

**TUFF CRATER RESERVE WALKWAY  
UPGRADE, EXMOUTH ROAD,  
NORTHCOTE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSESSMENT**

*Prepared for North Shore City Council*

*by*

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# **TUFF CRATER RESERVE WALKWAY UPGRADE, EXMOUTH ROAD, NORTHCOTE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

## ***Introduction***

An archaeological assessment was carried out on the section of the Tuff Crater Walkway proposed for upgrade at the request of Jane Kerwood (Parks and Environment Officer) of the North Shore City Council. The land is bounded by Hearn Park to the east, MacBreen Ave to the south and the Tuff Crater Lagoon to the west and north (Figure 1). The walkway predominantly traverses along the foreshore below a steep escarpment densely covered in a mix of re-generating native bush and wilding exotic species. Above are residential dwellings.

## ***Method***

The New Zealand Archaeological Association's Site Record File was searched for archaeological and historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed walkway. Early plans (DPs and SOs) were examined at Land Information New Zealand (LINZ). A visual inspection with some probe and spade testing was conducted along the extent of the walkway.

## ***Results***

### **Background**

Background research failed to identify any previously recorded archaeological sites in the immediate vicinity of the walkway. However, two archaeological sites (R11/912 and 967, site forms appended) were recorded in Weeks Reserve, Onepoto Basin approximately 350m to the south (Figure 1). Both sites are shell midden (food waste, predominantly shell with charcoal and hangi stone) related to Maori use of Shoal Bay and its immediate environs.

A survey plan dated 1961 (DP 50230) shows the Exmouth St/MacBreen Ave subdivision. It is assumed that housing was built soon after.

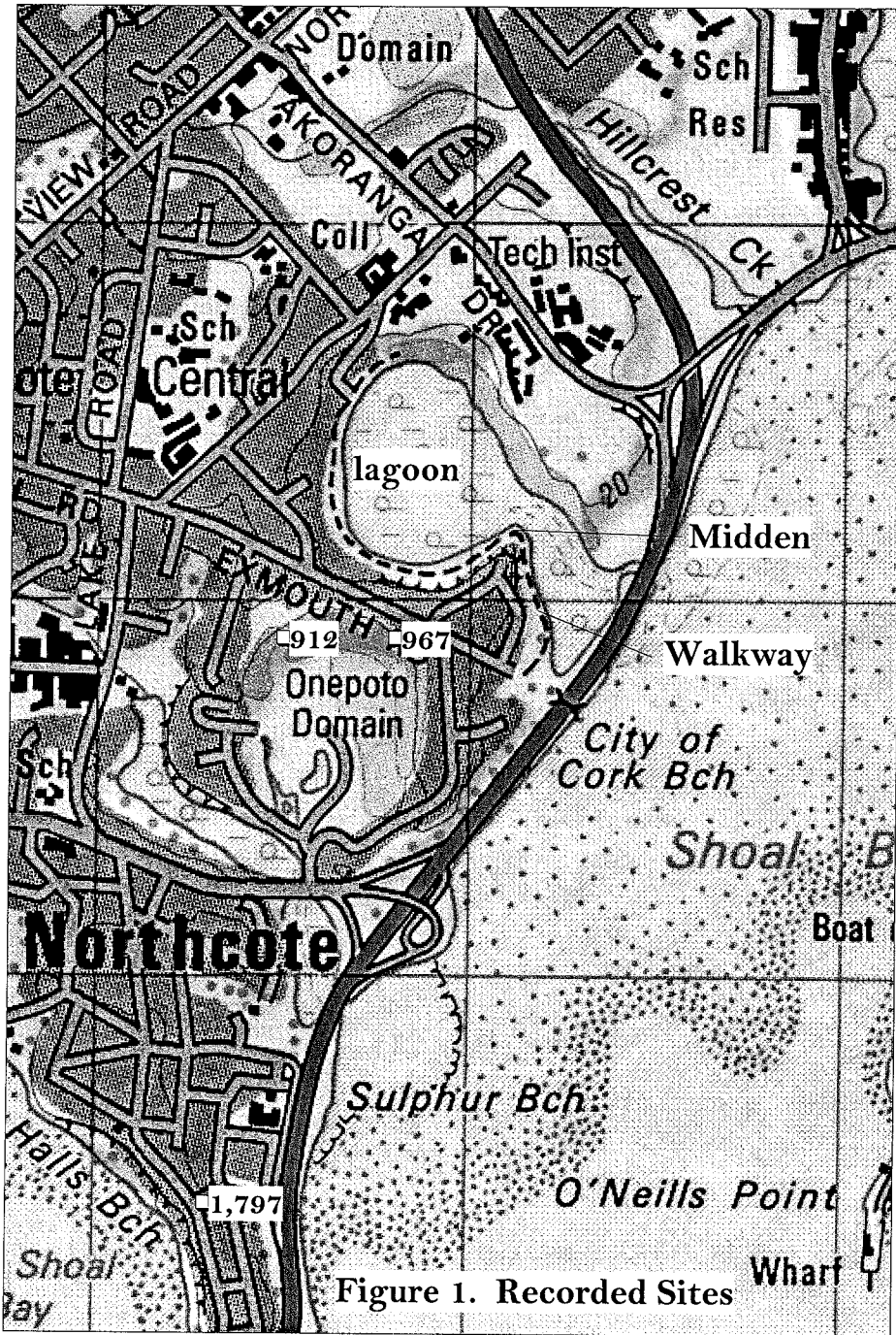


Figure 1. Recorded Sites

The walkway is located on the foreshore of a tidal lagoon, in an area which would have had various natural advantages for Maori and early European settlement - easy access to elevated occupation areas, fertile volcanic soils, marine resources and navigable waterways.

Shoal Bay, from Northcote Point to Stanley Point, was reputedly heavily populated by Maori before internecine fighting in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries resulted in the abandonment of much of the Auckland area (McCowan 1993). In the 1830s, following the cessation of hostilities in the Auckland region, Shoal Bay was re-occupied by Maori under chief Hetaraka Takapuna, and their descendents were still in residence in the 1890s on the shores of the Tuff Crater Lagoon (McCowan 1993) (Additional information in Clough & Prince 2001).

## Survey

The walkway is predominantly constructed along a narrow natural terrace at the base of a steep escarpment on the southern shore of the Tuff Crater Lagoon. Up to c. 2m above sea level, the walkway connects the inner shore of the lagoon to Shoal Bay. Recently the eastern half of the walkway has been upgraded (timber boxed and surfaced with a stone aggregate) and North Shore City Council has proposed a similar upgrade to the remaining c. 200m of the track from the knoll at the eastern entrance to the Lagoon to where the bush covered escarpment gives way to open grassland in the west. Currently the section to be upgraded comprises a beaten earth track approximately 2m wide with a low spade scarp on its southern side.

Three previously unrecorded archaeological sites were identified on the Tuff Crater Lagoon Walkway during the current survey (Figure 2). These are indicative of Maori occupation around the Tuff Crater Lagoon, an occupation that was apparently focused on the elevated tuff-ring that surrounds the Lagoon and is now predominantly in residential subdivision.

The three sites consist of shell midden and possible terraces. They have been recorded as numbers R11/2120-2122 in the New Zealand Archaeological Association Site Record Forms have been completed for these sites and are appended to this report.

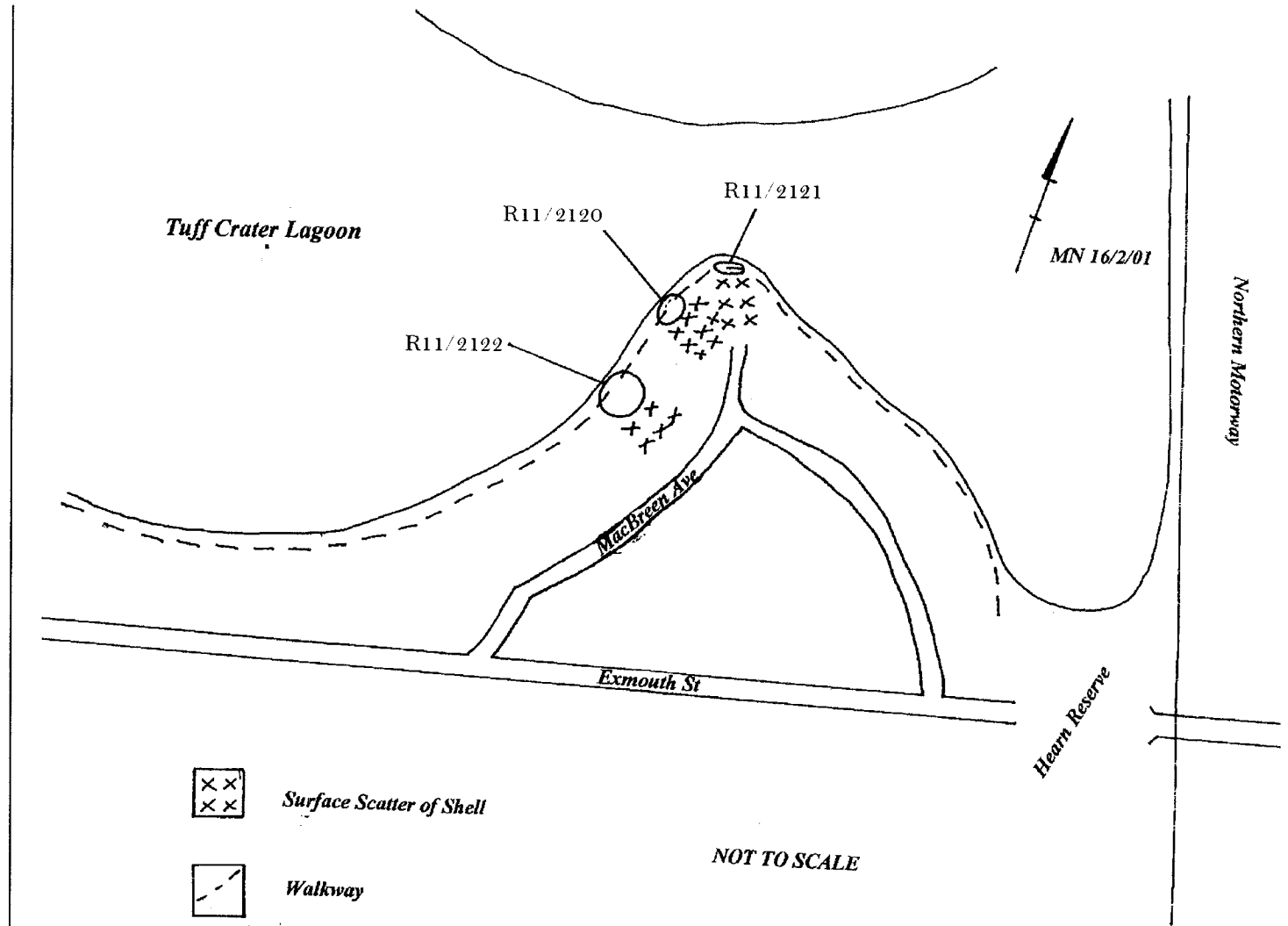


Figure 2. Location of Archaeological Features on Walkway

### R11/2120 Midden

This site consists of surface scatters of shell visible on the escarpment above the track at the south-eastern entrance of the Tuff Crater Lagoon and a small lens in the scarp above the track (Figure 2). The scatters of whole and fragmented shell (predominantly cockle) are spread over the escarpment below the back yards of 34, 34A, 36 and 36A MacBreen Ave. Surface shell can also be seen below the recently completed track, along with a 100mm thick x 2m long deposit of shell with some charcoal and fire cracked rock (hangi stone) contained in a light grey soil matrix that is visible in the track scarp. Overlain by a mixed clay and soil over-burden, it is possible that the deposit lies in an inter-cut feature, as suggested by an apparent edge visible at its eastern end. However, the physical appearance of the over-burden (mixed clay and grey soil) and midden material (light grey soil matrix and loose packing of the shell), its situation (450mm below a mixed clay over-burden) and the surface scatters above, suggest that it is more likely to be an accumulation of eroded midden in a natural depression.

No intact archaeological features were identified in the vicinity.

### R11/2121 Midden and ?Terrace

This site is initially identified by a scatter of shell on the track surface approximately 100m southwest of R11/2120 (Figure 2) and c. 1.5m above sea level. A closer inspection detected a 50mm thick lens of shell midden c. 120mm below the top of the track scarp, whilst a spade test in the track revealed a 100mm thick lens 120mm below the existing track surface. The midden consists of whole and fragmented shell (predominantly cockle with some oyster), charcoal and fire cracked rock contained in a dark brown soil matrix.

In bush approximately 15m behind and above the midden, and at the foot of the escarpment, is an indistinct terrace (15m x 8m) that appears to be natural but may be related to the midden.

### R11/2122 Midden and ?Terrace

This is an extensive scatter of shell visible for 14m along the track surface and a lens of shell up to 300mm thick and 60mm below the surface that is visible in the track scarp for 12m. The site is located approximately 130m inside the entrance to the Tuff Crater Lagoon on its southern shoreline (Figure 2). A spade test in the track revealed a layer of shell mixed with grey soil 50mm below the surface; the feature can also be

detected along the foreshore scarp below the track. Situated approximately 1.5m above sea level, the site consists of whole and fragmented shell (predominantly cockle with some mud snail), charcoal and fire cracked rock contained in a grey soil matrix. In bush approximately 12m behind and above the track, a dense-packed in situ lens of shell midden can be seen in tree falls and eroding out of the fore edge of a c. 20m long, indistinct terrace at the base of the escarpment. The lens is up to 600mm thick and consists of whole and fragmented shell - predominantly cockle with some oyster and mud snail - charcoal and fire cracked rock contained in a charcoal laden matrix that lies immediately below the surface. The shell scatter on and in the vicinity of the track appears to be the result of re-deposition (natural erosion) from the dense midden above, but might be the remains of the lower fringe of the intact deposit above. Additional surface scatters of shell can be seen up the escarpment to residential properties above (28 and 30 MacBreen Ave), indicating that midden was destroyed during the development of those properties.

## ***Discussion and Conclusions***

The three archaeological sites identified during the current inspection, shell midden and possible terraces, are remnants of Maori settlement around the Tuff Crater Lagoon. On this limited evidence it is not possible to determine the age of the sites or their length of occupation. However, the shell species recorded at the sites are types that could have been to be collected from beds located in the nearby lagoon and/or Shoal Bay, and the quantity of shell fish observed in R11/2122 indicates that occupation at that site was likely to have been lengthy. The location of the two indistinct terraces in close proximity to the midden indicates that they they may have been used during the preparation and consumption of the food represented in the midden. Indicators such as surface shell spilling down the escarpment suggest that residential development along the elevated tuff ring (MacBreen Ave) above the track has probably resulted in the destruction of the Lagoon's main occupation sites.

Sites R11/2120 and 2122 (where the latter appears on the track) appear to be the result of re-deposition and the completed track work (in the case of R11/2120) and proposed track development (in the vicinity of R11/2122), do not appear to represent any threat to any in situ archaeological sites. The in situ midden deposit of R11/2122, however it should be protected. R11/2121 contains the only in situ that could potentially be affected by the walkway upgrade. Dr. Stuart Bedford, the Historic Places Trust Northern Region Archaeologist, has been consulted regarding the status of the sites recorded on Tuff Crater Reserve walkway, and in particular R11/2121. He is of the

opinion that the work can be undertaken on the condition that the track upgrade does not impact on the intact midden below the present track surface.<sup>1</sup> The continued use of the walkway does not appear to present a threat to the archaeological sites identified during the current inspection.

It should be noted that this assessment was based on a visual inspection with limited sub-surface testing and that archaeological survey cannot necessarily detect all sub-surface features, or identify wahi tapu and other sites of traditional significance to Maori.

It should also be noted that the Historic Places Act 1993 protects all archaeological sites whether recorded or not, and they may not be damaged or destroyed without first obtaining an Authority from the Historic Places Trust.

## ***Recommendations***

1. That upgrade work in the immediate vicinity of archaeological site R11/2121 be restricted to the surface of the existing track.
2. That although the shell scatter on the track relating to R11/2122 is redeposited, work should be limited in its vicinity.
3. That if sub-surface archaeological evidence (shell midden, hangi, storage pits, etc) should be unearthed during construction, work should cease in the immediate vicinity of the remains and the Historic Places Trust should be contacted.
4. That if modification of an archaeological site is necessary, an Authority to modify be applied for under Section 11 of the Historic Places Act 1993 (Note that this is a legal requirement).
5. That in the event of koiwi (human remains) being uncovered, work should cease immediately and the tangata whenua should be contacted so that the appropriate arrangements can be made.
6. That since archaeological survey cannot always detect sites of traditional value to Maori, such as wahi tapu, the tangata whenua should be consulted regarding the possible existence of such sites and the recommendations in this report.

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<sup>1</sup> This can be achieved by building up the track as opposed to further excavation.



## **References**

McCowan, F. (Compiler). 1993. Documents Relating to the Maori History of Northcote. North Shore Central Library.

Clough, R. and D. Prince. 2001. North Shore Busway Project: Archaeological And Heritage Assessment. Report prepared for Beca Carter Hollings and Ferner.