The Vege Garden with a view

The first major vegetable garden was established by Hugh Jamieson (principal keeper, 1937-46) very early in his posting to the Cape Brett Station.[131] Of the many factors that had to be considered the biggest issue was which site would provide the best shelter from salt spray. He decided this would be on the steep slope to the extreme west of the hill face, looking over the entrance to the Bay of Islands.

Jamieson was a very skilled and fair keeper and when it came to establishing the garden he split the area into three even plots. Which keeper would get each plot was decided by pulling straws.[132] The garden area was fenced to prevent animal intrusion and was terraced to promote growth.[133] The keepers all used leaf litter on their thirds and Jamieson used to involve his children by getting them to collect a kerosene tin each of the leaf litter out of the surrounding bush, as well as cow manure, or fish guts.[134] The garden was a big success producing kumera and lettuce. One of the kumera weighed 8 pounds 2 ounces (3.7kgs), while a lettuce measured an impressive 37 inches (0.94m) across.[135]

The communal garden apparently fell out of use by the late 1950s when the keepers reverted to growing vegetables in their individual backyards.

Figure 59 – Left: the lettuce held by an unknown gardener
Right: the kumera held by Dave Jamieson.

The Schoolhouse

The school was built in 1909 at the same time as the houses and light tower. It was positioned on the western section of the dip below the third house and was also built from kauri. It was a single room building and was in everyway a stereotypical New Zealand rural school with mixed age classes, blackboards, school desks and students' work wallpapering the walls.

Figure 60 – The schoolhouse after the addition of the extra room.

The children also had a playground, utilising the area between the workshop and school house.[136] Unfortunately when it rained a small stream lined with toi-toi would divide the playground in two.[137]

If there were fewer than seven primary school aged children the school was closed by the Education Department. In February 1969 the schoolhouse was converted into a workshop, engine room and storage facility.[138]

Figure 61 – The schoolhouse in 1978.

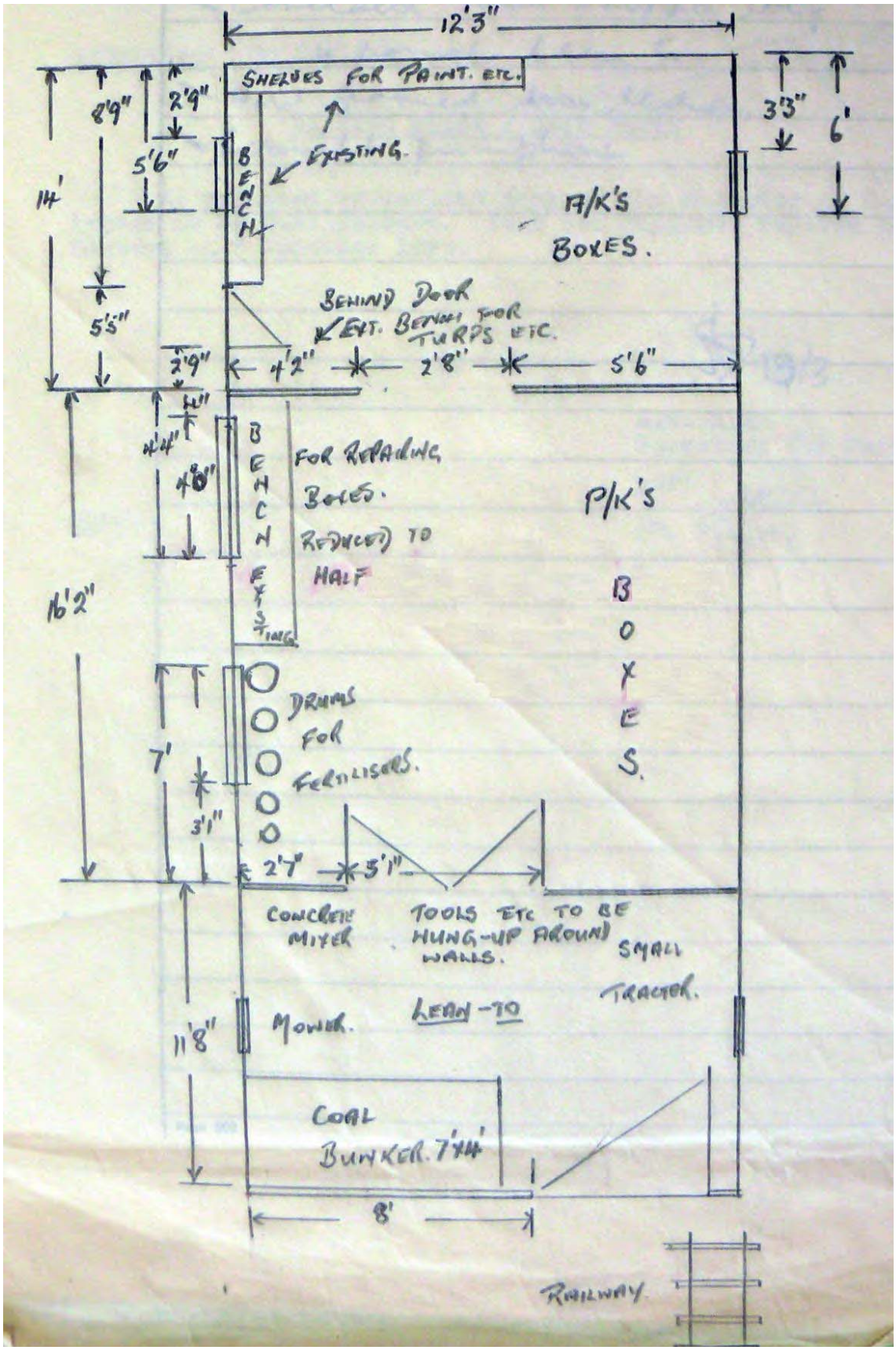

Figure 62 – School building modifications.

The Signal Hut / Station aka The Port War Signal Station

The signal hut was originally built by the Marine Department for signalling ships, but also for other activities, including boat building. During World War 2 it was converted to a naval signal station. In 1941 the government approved the establishment of port war signal stations and the conversion happened almost immediately. The building was based on the standard plans from the department (another example being that located at Pencarrow).

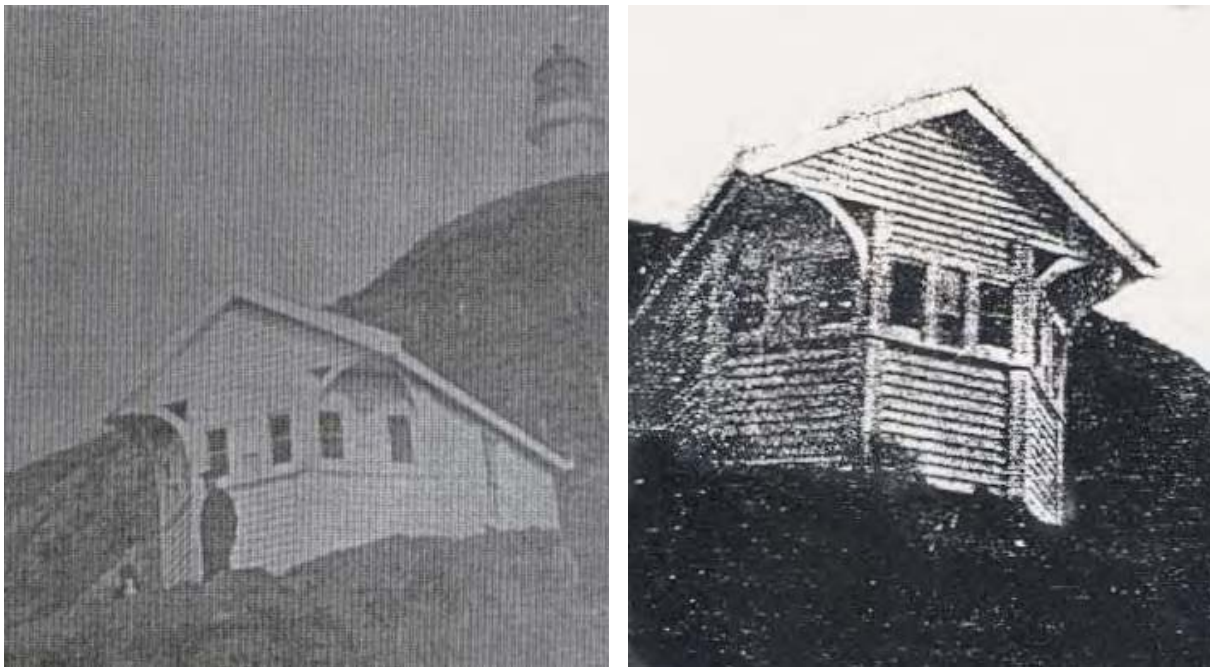

Figure 63 –Both photos show the signal hut before the World War 2 modifications.

Figure 64 – The signal hut and flagstaff as they were around 1916-20.

Figure 65 – The signal hut reverse view before modifications.

The signal station was modified in 1941 to accommodate two naval reserves to keep watch over the Bay for the Japanese.
Modifications included:

1. An extension of 5' for a new galley including concrete floor and new concrete chimney, plumbing and painting, etc (£99.13.0).
2. Renovating mess room, removal of partition, replacing windows with double light, lining new extension and installing Miro staves (£43.0.0).
3. Bunk house: line walls and ceilings with Pinex, close up front door and provide 2 additional double windows (£37.0.0).
4. Mast: Overhaul and replace shackles, renew broken halyard stays, etc (£15.17.0).
5. Flag dock: construct as indicated on plan 3'6" high with concrete floor (£51.10.0)

The modifications cost approximately £247.14.0.[139] They were carried out by two carpenters who worked all day, everyday, and boarded with the keepers.[140] By the time the changes were finished the naval reserves had an operations room, a lounge with bunks on one wall and an extension at the back and an open plan kitchen/dining room with an enamel stove and kerosene fridge.[141]

Figure 66 – The signal hut after modifications.

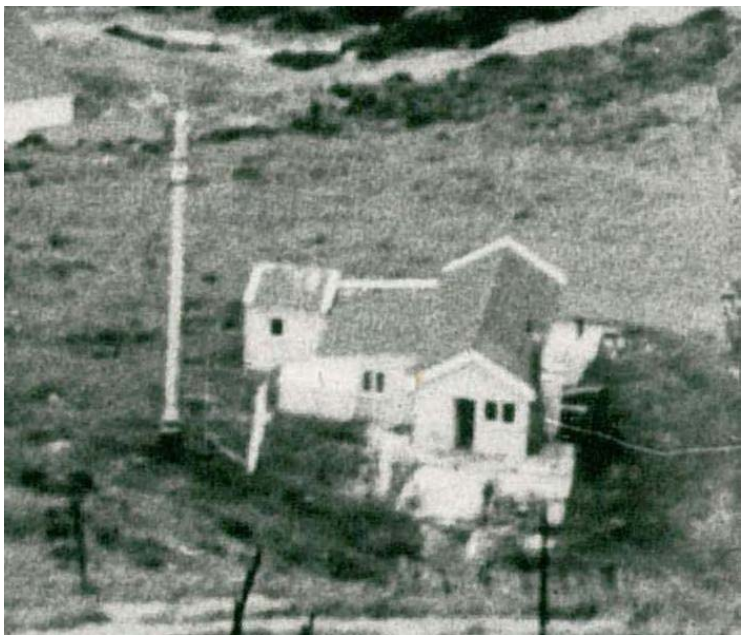

Figure 67 – View of the back of the signal station during World War 2.

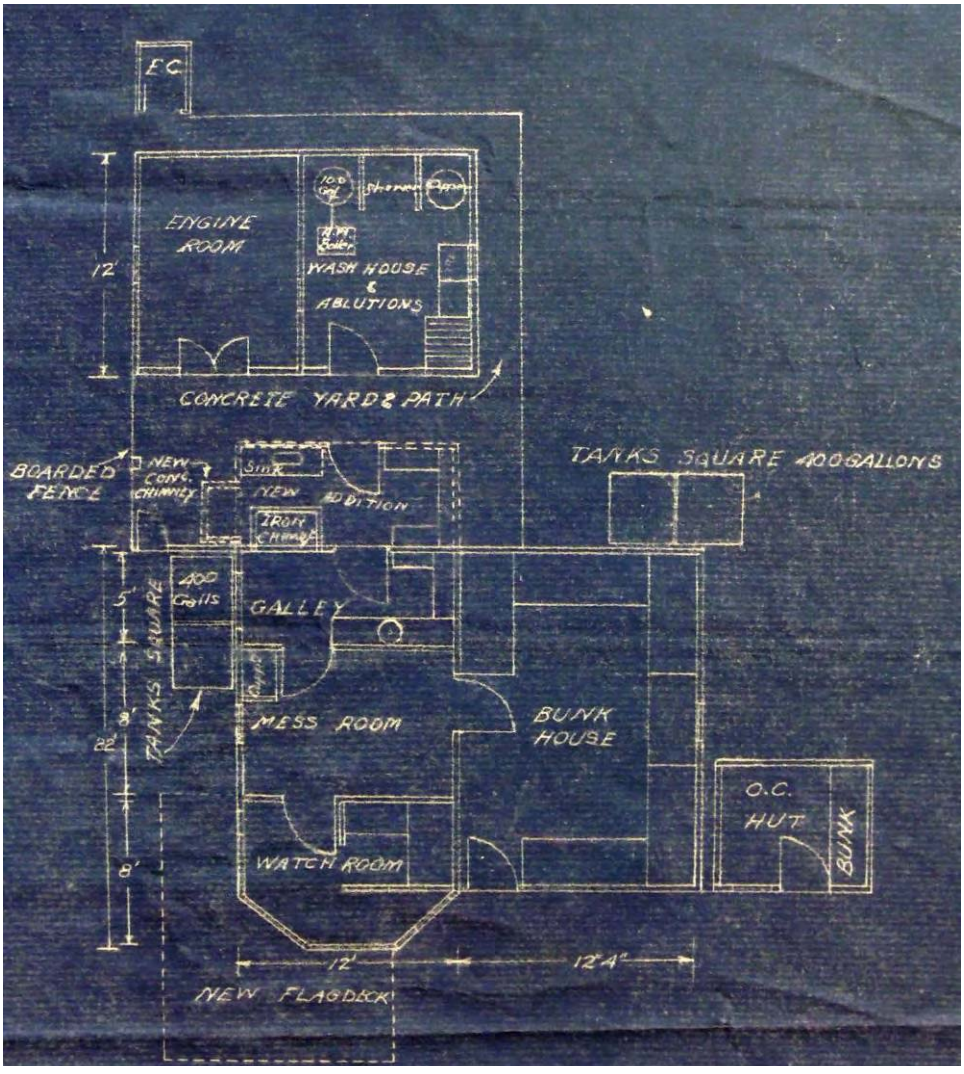

Figure 68 – Plan of the signal station with modifications.

In 1950 storm damage to the signal mast resulted in the decision to remove the mast to Russell, but by 1955 it was still positioned at the Cape. The mast was eventually displayed outside the Department of Conservation Russell Visitor Centre with a plaque. Over time it deteriorated to the point where it had to be removed.

Information from the files indicates that the signal station fell into disuse after the war with the building decaying faster than the third house. It was used as a source of materials to repair other buildings and on one occasion to build a new chicken coop.

The Naval Radar Station

'There is a highly secret Naval and Air Force installation being built at the top of the Lighthouse hill, we've become the most strategic station in New Zealand. I can tell you no more – but the population of the Cape has doubled.'[142]

The naval radar station at the Cape was one of 13 built throughout the country.[143] Six were constructed on light stations with the Cape Brett station opening in March 1942 (after being approved by Cabinet in July of 1940).[144] The station was manned by naval personnel and run in conjunction with the signal station for a short period of time.

The best account of the construction of this complex comes from letters Hugh Jamieson wrote to his daughter Mabel and which she has published in her book *'Children from the Lighthouse*':

'While the weather was fine we [the keepers] were busy getting timber and cement etc. up for the builders. As soon as this crowd is finished there will be another big 60 feet barge load of material coming for the other job.'[145]

This would happen twice a week when the weather was good until all the materials were delivered.[146] The barge would be anchored below the crane and slings of timber, cement, shingle, paint, nails, roofing iron and hardware had to be winched ashore and loaded into the tram's trolley by two of the keepers and a carpenter.[147] The other keeper would work the diesel engine of the tram while the two carpenters and the off-duty naval watchmen unloaded the trolley at the top. Barge landing days were days where all other work stopped and the focus was unloading.[148]

Based on the remains in situ today, and the map shown in Figure 69, the station consisted of five buildings:

1. Shed for tramway hauling engine
2. Accommodation and Mess
3. Ablutions
4. Engine shed
5. Radar hut

The accommodation and Mess building was equipped with facilities - both cooking and grooming - that were of a much greater standard than those the Marine Department had supplied for the three houses. This created tension between the keepers and their families and the Marine Department. The main points of tension were the Navy's flushing toilet - supplied with water from a dam at Pig Gully - and the cooking appliances. These resulted in considerable anger from the keepers' wives whose appliances were, to put it nicely, antiquated.

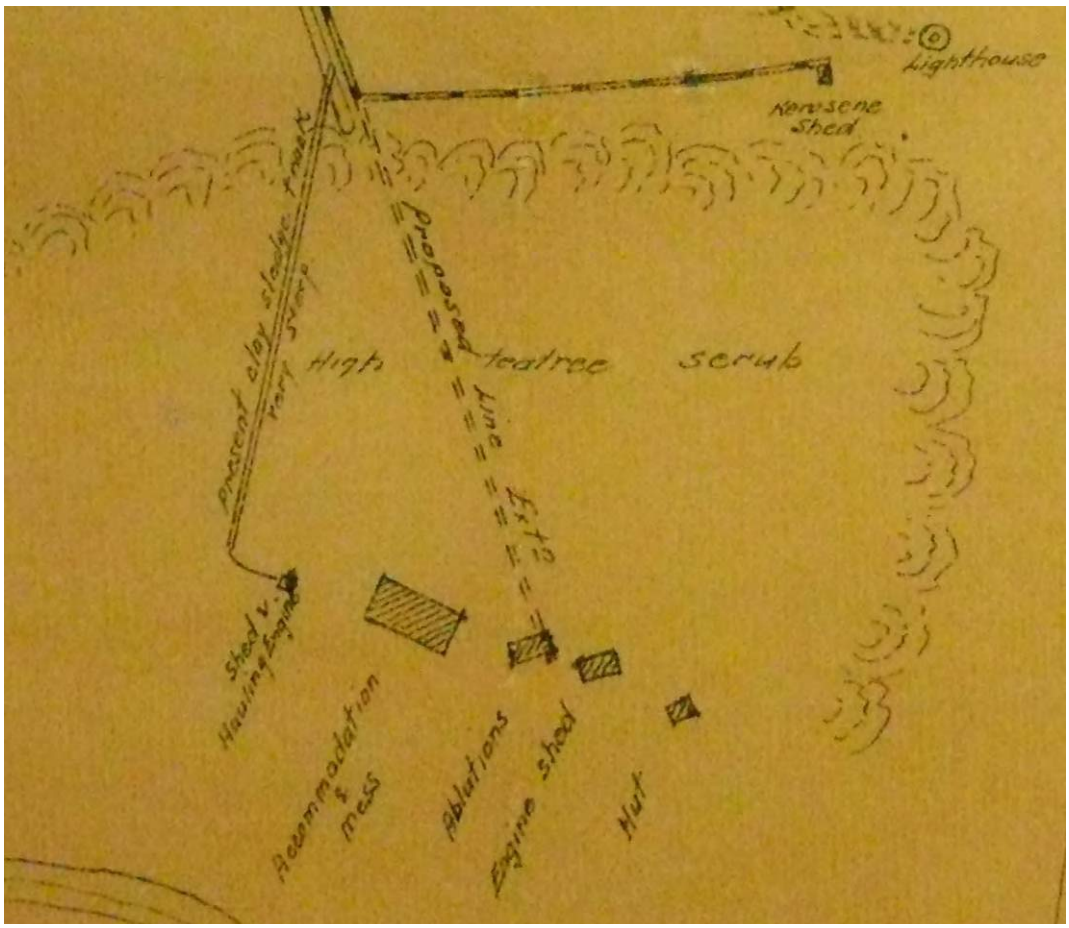

Figure 69 – A sketch plan of the World War 2 structures from 25 February, 1943.

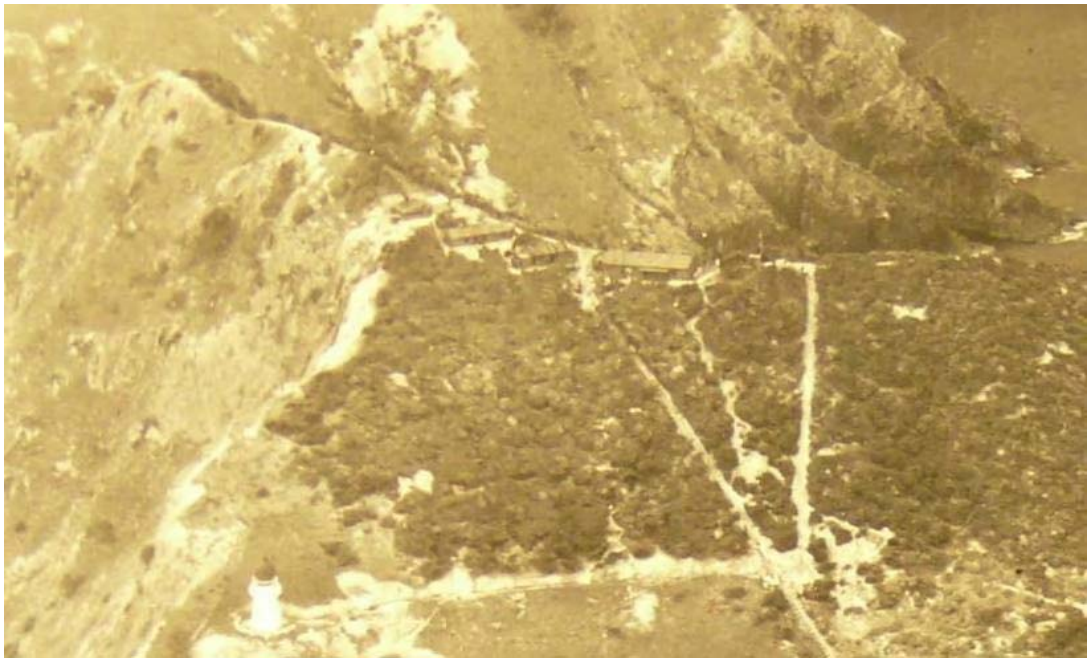

Figure 70 – The Naval Radar station at the top of the ridge.

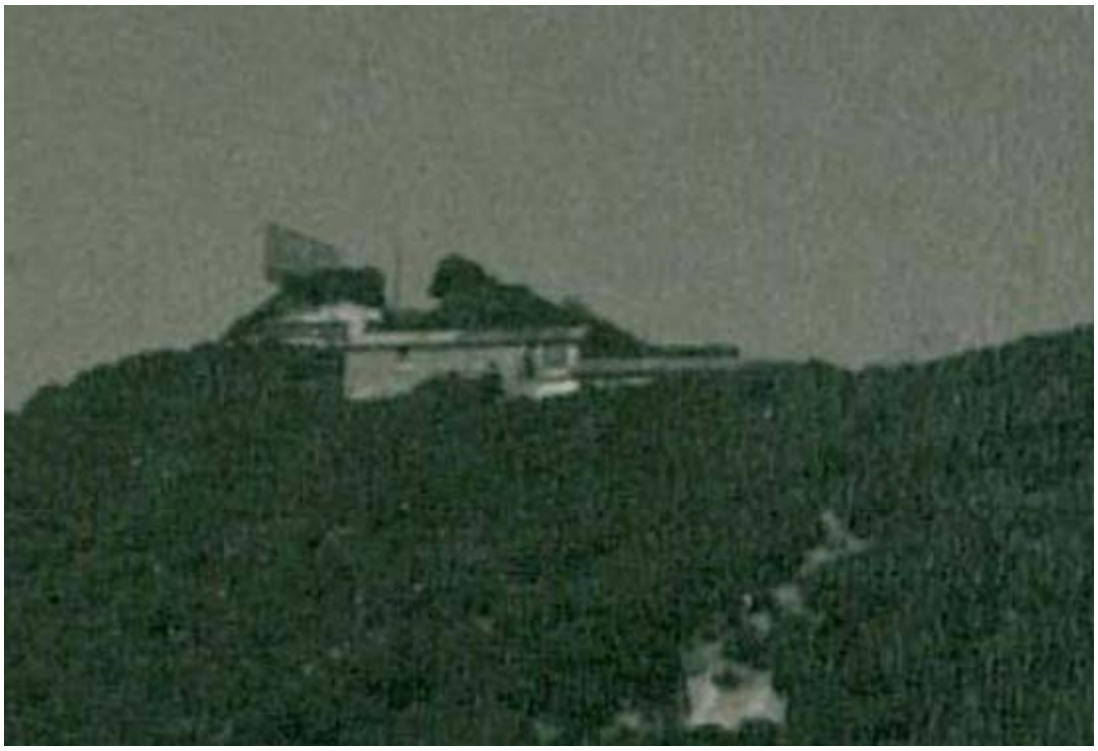

Figure 71 – The Naval Radar station – with the radar poking above the ridgeline.

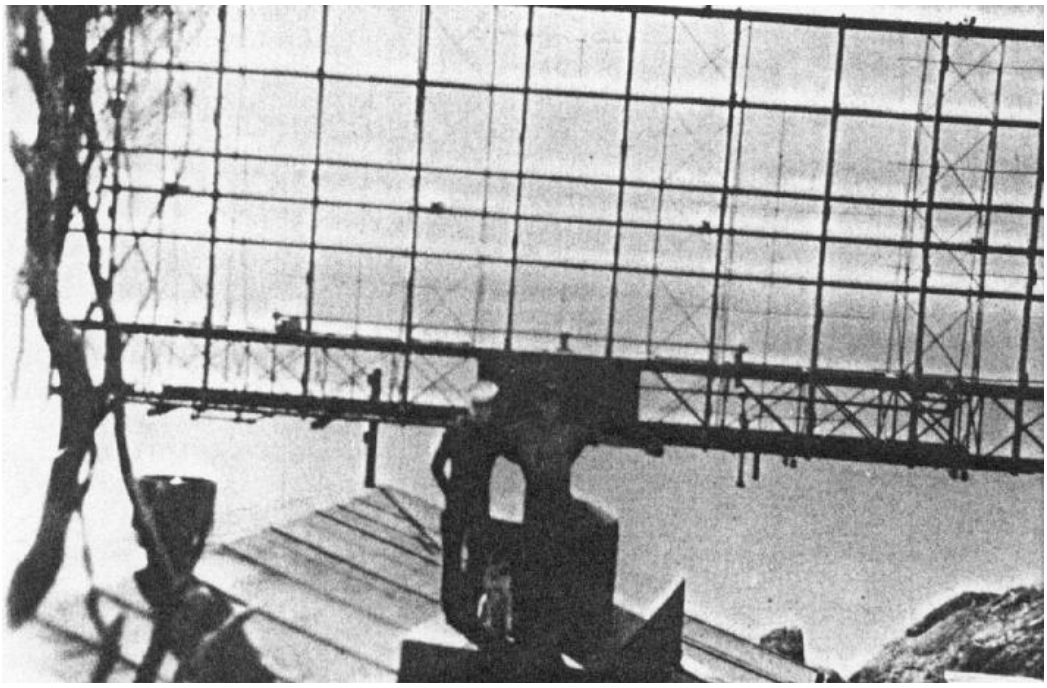

Figure 72 - The radar aerial mounted above the operator's hut.

'From the base of the lighthouse hill they could see a slow-turning steel structure silhouetted against the skyline [a radar station for tracking shipping]. There are seven or eight naval men there in very comfortable quarters. The workmen dammed the Pig Gully creek and they have flushed toilets with water they pump over. They don't use the signal station any more and have their own diesel engines….It's all very hush-hush.' [149]

The Power House

The last and singularly dedicated building was the power house, built in 1968. It housed the generator, workshop, the book/radio/store room and office.

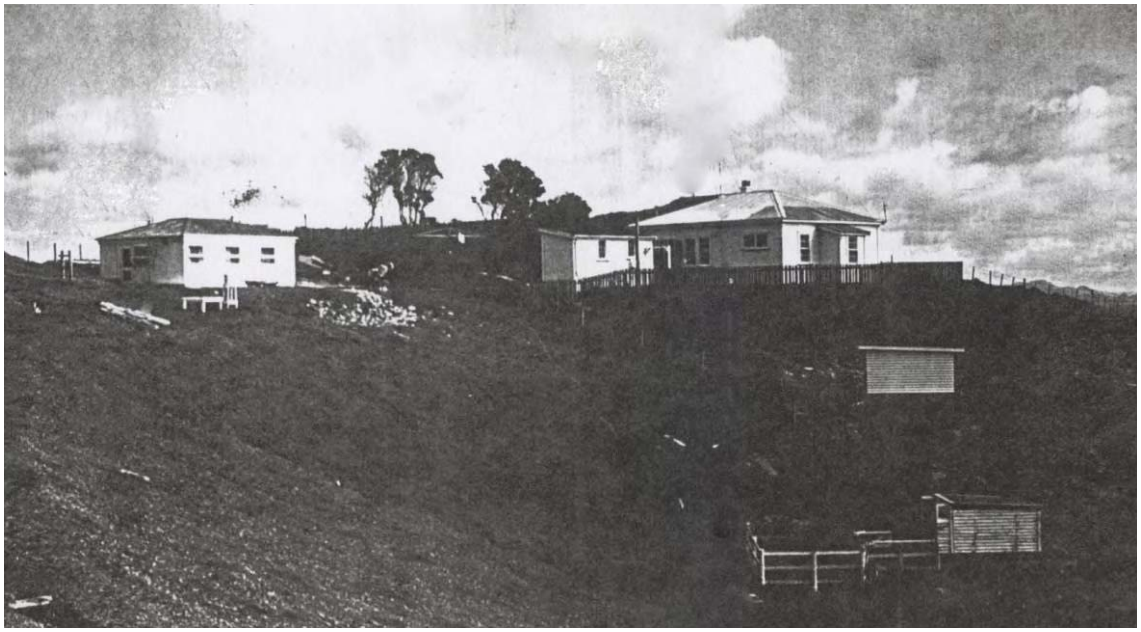

Figure 73 – The power house is the building on the left of the principal keeper's house.

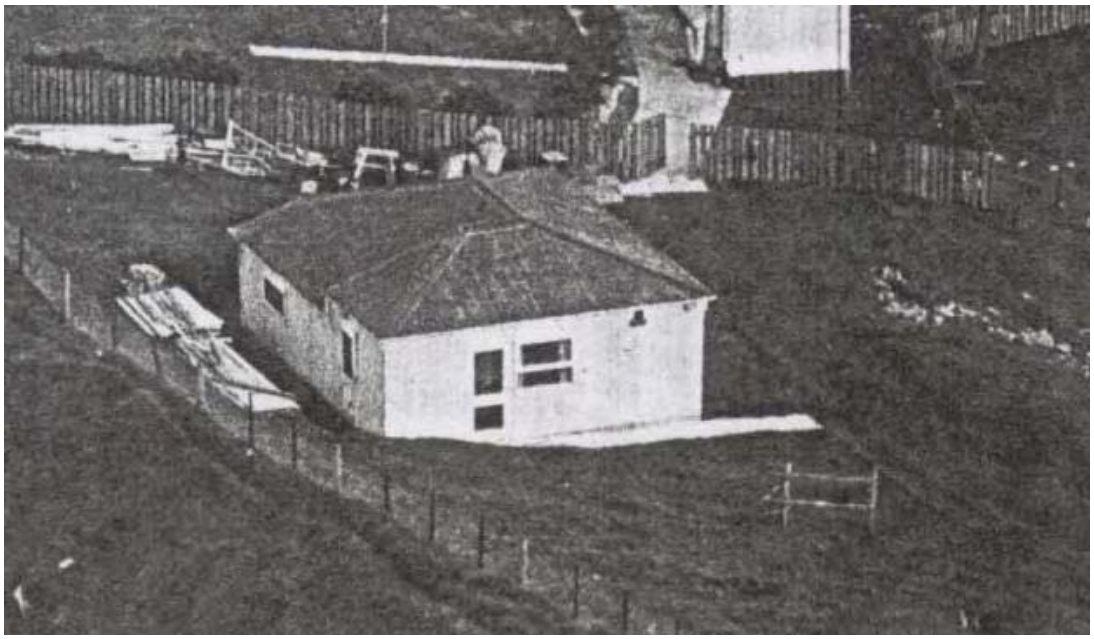

Figure 74 – View of the power house from the norwest.

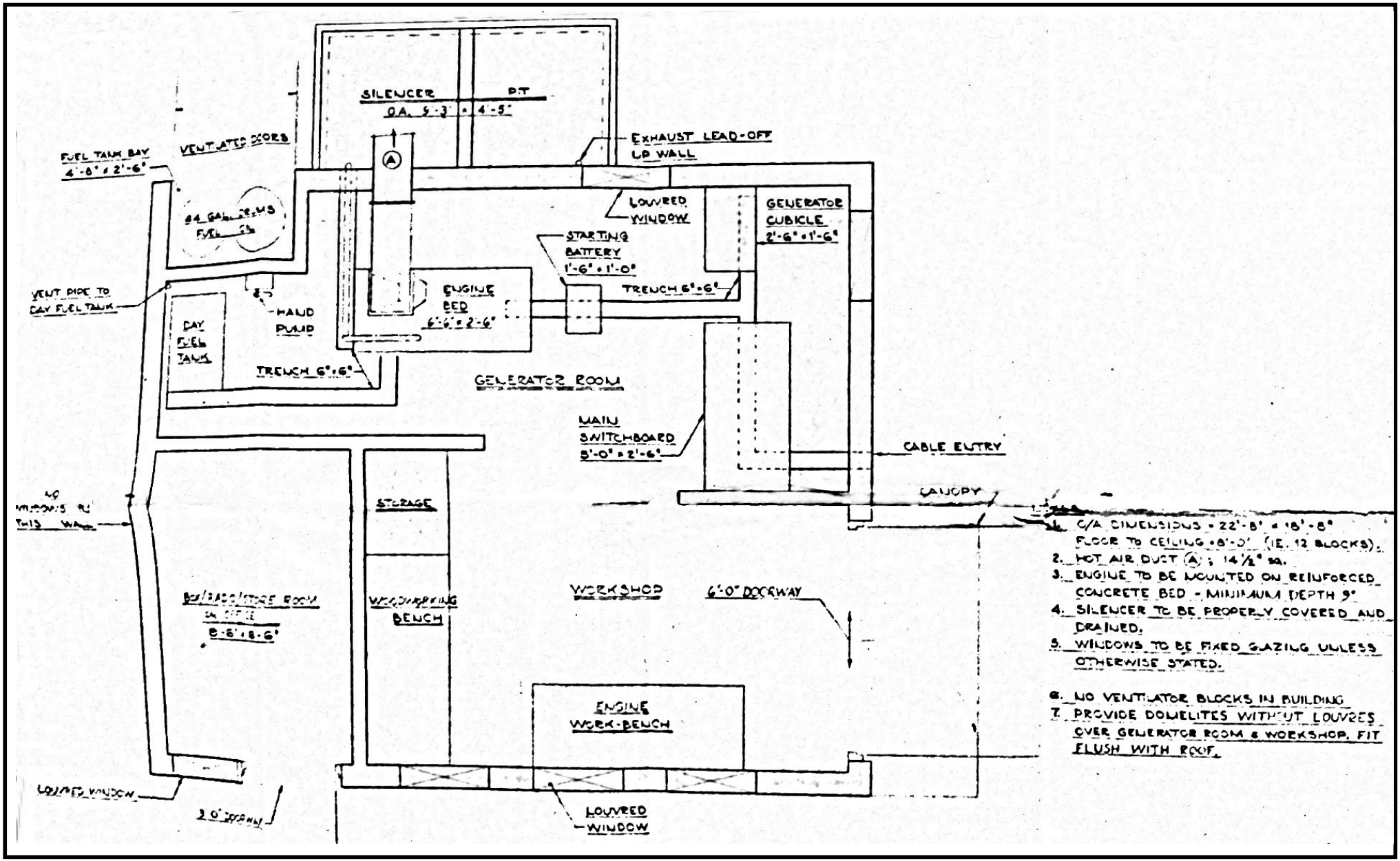

Figure 75 - The layout for the standard single generator power house from December 1969.