

Clark House

A National Ceramics Museum?

Richard Quinn, Auckland

Richard Quinn, a professional ceramics historian was invited by the New Zealand Society of Potters to give a presentation on Clark House and the associated Limeburners Bay kiln sites, at their annual conference Coromandoo, at Coromandel earlier this year.



Clark House, Hobsonville

Photos by Howard Williams

It's easier to find foreign ceramics in our museums than local examples. Shouldn't visitors be able to see what we have to offer? To see how, where and why we might differ? Have we earned the right to see our works proudly displayed? If you agree, you'll know why we need a National Ceramics Museum.

The proposal: that Clark House, Limeburners Bay, Hobsonville, Auckland, be used for ceramics displays and Joshua Carder's adjacent, c1863, Waitemata Pottery be a field site. The whole to be our National Ceramics Museum.

Clark House was built between the late 1890s and 1902, of hollow salt-glazed ceramic blocks designed by the Clarks before hollow concrete blocks were invented. Its fixtures and fittings are in original condition and of superb quality. Stained glass windows; rare arched walk-through windows; native wood ceilings; original wallpapers; moulded papier mache wall coverings; handpainted details on multicoloured, pressed-zinc ceilings; tiled floors; tiled, marble fireplaces; etched-glass doors and windows with ceramic pot motifs, etc. Architect/author John Stacpoole says the wrought iron work is the best example in New Zealand.

Originally named Ngaroma - House of Love, it was built for the Clarks' own use and to advertise the glazed blocks. Clark's huge brick and pipeyard abutted Pottery Creek below the house, still served by a brick tunnel from the basement. It stands in four and a half grassy, tree-studded acres above the upper Waitemata Harbour, just minutes from the end of Auckland's North-Western Motorway. Good parking; room to grow. A big concrete block annexe built by the RNZAF (current owners) is ideal for storage or archives and could be covered in salt-glazed tiles.

Briar Gardner, pioneer studio potter, was R O Clark's granddaughter and visited the house often. Tom Clark, Crown Lynn's founder, lived here. His father created Amalgamated Brick and Tile Co, the industry giant, in 1929. The Clarks have played a seminal role in our ceramics history.

Below Clark House the Waitemata Pottery site has miraculously survived, hidden in the bush. Joshua Carder and James Wright - the first wheel-throwing potters in New Zealand, arrived on the

Annie Wilson together in Auckland in 1863. Carder part-owned a Staffordshire Pottery and Wright had managed one. Wright from Carder's kilns. Their kilns differed; Wright had up-draughts, Carder used down-draughts. Carder lived alone in the bush at Limeburners until his family joined him in 1865. He rowed his first wares across the harbour to Auckland - there was no other way. A true pioneer potter.

The Waitemata Pottery site contains a wealth of visible evidence of Carder and those who followed him on the site. There are substantial kiln remains, including some with firemouths, beautiful salted bag walls, a 20 metre flue running up a hillside and a new kiln abandoned when built only to ground-level, because of the 1929 birth of Amalgamated Brick.



Remains of partly-built beehive kiln

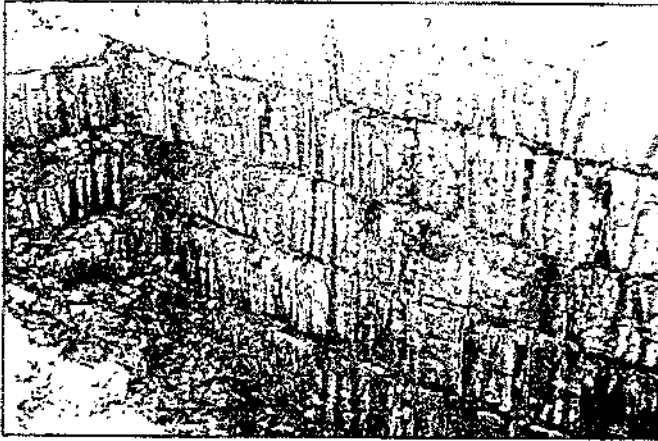
There are brick wells, a big brick water-storage tank; even Carder's workshop floor survives! In Pottery Creek lie the remains of two barges that carried marine clays, shell for calcining and finished ware. The Landing is retained by vertical, glazed pipes. Nearby is the steel ferry *Tongariro*, towed here around 1905 to act as a platform for water tanks. Big drains direct water from a tiny permanent stream. In a pool above one drain, tiny native fish dart for shelter when disturbed.

Four kilns on site are built of handmade, extruded and pressed bricks, the only methods ever used in brickmaking. Some machine parts and machine beds are known; more may be found.

Carder made whatever settlers needed: bottles, crocks, jars, flowerpots, pipes, insulators, etc. I've located over 50 moulds and test-pieces still held by his family. He made lead-glazed, salt-glazed and unglazed ware, in both earthen and stoneware bodies, and used both cogglewheel and sprigmoulding decorating techniques.

An arched flue runs up the bank from kiln to chimney





Salt glazed bag wall inside remains of a kiln



Remains of smaller beehive kiln

In 1865 Carder apprenticed thirteen year old George Vazey, the first colonial potter's apprentice and thus the first wheel-throwing potter to only ever work local clays. George later married one of Carder's daughters and ran the site for some years, thus becoming the first locally-trained potter to run a colonial Pottery. Yet how many people have ever even heard of him?

George Carder and Walter Carder, Joshua's sons, later ran the site until the 1920s when amalgamation cooled the Limeburners Bay kilns for ever. This site is the very heart and hearth of the birth of local ceramics. The bush setting makes it even more precious: pongas, pittosporums, silver ferns, flaxes, ground-ferns, epiphytes, native grasses - nature has clothed the bare body of man's work in a living mantle of green; the result is quietly beautiful.

Rhys Gardner, a botanist (related to Briar), listed 63 native plant species; since, young totara have sprung up. Big Australian trees surround the site, relics from seeds in the coal shipped from eastern Australia. Fantails, grey warblers, herons, tuis, kingfishers and other birds enjoy the protection of the bush. Tiny native snails and giant centipedes, the latter now rare on the mainland, thrive.

Take a guided tour round Limeburners Bay: my "Pottery Walk". Start at *Clark House*. Walk towards Wisely Road. Note the ceramic block servants' quarters, 60 metres from, and on the opposite side of, *Clark House*. It too had a tunnel which may still exist. Into Wisely Road to Joshua Carder's house, pulled there on skids by bullock teams from its original site over a century ago. It's cherished by its current owners.

Another kiln site showing flue exit towards chimney



Into Oakpark Place. Meander down to Oakpark Reserve. The huge spreading oak was planted in January 1867 on Annie Carder's twelfth birthday. The hole for it was dug by "Long Harry" du Fresne, one of Carder's workers. (Regrettably, we don't yet know his collar size or the brand of spade he used.) The Carder house originally stood by the oak. Annie Carder later married John Wisely, "the boy next door," who, working for Carder, "married the boss's daughter." The Wiselys are also related to the Clarks and still live in Wisely Road.

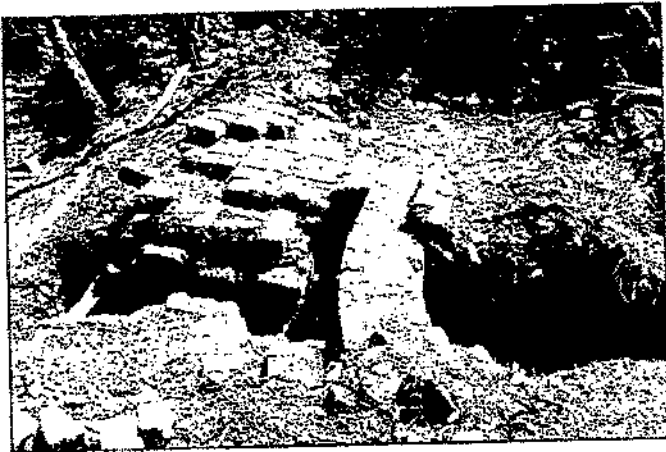
Walk to the bottom of the Reserve, noting the huge white shellbanks on the outer fringe of the mangroves. Calcined in the kilns, they gave the Bay its name. Left at the bank of Pottery Creek, into the bush and the *Waitemata Pottery* site. Beyond it is Robert Holland's site, between the Carder and Clark sites; a huge kiln collapse, like some ancient chief's tumulus, and a big menhir-like machine bed, still remain. Taken over, this site made ceramic blocks for Clark's.

Onto Clark's. More big machine beds. The concrete landing steps where scows, launches, cutters, schooners and barges berthed. The entire bank is retained with pipes - big pipes with smaller pipes inside them, and even smaller pipes inside them. (I've just located photos of Clark's works taken on an Auckland Anniversary day - the Bay is bouncing with ferries, scows, etc.)

Walk round to 'the point'. Huge magnolia and walnut trees stand near where Clark's original panga-walled, rammed-earth floor whare stood from 1854 until 1910. Note the big Norfolk pine, a feature of coastal sites, planted to guide early mariners. Sherds and wasters everywhere. Stumps of piles from the old public wharf rot in the tide.

The hulk of the steel ferry "Tongariro" lies in the mangroves





More kiln remains partly excavated



Seen from behind Clark House, the kiln sites lie between the houses and the mangroves

Back three hundred metres and walk up unpaved Pottary Lane. (In the bush-edge part way up the Lane are suspected kiln remains; I'll investigate them.) Cross the road to Hobsonville Cemetery and Church, now a Scout hall. On land donated by R O Clark, the church was built by John Danby, who married one of Carder's daughters here in 1875; the first couple to be married here - its nuptial baptism, so to speak.

The cemetery. Emma Vazey, George's wife, dead of typhoid at 33, 10 weeks after the birth of her fifth child, is just inside the gate. Ironically, huge orders came to the Limeburners works soon after, as town councils laid sewage lines to combat typhoid, endemic in colonial New Zealand. Joshua Carder and his wife lie near R O Clark and family. This place is a ceramic Roll of Honour. Robert Holland's two infant daughters share a tiny unmarked grave through eternity. Brothers George and Walter Carder. A ceramic tombstone marks a pottery worker's grave. Wiselys and Ocklestons, who ran a nearby works. (Years later, Ocklestons, a Wisely and a Carder worked for Tom Clark at Crown Lynn - the Limeburners lads stuck together.) Scott, who ran another local works, is here; the cemetery is in Scott Road,

Here lie more pioneer clayworkers, families and workers than in any comparable place in the country. Still in the Bay where they lived and worked. What can I say? It is sacred to our indigenous clayworking heritage and traditions. It is part of our taonga: Waahi tapu.

Leave this wonderful shrine, walk back into Clarke (sic) Road and Clark House. The entire walk takes an hour, spans 143 years and encompasses more ceramics history, tradition, beauty and associations than is reasonably imaginable. It's overwhelming - and it's of international stature and value. It's where we embarked on an uncharted journey to a pottery tradition - and Clark House displays will show where the voyage has taken us. Past, present and future tied together.

We'll make a video so that everyone can see its value. There may be a better place; I've yet to find it. If you know one, share it with us. Auckland has the needed critical mass; it sometimes faces needling critical masses indulging in parochialism. That was absent at *Coromandoo*: potters are thoughtful, sharing people. It's NOT an Auckland project - it's a national one. It's here only because it's the right thing in the right place at the right time: a national treasure. And to date its most dedicated supporters are from the Waikato, Wellington and the Coromandel as well as Auckland.

You deserve the best: this is it. The *Historic Places Trust* ranks Carder's site first-equal nationally as a remaining colonial industrial site. *Auckland Regional Council* chose it as the sole regional pakeha model site for management/conservation plans.

Clark House is a Category 'A' building; I'm working to Register the whole Bay as an Historic Area.

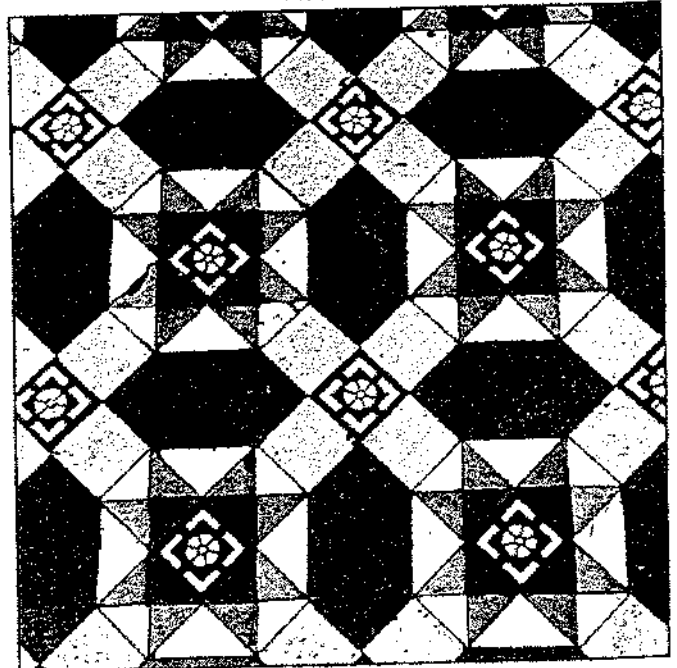
Few other countries can say "here our pottery tradition began." No other country has, right next to that tradition's birthplace, a mansion of such splendid, apposite materials. Or the first local potter's apprentice; the first studio potter; the beautiful healing bush or all the other wonderful associations of this pint-sized, remarkable Bay. We can't ask for more. How lucky we are! To make this all happen we only need our own strength, vision and passion. The overwhelming response to my talk at *Coromandoo* shows we have it.

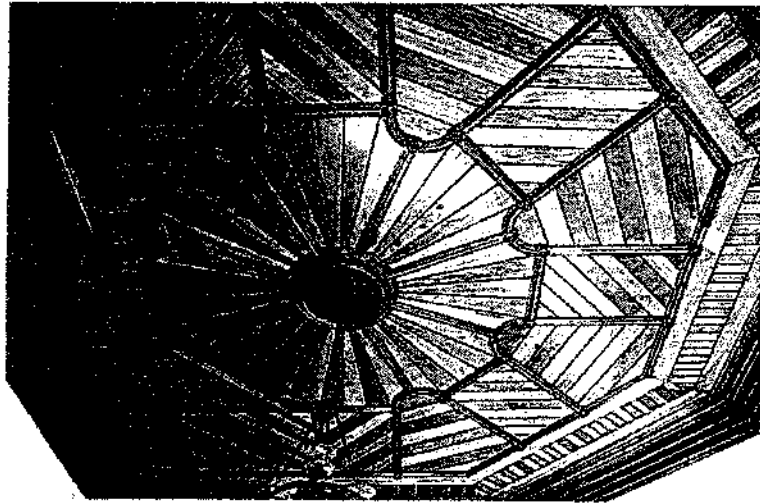
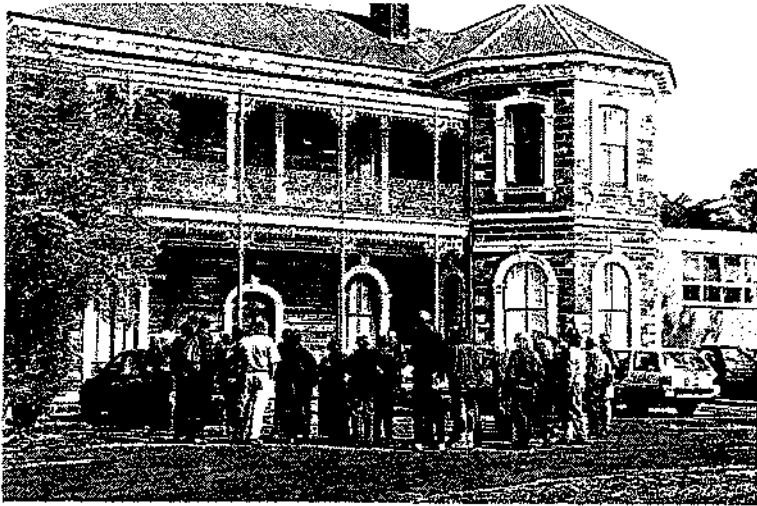
Thanks to the *New Zealand Society of Potters* for the invitation to speak at *Coromandoo*; I was scared scriptless - but it was truly *Coromandel*ful.

Lastly, pottery is intrinsically about people. A Maori proverb says:

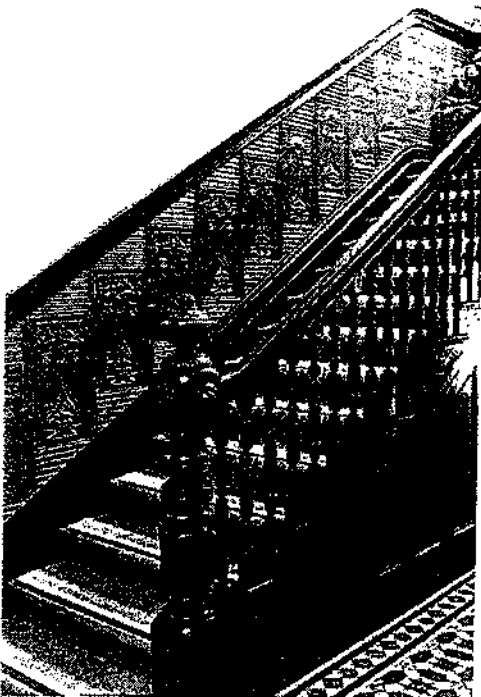
*Ka patai koutou ki au, he ata te mea nui o te Ao?
Ka ki atu ahau ki a koutou, he tangata, he tangata, ha tangata!
You ask me what is the greatest thing in all the world?
I answer you all, it is people, it is people, it is people!* ■

Mosaic tiled floor inside Clark House





*Clockwise from top left:
 Clark House visit by Auckland Studio Potters
 Bryce Stevens and Barry Brickell on 1st floor balcony
 Richard Quinn, Bryce and Barry examine the salt-glazed blocks
 Stained glass window on landing
 Panelled wall of main stairway
 Timbered ceiling in the master bedroom*





- stage 1 (6-12)
Clarks Pottery site
WCC Esplanade reserve/Hobsonville Developments Concept
- stage 2 (4-5)
Church
Privately owned
Cemetery
WCC
- stage 3 (13-18)
Carders Pottery site
WCC Esplanade reserve,
Oak Park
WCC Local Purpose reserve
- stage 4 (19-20)
Clarks Lane - Garder house
Privately owned
trees
WCC Roadside reserve
- stage 5 (1-3)
'Ngaroma' & tunnel
NZ Airforce
Community house
WCC
- Future links**
 - **esplanade reserve** to marina (south-west)
 - **Scott Road** to 1920s cottage at no 4 (Gate 1) and gun emplacements (east)
 - **future esplanade reserve** to Pottery Point (east)

Figure 18

Limeburners Bay Heritage Trail draft Concept Plan
To be completed in stages as funding and resources to develop become available and future esplanade/reserves are acquired. Each stage will stand alone and is not dependent on others. To have unified signage and paving throughout - broken/loose pieces of glazed bricks, tiles, pipes etc from pottery sites to be incorporated into walkway paving wherever possible. The detailed design to be developed in conjunction with West Auckland Historical Society, NZ Historic Places Trust, Museum of Transport & Technology, WCC Council heritage advisor etc. Clark House and site would be the ideal carparking/starting point for the entire trail if at some time in the future, (when it is no longer required by the Airforce) it should be acquired and developed as a ceramics museum and home to the Crown Lynn collection. Some dedication/recognition of Richard Quinn would be appropriate.

Heritage Trail

As part of the development, a heritage trail is recommended that would connect items of heritage interest within the site, within the gifted splanade reserve and around Limeburners bay (refer to figure 18 overleaf).

The items as listed are:

1. Community house glazed brick Cat I
2. 'Ngaroma' Clark house Cat I
3. Clark house cellar/tunnel
4. Hobsonville church Cat II
5. Hobsonville cemetery Cat II
6. brick/concrete footings
7. clarks wharf
8. boiler -- has been relocated not in original position
9. Extensive foundations (steam engine/machinery)
10. Circular kiln floors
11. Hollands brickworks site no visible remains - views to Clark house
12. Reclaimed foreshore - glazed pipes
13. Carders pottery site /substantial remains
14. Carders circular kilns
15. Carders wharf
16. Carders landing --glazed pipes
17. Hulk of the Tongariro
18. Oak tree (1867) -- Oak Park scheduled DP
19. Carders house Scheduled DP
20. gum trees - Wiseley Road scheduled DP

Note: Items 6-12 are those on the Clark site (Hobsonville Residential Developments' land). These are all included in the single ARC CHI listing for the site.

A6



Ken Maunder Bridge Location

Queen Mary Ave Reserve

DURRANT PLACE RESERVE

KEN MAUNDER PARK

MANUKA PARK

DURRANT PLACE

MIRO STREET

RATA STREET/ESPLANADE

MIRO ESPLANADE

RATA STREET/ESPLANADE



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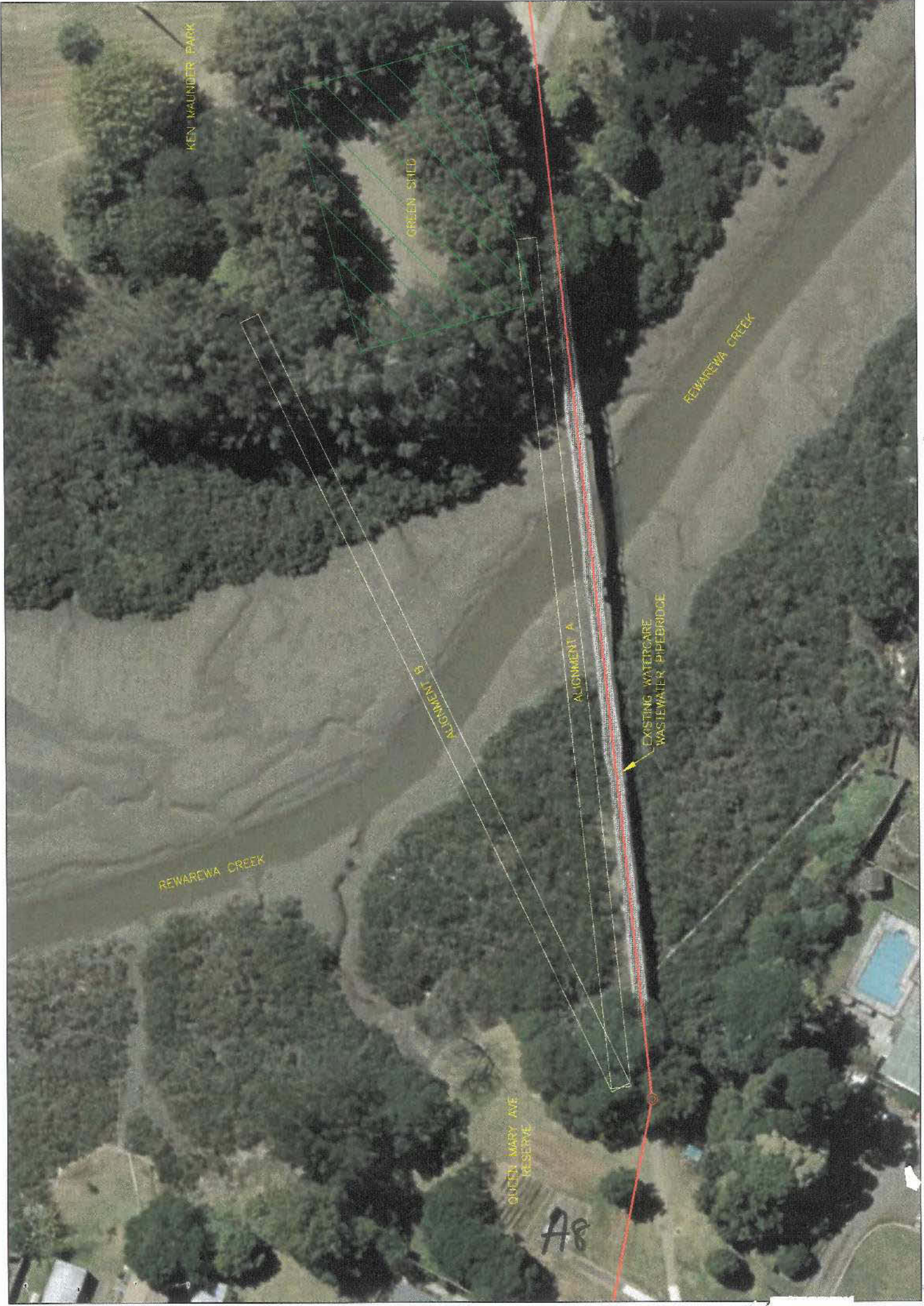
Ken Maunder Park - New Lynn



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A7



KEN MAUNDER PARK

GREEN SHIELD

REWAREWA CREEK

REWAREWA CREEK

ALIGNMENT B

ALIGNMENT A

EXISTING WATERCARE
WASTEWATER PIPEBRIDGE

QUEEN MARY AVE
RESERVE

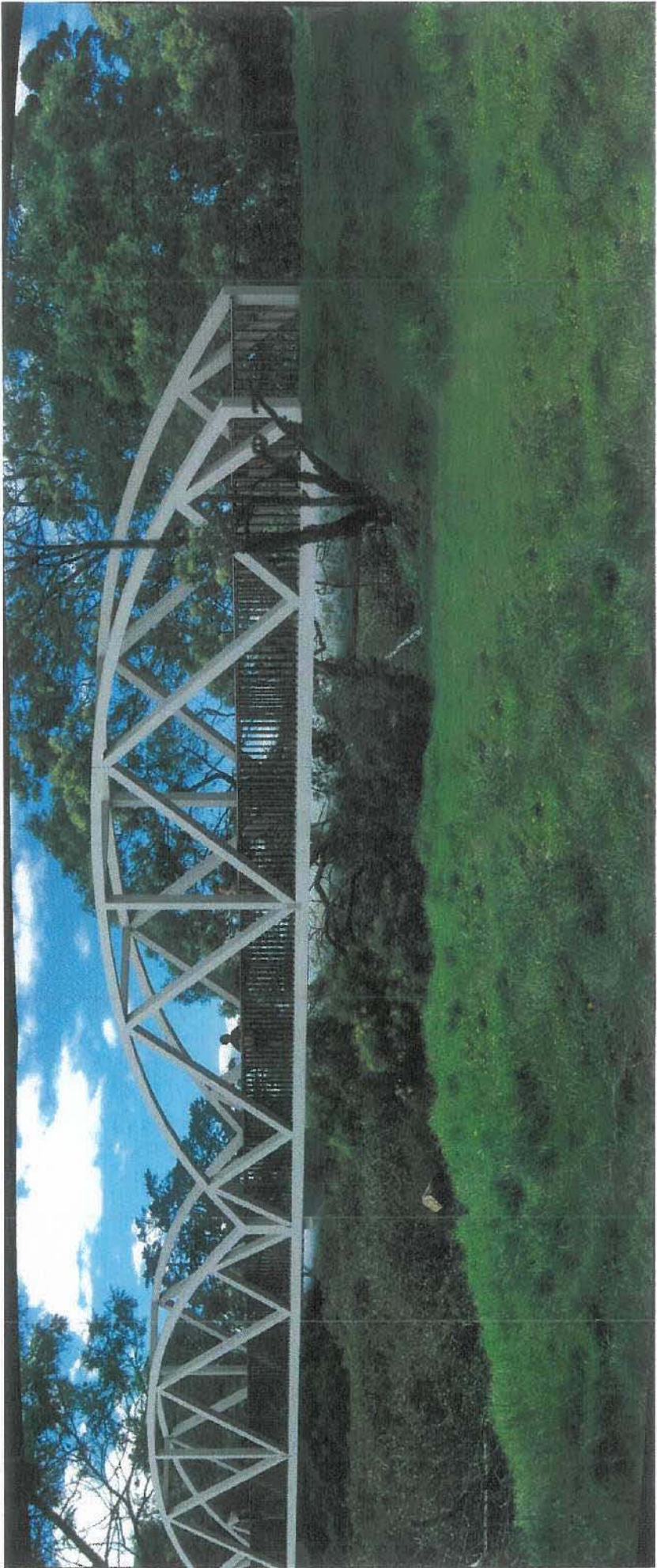
A8



A9

OPTION ONE: BEAM.

C



A10

OPTION TWO: TRUSS