

Conservation of Ellis Hut

A practical workshop on conservation skills

By Pam Bain, Department of Conservation

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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Ellis Hut c 1930s, photographer unknown

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*Cover image: Ellis Hut c.1926.
Roy McGlasban at Ellis Hut checking sheep out
the back of Poporangi station.
Photo: J. McGlasban*

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Ellis Hut was built in 1884 in the Ruahine Ranges, Hawke's Bay, for mustering and wild animal control. A feature is hand-made tongue & groove interior lining. This report records a 1995 on-site workshop planning the hut's restoration.



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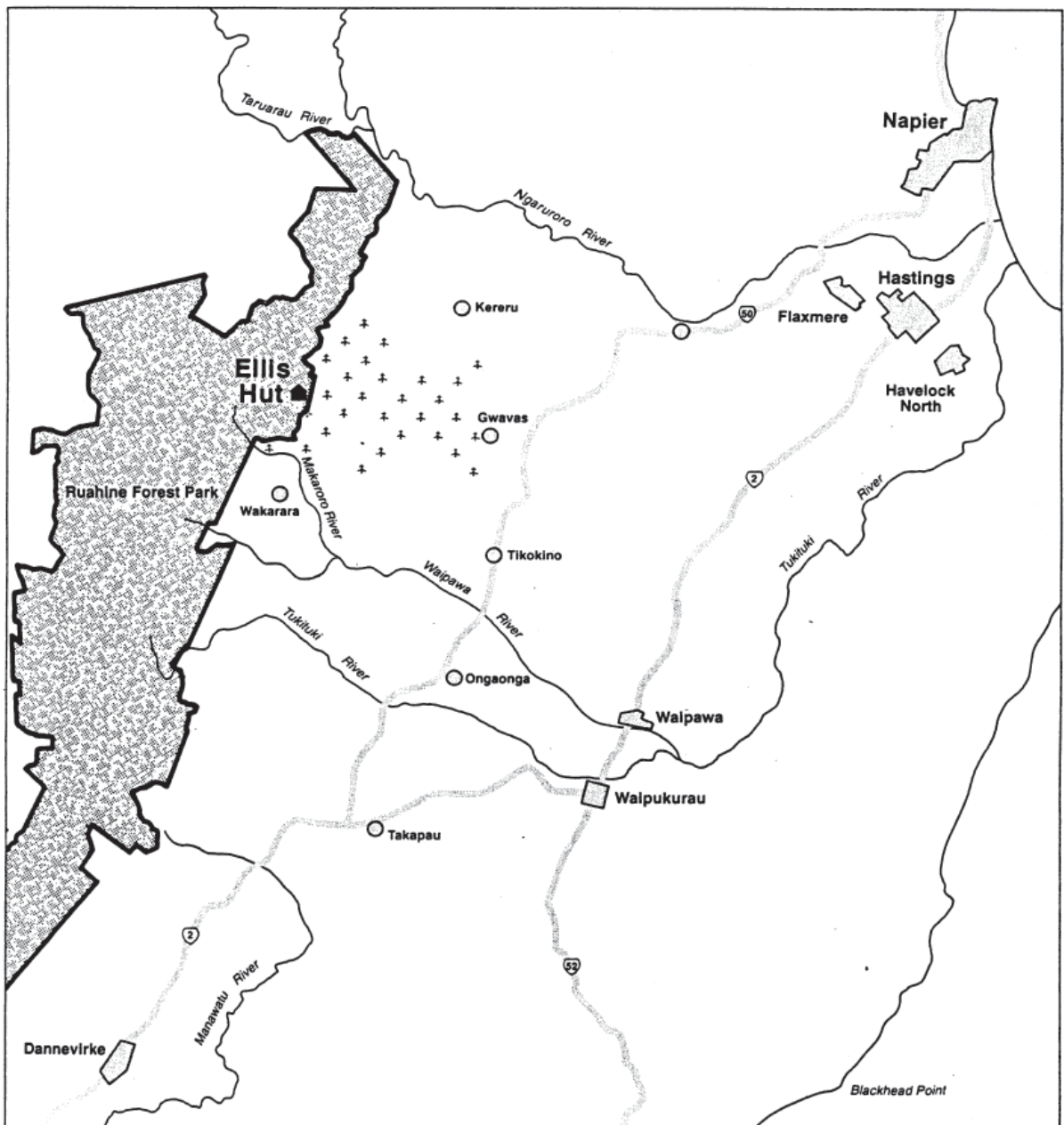
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Introduction

Ellis Hut has long been part of the folklore of the Hawke's Bay area and was in constant use by trampers and hunters until the late 1970s.

Times changed for Ellis Hut with the purchasing and planting of Gwavas State Forest and the placement beside it of Whitnell's Lodge. Ellis Hut became recorded on maps as derelict. However, derelict or not, Ellis Hut carried the mystique of being associated with a famous New Zealand murder.

FIGURE 1: LOCATION MAP ELLIS HUT



In 1990, the Department of Conservation recognised the need to assess the significance of Ellis Hut and to look at options for its future.

Chris Cochran, Conservation Architect, completed a conservation report for the hut in 1990, clarifying the significance of the hut. It was recognised that the hand-working techniques shown by this hut added considerably to its significance. It was recommended by C. Cochran that:

1. Ellis Hut be acknowledged as a significant structure in the DOC estate in the Hawke's Bay Conservancy, in particular for its historical and architectural importance.
2. The building be maintained on its original site.
3. The Department undertakes the repair and conservation of the building to ensure its continued existence, the method being generally as outlined in this report.
4. The building be maintained regularly after the major work of repair is completed.
5. Information about the building be made available and its use promoted.
6. Historic Places Trust be requested to consider the classification of the building under the Historic Places Act 1980 (Cochran, 1990).

Based on these recommendations, Ellis Hut was targeted for active management in the Hawke's Bay Historic Resources Strategy.

Difficulties locating funding meant that by 1993, despite pressure from the Hawke's Bay District Committee of Historic Places Trust, no work had been undertaken.

A visit to the hut in 1993 with Paul Mahoney, John Daniels and Michael Kelly, Historic Resources Unit, Head Office revealed that the hut was being further vandalised.



FIGURE 2

*Jim McGlashan outside
Ellis Hut 1924 or
1925 when mustering
Waikarara Block on
Poporangi Station.
Photo: J. McGlashan
collection*

Paul Mahoney completed an Active Management Appraisal for Ellis Hut which, amongst other things, addressed options for funding.

The Hawke's Bay Conservancy applied for, and received, funding from the Department of Conservation National Priority Pool funds to undertake remedial work on the hut. The concept of an historic conservation skills workshop was developed by Head Office and a practical workshop took place in February 1995.

History

The history of Ellis Hut covers three major themes: early mustering, an association with the suspected murderer James Ellis, and more recently, recreational hunting and tramping.

Ellis Hut was built in 1884 on what was once known as Marsh's Corner, which is south of the low ridge forming a watershed between the Makaroro and Ngauroro Rivers (Wright, 1986), on the far reaches of Poporangi Station. Poporangi Station began its long farming history in 1856 when James Alexander applied for the lease of 5,120 acres of grassy plains and fern hills which he stocked with 500 sheep.

In 1878 John (Jock) Anderson came to Poporangi from the South Island with 620 merino sheep. In 1883, the sheep shorn numbered 20,933 giving 259 bales of wool (MacGregor, 1970). Poporangi had become one of the showplaces in Hawke's Bay. However a shortage of labour during World War One allowed the increase of rabbits and the growth of manuka. Despite this, as many as 5,000 wethers were carried on Mangleton and Ellis Whare blocks during the 1920s.

Grazing on these blocks was discontinued before 1940 owing to the encroachment of fern and manuka. However in 1954 the Lands and Survey Department developed them for returned servicemen (MacGregor, 1970).

Ellis Hut is directly linked to the development and fortunes of Poporangi Station. It was built for Mr Jock Anderson of the Poporangi Sheep Station, by Bill Marsh and Jack Curtis. Timber was felled and pitsawn nearby. "It was floored and lined throughout with beautifully hand dressed timber, and roofed with corrugated iron, that had been transported to the site on packhorses, along the 17 mile track leading over the Wakararas from Poporangi" (Masters, 1961 : 139).

Originally the hut was known as Whitnell's Hut, after the shepherd and hunter Bill Whitnell who lived in it for many years. Sheep farming was a major industry which was really expanding last century and Poporangi Station was one of a number of Hawke's Bay's large pastoral runs. The size and luxury of this lined hut, which is different to most remaining early musterers huts in Hawke's Bay, suggests that people probably lived there for extended periods.

The hut became involved in a dramatic piece of Hawke's Bay history in 1904. "Early this century, New Zealand held its breath as the 'Invisible Killer of Te Awaite' was hunted for ten months throughout the lower North Island" (Rodley, 1993 : 49). James Ellis, the suspected murderer, was finally tracked down to this back-country hut in central Hawke's Bay, which has since been known as Ellis or Murderer's Hut.

Ellis was employed in 1903 by Leonard Collinson, a scrub cutting contractor on Te Awaite Station. Sacked for shooting a deer without authority, Ellis was heard to threaten revenge.

On Friday 26 February 1904, Collinson was shot in the chest and so started a ten month hunt for James Ellis. He was finally located on 10 December 1904 at the hut, disarmed and taken to Wellington for trial. Despite protesting his innocence, the jury returned a verdict of guilty and Ellis was hung (Dyne, 1969).

This piece of history associated with Ellis or Murderer's Hut has since been established as part of Hawke's Bay folk history.

In the 1920s Ellis Hut was in good condition and used by musterers such as Jim McGlashan and his father. The lean-to was still in place and used for storage and saddles. At this time it didn't have a floor but had had previously. The area to the west of the hut was becoming overgrown in manuka and scrub and to the east there were the probable remains of sheep yards (McGlashan, 1995, pers comm.).

Ellis Hut remained in good condition for many years until in 1935 it was nearly lost to fire. In 1946 the hut was still in good condition but by the early 1960s signs of decay became visible. Some of the boards were falling off the walls, and the crumbling chimney was replaced by the Forest Service (Wright, 1986).

During these later years the hut was used by cullers for animal control. A recreational aspect also developed, probably firstly to do with hunting for sport and more recently, tramping.

The history of Ellis Hut tells a very interesting and important story about the changing development of the area, from the early settlers who gradually realised their limitations on how they could use this type of land through to its current recreational use.

ELLIS HUT

The Ellis Hut Conservation Report (Cochran, 1990) gives a detailed description of the hut, summarised here.

It is a simple rectangular two room structure measuring 7.5 metres by 3.7 metres. A central front door opens into the larger of the two rooms which has a fireplace at one end. A window on either side of the front door lights each room. A gable roof running the length of the building is 2.2 metres high to the eaves and 4.2 metres to the ridge.

“It should be noted that the building is more properly a cottage than a hut. It follows closely in its design a prototype that was established in the early decades of the colonisation of New Zealand. A two-room gabled building often with a lean-to added to the rear elevation, formed the first permanent dwelling of many of the early settlers” (Cochran, 1990:4).

The structure is a timber frame sheathed in weatherboards and lined inside with beaded tongue and groove boarding. The roof is corrugated iron. The lean-to no longer exists.

The timber is pit-sawn and the majority of the inside tongue and groove is hand worked.

Before conservation work began, the general condition of Ellis Hut was considered poor. Most of the foundations and subfloor framing had rotted away. Most of the exterior weatherboarding had been removed. No windows remained. However the original corrugated iron roof remained and the interior timbers and door were largely intact.

Despite its apparent derelict appearance, much of the hand-worked timber remained.

Significance

Both the Ellis Hut Conservation Report (Cochran, 1990) and Ellis Hut : Active Management Appraisal (Mahoney, 1993) address the significance of Ellis Hut. To summarise, they note:

SOCIAL/HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

A very important hut in relation to the recent history of the Ruahine Ranges as the oldest surviving building. It gains historic significance from its association with the 1904 Ellis murder case. It has had continued use for animal control, recreational hunting and tramping until recently.

TECHNOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The technological significance is high as a rare surviving example of a hand worked European timber building (Appendix 3). It may well be one of the last buildings built in New Zealand that includes hand dressed timber (Mahoney, 1993).

ARCHITECTURAL

An important local survivor of a typical vernacular cottage once common in New Zealand during the early pioneering period. It has survived without major modifications.

Conservation Skills Workshop

The Conservation Skills Workshop concept (Appendix 1) was based on a daily mix of:

1. Lectures and workshops.
2. On-site practical application.
3. Short written exercises.
4. Practical demonstrations and personal involvement.

A range of workshop topics were covered with on-site practical application during the week January 30th - February 3rd 1995. Jack Fry and Chris Cochran provided specialist conservation input.

MONDAY JANUARY 30TH 1995

Workshop participants arrived at Ongaonga Field Centre and travelled to Ellis Hut.

Afternoon Workshops:

History of hut and area by Pat Bonis, Field Centre Manager (Ongaonga).

Visit and discussion of hand worked techniques of Ellis Hut.

Discussion on "How sound does it have to be in order to warrant conservation."

Worked through Historic Places Act significance assessment for hut.

Pat Bonis took a trip to Yeoman's Mill to identify resources which could be used in Ellis Hut conservation.

Evening Slides:

Jack Fry: Issues in conservation.

Chris Cochran: ICOMOS charter.

TUESDAY JANUARY 31ST 1995

Workshop on practical use.

Began work on hut:

- Clearing around hut
- Recording and removing furniture
- Recording archaeological material
- Assessment of structure and conservation issues
- Assessment of environment
- Discussion and feedback

Jack Fry workshop on conservation techniques and materials - "Kill and Harden" (Fig 4).

Workshop on specification of materials.

Continued work on hut:

- Clearing
- Assessment of building techniques
- Weather boards removed
- Braced for evening

Evening slides:

Steve Bagley, Nelson Conservancy.

Fiona Wilson and Dave Rogers, Wanganui Conservancy.

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 1ST 1995

Workshop on significant material

Discussion regarding process for historic conservation e.g. what is active management appraisal, conservation plan, etc. Discussion regarding chimney and lean-to issues. Discussion on graffiti. Continued work on hut:

- Building technology
- Assessment of graffiti
- Complete clearing and archaeological reporting
- Establish level for hut
- Dig for piles and monitor archaeology
- Jack Fry training Dave Rogers in chemical use

Feedback on work:

- Graffiti report (Appendix 2)
- Safety instructions regarding Jack Fry's chemicals
- Building technology reporting
- Clearing report

Continued work on hut:

- Jacking up hut
- Replacing piles
- New bearers
- Building technology assessment
- Task Force Green clearing vegetation around hut
- Photographic record of graffiti
- Cleaning off painted graffiti

Evening slides:

Pam Bain, East Coast/Hawke's Bay Conservancy

Jim Staton, West Coast Conservancy

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 2ND 1995

Discussion regarding location of other hut in early photo in Cochran 1990. No sign of that hut by 1920s (McGlashan, pers comm).

Continued work on hut:

- Lichen treatment
- Piles, bearers
- Removing graffiti
- Cleaning inside
- Discovery of possible water source in pines

Discussion regarding process and workshop with Chris Cochran before he departs.

Continued work on hut:

- Removing graffiti
- Replacing south and west wall piles

Training video clips:

- Pat Bonis - History
- Robert Brassey - Archaeology
- Steve Bagley - Conservation plans Terry Slee - Practical use issues/adaptation
- Richard Anderson - Job specifications
- Fiona Wilson - Chattels/interior
- Paul Mahoney - Significance, workshop concept
- Jim Staton - Significant material

Evening slides:

Terry Slee - Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy

Robert Brassey - Auckland Conservancy

Paul Mahoney - Historic places in New Zealand

FRIDAY JANUARY 3RD 1995

Continued work on hut:

- Completed piles and bearers
- Began cross braces and joist repairs
- Removal of graffiti
- Chemical treatment

Continued video training clips:

Dave Rogers - Stabilisation techniques.

Roger Elliott - Practical conservation.

Workshop

Concluding discussions on:

- Interior issues.
- Conservation on site vs shifting.
- Effects of politics on conservation.
- Conservation plans - workshop to be convened in future to discuss, future training options:
 - looking at cultural history links, archaeological training
 - metal conservation
 - cob conservation
 - research techniques and site histories
 - vegetation issues
 - artefact protection
 - legal protection
 - Waitangi claim implications
- Future training locations:
 - Rangitoto Island
 - West Coast
 - Te Urewera National Park
- Research topics:
 - wood preservative and form of application
 - what do solvents do?
 - alternative products
 - resource guide
 - handbook on conservation skills
- Decision making processes.
 - Is there a formula?
 - Conservation and era e.g. Katherine Mansfield House
 - Interpretation e.g. ring binders

Public Awareness e.g. open days

- Use e.g. historic network of huts
- Issues for future management
- What now for Ellis?
 - toilet
 - windows
 - bunks
 - interpretation sign
 - chimney
 - to lock or not to lock
 - fireplace or not
 - water supply
 - lean-to?

Workshop Resolutions

The workshop format allowed for often intense discussion and group resolution of issues associated with the conservation of the hut. Some of the issues discussed were:

1. *Hand-worked timbers: Early discussions challenged the concept that the hut was hand worked.*

Resolution: Further investigation proved the majority of the hut was hand worked with some machine worked boards (see Appendix 3).

2. *Practical Use: Discussion regarding the need for use for historic places. Does it need to have a use before it is conserved? It is enough to consent an historic place for its significance?*

Resolution: Historic Places should be conserved firstly for their significance although use issues are important.

3. *Discussion on working within the bounds of the ICOMOS charter e.g. retention of material.*

Resolution: All introduced materials to be obvious (e.g. pine) or marked.

4. *Discussion on importance of chattels.*

Resolution: Photographically record all chattels present and remove those introduced recently. All introduced chattels to be free standing.

5. *Discussion on archaeological associations to historic huts. How are sites identified? Legal requirements.*

Resolution: To record in-situ all historic and archaeological material. Leave lean-to area for future excavation.

6. *Discussion on conservation techniques and significant material. 'Pure' conservation method is to leave all significant material and treat chemically. Another perspective was to remove rotted ends and splice new wood for strength.*

Resolution: To splice areas hidden from view.

7. *Discussion about chimney.*

Resolution: To repair current chimney and replace with one similar to original as funds become available.

8. *Discussion about use of fireplace. Proximity to Carter Holt Harvey (CCH) forest an issue for fire use. Option for use in winter and locked in summer.*

Resolution: For further discussion with CCH and Field Centre Manager.

9. *Discussion about reconstruction of lean-to. Photographic evidence of lean-to shows it is still in place c.1920s. Assessment of building technology suggests it was part of original building. Good options for future use for storage of firewood, water, extra space. It once had a wooden floor (J. McGlashan, 1995 pers comm).*

Resolution: To monitor use of hut. Consider reconstruction of lean-to if funds available in future.

10. *Discussion about graffiti. This generated enthusiastic discussion. "Pure" conservation techniques would ensure protection of all graffiti. Due to future use is this practical or does it encourage further graffiti (Appendix 2)?*

Resolution: To remove paint and painted graffiti after recording it all.

11. *Discussion on use of Ellis Hut. Historical records suggest a musterers hut but an early photo shows two huts with Ellis being considerably larger. The skilled work gone into lining this Hut, its size and the range and amount of material located around the Hut suggest it was possibly lived in for long periods.*

Resolution: Further research into early history of the hut required to determine its early use.

12. *Discussion on current environment of Ellis Hut. How is the environment affected by a pine forest at the back door?*

Resolution: To undertake discussions with CCH with regard to developing a more appropriate environment for the hut.

13. *Discussion on location of water source. Access to water is currently an issue. A possible well was located in the pines opposite the front door.*

Resolution: Confirm use of well by discussion with early occupants or by excavation. This has since been confirmed by Mr J McGlashan who recalls a spring in front of the hut. (McGlashan, 1995 pers comm).

The range of topics discussed and the valuable input of course participants ensured a practical and ethical response to the conservation issues raised.



FIGURE 3: WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



FIGURE 4: JACK FRY WORKSHOP



FIGURE 5: ELLIS HUT BEFORE CONSERVATION



FIGURE 6: WAITING FOR THE TECHNICIAN'S ADVICE

Practical Conservation

The practical conservation of Ellis Hut, based on decisions made during workshop discussions with group input, centred around four areas: archaeology, graffiti report, building technology and practical work.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Many historic conservation projects DOC is involved in will require archaeological involvement, especially if the work involves any form of terrain disturbance to a pre-1900 site.

Although Ellis Hut was pre-1900, an archaeological permit was not originally sought from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT). This decision was based on two premises.

Firstly, a recent assessment of the hut suggested that it was sitting on bearers and had never sat on piles. Therefore no ground disturbance should be required.

Secondly, an excavation of Iron Whare, a musterers hut in the Kaweka Forest Park, suggested that minimal information is gained from early musterers huts probably due to the frugal nature of the occupants.

Attempts were made to clarify this situation with NZHPT in December and January, but contact was not able to be made with archaeological staff.

When work clearing around Ellis Hut began, it was obvious that the hut was built on piles which would need to be replaced. Also, post-1900 artefactual material was common, suggesting possible earlier material associated with the site.

Attempts were again made to contact NZHPT with no success. The decision was then made to continue the hut restoration and to monitor and record all artefactual material located.

This material is currently being analysed and a full archaeological report will be completed in the future.

BUILDING TECHNOLOGY

Chris Cochran and Jim Staton compiled a detailed analysis of the building technology of the hut (Appendix 3). They conclude “although it is not uncommon to find examples of pit-sawn timber in some of our early buildings, Ellis Hut must stand out as a building where we know that the whole of the structure, cladding and lining was pit-sawn, and where most of the finishing work was by hand” (Fig 7, 8).



FIGURE 7: BUILDING TECHNOLOGY TEAM AT WORK ON THE WEST WALL



FIGURE 8: DETAIL OF WEST WALL CONSTRUCTION (SEE APP. 3: SITE DRAWING 10)

Much of the basis of the structural work was completed at the close of the workshop. It was all recorded on video by Peter Abbot of the Ongaonga Field Centre. After the workshop, work on the hut continued for another week with the assistance of Roger Elliot (Rimutaka Field Centre), Dave Rogers (Stratford Field Centre), Ongaonga Field Centre staff and the Taskforce Green group. Visits were made by Napier Conservancy Office staff and media from *The Dominion* and Hawke's Bay newspapers (Appendix 6).

FURTHER CONSERVATION WORK :

- Cross braces restored. As with the studs, these were spliced with pine for strength (Fig 17).
- Wood treatment. Panacide spray was used for the removal of moss and lichen. Busan was sprayed on the whole building. Busan pole gel was injected into the ends of joists and bearers (Fig 14).
- Chimney removed. The chimney was removed to the Ongaonga Field Centre to be repaired until a reconstruction of the original chimney is completed in the future. It has since been replaced and is operational.
- Flamestop paper placed on the outside of building beneath the cladding.
- *Pinus radiata* weatherboard cladding was placed on outside using plain lapped boards. The technological detail of each corner was maintained with the weatherboards butting into a solid corner stop. The north and west walls were sheathed in *pinus radiata* (Fig 18).
- South wall. The south wall was sheathed in iron as it had never been weatherboarded due to the presence of the original lean-to. This allows for the future addition of the lean-to if required.
- East wall. The few usable pieces of the original weatherboarding were placed on this wall. The remainder was sheathed in *pinus radiata*.
- Windows. Based on measurements, description of window style, early photos and the original sill, two new windows were commissioned which match the originals.

ONGOING WORK

Although not completely finished, the conservation work on Ellis Hut ensured the protection of as much of the original fabric as possible. The hut is water proof and clearly no longer derelict. The Ongaonga Field Centre have been continuing with the following conservation work (Fig 19):

- The windows have been reconstructed and replaced.
- Discussions have been initiated with CCH regarding the setting of the hut.
- The chimney has been repaired and replaced to ensure minimal fire risk.
- Door surrounds replaced.

- Door has been repaired.
- Patched pieces of iron on roof have been replaced.
- Floor has been fixed.
- Wire brush and rust proof roof.
- Inside add new totara tongue and groove for gaps in walls.



FIGURE 10: EAST WALL ELLIS HUT BEFORE CONSERVATION



FIGURE 11: HUT BEING LEVELLED



FIGURE 12: REPILING NORTH WALL



FIGURE 13: REPILING COMPLETED



FIGURE 14: CHEMICAL TREATMENT OF WOOD

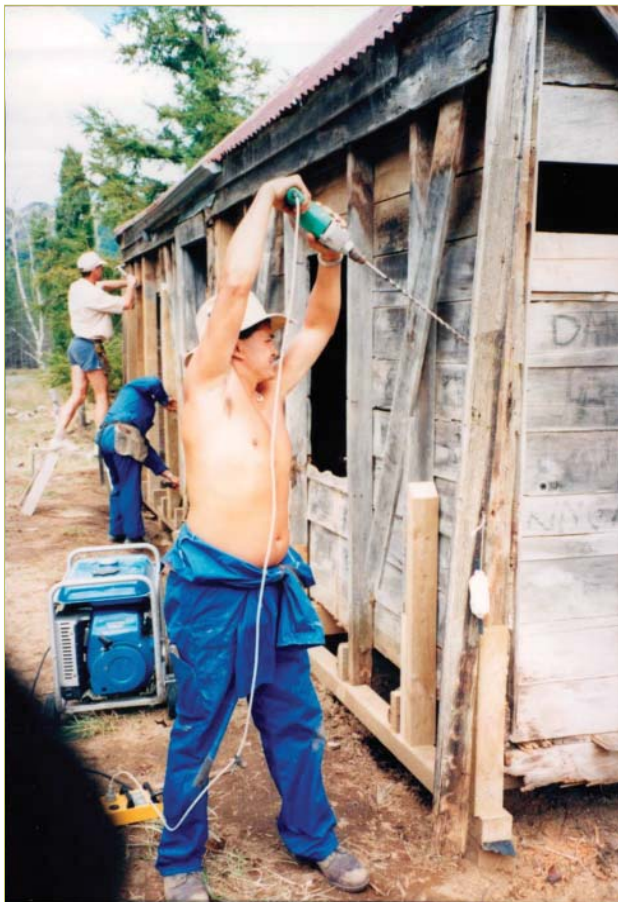


FIGURE 15: STUD REPAIRS



FIGURE 16: PINE CLADDING ON NORTH AND EAST WALLS



FIGURE 17: NEW WATER TANK AND REPAIRED CLADDING ON EAST AND SOUTH WALLS



FIGURE 18: PINE CLADDING ON NORTH AND WEST WALLS



FIGURE 19: DETAIL OF CONSERVATION WORK (BEFORE AND AFTER)

Conclusions

The folklore history of Ellis Hut has always been well known. However, the technological significance of this hut was reinforced during the workshop and ensured its acknowledgement as a candidate for protection despite issues such as use and location.

The history of Ellis Hut reflects much of the changing history of inland Hawke's Bay, from its development as part of a large early pastoral run through to wild animal control and more recently tramping.

The concept of a conservation skills workshop to tackle this project led to detailed on-site discussions on techniques and ethical considerations. This, combined with practical work based on the principles of the ICOMOS charter and the assistance of Conservation Architect, Chris Cochran and conservator Jack Fry, developed a very successful workshop and a high quality conservation project. The enthusiasm and feedback from participants is evidence of this. A detailed conservation skills training video has been completed and widely distributed.

Work on Ellis Hut is continuing with the preparation of interpretation and the completion of the conservation work. The work has a high profile in Hawke's Bay with many people enquiring about use of the hut, and those who visit very supportive of the work.

Acknowledgements

The task of conserving Ellis Hut would never have been possible without the help of those who attended the Conservation Skills Workshop:

- Paul Mahoney, Historic Resources, Head Office
- Chris Cochran, Conservation Architect, Wellington
- Jack Fry, Conservation Supplies Ltd, Wellington
- Richard Anderson, Historic Resources, Wellington
- Robert Brassey, Historic Resources, Auckland
- Fiona Wilson, Historic Resources, Wanganui
- Steve Bagley, Historic Resources, Nelson
- Terry Slee, Historic Resources, Tongariro/Taupo
- Jim Staton, Historic Resources, West Coast
- Roger Elliot, Carpenter, Rimutaka Field Centre
- Dave Rogers, Stratford Field Centre
- Pam Bain, Historic Resources, Hawke's Bay/East Coast
- Lindsay Canham, Training Video, Rotorua
- Ongaonga Field Centre staff and Task Force Green

Special thanks to Paul Mahoney, Head Office, who developed the workshop concept; Pat Bonis, Peter Abbott and Peter Dandy, Ongaonga Field Centre whose enthusiasm, commitment and practical help was essential; Roger Elliot whose carpentry skills made this project possible and who gave us two weeks of his time; Dave Rogers who also worked on the hut for a second week, and Robin Ward our chef extraordinaire. Thanks to Elizabeth Pishief who assisted with researching the history, and the late Jim McGlashan who shared his early memories and photographs.

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Appendix 1

CONSERVATION SKILLS WORKSHOP

Course description (initial version):

The course is based on physical conservation work on Ellis Hut in the Ruahine Ranges, Hawke's Bay. In summer droughts, cars can be driven right to this hut on a private road.

Accommodation: Whitnell Lodge, 100 meters from Ellis Hut. There is no electricity. Toilet and shower available.

Food: Food will be provided. We will all participate in meal preparation. Please advise if vegetarian.

Bring: Sleeping bag, utensils, cutlery, alcohol

Tools: Those who own tools suitable for wooden building restoration should bring them if practical.

Start: 11.00am Monday 30 January Onga Onga field centre, Hawke's Bay

Finish: Midday Friday 03 February

The course will consist of a balanced daily mix of four elements:

1. Lectures/workshops on specific learning blocks.
2. On-site practical application of knowledge to Ellis Hut situation in full group discussion format.
3. Short written exercises based on Ellis Hut in small group format.
4. Practical demonstrations and personal involvement in restoration work on Ellis Hut.

At present a formal daily timetable has not been produced. This is the first time we have run such a course and we will probably set the program on a daily basis with group support.

The proposed key learning blocks on this course are:

Significant material — you will learn how to:

- understand the concept of significant material
- identify significant material
- know when invasive investigation is required
- learn from past mistakes.

Conservation approaches and options — you will learn how to:

- understand and interpret ICOMOS principles and processes
- resolve issues and options related to introducing and removing material

- resolve issues and options related to stabilising material
- undertake basic chemical stabilisation processes.

Conservation plans for DOC — you will learn how to:

- use a ‘master’ table of contents to begin plans
- use ‘master’ policies to save time
- apply the ICOMOS charter for specific cases
- select the right type of plan for specific cases.

Work specifications — you will learn how to:

- establish a methodology for a specification
- specify the appropriate level of detail
- undertake project supervision
- deal with unforeseen problems and make on-site decisions.

Historic significance — you will learn how to:

- understand the Historic Places Act significance criteria,
- how to determine and meet research requirements
- how to prepare significance assessments
- how to link significance and conservation.

Associated activities — you will learn how to:

- manage the publicity of actual restoration projects
- consider future use options
- participate in the actual conservation works
- evaluate and improve the current Departmental guideline on conservation plans as a result of our experience with this project.

Appendix 2

ELLIS HUT GRAFFITI REPORT

February 1st 1995, for group discussion

1. Distribution

Ellis Hut consists of two rooms. The easternmost (main) room has a window, doorway and fireplace, and a large metal Forest Service cupboard affixed in one corner. The western room contains four bunks. These were not part of the original fixtures of the hut. The timber with which the hut is lined is thought to be totara. Graffiti is heavily concentrated in the main room on all the walls. It also occurs inside and outside the door, on the lintels and on the cupboard and ceiling. Only the bottom board or two of three shorter wall sections are untouched, graffitists appear to prefer white-painted boards.

There is much less graffiti in the bunkroom, which retains more newspaper covering. There is graffiti on all four walls and the ceiling, and some bunks. There is no apparent graffiti below the newspaper, however, some of the graffiti is on top of it.

2. Dates

The dates in the main room are older in general than the bunkroom. The oldest noted is 'L Gray 1926' (back wall of main room), and the most recent is 1993. There is an even distribution between these time periods. Some of the older dates - 1930s are around the fireplace; part of which has been destroyed by fire in the past. Dates in the bunkroom are more recent: 1948 to 1992. Apart from a couple around 1948 and 1970, the rest are from the last ten years. Ceiling dates are also 1948 to 1992.

3. Materials graffiti written in

In the main room, the recent graffiti (last ten years) was done in spraypaint (green, pink, white, black), paint, chalk, biro, pencil and charcoal. The older graffiti was generally carved (few in charcoal) and formed the majority.

The bunkroom had mostly recent graffiti in spraypaint (green, pink, white), chalk and charcoal. Few carvings (six).

4. Description

The bulk of the graffiti is names and dates. In the main room, at least two government shooters (1950s) are recorded. On the wall by the fireplace is a carving of the head and shoulders of a person in a sloped hat and

possibly convict clothing. There are a few love hearts, rude messages and spraypainted diagrams (generally more recent). Locations are sometimes recorded with the names — mostly local e.g Waipawa, Ongaonga, Waitara. An example of a message in the main room is '(Pete Strong) and George Swetman shot the Taipo River together in 1964 for 990 deer'.

The bunkroom had the following messages: 'Heavy metal rules', 'On YZ250 for a ride', '5 deer', 'The blacks who burnt the papers deserved to have their land taken'. Also names and dates.

5. Practicality of removal

The carvings cannot be removed without altering the surface of the wood. Chalk, biro, pencil and paint can be removed, although this may damage the remaining paper where the graffiti is over it.

6. Significance

The early graffiti is generally neater, carved and consists of names and dates. The earlier uncarved graffiti is difficult to distinguish.

It is suggested that the later graffiti, especially rude messages and spraypainted diagrams, is probably of lesser significance than the earlier graffiti.

7. Issues

What graffiti, if any should be removed? If it was decided to repaint/paint the interior of the hut, all graffiti except the carvings would be obliterated, a fresh surface would be provided for graffitists, and details of the hand-dressed timber may be obscured. Relationship with the remaining newspaper?

8. Recommendation

It is recommended only the carvings and earlier messages of other sorts remain; the rest be removed.

Fiona Wilson

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF GRAFFITI

February 2nd 1995 using Paul Mahoney's instamatic.

M: Main room

B: Bunkroom

Photos 1 & 2: M East (with fireplace)

Photos 3 & 4: M South (back wall)

Photos 5 & 6: M North (front wall with door)

Photos 7 & 8: B North

Photos 9 & 10: B North

Photos 11 & 12: B West

Photos 13 & 14: B East

NB: Don't have a record of M West or B South, and photos 7 - 10 will need to be checked as they both were recorded as B North.

Record of old graffiti that would be removed by cleaning

M North: H.R. Queripel Napier, 1949. J.B. Verran April 1953

M East: Peacock

M West: C.E. Tricklebank, Government deer culler D.J. Harwson Waipa 14/4/49, Hugh M. Milla/s Dec 2 1939

B South: E.H. Contas 25/12/45 5 deer

3/x/4x

4/X/49 7 deer

Graffiti removal techniques

Started with rubbing with a cloth soaked in dishwashing liquid and water. This removed chalk, recent charcoal, some biro and pencil, and lightened the timber slightly. Did not remove paint, spraypaint or old charcoal.

Rubbing with a synthetic pad removed the more obdurate charcoal, but caused considerably lighter patches on the timber. These patches were restored to a darker colour by burning a candle against a shovel to create soot then mixing the soot with water and applying to the lightened area.

Paint removal

Busan worked well on the spraypaint and general grime, but was ineffective against the painted panels and old charcoal.

Methelene-chloride (Polystripper) was effective on the painted panels. The most effective way was to apply it to one square foot at a time, as once the stripper dried the paint would reattach, therefore it had to be kept moist. A rough moistened abrasive pad was used to remove the paint, keeping it flat to avoid rub marks. Thin plastic gloves dissolved. The paint was too thin for a scraper to be effective.

Newspaper

The interior of the hut had once been covered in two layers of newspaper glued to the interior lining. Little remained in the main room and what remained in the bunkroom was largely burnt and graffitied.

The first layer was dated 1907 and contained items such as international news, local marriage notices etc. The second layer was the *Auckland Weekly News* 1910, and was largely pictorial. Pictures (not from the *Auckland Weekly News*) included an earlier version of Jack Fry in his timber treatment outfit!. All was in a fairly poor condition, although most was still legible.

Appendix 3

BUILDING TECHNOLOGY REPORT BY CHRIS COCHRAN AND JIM STATON

Background

During the Conservation Workshop at Ellis Hut, the opportunity was taken to make a study of the technology of the building. Investigations were carried out by Chris Cochran and Jim Staton during the first four days of the workshop, 30 January to 2 February, and they were aided by the clearing of the site and the opening up of the structure as the repair work got underway. Contributions came from all workshop participants.

Recording

The main part of the work involved measuring and recording, particularly those parts of the structure that were exposed but were due to be closed in as the repair work progressed.

Copies of the site drawings are attached. Note that these are not scaled drawings; they nevertheless contain the information necessary to produce scaled drawings, including plan, elevations, sections and details, if this should be necessary. They should be read in conjunction with photos of details taken by Pam Bain.

Description

The investigation confirmed and extended earlier findings about Ellis Hut. Of particular note are the following points:

Timber

The timber positively identified is totara for piles and framing. It is likely that other timbers are totara as well.

Pit Sawn Timber

The timber for the building, including framing, weatherboarding, flooring and lining boards, was pit sawn. The characteristic near-vertical saw marks in two slopes, one for each travel of the saw, are visible in many places such as the back face of lining boards and the underside of the floorboards, but they have weathered off the front face of remaining weatherboards and other timbers exposed to the weather. Sizes of apparently uniform timbers vary from one member to the next, and within the length of the same member.

The exception to pit sawing is the timber that lines the interior partition

(14 boards) and the top 6 boards on the inside of the west elevation; see site drawing 12. These boards are circular-sawn on their back face. (Paul Mahoney hypothesised here that these could easily have been the last boards to be fixed, and with the pit-sawn boards running out, the decision was made to carry in the last few boards required from a mill.)

The lining boards were hand-dressed, and the tongues and grooves and beads were hand-run. The flooring has hand-run tongues and grooves. The quality of the hand-dressing is exceptionally high with first appearances being of machine-dressed boards. The legitimate scepticism about whether such a finish could be obtained by hand was finally dispelled by the discovery of pit-saw marks near a knotty patch of one board, and the characteristic wavering of hand-dressing marks on the face of several others.

Sub-Floor Framing

Although the bearers to the outside walls are sawn, the bearer that runs the length of the middle of the building is (at its eastern end) made up of two flitches nailed together, notched to take the floor joists that run across; see site drawings 5 and 15.

Framing

An interesting aspect of the framing is the careful bracing, not only of the walls (two to each of the long walls and one to each of the end walls) but of the roof, with one brace in each plane of the roof and one in the plane of the ceiling. The braces are let into the studs and rafters.

Finishing Details

Exterior finishing of the weatherboarding at the north-east and north-west corners is to a solid corner stop. This is a typical early detail, common in cottages dating from say pre-1870. The weatherboards on the side elevations ran through to the lean-to so this detail does not occur on the back corners.

The quality of the interior finish received much comment during the course - dressed boards with tongue and groove and beaded edges is a very good quality finish for the time, let alone for a utilitarian building. This level of finish extends to the hand-moulded architraves to the two doors as well.

The front door is a basic but serviceable ledged door made of the same internal lining boards; the windows have disappeared but for one sill from the left hand window and one rail of the sash to the left hand window, although this item is from a later piece of joinery inserted into a widened opening.

Sequence of Building

This is set out in the site notes. The north and south walls were framed on the ground and stood up, with the end and interior walls framed in place. The evidence for this, see site drawing 6, is the nailing through the bottom plate into the end grain of the studs in these two walls.

Lean-to on South Side

There is clear evidence of the location of the outside door into the lean-to from the extended ends of weatherboards left on the east elevation now removed; see drawing 4. There was no internal access into the lean-to; the south wall of the cottage proper was never lined, and the space within the lean-to had an earth floor.

Nails and Roofing

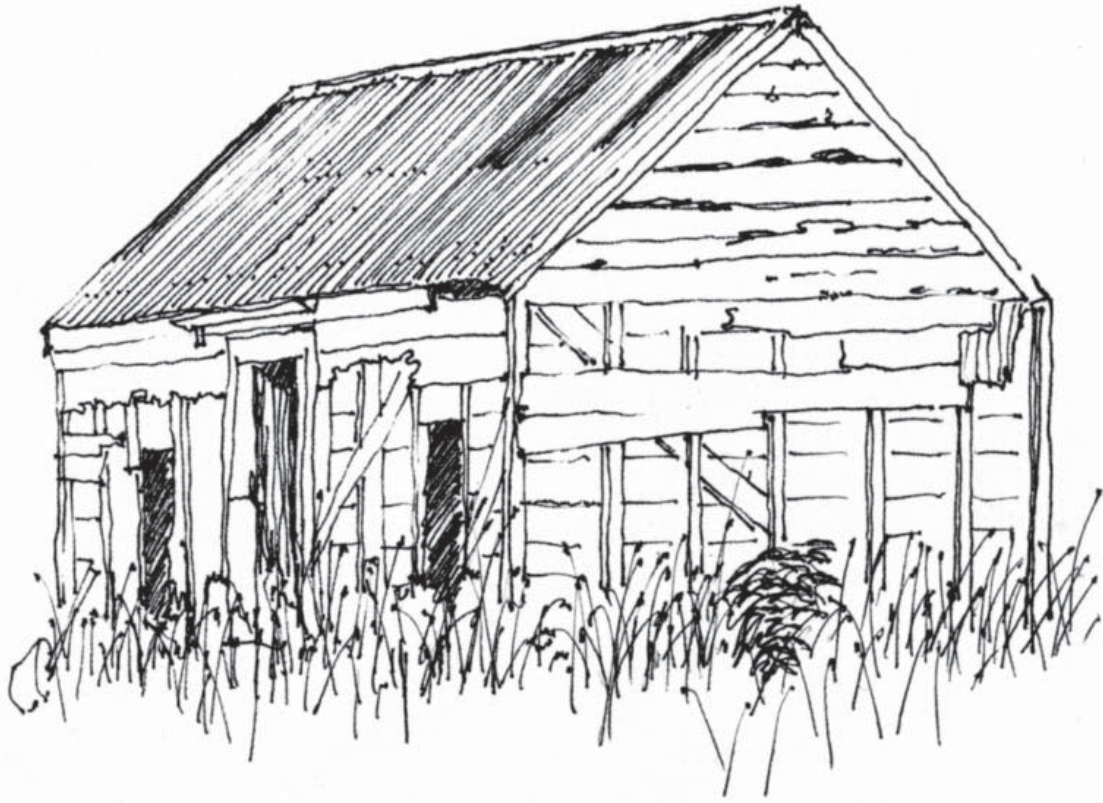
The largest of the nails is 155 x 6.5mm black iron used to fix the bottom plate through into the end grain of the studs of the north and south walls, also the bottom plates to the piles.

The roofing is EMU BEST corrugated iron manufactured by Wolverhampton Corrugated Iron Co. Nothing is known of this company at present.

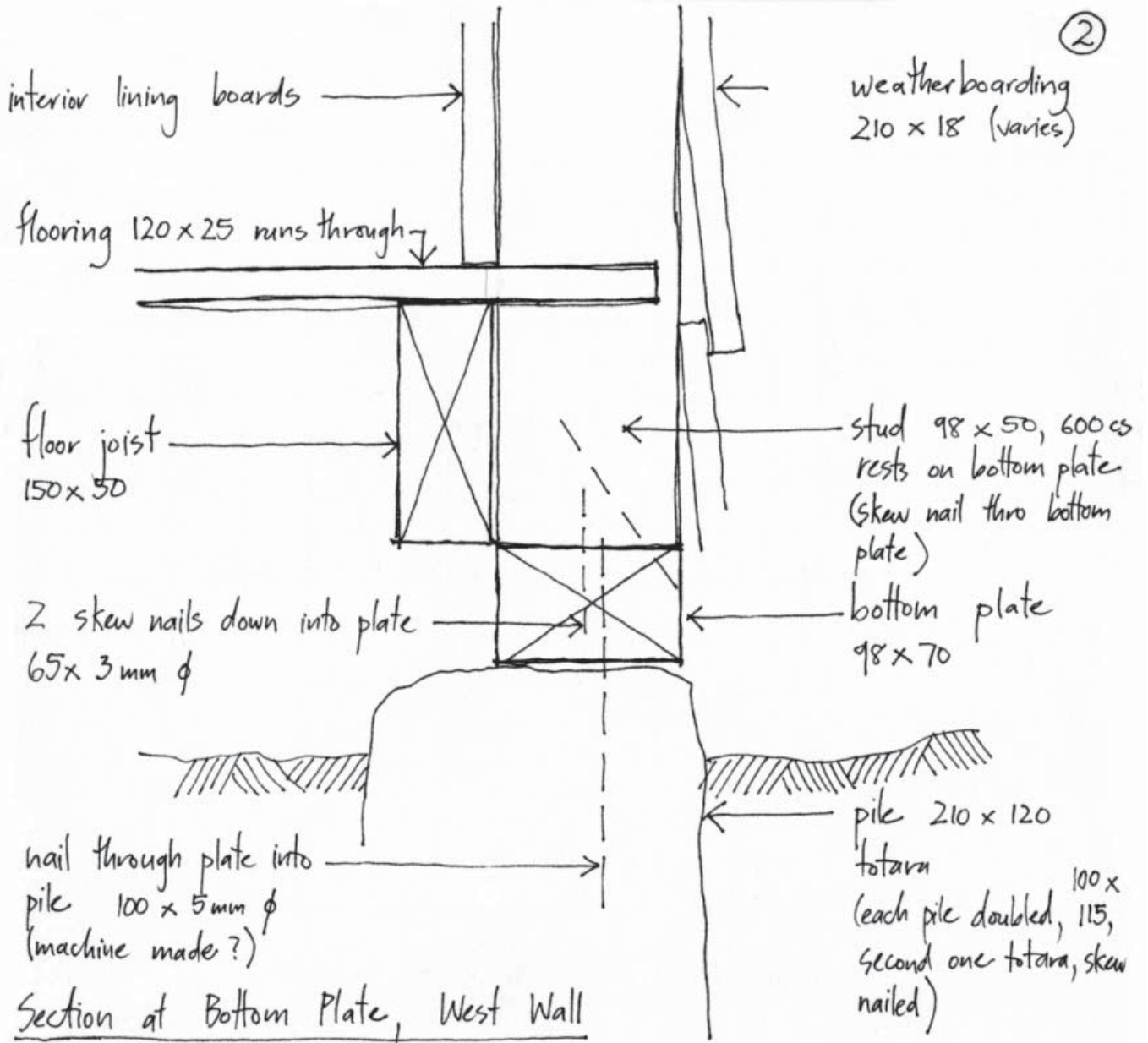
Despite its appearance at the time the workshop began, there is no doubt in our minds that the building was well constructed according to the best trade practice of the time. The quality of the timber is exceptional with very little rot despite the long exposure of lining and framing to the weather (significant decay had occurred only where framing timber was in contact with the ground). Timbers were properly sized and jointed for their location and the frame was well braced. Although it is not uncommon to find examples of pit-sawn timber in some of our early buildings, Ellis Hut must stand out as a building where we know that the whole of the structure, cladding and lining was pit-sawn, and where most of the finishing work was by hand. Its technological importance is therefore very high.

CHRIS COCHRAN
CONSERVATION ARCHITECT
20 Glenbervie Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington
Telephone & Fax 04-472 8847

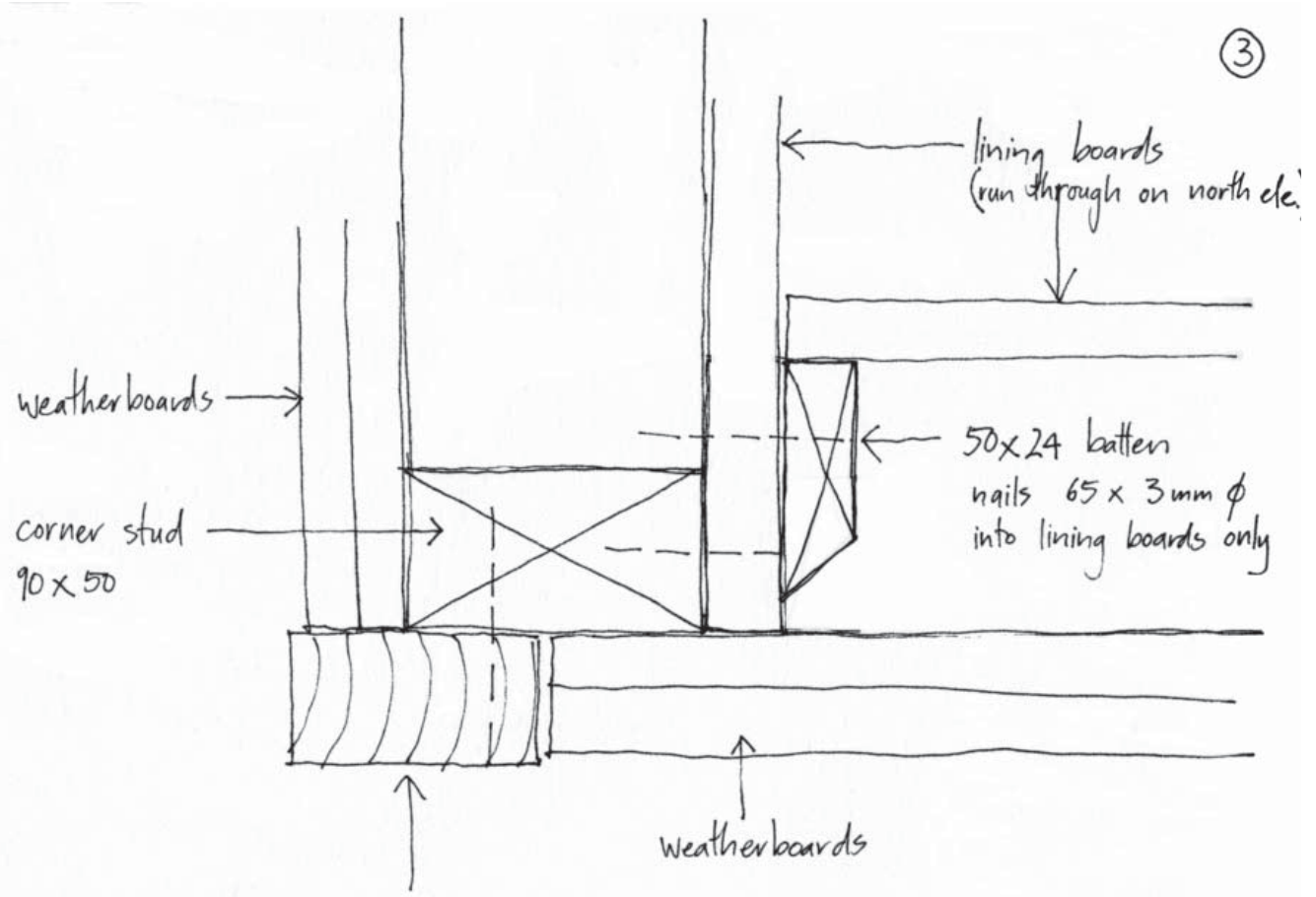
JIM STATON
Programme Manager Historic
Kaiwhakahaere Te Ao tawhito ki Mawheranui
Department of Conservation
Greymouth
Telephone: 3 768 0937 & Mobile: 0274 433 551



Ellis Hut, North + West Elevations Tues 31 Jan 95



③



weatherboards →
corner stud
90 x 50 →

← lining boards
(run through on north elev.)

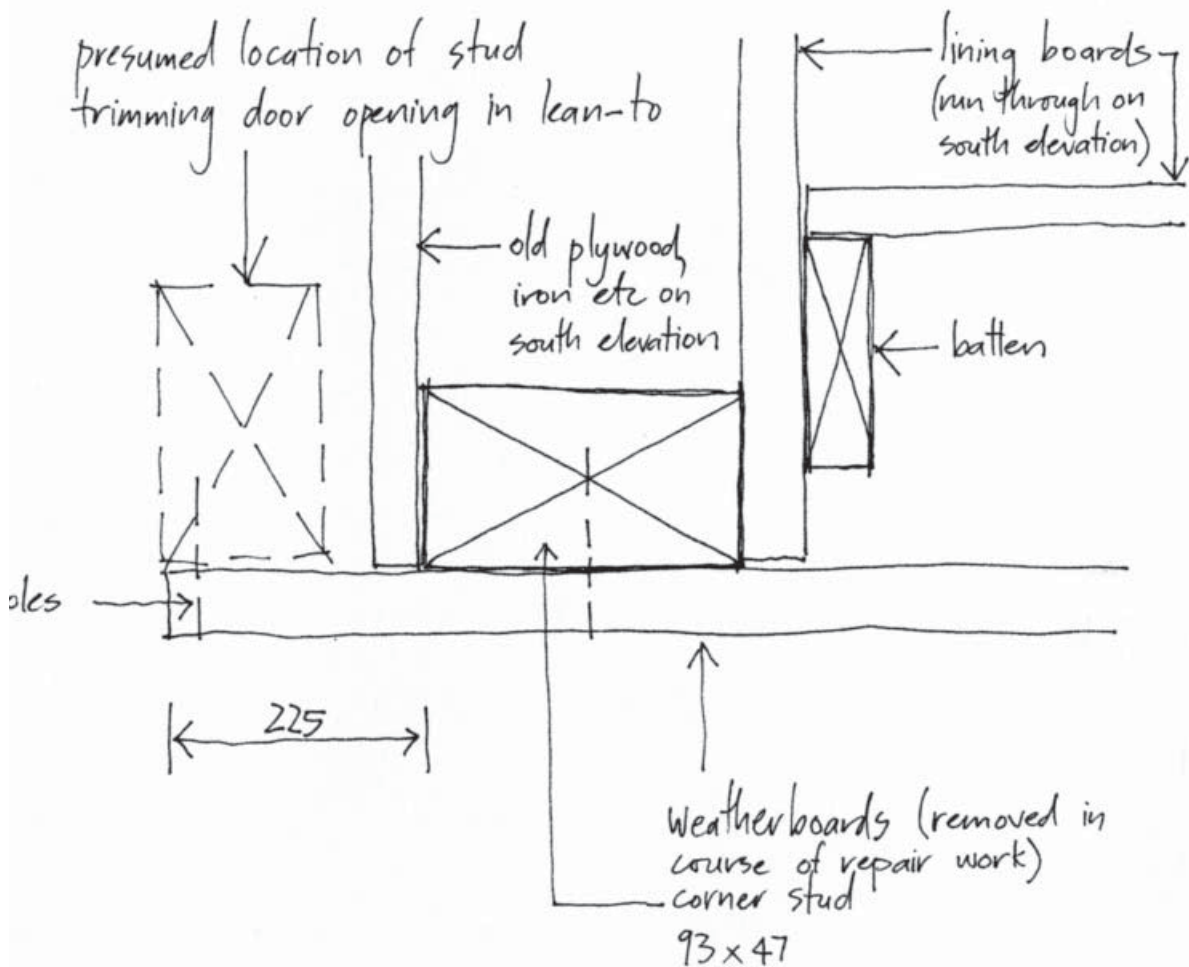
← 50 x 24 batten
nails 65 x 3 mm ϕ
into lining boards only

↑ weatherboards

corner stop 90 x 48, 100 x 5 mm ϕ machine made nails into corner stud (heavily weathered, presumed pit sawn)

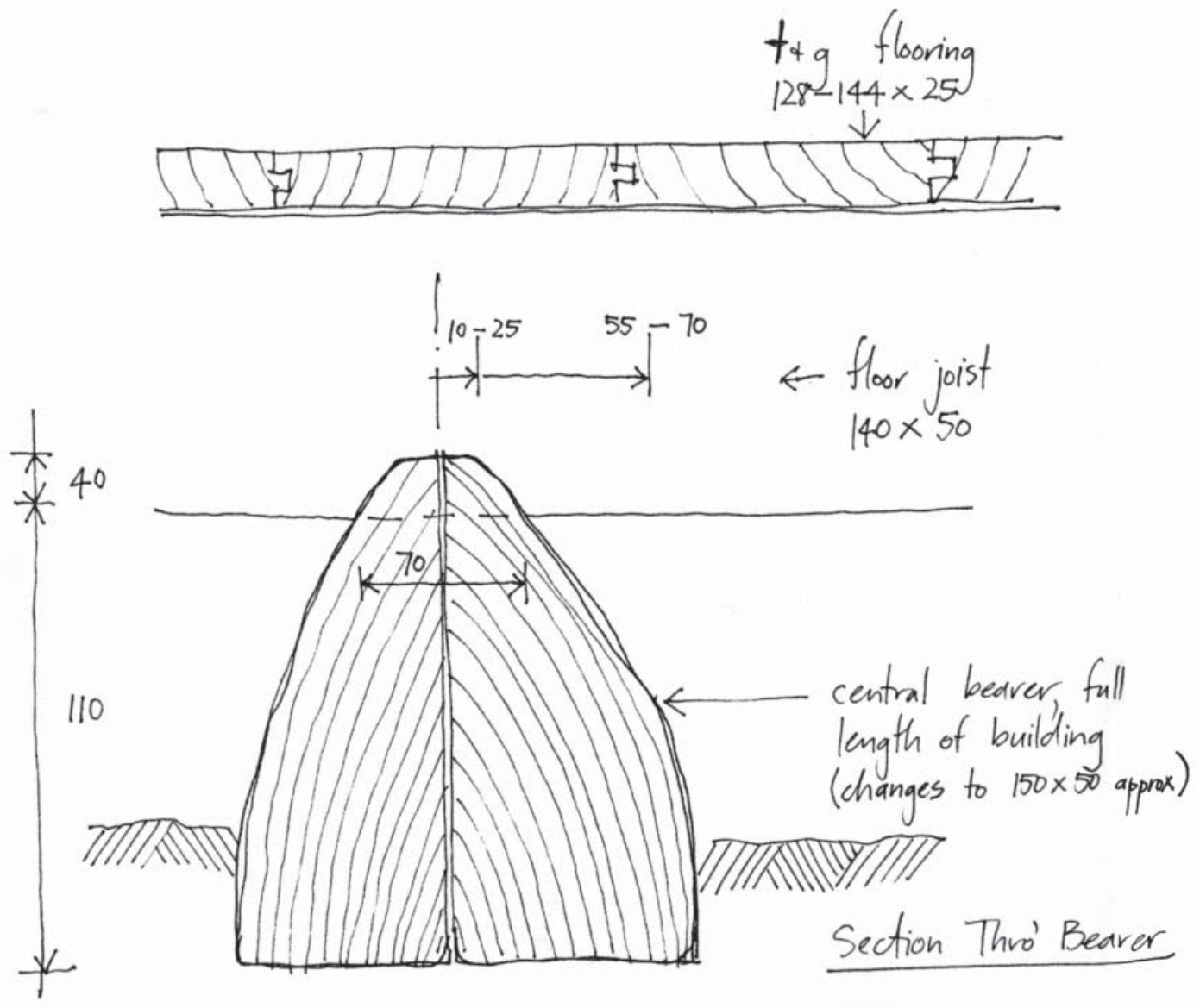
Detail at North-West Corner

④



Detail at South-East Corner

5



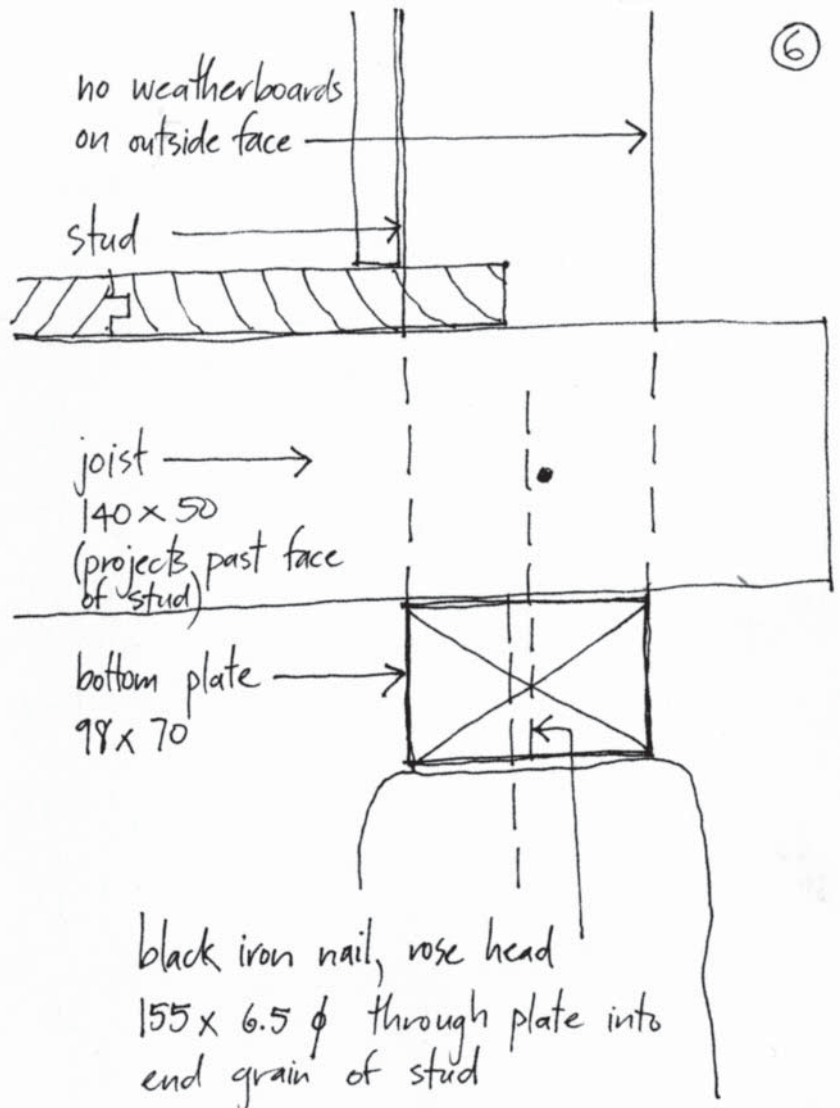
0	0	
670	610	
1330	1180	
1912	1840	
2648	2515	
3321	3175	
3987	3780	
4648	0	4440
664	4440	0
1327	4980	0
1988		470
2640		945

studs (11)

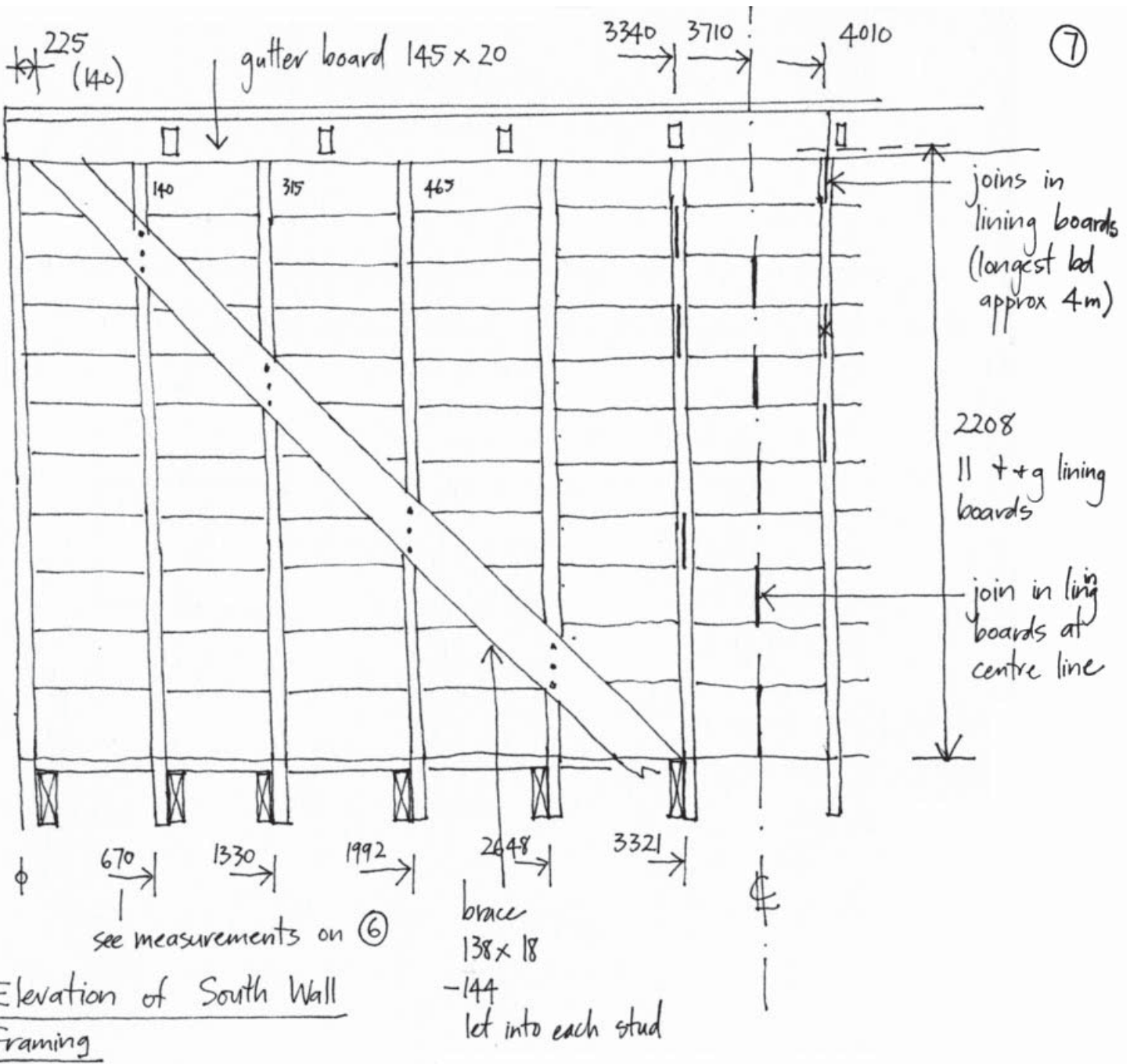
1515
2120

joists (12)

spacing of studs & joists
south wall, measured from
western end, see ⑦



Detail at Bottom Plate, South Wall
Similar at Front (North) Wall



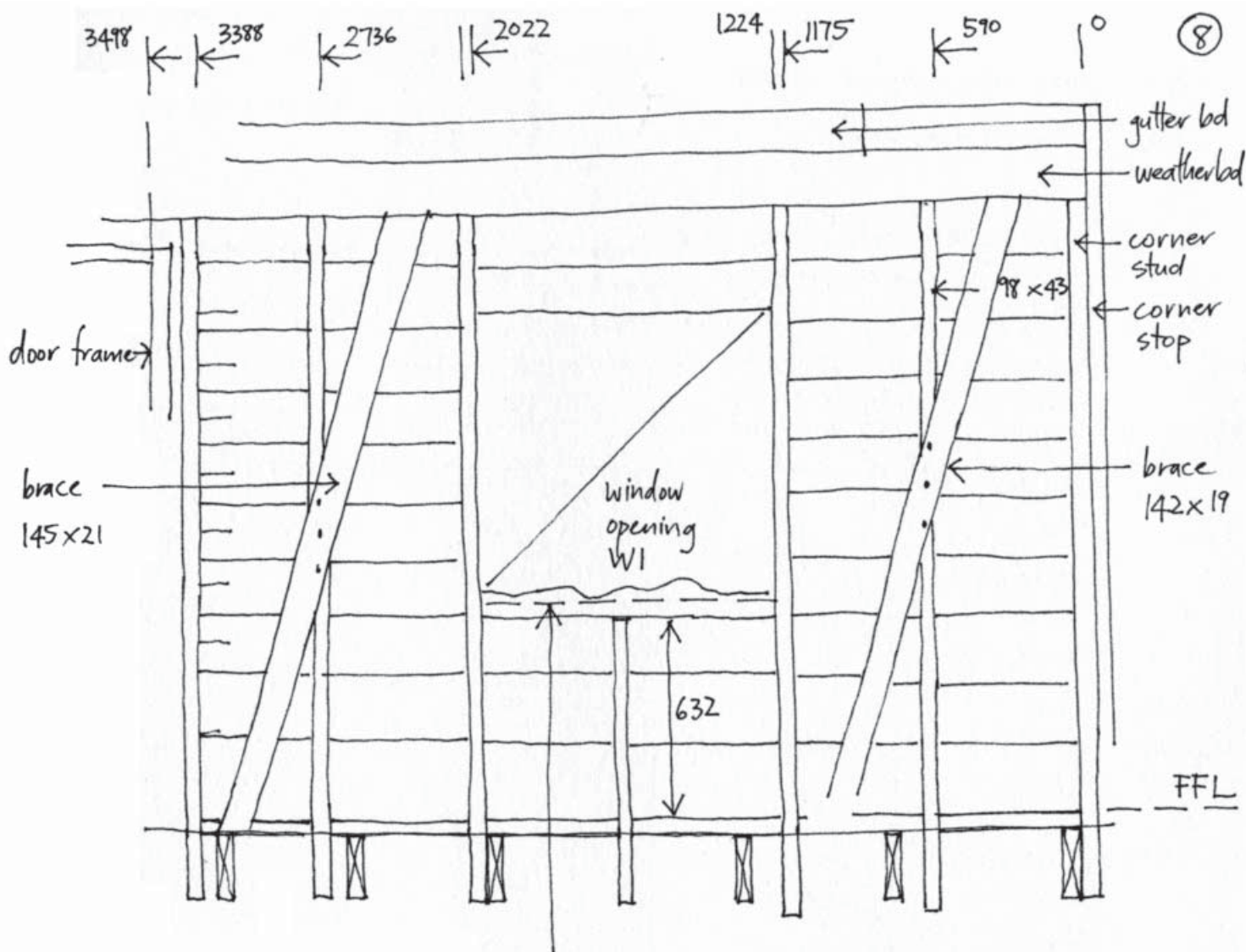


plate (100 x 50?) now missing
 no evidence of plate or lintel above opening

Elevation of North Wall Framing

9

note: studs skew nailed to bottom plate, similar to west wall

corrugated iron on 3 evenly spaced purlins

- 0 top of ridge board
- 165
- 371
- 560
- 746 bottom edge of weatherbds
- 940
- 1130
- 1335

rafter 143x52

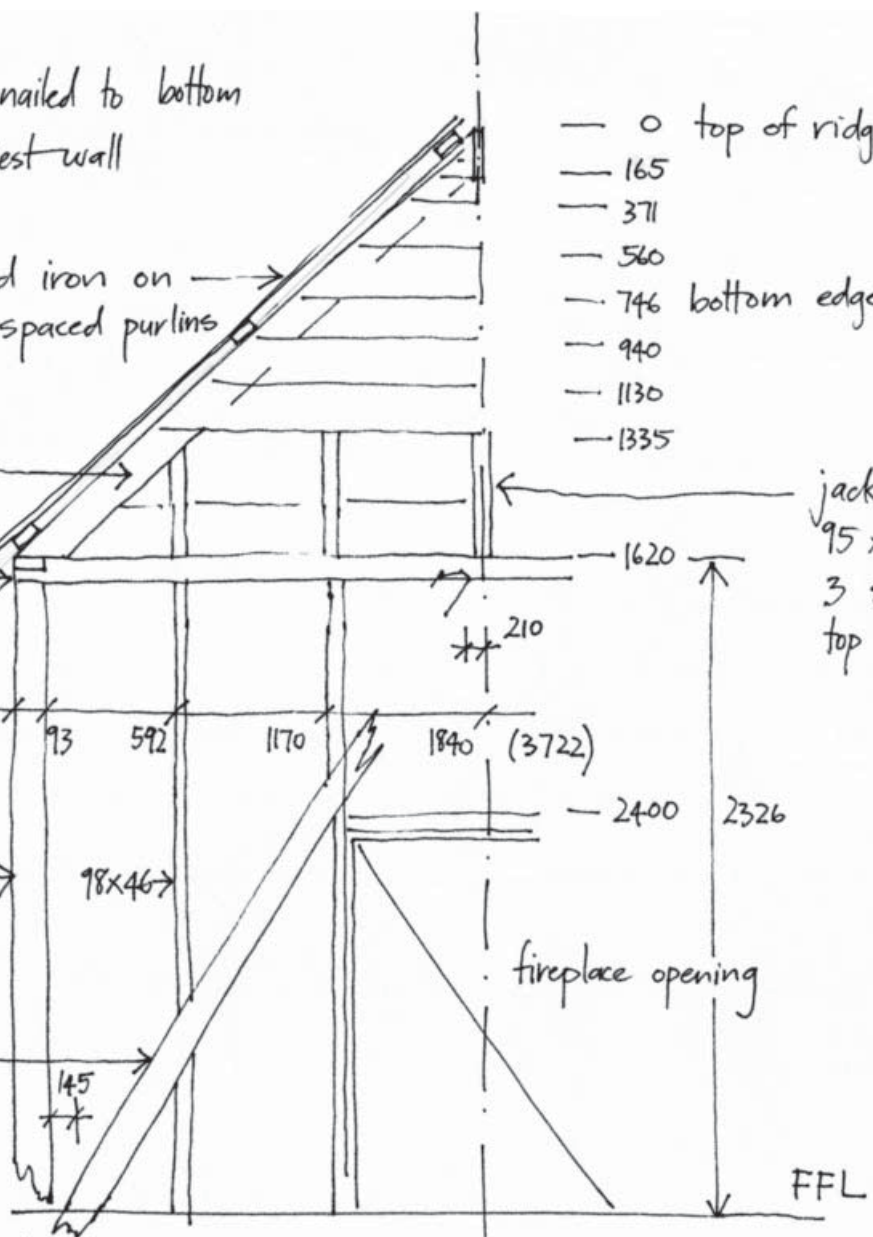
top plate 93x75

halved at corner (96x34 exp.)

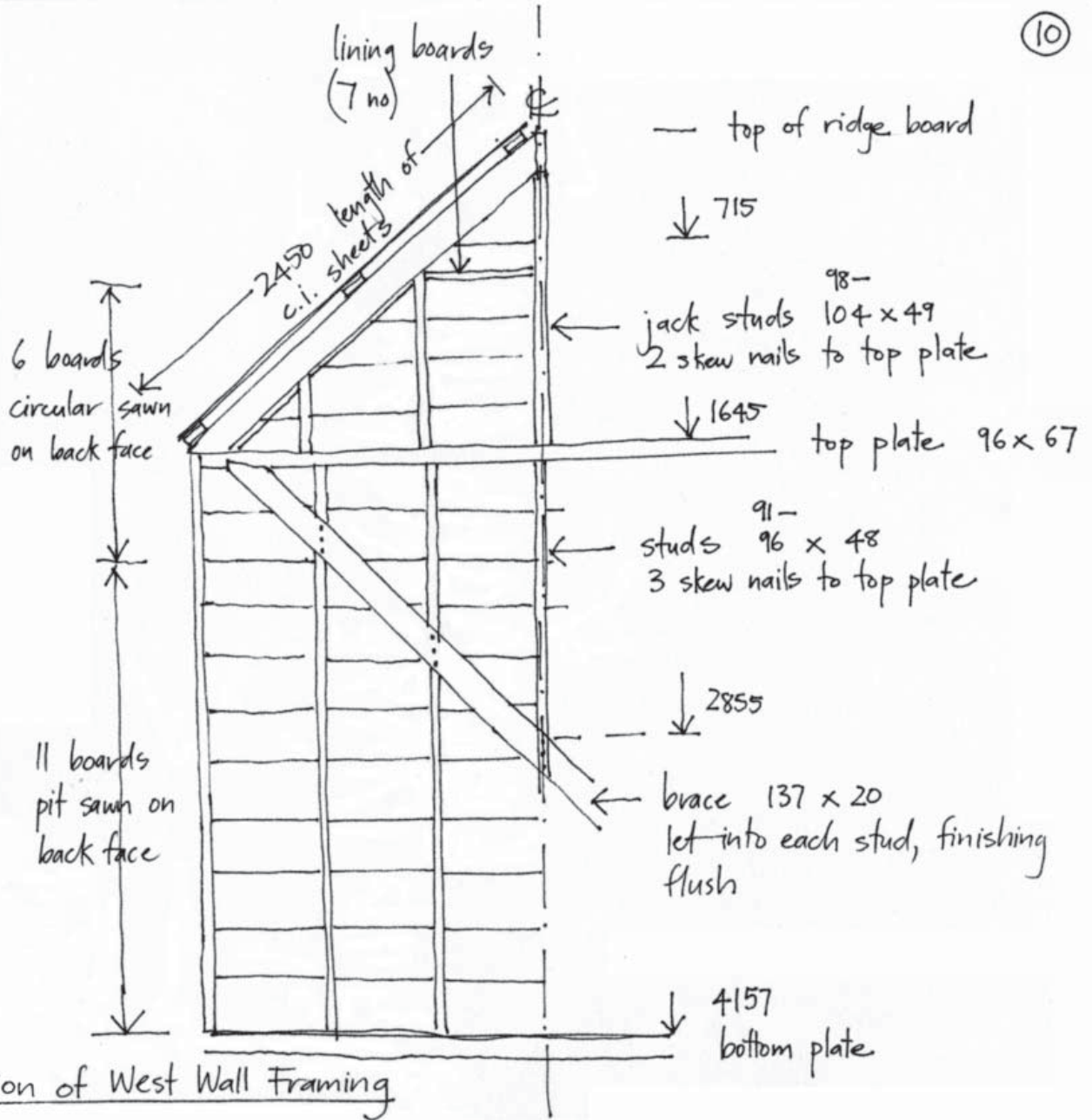
corner stud 93x47

brace 141x22

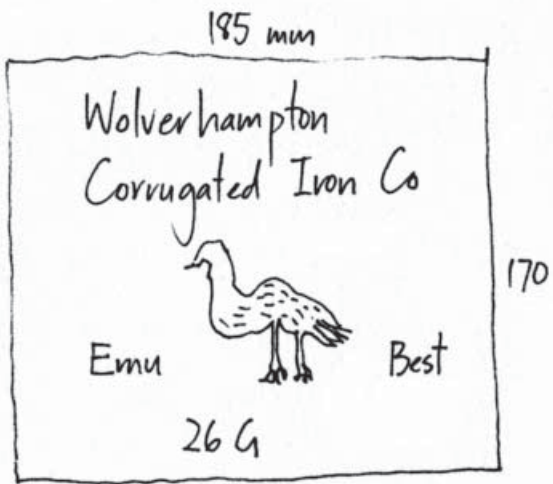
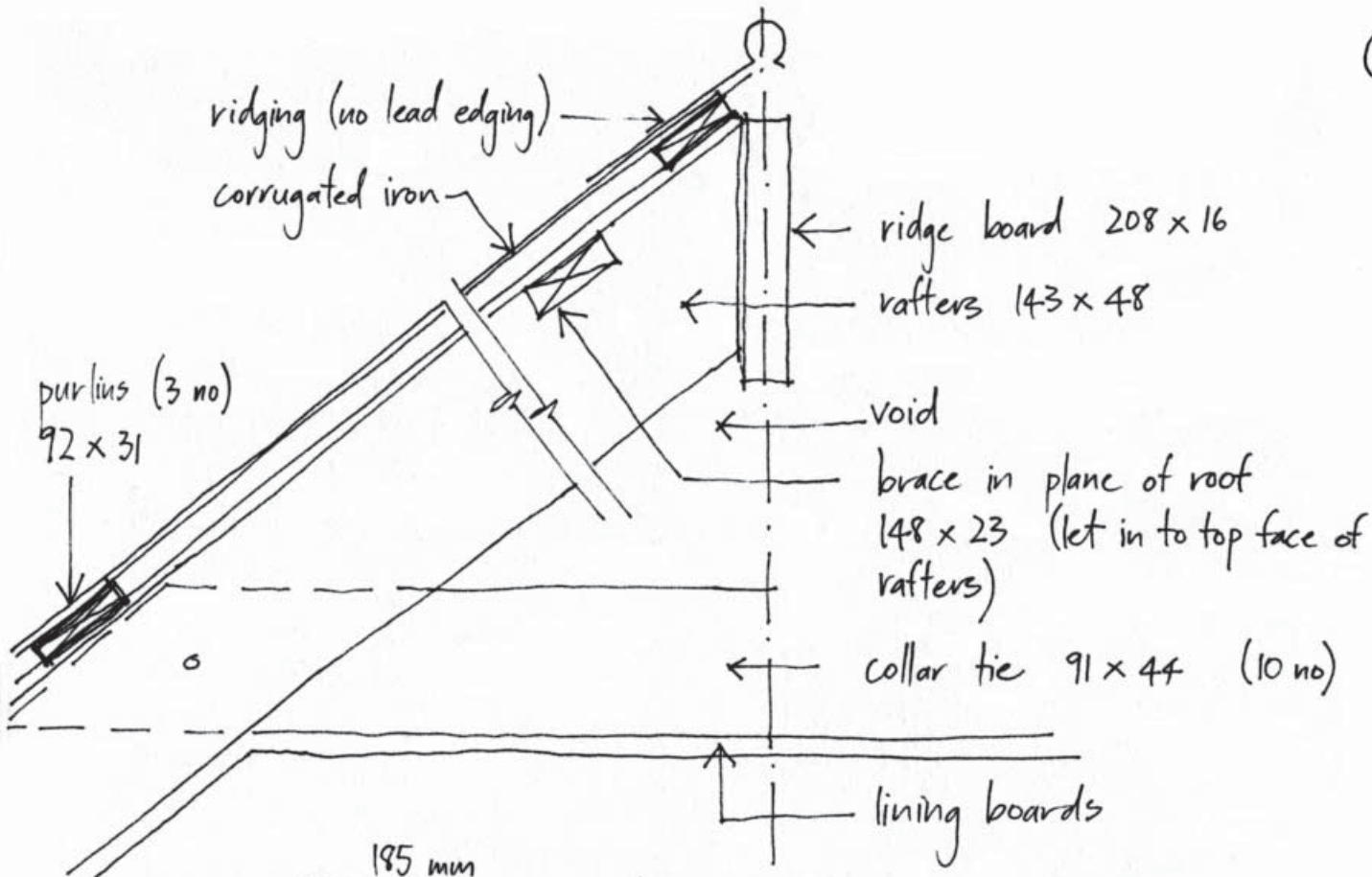
jack studs 95x50
3 skew nails to top plate



Elevation of East Wall Framing



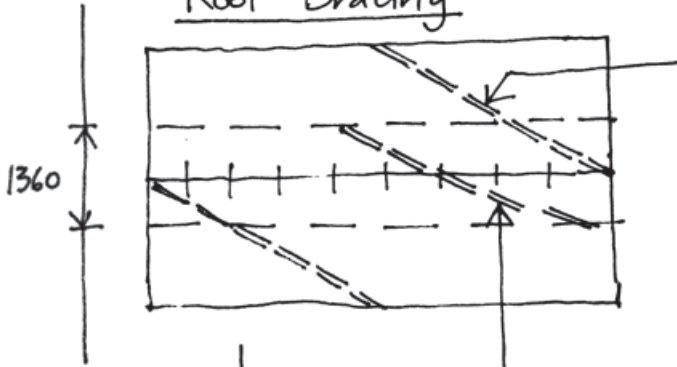
Elevation of West Wall Framing



Detail at Ridge

Trade mark on underside of corrugated iron roofing (one at either end of void, north face).

Roof Bracing



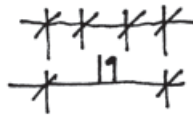
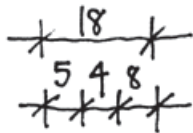
brace in plane of roof
150 x 20

widths of
15 boards on inside of west elevation:

(circ. sawn) 178 | 213 | 207 | 215 | 212 | 210

(pit sawn) 201 | 201 | 204 | 203 | 202 | 200

brace in plane of horiz. ceiling 202 | 203 | 196
145 x 25



Details of Lining Boards

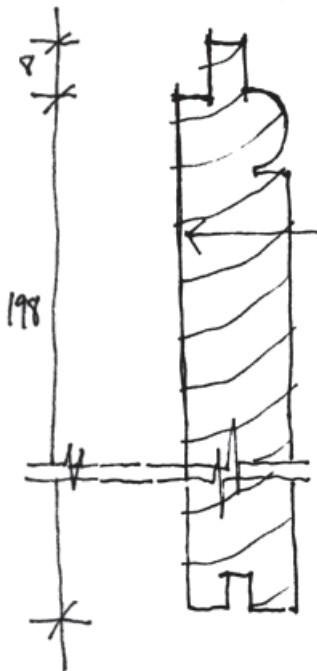
Pit sawn, hand worked tongue and groove and bead, hand dressed face.

Circular sawn face:

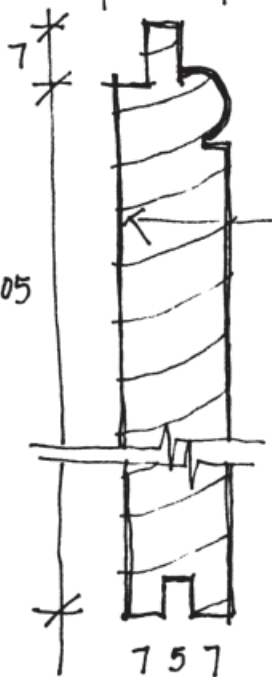
6 boards on west elevation

14 boards to internal partition

85 | 216 | 212 | 210 | plate | 200 | 214 |
 195 | 211 | 215 | 206 | 214 | 211 | 212 |
 216 | 205



pit sawn face: 205
all other boards

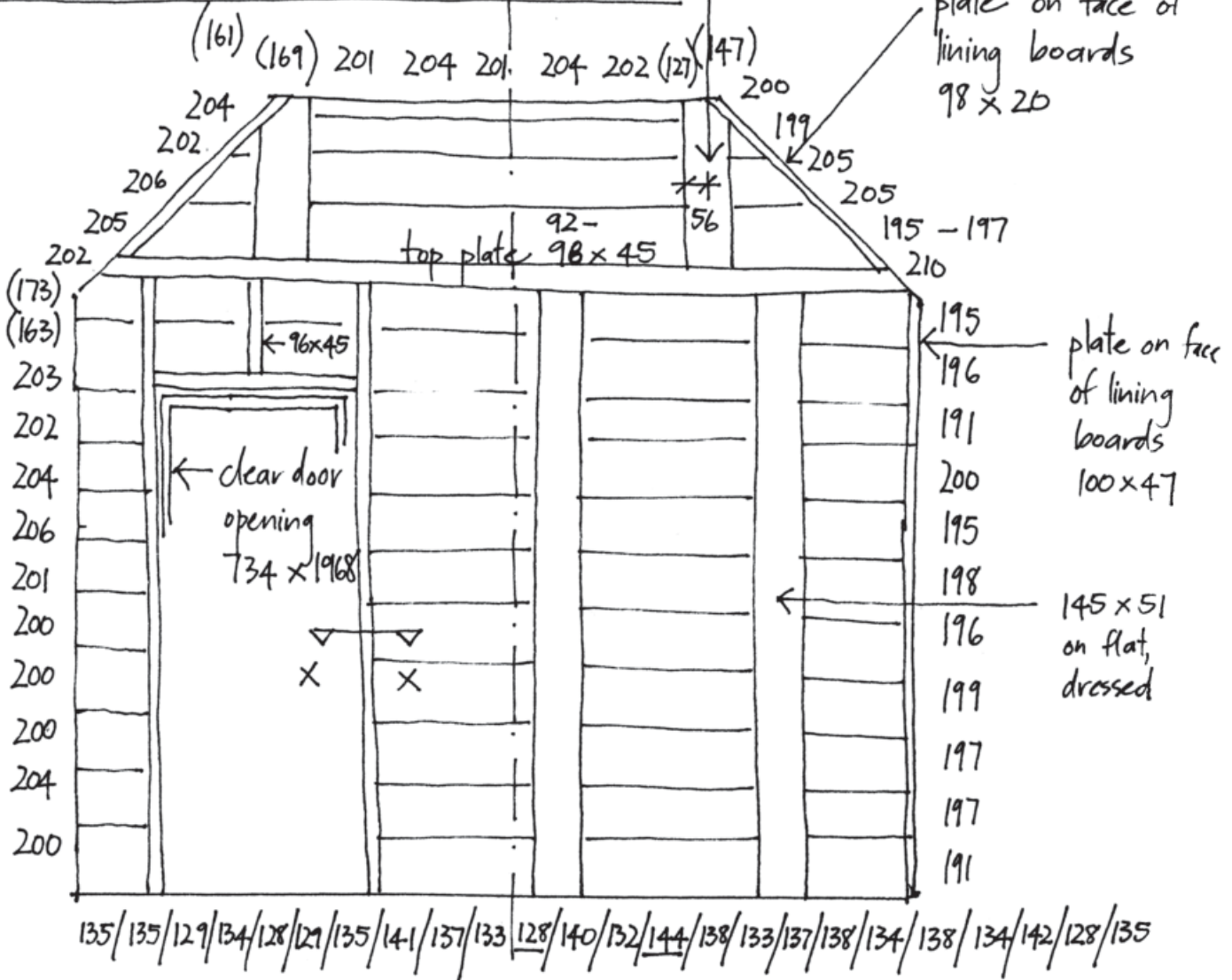


757

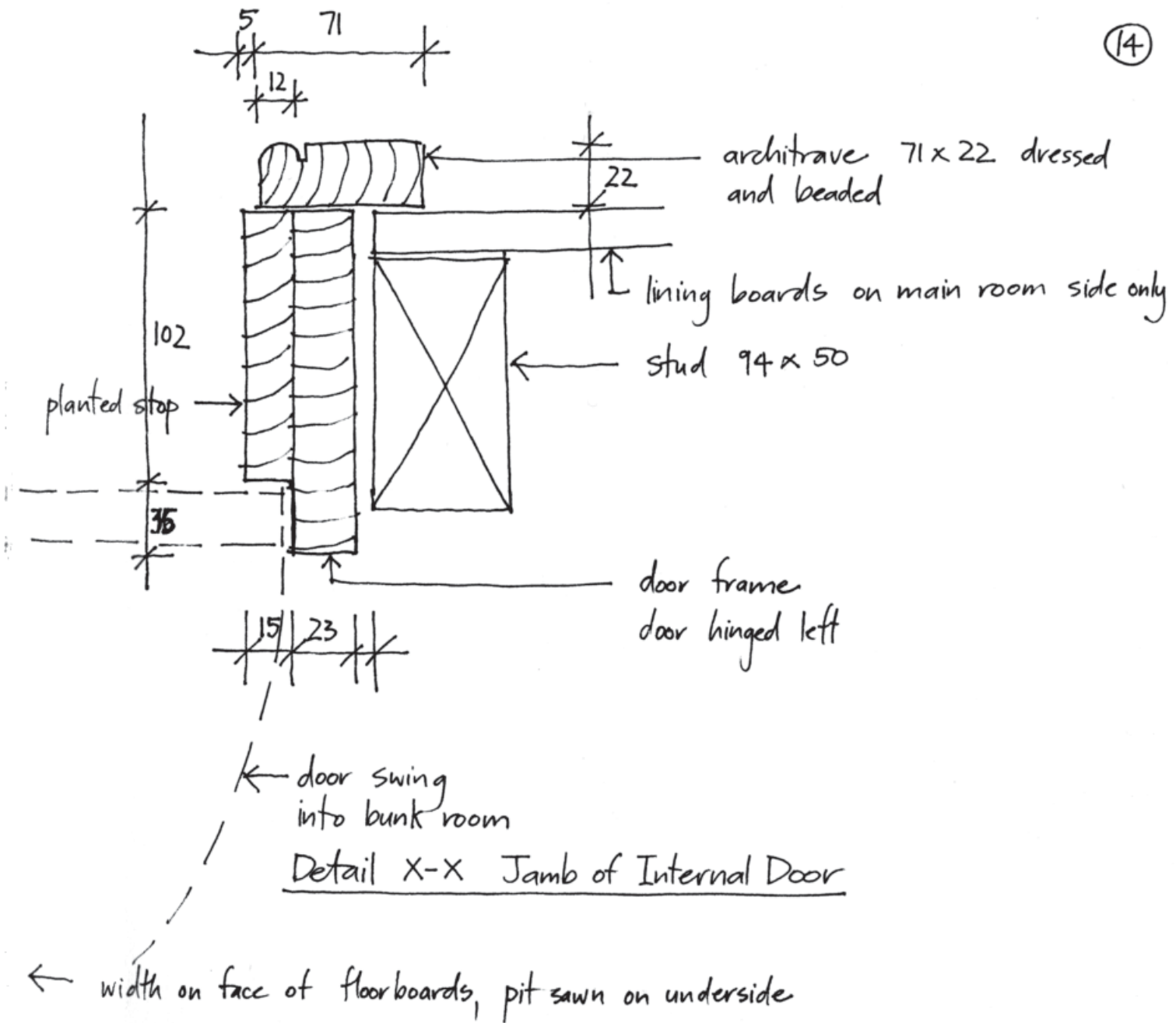
note: top plate runs through lining boards for fixing to wall framing

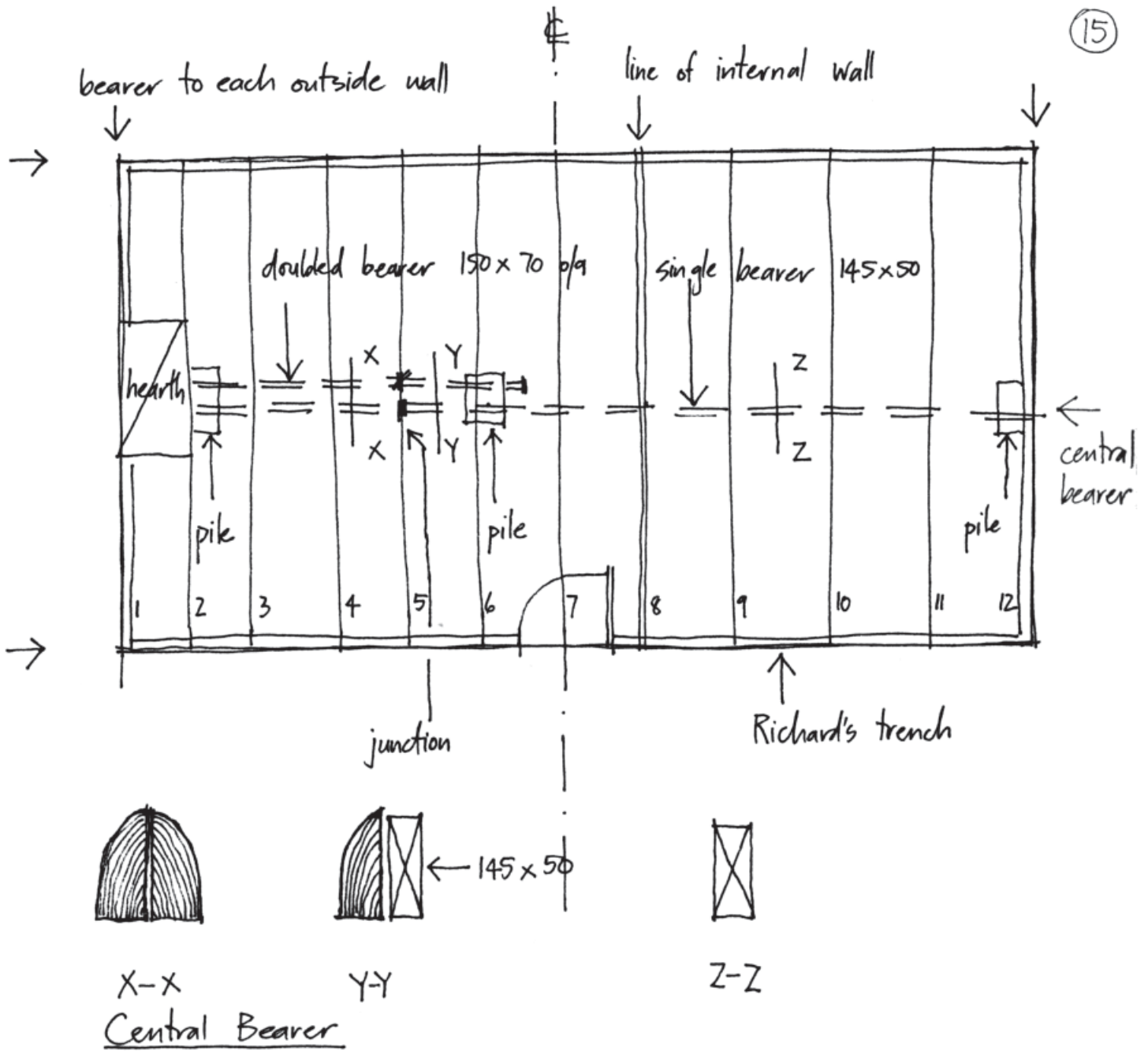
jack stud 145 x 50 on flat, dressed

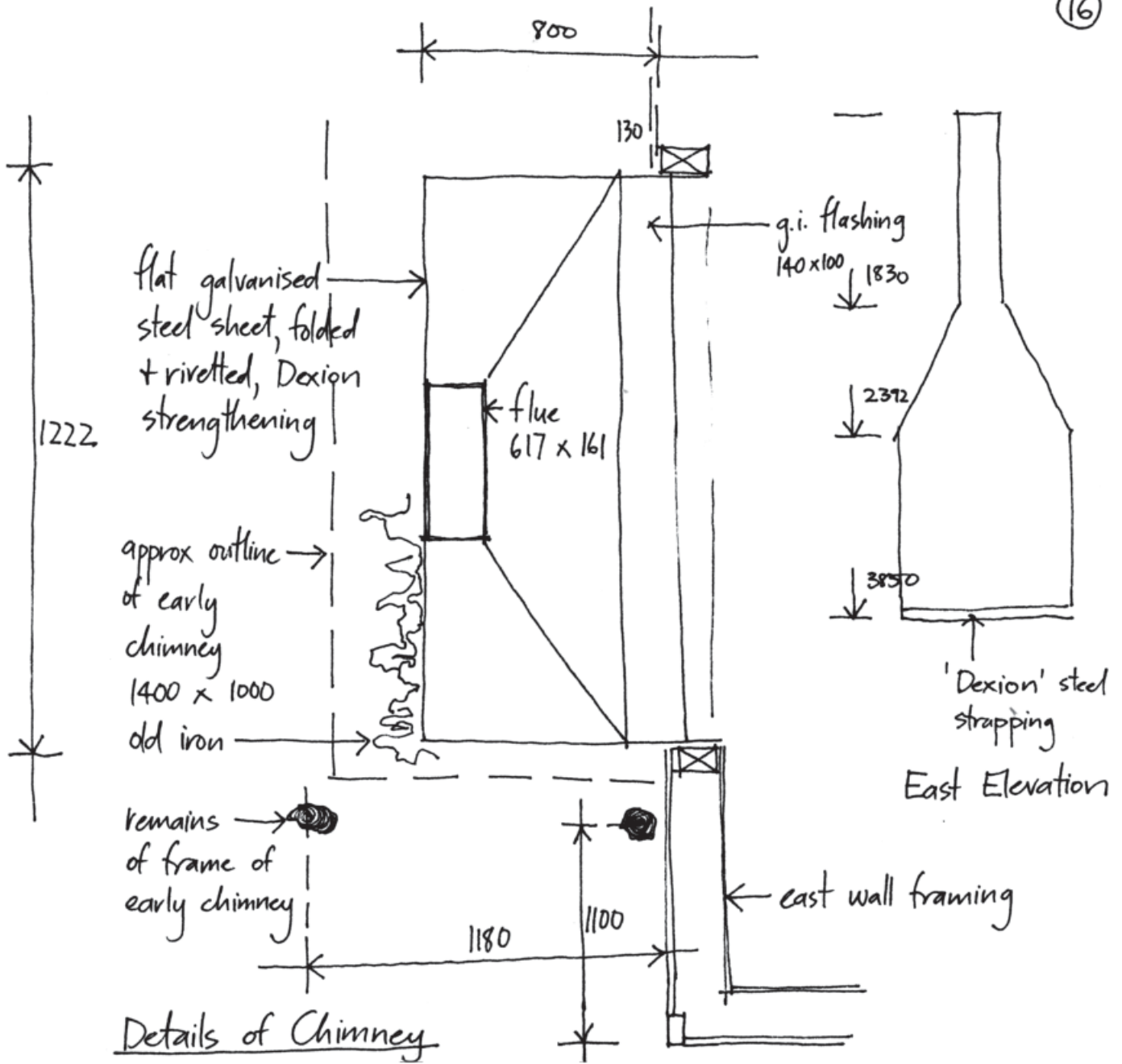
Elevation of Internal Wall From Bunk Room

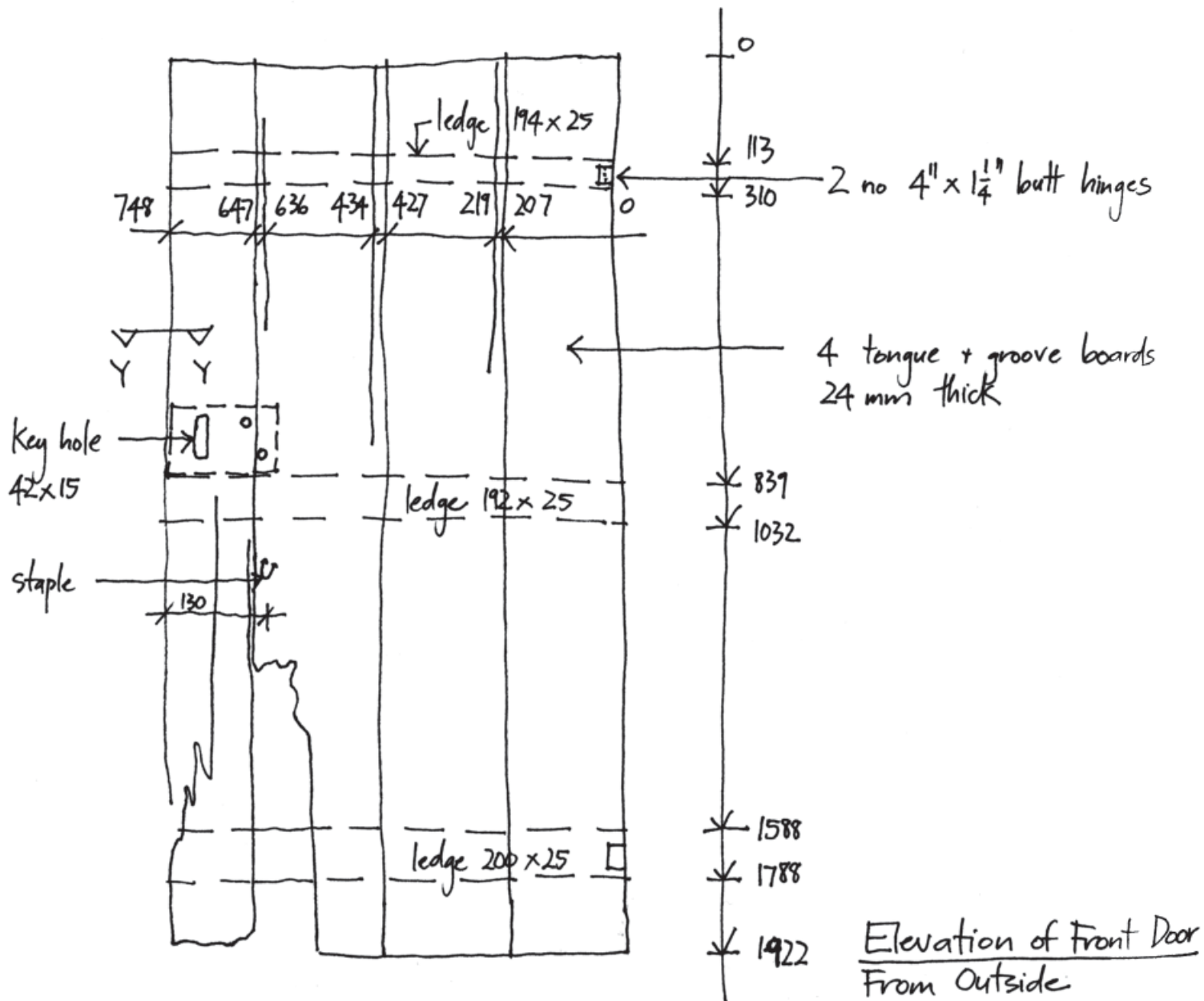


(14)

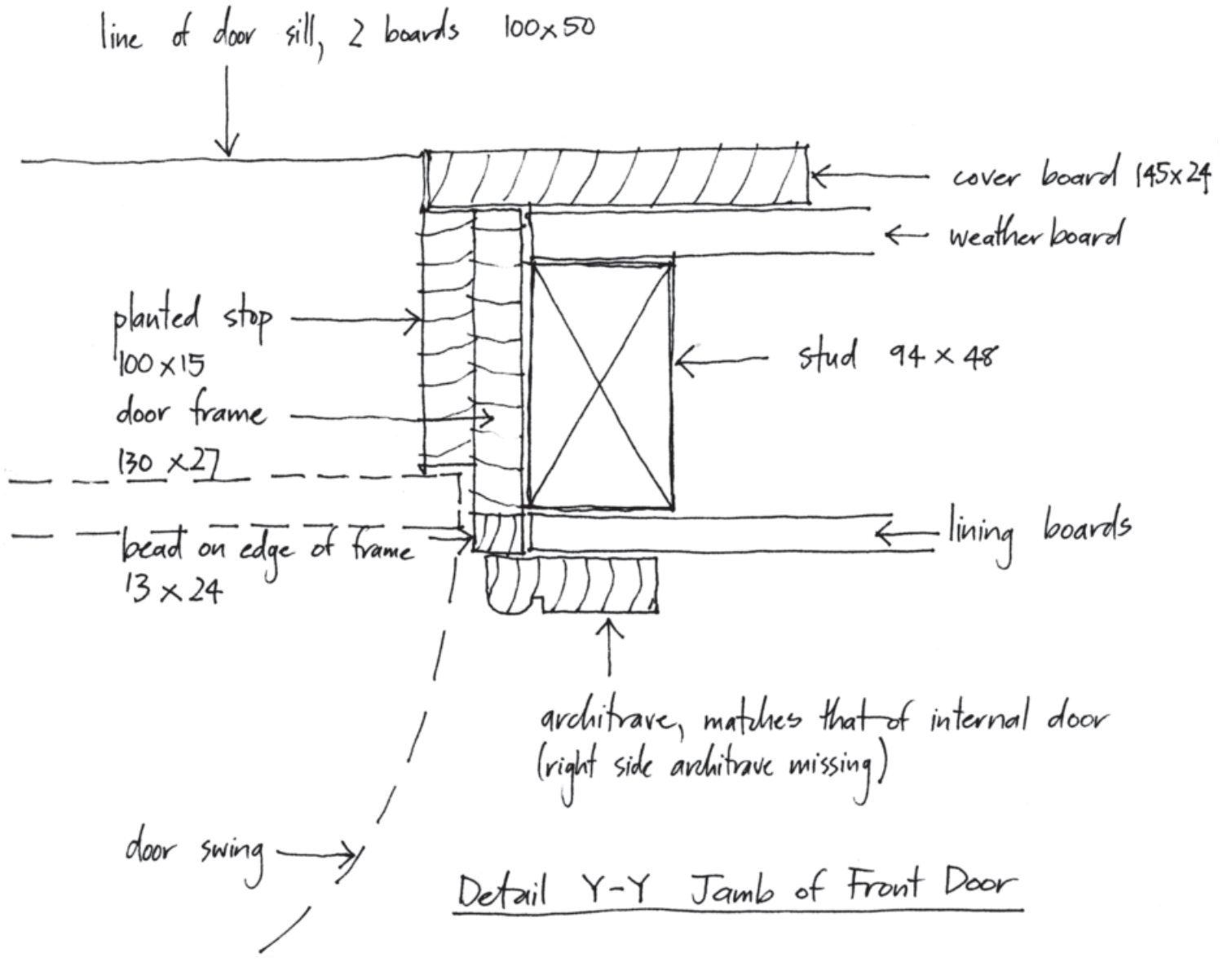


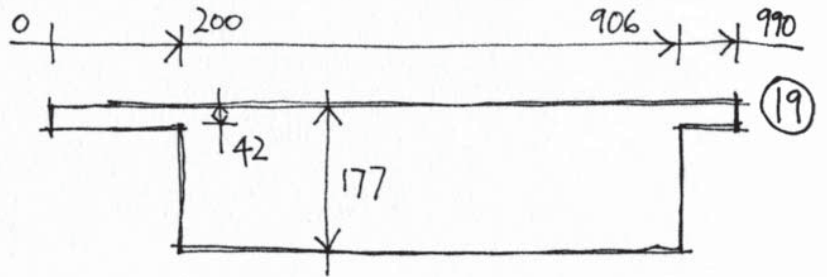
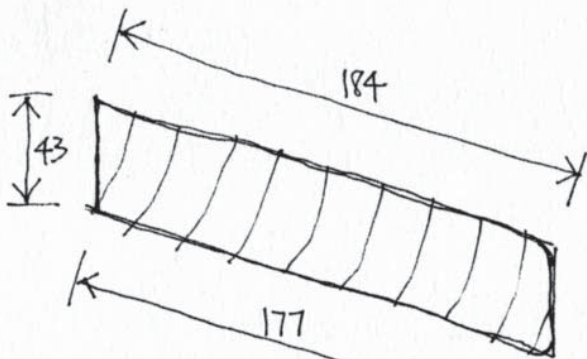






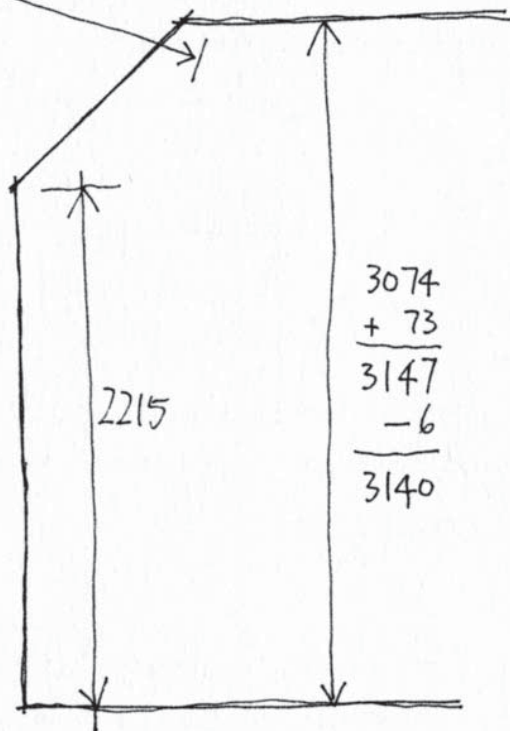
Elevation of Front Door
From Outside



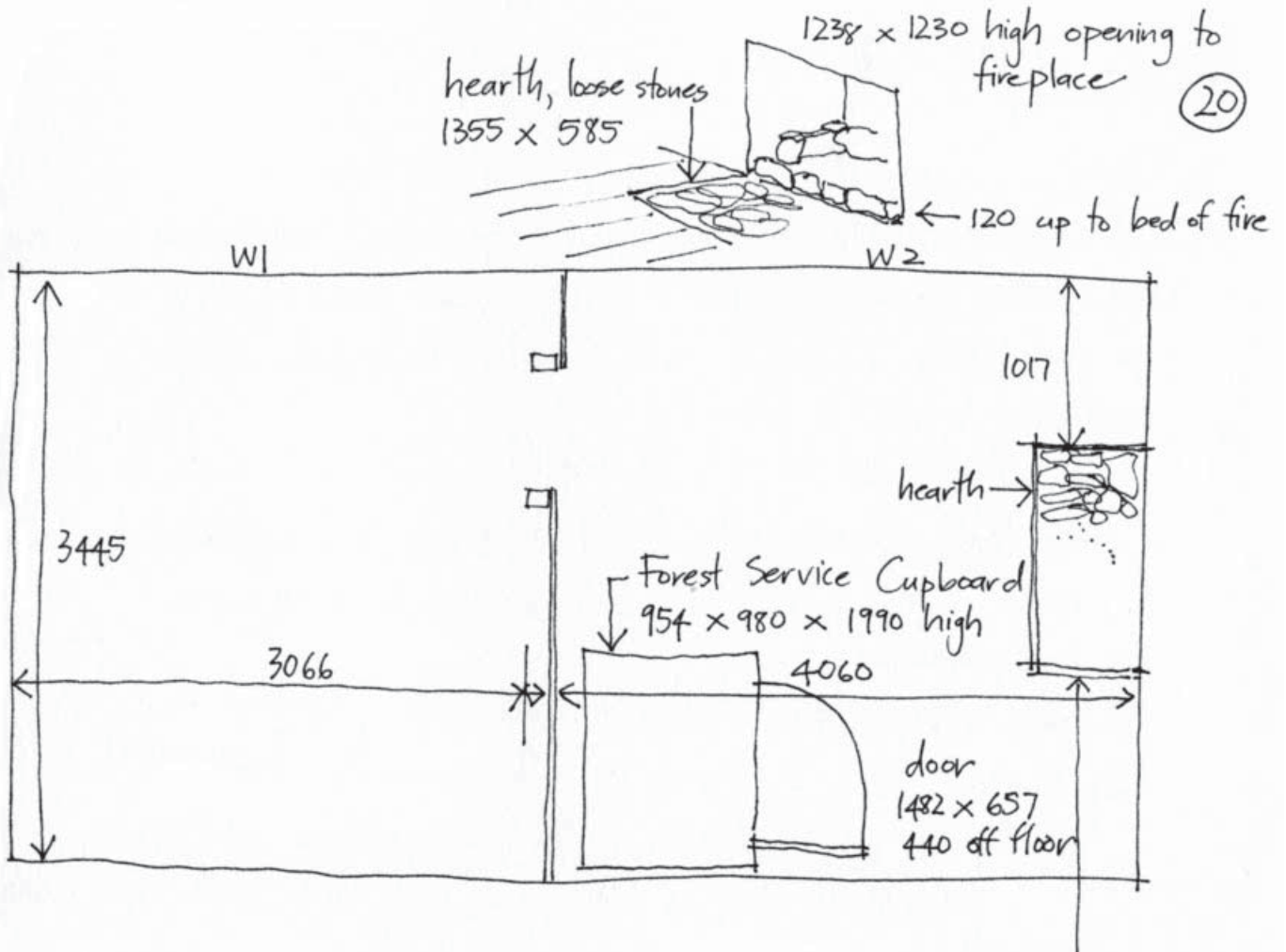


Section and Plan of Window Sill

Found in grass behind the hut. Fits window opening W1



Internal Heights



Internal Plan Dimensions

70 x 30 trim to edge of hearth (on top of edge of flooring)

Changes to Fabric

Lean-to on south elevation, built with the main part of the hut, now gone. (Evidence remaining includes weatherboards on east elevation, marks of rafter ends on gutter board on south elevation etc. Earth floor probable.)

Window opening W2 enlarged to take wider window.

Both windows and internal door gone (but for sill of W1 and bottom sash member of later W2 window).

Original chimney with external timber frame replaced with flat-iron chimney with no frame.

Building repiled with old piles left in place.

Bunks built in bunk room.

Forest Service cupboard installed in main room.

Sequence of Construction

(22)

Piles

Frame north + south walls on ground, stand up. Fix 3 cross wall top plates.

Lay central bearer.

Fix floor joists.

Build east + west ^{walls} in place.

Frame gable ends

Frame roof, including collar ties + purlins. Now a braced frame.

Fix roof.

Fix weatherboarding.

Fix door + windows. Now closed in.

Lay flooring.

Fix internal linings, south wall, north then east and west walls.

Start at floor on both sides, finish where south cove meets ceiling.

Frame internal partition, fix lining.

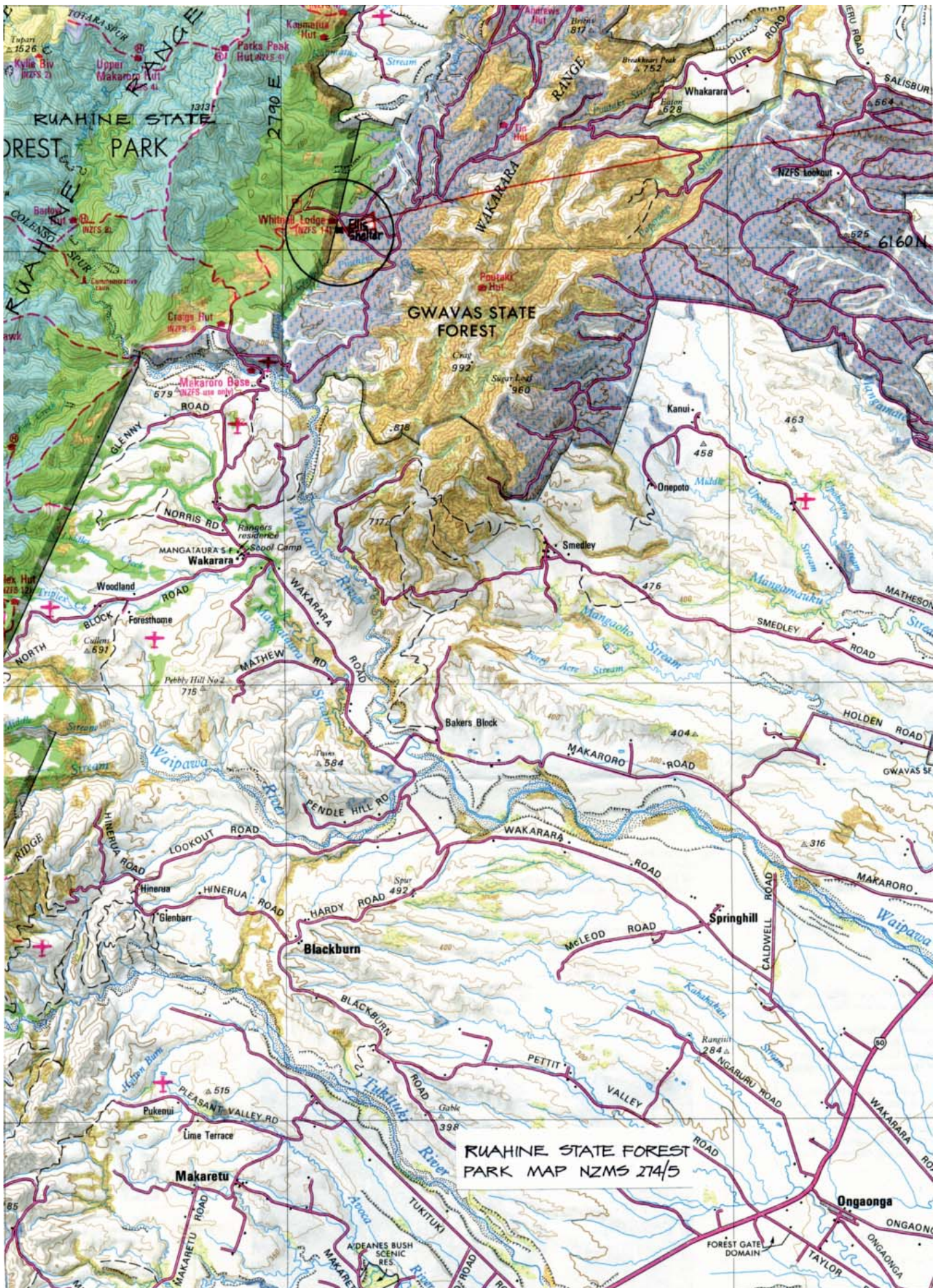
Fix internal architraves.

Build fireplace, although this could be built earlier.

Build lean-to.

Have a Bundi.

2/2/99 *Clahran* *Jim Mew*



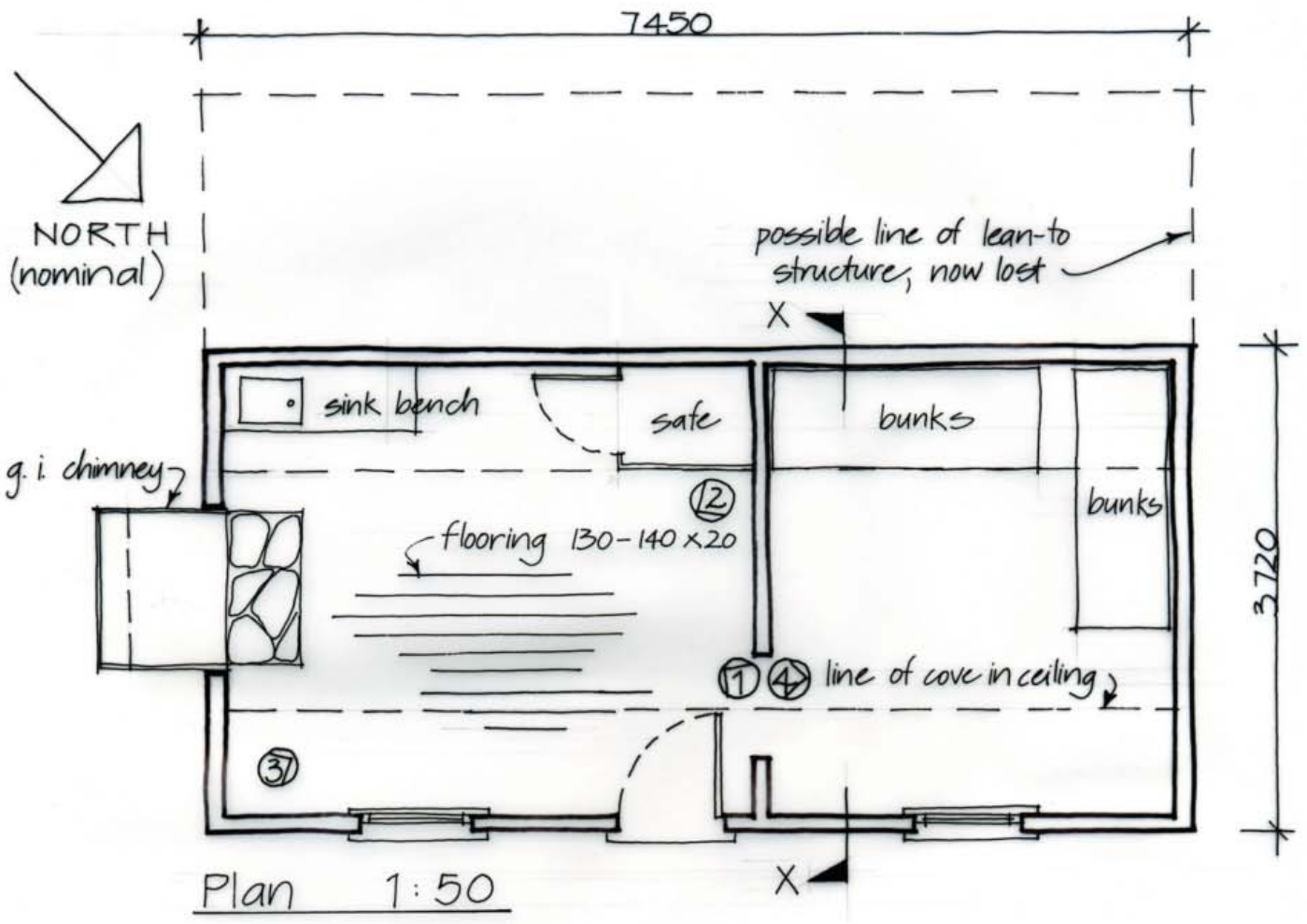
Appendix 4

MAP, PLANS AND PHOTOGRAPHS FROM
CHRIS COCHRAN'S JULY 1990 CONSERVATION
REPORT



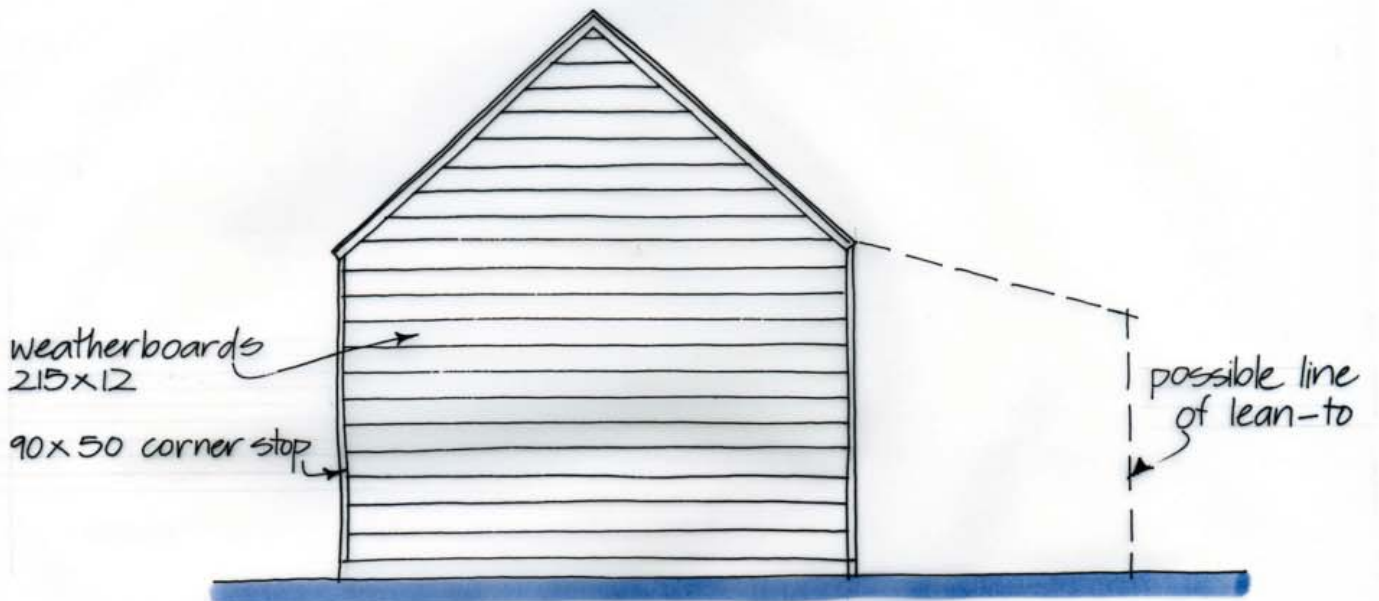
ELLIS HUT
GWAVAS STATE FOREST

CONSERVATION REPORT
July 1990

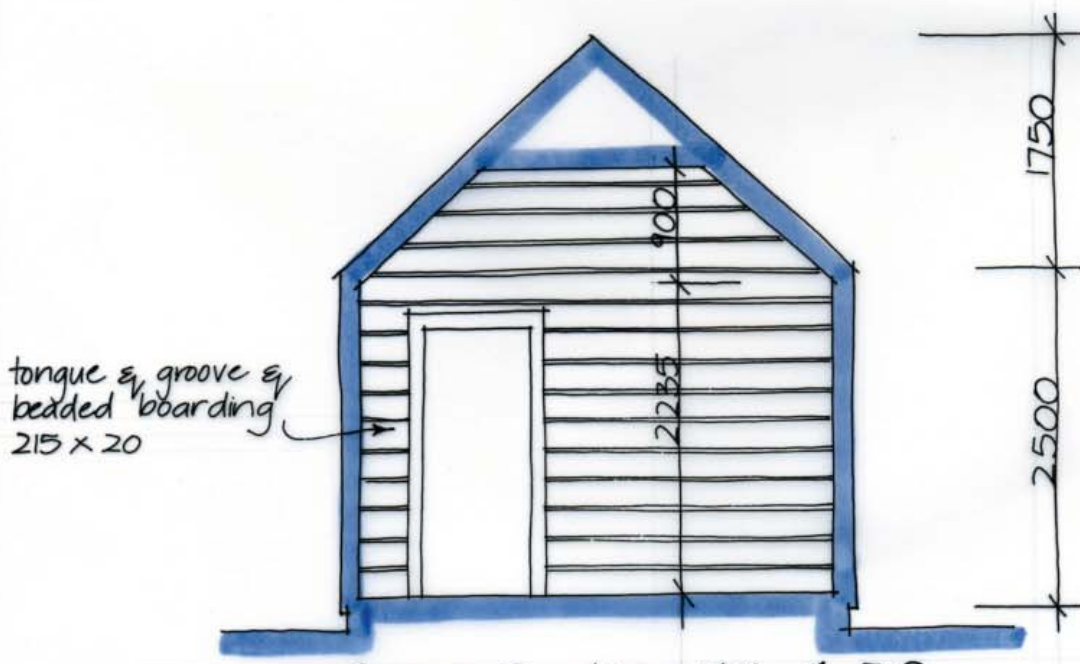


Ellis Hut Gwavas Forest C.C 25 June 1990

Measured by Pat Bonis, Peter Dandy & Chris Cochran
 Windows are as they appear in early photograph.



End (North-west) Elevation 1:50



Cross Section X-X 1:50

Ellis Hut Gwavas Forest CC 25 June 1990



End (north-west) elevation.



Rear (south-west) elevation. No weather-boarding remains on this wall.



South-east elevation. Weatherboarding in the gable can be retained; other short lengths should be salvaged for possible re-use.



Detail of front door. Replace board on latch edge of door only.



Detail of solid corner stop, north corner.



Detail showing pit-saw marks on inside face of tongue & groove boarding.



1 Interior, main room. Fireplace on left, sink bench in the middle & safe on the right. (See Plan for location of photos.)



2 Interior, main room. Fireplace on the right.



3

↑ Interior, main room.
Safe on the left, door
to bunk room on right.



← Detail of boarding
in bunk room.
4



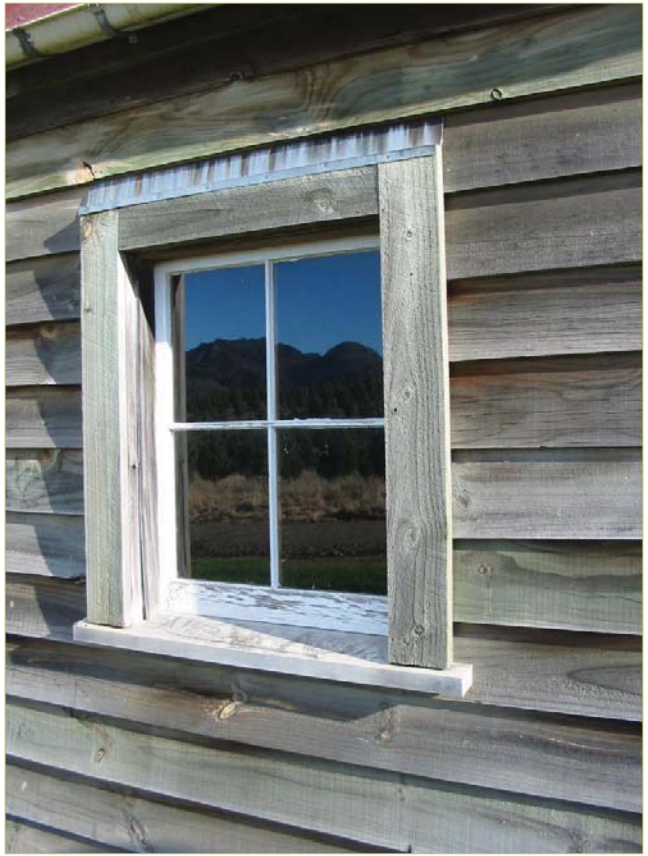
Ellis Hut, date unknown.
Copy supplied by Peter Dandy.

Appendix 5

ELLIS HUT PHOTOS SINCE RESTORATION



Restored Ellis Hut in 1998. Paul Maboney



Still looking pristine in July 2007. Dick Clark





Still looking pristine in July 2007. Dick Clark

Appendix 6

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Daily Telegraph, 3/2/1995

Historic Ruahine hut set for preservation

The Department of Conservation is earmarking a hut described as “a piece of Hawke’s Bay folklore and a fascinating piece of back-country architecture” for preservation.

Murderer’s Hut or Ellis Hut, in the Ruahine Range in Central Hawke’s Bay, dates back to 1884.

DOC archaeologist Pam Bain said the hut was an unusual one.

“This is a back-country hut put together by skilled builders,” she said. “It was built on-site using pitsawn timber, rather than the uneven split timber most back-country huts are made from. This is an unusual amount of trouble to go to for a musterer’s hut in such an isolated setting.”

The construction is a two-gabled building,

and because of its inaccessibility it has not been altered much over the years.

Ms Bain said the department planned to retain and treat as much of the original fabric of the building as possible.

In recent times, the hut has been used by hunters and trampers, but it has still to be decided how it should be used once restored.

Restoration should be completed this month.

The hut’s two names came about after it was used as a hideout by a man accused of murder. James Ellis was suspected of killing his employer in Martinborough, and was caught in the hut. He was later convicted and hanged.



Taranaki conservation officer Dave Rogers drills holes in the original timber of the hut before preservative is pumped in. Behind him is carpenter Roger Elliott who works at the Rimutaka Forest Park for the Department of Conservation, and Peter Dandy, centre, from the department's Ongaonga field centre.

Facelift for ‘Hilton’ of huts

The restoration of Ellis Hut in the Ruahine Range is a unique opportunity for experts to attend a workshop in conservation methods, Department of Conservation archaeologist Pam Bain says.

Ellis Hut, or Murderer’s Hut, was built in 1884 as a musterer’s hut. It is unique because of the method used to build it.

Unlike many back-country huts, Ellis Hut was built by skilled builders on site using pit-sawn timber rather than the uneven split timber used in most back-country huts.

“It’s the Hilton Hotel of musterers’ huts,” Ms Bain said this week.

Work on the hut began two weeks ago, with a workshop attended by 12 conservation experts.

The restoration is expected to be finished in two weeks.

Ms Bain said the plan for the building was to retain and treat as much of the original fabric of the historic building rather than replacing or rebuilding it.

The original builders may have put in the extra effort because the hut was used for extended periods and was in an isolated area. It was also lined to counter the cold winters.

Old photographs show the hut surrounded by snow.

The workshop at the hut was the first of its kind held by the department. Conservation methods learnt from it would be used on other projects, she said.



Carpenter Roger Elliott on the left works on the hut while Ongaonga field centre staff Peter Dandy (in the blue overalls) and Peter Abbott watch Dave Rogers at work under the hut.

The department was developing a series of historic sites like Ellis Hut that could be booked by groups.

The way the hut was built has also shown the conservationists the building techniques used at the time. The hut has also given researchers information on the manufacturers who supplied iron works for the hut.

The names of the manufacturers were cast into the iron implements found there.

The restoration will be documented with photographs and video tapes which would be used as training aids on other projects, Ms Bain said.

The conservationists were also faced with the dilemma of what to preserve and what to restore.

Generally, the hut was in a good condition, but some of the original woodwork had to be replaced and treated, Ms Bain said.

The future of the graffiti inside the hut was also scrutinised.

Some of the work carved into the wood and dated back to the 1940s would be left, but other graffiti painted in more recent times would be removed.

Ms Bain said the future of the hut was still in doubt, but it was likely to be booked by groups along with other sites the department was developing.

The Dominion, 9/3/1995

A broken-down old hut in the Ruabine Ranges which was the scene of the capture of murderer James Ellis, above, is being restored. Philip Kitchin recalls the grisly killing and reports on the renovation work



Department of Conservation staff at work on Murderer's Hut ... 'a fascinating piece of back-country architecture,' says archaeologist Pam Bain



Murder most foul, but lovingly restored

A BACK-COUNTRY hut, once the hide-out for a murderer who led police on a nine month manhunt, is being renovated in the Ruahine Ranges. Murderer's Hut, also known as Ellis Hut has been earmarked for preservation by the Department of Conservation (DOC) because of its importance in Hawke's Bay folklore. "It's a fascinating piece of back-country architecture," says DOC archaeologist Pim Bain.

The hut's claim to fame is that it was the site where James William Ellis, who was wanted for murder, was captured by a police officer disguised as a swagman.

Ellis, who also went by the alias of John McKenzie, was hunted by armed and mounted police over large parts of the lower North Island in 1904 after a murder on the Riddiford family's Te Awaiti station near Martinborough.

Ellis had arrived at the station to work as a scrub cutter six years after being released from a 14-year prison sentence for raping a Greytown woman. He worked for a contractor named Leonard Collinson till Collinson found out about Ellis's prison record. Somehow, he also knew that Ellis's back was deeply scarred from two floggings of 28 lashes, administered as part of his sentence.

Collinson, in hindsight somewhat foolishly, made provocative remarks about the rape and the scars on Ellis's back. He later sacked Ellis for shooting one of the Riddifords' 65,000 sheep and some of the stags on the sprawling station.

For several months Ellis lived a nomadic life in the area, living off his wits, his bush skills and from odd jobs he picked up in the district.

He stewed on Collinson's remarks and on his job dismissal and told several people he would get his revenge.

Te Awaiti was easy country for a man to hide in and on February 26 Collinson and a new worker were in marking areas claimed under Collinson's scrub-cutting contract. Collinson sat down to smoke his pipe and his worker, Alfred Ross, continued working some distance away.

The crack of a rifle was heard and Ross ran into a clearing to see Collinson sway, twist, fall and roll down a bank groaning in pain.

By the time Ross reached him, Collinson was dead.

Terrified, Ross ran back for help but became hopelessly lost in the manuka and his cries for help were unanswered till the following day.

Inspector Ellison of the Wellington police led the investigation into the murder and it was not long before the whole of New Zealand knew who the prime suspect was.

The hunt for Ellis began in earnest with Detective Broberg leading armed police and local men on several fruitless raids on remote musterers' huts and where Ellis was reported to have been seen.

On March 1, a "Wanted" poster of Ellis

was published in the *New Zealand Times* and occasional sightings of him were reported to police but each time the pursuing police arrived Ellis had vanished without trace.

Such was the fear of the man that a Mr Bunny, who managed the Riddiford property at the time of the killing, was reported to have been guarded by two mounted policemen when he went to the races at Waikikino.

Reports of Ellis's movements north into the Ruahine Ranges in Central Hawke's Bay prompted police to send a manhunt there.

Ellis was known as a superb bushman and he was well-armed. Police chasing him stalked him with great caution.

In December, a shepherd on Poporangi station reported seeing smoke from the chimney of a supposedly unoccupied musterers' hut in the Ruahines.

Detective Broberg, two policemen and a local who knew the country well approached the hut by a well-bushed gorge. Broberg decided the odds of rushing the hut were not good and, instead, disguised himself as a swagman and walked into the hut to find Ellis inside.

Ellis was holding a rifle which he brought to an on-guard position but he allowed the detective to disarm him.

He later told police he had read newspapers and it was against human nature for a man to give himself up when he knew there was a lot of evidence against him.

On February 6, 1905, James William Ellis was tried in Wellington's Supreme Court by Mr Justice Denniston.

Evidence was given that Ellis had been seen by two men in the vicinity of the murder site on the day of the slaying.

Defence counsel argued that there had been no case in New Zealand where the public had been so prejudiced before a trial. "If he had been a murderer he could have shot the men who went to arrest him," Ellis's counsel said.

The jury convicted Ellis of murder with a recommendation for mercy on the grounds of great provocation. But the convicted man was sentenced to hang.

The *New Zealand Times* describes how tall, elderly, grey-bearded Tom Long, the hangman, arrived in Wellington to end Ellis's life. Ellis was to hang on the same rope which hanged Petone murderer Stephen Boshier in 1897 and Silverstream murderer Frank Philpott in 1898.

Ellis was reported to have smoked a pipe and drunk a couple of whiskys on his last night. At 7am he calmly asked his executioner where on the trapdoor he should stand and asked if he had a final statement to make he repeated that he was innocent and said a simple: "Goodbye."

MS BAIN says the hut will be preserved by 11 conservationists from around the country. It was built by Bill Marsh and Jack Curtis in 1884 for Jock Anderson of Poporangi sheep station.

"This is a back-country hut put together by skilled builders. It was built on-site using pit-sawn timber rather than the uneven split timber most back-country huts are made from," Ms Bain says.

"This gives the hut a finished look which is an unusual amount of trouble to go to for a musterers' hut in such an isolated setting."

Corrugated iron was brought in on pack horses along the 27-kilometre bridle track from Poporangi homestead. The hut is a two-gabled building of the type many early New Zealand settlers lived in. It was originally named Whitnell's Hut after a shepherd and hunter who was the first semi-occupant.

Ms Bain says the plan for the hut is to retain as much of the building as possible and because the hut is so inaccessible it has not been altered much in the 110 years it has stood.

In recent years the hut has been used by recreational hunters and trampers but its future after restoration has yet to be decided.

"The Department of Conservation is developing a series of historic sites which can be booked for groups and Ellis Hut is an obvious one to consider for this," Ms Bain says.

The restoration is expected to be completed this month.

When he was finally tracked down in the hut James Ellis held his gun in the on-guard position, but allowed it to be taken away. He told police it was against human nature for a man to give himself up when he knew there was a lot of evidence against him.



Pictured working on Ellis (Murderer's) Hut are, from left; Casper Calver and Allan Way (Task Force Green), Roger Elliott (Conservation Officer), Pam Bain (historic resources, Hawke's Bay Conservancy) and Peter Dandy (Conservation Officer).

AN UNUSUAL example of early New Zealand back-country farming is being preserved in Central Hawke's Bay.

Ellis Hut, often referred to as Murderer's Hut after the alleged murderer James Ellis holed up there for nine months before capture in 1904, has been singled out for preservation by the Department of Conservation.

A week long, on-site workshop using the adjacent Whitnells Hut as base, was attended by 12 members of the department from many parts of New Zealand at the beginning of the month.

Two weeks of restoration work started after the historical significance of the outback shepherd's hut was assessed and it was decided it was a good example of work from a by-gone era, the department's East Coast historic resources officer Pam Bain said.

In terms of conservation, the restoration exercise was a useful programme for anywhere in the

country, she said, and a staff training video was filmed throughout the operation.

The hut was built in 1884 for Mr Jock Anderson of the former Poporangi Station (now covered in forest or scrub regrowth) and the first semi-permanent resident was Bill Whitnell who was a shepherd and wild dog hunter there in the late 1880's and 1890's.

Any new materials used were carefully documented and photographed as the hut was repiled and rotten boards replaced.

Recent graffiti was removed but carved names, initials and dates remain — adding to the character of the wooden interior.

The bottom half of the two roomed gabled hut was lined with pages from the Auckland Weekly News.

The hut is significant as it was built from pit sawn timber on-site, although sawmills had started in the area by then, and the timber inside was hand dressed.

“This gives the hut a finished look and is an unusual amount of trouble to go to for a musterer's hut in such an isolated setting,” Ms Bain says.

It still has its original corrugated iron roof which would have been brought in by pack-horse.

The chimney has been closed off and it has not yet been decided whether or not to replace the rear lean-to which burnt down in 1934, she says.

When completed, Ellis Hut will be appropriately furnished and probably listed as a ‘locked hut’ — available for use through booking with the Department of Conservation.

Nearby Whitnell Hut may be removed, head of the Ongaonga field centre Mr Pat Bonis says.

Ellis Hut can be reached on foot in two to two and a half hours, following an old logging track on the northern side of the Makaroro River, opposite the site of Yeoman's Mill at the end of Wakarara Road.

TE AWAITE MURDER.

ELLIS ARRESTED IN HAWKE'S BAY.

SURPRISED IN A HUT. ACCUSED BEFORE THE COURT.

REMANDED TO WELLINGTON.

[by telegraph—press association.]

NAPIER, 11th December.

Great excitement was caused in town last evening when, the report that the man John McKenzie, alias John William Ellis, wanted in connection with the murder of Leonard Collinson at Te Awaite, Wairarapa, on 26th February, 1904, had been captured at Kereru. The news proved correct, the capture having been effected by Detective Broberg (of Wellington) and Constable Willcocks (of Waipawa), who were accompanied by a guide, at about 1.30 p.m., on Saturday, in a hut on Mr. John Anderson's run at Kereru, at the foot of the Kaimanawa range.

The detective and constable, who had been scouring the country for several days, and who had twice visited this hut previously, had returned to town for provisions on Tuesday last; and on going back on Saturday they went to the hut to camp, and found their man there before them. Being surprised, Ellis was captured without resistance. When captured Ellis had in his possession a Jackson .303 repeating rifle and a six-chambered revolver, fully loaded.

Information was received some time ago that there were traces of some person hiding in the vicinity, and it was strongly suspected that McKenzie (or Ellis) was the man. In several instances huts were visited, and provisions and other articles stolen, but in every-case these huts were situated on hilltops where the man would have a good view of the country, and could see anyone approaching, so that evidently he watched, and knew when the occupants were absent.

A short time ago Mr. W. W. Hirst's station at Wakarara was visited by the

man and a cake was stolen. A greasy piece of paper which had been around the cake was afterwards found in the bush, some distance to the northward, showing the direction the man had taken.

On Tuesday week Constable Willcocks was instructed to proceed to Kereru and make a search, and as the country was very wild thereabouts, he engaged a guide. On Friday week Detective Broberg joined hi the search, which has been kept up constantly ever since.

Constable Butler was also searching the country back of Takapau in case the man doubled back there, as indications showed that he had been in that district at least on three occasions. Constables Carmody and Riordan were also sent up last week to join in the search, but would probably arrive after the capture.

McKenzie, who was an expert bushman, might have eluded capture for months but for the fortunate circumstance of the party finding him in the hut, as he kept himself well supplied with ammunition. On his first visit to Takapau he had evidently used the hollow of a burned tree as a camping place, and had lined it with the hide of a bullock which he is alleged to have shot. It also appears that wherever possible, in lighting his fire, he used a dry kind of smokeless wood so as not to give indications of his presence.

It was noticed, however, on the first visit to the hut where he was eventually captured that a fire had been recently lighted, and this put the search party on the scent. They kept close handy in case he should return, and an indication of the kind of country travelled will be gained when it is stated that they had to wade through a stream ten times in returning to the spot.

REMANDED TILL NEXT MONDAY.

WAIPAWA, This Day.

Ellis was charged at the Court with the murder of Collinson and robbery from Hirst's house, and was remanded till the 19th at Wellington.

CONFIRMATION OF THE ARREST.

TELEGRAM TO THE INSPECTOR OF POLICE.

On Saturday night Inspector Ellison, of Wellington, under whose direction the hunt for Ellis was conducted, received the following confirmatory telegram from the Inspector of Police for Hawke's Bay (Inspector Macdonell) "Ellis, alias McKenzie, was arrested at 1.30 p.m. today by Detective Broberg and Constable Willcocks (who were accompanied by a guide), in a whare at the back of John Anderson's Kereru station. He went into the whare for shelter, and they (the officers) did the same. He was well armed, but was secured before he could use his weapons. Detective Broberg and the constable are bringing the prisoner to Waipawa, which they expect to reach at about 1 a.m. Several articles which are alleged to have been stolen were found in accused's possession."

THE MURDER.

A MYSTERIOUS SHOT FROM THE BUSH.

Leonard Collinson was murdered on 26th February at Te Awaite station, thirty miles from Martinborough. Collinson, who had a scrub-cutting contract, was absent some miles from his main gang, and had only one man with him, Alfred William Ross, a runaway sailor. Between 4 and 5 o'clock in the afternoon Collinson and Ross were measuring work done on a clearing, and were expecting Mr. Bunny, manager of Te Awaite, to come and pass the work. Mr. Bunny, as it happened, did not come. Towards 5 p.m., Collinson was sitting near the edge of a stream, with a steep bank rising behind him; Ross was twenty yards away, on the other side of the stream, cutting a measuring-pole. Ross was concealed in scrub, while Collinson was sitting in an open place, with his face to the stream and his back to the high bank. He was shot

from behind, and the bullet went right through him, traversing heart and lungs. The body soiled down the bank. Ross saw no smoke nor anything to locate the shot. Finding Collinson dead, he tried to find the camp, lost himself in the bush, and was found next day by two mates, who subsequently found Collinson's body.

The evidence at the inquest held at Martinborough showed that the bullet, entering the back, must have been fired from up the steep bank. At the top of the bank there was a flax-bush and a clump of manuka; otherwise there was no cover. The bank ended in a terrace. The evidence indicated that some one on the terrace or in the manuka probably fired the shot. The murdered man was about twenty years old when he came to the colony, and had been in New Zealand about eighteen years. His father is Mr. J. Collinson, Delphic Cliff, Shankslin, Isle of Wight. The body of Collinson was buried in the Martinborough Cemetery.

A LONG SEARCH.

The arrest of Ellis on a charge of being concerned in the murder is the outcome of a nine months' steady hunt and persistency of purpose on the part of the police. From the very first, officers of the Wellington Force have been keeping a strict watch. No clue regarding the suspected man, however far-fetched it might appear to be, was neglected, and a rehearsal of the work of investigation would surprise the public if the complete record was available. Two suspects, it will be remembered, were arrested under sensational circumstances.

In April last, David Watt was apprehended at Urenui (Taranaki) on suspicion of being Ellis, and was locked up in the goal at New Plymouth, because in height, appearance, and general build

he resembled the man whose description and photograph had been posted throughout the colony. Watt, who was released after a week's remand, subsequently wrote to the Taranaki Herald to assure the public that the police had only done its duty in arresting him, and that he was neither "a martyr nor an object of pity".

Three months later word came from Sydney that, a man named James Baker had been arrested at Kiandra (once an important township, 316 miles south-west of Sydney), whose description answered to that of Ellis. Baker asserted that he was a native of South Dunedin, and came from there recently to Australia. When informed that he would have to be detained he became violent and attempted to strike the constable with a billycan. He was remanded for eight days, and in the meantime Constable Armour, of Greytown, who was the only member of the New Zealand Police Force who was personally acquainted with Ellis, went over to identify the prisoner. Baker made things appear very black against himself by breaking prison. The police and the inhabitants of Kiandra went out in pursuit of him, and effected a capture in the snow clad country. Constable Armour had no difficulty in declaring that Baker was [not] Ellis.

Subsequently, whilst Inspector Ellison was on a visit of inspection in the Fortymile Bush district, word came to the police at Eketahuna that there was a mystery concerning the occupant of a hut some miles out from the bush town. The Inspector took charge of the search party, the hut was surrounded—but it had no occupant. Another report was made that Ellis had been seen at Taihape. The hunt in that region drew another blank. Every mysterious-looking individual seen wandering through the back country at that period—some three or four months ago—was declared on sight

to be Ellis, and the police received many "tips". There was the case of a stranger who had come down through the King Country, and was seen at Waikaremoana. The man's steps were traced back—and another blank. A pair of greenhide shoes was found in the bush in the Te Awaite region, and the scent grew hot again, only to prove resultless.

The police one day received an intimation that a man who had tramped from Manakau to the Hutt had acted in a very eccentric manner. The hunters again went out. The result was the arrest of a man who was afterwards sent to the Porirua Asylum. The latest information received by the Wellington police was that Ellis was seen at Happy Valley yesterday week. Search in that direction failed as in the numerous other cases.

Some three months ago a paragraph appeared in a Hawke's Bay paper stating that settlers in the Takapau district had heard of a stranger who had been dwelling in a hollow tree. The press had obtained this interesting item ahead of the police. Detective Broberg, who was given charge of the Te Awaite case from the beginning, and who had stuck closely to his task, went up at once to the district indicated, and it is thought that this newspaper paragraph was the clue which has resulted in the arrest of Ellis.

It is understood that Mr. Wilford will defend the accused man.

DVD CHAPTERS

Conservation of Ellis Hut

- 1. The Workshop**
Paul Mahoney, Historic Resources, HO
- 2. History**
Pat Bonis, Ongaonga Field Centre Manager
- 3. Historic Significance**
Paul Mahoney, Historic Resources, HO
- 4. The Conservation Plan**
Steve Bagley, Historic Resources,
Nelson/Marlborough Conservancy
- 5. Work Specifications**
Richard Anderson, Wellington Conservancy
- 6. Use Issues and Adaptation**
Terry Slee, Historic Resources,
Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy
- 7. Site Archaeology**
Robert Brassey, Historic Resources,
Auckland Conservancy
- 8. Significant Material**
Jim Staton, Historic Resources,
West Coast Conservancy
- 9. Stabilisation**
Dave Rogers, Historic Resources,
Stratford Area Office
- 10. Interior and Chattels**
Fiona Wilson, Historic Resources,
Wanganui Conservancy
- 11. Work Progress**
Roger Elliot, Rimutaka Forest Park
- 12. WorksHop Summary**
Paul Mahoney, Historic Resources, HO
- 13. The Last Word**
Chris Cochran, Conservation Architect
interview

