

WWII Mine Control Station Moturua Island

Historic Heritage Assessment

Bay of Islands Area Office

Melina Goddard
2010



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

WWII Mine Control Station, Moturua Island: Historic Heritage Assessment

Melina Goddard, DoC, Bay of Islands Area Office 2010.

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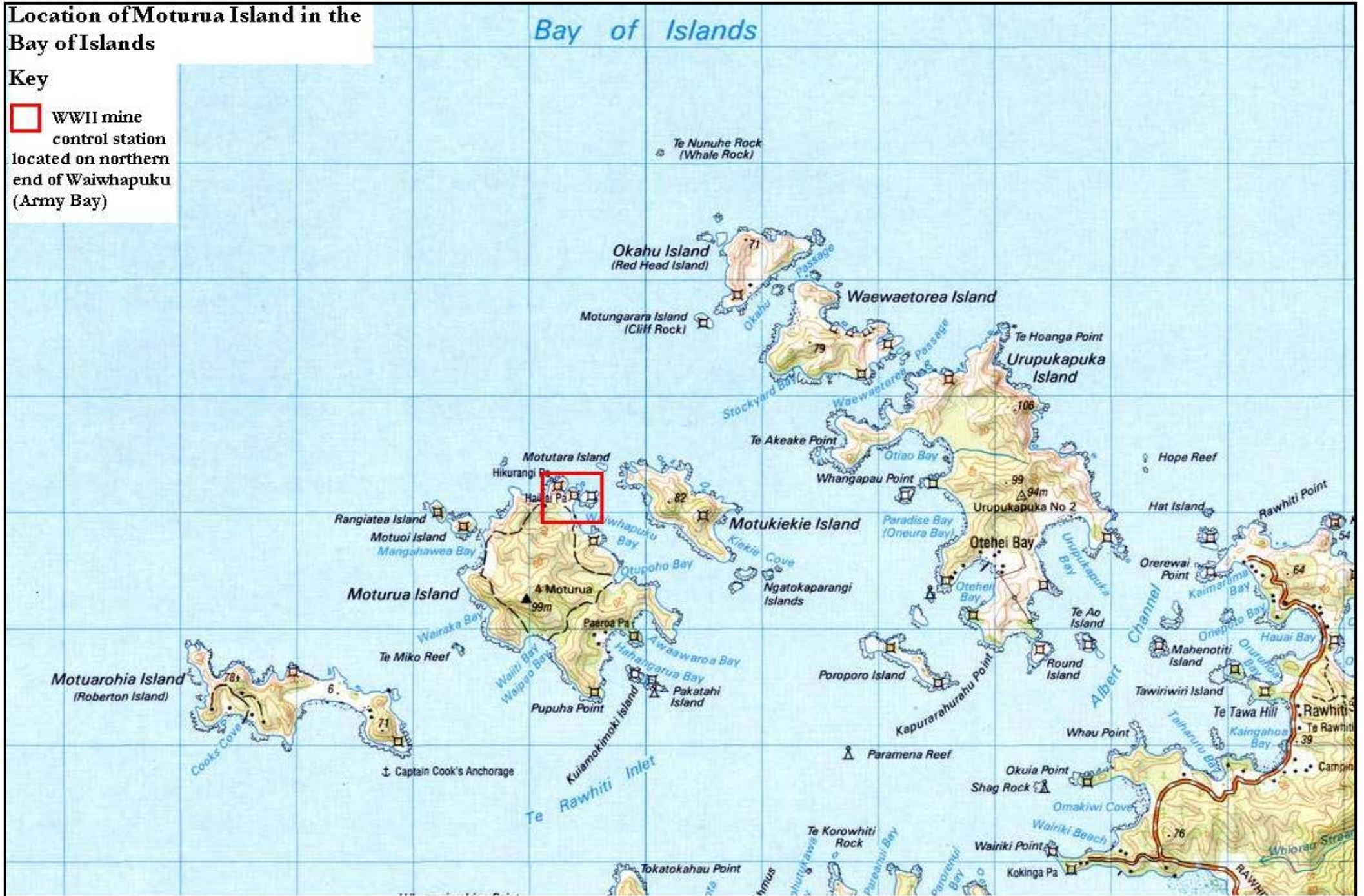
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Location of Moturua Island in the Bay of Islands

Key

 WWII mine control station located on northern end of Waiwhapuku (Army Bay)



Site Overview

The Moturua Island mine control station was constructed in Waiwhapuku Bay in 1942. Structures were built for accommodation and for defensive operations here, and late in 1942 the mine station was operational. It had approximately 24 mine personnel stationed here and was part of 4 coastal defences that were set up in the Bay of Islands under the management of the Bay of Islands Fortress Group. The station was closed at the end of the war. The structural remains today consist of concrete foundation pads from the campground, three underground operations structures, an observation post located on the platform of Hikurangi Pa, and a water supply tank. Structures are in good condition and some still have their original timber elements. The Mine station is part of Moturua Island's unique historic fabric.

Land status: *Part of Moturua Island Scenic Reserve*

Administered by: *The Department of Conservation, Bay of Islands*

Access by: *Boat then track*

Visitor numbers: *see VAMS*

Heritage status: *Protected under the Conservation Act 1987 and the Reserves Act 1977*

Site area: *136 hectares with the exception of 20 hectares on the south east coast in private ownership*

Functional location number: *DN-61-200-1016*

History Description

With the advance of Japanese forces through the Pacific in 1941 the New Zealand Government began constructing systems of defences around the coast. These included gun emplacements, observation posts, radar stations, airfields and mine stations. In early 1942 a mine control station was built on Moturua Island in Waiwhapuku Bay also known as Army Bay. A controlled minefield was laid by *HMS Atrius*, in two fields, each comprising 8 loops, with each loop containing 15 mines. The entire field was controlled from the installations on Moturua Island.¹ The mine personnel stationed here consisted of 4 officers, 15 seamen, 2 signallers, 2 cooks and one officer's steward.²

This mine station was part of a joint defence of the Bay of Islands that included Waitata Point, which is the only coastal battery in New Zealand with constructed with large fans of timber poles cantilevered over the gun in order to disguise the emplacements,³ Cape Brett which had a radar and coast watching station and Moturoa Island which had two six inch guns (see appendix 1). This army installation together with the detachments of the Navy and the Air Force were under the management of the Bay of Islands Fortress group.⁴

Fabric Description

The structures built in 1942 for the mine control station operations were an observation post built on the platform of Hikurangi Pa overlooking the exposed northern entrance to the Bay of Islands. On the southern inland flanks of the pa are the below ground structures of the "power station" which were radio communications and cable terminal stations. The mine station camp was on the beach flats of the bay. It had cabins,

associated mess and galley, a recreation hut, toilets, engine room and workshop (see appendix 2). Buildings were complete with drainage, and wharf access. The water supply tank for the station was located on the western slope of the bay.

The structures were of heavy construction and their erection required a considerable amount of underground excavation. Overall the structures of the station are in good condition and the report for DoC Bay of Islands by Salmond Reed Architects in 2002 details the repairs and remedial work required for the preservation of the station's elements.

The mine station camp

An early photograph of the camp with a handwritten layout plan describes the buildings that made up the camp (fig 1). These were 4 officer's cabins, an office, galley and mess, 5 four berth cabins, a recreation hut, and a joint toilet and engine room complex. The smaller buildings were wooden and the larger ones were built on concrete foundations. All of the structures were removed before the end of the war. Today the only visible remains are the concrete pads from the toilet block/engine shed, workshop and office (see appendix 3, 4). On the beach bank in front of the foundations are the remains of the minefield cable loop.

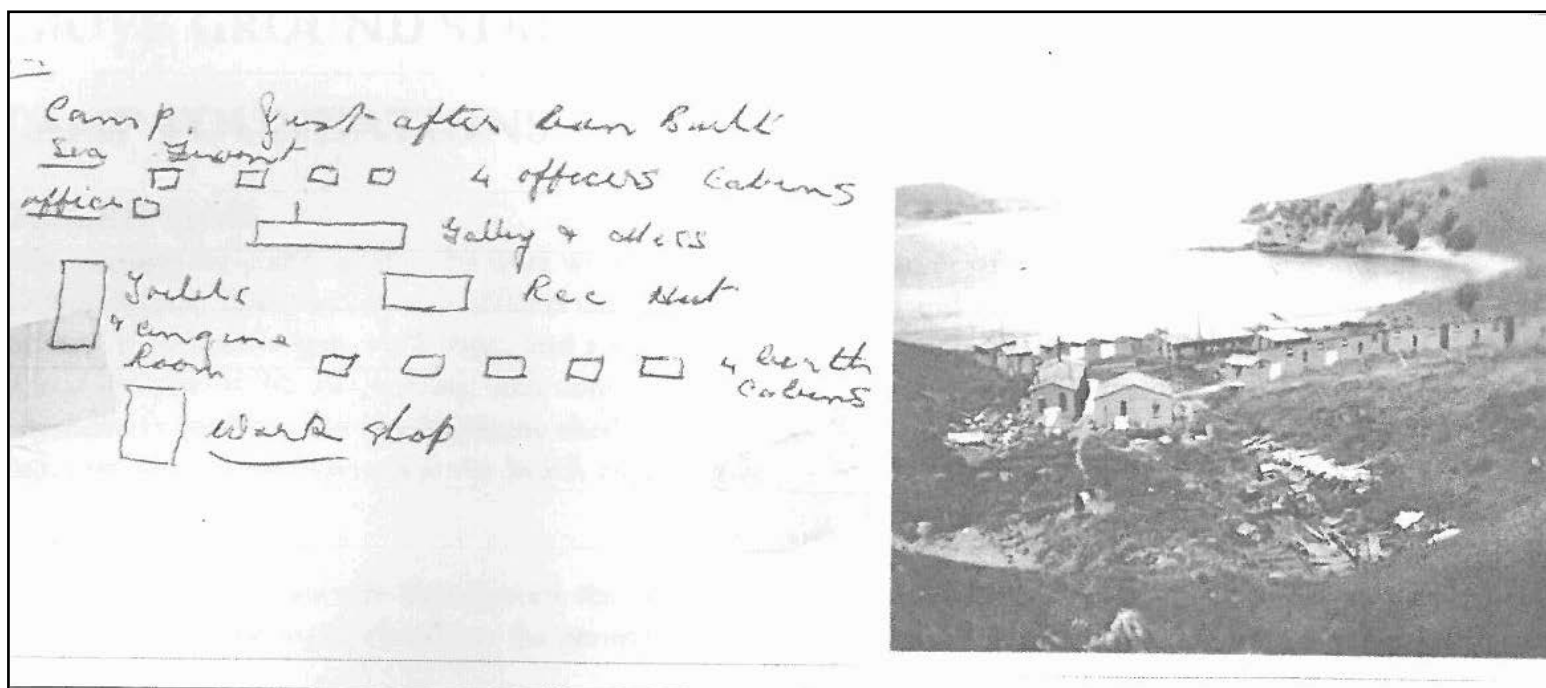


Figure 1: Early photograph of mine station camp; with corresponding structure descriptions (DoC files, primary source unknown)

The underground structures of the power station

The power station consists of three under ground structures located on the southern flank of Hikurangi Pa. They are constructed of concrete and access is from three above ground 1m square shafts. The rooms are an L shaped and have connecting doorways to a larger room. One of rooms is plain concrete with the access shaft and circular vent hole

in the ceiling. The floor is concrete with the remains of a raised timber floor and the wooden door frame is still present (see appendix 5).⁵

The second radio room is larger and the walls are lined with painted timber. Unlike the other radio room this does not have the remains of a raised timber floor over concrete (see appendix 6, 7, 8). There is however a raised bed of concrete located at the end of the room possibly where heavy equipment was placed. The ceiling has a circular vent hole and a single timber board that runs across the ceiling.⁶

The ancillary room is the smallest of the two three under ground structures measuring 2.5m x 1.35m. It has a shaft in the corner measuring 0.8m x 0.9m. The walls are plain concrete and there is an open channel drain with an outlet (see appendix 9).

Originally the three shafts may have been entered via ladders and steel hatches. After the station was abandoned wooden security grills covered the shafts. Today they are covered with raised steel hatches that are padlocked (see appendix 10).

Observation post

This post is located on the top of Hikurangi Pa on the northern headland of the Waiwhapuku Bay (fig 2). It is a reinforced concrete structure and has been excavated into the platform of the pa. The post is L shaped and measures 3.0m x 3.5m overall with a 1.5m x 1.2m entrance. The walls are concrete but may have been overlaid in timber during its operational life. A trench leading from the post's entrance to the end of the platform has been excavated to a depth of 2m and a width of 1m so that the lookouts could move in and out of the post unseen. A 4" clay pipe in the centre of the roof of the post served as an air vent, and a hole through the wall 1m below ground level acted as a cable duct. There are deep set windows on four of the five aboveground walls of the post. These still have their wooden frames and were once glazed (see appendix 11).⁷



Figure 2: Observation post on Hikurangi pa (DoC)

Water supply tank

The concrete water tank is located on the upper northern side of the bay and is set well into the side of the hill. It measures 4m square in plan with the flat roof extending over 2.2m above ground on the south side. There is a modern plywood timber cover located in the south east corner, possibly covering an access hatch, and there are cast iron pipes coming from the tank, one at the

top and another extending out some 400mm from a plinth at the bottom (see appendix 12).⁸

Cultural Connections

The mine control station is connected to Ngare Raumati, who possibly initially built the pa before Ngapuhi conquest, and Ngati Kuta and Patu Keha as they whakapapa back to Moturua Island and Hikurangi pa where the observation post is located. It is connected to the men who were stationed here and their families. This site is also connected to all New Zealanders as part of their early history.

Regional Context

Moturua Island has a long history of human occupation from some of the earliest Polynesian settler sites through to the mine control station in 1942. The pre-European archaeological sites on the island consist of an early midden site, and evidence of late Maori occupation is defined by headland pa, terraces, pits and gardening areas. The island was visited by the early explorer Captain Cook in 1769 and he recorded the Polynesian in origin plant paper mulberry growing here, which was introduced by the earliest settlers to New Zealand. French explorer Marion Du Fresne set up camp in one of the bays of Moturua and stayed here for 3 months in 1772. This is one of the earliest known accounts of interactions between Maori and European. The Mine Control Station is part of the island's unique history and fabric.

Historic Significance

Historically the mine station is significant as it is part of the group of installations that were set up in the Bay of Islands. The mine station is also a part of the unique history of Moturua Island.

Fabric Significance

The station is considered to be in excellent condition having still the wooden elements some of which are painted, of the bunkers. It is part of the group of control stations in the Bay of Islands which are also still intact and has potential for extensive interpretation. The mine station is also part of Moturua Island's unique prehistoric and historic fabric.

Cultural Significance

The mine station is culturally significant to Ngare Raumati, Ngati Kuta and Patu Keha and it is also significant to all New Zealanders as part of their early military history.

Management Recommendations

- Action the recommendations made by Salmond Reed architects to preserve structures
- Open up the cleared radio rooms for public viewing/tours
- Interpretation of the mine camp on the beach flats

Management Chronology

- 1968: Moturua Island purchased by the Crown and used for pastoral farming
- 1972: Grazing ceased and the stock were removed, leaving the island's vegetation to regenerate.
- 1979: Moturua Island gazetted as a Scenic Reserve under Bay of Islands Maritime and Historic Park
- 2002: Repairs and remedial work to Defence Structures Moturua, Bay of Islands, Northland for Department of Conservation. Salmond Reed Architects.
- The timber grills covering hatches were replaced with raised steel hatches that are padlocked.
- 2010: Two of the power station radio rooms were cleared of rubbish by Department of Conservation staff and volunteers.

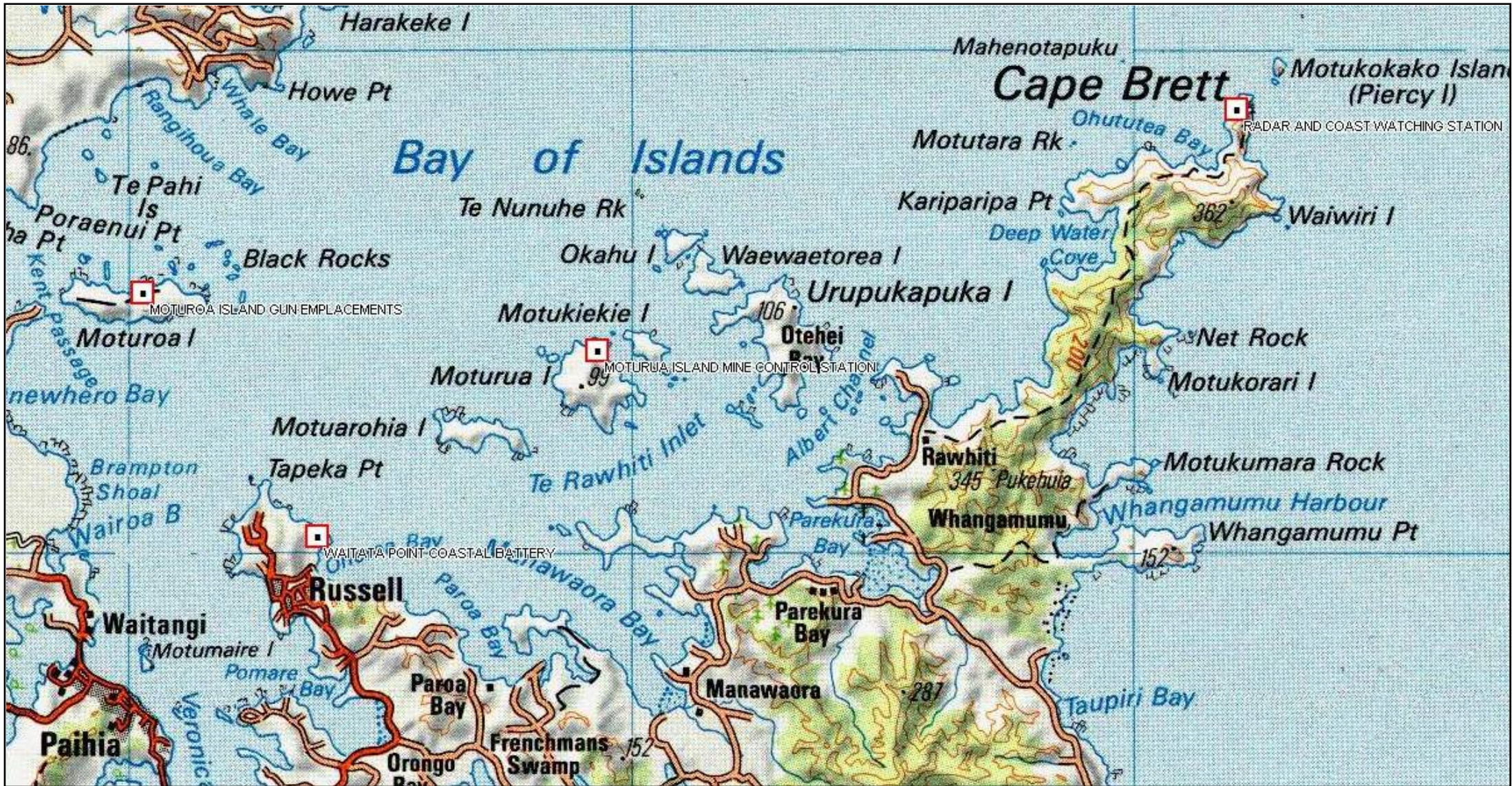
Management Documentation

- Current DoC management file numbers: HHA-01-02-13-01 NLB-1 02/06/2008; HHA-01-02-14 NL-1; HHA-01-02-14-01 NLB-1 01/07/2010; HHA-01-02-14-02 NLB-1 01/07/2010; HHA-01-02-14-02 NLB-28/07/2010; HHA-01-02-14-03 NLB-1 01/07/2010; HHA-01-02-14-04 NLB-1 01/07/2010
- Heritage assessment 677729
- Baseline inspection: *Salmond Reed Architects, 2002. Repair and remedial work to Defence Building Structures Moturua Island Bay of Islands, Northland. For Department of Conservation.*

Sources

Salmond Reed Architects, 2001. Gun Emplacements Waitata Point, Russell, Northland. Report for the Department of Conservation.

Salmond Reed Architects 2002. Repair and remedial work to Defence Building Structures, Moturua Island, Bay of Islands, Northland. For Department of Conservation.



Appendix 1: Location of the 4 coastal defence sites set up by the Bay of Islands Fortress Group



Appendix 2: The northern end of Waiwhapuku Bay showing the locations of the elements of Moturua Island station.



Appendix 3: A section of the campground foundations located on the bay flats (DoC).



Appendix 4: Camp foundations plan by Salmond Reed 2002.



Appendix 5: The doorway of the radio room. Shows the painted timber overlaid on concrete walls (DoC).



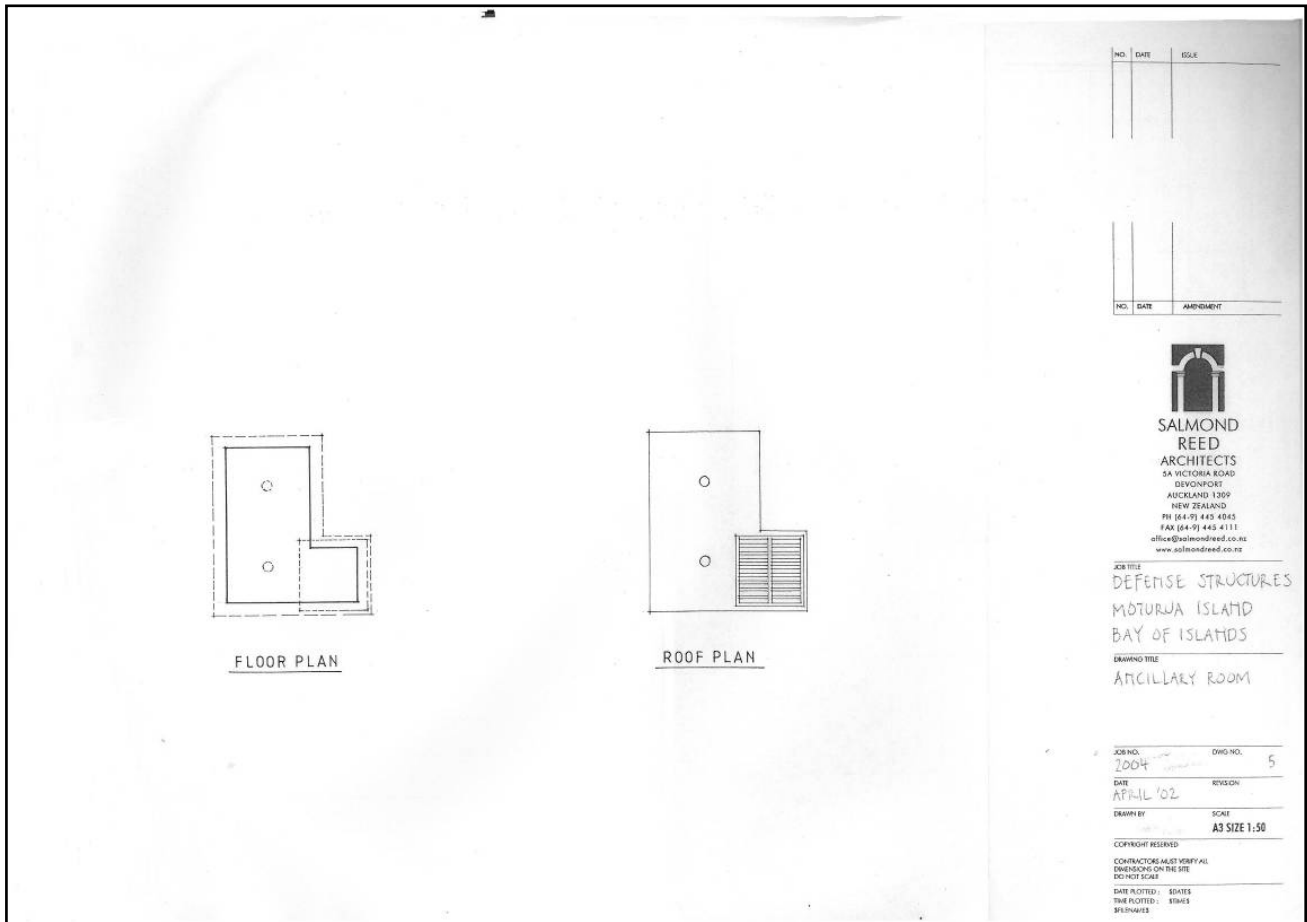
Appendix 6: Wall of radio room showing “No. 1 set” indicating radio locations (DoC).



Appendix 7: “No. 2 set” location of 2nd radio (DoC).



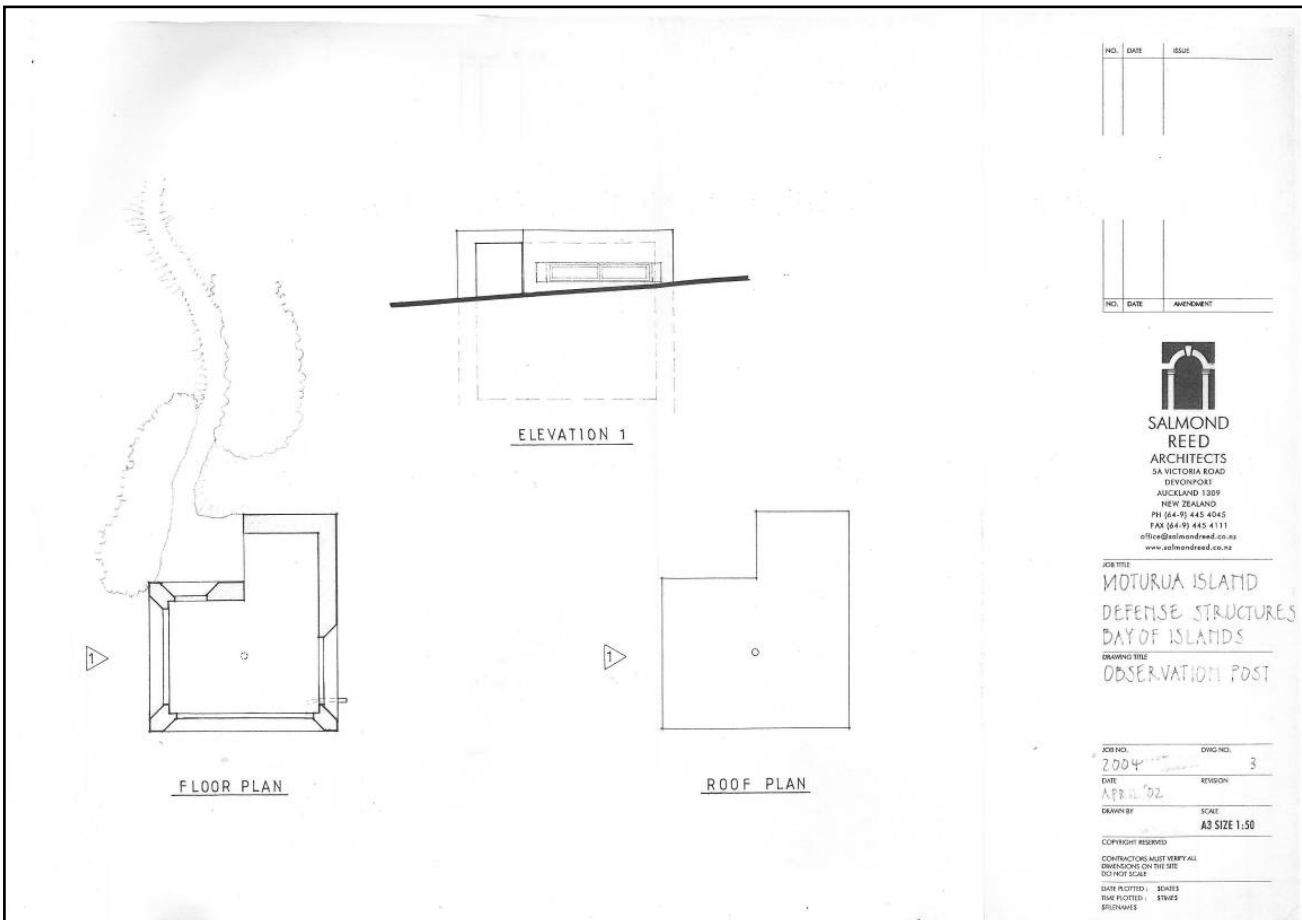
Appendix 8: Radio room plan by Salmond Reed 2002.



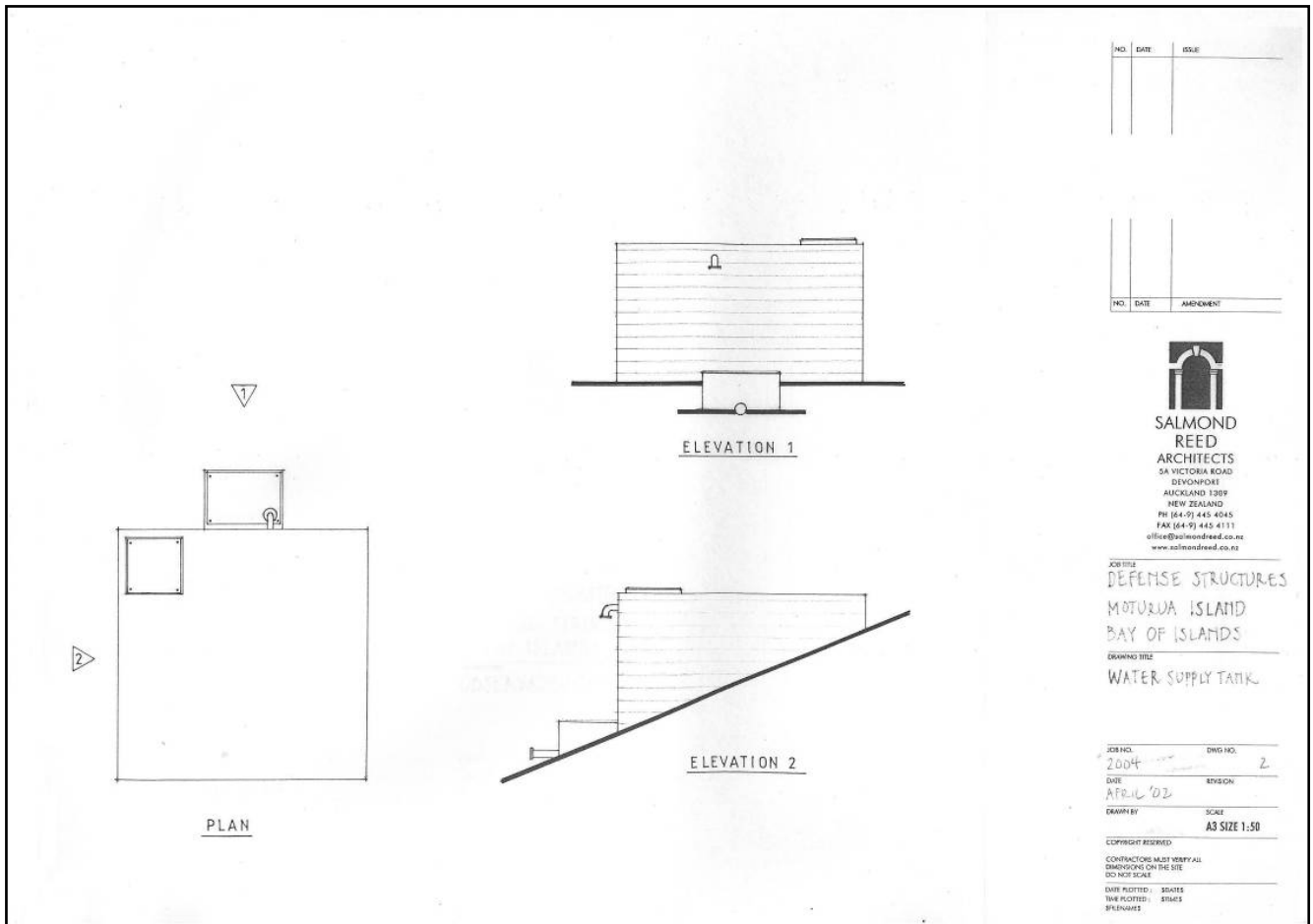
Appendix 9: Ancillary room plan by Salmond Reed 2002.



Appendix 10: The entry shaft to one of the radios taken during the 2010 clean up, facing south (DoC).



Appendix 11: Observation post plan by Salmond Reed 2002.



Appendix 12: Water supply tank plan by Salmond Reed 2002.

Endnotes

¹ Barrat 1982 (source unknown)

² Houston 1986 pers comm. DoC files

³ Salmond Reed 2001:1

⁴ Salmond Reed: 2004:1

⁵ Salmond, Reed 2004:13

⁶ Salmond, Reed 2004:13

⁷ Salmond, Reed 2004

⁸ Salmond, Reed 2004