

**Report on the History of the Motuihe Wharf  
for the Motuihe Trust**

**Researched by Fiona Alexander Heritage Co-ordinator Motuihe Trust**

The earliest photographic record we have of a wharf at Motuihe is during the Internment camp days of WWI. This photo also shows the smaller wharf which came off the beach at Wharf Bay. The remains of that wharf can still be seen at low tide.



**Robert Brassey Report 2018 Assessment of Historical and Archaeological Significance of Motuihe**

Robert Brassey's assessment of the wharf:

Historical or associational value (whether the particular element has clear association with events, individuals, or periods of history of the site) = Considerable, should be preserved/protected

Functional significance (whether the particular element helps to explain the use of the site) = Considerable, should be preserved/protected

Aesthetic significance (whether the element has aesthetic significance due to its contribution to the overall unity and appearance of the site) = considerable, should be preserved/protected

Heritage value (the degree to which the element can be said to have heritage value) = Considerable, should be preserved/protected

**Alterations to the wharf over time**

Date	Activity	Source of information
?	First wharf built. Probably when the quarantine station was first built in 1872.	No records found.

1914-1918	Wharf used to service the internment camp	Photographic
1929	Dept of Agriculture agreed to spend 350 pounds strengthening the wharf	Letter 29 Oct 1929 to ACC.
1938	Sunshine Health camp worried about the state of the wharf.	Letter to ACC 14 Dec 1938
1935- 1967	When ACC in charge endless letters complaining about the state of the wharf from all the ferry companies, health camp, Navy Repairs undertaken almost every year. Discussions about who should pay between Minister of Lands, ACC, Harbour board and Lands and Survey and Navy	ACC Archives
1939	Major rebuild and strengthening Much of the material used was second hand timbers from a demolished wharf somewhere else.	Plans produced for the Auckland Harbour Board in ACC Archives Archives NZ in material about the 1979 rebuild plans incl. showing the 1939 rebuild and also several mentions of the wharf being rebuilt in 1979 was originally built during WWII.
1940 to 1963	Navy base HMNZS Tamaki on the island big demands on the wharf	ACC Archives correspondence and plans
EXTENSION 1947 to 1951	Soundings taken 1947 wanted 14 feet depth at spring low tide. Considered dredging but too expensive, considered moving the wharf but decided present location best for infrastructure and beaches. Rope Bros got contract. Extension completed in 1951. Had to import Australian hardwood and used Turpentine piles purchased from "War Assets Realization Board" from Wgtn. Extension 500 feet and cost 6,000 pounds.	ACC Archives
1952	Wharf altered with new steps added on landward side	Plans for ACC in ACC Archives
1952	Wharf deck widened by 18 inches to allow Navy to take vehicles on to the wharf	ACC Archives
1961	Dolphins added	Plans for ACC in ACC Archives
1961	ACC agreed to spend 10,000 pounds on strengthening wharf	NZ Herald 5/9/61
1963	When the Navy left the island in 1963 the wharf was full length with the extension making it almost twice its current length	Photographic aerial photo of the navy base taken in 1962.
1965	Ngaroma hits the wharf and damages it. Insurance claim.	ACC Archives.
1974	Motuihe wharf in a state of disrepair. Expected life 5 years.	Dissertation by D J Scott "Motuihe Island Development proposals for a Recreation Resource"
1974	Motuihe Wharf is dangerous	Auckland Star article
1975	Outer section of Motuihe wharf closed. Inner section still in use. Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park	Dec Auckland Star article

	Board said the wharf will have to be replaced but they do not have the 200,000 pounds required.	
1976	Extension (built in 1951) is removed as it was unsound and a danger to those using it.	Archives NZ HGMPB file
1979	Rebuilt Ascot construction were the builders Bruce Wallace and partners were the engineers Construction to commence 10 Sept 1979 HGMPB supplied materials, stored at Islington Bay. Paid for by a Crown grant. In 1980 HGMPB staff completed the job as Ascot did not meet deadlines Budget \$80,000	Archives NZ HGMPB file
1979/80	Scope of rebuild job: Replace existing timber superstructure Repair existing timber steps Build new set of steps Replace 7 timber piles Underwater repairs to concrete trestles Forming of concrete bases to 8 existing concrete trestle legs "The contractor shall demolish the existing wharf superstructure to ensure that no damage is caused to sections of the wharf which are to be retained."	Archives NZ HGMPB file
2016	Fender piles added and stairway extended. Fixed brackets between the timber bearers and the support piles.	May 2023 Engineers report.
2017 April	Wharf closed with slip on wharf road	Photos
2019 CLOSED	August Wharf closed suddenly Last Fullers ferry August 2019	DoC directive danger tapes on wharf
2020 CLOSED	Wharf closed engineers report will be repaired	DoC report
2021 CLOSED all year	Feb/March repairs carried out, new middle decking, pier 4 strengthened, handrails on concrete block	Photos March 2021 newsletter
2021 OPENS	13 June first ferry back Red Boats Fullers does not return	Volunteers on ferry
Mid Feb 2023 CLOSED	Wharf closed 13 Feb after sustaining damage due to cyclone Gabrielle. SW winds gusting 130 km/h	DoC directive
March/April/May 2023 STILL CLOSED	Report from Engineers using land based observers and divers to assess the condition of the wharf. Found damage to the decking near the abutment, bearers above the piles had moved, hole in the sea wall. \$53,000 to repair plus GST.	Engineers report circulated by DoC.
May 2023	The wharf is set to end life in 2025 There is cyclone money for repairs Hope to reopen wharf July 2023 with max. of 50 people at any one time.	Minutes of DoC/Trust meeting 17 May 2023

	New wharf unlikely DoC recommendation to remove wharf once it reaches end of life. DoC will continue to inspect and assess the wharf.	
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*Sources of information*

Auckland City Council (ACC) Archives

NZ Archives Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park Board file (HGMPB)R21460946 1977-1984

NZ Navy museum

*Is the wharf a heritage site?*

According to Robert Brassey's report of 2018 it is

The wharf we see today was largely built in 1979. However parts of it were retained from the 1939 rebuild in particular piers 20 and 21, the steps, the two caissons and some of the concrete foundations for the trestles.

*Personal comment*

There has been a wharf at Motuihe for over 100 years. It is the gateway to the island for visitors. Without the wharf only those privileged enough to own private boats will be able to land and experience this wonderful island. The Aucklanders who have volunteered over the last 20 plus years to restore the flora and fauna will not be able to enjoy the amazing results of their work. Everything possible should be done to maintain a safe landing place for visitors to Motuihe.

Fiona Alexander