves and the location of the church thought to have once been located in the cemetery grounds.

The survey analysis identified a number of anomalies in the open areas between marked graves on the sloped ground and on the lower field. The report considered that only two pits were likely to be graves, with other pit features likely to be the result of farming activity. The survey also indicated an area with features that could have been a platform for a small building mounted on foundations. The survey indicated that a possible pathway once lead to this area raised the prospect that this could be the location of the 1848 church. The geophysical analysis undertaken however, cannot confirm that the structure was a church. A farm building could equally produce similar results³.

The survey commissioned by the local resident is of benefit to the Council, providing a guide as to where developmental work can be undertaken in the cemetery, such as new burial plots, though further ground investigative work is likely to be required.

Archaeological test excavations (2011)

An archaeological test excavation of the lower flat area (currently grazed) has been completed by Opus International Consultants⁴ operating under an archaeological authority from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

The test excavation undertook to ground truth the Geophysical survey (2008) and the 1932 Cemetery Plan and to identify areas that are 'clear' of existing graves or other archaeological features. The test excavation involved trenching of strips through the field identified some unmarked burials and did not identify any features that would be associated with the earlier 1848 church.

The report concluded that there was no evidence of a building structure as deemed possible in the Geophysical survey (2008) and that the church may have been built of make shift materials such that no evidence remained or that it existed elsewhere in the cemetery or on a neighbouring property.

³ Geometria: Geophysical Survey, Waireka Cemetery, Omata, Taranaki. August 2010: DM 703979

⁴ Waireka Cemetery: Section 18 Report of Archaeological Test Excavations 2011; DM 1227206

The test excavation identified two areas as clear for burials. The test excavation also affirmed confidence in the accuracy of the 1932 Cemetery Plan, advising that the plan be used to identify the three remaining unmarked burials. The report's recommendations are included in the 'Management objectives and specific policies' section.

Management objectives and specific policies

- This cemetery is managed as an open cemetery.
- The undeveloped lower flat part of the cemetery will be managed through grazing.
- Results from the archaeological test excavations⁵ have indicated that the 1932 Cemetery Plan is accurate and can be confidently used to identify the unmarked burials in the cemetery. It is recommended that the seven burials identified through the test excavations be permanently marked and that the three unmarked burials identified in the plan be ground truthed and marked.
- It is possible that archaeological features exist in the cemetery and therefore development work should proceed in conjunction with an accidental discovery protocol and if evidence of a suspected grave is identified, work should cease in that area until the features are confirmed as a grave, evidence of a archaeological structure or a natural anomaly.
- Unmarked graves identified in the archaeological test excavations (2011) conducted in the flat lower flat area of the cemetery, are to have a concrete memorial strip/marker added at the head of the grave site. Each strip/marker that locates a grave will have an identifier number that will be recorded on the cemetery plan.
- The official name of the cemetery has been approved by the Council on 20 December 2011 as Waireka Cemetery, under section 16(10) of the Reserves Act 1977.
- A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is to be established with the Friends of the Waireka Cemetery which is to include consultation with the Friends for any proposed development works before their implementation.
- The maximum burial use of the sloped portion of the cemetery (not currently grazed), will be achieved before the development of the lower flat area which is currently grazed, proceeds. The plan below indicates two open space areas on the slope, area A and B that are available for burials. Both area A and B have been checked against cemetery records and aerial photographs.
- Service vehicle and pedestrian access is to be developed to the lower field as part of the development of this burial area (see plan below), as the need to use the undeveloped area of the cemetery eventuates. The entrance will require a culvert laid over the open drain with road and pathway including gates installed to allow access. It is intended that cars attending a funeral service can park along Gardner Road in the vicinity of the pedestrian entrance, with service vehicles gaining access from the new access way.

⁵ Waireka Cemetery: Section 18 Report of Archaeological Test Excavations 2011; DM 1227206

Development Plan and white outline area indicates the area of pre 1900 development at the cemetery, constituting an archaeological area under the Historic Places Act 1993.



- White outlines indicating graves that pre date 1900, and therefore constitute an archaeological site under the Historic Places Act 1993.



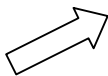
- Area available for 24 casket burials – site identified as having no burials through cemetery records and aerial photographs.



- Area available for ash interments.



- Area currently grazed to be developed as capacity is reached in the developed portion of the cemetery



- Area to be developed for vehicle and pedestrian entrance to lower field. Car parking along Gardner Road for access to the entrance when lower fields are used for burials. Vegetation may need to be lifted or cleared to improve visibility on the sharp corner where Gardner Road meets Waireka Road West.