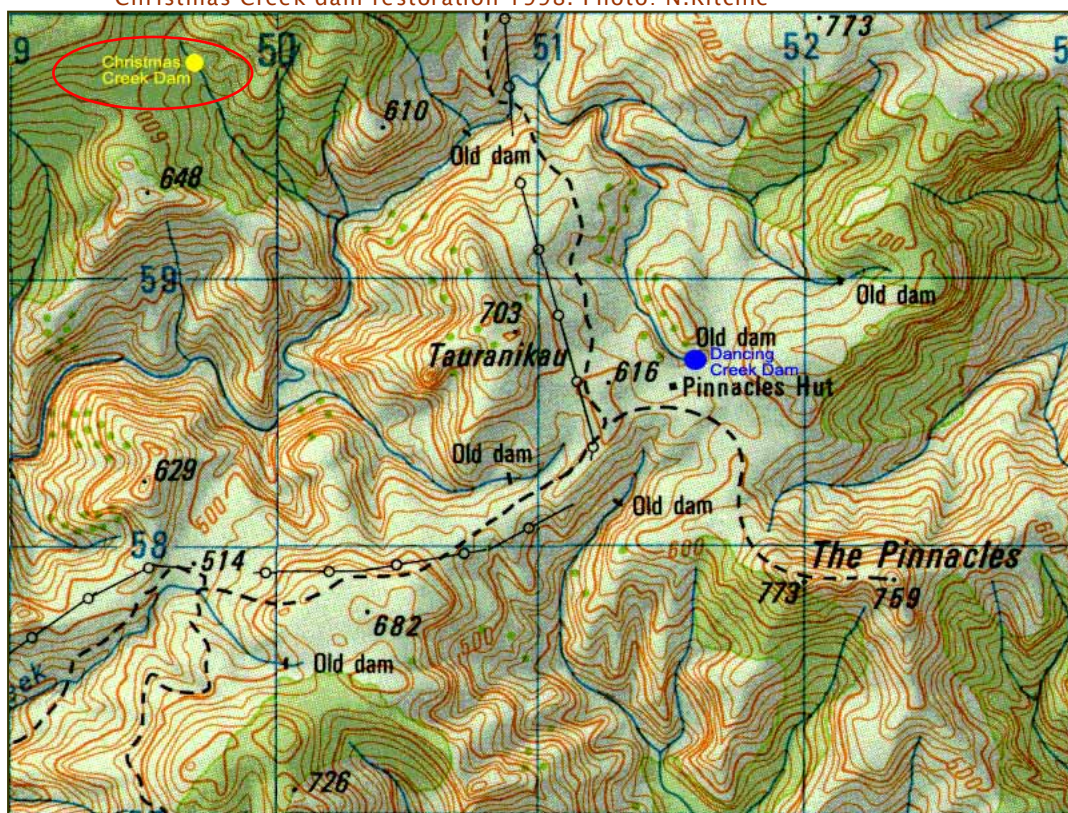




Built: early 1920s Christmas Creek kauri driving dam



Christmas Creek dam restoration 1998. Photo: N.Ritchie



Map Source and grid reference: NZMS 260 series T12 497 597





Built: early 1920s **Christmas Creek kauri driving dam**

Management: Hauraki Area Office, Waikato Conservancy; Department of Conservation.

Fabric: A rafter flume dam with loose plank gate. Total width 35m and stood c10m above the dam floor. The planking on a rafter dam is fixed to the rafters and runs horizontally. The planking on the true left side is virtually complete. Major remedial work was undertaken from 1996 to 1998 involving substantial replacement of rafters and flume planking on the true right side & treatments (CD50/Metallex mix). Recorded archaeological site T12/888.

History: The builder, the exact date of construction and even the source of the name Christmas Creek (a tributary of the Kauaeranga River) are not known despite considerable research. Believed to have been built in the early 1920s. No known historical photos of the dam exist.

Fabric Significance: Of the many structures built by the pioneer kauri bushmen including camps, shanties, log chutes, trestles and skid roads, the driving dams have proven the most durable, and are arguably the most distinctive and evocative of the industry as a whole. They were an essential part of the kauri industry for recovering logs in difficult back country. Although over 60 dams were built in the Kauaeranga valley, only two (Christmas Creek & Dancing Camp) remain substantially intact. Kauri dams developed into highly ingenious reusable structures unique to this country

Historic Significance: When Europeans first arrived in New Zealand kauri trees grew in abundance from the Kaimai Ranges to the far north covering some 1.2 million hectares. Although Maori used kauri and kauri gum no significant impact on the resource occurred until the late 1700s when British vessels were sent to New Zealand to obtain spars for sailing ships. By the 1830s, it was being sawn into boards for export and the local market. In 1903 340,000 cu metres was milled, approximately 40% of it being exported. Kauri logging was New Zealand's first major land-based export industry (excluding whaling & sealing); consequently associated technologies such as the driving dams are an important historic element of one of our pioneer industries.

Future Management: The restoration work done to date was to ensure the dam's survival. Further work is planned to rebuild the right side to the same height as the remaining timber on the left side so that the dam 'looks complete'. Retreatments are scheduled every three years.

References Haywood, Bruce.W. 1972 *Kauaeranga Kauri: A Pictorial History of Kauri Timber Industry in the Kauaeranga Valley*. Lodestar Press, Auckland.

Pearson, Dave. 1997 *Christmas Creek Dam, Kauaeranga Valley: Conservation Plan for the Dept of Conservation, Waikato Conservancy, Hamilton*.

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