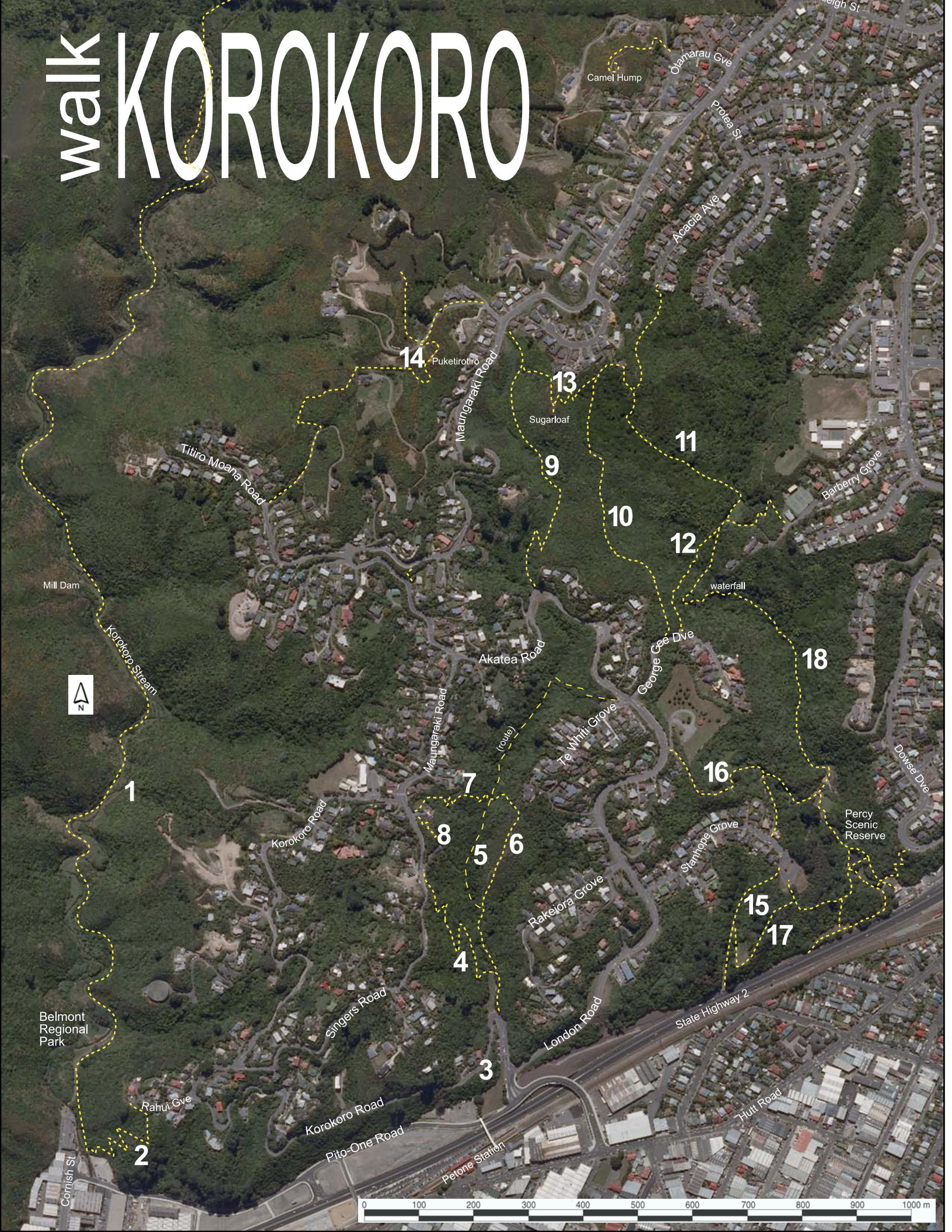


walk KOROKORO



14

13

11

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18

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Korokoro Road

8

5

6

Stanhope Grove

15

4

Singers Road

3

London Road

State Highway 2

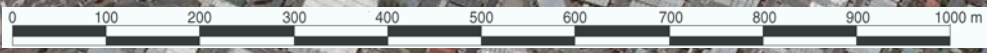
Hutt Road

2

Korokoro Road

Pito-One Road

Petone Station



Belmont Regional Park

Rahui Gve

Mill Dam

Korokoro Stream

Maungaraki Road

Maungaraki Road

Puketiroiro

Sugarloaf

Akatea Road

Te Whiri Grove

Rakehōra Grove

George Gee Drive

Camel Hump

Otamarau Gve

Prolea St

Acacia Ave

Barberry Grove

Dowse Drive

Percy Scenic Reserve

History of the Korokoro Tracks

The Korokoro hills overlooking the north west corner of Wellington Harbour offer a variety of walks through bushy gullies to commanding hilltops. The separate tracks, each with a different story to tell, now form a fascinating network.

1 Korokoro Stream

Korokoro ("throat") Stream speaks of its value to Maori as a food source. To pakeha, its value was the power to drive a mill, sited on what is now Cornish Street. So when Petone Borough Council saw it also as a way to get pressure into their water supply they had to build two dams and two pipelines, one for the woollen mill, the higher one for the town's water supply. In the early 1900s the valley was a favoured haunt of "pleasure seekers" from Petone. Rustic footbridges over the stream enabled ladies in their long dresses to reach the scenic reaches around the top reservoir, where PBC was taking care to preserve the pristine forest. Where the bush had been burnt, pines were planted as relief work in the 1930s. But upstream in Normandale farming polluted the water and supply was discontinued in 1962. By then the forest was valued for its own sake. From 1990 the valley track got a new lease of life when Wellington Regional Council formed it above flood level as a southern entrance into Belmont Regional Park.

2 Millworkers Track

The woollen mill workers who, from 1900, took up land in the first government subdivision of Korokoro made this short cut to work and the pub (the "Grand National" was later shifted to 274 Jackson Street). After the mill closed in 1968, the track had its top and bottom cut off and disappeared into the undergrowth until re-discovered by Barry Malcolm in 2002. He and John Vannisselroy then cleared the track ready for the Regional Park Ranger to take it over as the rightful way for Korokoro folk to get down to the valley below.

3 Korokoro Catholic Cemetery

Half on the hill, half on the flat was a compromise imposed on local Maori after the cemetery acre they had gifted to the Catholic Church suddenly became valuable with the coming of the railway in 1874. Now only the hillside graves survive in their original form. The headstones on the flat, dated between 1853 and 1953, were cleared away in 1957, to make way for a drain and for ease of maintenance. Only those of Wi Tako Ngatata and Dean Lane

were saved and shifted to the edge. At this stage the Council took over maintenance, but only looked after the flat half. Finally some 50 years later, at the instigation of the Sacred Heart Parish, Petone, they cleared around the almost forgotten hillside graves and resurrected the old path up to them. During the reconstruction of State Highway 2, the Catholic Church and local iwi combined to guard the cemetery from any disturbance and they expect visitors to treat with equal respect the dead who lie here.

4 Settlers Bush Track

Early settlers in Korokoro cut this steep zig zag into the rocky hillside below Singers Road as a short cut to work in Petone. As the Footpath Committee they raised money to help the Council continue the work. From 1905 PBC installed steps, a bridge at the bottom and cast iron kerosene lamp stands. In the 1950s they piped the creek below the bridge and re-routed the track over it. This path now links safely with Petone - an outcry on the death of Korokoro resident Ian Renner, killed while crossing the highway in 1988, resulted in a footbridge over both road and rail.

5 Galbraiths Gully Route*

Walkers follow the creek which as Tuara Whaiti o Te Mana once supplied Pito-One Pa and now flows past the cemetery to Korokoro Stream. The narrow gully escaped bush burn-offs and in the 1890s still supported its original forest cover. PBC lobbied for the "beautiful native bush with ferns still growing" to be set aside as reserve and took it over as Petone Domain in 1905. The upper reaches had been burnt off and divided into grassy farmlets, part of a second government subdivision in 1901, as old fence posts in the bush and a concrete dam testify today.

Later Councils saw the Korokoro gullies more as potential rubbish tips and started tipping in Korokoro from the 1950s. They filled three tip sites before looking to tip into Galbraiths Gully from Akatea Road at the Galbraiths' old house site, now the Te Whiti Grove playground. They had acquired for that purpose the gully down to Petone Domain, all by then covered with vigorous re-growth bush. Appalled local residents formed the Korokoro Conservation Group and energetically resisted the tip proposal. They found the reserve status of some of the Council land in the gully required consent from the Minister of Lands before any bush could be destroyed. On this basis and suspecting bulldozing was about to begin in December 1972, two adjacent householders took out an injunction against the Council and refused to lift it until the area was vested Scenic Reserve in 1989.

The top edge of the Galbraiths Gully Scenic Reserve, around Akatea Road, became smothered with a tangle of rank weeds, prompting the start of Korokoro Environmental Group in 2001. KEG replaced the weeds with local native plants to "seal" the sunny bush margins.

6 Dry Foot Loop

This track climbs up a spur that was planted out in pines as a relief project during the Depression. Later, housing along London Road cut off easy access into the plantation and prevented the timber being harvested. Meantime the pines started to cast an oppressive winter shade over the Rakeiroa Grove neighbourhood and were the subject of many pleas for their removal. Progressive felling was started in the 1990s but not finished. Finally a storm in February 2004 so destabilised the whole plantation that the Council had the remaining trees cut and helicoptered out.

7 Zig Zag Track

This was once the way for cows to come for milking, up to sheds below a house at the top, now Huggans Hollow. Joe and Annie Huggan ran a store and post office next door and were leading citizens of Korokoro and Petone. PBC bought the farmlet as access to the proposed tip but their successor Hutt City Council set it aside as reserve at the request of KEG, who had cleared and planted around the lawn.

8 Centenary Lookout

This knoll was the site of Korokoro's first reservoir built in 1932 as a Depression project. After it was decommissioned and bulldozed away the site reverted to gorse. In 2000 a group of enthusiastic locals decided to clear the site and develop a lookout spot to mark the centenary of the suburb. Working bees cut gorse, made the path and hand rail and then started restoration planting to gradually replace gorse on the hillside, reintroducing grey-green tauhinu which with its sweet smelling flowers once covered these sunny slopes.

9 O'Donahoos

In 1889-90 Mr A.O.O'Donahoo surveyed a road through the Maungaraki block for its Maori owners. Where it ran along the ridge it became the top part of Maungaraki Road in the 1901 subdivision. Where it turned down and followed the headwaters of the creek, it remained a paper road extended down to Akatea Road and was used as access to farms and for fire fighters when the hillside became covered in gorse. In 2003 KEG made a track up the road reserve to link Galbraiths Gully with the hilltops. No planting was needed as the gorse had provided perfect conditions for

the complete range of Korokoro bush seeds to germinate and grow to form a canopy that shaded out their host, a natural succession that had taken about 150 years.

10 Bulldozer Track

North of O'Donahoos, part of the Maungaraki block was bought by developer Thomas Jones, who had a track bulldozed from Maungaraki Road to Akatea Road in the 1950s. The subsequent owner, Fletcher Homes Ltd, followed up with a plan to subdivide the whole block for low cost housing. But only their first phase, Jasmine Grove, was completed before local protests and the sharemarket crash made them think better of it. In 1995 they sold the land to HCC who managed it as reserve and re-routed the track to bypass Jasmine Grove and come out at Acacia Ave.

11 Corins Kohekohe Climb

As this bush became public, keen local walkers made tracks through it. Dick Corin, for the Maungaraki Progressive Association and with timber provided by HCC, made this long link up through groves of tawa and kohekohe from the retention dam near Barbary Grove to the bulldozed track. He also joined the bulldozed track to George Gee Drive. Korokoro trumper Peter Jagger maintained this track and also added a steep shortcut, now replaced by

12 Gee Whiz.

This uses an entrance created off George Gee Drive when the large-scale subdivision was still on the cards. Today's benched path, carefully designed for cyclists as well as walkers, was dug into the hillside in 2011 following an idea conceived by Barry Malcolm and Cr Chris Milne. They had struggled through here five years before and realised the advantages to both communities of an easy link at this level between Korokoro and Maungaraki.

13 Sugarloaf

In 2005 Barry Malcolm re-opened an old track from O'Donahoos up to the Sugarloaf while Dick Corin pioneered a way up from the Bulldozer Track, later re-formed by HCC, to give walkers from each side easy access to this dramatic rocky outcrop.

14 Puketiroitiro

The hilltops, important lookouts for Maori, were kept clear of trees to allow an unobstructed 360 degree view. When in 1901 the Government bought this part of the Maungaraki block to subdivide into farmlets, the two summits and the ridge between stood in a grassy clearing above bush that stretched down to Korokoro Stream. Settlers who then cleared these blocks for livestock left an imprint still

visible along old fencelines in the aerial photo. In 1989 a proposal to bulldoze away the hilltops to make way for intensive housing had the locals up in arms. Allied with Maori they challenged the Council's acceptance of the proposal and won a legal decision which directed the Council to reserve Puketiroitiro and give the public walking access over private land up from Maungaraki Road. The private road at No.135 is your legal walking access.

The Korokoro community and Petone Planning Action Group were prime movers in saving these hilltops. Now, the Mansell and Allan families welcome walkers onto their land at Tiitiro Moana Road, as access up the hill to a legally provided 3m wide reserve strip between Puketiroitiro Reserve and Belmont Regional Park.

15 Old Sledge Track

The oldest track made by Pakeha settlers on the hill ran from a prolongation of Udy Street up to what is now London Road. It gave access over private land to "Hope Farm" which the Chapman family established on the hill in the 1860s. Too steep near the top for carts, the track at least enabled sledge loads of building materials for the Chapmans' two cottages to be dragged up. And in 1881 when Sir James Hector chose a house site near the sledge track he used the bottom part of it for his carriageway. After the government bought and subdivided "Hope Farm" and parts of the Maungaraki block in 1901, settlers on this side of the hill continued to use the sledge track as a short cut to Petone until London Road was put through in the 1930s. In 1974 Stanhope Grove cut the sledge track in two and now only the bottom half remains. A tawa tree beside the track was identified as being about the same age as the track, 150 years old.

16 Hope Staircase

PBC created Frank Cameron Park on top of the London Road tip, naming it after the contractor whose company had carted rubbish there from 1964 to 1972. And after promising the residents a walking link down to Percys, they had steep steps cut into clay by unemployed labour in the 1980s. The new timber staircase is a more elegant version. Just above the top of the staircase is the site of the lower Chapman farmhouse, which was deliberately burnt down in 1970 as an exercise for Petone Fire Brigade. Rusting iron and the macrocarpa windbreak remain as bleak reminders of "Hope Farm".

17 Puriri Track

This is level with the top of a huge puriri tree planted by the Percys, who also dug a long zig zag track up the hillside above it. One zig of the track was extended to create a link between Percys and Ratanui, the old house site of Sir James Hector. The Hector/London estate is owned by the Ministry of Transport but following a letter-writing campaign orchestrated by the Malcolms at the request of Gerald Davidson, they agreed to lease it to HCC so that it could be opened to the public to mark the centenary of Hector's death. The various groups who supported this campaign recognised not only the values of the land itself but also the historical connection with Hector and his achievements. After clearing 40 years' growth of blackberry to reveal the house site and tracks, HCC held a formal opening for Ratanui in November 2007.

18 Waterfall Walk

The surveyors laying out the 1901 subdivision set aside the waterfall gully, previously part of Hope Farm, as a "scenery reserve". Gazetted as Scenic Reserve in 1907 and fenced off to allow regeneration of the bush, it was in 1963 entrusted to PBC along with a 10 acre block joining it with Percys below. The year before, LHCC's cut-and-fill development of Maungaraki had precipitated a massive clay-filled flood that swept through the gully and Percys and ended up as sludge around factories in Bourverie St. To control such run-off the Councils built silt retention dams, above and below the waterfall gully; their steep vehicular accessways, from Stanhope and Barbary Groves, provided ways for walkers too.

In the 1980s, the waterfall was made easier to get to from below and above. Taking advantage of a Government scheme giving work to the unemployed, PBC provided supervision for a gang to make a track up from Percys and devise some way of getting through the gorge. Their unorthodox timber structures surprisingly stayed up. To link with this way up, LHCC made a track down from Maungaraki to the pool at the base of the waterfall. In 2010 the supervisor of the unemployed gang got another chance - contractor Paul O'Hagan created for Hutt City a walkway he can be proud of.

This is an independent publication. We thank Greater Wellington Regional Council for providing the aerial photo (© GW).