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INTERIM REPORT: INVESTIGATION OF LAND ADJOINING GLENSIDE & STEBBINGS ROADS, CHURTON PARK.

This report documents the preliminary findings of the archaeological investigation of the Stebbings Farmlands subdivision that adjoins Glenside and Stebbings Roads at Churton Park (Pt Lot 1 DP 63967 and Pt Lot 1 DP 60664). The investigation was carried out between 5 - 8 December 2005 in accordance with Authority 2006/122 granted by the NZ Historic Places Trust on 25 November 2005.

PURPOSE OF INVESTIGATION

The subdivision is located within an area of early European settlement of Wellington. The property is part of one of the original sections that was surveyed and sold by the New Zealand Company along the Old Porirua Road¹. The Wall family is known to have lived there during the 1840s. There are old English trees present on the southern part of the property, including a holly, laurel and hawthorn hedge row. There is an artificial terrace near the corner of Glenside and Stebbings Roads. In 2003 during tree removal in the area of the subdivision, 19th century artefacts were disturbed (letter to Stebbings Farmlands Ltd, from NZ Historic Places Trust, 6 July 2005) although the place of origin could not be determined at that time.

The purpose of the investigation was to clarify the archaeological issues associated with the subdivision, locate any areas of intact archaeological material and establish any further archaeological requirements under the *Historic Places Act* 1993. Any evidence of early European occupation and activity that predates 1900, is an archaeological site as defined by the *Historic*

1. For details see Archaeological Appraisal: Proposed subdivision, Glenside Road, prepared for Stebbings Farmland Ltd, by arczoo Ltd., September 2005.

Places Act 1993 and is therefore subject to the provisions of that Act, as set out in the letter from the NZ Historic Places Trust to Stebbings Farmlands Ltd, 6 July 2005.

METHOD

On 5 and 6 December 2005 a mechanical excavator was used to clear the ground and dig a series of trenches in three areas of the subdivision. The locations of the trenches were selected on the basis of the conveyancing history of the land parcels and locations favourable for house construction. Mechanical excavation proceeded by layers; each layer was inspected for archaeological material before excavation continued. In the event that archaeological material was encountered, mechanical excavation would cease and the investigation proceed by hand.

RESULTS

Area 1

Area 1 was above the intersection of Glenside and Stebbings Roads at the northern end of the subdivision. A digger with rubber tracks was used to clear the area to be investigated of the overlying vegetation. The vegetation was mainly comprised of blackberry, grass weeds and broom. Initially the area was cleared roughly to enable the underlying topography of the land to be discerned. A terrace approximately 6m by 4m was revealed. This was then cleared gently without disturbing the soil layer to remove most of the vegetation which was cut back until only short stalks were left protruding out of the topsoil.

The digger uncovered a pile of bricks and large water-rolled river stones at the northern end of the terrace. Then a thin layer of topsoil was removed from across the site revealing a brick paved area at the north western corner of the terrace, several areas of scattered bricks and a few possible rubbish pits across the terrace.

Trench No.1 was excavated from southwest to northeast along the outer edge of the terrace. A rubbish pit containing fragments of ceramic and glass was noted at the southwestern end of the north wall of the trench. Eight post holes less than 1m apart (c.3 feet) were exposed running in a parallel row close to the northern wall of the trench. The post holes were between 15 -20cm in diameter. Outside the post hole alignment was a mound of large rolled rivers stones and brick, some with evidence of burning, which may be the remains of a fireplace (Figure 1).

Trench 2 was excavated parallel with and 30cm north of Trench 1. A baulk was left between the two trenches. This trench destroyed an area of bricks on the surface of the top soil but also exposed several more post holes at the north western and north eastern ends of the trench.

The third area, that lay between the brick "footpath" and the area of rubbish holes was stripped to a depth of c.10-15cm exposing four post holes containing broken bricks (Figure 2).

Following the recording of the features in Area 1, the excavation was covered with a geotextile fabric and the soil replaced. This will ensure the site is protected until any future action is decided upon.



Figure 1: Trenches on terrace, stone and brick mound (bottom left).



Figure 2: Cleared area on terrace, with brick paving (top left) post hole alignment (right) and mound (top right).

Area 2

Area 2 was above the bend in Glenside Road just north of the culvert. The initial cut for the trench revealed an overburden of fill. The excavator operator recalled work carried out in this area during earlier subdivisions above and believed that there was a large amount of fill deposited in this area. No further trenching was undertaken.

Area 3

A trench 2m wide and c. 30 m long was dug between the trees and the fence on the upper side of Glenside Road (Figure 3). A few fragments of 19th century ceramics were recovered, several glass bottles from the period around 1970 (coca cola, ABC beer and Leed lemonade) and some old, poor quality brick fragments. The trench was excavated to the sterile layer and showed no indication of any archaeological features – post holes, foundations or rubbish pits.

An area behind the old trees was said by local informants to be where an old house had been situated. This area is now covered with fill from the earlier work associated with the subdivision. A test pit 2m wide and 3-4m deep was excavated to the original surface by the digger (Figure 4). This test pit showed the disturbed material used for fill: clay/rocks, old iron, tyres, wood etc.



Figure 3: Trench along Glenside Road.



Figure 4: Test pit behind trees, note layers of fill.

DISCUSSION

Trenches excavated across the central and southern areas of the subdivision revealed the extent to which these areas have already been modified by the subdivision of land above Glenside Road, particularly work associated with the formation of Wentwood Close. The addition of fill and the piping of the stream has significantly altered the original land form. No archaeological features were apparent in these areas, although some scattered bricks and domestic rubbish were noted.

It is considered unlikely that any intact archaeological features are present in these areas. If present on the original ground surface in Area 1 around the English trees, the addition of yet more fill in the subdivision earthworks plan makes discovery even less likely.

The Historic Places Trust should be consulted to confirm that an authority is no longer required for earthworks in these areas.

Even if an authority is not required, contractors should still be briefed on the chance of finding archaeological material, such as post holes, brick features or paving or rubbish pits, and the steps to take in this instance. That is, that work in the vicinity should be halted and the Historic Places Trust be advised as soon as possible.

The house foundations and associated features in Lot 10 clearly predate 1900 and therefore comprise an archaeological site as defined by the Historic Places Act. The provisions of that Act apply, and any further earthworks in Lot 10 to construct a building platform, access way or services will require an authority (consent) from the Historic Places Trust.

The date when the house was first constructed is not yet known. Work is under way to analyse the artefacts recovered from the site and to carry out further historical research to more accurately date the phases of construction and occupation. A report will be compiled and submitted shortly on this work, in compliance with the authority issued by the Trust to investigate the subdivision area.

Until the investigation report is completed, the relationship between the house site and the early settlement along the Old Porirua Road will not be clearly known. The findings of that report are relevant to the discussion below, as ultimately the archaeological and historical values of the site will determine the most appropriate future option.

At this point, it appears there are two options for the future of the site. The first involves avoiding any further disturbance to the site by permanently burying it and maintaining the area in grass, possibly as a small reserve. It would not be possible to build on Lot 10 in such a way as to avoid affecting the site.

The second option involves mitigating the loss of the site, caused by the development of Lot 10, through the recovery of information. This approach is often used where it is not possible to preserve features or sites in place. Information about the past recovered under such circumstances should be made publicly available as a contribution to the understanding of New Zealand's history. In this particular case, an interpretation panel giving the early history of Glenside Road could also make a positive contribution.

If option two is adopted, it is suggested that Stebbings Farmlands Ltd. apply for the authority to prepare the lot for building and commission the archaeological work required. This would ensure that the lot could be sold with no encumbrances for the future owner. If the lot is sold 'as is', any person intending to build on the lot would have to apply for an authority from the Historic Places Trust and ensure the archaeological work was carried out before they could build a house and develop the section.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with NZ Historic Places Trust Authority 2006/122, test trenches were excavated across the Stebbings Farmlands subdivision that adjoins Glenside and Stebbings Roads at Churton Park (Pt Lot 1 DP 63967 and Pt Lot 1 DP 60664) to determine if any archaeological material was present. The area is associated with the early European settlement of Wellington and the original Porirua Road.

The remains of a small building, including post holes, possible fireplace, window glass and rubbish pits, were uncovered at the northern end of the subdivision near the intersection of Stebbings and Glenside Road. This building was constructed prior to 1900 and the remains are an archaeological site as defined by the Historic Places Act. *An authority is required from the Historic Places Trust for any further work that will disturb this site.* The site has been covered over to ensure its short term protection. The final report of the investigation (in preparation) will provide further information about the archaeological and historic values of the site, to assist with decisions about its future.

Much of the remainder of the subdivision area has already been modified by earthworks associated with earlier phases of residential development and is highly disturbed. No other archaeological features were identified in the subdivision.



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