

# Firth Tower

and

## Stanley Landing

HISTORICAL RESERVES  
MANAGEMENT PLAN



**matamata  
piako**  
district council

Isthmus  
GROUP

# **Firth Tower**

and

## **Stanley Landing**

### **HISTORICAL RESERVES MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The purpose of this document is to:

- Provide a Management Plan, in accordance with the Reserves Act 1977, to direct the management of Firth Tower and Stanley Landing Historical Reserves.
- Provide background information on the reserves.

**Part One: Background** provides information about Firth Tower and Stanley Landing Reserves. It includes a discussion on the main issues and appropriate management response.

**Part Two: Management** directs future management of the reserve. It is set as a main goal, a set of six Objectives (desired outcomes), and a range of Policies and proposed Methods to achieve these objectives.

Prepared for Matamata-Piako District Council  
by Isthmus Group Landscape Architects  
under the direction of John De Luca

### **Acknowledgments:**

This Management Plan was put together with considerable assistance from the Firth Tower Historical Reserve Management Committee, the Matamata Historical Society, Custodians Leith Toner & Judy Cade, and John De Luca and Denis Bellamy of the Matamata-Piako District Council. Particular thanks to J. and R.D. Stanley for providing historical photos and historical material.

Cover: 'MEN OF THE TIME: MR J.C. FIRTH'  
Observer and Free Lance, 4 December 1886<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> From Mona Gordon, *The Golden Age of Josiah Clifton Firth*, 1963, p.144

## **Executive Summary**

The main issue facing the Firth Tower Historical Reserve appears to be the focus of the museum. The museum is based around the Firth Tower and the history of Josiah Firth and the Matamata Estate. This is what makes the museum distinctive, and provides the best platform from which to interpret the history of the Matamata district.

However over the years the development of the Reserve has blurred this focus. The excellent collection of farm machinery is not integrated well within the site, and the 'colonial village' of early buildings at the front of the site compromises the authentic character of the homestead and tower.

The approach proposed by the Management Plan to address this issue is to create three separate precincts within the Reserve:

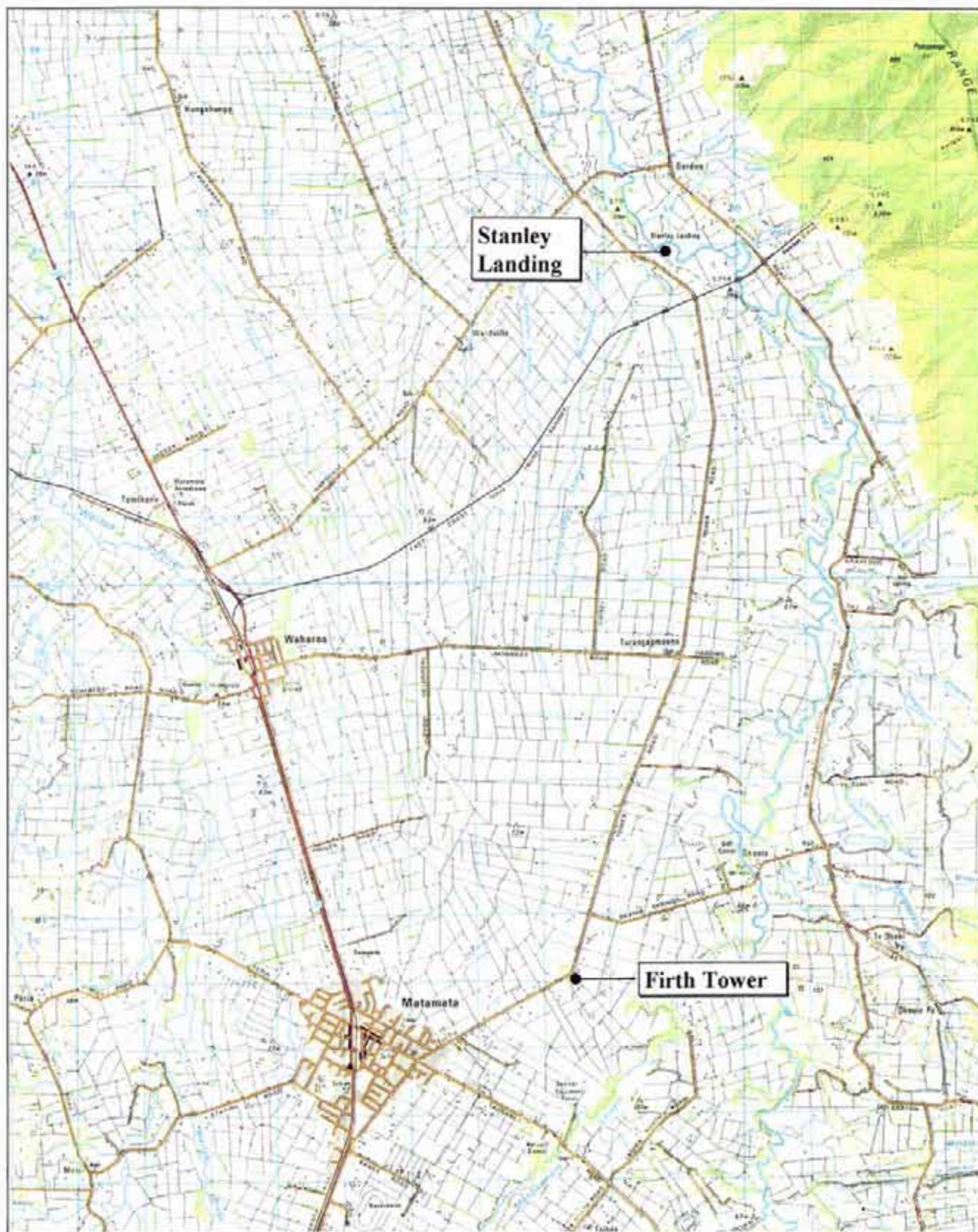
- The homestead precinct at the front of the site will be restored to the authentic grounds layout as near as practicable.
- A farm machinery precinct will be established at the rear of the homestead to integrate the rear part of the site with the museum.
- Finally a local history precinct will be established at the rear of the carpark. The early buildings from the district will be shifted to this part of the site in order to enable the homestead grounds to be re-established.

Stanley Landing will continue to be managed in a low key way as at present. However connections between Stanley Landing and the Firth Tower site will be emphasised through signage and interpretation.

The six objectives which form the basis of the Management Plan are:

1. Focus primarily on the history of the Matamata Estate during the time of Josiah Firth and John McCaw. (1865-1917)
2. Develop a museum of farm technology in a way that complements the Matamata Estate focus
3. Improve understanding of the development of the Matamata district starting from the perspective of the Matamata Estate.
4. Improve understanding of New Zealand history and development during the 1860s to 1900s through the example of the Matamata Estate and Josiah Firth.
5. Increase visitor numbers and broaden visitor origin.
6. Minimise cost to the Council consistent with achieving the other objectives.





**Figure 1**  
**Location: Firth Tower and Stanley Landing Historical Reserves**  
 NZMS 260 T14 MORRINSVILLE EDITION 1

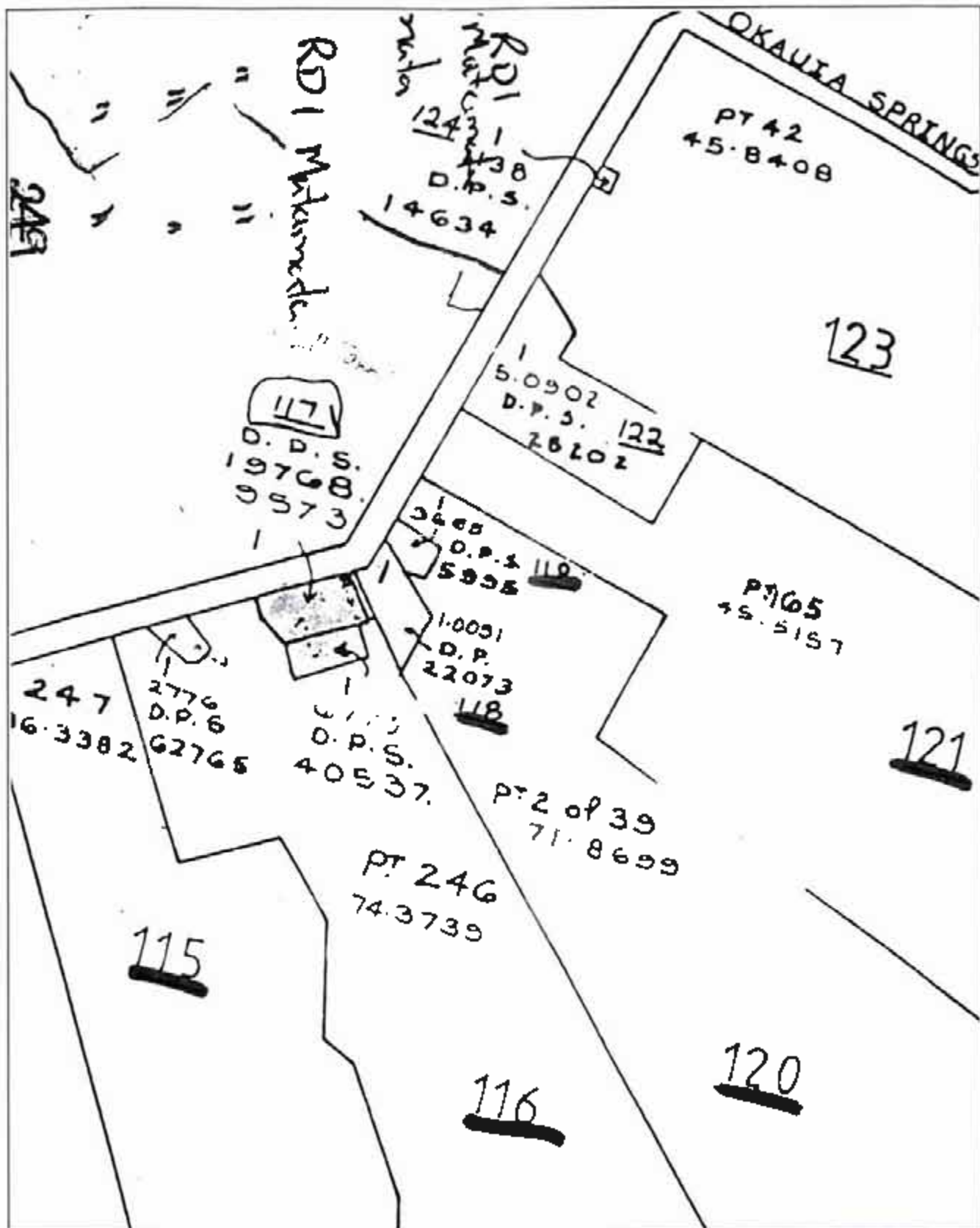
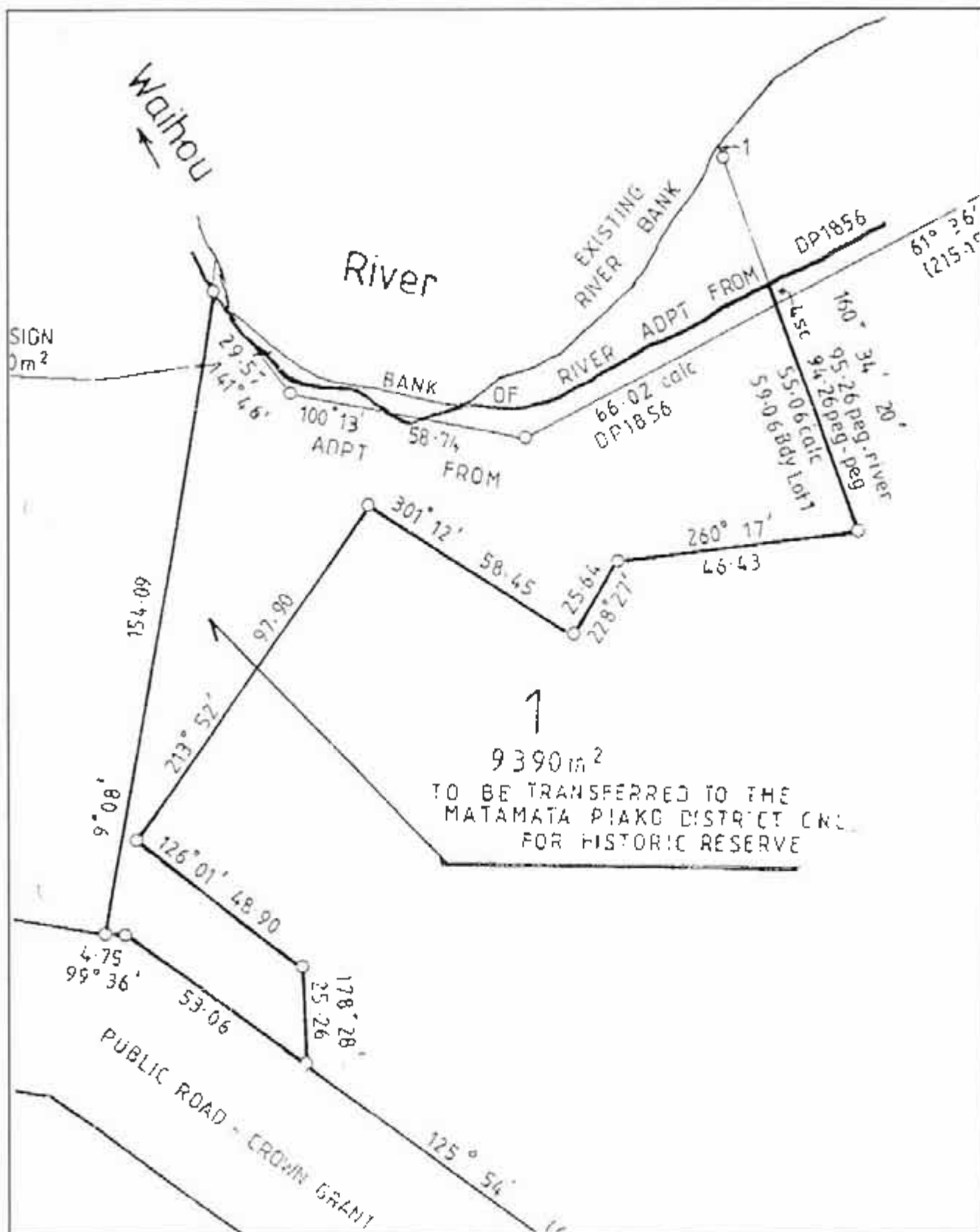


Figure 2  
Firth Tower Historical Reserve





**Figure 3**  
Stanley Landing Historical Reserve

# Contents

## Part One: Background

<b>1</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>History</b>	
2.1	Josiah Firth and the Matamata Estate .....	9
2.2	Tower's Purpose .....	12
2.3	Stanley Landing .....	15
2.4	Firth's Loss of the Matamata Estate .....	17
2.5	The John McCaw Era .....	19
2.6	History as an Historical Reserve.....	20
<b>3</b>	<b>Reserve Description</b>	
3.1	Landscape Context .....	23
3.2	Site Layout and Vegetation.....	24
3.3	Buildings .....	26
<b>4</b>	<b>Visitor Experience</b>	
4.1	Approaches, Arrival, Entry .....	30
4.2	Circulation .....	31
4.3	Themes of Museum .....	32
<b>5</b>	<b>Management Framework</b>	
5.1	Legal Description and Titles.....	33
5.2	Administration and Finance.....	34
5.3	Visitors.....	35
5.4	Legislative Framework.....	35
5.5	Process for Preparation of Management Plan .....	35
5.6	Submissions .....	35
<b>6</b>	<b>Issues and Management Approach</b>	
6.1	Focus of Museum .....	37
6.2	Site Development Plan.....	39
6.3	Stanley Landing .....	39
6.4	Visitor Numbers and Visitor Experience .....	40
6.5	Appropriateness of New Buildings.....	40
6.6	Need for Local History Archives.....	40
6.7	Need for Progressive Implementation.....	40

/continued



## **Part Two: Management**

<b>7</b>	<b>Principle Purpose and Focus of Museum</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Objectives</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Policies and Implementation</b>	
<b>9.1</b>	<b>Focus on Matamata Estate during Firth and McCaw era</b>	
	Homestead Precinct .....	42
	Interpretation Themes .....	43
<b>9.2</b>	<b>Develop Complementary Farm Technology Museum</b>	
	Farm Technology Precinct .....	45
	Interpretation Themes .....	46
<b>8.3</b>	<b>Improve Understanding of Matamata District's History</b>	
	Connections to Surrounding Landscape .....	47
	Connection to Stanley Landing .....	48
	Local History Precinct .....	49
	Archives and Research Facilities .....	49
<b>8.4</b>	<b>Improve Understanding of New Zealand History</b>	
	Interpretation.....	51
<b>8.5</b>	<b>Increase Visitor Numbers</b>	
	Marketing .....	53
	Signs and Approaches .....	54
	Entrance and Parking .....	55
	Refreshments .....	56
<b>8.6</b>	<b>Minimise Costs to Council</b>	
	Voluntary Development and Management.....	57
	Additional Building Projects .....	58
	Professional Staffing .....	58
	<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Bibliography</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Report on Submissions Received on Draft Management Plan</b>	

# Part One: Background

## History

### Josiah Firth and the Matamata Estate

The Pakeha history of the Matamata Plains is dominated by Josiah Firth and the Matamata Estate.



Figure 4  
Josiah Clifton Firth 1865

Firth came from a Yorkshire family with interests in farming, woollen mills, and an ironworks which he managed between 1850-1854<sup>2</sup>. This background, together with a broad education, strongly influenced his life in New Zealand. He developed one of the largest agricultural estates, became involved in a range of industrial enterprises, and became one of a small circle of businessmen who controlled much of the financial power of Auckland Province from the 1850s to the 1880s. He also represented the wide interests and enthusiasms of the age.

After emigrating to Auckland in 1855, Firth initially established a brickyard at Cook Street. Then in 1856, with two partners, he built the Wharf Steam Flour Mills -the largest and most technologically advanced in Auckland Province and the source of his initial capital growth.

Firth quickly became part of a circle of businessmen known as the 'Merchant Princes' which was led by Thomas Russell and included other prominent figures such as John Logan Campbell, Thomas Morrin, and Frederick Whitaker. This group became involved in a wide range of entrepreneurial and speculative developments. They shared overlapping directorships of prominent companies. They were prominent in provincial and national politics. In particular their enterprises were made possible through the influence they had on the board of the Bank of New Zealand and its lending agency, the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company (NZL&MA).<sup>3</sup>

A key activity of this group was land speculation. They benefited from the Waikato War and in many cases promoted it. Firth was a volunteer and a "militaristic gadfly" on the South Auckland frontier<sup>4</sup>. He was a member of what was regarded as the 'war party' in the House of Representatives. Firth also promoted 'direct purchase' from Maori owners in disregard of Government policy and the Treaty of Waitangi.

<sup>2</sup> Duncan Waterson, *Dictionary of N.Z. Biography Vol. 1*, 1990, p.124

<sup>3</sup> The history of this group of businessmen is the subject of Russell Stone, *Makers of Fortune. a Colonial Business Community and its Fall*. 1973.

<sup>4</sup> Duncan Waterson, *Dictionary of N.Z. Biography*, p.124

In 1856 and 1859 Firth explored the Waihou River and Matamata Plains which were controlled at the time by Wiremu Tamihana.<sup>5</sup>

Tamihana was a key figure in Maori Pakeha relations during the 1860s. He was the son of Waharoa, a leading warrior chief who controlled the Matamata area. A mission station was established at Matamata in the 1830s under Waharoa's patronage, although it was abandoned in 1836 because of fear of military reprisals by Ngati Whakaue against Waharoa. However Tamihana adopted Christianity and developed a model village at Peria where he sought to combine aspects of western culture, such as Christianity and western agriculture, with traditional Maori culture.

He also promoted the idea of a cohesive leadership amongst Maori to counter the negative effects of Pakeha settlement, and promoted the idea of a Maori nation under a separate King. He played a key role in establishing Tawhiao as the first Maori King, and became known as the 'Kingmaker'.

In 1865 Firth began leasing land in the Matamata area from Tamihana, eventually increasing it to 55,000 acres. At the same time Firth began the process of converting leasehold land to freehold.

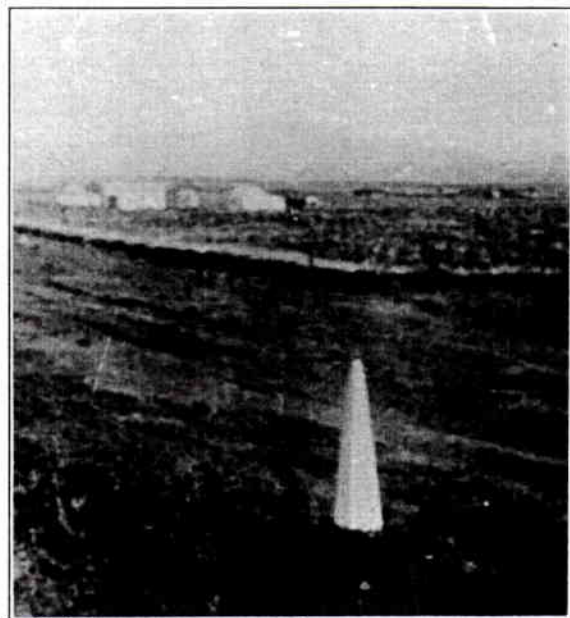
Between 1865 and the late 1870s a gradual process of land improvement was carried out on the Matamata Estates, which Firth referred to as *The Run*. The fern and bracken covered plains were burnt and sown as grassland and feed crops such as turnips were grown. An original homestead, known as *The (Old) Station*, was built on a site near Peria<sup>6</sup>

After Tamihana died in 1866 Firth had an obelisk erected on the spot where Tamihana is said to have died, at the foot of the scarp below the museum site. Note that this was more than ten years prior to the

homestead being shifted to this site. The obelisk was wooden structure with an inscription in brass written in Maori:

*"Farewell, O friend!  
When the son of Kiripuai lived men  
were venerated.  
William Thompson te Waharoa died  
on this spot on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of  
December, 1866. His last words  
were:  
'Tell Mr Firth, if he wishes, I am  
willing that he should abide here  
continually'".<sup>7</sup>*

The obelisk was a well known landmark, and was the location chosen for a meeting between Firth and Te Kooti in 1870.



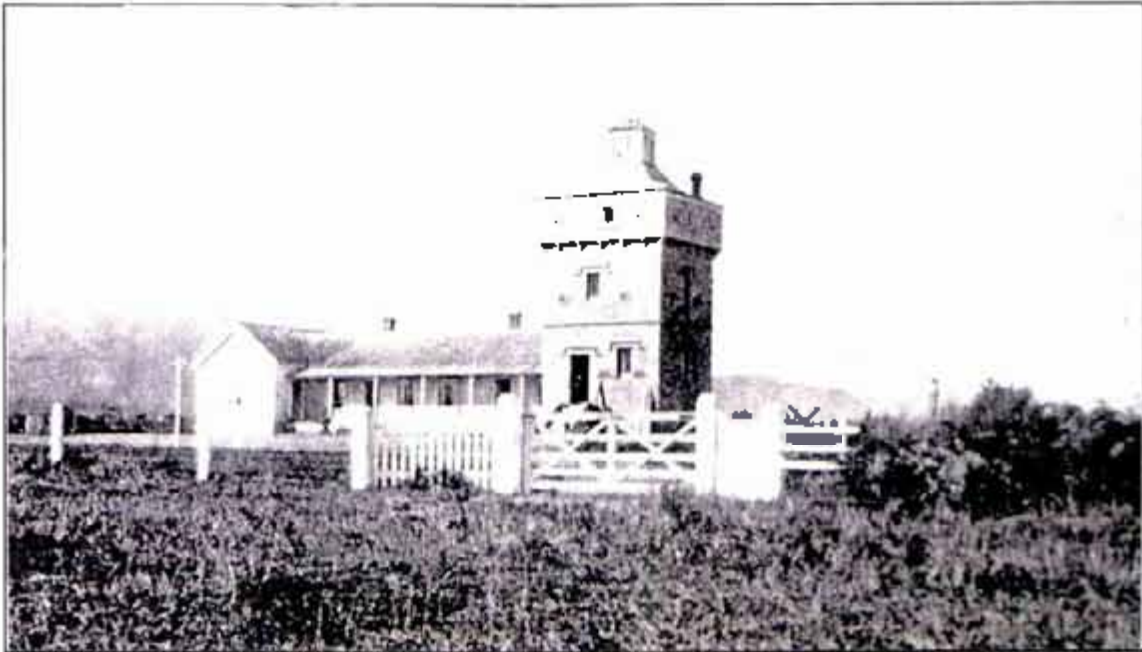
*Figure 5  
Obelisk in Memory of Tamihana*

<sup>5</sup> Mona Gordon. *The Golden Age of Josiah Clifton Firth*. 1963, p.48ff

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 71

From the mid 1870s Firth began a period of large scale investment and development of the Matamata Estate. In particular he had a vision of substituting wheat grown on the estate for the imported wheat milled at his Auckland mill. To achieve this he had the Waihou River cleared for navigation, built wharf facilities and a grain store at Stanley Landing, invested heavily in farm machinery and labour, and shifted the farm headquarters to the present site.



*Figure 6*  
The tower and earlier Matamata Estate homestead 1884

The Matamata Estate was developed using the latest agricultural machinery imported mainly from the U.S.A. Firth's fascination with technology extended to such new devices as the telephone which was used to link Stanley Landing with the homestead, and even with the fields to ensure that any machinery breakdown could be attended to with the least delay.<sup>8</sup>



*Figure 7*  
The tower and current homestead today

The tower was built as part of this massive development of the Matamata Estate. It was built in 1881-82 adjacent to the new homestead which had been completed by 1879<sup>9</sup>. The homestead at this time appears to have been referred to as *The Station or Tower Homestead*.

The tower reflected Firth's fascination with technology, being built with reinforced concrete. Firth commissioned T.H. White, an architect then living in Taupiri, to

<sup>8</sup> Mona Gordon, *The Golden Age of Josiah Clifton Firth*, 1963, p

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 167

design the tower. White had earlier built a flour mill at Ngaruawahia in reinforced concrete, said to be the first reinforced concrete building in New Zealand.<sup>10</sup>

### Tower's Purpose

The question arises as to why the tower was built.

The conventional history says the tower was built to provide a refuge against attack by Maori. *"It was built for defensive purposes but not being needed for the latter, was used as the office for the Estate"*<sup>11</sup>

However this has been largely discredited.<sup>12</sup>

Although Firth's land transactions did cause personal bitterness and resentment amongst some sections of the affected Ngati Haua<sup>13</sup> he appears in general to have been on good terms with Maori in the area by this time. General Maori Pakeha conflict had finished by the early 1870s, and even when there was conflict during the 1860s Firth was farming Matamata without the security of a fortress. By the time the tower was built Firth was sending his children to Matamata for school holidays or to convalesce<sup>14</sup>.

The tower was not very defensible anyway. The rifle slots are apparently too narrow to be effective, permitting only a narrow arc of fire<sup>15</sup>. Most importantly it was attached to a wooden homestead which provided cover to attackers and an easy means of burning defenders out of the tower. This was demonstrated by the fact that the tower was gutted when the homestead was burnt down in 1902.

A more convincing reason for the tower is that they were typical features of the houses of self confident men of that era, and that Firth had a personal penchant for castles and towers. Firth's sketchbook (displayed at the museum) includes sketches of castles and towers<sup>16</sup>.

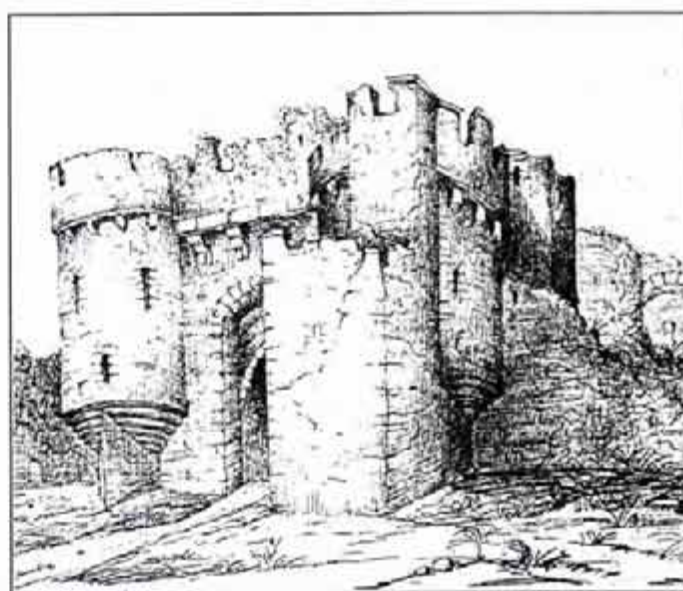


Figure 8  
Castle sketch from Firth's sketchbook

<sup>10</sup> C.M.Vennell. History of the Matamata Plains, p.71 (note)

<sup>11</sup> Brochure: Firth Tower Historical Museum

<sup>12</sup> For instance J. Stanley, 'Matamata's Firth Tower is 100 Years Old' and R.D. Stanley, 'Firth's Tower -Fortress or Folly', unpublished paper, 1992

<sup>13</sup> R. Stone, 'Makers of Fortune', p. 143

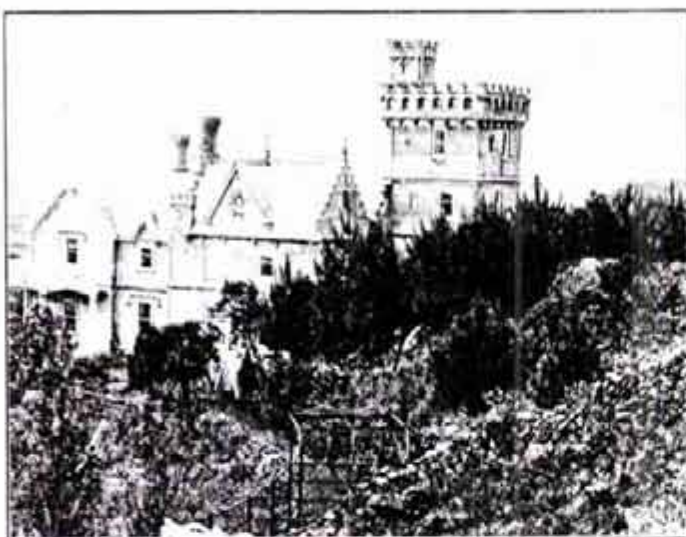
<sup>14</sup> Mona Gordon, The Golden Age of Josiah Clifton Firth, p. 168

<sup>15</sup> R.D. Stanley, p.1

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 'Firth's Tower -Fortress or Folly', p.1



His house *Clifton* at Mount Eden had a concrete castellated tower which had been built in 1873<sup>17</sup>. Other contemporary buildings with similar towers include *The Pah* built at Hillsborough by James Williamson, and *Kilbryde* built at Parnell by John Logan Campbell. Ten years earlier William Larnach had also built his famous 'castle' on Otago Peninsula. Architectural follies were also an established element of the landscape parklands of English estates. The Firth Tower design is influenced by Italian architectural style, one of the fashionable sources of inspiration for men of substance in the mid nineteenth century



**Figure 9**  
*Firth's Clifton Homestead, Epsom, Auckland*<sup>18</sup>  
(*Clifton* still exists)

Firth Tower should also be seen in relationship to Firth's Auckland mansion *Clifton*. This was Firth's main residence and in fact Firth never lived permanently at the Matamata Estate but made regular visits from Auckland. His children, however, spent holidays at *The Run*<sup>19</sup> and one of Firth's older sons was a manager on the estate for several years. *Clifton* has similarities in style to the Firth tower as well as having a concrete tower (although in this case not reinforced concrete).

The purpose of the tower is significant to how the Museum is interpreted:

If it is seen as a fortress it reinforces a conventional 'frontier' interpretation including concepts such as isolation from the centre of civilisation, the dangers of the frontier, the perseverance and hardships endured by settlers, and the need for settlers to make do.

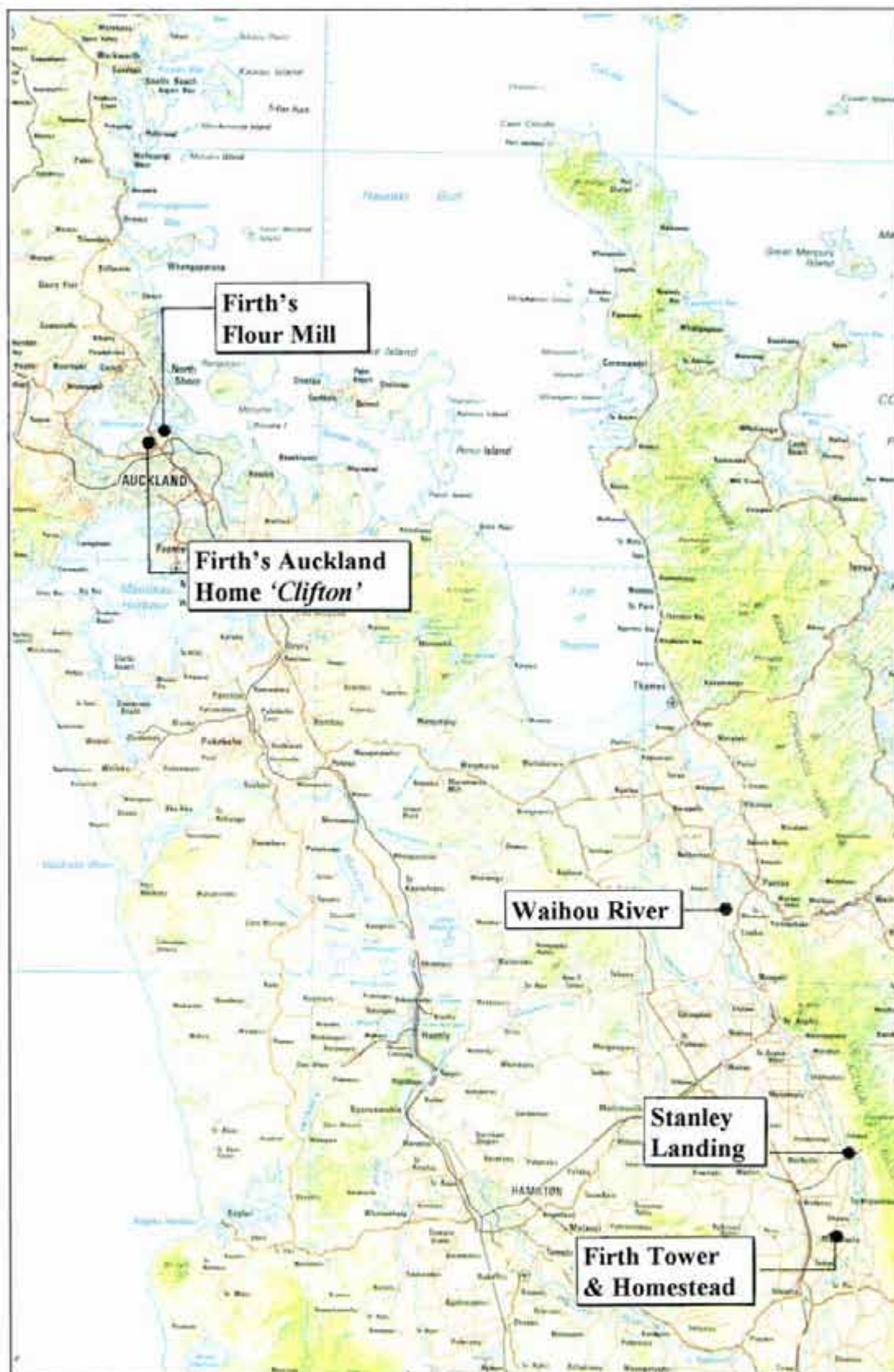
If it is seen as a folly it illustrates a more accurate and perhaps more intriguing story. It helps illustrate that the Matamata Estate was closely connected with Auckland and the merchant and social elite of the time, rather than being an isolated frontier. It illustrates Firth's boyish exuberance, his entrepreneurial spirit, his fascination with new things, and the desire perhaps to act out the role of a country gentleman –the "Duke of Matamata"<sup>20</sup>. Rather than settlers making do in the back blocks it helps illustrate that the Matamata Estate had high capital backing (albeit borrowed capital) and used state of the art methods and equipment.

<sup>17</sup> Mona Gordon, 'The Golden Age of Josiah Clifton Firth', 1963, p.81.

<sup>18</sup> photo from Mona Gordon,

<sup>19</sup> Ibid p.186

<sup>20</sup> R. Stone, 'Makers of Fortune', p. 139



**Figure 10**  
*Regional Context of Firth Tower and Stanley Landing*  
 NZMS 224-1 FURTHER NORTH

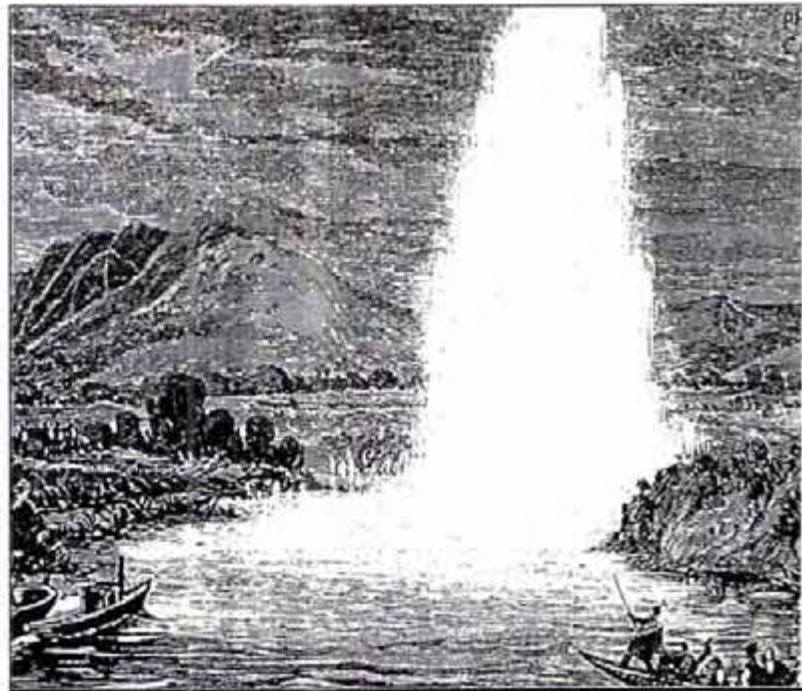
## Stanley Landing

A means of heavy transport to Auckland was integral to Firth's vision of developing the Matamata Estate. It was essential for bringing in the agricultural machinery used to develop the land, and for taking out the produce grown on the estate.

Firth began clearing the Waihou River for navigation in 1873, a task that took seven years. This entailed removing rapids and snags, mainly through the use of dynamite which was a new tool at the time.

A launch, *Tui*, was bought for the snagging operation, later being replaced by a larger boat, the 82ft long *Kotuku*, built specifically for the run between Auckland and *The Landing*.

The Landing was at the northern boundary of the Matamata Estate. A wharf was built on the river and several buildings including a large grain store on a bench cut into the river terrace above the river. A traction engine haul



*Figure 11*  
*Clearing the Waihou River for navigation*

road was also built up the escarpment from the river bank to the plains. These earthworks are clearly visible today and the haul road is still used for farm access.

The grain store was built to store the crops Firth hoped would supply his Auckland mill. In March 1880 he hosted a large celebration in this building to celebrate his achievement in opening up the *Thames Navigation*. Guests included the New Zealand Premier, John Hall, the Attorney General, the Hon. F. Whittaker, the mayors of Auckland and Thames, members of the Legislative Council, the Member for Waikato, and other prominent citizens of Auckland province.<sup>21</sup>

*"So entertainment was provided by a bit of snagging, an operation few if any of the guests had previously witnessed. Certainly the Premier had not: it was his first snag... They gathered on the bank to watch a dinghy set off from Kotuku with Sam and Will aboard, and a plug of dynamite. Three snags had been chosen, one of them a large totara protruding from the river and left, no doubt, for exhibition purposes... In a moment or two came a rumbling shock followed by a huge jet of water casting out pieces of wood as it rose some two hundred feet to its pinnacles apex against the stormy sapphire of the range. Another and another shot followed the first until the*

<sup>21</sup> Mona Gordon, *The Golden Age of Josiah Clifton Firth*, 1963, p. 137



guests, having temporarily forgotten both damp coats and empty stomachs, were informed that luncheon was served. There were hot meats, vegetables and every kind of delicacy produced on the estate, with the usual sauces and trimmings... The host (Josiah Firth) has the Premier and the Member for Thames on his right, the Attorney-General and the Member for Waikato on his left; the other guests were seated down the long tables".<sup>22</sup>

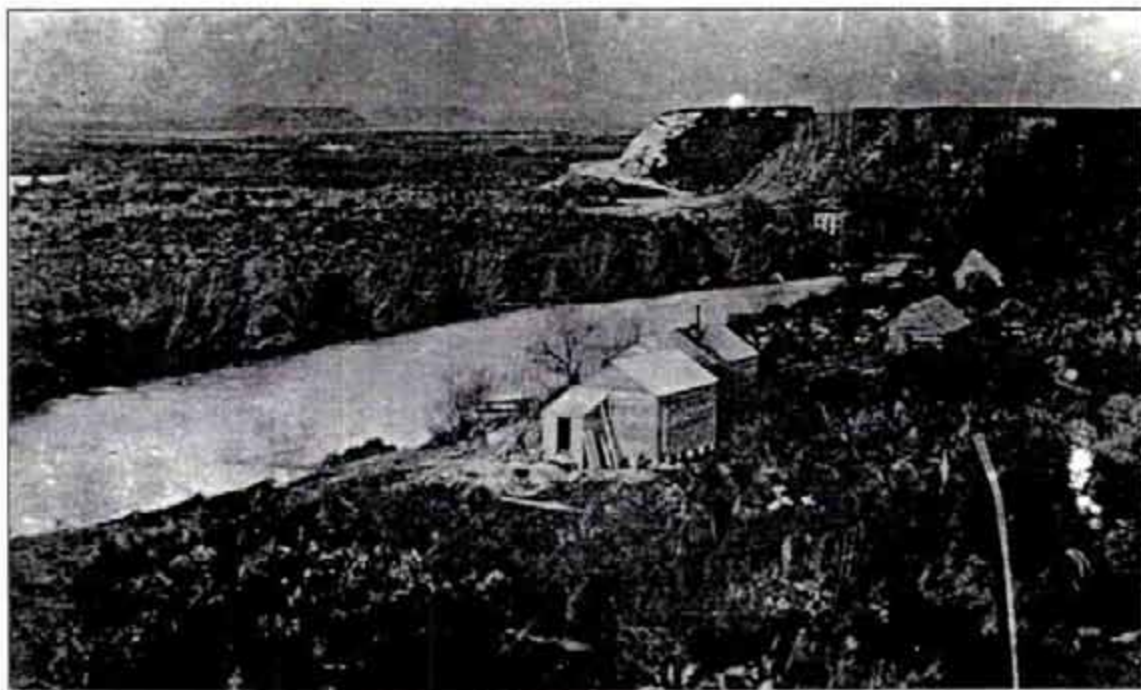


Figure 12  
Stanley Landing 1890s

However Stanley Landing had a short life, being made virtually redundant within less than a decade by the extension of the railway to Matamata.



Figure 13  
Stanley Landing Today

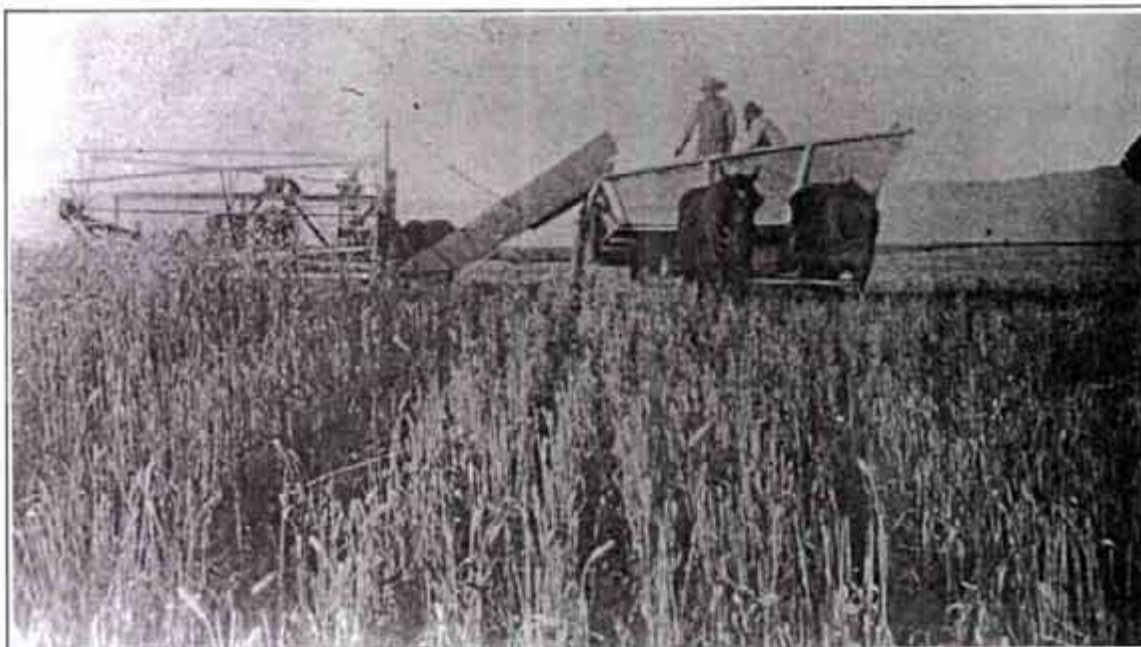
Stanley Landing is apparently named for the contemporary African explorer<sup>23</sup>. Perhaps this illustrates the significance of the concept of the British Empire at the time. Firth had heroic visions of his own role in extending British civilisation and building a new nation which are indicated in his writings.

<sup>22</sup> Mona Gordon. The Golden Age of Josiah Clifton Firth, p.138ff

<sup>23</sup> Joan Stanley, pers. com.

### Firth's Loss of the Matamata Estate

The large scale wheat farming venture proved unsuccessful due mainly to the humid climate and unreliable weather at harvest time. The 1882 and 1883 crops were poor. By 1884, which produced a good crop, the commodity price for wheat was falling. Firth turned to other agricultural enterprises on the estate including an apiary which was very large by the standards of the time, raising fat sheep to take advantage of the new refrigeration technology, and dairy farming.



*Figure 14*  
*Harvesting on the Matamata Estates 1880s*

Land speculation was an essential ingredient of the development of the Matamata Estate. *"The harvest Firth most wanted to reap was not wheat but capital gains"*<sup>24</sup>. He intended developing and subdividing the farm and became involved in ventures, such as the Thames Valley and Rotorua Railway and the Waharoa Dairy Factory, in order to increase the value of the land and facilitate its later subdivision. Firth subdivided 20 farms around Waharoa in 1886. He built a dairy factory, and lent money to purchasers to pay for the dairy herd, fencing, and housing.

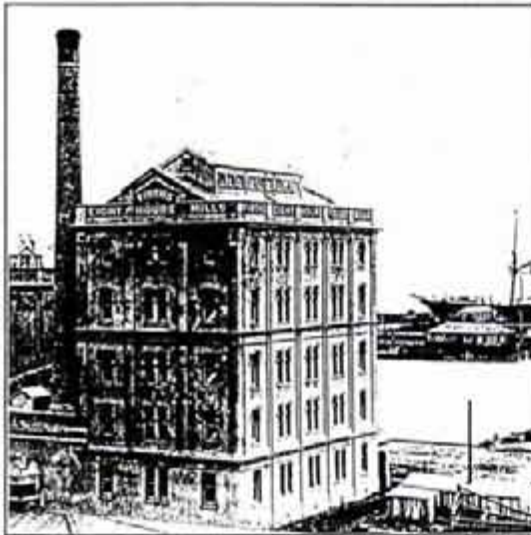
Critically the purchase and development of the Matamata Estate was carried out with borrowed money through the NZM&LA. By the mid 1880s a combination of interest payments, an economy slipping into recession, and declining commodity prices and land values began to catch up with Firth. Typically his response was to borrow more and undertake more daring ventures in order to trade out of the problem. The money was raised against over-valued assessments of the Matamata Estate<sup>25</sup>. The ventures included development of mines and a battery at the Waiorongomai Goldfield near Te Aroha, and a new flour mill in Auckland.

<sup>24</sup> Russell Stone, *Makers of Fortune* p.145

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p.152



The gold mining enterprise was part of a colourful episode in the history of the area. Firth bought claims and set up the Te Aroha Battery Company which built a battery and refractory at Waiorongomai. He used his influence to persuade the Piako County Council to build an impressive industrial tramway including three self-acting inclines. When early results from the battery were disappointing he invested in state of the art equipment from the U.S.A. to try and improve yields. However Firth and his partner, J.M.Clark, were forced to cut their losses in 1887.



*Figure 15*  
*Eight Hour Roller Mill, Auckland*

Finally Firth built the Eight Hour Roller Mill in 1886-1887. Once again it involved latest technologies and methods. The mill was built in reinforced concrete (linking it with the Firth Tower), was highly mechanised, and was designed to work around the clock using the new technology of electric lighting. It also included such innovations as fire sprinklers.

However by this time the combination of Firth's heavy borrowing and unsuccessful ventures, exacerbated by growing economic recession, were leading to inevitable insolvency. The NZL&MA took control of the 'Matamata Estate' in 1887.

## The John McCaw Era

John McCaw became manager of the Matamata Estate eight years after the NZM&LA had resumed the property from Josiah Firth. He was responsible for improving the farm and overseeing its eventual subdivision into smaller holdings.

John McCaw was a career farmer. He came from a Scottish farming background and emigrated to New Zealand in 1874. His early N.Z. experience was on large South Island agricultural estates. In particular he was strongly influenced by his mentor Thomas Brydone during a period with the New Zealand and Australian Land Company. Brydone was a pioneer of what were referred to as scientific farming methods<sup>26</sup>. Whereas Firth can be seen as the enthusiastic entrepreneur, McCaw could be contrasted as the prudent and perhaps dour<sup>27</sup> manager.

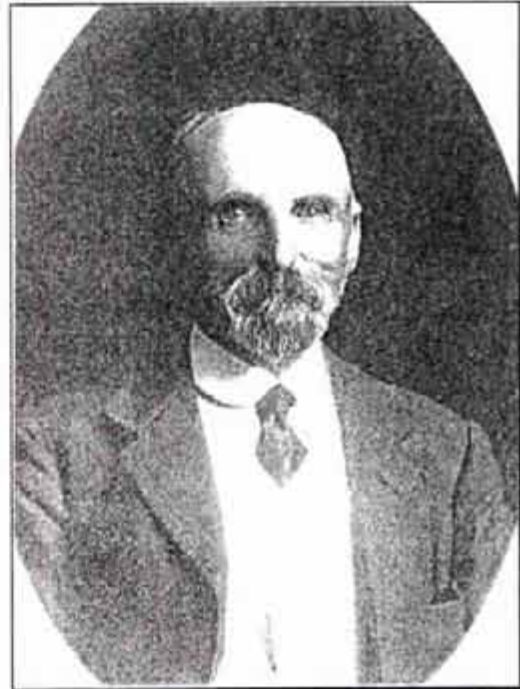


Figure 16  
John McCaw

The 1880s recession bankrupted many of the large New Zealand estates built on borrowed money and speculations of rising land prices and led to their subdivision. In addition the Land for Settlement Act was passed in 1892 to facilitate the break up of larger estates for closer settlement.

John McCaw was appointed by the B.N.Z. in 1889 to control the North Island properties which it had resumed through foreclosure. He moved to Cambridge at this time. In 1895 the BNZ's properties were incorporated within those managed by the Crown's Assets Realisation Board, which also included the Matamata Estate.

McCaw shifted to the homestead at the Matamata Estate. He continued the scientific farming methods to improve the estate prior to subdivision. This included use of fertiliser, clearing and draining, sowing new grasses and crops, and improved breeding of livestock.

In 1904 the improved Matamata Estate was subdivided into 117 farms. McCaw acquired the homestead farm of around 984 acres as his own holding, and continued to farm this property until he retired because of ill health in 1917.

John McCaw married twice. His first wife Cecilia Todd, with whom he had four children, died in 1890. McCaw married Frances Buckland in 1893. They had five children, four of whom were born at the Matamata Estate homestead.

In 1902 the homestead burnt down. The Firth Tower at that time was attached to the end of this original homestead on the current site, with the chimney from the dining room being incorporated within the tower itself.

<sup>26</sup> Joan Stanley, 'McCaw John' in *Dictionary of N.Z. Biography Vol III*, 1996, p.288

<sup>27</sup> Joan Stanley, pers. com.



**Figure 17**  
*Earlier Matamata Estate homestead destroyed by fire*

The fire started when a nurse-maid, who was dressing the McCaw children in front of the hearth, threw a large armful of tea tree into the open fire in an effort to rekindle it. A burst of flames set the scrim inside the dining room on fire and, aided by the long draught of the tower chimney, the fire quickly engulfed the house.<sup>28</sup>

The present homestead was rebuilt the same year, this time separated from the tower. Firth Tower was re-roofed but the upper floors, stairs, and lantern were not replaced at this time.



**Figure 18**  
*McCaw family members outside rebuilt homestead early C20<sup>th</sup>*

### **History as an Historical Reserve.**

The homestead farm changed hands several times and was further subdivided in years following its sale by the McCaws. The tower became neglected and overgrown in ivy.

From the 1950s, however, there was a growing appreciation of the tower's historical value and efforts were made to preserve it. Owner A.W. Fowke removed the ivy which was damaging the structure in about 1951, and replaced the roof in 1972.

Then in 1974 the homestead site of 2.5 acres including the tower was bought by the Matamata County Council and Matamata Borough Council for \$30,000. Initially the County Council intending buying the site to house a Clydesdale Museum which it was

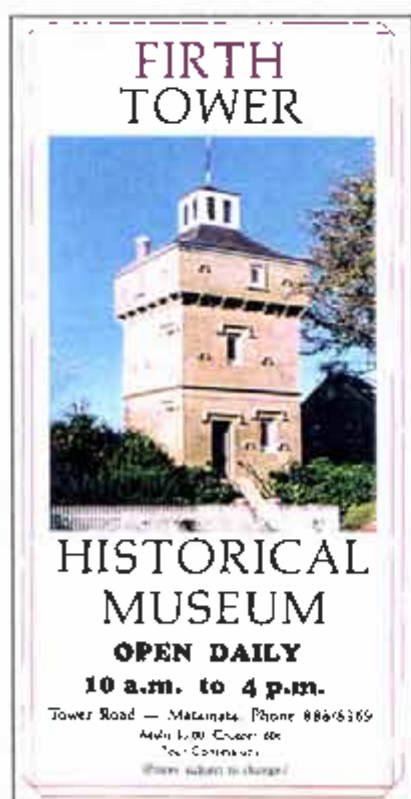
<sup>28</sup> Joan Stanley. 'Matamata's Firth Tower is 100 Years Old', p.36

also negotiating to purchase. When the Clydesdale Museum purchase fell through the Council decided to continue with the purchase of the site as an historical reserve.

The Matamata Borough Council agreed to join the venture at this time<sup>29</sup> and a joint management committee was set up in May 1975: -the Firth Tower Historical Reserve Committee. \$5000 was given by E.B. Firth, a grandson of Josiah Firth, to assist the tower restoration. It was water blasted and replastered about 1977<sup>30</sup>, and the interior stairs and floors were rebuilt. The homestead was restored and exhibits set up by the Matamata Historical Society. The Firth Tower and Homestead were opened as the Firth Tower Historical Museum on 18 November 1978. Later, in 1990, the lantern was rebuilt and the roof-line altered to reflect the original design. This work was sponsored by Stanley Construction.



*Figure 19*  
Tower neglected, missing roof and overgrown with ivy, probably 1930s



*Figure 20*  
Brochure

Since then the site has evolved along several different themes. Early buildings from the district have been shifted onto the site to create a 'colonial village' atmosphere. A comprehensive collection of farm machinery has been accumulated and several farm buildings built to house it. Also other club buildings and amenities have been located on the site, such as the Arts Society clubrooms.

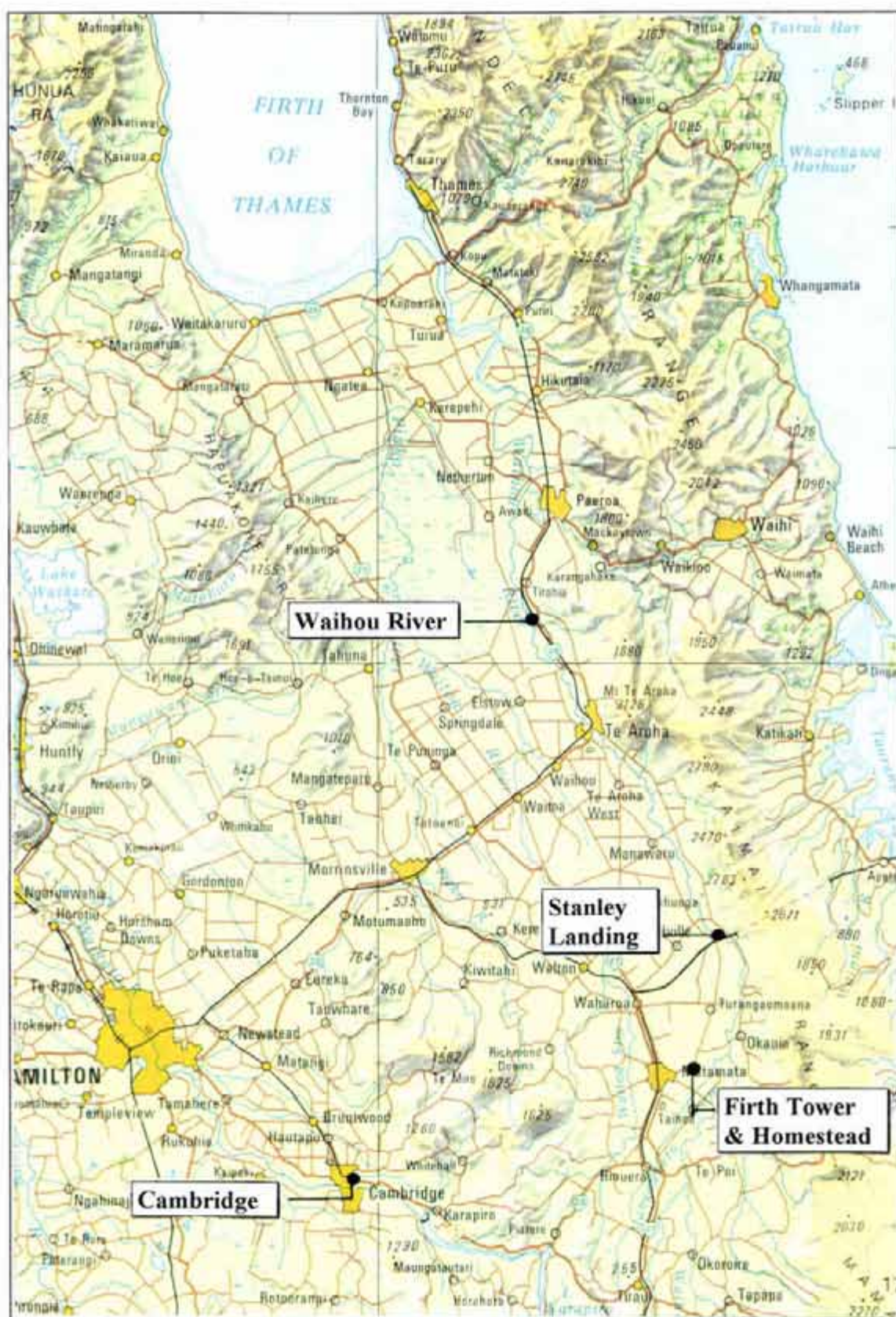
At the same time the significance of Stanley Landing to the history of the Matamata Estate and the Firth Tower Historical Reserve was recognised. In the early 1980s measures to identify the site and provide access were taken.

In the early 1980s a parking area was fenced off adjacent to Tower Road and an old power pylon erected to mark the site. This provided access across a field to the Landing site which comprises earthworks, sites of former buildings, and site of the wharf on the Waihou River. A monument was erected on the site of Firth's grain store, which is cut into a river terrace above the landing. The area of Stanley landing was gifted to Council by Miss N. Brady, 6 March 1992.

<sup>29</sup> W. Madill, submission to draft Management Plan, October 1996

<sup>30</sup> J. Stanley, pers. comm.





**Figure 21**  
*Topographic Context of Firth Tower and Stanley Landing*  
 NZMS



## Reserve Description

### Landscape Context

Firth Tower Historical Reserve is in the middle of the Matamata Plains about 2km from the outskirts of Matamata. The landscape of the area is bold and simple, with the closely settled and tended plains contrasting with the bush covered backdrop of the Kaimai Ranges. The Matamata Plains are characterised by lush green pasture, dairy farming and horse breeding, mature European trees (especially oaks), trimmed hedges, and some remnant kahikatea stands.

The reserve is on the edge of a small scarp of the Kerepehi Fault.<sup>31</sup> This gives it an elevated position some 10m above the plains to the west, providing wide views toward Matamata. This elevated position is known as *Tower Hill*.

The Matamata Estate and the homestead site were located in response to the broad landscape setting.

The Plains clearly suggested themselves as ideal land for agricultural development within relatively easy reach of Auckland. They were reached either by way of Thames and up the Waikou River, or from Cambridge which was a military town at the time. Firth built a dray track from Cambridge over the Maungakawa hills.



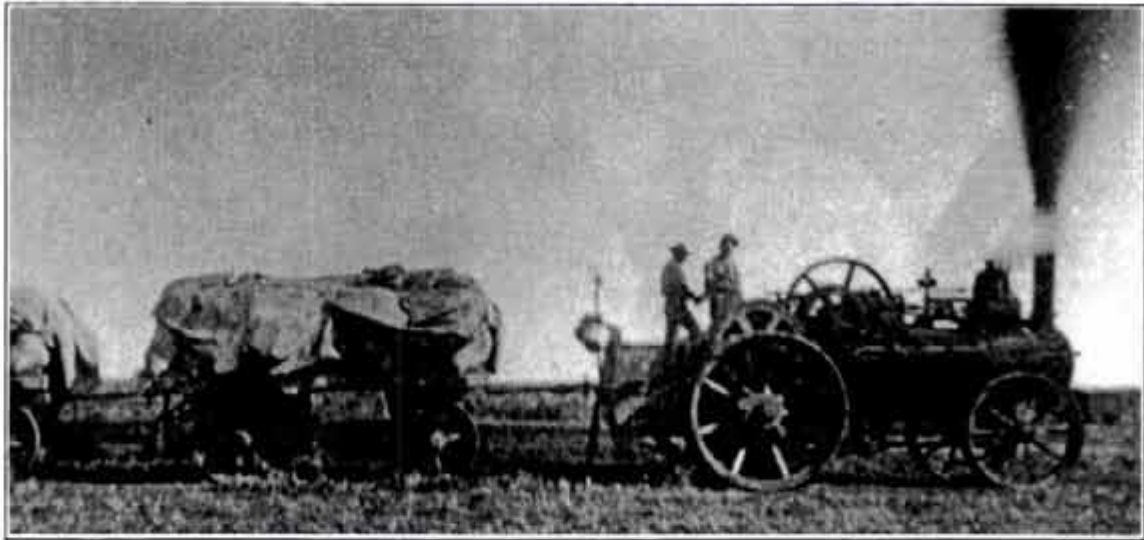
**Figure 22**  
*Looking from top of scarp west toward Matamata*

perhaps plans to route the railway (or branch railway) on this alignment. It was wide enough to allow traction engines to turn. Wells were sunk along the road to provide water for the traction engines.

The homestead site on the edge of the Kerepehi Fault scarp provides as close to an elevated site as is possible on the Plains. It commands the surrounding farmland. The site appears to have been where a pre European Maori track between Matamata and Tauranga crossed the scarp and was known as Turanga o moana. Tamihana was said to have died at the spot at the foot of the scarp in 1866, and the obelisk was erected there in his memory. Firth selected the site to relocate his homestead to in the late 1870s. Routes were laid out to the then key destinations: Stanley Landing and Cambridge.

The extra wide road reserve of Tower Road is a relic of its original purpose as a traction engine haul road, and

<sup>31</sup> R.D. Stanley. *Geology of Matamata*. 1994



**Figure 23**

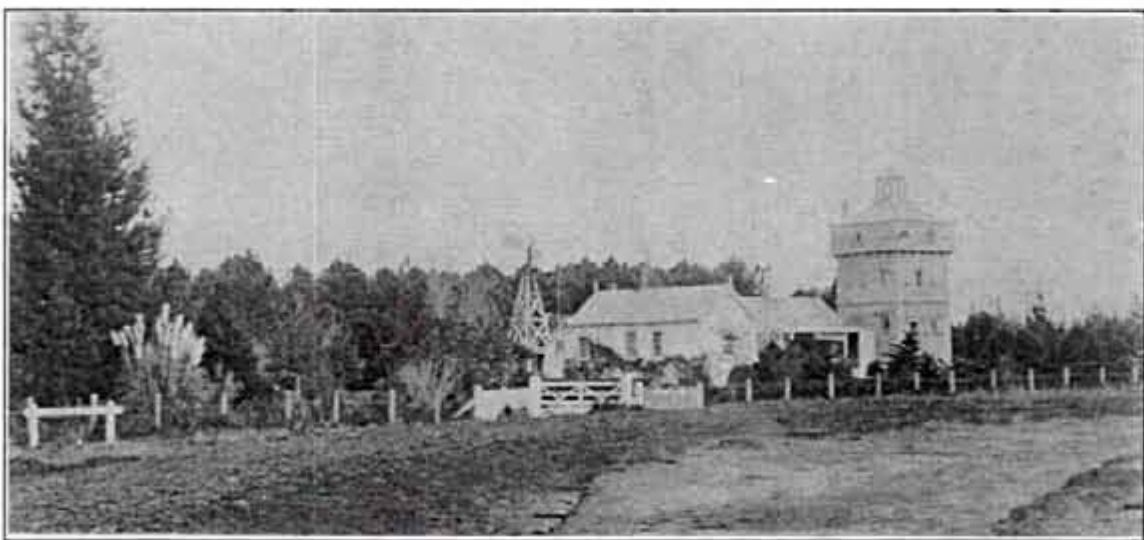
*Tower Road was a traction engine haul road between Stanley Landing and the homestead*

### **Site Layout and Vegetation**

Early photos show that the tower originally stood in an open plain. (see Figure 6 ).

Trees were planted both for shelter and as part of the early landscaped grounds of the homestead. Photos show that by the 1890s there was substantial planting of conifers around the homestead site, and amenity planting in the front lawn area. The original layout comprised a loop drive in front of the homestead and tower with distinctive gates at either end.

The most prominent trees on site are mature oaks (*Quercus robur*). These include two specimens in the car park area, one adjacent to the tower, and a stand in the north-western corner of the homestead site. These trees are in the order of 15-20 m high. It is assumed they were planted during the 1880s as part of the early amenity planting around the homestead.



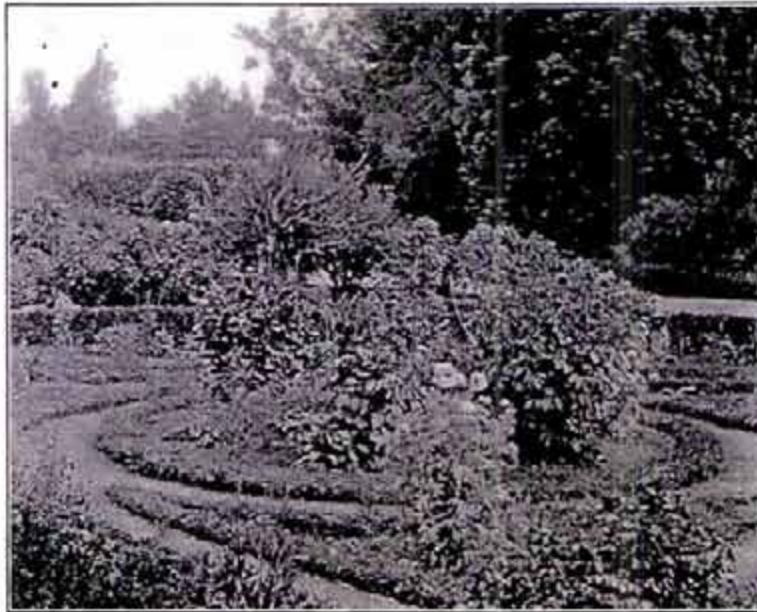
**Figure 24**

*Homestead & Tower in 1890s*

Photos also show that by the 1890s there was a garden to the north-east of the homestead in the area where the gatehouse now is. Following the rebuilding of the homestead in 1902 this garden was laid out in a formal pattern.

There is also a substantial woodland on the opposite side of Tower Road. This comprises a range of exotic species including oaks and also appears to be part of the early homestead planting. Other mature trees which appear to date from the Firth or McCaw eras include cabbage trees, and a yew. There is also an overlay of more recent planting, including areas of rhododendrons, roses, and native shrubs. Recently

the beds around the homestead have been planted in an Edwardian period border style using flowers common around the turn of the century. Some of this planting reflects the styles of the 1970s and 1980s rather than that of the Firth or McCaw eras. Other planting uses plants typical of the era but does not attempt to follow the original layout of the site.



*Figure 25*  
*Formal gardens of Tower Homestead early C20th*



*Figure 26*  
*Aerial View of Firth Tower Historical Reserve*



## Buildings

### Buildings Associated with the Matamata Estate

#### The Firth Tower

The tower is the focus of the museum and its main raison d'être. It is the one building on the site rated as Category 1 on the Register of Historic Places. (The tower was classified on the 'B' Register of Historic Places prior to the 1993 Act).

Firth Tower is significant because:

- it is a landmark
- it is associated with Josiah Firth, a history-maker within the Auckland 'province' during the 1860s to 1880s.
- it captures an aspect of the spirit of the times.
- it is an unusual and intriguing building
- it is associated with the early history and development of Matamata



*Figure 27*  
*Firth Tower*

The tower was built in 1881-82 as part of a grand development of Firth's Matamata Estate that included the establishment of large scale wheat farming, clearing of the Waihou River for navigation, construction of a port and store at Stanley Landing, and the relocation of *The Station* homestead from near Peria. The history of the tower is detailed in section 2 above.

#### **Homestead (currently known as Firth Homestead, with proposal to rename as McCaw Homestead)**

The present homestead was built in 1902 when John McCaw was manager of the Matamata Estates to replace the original homestead destroyed by fire in June that year. It was bought, together with the tower, to form the basis of the Historical reserve in 1974. Four rooms and the kitchen have been furnished in a period style and were opened as part of the museum in 1978. Classified Category II under the Historic Places Act 1993 (was 'C' category under 1980 Act). It is open daily as part of the Museum.

#### **Settlers' Cottage (previously known as Nicolson Cottage)**

Built as a farm workers cottage at Waharoa. Its age is unknown. It was donated to the Museum by Mr Len Nicolson and shifted to the Reserve in 1985. Classified Category II under the Historic Places Act 1993 (was 'C' category under 1980 Act). The cottage is set up to represent the accommodation of a farm worker's family around the turn of the century. It is open daily as part of the Museum.



## Historical Buildings from Matamata District

### Church

This was the Methodist Church, Matamata, built 1914-15 on the corner of Broadway and Tainui Street.

It was shifted to the Reserve in 1975<sup>13</sup>.

Classified Category II under the Historic Places Act 1993 (was 'C' category under 1980 Act). The Church is open

daily as part of the Museum. It is also used for occasional meetings and is a popular wedding venue.



*Figure 28*  
*Old Methodist Church*

### Jail

This was built at Karangahake probably in 1897 and moved, together with the police station, to Matamata about 1922. It was later shifted to a site in Scherer's Road and used for farm storage. It was shifted to the Reserve by the Kiwanis club in 1983.

Classified Category II under the Historic Places Act 1993 (was 'C' category under 1980 Act). The jail is set up with a mannequin and jailhouse props.

### Post Office

Built as Okoroire Post Office. It was shifted to the Reserve in 1981. Classified Category II under the Historic Places Act 1993 (was 'C' category under 1980 Act).



*Figure 29*  
*Old Schoolhouse*

### School

The school was built for the Armadale District which later changed its name to Gordon. It was later shifted to Selwyn [check details]. Shifted to the Reserve site in 1982. Classified Category II under the Historic Places Act 1993 (was 'C' category under 1980 Act). The School-house is set up as a class room with desks.

<sup>13</sup> Anon, notes for Draft Management Plan, Firth Tower Historical Reserve, undated

## Farm Machinery Buildings

### Barn

Built on site in 1979 by the Matamata Lions Club. It is a pole structure with board and batten cladding. It is used to display various exhibits including a wagon, gig and truck, and cinema projection equipment.

### Firth Shed

Built on site in 1981 by the Matamata Lions Club.

Intended as a storage shed it is used to display several collections, including stationary engines, and small farm machinery. There is a dairying exhibit and a mock up of a small blacksmithy. There is also a lean-to open to the outside on the north wall of the shed. This is used to display small farm machinery.



*Figure 30  
Firth Shed, Barn and Tower*

### Madill Shed

Built on site in 1990 in a similar style to the Firth Shed by the Matamata Lions Club. It is used to house and display a collection of large farm machinery such as harvesters, hay hoists, and sowers. It is open daily as part of the Museum, although the entrance to the shed is behind the Arts Society cottage and the fact that it is open to the public is not clear.

### John McCaw Woolshed

Donated by the Gasquoine family and dismantled and rebuilt on site in 1993 by the Matamata Lions Club. It is used for shearing demonstrations and displays.

### Stables

Was built on site as stables, although it is not known when it was built. It is in a semi-derelict state. It is not open as part of the Museum at present but is the only authentic farm building on the site and should be retained. It is currently used for storage.

## Other Buildings

### Arts Society Cottage

Built as a dairy factory workers house at Waharoa around 1930. It was shifted to the Reserve in 1976.

The cottage has been gutted to create an open hall. It is used for meetings and activities of the Arts Society. It is remote from the parking area which causes some inconvenience to users. It is one of the buildings which compromises connections between the front and rear parts of the Reserve.

### Railway Wagons

Two railway wagons were shifted to the Reserve in 1995 principally to house the Kaimai Tunnel display. The second wagon houses a model railway clubrooms. Connections to the carriages are across an open field.

### Custodian's House

A Lockwood house was erected on the Reserve in 1977 to the east of the McCaw Homestead. It is surrounded by a small garden area, and has a garage to the rear. This accommodation forms part of the package for the caretaker's contract.

### Public Toilets

Built at the rear of the carpark in 1978 by the Matamata Rotary Club. These are maintained by the custodians.

## Stanley Landing

The concrete floor of the grain store is still present but is now mostly buried.



*Figure 31*  
*Pylon Stanley Landing*

The entrance to the site from Tower Road is marked by a power pylon. This is classified Category II on the Register of historic places. (It was classified Category C under the 1980 Act).

There is an Historic Places Trust signboard in the carpark with a brief introduction to Stanley Landing.

## Visitor Experience

Experience of the Museum is influenced by a range of factors including the way people approach and enter the Reserve, the circulation sequence, the degree to which they interact with and become immersed in exhibits, and the way the museum is interpreted.

### Approaches

The route to Firth Tower from Matamata and S.H.27 is along Broadway and Tower Road. Signposting is poor. The Reserve site is marked by the prominent oak trees on the scarp rising above the fields, but the tower itself is not visible until immediately opposite the site.

There is an alternative approach from the north along the Waihou River, either along the west bank on Tower Road, or along the east bank on the Old Te Aroha Road/Okauia Springs Road. These quiet country roads near the base of the Kaimais provide a particularly scenic route. The Tower Road route also connects Stanley Landing and the Firth Tower. There is no signposting from this direction. However a *Heritage Trail* is being prepared which will publicise this route to Firth Tower.

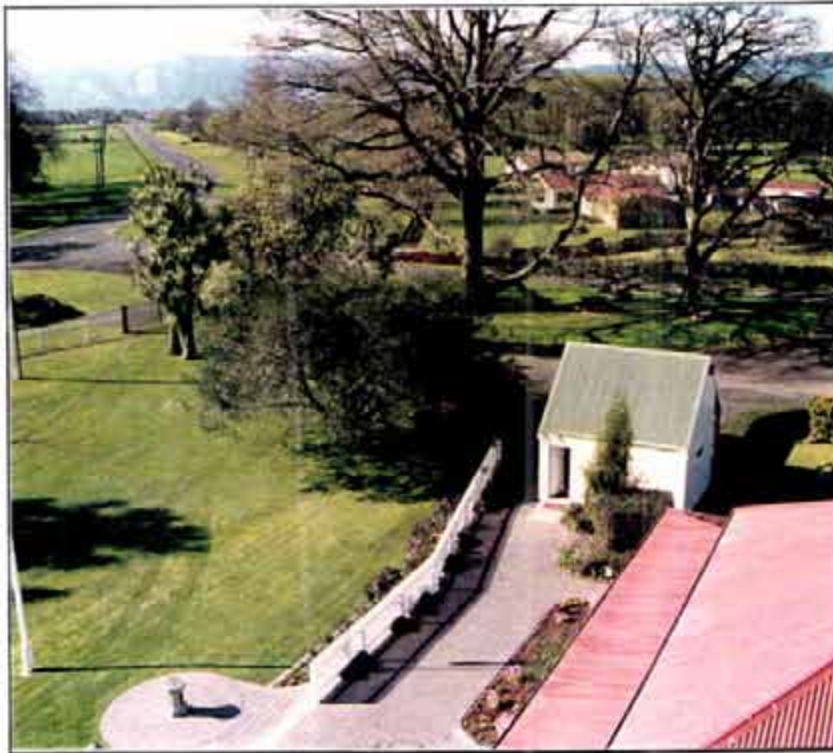
The vehicle entrance to Firth Tower Historical Reserve creates a positive sense of arrival. There are attractive views across the front lawn to the tower, and the vehicle entrance is marked by the two mature oaks. However the initial impression within the carpark is dominated less by the tower and more by the toilets, railway wagons, entry gatehouse, and custodian's cottage. These send out a strong message that this is more of an eclectic local history museum rather than a distinctive historic homestead.



**Figure 32**  
*First impression creates colonial village impression*

The gatehouse entrance has a significant effect on experience of the Museum. The gatehouse is clearly not an authentic part of the homestead and suggests a theme park. The progression between carpark and the Museum itself is very short and does not create a strong sense of approach to the homestead and tower. On passing through the gatehouse the first things seen are the white picket fence, concrete 'cobblestones', and eclectic buildings opposite the entrance -the church, school, post office and jail.





*Figure 33*  
*Entrance through gatehouse*

The existing entrance creates the feeling of entering an intimate 'colonial village' rather than approaching an estate homestead. The entrance down-plays Firth Tower and homestead, and down-plays the fact that the site was originally the centre of a farm.

The gatehouse is unauthentic. It has been described as a "car sales office".

## **Circulation**

The circulation encourages people to enter the homestead first. While it is furnished in the Firth-McCaw period there is little interpretation to establish the reason it is there. Perhaps the interpretation at this first building needs to establish why the museum is there and what its main themes are.

After the homestead people are drawn naturally to the tower. This is clearly the main feature of the Reserve and interpretation within it deals with the history of the Matamata Estate.

Following the tower the circulation leads visitors to a circle which includes the colonial village collection of buildings (church, post office, school house, jail, and settlers cottage) and the barn. This confuses the sense of the Reserve as the homestead of the Matamata Estate. It also confuses the potentially strong thematic connection between the homestead and the working farmyard area.

The connection to the working farm area at the rear of the site and circulation within it is poor -a legacy of the pattern of growth of the museum and the fact that the rear lot has not yet been integrated into the spatial and circulation structure of the Reserve. Circulation is compromised by the Arts Society building and to a lesser extent the Settlers' cottage, by weak entrances to the Firth Shed and Madill Shed, and the lack of a focus space for these buildings. The remaining farm buildings and railway carriages are presently isolated in the rear paddock.

## Theme of Museum

The Reserve reflects the fact that it has developed as a local history museum with several different themes, some of which are in conflict with each other.

This was highlighted in the report prepared by John Coster, Museums Liaison Officer, Auckland Institute and Museum<sup>35</sup>

Coster identified the following themes

- Firth Estate
- Colonial Life
- Historical 'village'
- Agricultural Museum
- Arts and Crafts
- Public park and garden
- Railway exhibit

The report suggested that the museum concentrate on the distinctive aspects of the Firth Estate and the agricultural museum



Figure 34  
Telephone box, barn, and Firth Tower

*"It is important that the complex as a whole should continue to pay primary regard to its central core, namely the Firth Tower and the Firth Homestead. These are real buildings, on the site where real historical events associate with them took place, and must under any circumstances remain central to the complex. Concepts which are consistent with these primary structures include the development of the area as*

- *a recreation of the Firth Homestead, or*
- *a model (idealised) early farmstead, or*
- *an agricultural museum*

*Concepts which are more difficult to reconcile with the original buildings include the 'Historical village' collection of buildings, which have been moved to the site but which have no particular relationship to the Firth Estate or to early farming. The model railway proposals and the arts and crafts centre, which again have little relationship to the original buildings"*<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> J. Coster, Report on Plans for future Development of Firth Tower Complex. Unpublished report to Matamata Historical Society. 8 March 1993.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*

## **Management Framework**

### **Legal Description and Titles**

#### **Firth Tower Historical Reserve**

Firth Tower Historical Reserve comprises 1.6343 hectares owned in fee simple by the Matamata Piako District Council.

Lot 1, D.P.S. 19768 C.T. 36A/609. Blk III Tapapa Survey District

Lot 1, D.P.S. 40537 C.T. 36A/609. Blk III Tapapa Survey District

There is a right of way listed on Lot 1, D.P.S. 19768. This provides access to an adjoining property off the car park on the eastern boundary.

The land is classified 'Historical Reserve' in accordance with s.18 of the Reserves Act 1977, and the classification is notified in the N.Z. Gazette, No.216, p.6110, 7 December 1989.

#### **Leases**

The Matamata Society of Arts Incorporated have a lease at 'peppercorn' rental for part of the site occupied by their building on the western boundary. This 21 year lease expires on 31.3.1997.

Matamata Society of Arts Incorporated:

C.T. 36A/609.

Lot 1, D.P.S. 19768

Term 21 years from 1.4.1976

#### **Stanley Landing**

Stanley Landing Historical Reserve comprises 0.9390 hectares owned in fee simple by the Matamata Piako District Council.

Lot 1, D.P.S. 57281 C.T. 50A/754 Blk X Wairere Survey District

The site was transferred to Council on 6 March 1992 as an historic reserve, and is therefore deemed to be an 'Historical Reserve' in accordance with s.18 of the Reserves Act 1977.

## Administration and Finance

Both Firth Tower and Stanley Landing Reserves are administered by Parks and Reserves Management of the Matamata Piako District Council under the guidance of the 'Firth Tower Historical Reserve Management Committee'.<sup>35</sup>

The Firth Tower Reserve Management Committee comprises:

- A representative of the Matamata-Piako District Council
- A representative of the Matamata Historical Society
- Two representatives of the Matamata Community Board
- A representative of the Matamata Public Relations Association

The Council owns the Reserves and buildings. It is responsible for general maintenance of the site and day to day running costs. The Matamata Historical Society owns (or holds on loan<sup>36</sup>) the exhibits within buildings on site and is responsible for interpretation and presentation of exhibits.

The Council budget for 1/6/1996-30/5/1997 indicates that the Museum is run as a relatively low key local amenity relying to a large extent on voluntary inputs. Both income and expenditure are low.

<u>Income:</u>	
(entrance fees)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,000</b>
 <u>Expenditure:</u>	
Rates & Insurance	2445
Ground Maintenance	12400
Operating	46280
(incl. Custodian's contract)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>61,125</b>
 <b>Operating Loss</b>	 <b>51,125</b>

Income is mainly from gate takings with occasional weddings. Entrance fees are low: (\$3 per adult, \$1 concession for children, \$70 for hire of facilities for weddings). The income from gate takings helps to offset day to day costs but would have to increase more than six fold to meet current operating costs. The museum has been built up largely by voluntary labour and donations, and continues to rely on voluntary input to maintain exhibits and interpretation, and to direct the museum through the management committee. It also does not require a return on existing capital investment such as the custodian's house.

<sup>35</sup> Council resolved to extend the terms of reference of the Firth Tower Historical Reserve Committee to include Stanley Landing on 28 March 1994.

<sup>36</sup> The Historical Society's current policy is not to accept items on loan. Some items loaned to the museum prior to the adoption of this policy are still on display.



## Visitors

Present visitor numbers are low. In 1995-96 financial year there were 2353 individual visitors and 79 groups. These comprise:

Adults	1118
Senior citizens	725
Children	510
Groups (incl. Schools)	53
Weddings	26

Most visitors are<sup>39</sup>:

- School Groups from Matamata and wider Waikato-Thames Valley
- Regional bus outings (eg. Senior citizen trips from Waikato, Tauranga)
- Visitors staying with locals
- A small steady flow of New Zealand couples or families on holiday (ie. 1-2 couples or families a day)
- Visitors to the Totara Springs Christian Centre
- Locals for special events (eg. weddings, open days)

## Legislative Framework

Firth Tower Historical Reserve and the Stanley Landing Historical Reserve are managed in accordance with the following main acts and legal instruments:

- The **Reserves Act 1977** and this **Management Plan** prepared under that Act.
- The **Resource Management Act 1991**, and instruments prepared under that Act including the **Matamata-Piako District Plan**.
- **Historic Places Act 1993**.

## Process for Preparation of the Management Plan

In accordance with the requirements of the Reserves Act 1977 (s41), this Management Plan was prepared by the following process:

- Notification a Management Plan is to be prepared and call for initial submissions.
- Preparation of a Draft Management Plan, following consultation with interested groups.
- Draft forwarded to the Matamata Piako District Council.
- Notification of the Draft Management Plan, together with a call for written submissions on the Draft.
- Analysis of submissions and recommendations for changes or modifications to the Draft Plan. Council committee hearing of submissions if required.
- Final Management Plan approved by Council and made publicly available.
- The Management Plan is subject to continuous review as required.

## Submissions

Notice of intention to prepare a Management Plan for the Firth Tower Historical Reserve and invitation for submissions was published in the Waikato Times on 7 September, 1994 (p. 35), and the Matamata Chronicle on 8 September 1994 (p.17). Three submissions were received and are summarised as follows:

<sup>39</sup> Pers. com. with custodians and members of Historical Society and Reserve Management Committee.

**Matamata Society of Arts Inc.**

Box 379

Matamata

13 October 1994

- a) May eventually shift to proposed cultural centre in Matamata Township.
- b) Wish to remain at Firth Tower in meantime.
- c) Request parking adjacent to Society of Arts cottage (proposed plan attached as Appendix 2).

**Matamata Historical Society Inc.**

c/o J. Stanley

12 Totara Avenue

Matamata

15 October 1994

- a) Not another 'historic village' but 'a farm homestead headquarters of the Matamata Estate'.
- b) Recommend development plan for back field (plan attached as Appendix 3).
- c) Incorporate archives/library/theatrette building in plans.
- d) Maintain rural character and views to surrounding landscape.
- e) Recommends consultation with Museums Liaison Service and use of their expertise.  
(Notes that Lottery Board would submit plans to Museums Liaison Officer prior to approving any funding).

**Matamata District Rose Society Incorporated.**

Box 463

Matamata

8 November 1994

- a) Interested in roses at Reserve.
- b) Some need to be replaced.
- c) Rose Society willing to set out a care programme for roses at the Reserve.

Notice of intention to prepare a Management Plan for the Stanley Landing Historical Reserve and invitation for submissions was published in the Waikato Times on 25 September 1996 (p. 34), and the Matamata Chronicle on 26 September 1996 (p. 9). One submission was received:

**Matamata Historical Society Inc.**

c/o J. Stanley

12 Totara Avenue

Matamata

14 October 1996

- a) Provide interpretative panels interpreting layout of site and its importance to Firth's farming enterprise
- b) Provide walkway from carpark to riverside site. Use finger posts. Beautify walkway with shrubs and trees
- c) Good to purchase land to incorporate traction engine track
- d) Increase publicity and road signs

## Issues and Management Approach

As a result of submissions, discussions with interested groups, and site analysis, the following issues became apparent:

- Need to clarify focus of museum
- Need for a site development plan
- Need to increase visitor numbers
- Need for archives storage and research facilities
- Need for policy to determine appropriateness of new buildings and exhibits
- Need to integrate Stanley Landing



**Figure 35**

*The core of the museum is the tower is the Firth Tower and McCaw homestead together with the associated history of Josiah Firth, John McCaw and the Matamata Estate.*

A collection of farm machinery has been put together at the Museum. This has enough high quality exhibits to make it a distinctive asset and it can be presented in a way that fits in with the theme of the Matamata Estate being at the cutting edge of agricultural technology and methods in the 1880s-1910s.

A collection of colonial buildings has also been put together on the Reserve. While these are part of the history of the district they are not distinctive, but rather are typical of rural communities throughout New Zealand. Their arrangement on site is also typical of 'colonial villages' which are common throughout New Zealand. In general

### Focus of Museum

The main issue appears to be the focus of the Firth Tower Historical Reserve. The core of the museum was the Firth Tower and McCaw homestead together with the associated history of Josiah Firth, John McCaw and the *Matamata Estate*. This is what makes the Museum distinctive. It provides an excellent platform from which to interpret the history of the Matamata district and to develop themes of interest to a wider New Zealand audience.

However over the years the Museum has diversified and its focus has been blurred:



**Figure 36**

*The farm machinery exhibits complement the Matamata Estate focus*

these colonial villages have fallen out of favour as people's sense of history has become stronger and more sophisticated. There is a greater demand for authenticity, for the distinctive, and for a more critical and sophisticated interpretation of history.



**Figure 37**  
*The Colonial village compromises the focus of the museum*

The colonial buildings also compromise the *Matamata Estate* core of the museum, both physically and in the way the Museum is perceived and interpreted:

Physically the original homestead, the colonial village, and the farm buildings are mixed together. There is a telephone box outside the barn. The homestead's front lawn is enclosed by a jail, school, church and post office. At first glance the museum appears to be another 'colonial village' or local settler's museum despite the distinctive feature of the tower

The 'colonial village' also tends to reproduce a stereotype interpretation about the hardships of early settlers, the need for resourcefulness to 'make do' in the backblocks, and the quaintness of old fashioned social attitudes. In the past this has been combined with an inaccurate interpretation of the purpose of the tower to give a picture of the perils of the frontier and the bravery of settlers. This compromises the opportunity to give a more accurate interpretation of the history of the site which is both more interesting and more distinctive.

This interpretation would focus on such themes as:

- The fact that the frontier used state of the art technology and farming methods.
- The close connections between Matamata and the business and social elite of Provincial Auckland.
- The fact that the frontier was capital intensive
- The role of land speculation in settling the Matamata Plains
- Josiah Firth as a colourful example of the 'Merchant Princes' of 1860s-1880s Auckland
- Comparisons between entrepreneurs of last century and today.



**Figure 38<sup>40</sup>**  
*"Focus on themes such as the exuberant and self confident spirit of the times"*

<sup>40</sup> Mona Gordon. *The Golden Age of Josiah Clifton Firth*



- Comparisons between economics of last century and today (eg. Similarities and differences between the 1880s and 1980s economic cycles).
- The exuberant and self confident spirit of the times: Firth's somewhat boyish fascination with new things, new ideas, and the excitement of Empire eg. naming of Stanley Landing, construction of a mock fortification.

## Site Development Plan

A development plan is needed for two main reasons: to integrate the additional land that has been added to the rear of the site; and to improve visitor experience by resolving conflicts between different parts of the Museum, such as the *Matamata Estate* core, the farm machinery collection and farm buildings, and the 'colonial village'.

The proposed concept is to establish three precincts within the Reserve. The main precinct will include the tower and homestead and will be restored to replicate as close as possible the layout of the homestead gardens during the 1880s-1900s. A second precinct will provide a working farmyard focus for the farm machinery collection. This



**Figure 39**  
*Organisation of the site into three precincts*

will straddle the boundary between front and rear lots and help knit the two together. A third precinct will accommodate the colonial buildings in an area devoted to local history. This precinct will include archives and research facilities and will have direct access from the carpark.

## Stanley Landing

Stanley Landing is not integrated as strongly with the Museum as it could be. The Landing

is an integral part of the story of the Matamata Estate. Understanding the connection between the Tower site and The Landing helps bring to life some features of the surrounding landscape, and illustrates the connection between Matamata Estate and Auckland.

### **Visitor Numbers and Visitor Experience**

Visitor numbers are low. There is a need to market and promote the Reserve. To increase numbers raises issues such as developing the distinctive elements of the museum, tailoring exhibits and interpreting features in a way that adds value to target audiences, promoting the museum to potential visitors, and functional requirements such as signage and the possible provision of refreshments.

### **Appropriateness of New Exhibits and Buildings**

New buildings and exhibits have sometimes been accepted reluctantly into the museum because of the lack of specific policies on the Reserve's purpose and focus. A strong and clear statement of purpose is needed to ensure that additional items reinforce the distinctiveness and value of the Museum rather than dilute and compromise it.

### **Local History Archives**

There is a need to provide proper storage of archives and facilities for research. At present there is a large collection stored in a shipping container on site. This is clearly unsatisfactory in terms of long term preservation of archives and the ability to use them to carry out research.

### **Progressive Implementation**

The museum has a low income, low budget, and relies on voluntary input for some of its functions. Changes can be made only as resources allow. A danger of this situation is that ad hoc developments are carried out which compromise the long term development of the site. The Management Plan needs to allow for gradual implementation of works in a way that works toward an overall goal.

# Part Two: Management

## Principal Purpose and Focus of Reserve

- The main goal of the Firth Tower Historical Reserve and Stanley Landing Historical Reserve is to preserve the buildings and features of the Matamata Estate as a focus for the interpretation of the history of the Matamata district.
- The secondary goal is to accommodate other museum buildings and exhibits relevant to the Matamata district in a way that does not compromise the main goal.



**Figure 40**

*"The main goal is to preserve the buildings and features of the Matamata Estate as a focus for the interpretation of the history of the Matamata district"*

## Objectives

1. Focus primarily on the history of the Matamata Estate during the time of Josiah Firth and John McCaw. (1865-1917)
2. Develop a museum of farm technology in a way that complements the Matamata Estate focus
3. Improve understanding of the development of the Matamata district starting from the perspective of the Matamata Estate.
4. Improve understanding of New Zealand history and development during the 1860s to 1900s through the example of the Matamata Estate and Josiah Firth.
5. Increase visitor numbers and broaden visitor origin.
6. Minimise cost to the Council consistent with achieving the other objectives.

## Objective 1

Focus primarily on the history of the 'Matamata Estate' during the time of Josiah Firth and John McCaw.

### *Explanation:*

*The thing that makes the Museum distinctive and significant is the tower: it as a drawcard and curiosity, it is an expression of the times and character of Josiah Firth, and the Matamata Estate is the best starting point for interpreting the history of Matamata district.*



Figure 41

"Focus primarily on the history of the Matamata Estate..."

### **Policy: Homestead Precinct**

To restore the precinct around the Firth Tower and McCaw Homestead as far as possible to its appearance in the period 1880-1905.

### *Explanation:*

*Restoring the area around the tower and homestead to an authentic layout will increase the museum's historic value, improve the opportunities to interpret the history of the site, and create a stronger setting for the tower and homestead.*

### **Implementation:**

- Restore grounds to layout in period 1880-1905 as near as practicable. Reinstate the sweeping drive. Surface to approximate appearance of gravel (eg. Asphalt or compacted and rolled crusher dust). Remove the picket fence to re-establish connection between house and front lawn.
- Research and recreate garden layout<sup>41</sup>, including the formal garden on north-east corner of homestead.
- Install replicas of original gates and fences copied from historical photos.
- Screen Firth Shed from Homestead precinct by hedge/fence behind Firth Tower.

<sup>41</sup> Consult expert in garden history, for instance John Adam, University of Auckland



- Relocate the school, jail, post office, telephone box, windmill, waterwheel from the Homestead Precinct. (It was discussed whether or not the Settler's cottage should be relocated. In its present location it blocks the connection between the homestead and farm machinery precinct and compromises a potential yard area that would link the barn, Firth Shed and Madill Shed. There is justification for keeping the settler's cottage within the homestead precinct as it represents cottages originally on the site and illustrates a comparison between the homestead and a farm worker's cottage).
- Retain Church in present location.
- Investigate possibility of recreating a replica of Tamihana's obelisk on its original site, in its original form, and with its original inscription. A replica obelisk would have much greater historical significance, and would increase opportunities to interpret early Maori Pakeha relations in the area. (see page 10). It would also provide a landmark to help identify the museum site along Tower Road from Matamata. The original timber form may be recreated in steel for practical reasons.
- The Concept Plan illustrates proposed design.

#### **Policy: Interpretation Themes**

To interpret the history of the Homestead Precinct in a way that emphasises the distinctive history of Josiah Firth, John McCaw, and the Matamata Estate.

#### **Explanation:**

*Josiah Firth's history was particularly distinctive and colourful, and represents a number of wider themes. The Firth period set the foundation for the development of modern Matamata district. John McCaw also represents an crucial stage in the history of Matamata Estate and the development of Matamata district. This includes the rehabilitation of the farm from bankruptcy and its eventual subdivision into smaller farms. His character can be easily contrasted with that of Firth.*

*The present homestead was built for John McCaw in 1902. Its name of 'Firth' Homestead is inaccurate and forgoes the opportunity to interpret the history of the McCaw era.*

#### **Implementation:**

- Interpret the homestead precinct, in particular the Firth Tower, in a way that emphasises the distinctive history of Josiah Firth including:
  - a) That the tower was a folly not a fortress, its connections with *Clifton* homestead in Mount Eden, and the context of other Victorian businessmen's follies.
  - b) The Matamata Estate was closely tied to the Auckland business and social elite.
  - c) The central role of land speculation; how Firth obtained land from Maori owners and how it influenced his views toward Maori, the role of borrowed capital, the purpose of improvements designed to facilitate subdivision.

- d) Emphasise Josiah Firth's exuberant character, broad interests, and restless energy to capture something of the spirit of the times. Use examples such as the tower, new technology, and his writings.
- Interpret the homestead precinct, in particular within the homestead building, to also emphasise the history of John McCaw:
  - a) Rename Firth Homestead as 'McCaw Homestead'.
  - b) Furnish homestead in accordance with McCaw period.
  - c) Devote one room of the homestead to interpretative displays. (this room could also be used to display literature for sale).
  - d) Explain how Matamata Estate was resumed by the NZL&MA because of insolvency.
  - e) Explain how McCaw's role was to develop the estate in order to make it suitable for subdivision so that the bank could recover its losses, and how this led to closer settlement of the Matamata Plains.
  - f) Contrast McCaw's character and different social role with that of Firth's. (eg. the dour manager compared with the exuberant entrepreneur).
  - g) Feature the dramatic story of the burning of the original homestead and gutting of the tower.
  - h) Emphasise McCaw's scientific farming methods, together with Firth's interests in farm technology, as a link to the farm machinery exhibits.

## Objective 2

**Develop a museum of farm technology in a way that complements the 'Matamata Estate' focus**

***Explanation:***

*In its heyday in the 1880s, the Matamata Estate was an agricultural showpiece with many innovations. Agricultural technology has continued to play a role in development of the economy and landscape of the district. The Museum has a significant collection of farm machinery.*



*Figure 42  
Seed Drill*

**Policy: Farm Technology Precinct**

To develop a farm technology precinct linked to, but distinct from, the Matamata Estate Homestead precinct.

***Explanation:***

*At present the farm technology is tucked away in buildings in one corner of the site. The buildings need to be drawn together around an outdoor space (or spaces) to give some focus to the precinct, to provide for outdoor displays of machinery, to create a working farmyard character, and to create connections to surrounding farmland landscape.*

*The Farm Machinery Precinct should not compromise the Homestead Precinct.*

**Implementation:**

- Design and work towards a farm precinct behind the homestead precinct.
- Remove Arts Society Building when alternative facilities have been provided.

- Create farmyard in spaces enclosed by the Barn, Firth Shed and Madill Shed. Surface farmyard spaces with compacted crusher dust or similar material to provide spaces for outdoor display of machinery.
- Close northern entrance to the Barn. Close in lean-to on northern side and build new lean-to on south side.
- Shift Firth Shed entrances to west end and south side. Move machinery exhibits from lean to on north side to new lean to on south side.
- Provide entrance to west side of Madill Shed, and build new lean to on west side.
- Build replica of windmill over original well (or relocate and extend height of existing windmill)
- Add new buildings to Farmyard Precinct as funds permit. These will include a blacksmith shop, stables, cowshed, storage and workshop buildings.

#### **Policy: Interpretation Themes**

To interpret the history of the Farm Technology Precinct in a way that emphasises links to Josiah Firth and John McCaw, and significance in the development of the Matamata district

#### **Explanation:**

*Using the fact that both Firth and McCaw were pioneers of scientific farming methods, and Firth in particular was an enthusiast for new agricultural technology, provides a focus to the collection and helps make sense of the overall Reserve.*

#### **Implementation:**

- Interpret the Farm Machinery exhibits, amongst other themes, to emphasise connections with Josiah Firth and John McCaw including:
  - a) Early adoption of new technology.
  - b) Role of 'scientific farming' in developing productivity of the Matamata Plains and facilitating closer subdivision.



### Objective 3

Improve understanding of the development of the Matamata district starting from the perspective of the 'Matamata Estate'.

**Explanation:**

*The 'Matamata Estate' was the foundation of modern development of the Matamata Plains. It established many of the present patterns of the district including the basic survey layout, alignment of roads, location of Waharoa and Matamata. The history of Matamata Estate explains the manner in which the land was developed and subdivided, and the story of Josiah Firth brings to life places in the district such as Stanley Landing, Waihou River, Waiorongomai Gold Field, the Railway, and roads. Josiah Firth's colourful character also adds personality to the history of the district.*



Figure 43  
Connections to surrounding landscape

**Policy: Connections to Surrounding Landscape**

To strengthen visual connections to surrounding landscape and interpretation of views.

**Explanation:**

*Maintaining views of surrounding landscape helps reinforce understanding of historical links between the Matamata Estate and the district. For instance views encourage appreciation that the surrounding land was originally part of the Matamata Estate and that the homestead and tower were built to command views over this extensive farm. It helps interpretation of the subsequent subdivision of the estate. It helps make the connection between the Matamata Estate and Matamata township.*

*Views over surrounding farmland also provide an appropriate context for the farm technology part of the Museum. They help appreciation of the role of farm technology in the development of the landscape and economy of the district.*

**Implementation:**

- Maintain low vegetation behind Church to maintain open views through oaks to farmland. Provide seat positioned for views in this direction.
- Maintain open views over countryside from farmyard between the Barn and Madill Shed. This is subsequent to removal of the Arts Society cottage. Maintain open views from farmyard area south of Madill Shed.
- Erect outdoor information panels to interpret views. These might include historical photos from particular viewpoints, relevance of landscape features to the Matamata Estate (such as the alignment and dimensions of Tower Road), and explanation of the evolution of surrounding landscapes.

**Policy: Connection to Stanley Landing**

To promote the connection between the Matamata Estate homestead and Stanley Landing.

**Explanation:**

*Critical to Josiah Firth's plans to develop broad scale wheat farming on the Matamata Estate was his clearing of the Waihou River for navigation and the establishment of a port at Stanley Landing. This included a jetty and a large grain store. Firth had a boat built ('Kotuku') to transport the wheat from Stanley Landing to his mill in Auckland. This became a general transportation system between Matamata and the Auckland region.*

**Implementation:**

- Install interpretative panels at Stanley Landing explaining the connection to Matamata Estate, and providing directions to the Firth Tower Historical Reserve.
- Install interpretative panels at the Firth Tower Historical Reserve explaining the historical connection to Stanley Landing, and providing directions to Stanley Landing Reserve.
- Use a common logo on signs at both sites.
- Install logo signs along Tower Road linking Stanley Landing and Firth Tower. Improve signage at the Stanley Landing carpark.
- Locate and mark the sites of the wells supplying water for traction engines on Tower Road.
- Include Stanley Landing in open days or carnivals associated with Firth Tower. (eg. traction engine rides between the two sites)
- Improve the connection between the carpark and the grain store site at Stanley Landing. This may include finger signs and a walkway.

- Install interpretative panels including photographs at the Stanley Landing site on the grainstore site to explain what the layout was like and the importance of the port to Firth's farming enterprise.
- Investigate opportunities to purchase additional land to incorporate the traction engine track up the hillside. This original 1:9 grade track is a feature of photos from the 1890s.

**Policy: Local History Precinct**

To move historical buildings not relevant to the homestead or farm machinery precincts to a local history precinct adjacent to the archives building.

**Explanation:**

*The Reserve contains several buildings which illustrate the development of the Matamata district but which do not relate to the homestead precinct of the Matamata Estate, or to the farm machinery precinct.*

*These buildings could be re-located to form part of a local history precinct in a way that does not compromise the other precincts.*

**Implementation:**

- Establish local history precinct adjacent to proposed archives building.
- Shift the school, post office, jail, and settler's (Nicolson) cottage from the homestead precinct to the local history precinct
- Incorporate railway wagons within local history precinct.
- Provide a building, or other facility, to display local history exhibits..

**Policy: Archives and Research Facilities**

To provide suitable facilities for local history archive storage and research

**Explanation:**

*The historical society has a large collection of archives relevant to the history of the district. These are currently stored in a shipping container behind Madill Shed.*

*To ensure long term survival of these archives requires storage with better climate control, better security, and better protection from fire.*

*To facilitate use of the archives for research also requires facilities that enable them to be retrieved easily and areas where research can be carried out.*

*A suitable location for an archives building is adjacent to the carpark behind the caretakers house. It would have a separate access from the carpark. It would form the focus for a local history precinct incorporating the historic buildings moved on to the site and the railway carriages.*

*Preliminary plans have been prepared. A report on the brief for such a building has been prepared by the Museums Liaison Officer, Auckland Institute and Museum. This liaison service has offered its advice in development of plans.*

**Implementation:**

- Provide archives building when funds permit in accordance with the preliminary plans developed in consultation with the Liaison Officer, Auckland Institute and Museum.



## Objective 4

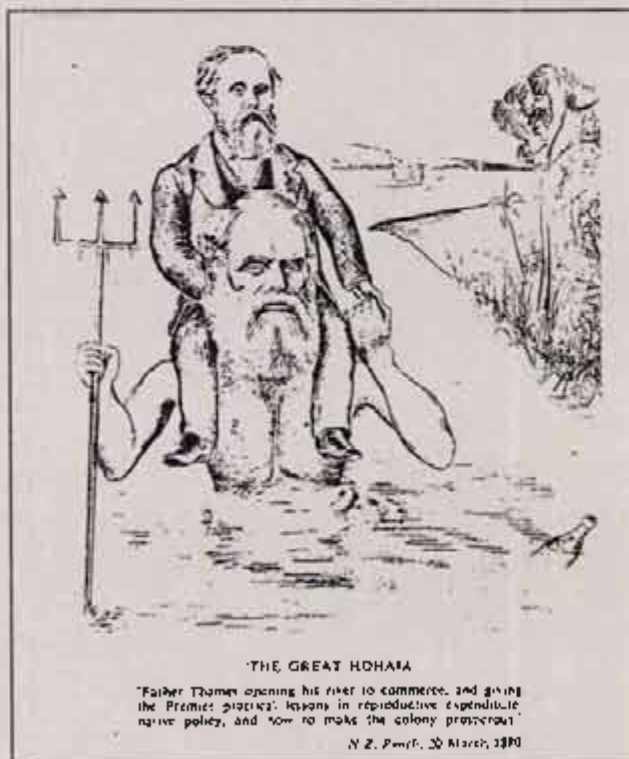
Improve understanding of New Zealand history and development during the 1860s to 1900s through the example of the Matamata Estate and Josiah Firth.

### **Explanation:**

*The story of Josiah Firth and the Matamata Estate has significance to the history of the Auckland 'Province' and to New Zealand in general, as well as explaining the development of the Matamata Plains.*

*Josiah Firth is a particularly colourful example of a small group of business people known as the 'Merchant Princes'. He illustrates important themes in the development of Auckland Province such as the role of land speculation, control of credit, control of local politics, and the role of the B.N.Z. and its loan agencies. Firth represents an era in the financial history of New Zealand. This includes the way a small group monopolised credit, were able to raise credit against over-valued assets (ie. Matamata Estate) in expectation of capital gains from an ever expanding economy, and were ruined by the depression of the 1880s. This history can also be compared to recent history.*

*The Matamata Estate illustrates one of the ways in which the hinterland was brought into Auckland's economy and Maori Pakeha relations. Josiah Firth also illustrates a particular character or personality type which is not well represented in museums and which captures part of the spirit of the age.*



**Figure 44**

*The history of Firth and the Matamata Estate provides an excellent platform from which to interpret the history of the Matamata district and to develop themes of interest to a wider New Zealand audience.*

### **Policy: Interpretation**

To include exhibits and interpretation of Josiah Firth and the Matamata Estate in a way that relates it to a wider Auckland history.

### **Explanation:**

*Taking a wider perspective makes the museum relevant to a wider audience as well as giving greater meaning to local history.*

### **Implementation:**

- Install exhibits and information interpreting wider themes in New Zealand history connected with Firth and the Matamata Estate.

Themes might include:

- a) Compare process of land settlement on Matamata Plains with other parts of New Zealand eg. The initial small subdivision of Taranaki and 'The Bush' of southern Hawke's Bay, the leasehold pastoral runs of the South Island.
- b) Compare Maori Pakeha relations in Matamata area with other parts of New Zealand.
- c) Compare Firth with similar C19th figures such as Thomas Morrin and Logan Campbell.

## Objective 5

### Increase visitor numbers.

#### **Explanation:**

*Visitor numbers to the museum are low and have been declining. Reversing this trend is a priority to justify on-going financial support from Council, to justify capital expenditure, and to ensure the long term viability of the Museum.*

*Visitor numbers can be increased through emphasising and developing the distinctive aspects of the Museum (as outlined in Objectives 1-3 above), interpreting exhibits to make them relevant to particular audiences, promoting awareness of the Museum, and improving facilities such as refreshments and signs.*

#### **Policy: Marketing**

To market Firth Tower Museum among potential groups of visitors.

#### **Explanation:**

*The Museum needs to be marketed in the fullest sense. Potential visitor groups need to be identified, the museum tailored to increase its value to these groups, and promoted through targeted advertising.*

#### **Implementation:**

##### • **Schools**

- a) Liaise with local schools to increase value of museum to school curricula
- b) Prepare resource material to support school trips

##### • **Regional Coach Trips**

- a) Promote Museum as a destination for coach trips.
- b) Develop a data base of potential organisations, and tour operators.
- c) Provide light refreshments for groups (eg. Morning tea on lawn).
- d) Partner the museum with other local facilities. (eg. Okorire Hotel for lunches).

##### • **Auckland and Hamilton Weekend Market**

- a) Prepare interpretive material and brochures explaining significance of Josiah Firth and the Matamata Estate to the development of Auckland 'Province'.
- b) Distribute brochures to 'weekend' destinations within district.



**Figure 45**

*Liaise with local schools to increase value of museum to school curricula*

- c) Advertise to attract this market; eg. N.Z. Herald. Prepare material as basis for magazine type article in paper focusing on wider significance of Josiah Firth, the 'fortress or folly' debate.

- **History Interest Market**

- a) Promote Museum to history interest market. (eg. Advertise in New Zealand Historic Places Magazine).

- **Local Market**

- a) Emphasise interpretive material explaining why Matamata and Waharoa are where they are, how they came into being, and how the surrounding landscape evolved.
- b) Promote hire of the facility for functions, such as garden parties.
- c) Continue the policy of annual open days to increase local awareness and ownership of the Reserve.
- d) Promote the wider significance of Josiah Firth and the Matamata Estate to put local history in a broader context.

- **Garden Interest Group**

- a) Maintain parkland atmosphere, particularly the mature oaks.
- b) Interpret history of gardens.

**Policy: Signs and Approaches to Museum**

To direct visitors more clearly to Firth Tower and Stanley Landing.

***Explanation:***

*Firth Tower is not visible from main roads and signs to the Museum are virtually non-existent. The poor signage represents a direct cost to Council in terms of potential visitor numbers.*

**Implementation:**

- Negotiate with Transit New Zealand to erect international standard tourist (brown) signs on S.H.27 indicating Firth Tower.
- Erect finger signs to Firth Tower, incorporating a Tower logo, at the following locations
  - Broadway/Tower Road roundabout.
  - Intersection of Old Te Aroha Road and Wardville Road
  - Intersection of Wardville and Tower Road
  - Intersection of Old Te Aroha Road and Okauia Springs Road.
  - Intersection of Okauia Springs Road and Tower Road.
- Install simple logo signs on power poles leading to Firth Tower on the following approach routes:
  - From Matamata town centre, along Broadway and north along Tower Road.
  - Between Firth Tower and Stanley Landing.



- Support the development and maintenance of a **Heritage Trail** from Te Aroha along the Waihou River to Stanley Landing and Firth Tower. This Heritage Trail is currently being prepared. It will include its own signs.

### **Policy: Entrance and Parking**

To re-design entry to enhance experience of the 'Homestead' precinct.

#### **Explanation:**

*The present parking area is large enough to accommodate day to day use of the Reserve. Overflow parking is required on rare special occasions, such as open days. The wide grass berm in front of the site (and further along Tower Road if required) is appropriate for this occasional use. It is important to retain the ability for buses to turn within the site.*

*The present entrance does not follow the original approach to the homestead and tower. It does not allow the tower to be shown off to its potential. It compromises the relationship of homestead with its original setting. It emphasises the collection of local buildings at the expense of the homestead and tower. It reinforces the sense of entering a theme village rather than an authentic homestead. The gatehouse/office is not authentic.*

*However the removal of the gatehouse/office raises questions about how visitors are received in the Museum. One alternative is to provide a reception table inside the main door of the McCaw homestead in a similar manner to that in other historic buildings. Another alternative is to use one of the front bedrooms as a reception and interpretation area. This could increase opportunities for interpretation of the museum and perhaps increase the sense of involvement with the building without detracting excessively from the period furnishing of the house. Neither of these alternatives are favoured by the Matamata Historical Society or the Firth Tower Historical Reserves Committee.*

#### **Implementation:**

- Remove the existing entrance and gatehouse/office. Create a new entry from the car-park and a curved approach to the homestead following the line of the original carriageway. Surface carriageway in asphalt to approximate the appearance of gravel.
- Remove picket fence to re-establish connection between homestead and front lawn.
- Recreate formal garden adjacent to entrance carriageway at north-east corner of homestead. Use photos and other documents to research original layout and plants.
- Plant hedge to reduce visual presence of custodian's cottage but maintain visibility.
- Install buzzer on gate from car park to ensure custodian is aware of people entering.

- Retain existing carpark size. Use roadside grass for occasional overflow parking.
- The Concept Plan illustrates re-design of car park and entrance.

#### **Policy: Refreshments**

To facilitate and encourage provision of refreshments to visitors in a way that does not incur on-going costs to Council.

##### ***Explanation:***

*Provision of refreshments will make the Museum more attractive to visitors.*

*However it is not appropriate for Council to become involved in catering.*

*Visitor numbers are not sufficient to warrant 'on demand' refreshments such as a café. However there are opportunities to cater for pre-arranged groups, and opportunities for other businesses to use facilities at the Museum to provide refreshments. For instance morning and afternoon teas served with period trimmings, could be provided for pre-arranged group visits or for weddings. Basic facilities such as storage and a dishwasher, are necessary for such catering.*

*There is also the opportunity to promote complementary facilities in conjunction with the Museum.*

##### **Implementation:**

- Negotiate with interested businesses to provide refreshments for pre-arranged group visits.
- Provide suitable catering facilities, such as dishwasher and storage, when appropriate.
- Provide tables and chairs suitable for teas on the veranda or front lawn area.
- Promote complementary facilities in conjunction with the Firth Tower Reserve.

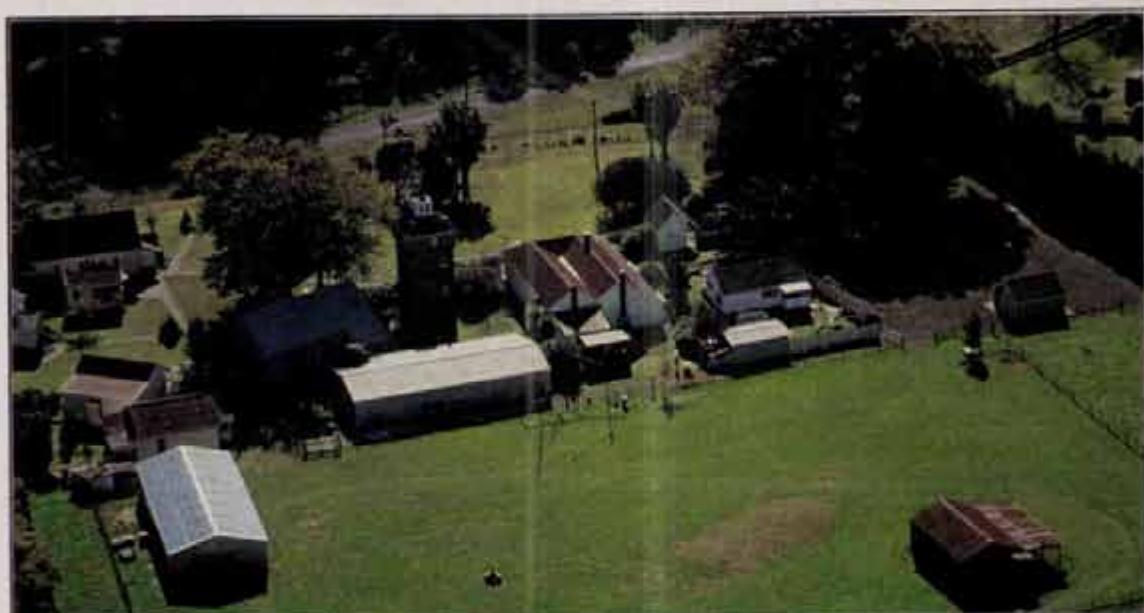
## Objective 6

Minimise cost to the Council consistent with achieving the other objectives.

### ***Explanation:***

*The Firth Tower and Stanley Landing Reserves add to the amenity of the district, is a valuable community resource, and contributes to the attractiveness of the area to tourism.*

*At the same time Council has an obligation to manage the Reserves in the most cost effective manner. This entails continuing to rely on voluntary input to maintain and develop the museum, increasing income to offset running costs, and ensuring that capital projects are justified in terms of increasing use and value of the Reserves.*



**Figure 46**

*Future development area of Firth Tower Historical Reserve*

### **Policy: Voluntary Development and Management**

To continue to rely, where practicable, on voluntary input in running and developing the Reserve and Museum.

### ***Explanation:***

*The museum is a community resource and has been developed largely through voluntary efforts. Buildings have been shifted to the site and restored as voluntary projects. Exhibits have been donated and are maintained and interpreted by the Historical Society.*

*Council supports this voluntary effort by covering running costs and administration of the Reserve as a recognition of the benefit of the Museum to the wider community. It also carries out some capital projects where appropriate. Continued voluntary input is essential to the on going survival of the Museum in its present form.*

**Implementation:**

Continue to facilitate voluntary input to the development and running of the Reserve through the Firth Tower Historical Reserve Committee and in accordance with the direction, objectives and policies incorporated in this Management Plan

**Policy: Additional Building Projects**

To ensure that new building projects and site development build toward the overall goals and long term development plans for the Reserve.

**Explanation:**

The present development of the Reserve has occurred through a series of individual projects.

There is pressure to use the site for community uses which, while worthwhile in themselves, do not reinforce the main focus and long term goals for the Reserve. Such ad hoc additions could compromise the overall future of the Museum.

**Implementation:**

- Proposals to develop new building projects or site development will be evaluated against the following criteria:
  - a) The extent to which the project is consistent with the overall Goals and Objectives for the Reserve as set out in the Management Plan.
  - b) The extent to which the project is consistent with the 'Concept Plan' outlined in the Management Plan.
  - c) The need for the project to be within the Museum, including consideration of alternative sites which may be more appropriate

**Policy: Professional Staffing**

To continue employing live-in custodian

**Explanation:**

*The current arrangement combines several key functions including visitor reception and gate-keeping, maintenance, and security. It is a cost effective means of achieving these functions.*

**Implementation:**

- Continue to employ a live-in custodian combining the roles of visitor reception and promotion, maintenance, and security.



## Appendix 1

### Bibliography

Coster, J. 'Report on Plans for future Development of Firth Tower Complex',  
Unpublished report to Matamata Historical Society, (8 March 1993)

Gordon, Mona. *The Golden Age of Josiah Clifton Firth*, (1963)

Matamata District Council, 'unpublished notes prepared for 'Firth Tower Historical Reserve Management Plan' (undated)

Stanley, J. 'Matamata's Firth Tower is 100 Years Old', *Auckland-Waikato Historical Journal No.42*, (April 1983)

Stanley, Joan. 'McCaw John' *Dictionary of N.Z. Biography Vol III*, (1996)

Stanley, Joan. 'River Transport to the Matamata Estate -Navigation on the upper Waihou,' *Auckland-Waikato Historical Journal No. 40* (April 1982)

Stanley, R.D. 'Firth's Tower -Fortress or Folly', unpublished paper (1992)

Stanley, R.D. 'Geology of Matamata', (1994)

Stone, Russell. *Makers of Fortune: a Colonial Business Community and its Fall*, (1973)

Waterson, Duncan. 'Firth Josiah Clifton', *Dictionary of N.Z. Biography Vol. I*, (1990)



## **Appendix 2**

### **Report on Submissions Received on Draft Management Plan**

The Draft Management Plan was adopted by the Matamata Piako District Council for notification for submissions on 10 October 1996 (resolution 96/471). The Draft Plan was advertised for submissions on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1997, Matamata Chronicle p.12, and 6<sup>th</sup> August 1997, Waikato Times, p.34.

A total of 4 submissions were received from the following:

- M. W. Madill
- Firth Tower Historical Reserve Committee
- Matamata Historical Society Inc. (in addition 1 subsidiary late submission)
- Leith Toner

The submissions are appended. A meeting was subsequently held with submitters on 3 February 1998 on the site. The following issues arose from the submissions:

#### **MINOR CHANGES TO TEXT OF PLAN**

##### **Submissions:**

Most of the content of the submissions entailed clarification of information, corrections of facts, or minor changes to the text and punctuation.

##### **Response to Submissions:**

The Firth Tower Historical Reserve Committee submission made proposed changes in a numbered tabular format. The following numbered changes were made to the Plan: Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 (in part), 35 (in part), 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48 (in modified form), 49, 50, 51, 52, 53 (modified), 54 (modification also to explanation), 55, 56, 57 (in modified form following discussion), 58, 59.

The Matamata Historical Society Inc. cross referenced its submissions to the numbered points in the above submission. The following changes were made:

Nos. 3, 17, 18 (following discussion), 23, 29, 49 (in modified form), 51, 55, 59. In addition the late submission recommending relabelling the "proposed stables" on the concept plan as "proposed local history display shed" was accepted.

The submission received from M. W. Madill provided additional information on how the site was selected and purchased as a museum by the Matamata County Council and Matamata Borough Council. The section on the history of the reserve on page 20 was modified to incorporate additional information.

##### **Recommendation:**

Adopt minor changes listed above.

## CONCEPT PLAN

### Submissions:

Three submissions proposed minor modifications to the Concept Plan. The proposed changes entailed:

- a) **Retain Settlers Cottage where it is**  
**Reasons:** There is a reluctance to shift the cottage. It is seen as part of the homestead precinct. Farm workers cottages were located near the original homestead. In its present location the cottage helps interpret the difference between living conditions of the different classes.
- b) **Relocate Archives Building**  
**Reasons:** There was a desire to shift the building a short distance to the west away from the fence in order to provide room for future expansion, to provide a better link to the Homestead, and to provide a stronger connection to the circulation through the site. The proposed building is also larger than indicated on draft concept plan.
- c) **Create a more informal circular road in farm machinery area.**  
**Reasons:** There is a preference for a more informal character. It would also create an opportunity to create a central grass area to display machinery.
- d) **Retain red barn and re-label "Stables".**  
**Reasons:** The building is an authentic building belonging to the Matamata Estate and was in fact stables rather than a barn.
- e) **Include a Potager**  
**Reasons:** It was suggested that provision be made for a potager (kitchen garden), to provide additional attraction, especially for school groups.

### Response to Submissions:

These changes were discussed in the meeting on 3 February 1998. As a result a revised plan incorporating the proposed changes was circulated and approved.

### Recommendation:

Adopt revised concept plan attached.



## **REPORT COVER**

### **Submissions:**

Two submissions proposed replacing the cartoon illustration of Josiah Firth with an alternative cover illustrating the tower, which was seen as more appropriate.

### **Response to Submissions:**

This was discussed at the meeting on 3 February 1998. It was argued that the cartoon cover was appropriate because:

- it is a contemporary cartoon of Josiah Firth and captures the spirit of the times
- it more strongly illustrates the thrust of the management plan which entails a refocussing of the reserve
- it relates to both the Firth Tower and Stanley Landing sites
- it is graphically strong, and might encourage greater notice to be paid to the Management Plan as a result

It was agreed at the meeting to retain the cartoon cover.

### **Recommendation:**

No changes required

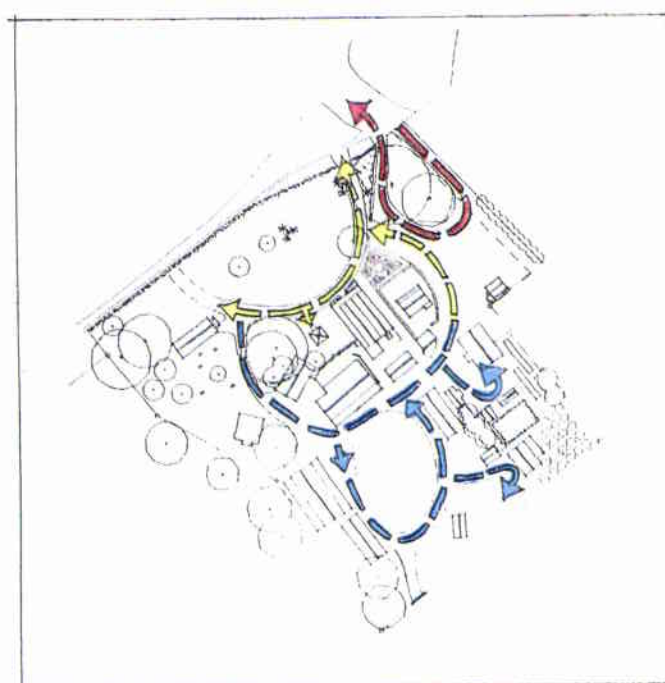
Gavin Lister  
Isthmus Group Ltd  
26 February 1998







Site Zoning



Site Circulation

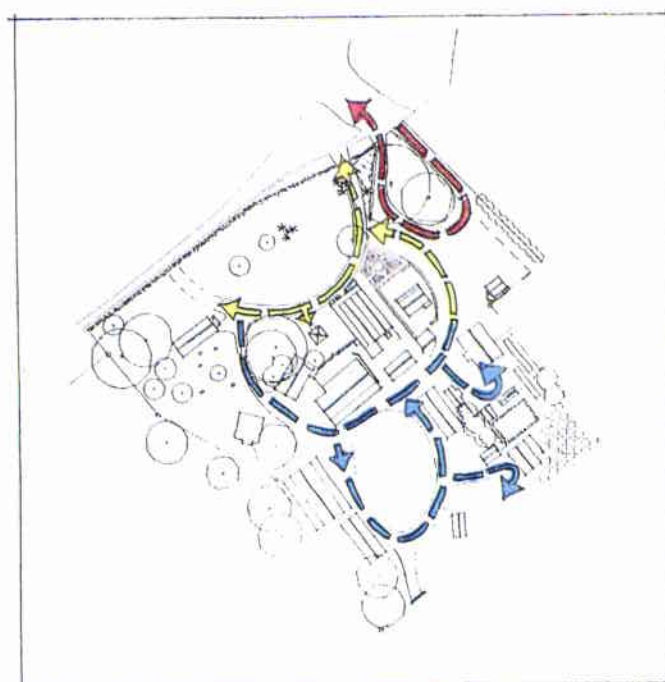
# FIRTH TOWER HISTORICAL RESERVE

LANDSCAPE CONCEPT PLAN  
ISTHMUS GROUP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
SCALE 1:500 AT A1, 1:1000 AT A3 5 FEBRUARY 1998  
SHEET 1 OF 1





Site Zoning



Site Circulation

# FIRTH TOWER HISTORICAL RESERVE

LANDSCAPE CONCEPT PLAN  
ISTHMUS GROUP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
SCALE 1:500 AT A1, 1:1000 AT A3 5 FEBRUARY 1998  
SHEET 1 OF 1