

Flagstaff Hill Historic Reserve

Maiki Hill

Historic Heritage Assessment

Bay of Islands Area Office



Melina Goddard 2011



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Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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Cover images: left- Heke fells the flagstaff at Kororareka.(Page 109). [1908] Arthur David McCormick, 1860-1943. Alexander Turnbull Library. Right the Flagstaff today flying the confederation of tribes flag (DoC)

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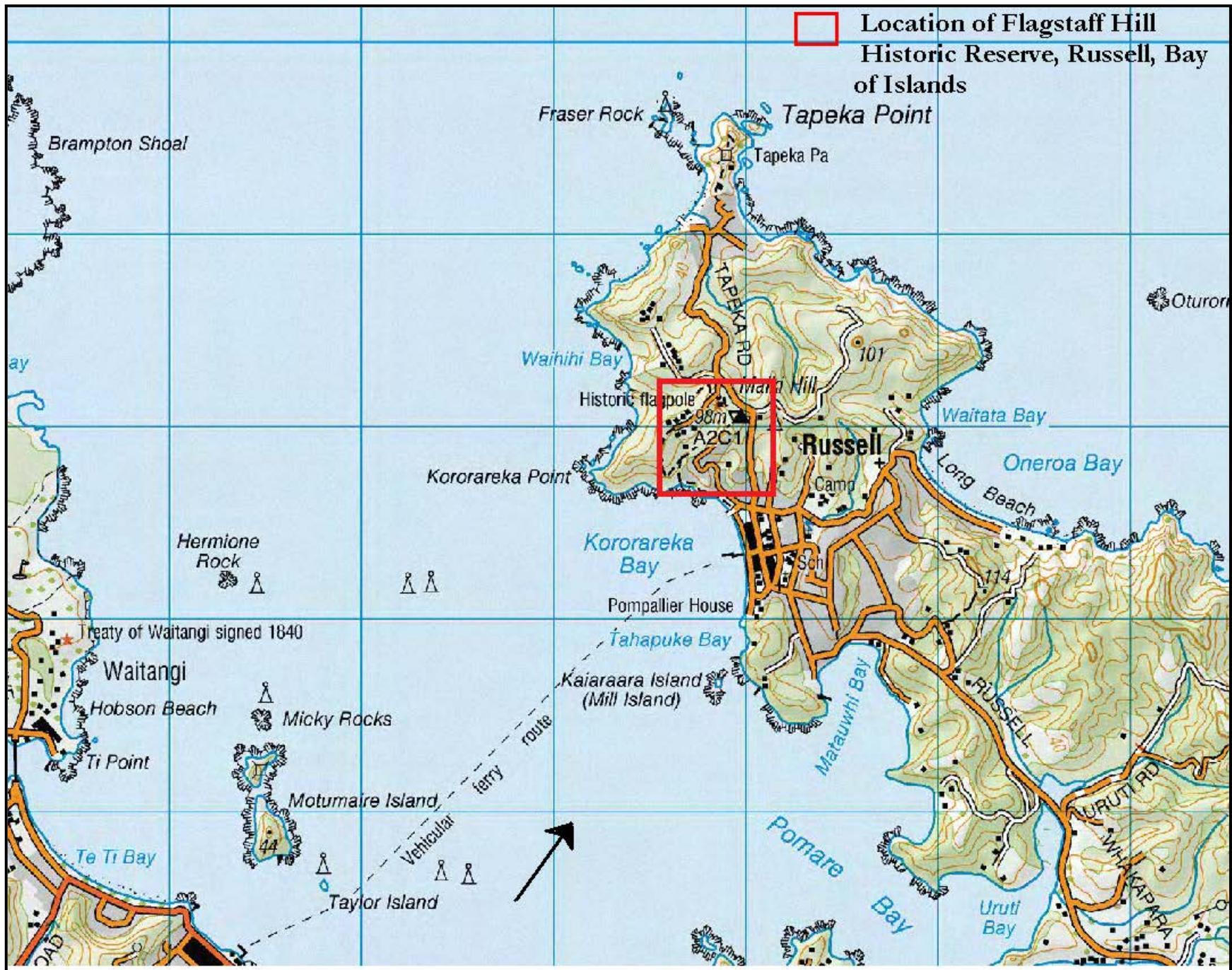


Figure 1: Flagstaff Hill Historic Reserve in the Russell, Bay of Islands (arcreader)

Site overview

Flagstaff Hill Historic Reserve is located on Maiki Hill overlooking Russell in the Bay of Islands (fig 1). It is administered by the Department of Conservation and contains the flagstaff structure itself surrounded by a Maori pa. There are no records of the early occupation on Maiki Hill, but it is famous for its later history.

The Union Jack was first flown here in 1840; from then on until 1845 it was chopped down on four occasions. By the Ngapuhi Chief Hone Heke as a symbolic gesture against British rule. It was re-erected in 1858 by local Maori, but in 1913 it was again brought to the ground in a gorse fire. This flagstaff was repaired and re-erected and still stands today.

Heke's actions and the subsequent sacking of Kororareka were catalysts that sparked the Northland wars. The people and events associated with the flagstaff and Maiki Hill are an important part of New Zealand history. Today the staff flies the flag of Russell, and on special occasions the flag of the Confederation of United Tribes. In contrast to Heke's original intentions it now symbolizes unity between Maori and Pakeha.

Land status: *Historic Reserve*

Administered by: *The Department of Conservation, Bay of Islands area office under the Reserves Act 1977.*

Access by: *The walking track to the historic reserve at Flagstaff Hill begins near the boat ramp on the Strand in Russell. Or reserve can be accessed by carpark located on Flagstaff road.*

Visitor numbers: *unknown.*

Heritage status: *protected under the Historic Places Act 1993, the Conservation Act 1987 the Reserves Act 1977 and comes under the ICOMOS charter as a place of cultural heritage value.*

Site area: *4.3501ha*

Functional location number: *DN-61-200-1001*

NZAA site record form # *Q05/019 (flagstaff) and Q05/709 (blockhouse)*

History description

The original flagstaff was a spar of kauri grown on Ngapuhi chief Hone Heke's own land which was presented by him to James Busby, a British government representative stationed at Waitangi. In March 1840 it was moved from Waitangi to the Maiki Hill on the other side of the harbour by the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor, Captain William Hobson. The flag was used both as a signal halyard for ships entering the harbour and for flying the Union Jack. The flagstaff's place in history as we know it began at daybreak on the 8th July 1844 when it was felled, chopped into pieces and burned by Heke as a symbolic objection to British authority.

There were numerous factors preceding these events resulting in the discontent of Heke and others towards British rule. Perhaps the most significant was the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi on the 6th of February. The treaty was signed by 60 chiefs and resulted in them ceding sovereignty of their lands to the British.

Captain Hobson was now Lieutenant Governor, responsible to only the Crown and the capital was instated at Clendon's Okiato, named Russell, but after a year was moved to Auckland. Although some officials remained in Kororareka commercial activity declined and many undertakings became insolvent. Whalers now avoided the bay because of the newly introduced taxes, and businesses suffered.¹

Some Maori chiefs were affected by the loss of the charges they had levied on shipping and were suffering from the decline in trade they had relied upon for decades. Many felt that they had been deceived by the promises made at Waitangi.²

As a result active resentment about the Treaty, and subsequent events, grew and the discontent finally focused on the flagstaff at Kororareka. Heke's very own gift was now a symbol of the British sovereignty he did not want for himself and his people.³ The flag of the Confederation of United Tribes, chosen by the Maori people in 1834, which had flown until 1840 had been removed. Some Maori in the bay believed that the Union Jack now flying was a symbol of their loss of prosperity. Those harbouring resentment found a leader in Hone Heke Pokai.⁴

Within the town there was insufficient force to exercise any control of this event. Governor Fitzroy reacted by sending an officer and 30 men of the 96th regiment to garrison the town. Further military assistance was requested from New South Wales, and by August there was a force of 250 men camped at Matauwhi Bay under Colonel Hulme, with Fitzroy arriving in the *HMS Hazard*.⁵ The flagstaff was re-erected in September most believing the matter to be at rest.⁶

Governor Fitzroy had begun an attempt to ward off a war and went inland to Waimate Mission Station to hear the depositions of the chiefs led by Waka Nene.⁷ Nene made a speech and stated that “If the flagstaff is cut down again, we will fight for it”.⁸

Around this time chief Kawiti of Kawakawa became involved.⁹ He was eager also to defy British authority and he became an ally of Heke. On his own initiative Heke again visited Kororareka on the night of the 9th January 1845 and early the next morning the flagstaff was again chopped and burnt by him and his men. Fitzroy sent 30 men of the 96th Regiment up Maiki Hill as a guard. A reward of £100 was offered for Heke’s capture which was matched by Heke for the capture of Fitzroy.¹⁰

In accordance with orders a third small spar was set up on Maiki Hill, still under guard. Ten days later, on the morning of the 19th January, Heke and a party came to Kororareka and leaving his men below Heke walked up the hill, brushing through the guard of Nene’s men and chopped down the third staff by severing its stays.¹¹ Untouched, Heke walked back down the hill to his awaiting men and left by canoe. It is likely that Waka’s men hesitated to shoot a chief of Heke’s rank for the sake of a piece of timber and coloured cloth.¹²

Another and greater flagstaff was re-erected, this time its lower portion was encased with iron to provide greater protection.¹³ A ditch was also dug around it and a blockhouse was constructed nearby to house 20 soldiers. Lower down the hill a second redoubt was built and 3 cannons were placed there. In addition a stockade was erected to act as a protective rallying point for the town’s inhabitants in case of war.¹⁴

For Heke, however, the issue of the Flagstaff was put to the side for now. His alliance with Kawiti had solidified and both intended to step up resistance. A camp was set up at Te Uruti where some 600 fighting men assembled with the plan of attacking Kororareka. On the night of the 10th of March the battle commenced. Acting-commander Robertson of the *Hazard* positioned a landed naval gun, and sent ashore 45 sailors and marines to strengthen the garrison of two officers, 52 NCO’s and soldiers of the 96th regiment with the militia of 110 armed citizens.¹⁵

After a short time Lieutenant Barclay of the 96th regiment moved most of his soldiers to the Maiki Hill blockhouse to answer the firing and they also had the old cannons operating in the lower blockhouse towards where Heke’s men were ascending. Just before dawn the men in the blockhouse were taken by surprise allowing Heke and his men to rush the four remaining soldiers at the blockhouse and fell the flagstaff for the fourth time.¹⁶

Kororareka was abandoned and the Maori force took over, allowing towns people to salvage what belongings they had before the burning and looting commenced.¹⁷ Much of Kororareka was burnt to the ground save a few buildings that were deliberately spared, the Anglican

and the buildings on the property of the Catholic bishop, Mgr Pompallier.¹⁸ The British force and European population departed on various ships to Auckland leaving Kororareka to Kawiti and Heke.¹⁹

Since the fall of Kororareka Fitzroy was under pressure to mount an expedition against Kawiti and Heke.²⁰ This resulted in the war in the north. Firstly Pomare's pa, Otuihu, was seized and burnt to the ground by the British troops. Following attacks were attempted on Heke's pa at Puketutu and other pa in the region. Retaliation by the British was hampered by bungling and misfortune and warfare ended on Sunday the 11th January 1846 at Ruapekapeka Pa which was purpose built by Kawiti to withstand the British attack. After heavy artillery bombardment the palisades of Ruapekapeka were breached and so ended the war in the north some 3 years from when the Flagstaff was first chopped down by Heke.²¹

The Flagstaff was never re-erected in Heke or Kawiti's lifetime and it was not until January 1858 that Kawiti's son Maihi Paraone re-hoisted the British flag on Maiki Hill, in commemoration of peace between Maori and Pakeha. This flagstaff was accidentally burnt in 1913 in a gorse fire. A sixth flagstaff was erected on Maiki Hill and still stands today.

Fabric description

The fabric of Flagstaff Hill Historic Reserve consists of Flagstaff Hill containing the flagstaff itself, on a concrete and metal post and the 1845 blockhouse earthworks around it. The second is Maiki Hill which contains a pre-European terraced pa. This was also where the first two flagstaffs were located for a time. The remaining land that surrounds these two knolls slopes down steeply on three sides and is covered under manuka scrub.

The current flagpole is the original staff that was erected in 1858 by local Maori, it was partially burnt down in a gorse fire in 1913 but it was repaired and apparently shortened to its present length of 25' from its original 90'. This staff, built under the guidance of Chief Maihi Paraone Kawiti, Kawiti's son, was given the name Whakakotahitanga, and reportedly it required the strength of 100 men to carry it up Maiki Hill.²²

The materials that the flagstaff is composed of are a steel spiral base filled with concrete, kauri timber mid-section, and fiberglass top mast. Cross trees extend from the pole and system of ss guy wires stretch from above to below the cross trees.²³ Adjacent to the flagstaff is a commemorative bronze plaque. The staff is lit up at night by four floodlights.

There are two knolls on the summit and the present flagstaff is on the northwest knoll with a sundial located on the southeast knoll (see appendix 2, 3). Allegedly the first two flagstaffs

were located on the southeast knoll, which is known as Titore's mount, and the third and following staffs were located in the current location.²⁴ This is also supported by G.H Cook in a newspaper article from the 1930's.²⁵ However based on evidence from survey plans from 1843 and 1863 this still remains inconclusive.²⁶

Since the 1960's the reserve has been highly modified by a carpark that is located between the two knolls and a concrete path to the north east which leads to the sundial, built on the southern knoll in 1988. The location of the sundial was to be on a pit like depression and therefore required an authority to modify from the Historic Places Trust. An excavation was undertaken by Maingay on the 24-25th November to investigate the age and function of the pit located northwest of the trig station.²⁷

Excavation clearly indicating that was not a Maori storage pit. Shards of a 19th century bottle in the fill showed that the feature had been partially filled in during the 1800's. While it was probably the site of an early flagpole, there was no specific archaeological evidence to prove this.²⁸

In the 1990's the most serious problem to be addressed within the reserve was damage to the archaeological terrace features leading up to the sundial from the carpark, caused by a high amount of pedestrian activity. This has since been repaired with soil packing and turfing, and a concrete path has been constructed around the terraces.

Cultural Connections

The reserve is culturally connected to the iwi of Kororareka, the people of Russell as part of their early history and also to all New Zealanders as a symbol of the early objections to British and later unity between Maori and Pakeha.

National Context

The flagstaff is of national importance and is an original representation of its kind. Although there are flagstaffs that exist in history and today, none are equal to this one located on Maiki Hill. Hone Heke gave the original kauri pole to the British resident, James Busby, for the purpose of flying the flag of the Confederation of United Chiefs at Waitangi. At this time Heke was in favour of British rule, indeed he was the first chieftain to sign the Treaty of Waitangi. The flagpole was later moved to Maiki Hill where it flew the Union Jack, and ironically Heke became the first to take direct action against the British Crown by cutting it down.

Flagstaff Hill Historic Reserve is a significant New Zealand site with high historic and fabric values. The actions of Heke and Kawiti here, and in the adjacent township of Kororareka, led

to the 'War in the North' and set a precedent for wider reaction against British rule in the North Island.

Historic Significance

The reserve is an integral part of Northland's early history; it represents highly significant events and people that affected the future of the country.

Fabric Significance

The fabric of the reserve is represented by the flagstaff and the earthworks that surround it; both of which are protected under the Historic Places Act. The flagstaff and the events that are associated with it sparked the beginning of the Northland wars which ended at Ruapekapeka Pa. They are a highly significant part of Northland and New Zealand's history. There is still part of the original kauri staff gifted by Kawiti's grandson incorporated with modern elements of the flagpole. This is highly symbolic and today represents unity and peace which Heke and the British government were unable to achieve.

Cultural Significance

From the words of Mr Teraumoa Kawiti the grandson of Chief Maihi Kawiti, son of Kawiti, *"..it represents our ancestors..... the importance of this pole to my people cannot be measured. It is one of our family's greatest treasures"*.²⁹

Management Recommendations

- The site has huge potential for historic interpretation. This could incorporate the history of the reserve with other historic remains of Kororareka and could also be extended to Waitata Point gun emplacements, Okiato, New Zealand's first capital, and Tapeka Point Pa. The potential for incorporating these significant sites into an outdoor living museum/ heritage trail is immense.
- Vegetation management of the encroaching manuka is required to keep the features of the site clear and also the trees planted in the 1980's as part of a landscaping project tend to obscure views and need to be kept open with regular trimming.
- An archaeological survey to locate features relating to the battle of Kororareka such as the lower blockhouse, the track that ran from here to Kororareka and the original flagstaff site would be beneficial. Survey would be based upon the historical texts. Any further features that remain unrecorded on the slopes of the reserve could be

located. This survey would aid in the preservation of features and could add to future interpretation.

- Further historic research relating to diaries, letters, drawings and plans should be undertaken to source direct accounts of soldiers of the 96th regiment who were stationed here.
- The Cyclical Maintenance Plan by Salmond Reed Architects 2002 would be a valuable guide to follow.³⁰

Management Chronology

1932: Gazetted as a historic reserve.

1951: The flagstaff was taken down for painting and the addition of new galvanized chains.

1954, 5th February: Four naval ratings cut the flagstaff almost down.

1973: The flagstaff underwent further repairs and had the base cut.

1978: lightning shattered the top section.

1981, December: The support chains were unshackled and the staff felled.

1983: The flagstaff was re-erected and strengthened after an explosion damaged the base.

1988: A sundial was placed on the southern knoll and the trig removed around this time.

1991, December: An assessment of the flagstaff found that there were significant amounts of decay of the timber section and conservation was needed.

1992, 27th February: Flagstaff taken down for preservation of timber.

1993, 20th March: The Flagstaff was re-erected by Dean Whiting, Maori Buildings Conservator.

2002: Salmond and Reed Architects produced a condition report on the flagstaff. The staff's condition was found to be "generally sound" the plinth was found to be in fair condition and recommendations were made in the report.

16th September 2004 historic assessment of Te Maiki Flagstaff Hill by Sally Burgess of DoC.

2005-06: New carpark and tracks constructed.

2007: New rigging systems placed on the flagstaff.

- Management chronology also includes maintenance and replacement of parts to the flagstaff done by DoC staff that did not generate paperwork.

Management Documentation

Baseline inspection: Salmond and Reed Architects, 2002. Repairs and remedial work to Flagstaff, Maiki hill Russell Bay of Islands, Northland for Department of Conservation.

Heritage assessment: 928421

Historic Asset Management

[HHA-01-02-23-01](#) NLB-1

01/07/2010 Northland - Bay of Islands Area Office - **Flagstaff** (Maiki) Hill - Archaeological Site Records [HHA-01-02-23-02](#) NLB-1 01/07/2010 Northland - Bay of Islands Area Office **Flagstaff** (Maiki) Hill - Research, Assessments, Surveys [HHA-01-02-23-03](#) NLB-1 01/07/2010 Northland - Bay of Islands Area Office - **Flagstaff** (Maiki) Hill - Restoration, Maintenance etc [HHA-01-02-23-04](#) NLB-1 01/07/2010 Northland - Bay of Islands Area Office - **Flagstaff** (Maiki) Hill - Maps.

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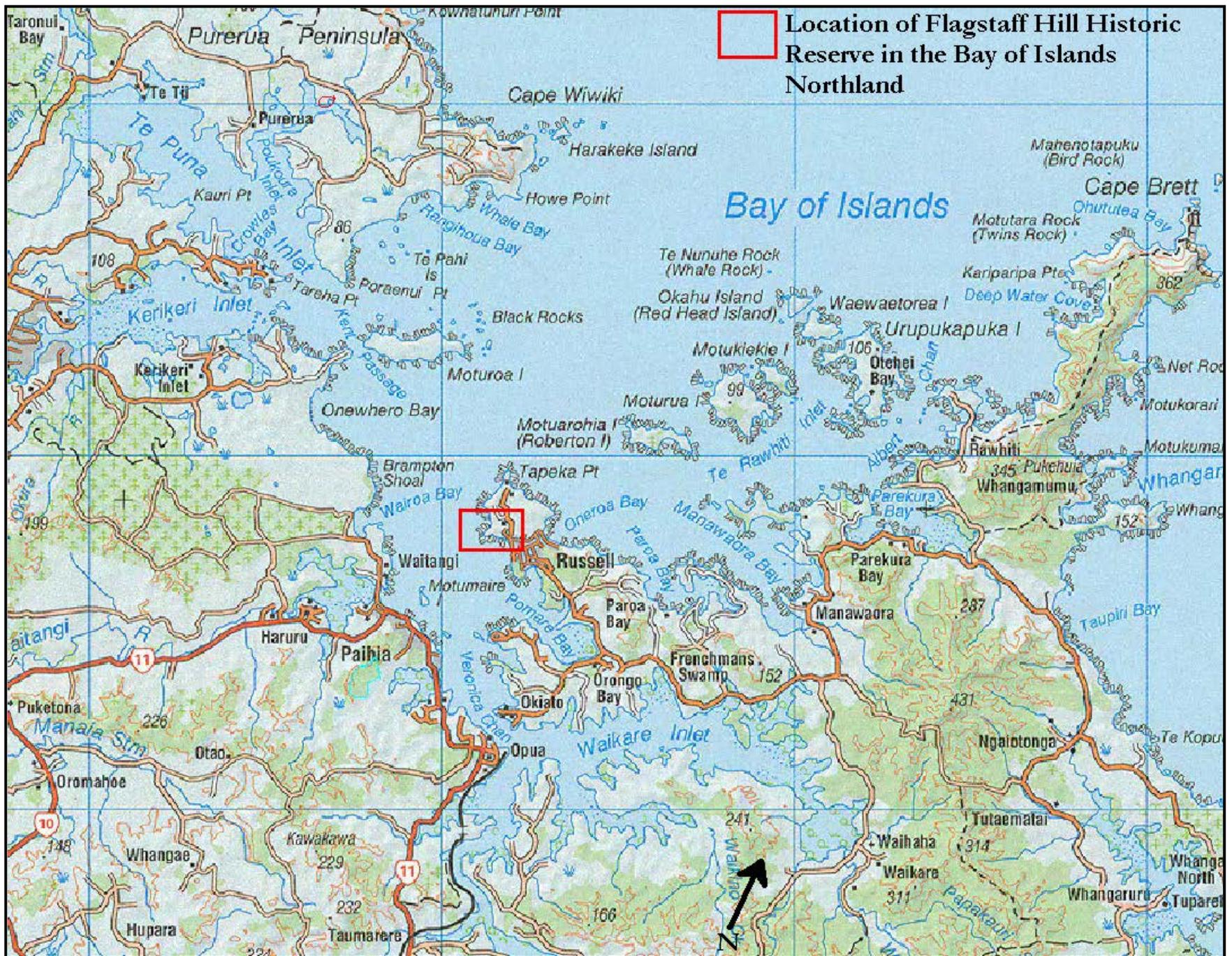
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Appendix 1: Location of the Flagstaff Hill Historic Reserve within the Bay of Islands (arcreader)



Appendix 2: Flagstaff today taken from the south eastern knoll where the sundial is situated and the possible location of the first two flagstaffs. Facing south, terraces can be seen running down the slope (DoC)



Appendix 3: Taken from the south east knoll (Titores Mount) with part of the sundial and the Purerua Peninsula in the background (DoC).

Endnotes

¹ BOIMHP 1989

² *Op cit:* 1989:40

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Lee 1983:254

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Gibson 1974:28

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Lee. J. 1983:255

¹¹ *Op cit:*1983:256

¹² Gibson 1974:30

¹³ Cover image, Alexander Turnbull Library.

¹⁴ Gibson 1974:30

¹⁵ Gibson 1974:31

¹⁶ Gibson 1974:33

¹⁷ Bay of Islands Maritime and Historic Park 1989

¹⁸ Gibson 1974:35

¹⁹ BOIMHP 1989

²⁰ Gibson 1974:36

²¹ BOIMHP 1989

²² Whiting 1995:2

²³ Salmond Reed 2002:4 for further description

²⁴ King 1949:43,55

²⁵ *Op cit*: Maingay 1989:5

²⁶ *Op cit*: Maingay:5

²⁷ *Op cit*: Maingay:7

²⁸ *Op cit*: Maingay 1989

²⁹ (NZ Herald 24/1/92, “pole set for final felling” at the removal and restoration of the pole in 1992)

³⁰ (HHA-01-02-23-03)