

# AUCKLAND COUNCIL ARCHIVES PRESENTS...

---



# FLUSHED OUT

THE SECRETS OF THE PUBLIC TOILET

# THE CONVENIENCE OF CONVENIENCES

- The establishment of public toilets and the changing ways in which they have been needed and used tell interesting stories about aspects of our social history. For something as seemingly mundane as a toilet, we really can infer a lot about what was going on in our city, who was here and what their needs were.
- Auckland has been New Zealand's largest city since 1891. Early on there was recognition from locals and governing bodies that certain needs were to be met if Auckland was to be considered a modern city.
- One of the major issues facing the authorities was the growing need for public toilets. On 18 August 1863, it was passed by the City Board of Commissioners "that the work be forthwith proceeded with" to build the first men's public toilet in Auckland.
- This first toilet was a urinal and water closet located at the beginning of Queen Street Wharf on Custom House Street (now Customs Street) constructed to serve the ever-busy wharf and surrounding areas. It must be said that one public toilet serving a busy port of a city with over 6000 inhabitants would not have met the high demand, but it was certainly the beginning of journey toward improving public sanitation and it set the tone for Auckland's public toilet history.



QUEEN STREET WHARF AND  
SHIPPING IN 1864, WITH  
NORTH HEAD AND MOUNT  
VICTORIA IN THE DISTANCE  
BY HENRY WINKELMANN

## UNDERGROUND - LITERALLY & METAPHORICALLY

- As Auckland and demand for public conveniences grew, there were challenges regarding where the toilets could be constructed. Buildings were popping up left, right and centre and conveniences needed to be in locations where the needs were greatest. This helped drive the decision to take conveniences underground.
- There were several benefits of subterranean toilets. They could be placed at busy intersections if need be. There was also no impact on architectural feature or the streetscape. Another, less literal reason conveniences went underground was partly due to social and moral attitudes of the late 19th and early 20th centuries regarding such delicate matters as using the toilet. Authorities had the mission of erecting new facilities so they were discreet, but could be found and were safe to use.
- However, there was a darker side to the underground toilets. While distinctly 'there', underground toilets were subtly concealed from view and underhandedly worked to conceal the acts that took place within them. Driven by public concerns about safety, Auckland City Council made policy changes in 1942 which meant they were no longer building underground toilets.

# DURHAM STREET WEST MEN'S CONVENIENCE

- Built 1880
- Thought to be the only remaining 19<sup>th</sup> century convenience building
- Believed to be oldest surviving public toilets in Auckland in use until recently
- Bluestone wall to be deconstructed and moved 1 metre for the City Rail Link
- Conveniences will not be reinstated due to limited space

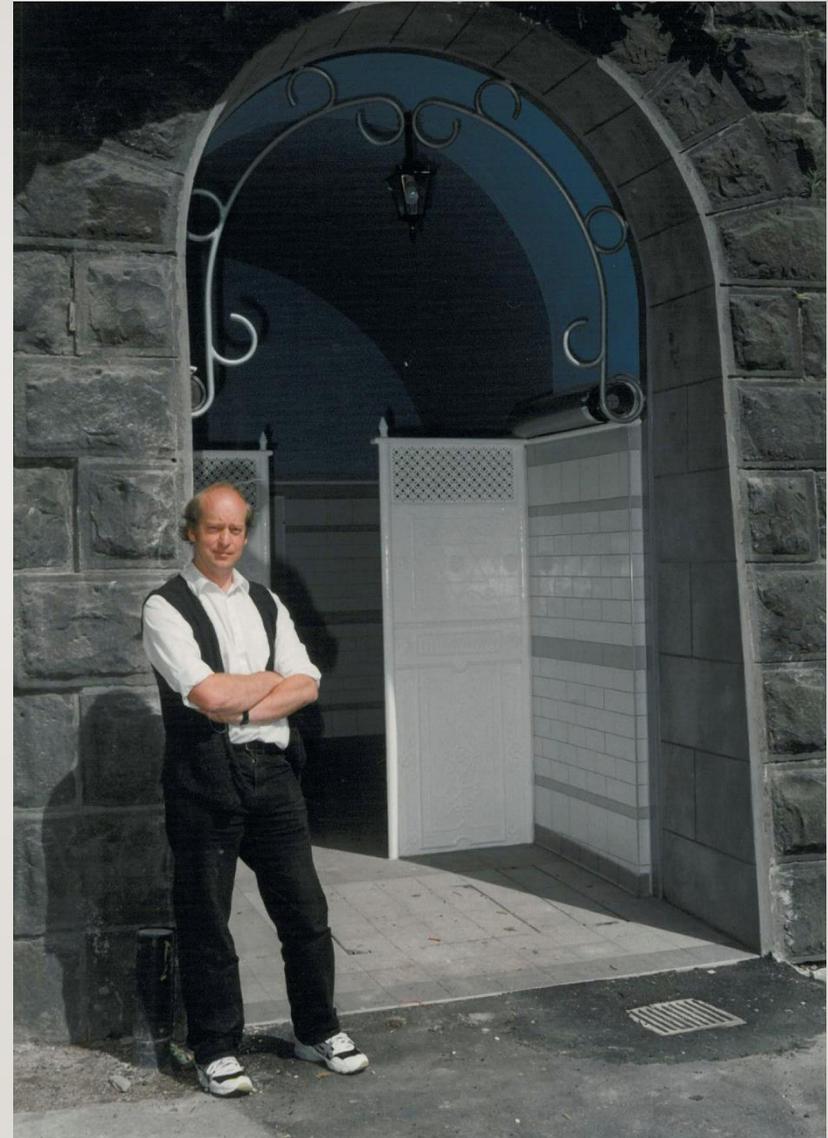




# DURHAM STREET WEST MEN'S CONVENIENCE

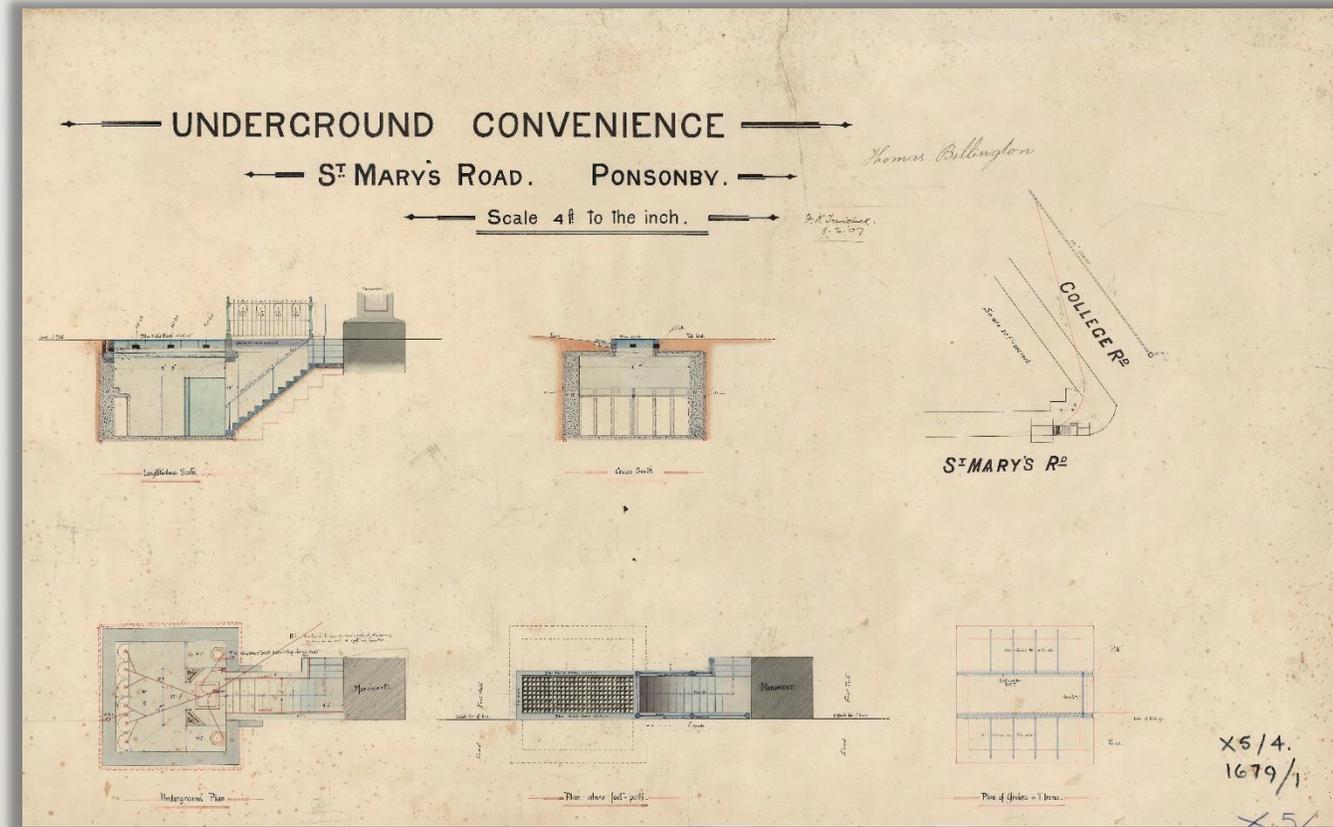
---

- City Design architect, Chris Thom at the entrance to the Durham Street toilets
- The toilet was refurbished in 1996
- The lamp and wrought iron work above the doorway were new additions
- Very little of the original interior remains apart from the decorative screens



# THREE LAMPS MEN'S CONVENIENCE

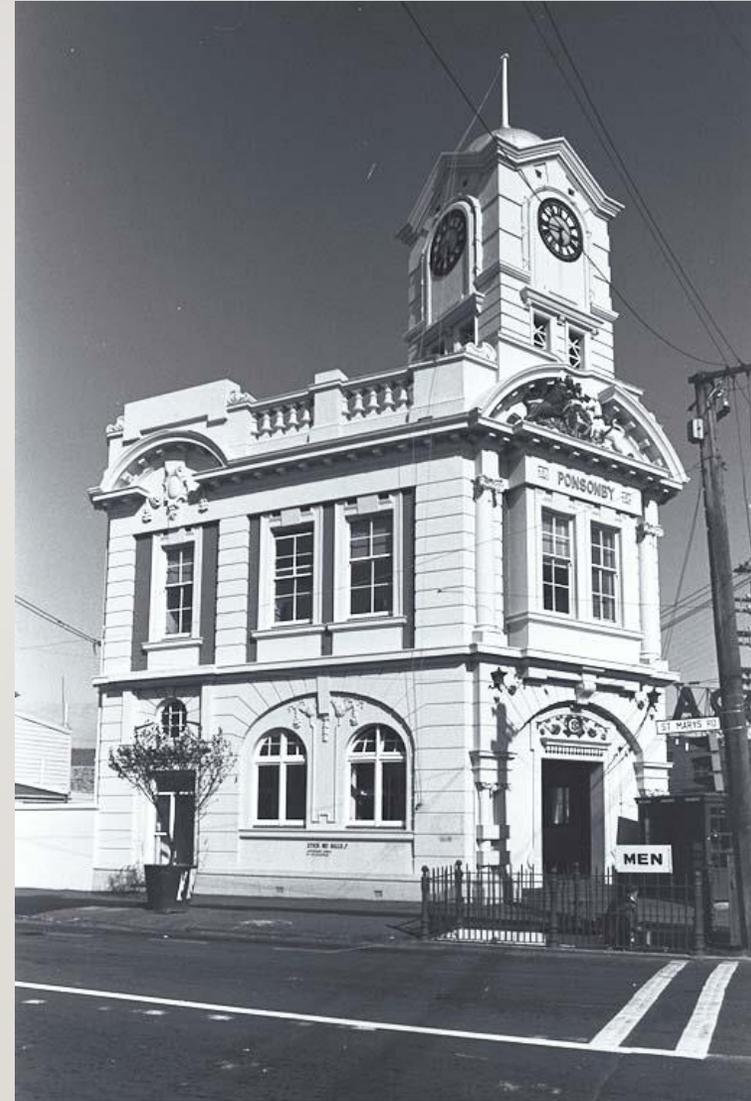
- Built 1907
- Located at the intersection of Ponsonby Road, Jervois Road, College Hill and St Mary's Road by the old Post Office
- Had a glass brick ceiling and roof to let in light and decorative cast iron railings around the entrance for safety and street appeal
- Aside from maintenance and some modernising, the toilets are still much the same



# THE THREE LAMPS INCIDENT

---

- On 27 March 1963, a two-and-a-half-ton pavement roller broke through the roof of the convenience.
- City Council workers had replaced the concrete slabs covering the convenience and were rolling the re-laid footpath, when the driver, Mr Ley Tuala felt the front of his roller go down. He quickly leapt out of his seat.
- The roller had broken through a slab. Then a second slab gave way, leaving the roller hanging upside down. A crane was brought in to lift the roller out.
- The intrusion by the pavement roller didn't cause any major damage to the toilet facilities and the concrete slabs were replaced.



# WINDSOR RESERVE DEVONPORT

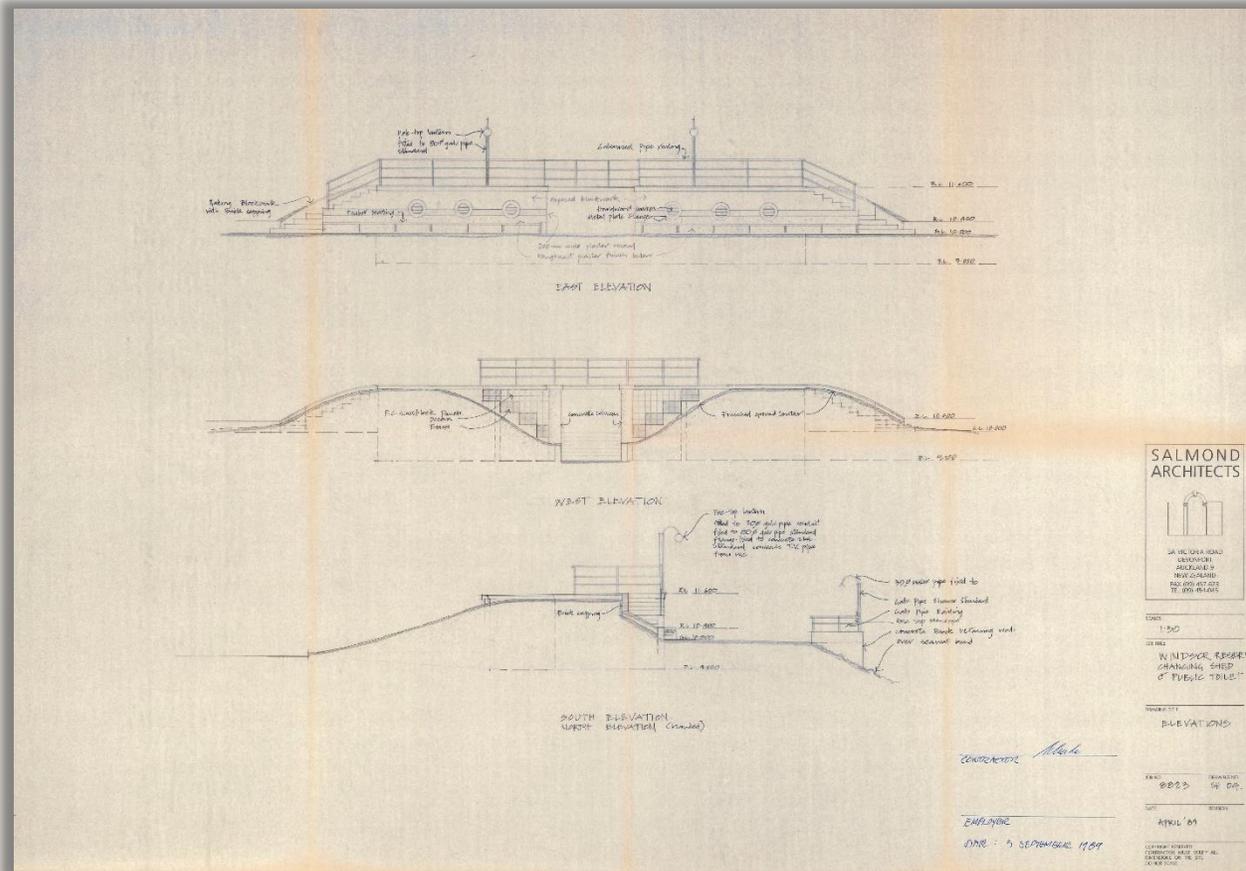
---

- An example of modern underground toilets
- Built 1990
- Designed by architect Jeremy Salmond
- They replaced the 1960s changing sheds which were considered a blight on the landscape



# WINDSOR RESERVE CHANGING SHED AND PUBLIC TOILET - ELEVATIONS

## SALMOND ARCHITECTS, 1989



## WINDSOR RESERVE CHANGING SHED AND TOILETS, 1994-1995

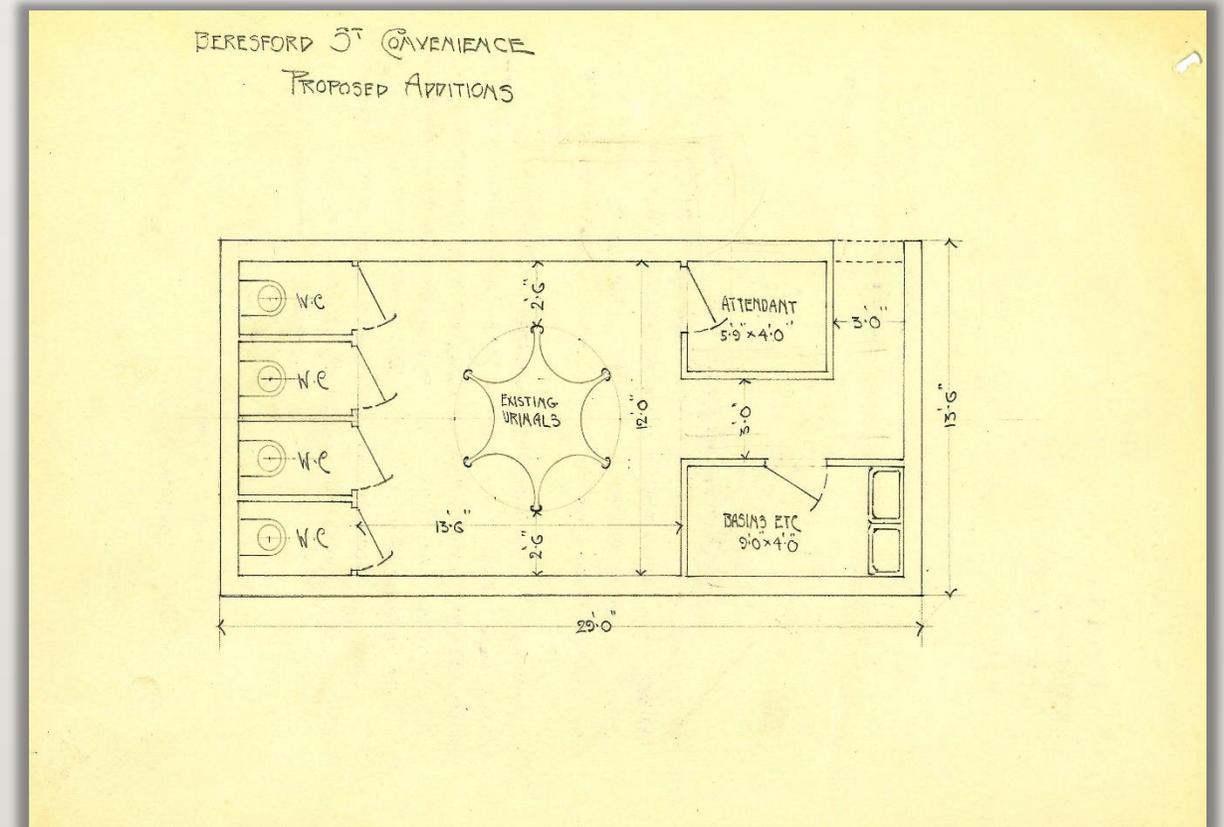
---

- Inventive design – the toilets are partially excavated into the ground to minimise impact on the view
- Architectural features such as port-hole windows and metal bannisters around the viewing platform give a nautical feel to the toilets
- Jeremy Salmond won an award from the Auckland branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects for his design

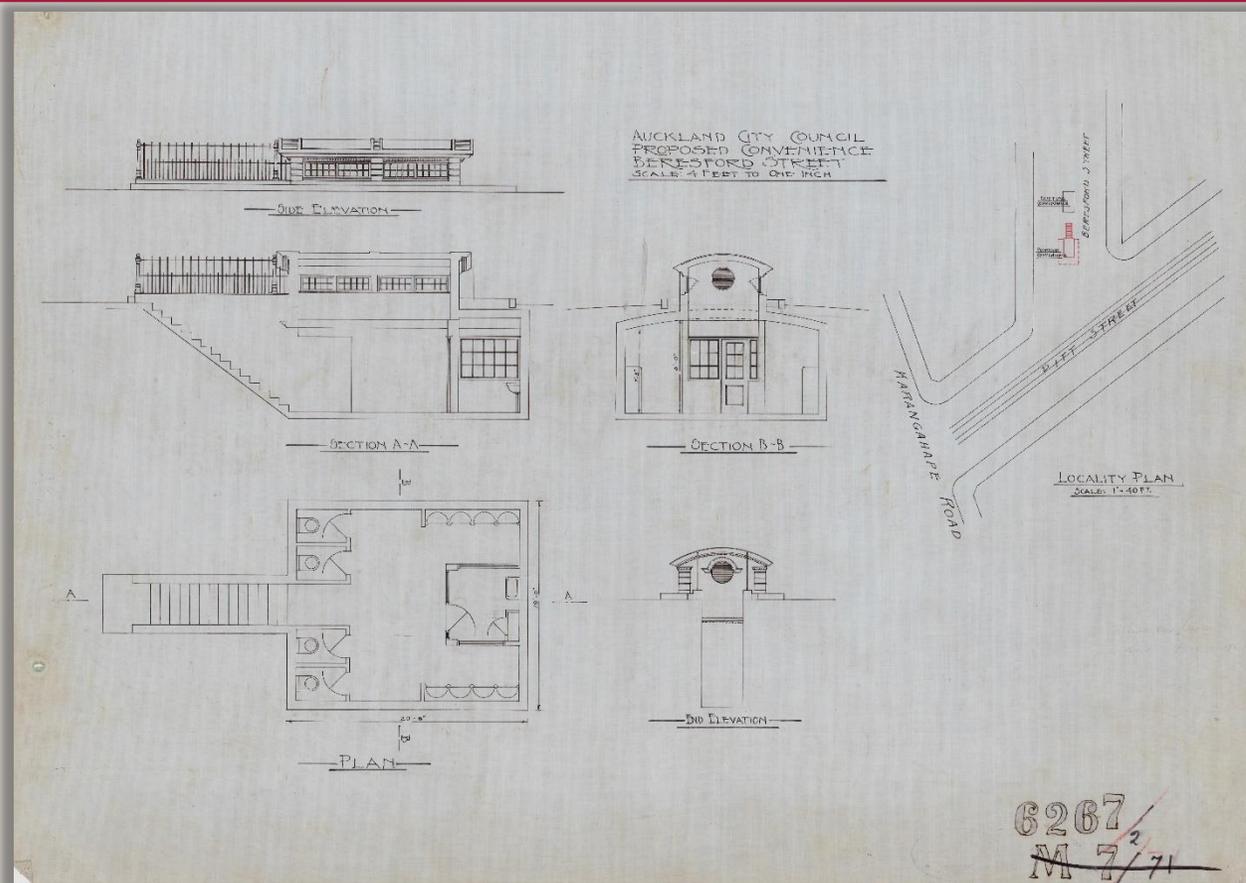


# BERESFORD STREET MEN'S CONVENIENCES

- Above-ground men's conveniences built 1906
- In 1914 building was extended and interior alterations made
- People complained it was an eyesore and attracted undesirable behavior, the Auckland Gas Company wrote 'our salesmen report they have frequently seen happenings that are anything but conducive to the welfare of the public in this vicinity'
- In 1925 it was decided to build underground instead of removing the toilets
- Underground conveniences opened 1926



# AUCKLAND CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED CONVENIENCE BERESFORD STREET, 1925



## BERESFORD STREET CAFÉ AND BAR, 1995

---

- Toilets closed at the request of NZ Police in 1993
- The unwanted toilet was leased and later sold to Steven Marinovich
- Example of adaptive re-use when Mr Marinovich converted the space into a café and bar
- The former toilet will be demolished for the City Rail Link project
- The above-ground glass structure is being recycled as a café on Niue



## FUNCTIONALITY AND ARCHITECTURAL AESTHETIC

- Functionality and aesthetic architectural elements are two common themes in some of the early public toilets in and around Auckland.
- It was common to build a public toilet that also had other functional elements: a tram shelter, a restroom, changing sheds and power substations to name a few.
- These were practical, time and money saving decisions that were made to maximise ratepayer contributions for public amenities and were often a result of practical constraints such as convenience and available land.

# GRAFTON BRIDGE TOILETS & SHELTER

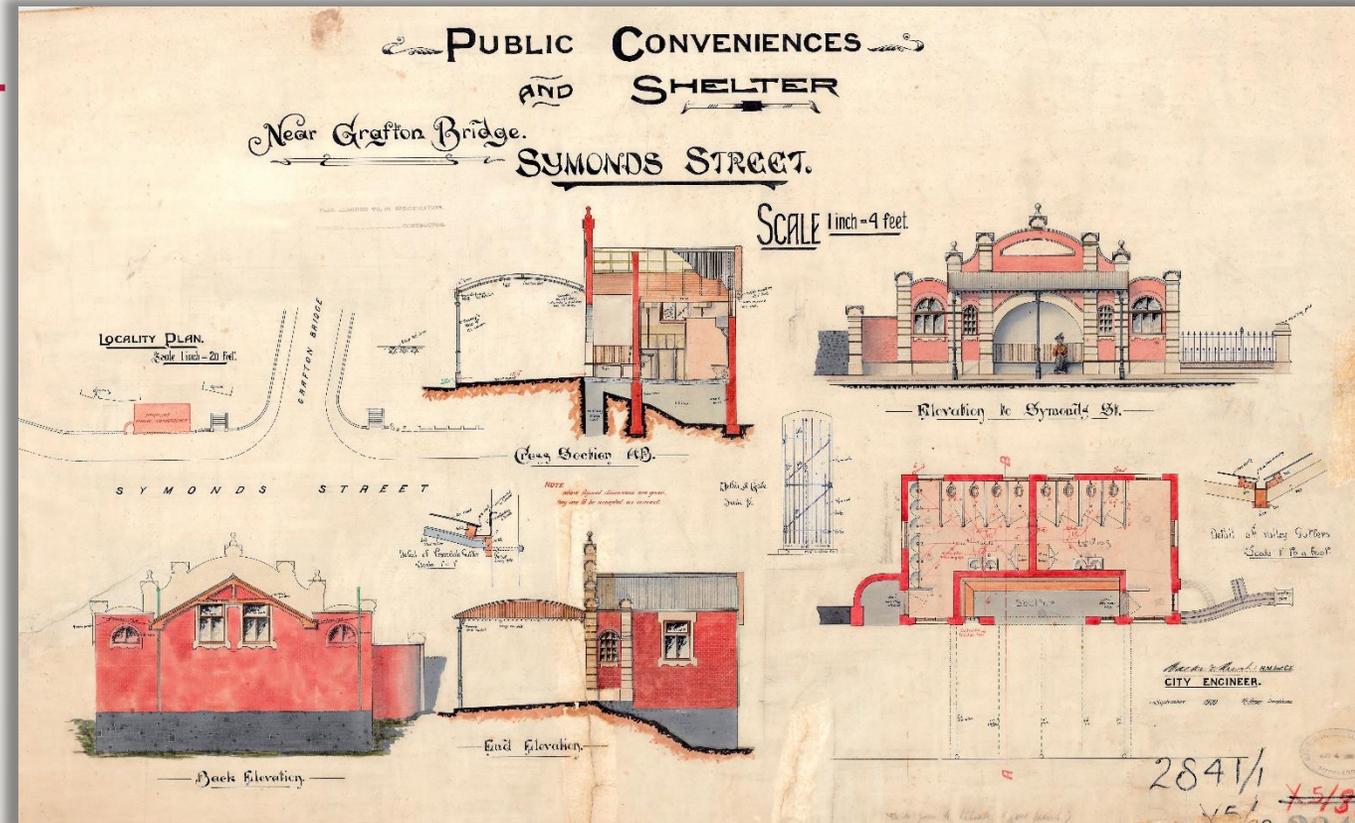
---

- Built 1910 to coincide with opening of Grafton Bridge
- Edwardian Baroque architectural style
- First public toilet to incorporate a tram shelter
- First public toilet to cater for women



# SYMONDS STREET PUBLIC CONVENIENCES AND SHELTER 4 AUGUST 1909

- Alterations were made in the 1920s
- Originally the entrance to the women's toilet was inside the tram shelter
- Women had to squeeze past people waiting in the shelter to enter the toilet
- The entranceway was moved to the side of the building to reflect the layout of the men's toilet



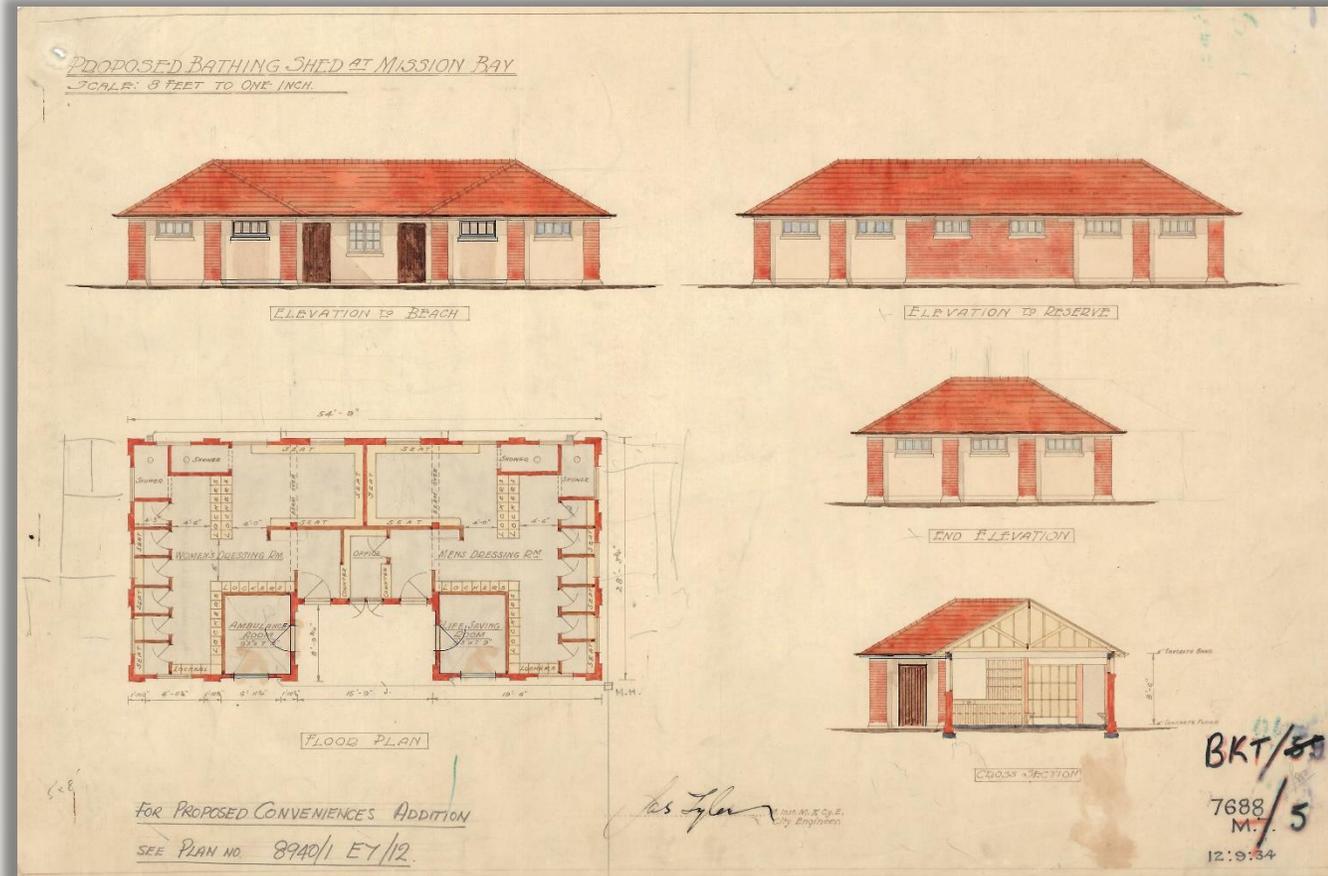
# MISSION BAY CHANGING SHEDS AND TOILETS

- 
- Built in 1934 as dressing sheds
  - Toilet and shower facilities were added in 1946
  - In 1957 the building was extended
  - The building was re-designed in 1998



# PROPOSED BATHING SHED AT MISSION BAY, 1934

- Until the mid-1930s facilities at Mission Bay were basic with 'corrugated iron enclosures for dressing sheds and no showers whatsoever'
- A permanent structure with dressing rooms and lockers, an ambulance room, a lifesaving room and an office was built in 1934
- BUT there were no toilet facilities
- In 1946 an important addition was made – toilets
- The bathing shed has been modernised and redecorated but the exterior remains much the same



# WAIUKU PLUNKET & RESTROOM

---

- Waiuku Plunket was established 30 May 1929 and the Waiuku Town Board was asked to provide a ladies' restroom and Plunket room
- On 26 November 1937 the Waiuku Plunket and Restroom in Queen Street was officially opened
- The restroom served the Waiuku community until 1987 when the Civic Centre in King Street was built
- The old Plunket and ladies' restroom became redundant and was eventually sold by the council
- It has since been used for many other purposes, including a funeral home



# HOBSONVILLE WAR MEMORIAL PARK TOILETS

---

- Hobsonville War Memorial park was established in the early 1950s
- Toilet block built 1959 with various sports clubs sharing the facility
- Consisted of 4 men's and women's toilets at rear of the bowling club
- Waitakere City Council decided to replace the toilets which were poorly located and often vandalised
- New toilets were designed by architectural firm Archoffice in 2009 and built by Cassidy Construction



# HOBSONVILLE DOMAIN PUBLIC TOILETS – ELEVATIONS

## HENRI SAYES, ARCHOFFICE, 3 MARCH 2009

FINISHES LEGEND	
SYMBOL	DESCRIPTION
PC	PRECAST PANEL LOCKER GROUP PERIPH STEEL SCREEN
SS	STEEL SCREEN STEEL SCREEN, FIXED INTERSECTING & 20MM GALV STEEL MEMBERS, REFER ELEVATIONS FOR SETOUT, PAINT FINISH - RESINE, REFER SPEC. - SEMI GLOSS REFER SPECIFICATION
MB	METALBLT DOORS METALBLT RECESSED FLUSH PANEL DOORS, COLOUR RESINE, TRANSPARENT, REFER SPEC. SEMI GLOSS REFER SPECIFICATION
PS	PLATE STEEL ROOF 20MM GALV PLATE STEEL ROOF (2X) & ARC SPRAYS WITH 400G EA SUB FRAME WITH RESINE, ANTI-CORROSION TREATED URACIL, PAINT SYSTEM, TRANSPARENT REFER SPEC. SEMI GLOSS REFER SPEC. DRAWINGS AND RESINE SPECIFICATION
SDR	STEEL DOOR REVEAL 40MM GALV STEEL DOOR REVEAL, PAINT FINISH - RESINE, COLOUR REFER SPEC. SEMI GLOSS REFER SPECIFICATION

ARCHITECTS | INTERIOR DESIGNERS | PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

1A, 47 Brown Street P 08 380 2817  
 Pongere, Auckland F 08 380 2818  
 Box 182 019, Pongere E info@archoffice.co.nz  
 Auckland

Client  
**WCC - PARKS**

Project  
**HOBSONVILLE DOMAIN PUBLIC  
 TOILET**  
 126 HOBSONVILLE ROAD  
 WAITAKERE CITY

Title  
**ELEVATIONS**

Date	Drawn	Checked
03.03.09	HCWS	JFI

Scale: AS SHOWN JOB NO: 08-006

Scale: 1:500

DD01 - INFORMATION ONLY REV

Drawing number: A310

Print time & date: 9:00 AM Friday, May 22, 2009

File path:  
 H:\Active Projects\2008\08-006\WCC-Hobsonville  
 Domain\CAD\05-001\_Arch\CAD\Files\PLN\Final\08-006  
 WCC-Hobsonville\_05-001.dwg

# HOBSONVILLE WAR MEMORIAL PARK TOILETS

- Archoffice created a design that could be used at different locations, was easy to maintain and vandal-proof
- It is a two-unit accessible toilet with a floating roof and decorative perforated stainless-steel screen
- References the past with images of Royal NZ Air Force planes on the cladding
- One in a series of toilet blocks designed by Archoffice for Waitakere City Council



## TOILETS FOR ALL

- The topic of gender and toilets has long been an ongoing issue.
- In 1949, Auckland City Council operated 20 men's conveniences and only six women's. Even in the 1950s public conveniences for women had to be fought for and justified.
- The Auckland West Federation of Country Women wrote to the Council in 1958 asking for more public conveniences for women and children. The City Engineer conducted a report and found there were 25 public conveniences accessible to women and that 'In addition to these, facilities are provided in a number of the large Departmental stores in shopping areas. I do not consider that additional women's public conveniences should be provided'.
- In essence, it was about more than just toilets - it was about giving women the freedom to move, socialise and work throughout the city without being limited by something as simple as nature's call.
- From the 1960s through to the 1990s, ideas around designing and providing public amenities to make them accessible to all people regardless of age, ability and life stages were developed. Auckland City Council opened the first unisex toilet in Remuera in 1974 in an attempt to provide one facility available to both men and women.

# ELLEN MELVILLE

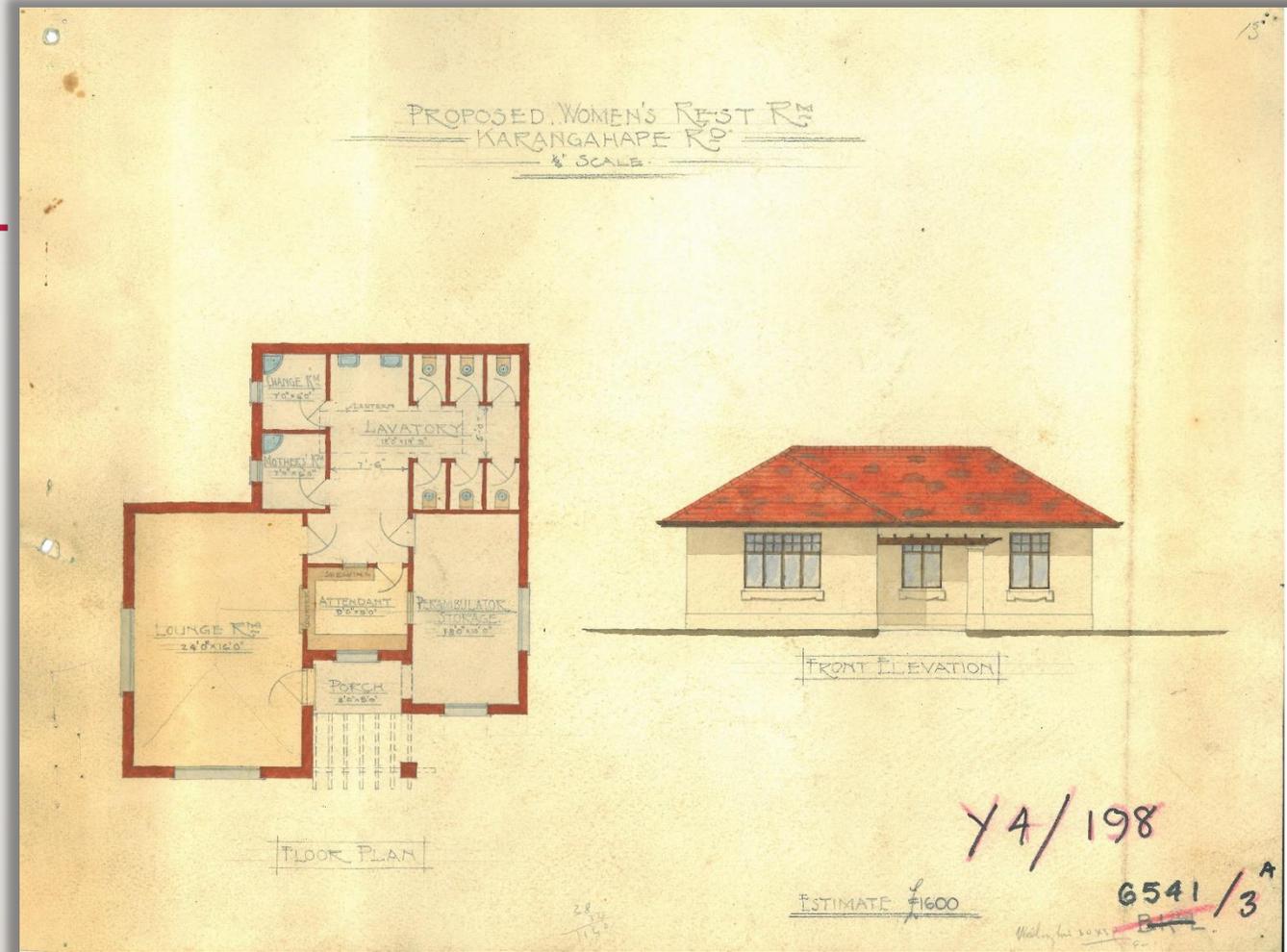
---

- On 27 August 1923 the National Council of Women agreed to send a deputation to Auckland City Council to lobby for a women's rest room in the city
- The deputation was led by Ellen Melville
- Ellen was a councillor for Auckland City Council 1913-1946 and the first woman to be elected to this role
- In July 1926 the Council agreed to set aside part of a reserve on Karangahape Road for a rest room



# KARANGAHAPE RD RESTROOM

- First purpose-built women's restroom
- Built in 1926 and opened April 1927
- Featured 6 toilets, lounge room, change room, mother's room, attendant's room and pram storage room
- Replaced in 1950 with a new restroom with more amenities
- The restroom was demolished in 2000



# RESTROOM ATTENDANTS

---

- On 17 March 1927, the Council advertised for lady attendants for the Karangahape Road restroom
- A huge number of applications were received - 298 by the closing date
- Two attendants were appointed to cover shifts between 9:00am to 3:30pm and 3:30pm to 10:00pm
- The tradition of attendants continued into the 1990s - pictured is Caroline who was a restroom attendant in 1993



## TOILETS WITH A CONSCIENCE

- In recent years there has been a shift in thinking and design toward providing more environmentally sustainable and suitable buildings and facilities for the public to use.
- Whether it is a composting toilet designed to operate without water, a state-of-the-art septic tank system, a stormwater collection system or a living roof designed to filter rainwater, there are many ways that technology can be harnessed to create toilets with a conscience.
- There is also an emphasis on creating toilets that are well suited to their physical environment. Suitable cladding materials, landscaping and the size and position of the building each offers the chance for a building to complement its surroundings.

# MAUKATIA (MAORI BAY) TOILETS

---

- Designed by Turbott & Associates for Auckland Regional Council in 2001
- The buildings are made from timber and have earth roofs planted with grass and shrubs helping them blend into the natural environment
- The grassed roofs also assist with minimizing the impact of water run-off on the soft soil
- To limit damage with any rock falls, the roofs are designed to be impact resistant and the toilet blocks have debris fences behind them





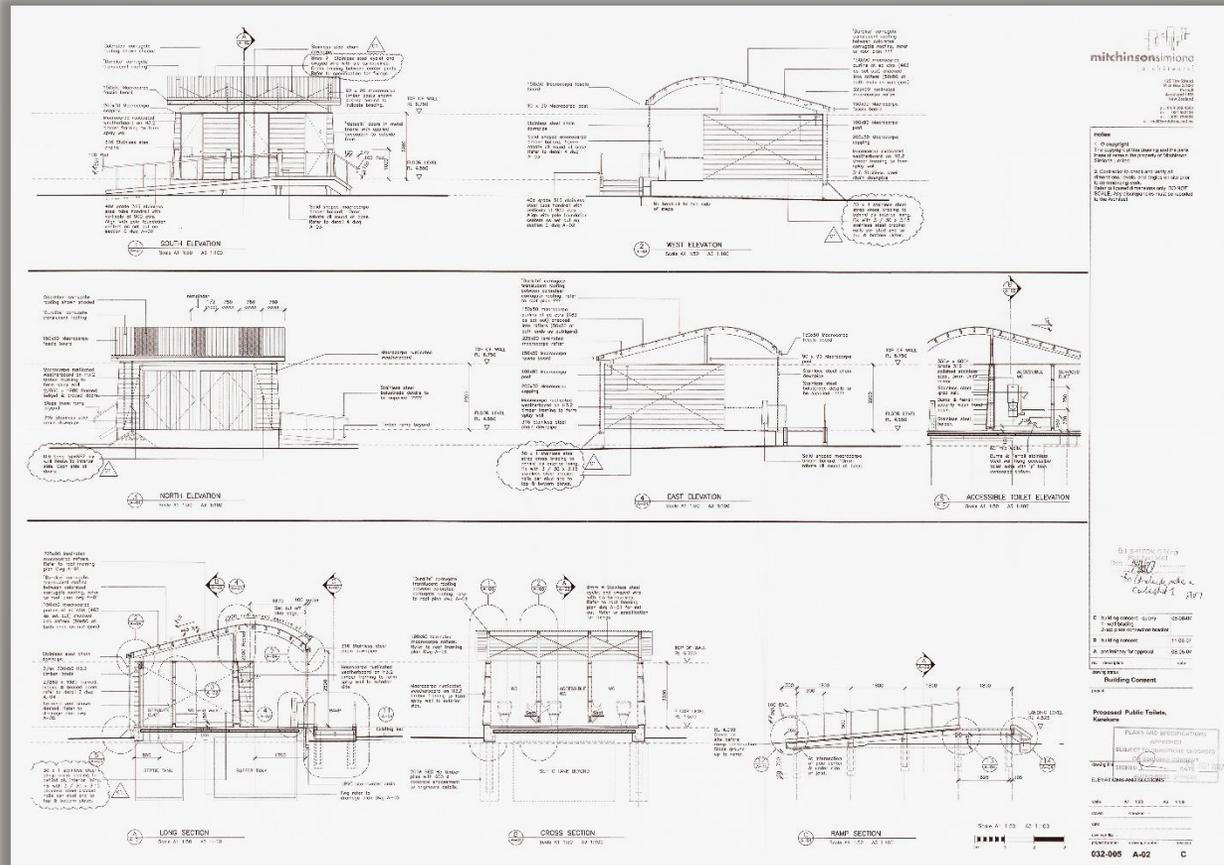
# KAREKARE BEACH TOILETS

---

- Karekare Beach on Auckland's west coast is a popular surf beach and very busy during summer
- Concrete block toilets built in 1960 by building contractors Lewis & Lewis of Titirangi
- Serviced by a septic tank with a trench disposal field which was a risk to the nearby stream and public health
- In 2001 Waitakere City Council began planning a replacement toilet block



# PROPOSED PUBLIC TOILET, KAREKARE – ELEVATIONS AND SECTIONS MITCHINSON SIMIONA ARCHITECTS



# KAREKARE BEACH TOILETS

---

- Architectural firm Mitchinson Simiona designed the toilet block
- Constructed from macrocarpa with a curved long-run steel roof and resin coated concrete floor
- To minimize water usage and wastewater the toilets are low/dual flush and taps are push button
- With no sewerage reticulation in Karekare wastewater is treated onsite using a recirculating packed bed reactor system and ultraviolet disinfection



## TOILETS AS ART

- Much like the new trend of creating environmentally friendly and accessible toilets, there has also been a shift toward designing toilets that are aesthetically pleasing. Bonus points if it ticks all the boxes!
- With the popularity of toilets such as the famous Kawakawa Hunterwasser toilets, the Wellington waterfront lobster toilets or the iconic Tirau corrugated iron sheepdog toilets, small towns around New Zealand are opting to build eye-catching, unique toilets that make a statement in an attempt to attract tourists and to provide a talking point.
- These sorts of facilities often become projects that heavily involve local communities and they become a great way to get local businesses and designers working with each other.
- It is a commonly accepted idea that public art enriches a place and it offers a great opportunity for story-telling and the development of local identity.

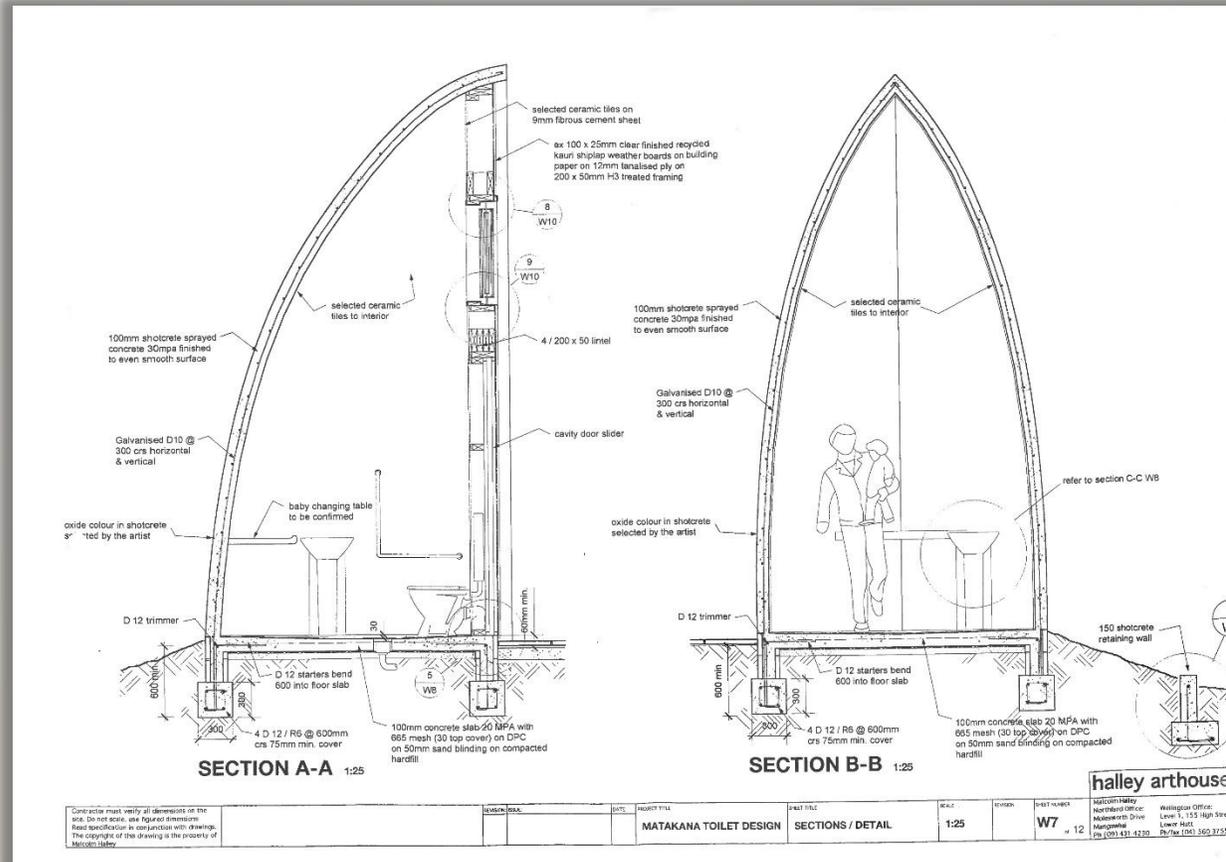
# MATAKANA TOILETS

---

- Opened in 2009, nearly 6 years after the design was chosen
- They have disabled and unisex access combined
- Concept was designed by Steffan de Haan, who was a student at ELAM art school
- Malcolm Halley of Halley Arthouse worked the design into technical drawings



# MATAKANA TOILET DESIGN – SECTIONS AND DETAIL MALCOLM HALLEY, HALLEY ARTHOUSE



# MATAKANA TOILETS

---

- These surrealist sculptural toilets act as a public artwork and tourist attraction for Matakana village
- A community-lead project with the Matakana Toilets Project Team established in 2003
- Funded by combination of community donations, grants and the Rodney District Council
- Cost about \$400,000 to construct



# CREEK LANE HELENSVILLE TOILETS

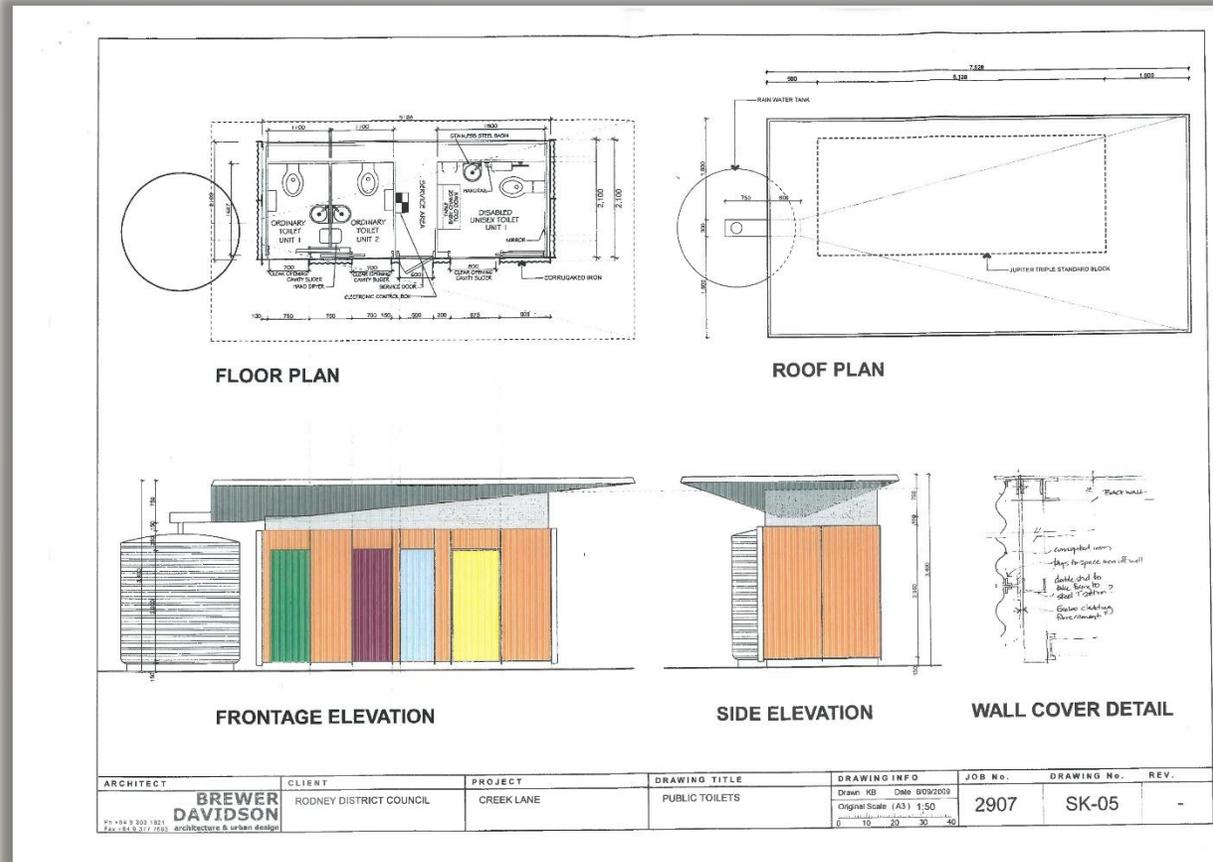
---

- Opened 10 July 2010
- Replaced the old 1993 Exeloo in Creek Lane
- Rodney District Council chose Exeloo's Jupiter triple cubicle building with unisex facilities and wheelchair accessibility
- The community identity was able to be reflected in the new toilet block through exterior artwork
- In February 2009, Rodney District Council called for expressions of interest from artists
- Local artist Jeff Thomson was selected
- His chosen media is corrugated iron and is well known for various public artworks



# CREEK LANE PUBLIC TOILETS – PLAN AND ELEVATIONS

## BREWER DAVIDSON, SEPTEMBER 2009



ARCHITECT	CLIENT	PROJECT	DRAWING TITLE	DRAWING INFO	JOB No.	DRAWING No.	REV.
<b>BREWER DAVIDSON</b> <small>75 • 14 • 9 303 1821                      Fax 143 9 317 7853 architects &amp; urban design</small>	RODNEY DISTRICT COUNCIL	CREEK LANE	PUBLIC TOILETS	Drawn KB Date 8/09/2009 Original Scale (A3) 1:50 0 10 20 30 40	2907	SK-05	-

# CREEK LANE HELENSVILLE TOILETS

---

- A sustainable feature is the water tank which is filled by stormwater run off from the roof
- The tank is also an artwork
- Constructed from corrugated iron with toughened glass
- The portholes are lit from the inside and when a viewer looks in they can see images of ships and sea life
- The toilets tell the story of Helensville



## REINVENTING THE TOILET FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

- Modern public toilets differ from historic examples in a couple of ways. Advances in technology have allowed toilets to be built in more obscure and remote locations. It is important that toilets are well suited to their natural or built environment.
- Another great change in the 21st century is how we talk about accessibility and gender. It is standard now for all public toilets to be built in compliance with accessibility legislation to ensure anyone can use at least one stall within a facility. While discussions around gender and toilets isn't strictly a 21st century phenomenon, it is now a common expectation when it comes to the design of public toilets.
- Expectations held by 21<sup>st</sup> century public toilet users are much the same as those who used the early Auckland public toilets. People expect cleanliness, a level of privacy and the ability to locate the facilities easily. The differences in user experience today comes down to how toilets are built and what role the facility plays in its surroundings.
- Toilets have become an opportunity to show off architectural flair, to tell local histories, to create facilities that compliment the natural environment and to be environmentally friendly. Many offer much more than merely a building with a toilet.



**THIS EXHIBITION WAS  
RESEARCHED AND CURATED  
BY SAMANTHA WARU AND  
VICKY SPALDING**

Auckland Council Archives | 890 2427 |  
[archives@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:archives@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)