

## 6.6 Oakura Cemetery

### Description

|                         |                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Location:               | End of Butler's Lane, Oakura     |
| Legal description:      | Lot 4 DP 353145                  |
| Size:                   | 0.89 hectares                    |
| Reserve status:         | Subject to Reserves Act 1977     |
| Reserve classification: | Local purpose (cemetery) reserve |



### Physical description

The cemetery is accessed from Butler's Lane, at the eastern edge of Oakura Township on State Highway 45. There is also a pedestrian access from the end of Hussey Street. The cemetery graves are located at the northwestern end of the cemetery, running parallel and close to Butler's Lane. The cemetery comprises of flat ground in this area and also along the western edge parallel with the pedestrian walkway. Beyond these areas the cemetery land slopes moderately to a lower flat area which lies on the edge of a cliff dropping down to the Oakura River bed. The cliff area and its margins are covered in native bush.

There are views of farmland to the east and the Kaitake Ranges to the south.

### Tangata whenua interests

This reserve is within the tribal rohe of Taranaki Iwi. It is of historic and cultural significance to Nga Mahanga-a-Tairi hapu.

### Land status and acquisition history

A gazette notice in October 1881 (page 1308), James Prendergast Chief Justice of the Colony of New Zealand and Administrator of the Government pursuant to 'The Special Powers and Contracts Act 1881' changed the purpose of the reserve from

educational to cemetery. The reserve being Town Belt No.8, Oakura Township. The educational purpose for the land had been granted under a New Zealand Act in November of 1871, allowing the Governor to ‘Grant Endowment land for the support of Common Schools in the Province of Taranaki’.

In a gazette notice dated September 1933 (page 2429), Governor-General Bledisloe pursuant to Section 4 the ‘Cemeteries Act 1908’, delegated the Taranaki County Council the powers to appoint and remove Trustees.

Governor Cobham in March 1960 by gazette notice (page 375), appointed the Taranaki County Council as Trustees of the Oakura Cemetery pursuant to the Cemeteries Act 1908. The cemetery is described at this time as Section 27 Oakura Town Belt of some two acres (0.809 hectares). The notice also revoked the Council’s powers to appoint and remove trustees initiated on 18 September 1933.

The cemetery was classified as Local purpose (cemetery) reserve in a gazette notice dated October 2005 (page 4522), and authorised by Frank Versteeg, Principal Administrative Officer of the New Plymouth District Council.

In September 2005, the Council approved a land exchange with the neighbour on the southern boundary, who gained 22m<sup>2</sup> of cemetery land to facilitate that property’s access to Hussey Street. 250m<sup>2</sup> of that neighbour’s land was amalgamated into the cemetery. The land added to the cemetery, now named Lot 3 DP 315326 is a triangular section adjoining the cemetery south-eastern boundary and the Oakura River. It has assumed local purpose (cemetery) reserve status<sup>1</sup> and subject to the Burial and Cremations Act 1964. An esplanade strip is also associated with this portion of land.

The appellation for the Oakura Cemetery has changed from Town Belt No. 8 Oakura Township, to Section 27 Oakura Town Belt and finally to Lot 4 DP 353145.

The underlying title to the land is with the Crown.

### **History and cultural values**

The Crown originally appointed trustees to control and manage the cemetery. The trustees were first appointed in 1887 by gazette notice (page 1221-22), with further appointments recorded by gazette notice in 1915 (page 3226-6).

The power of appointing and removing trustees was delegated to the Council in 1933. The Trustees approached the Council in October 1959 “desiring that the Council accept the responsibility and care of the cemetery”. The Council was appointed trustees by the Crown in 1960 and the land then vested in the Council in accordance with Section 5(2) of the Burials and Cremations Act 1964.

The walkway between the end of Butler’s Lane and Hussey Street was once an unformed road, being the continuance of Hussey Street. The walkway is part of a legal road reserve and was completed in 1999.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 15(6) of the Reserves Act 1977.

The flat northwestern part of the cemetery was nearing capacity by 2000, and the need for more burial areas to develop in the cemetery was pressing, with the moderately sloping land below the existing burial area being too steep for traditional burials without some form of modification. The area of high ground to the south of the existing burials is suitably flat for traditional burials, however there was uncertainty as to whether unmarked graves existed in the area.

In 2002, the Council engaged G.P.R. Geophysical Services to assess the presence of any historical gravesites in the area – unmarked graves at the western area of the cemetery, parallel with the pedestrian walkway between Butlers Lane and Hussey Street. The report completed in January 2003, using ground penetrating radar concluded that the majority of the survey area showed no signs of anomalies that could be considered grave related. There were four anomalies detected on the eastern side of the Adlam memorial considered as possible grave sites.

Retaining walls have been added to extend the existing burial area to the sloped terrain. Three sets of retaining walls made of treated pine have been installed on the slopes.

Oakura Cemetery is a Category B heritage site in the District Plan.

There is an esplanade reserve immediately north of the cemetery, and an esplanade strip immediately to the south.

#### **Existing improvements**

One outdoor tap, seat and rubbish bin and two signs exist in the cemetery and a concrete war memorial is located at the cemetery's entrance.

#### **Management and administration**

Conceptual landscape architectural designs for development of the remaining area of the cemetery were produced in 2002.

Three conceptual design proposals for a road accessing the lower part and slopes of the cemetery were produced 2004

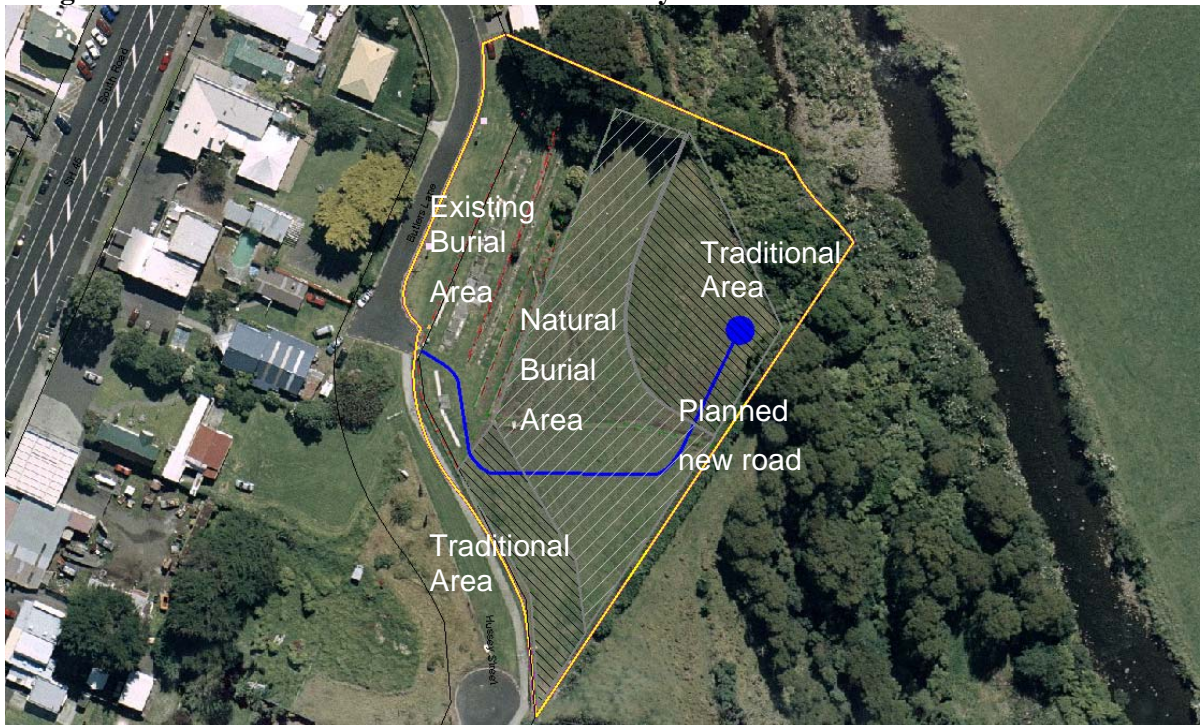
The setting aside of the sloping area of Oakura Cemetery for natural burials was resolved by the Council on 10 March 2009. Following the Council resolution on 31 August 2010, this management plan will consider the options of memorialisation for the natural burial area at Awanui Cemetery. Development of the natural burial area to advance it's opening to the public is subject to funding approval by the Council in the 2011/2012 Annual Plan.

The cemetery land is separated by a fence between the burial area and that which is grazed by horses.

### Management objectives and specific policy

- This cemetery is managed as an open cemetery.
- The undeveloped part of the cemetery will be managed through grazing.
- A road is planned to access the lower flat area of the cemetery, which is to be developed for traditional burials.
- A natural burial area is to be developed on the sloping portion of the cemetery (see below).

### Designated natural burial area at Oakura Cemetery



**Outlined area indicates the area of pre 1900 development at the cemetery, constituting an archaeological area under the Historic Places Act 1993.**

