

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: Jetty, Wilson's Beach



1.0 Brief

The Heritage Studio Limited was commissioned by Remuera Heritage to undertake high-level research to gain an understanding about the history of the jetty located at Wilson's Beach, Remuera. For some time, it has been the understanding locally that the jetty was built by a nearby resident prior to his death in 1900. The principal aim of the study therefore was to establish whether evidence exists to confirm the date of the existing jetty and whether in fact it pre-dates 1900.

2.0 The item

Known locally as 'Wilson's Jetty', the structure is located on Wilson's Beach at the northern end of Victoria Avenue. Extending north into Hobson Bay, the jetty is a timber structure built on a series of piles, with a boardwalk edged by braced posts and rails. Currently, the jetty is inaccessible from the beach.

3.0 Research undertaken

High-level research involved viewing online repositories such as DigitalNZ and Papers Past, and sourcing available information from Auckland Council Archives. A site visit and meeting with local resident, Bruce Renshaw, was carried out on 12 July 2019. Research was undertaken to an extent that met the requirements of the brief, but was not exhaustive. It is important to note that opportunities exist to explore other avenues of research, which may yield more detailed information.

4.0 Summary of findings

4.1 Association with Captain Tilly and early recreation

Local resident, Bruce Renshaw has long been of the understanding that the existing jetty was built by his great grandfather, Captain T. C. Tilly, R.N. A lieutenant navigator in the

Royal Navy and commander of the Melanesian Mission schooner, 'Southern Cross II', Captain Tilly also oversaw the construction of sailing ships.¹ He acquired his property 'Tremough', which bordered Wilson's Beach, in c.1870 and lived there until his death in 1900.²

During this time, Hobson Bay was a popular spot for watersports, with the highly-attended 'Hobson's Bay ('Remuera') Regatta' being held during the mid-1880s. Organised by the Morrin, Mitchelson, Wilson, Carr and Tilly families who lived at the northern end of Victoria Avenue, the event was initiated *"for the purpose of affording the resident boys and girls an afternoon's amusement, and to encourage the taste for healthy recreation on the part of the young people."*³ Wilson's Beach itself was also a popular place for swimming and boating, evidenced in contemporary newspaper articles, local histories, early twentieth century photographs and the existence of boat sheds along its shore.⁴

4.2 Earliest records of a jetty

The earliest reference to a jetty at the foot of Victoria Avenue was found in a newspaper article dated 1881, documenting the application on behalf of the Remuera Land and Building Company for such a structure. It states that *"should substantial assistance be granted by the [Harbour] Board, the work would be proceeded with at once..."*⁵ (Appendix 2, Figure 12). Whether this work was ever implemented, however, remains unclear.

Contemporary photographs of the construction of the Hobson Bay main sewer line in 1910-11 reveal that the existing jetty on Wilson's Beach was not in place at that time (Appendix 1, Figures 2 and 3). A newspaper article from 1913, however, documents a proposal for a 'wharf' at the foot of Victoria Avenue. The deputation from the Remuera Ratepayers' Association spoke of what an *"advantage a wharf would be to the whole district..."*⁶ (Appendix 2, Figure 13). The article goes on to explain that the wharf would connect the end of Victoria Avenue and the sewer from which it was proposed to start the wharf. However, the two proposed schemes sought the establishment of a 200ft long and 14 or 18ft wide bank, and a further 180ft wharf, which would suggest a structure more substantial than the one shown in early photographic records.

4.3 Photographic records

The earliest 'dated' photograph showing a jetty in the current location is from 1918 (Appendix 1, Figure 5), followed by several others dating from the 1920s and 1930s. These photographs show the jetty extending north from Wilson's Beach, up and over the sewer line, providing access into Hobson Bay. Some of these images also show people 'promenading' along the jetty and the sewer line.

¹ Papers Past, New Zealand Herald, 'Death of Captain Tilly, R.N.', Volume XXXVII, Issue 11436, 28 July 1900; New Zealand Illustrated Magazine, 'In the Public Eye', 1 September 1900, 9; Jenny Carlyon and Diana Morrow, A Fine Prospect: A History of Remuera, Meadowbank and St Johns, 2011, 67; email correspondence with Bruce Renshaw, 12 July 2019.

² Ibid.

³ Remuera Regatta, January 1884, quoted in Jenny Carlyon and Diana Morrow, 336, from a typescript, lent by Bruce Renshaw.

⁴ Jenny Carlyon and Diana Morrow, 336.

⁵ Papers Past, Auckland Star, Volume XII, Issue 3425, 26 July 1881.

⁶ Papers Past, New Zealand Herald, volume L, Issue 15389, 26 August 1913.

The location and proportions of the jetty appear consistent in these early photographs and are similarly conveyed in a series of aerial photographs dating from 1940 (Appendix 1, Figures 10 and 11). However, in preparation of the demolition of the main sewer line, the northern portion of the jetty together with the access ramp that extended up and over the sewer, had been removed by 2010-2011. It is this shortened version of the jetty that exists today.

4.3 Physical fabric of jetty

Based on photographic evidence, the jetty was built as a modest timber structure on piles, with what appears to be a single-handrail. Aerial images indicate that its two-dimensional measurements remained relatively constant between 1940 and the present day, with only a shortening of the jetty's length occurring in 2010-11. Unsurprisingly, however, its physical fabric changed during this time.

When comparing the height and configuration of the present-day jetty with earlier images, it appears that the piles of the original structure were taller and more slender, suggesting that the supporting timbers were shortened or replaced. It is also apparent that additional handrails and supports have been added.

In such an exposed location, it can be expected that materials would have required replacing over the years, which, based on visual observations, appears to have been the case. Modern timbers and fixings are apparent, suggesting that much of the historic fabric has been replaced.

Archival records reveal that repair works have occurred since at least the 1930s. A letter dated 1934 highlights that *"the planking leading out to the sewer from Wilson's Beach is in a very unsafe condition in places. The boards are loose in places, while in others new boards are required."*⁷ In more recent years, further work has been carried out to the jetty. As part of general maintenance works by the Orakei Local Board, the jetty was repaired in 2012, and again in 2018.⁸ However, storm damage in 2018 compromised several of its piles, which resulted in restricted access onto the jetty for safety reasons.⁹

5.0 Conclusion

Based on the findings summarised above, documentary evidence suggests that the subject of a jetty at Wilson's Beach had been raised as early as 1881, and given the popularity of the beach for swimming and boating during this time, it is entirely possible that one was built before 1900. Furthermore, with Captain Tilly's strong association with sea-faring, the location of his property adjacent to Wilson's Beach, reinforced by the family history that

⁷ Letter to the Workshops Superintendent from the City Engineer, entitled 'Wilson's Beach, Off Victoria Avenue, 20 December 1934, from ACC 219 Works Department Classified Subject Files 1912-1995, Wilsons Beach 1920-1982, Record id: 412857, Auckland Council Archives.

⁸ Orakei Local Board Achievements Report, 12-month update – July 2012 to June 2013, 28, <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/about-auckland-council/how-auckland-council-works/local-boards/all-local-boards/orakei-local-board/docsorakeilocalboardprogress/orakei-local-board-achievements-june-2013.pdf> (accessed 23 July 2019).

⁹ Remuera Residents Association Inc. 'Wilson's Beach Jetty Restoration', <https://remueraresidents.org.nz/latest-news/wilsons-beach-jetty-restoration/> (accessed 26 July 2019).

has endured for over 120 years, it is also feasible that he may have been involved with the construction of a jetty at the beach. At this stage, however, the existence of a jetty at Wilson's Beach prior to 1900 has not been confirmed.

Records indicate that a jetty was constructed sometime between 1913 and 1918, and despite the shortening of its length before the removal of the main sewer line in 2010-11, its location and two-dimensional proportions over the years appear consistent. Whilst minor changes to the structure's configuration and the replacement of historic fabric have occurred, the jetty continues to reflect the structure that was built in the early decades of the twentieth century. With this in mind, it is most likely that the jetty has been subject to periodic repairs and replacement of fabric over the years, rather than wholesale reconstruction at any one time.

Research has indicated that the jetty has long been considered a valuable public amenity. Located at Wilson's Beach, a place of local recreation since at least the 1880s, the jetty is associated with Remuera's early social history. With a jetty having existed on the site for over 100 years and with many of the earlier boat and bathing sheds now gone, the structure remains a tangible reminder of the area's recreational past and positively contributes to its coastal landscape.

6.0 Further research opportunities

As previously noted, research for this summary of findings was not exhaustive and further opportunities exist to explore other avenues of research, such as Auckland Harbour Board and Watercare records. It is understood, however, that previous investigations into the Harbour Board records came up short, with apparent gaps existing in early records. In terms of Watercare, it might be possible that early plans and documents exist of the main sewer line that also provides some details around the jetty. At the time of writing, initial contact had been made with Watercare to determine the nature, relevance and accessibility of the information they have on file. However, confirmation has yet to be gained.

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Appendix 1: Historic records, images and aerials

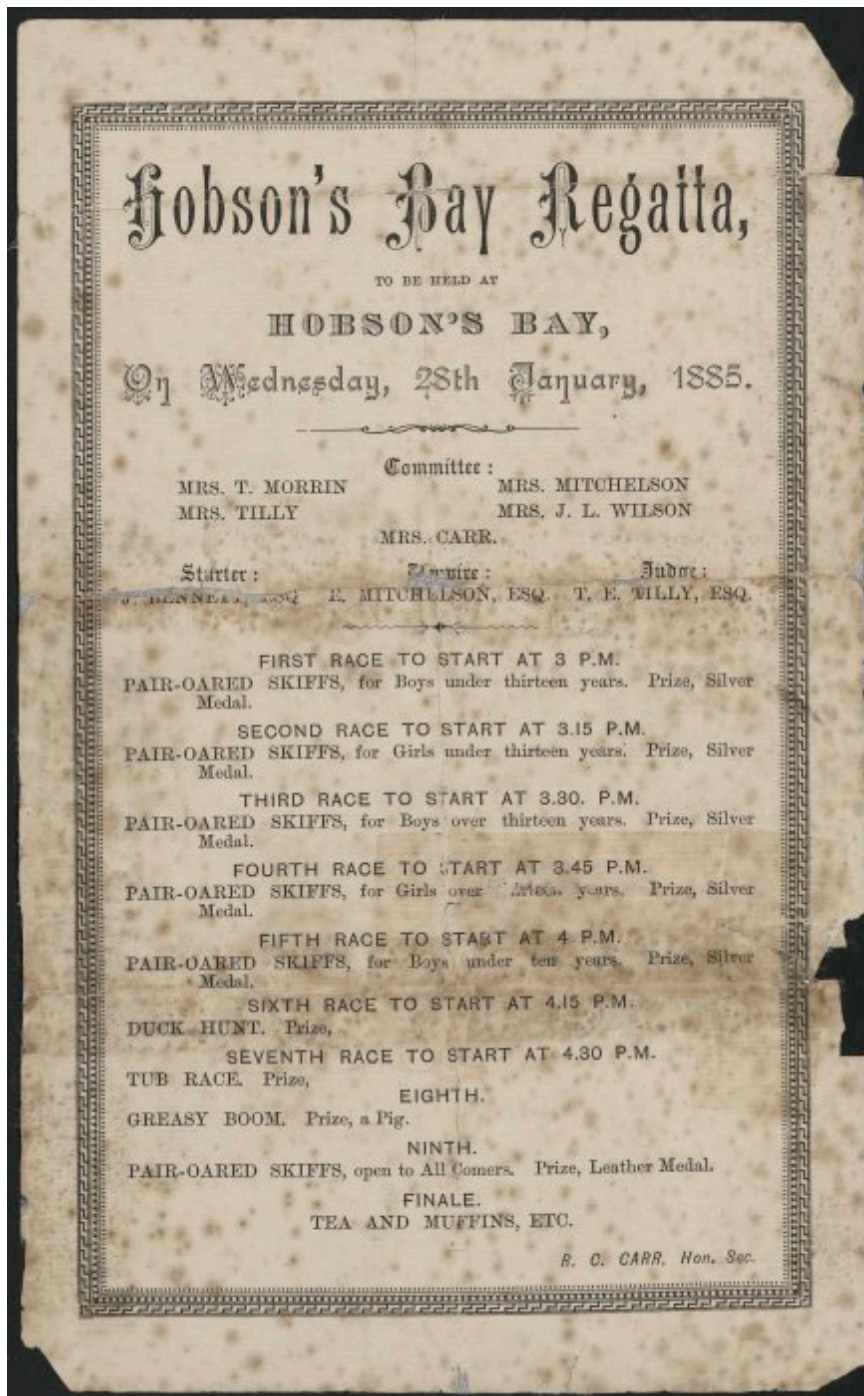


Figure 1: Programme for the Hobson's Bay Regatta, 1885. It lists the nine races that took place. The committee included Mrs T Morrin, Mrs Mitchelson, Mrs Tilly, Mrs J. L. Wilson and Mrs Carr (Eph-A-ROWING-1885-01, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand).

Historic images



Figure 2: Photograph showing the main sewer line across Hobson Bay under construction, with Wilson's Beach to the left, c.1910-11. Note that there is no sign of the jetty at this time (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 1150-1).

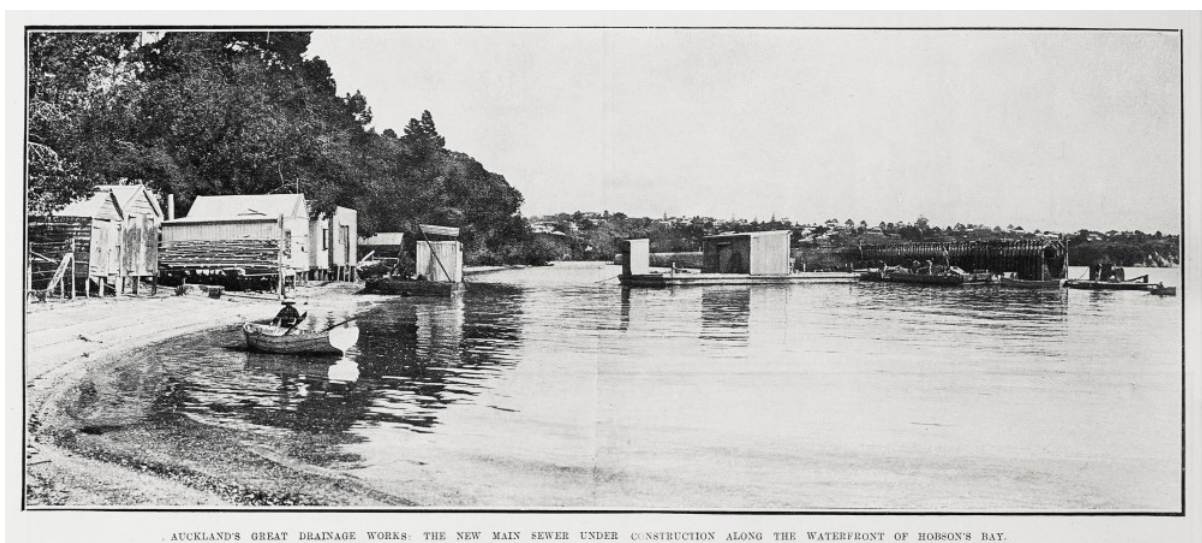


Figure 3: Photograph entitled "Auckland's Great Drainage Works: The new main sewer under construction along the waterfront of Hobson's Bay in 15 September 1910. Note the boatsheds on what is likely Wilson's Beach (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections AWNS-19100915-16-3).



Figure 4: Photograph showing a group of people standing on top of the Hobson Bay sewer, date unknown. Note that the jetty has been constructed, which extends up and over the sewer (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections, AHJ-G-191).



Figure 5: The first 'dated' photograph showing the jetty in the background and children on Wilsons Beach in the foreground, 1918 (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 7-A11230).

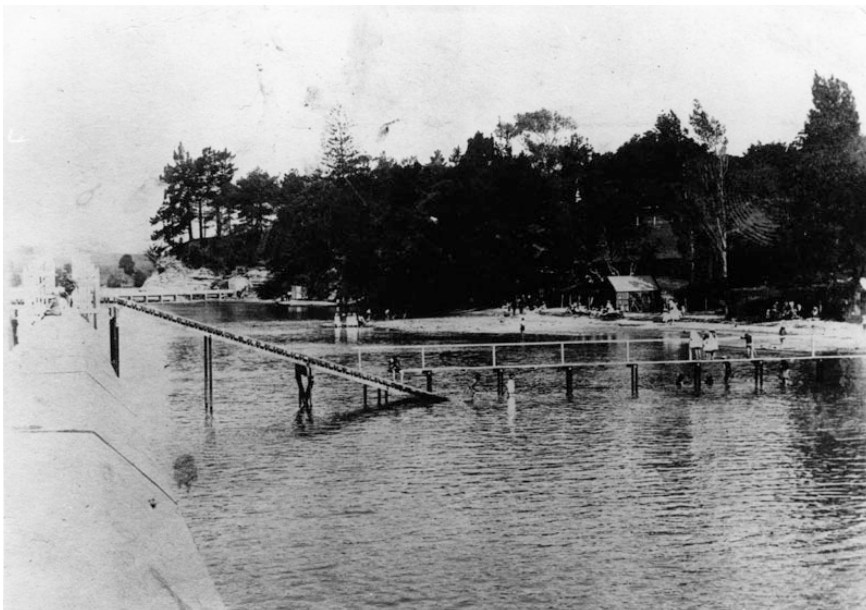


Figure 6: Showing the jetty and Wilson's Beach, 1920s (PH-CNEG-C26980).



Figure 7: Looking east along Wilson's Beach showing the main sewer line and the jetty in the distance. Note also the boat and bathing sheds along the beach (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 4-5685).

Oblique aerial view



Figure 8: Showing Hobson Bay, Victoria Avenue and Shore Road, Remuera (Whites Aviation Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, PA-Group-00080: Whites Aviation Ltd: Photographs, Reference: WA-34082-F, 1953).

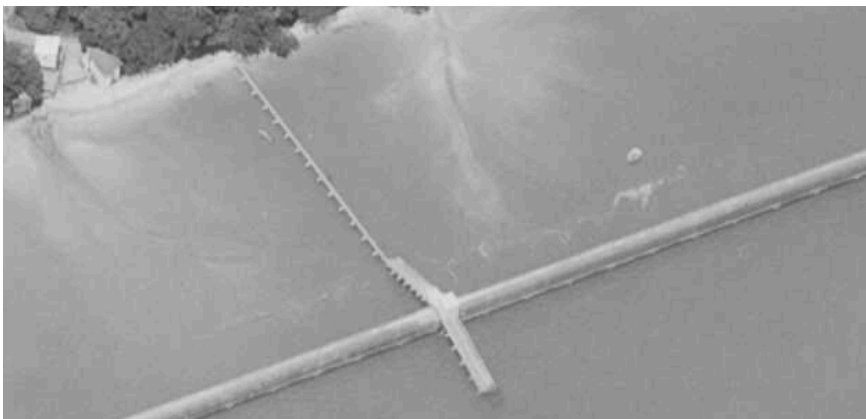


Figure 9: Close-up of above image, showing the jetty in place, extending up and over the main sewer line.

Series of aerial images (1940, 1959 and 2001)

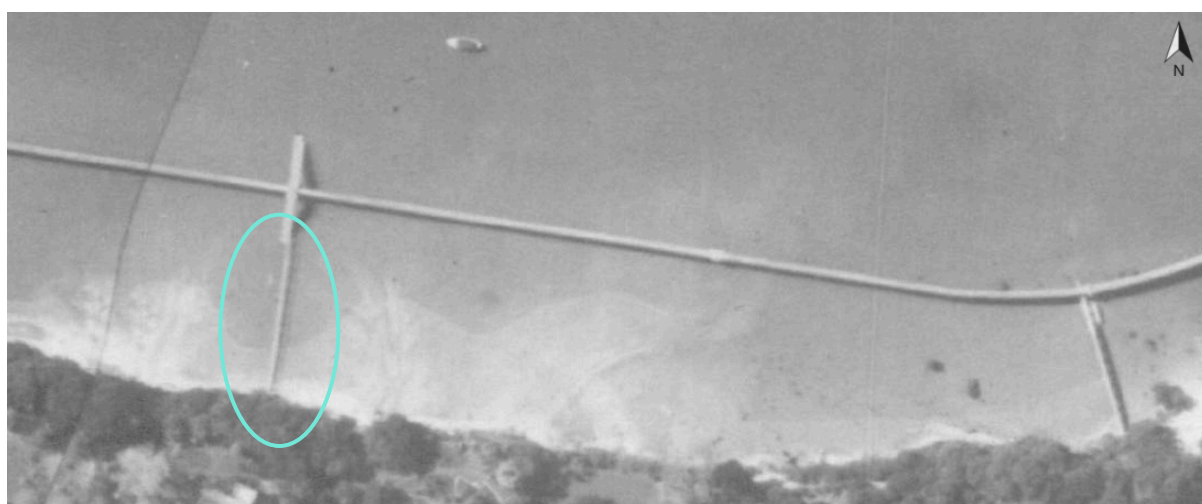


Figure 10: Series of aerial images (from top to bottom) 1940, 1959 and 2008 showing the Wilson's Beach Jetty (circled). Note in each of the images the jetty extends out into the bay and extends up and over the main sewer line (Auckland Council Geomaps).

Series of aerial images (2008, 2010-11 and 2017)



Figure 11: Series of aerial images (from top to bottom) 2008, 2010-11 and 2017 showing the Wilson's Beach Jetty (circled). Note in 2010-11, works have commenced with the removal of the main sewer line and shows that the extension over the line has been removed together with a section of the north end of the jetty. The 2017 image shows the jetty with no exposed sewer line (Auckland Council Geomaps).

Appendix 2: Newspaper articles

HARBOUR BOARD

JETTY AT REMUERA.—Mr F. A. White forwarded an application on behalf of the Remuera Land and Building Company (Limited) for the erection of a jetty at the foot of Victoria Avenue, late Hobson Road, Remuera. The writer stated that should substantial assistance be granted by the Board, the work would be proceeded with at once, arrangements having been made to ply one of the Ferry Company's steamers for the convenience of residents in the Remuera district.—Referred to the Works and Endowment Committee.

Figure 12: Earliest newspaper article found referring to a proposed jetty (Papers Past, Auckland Star, Volume XII, Issue 3425, 26 July 1881).

NEEDS OF REMUERA.

A WHARF ADVOCATED.

A DEPUTATION from the Remuera Ratepayers' Association, headed by Mr. D. Fallon, waited on the Remuera Road Board last night with reference to the proposed wharf at the foot of Victoria Avenue and the proposed slipways at Orakei Creek. The deputation pointed out what a great advantage such a wharf would be to the district, with special reference to the effect it would have on the price of building. Timber, bricks, lime, metal, and shingle, it was pointed out, could be delivered at the wharf at a much cheaper rate than at present, when they were landed in the city and conveyed to their destination by land, to the detriment of the roads in the district. It was also pointed out that metal could be brought up the coast which would be better and cheaper than that which was being obtained from the City Council. Remuera was, it was stated, absolutely cut off from sea communication of any kind. There was no harbour of any description in which even pleasure boats could be accommodated.

Six members of the deputation spoke in regard to the advantage a wharf would be to the whole district, and Mr. Fallon produced plans and estimates which he had prepared for such a wharf and the connection between the end of Victoria Avenue and the sewer from which it was proposed to start the wharf. One of these plans was for a bank 200ft long and 18ft wide from the shore line seawards, and for 180ft of wharf (nine spans of 20ft), which he estimated would cost in all £927 18s. Another scheme was for a bank 200ft long and 14ft wide, and a wharf 180ft long, 10ft wide, and 14ft high, which was estimated to cost £462. A slipway into Hobson Bay would, it was estimated, cost £47 10s.

The chairman of the board (Mr. J. Dempsey) said a wharf would evidently cost a considerable sum, which the board could not afford at present. He quite recognised how great an advantage a

wharf would be. The slipway seemed a much more reasonable proposition, and he would put the suggestion before the Drainage Board at the first possible opportunity.

Mr. G. W. Murray suggested that a special loan of £1000 might be raised for the purpose, and Mr. W. Parker expressed the opinion that the money should be raised by some means or other.

Ultimately it was decided, on the motion of Mr. S. M. Moore-Jones, that the board's engineer should consider the suggestions of the Ratepayers' Association, and report to a special meeting of the board to-morrow week.

The deputation also drew attention to an old-standing grievance, that of the sewage emptying into Hobson Bay, pointing out the offensive smells and other inconveniences it caused. The board was requested to urge the Drainage Board to stop the discharge of sewage on the mud flats, between Pittar's Point and Parnell, and to carry it forthwith to the outfall at Okahu Point. The board was further asked to request the Drainage Board to erect the retaining wall from Wilson's Point to Orakei Creek, and also to dredge and deepen the mouth of the creek, so that the sewage already deposited in the creek might be sluiced into deeper water in the harbour.

The chairman said that he hoped to see the sewage taken before long to the outfall at Okahu Point, and he would bring the matter before the Drainage Board at the earliest opportunity.

Figure 13: Newspaper article discussing a proposed 'wharf' at the foot of Victoria Avenue (Papers Past, New Zealand Herald, Volume L, Issue 15389, 26 August 1913).

Appendix 3: Photographs

The following photographs were taken by the author on 12 July 2019.





