

MOTUOPAO - A Green and Gold Island

A new exhibition opened at Te Ahu Heritage Museum on Monday 9 September 2013. It is a collaborative effort between the Museum and Kaitaia's Department of Conservation to mark Conservation Week 2013.

The exhibition illustrates the history of the Far North's Motuopao Island Lighthouse Station in conjunction with an insight into the ongoing conservation work being done by DOC to preserve the island's special flora and fauna, notably the Pupuharakeke, (Flax Snail) and the Robust Skink, both highly endangered species.

The island, often referred to as the "Cape Maria van Diemen Lighthouse" was the first light to be constructed north of Auckland, designed by the noted John Blackett, it was built in 1877 and formally illuminated on 24th March 1879. It remained in service until 1939 when, because of the difficulties in servicing the site and the onset of World War II. it was decided to relocate the lighthouse to Cape Reinga. The lens assembly was removed from the tower for reuse and the remaining structure along with the rest of the facilities left to the elements.

In 1962 the designated "Lighthouse Reserve" classification was changed to that of "Flora and Fauna Reserve"

October 1989. A successful rodent eradication program is carried out.

1997 - April 30. DOC Archaeologists visit Island to record the Lighthouse Settlement. Suggested stabilisation of Lighthouse Tower's condition.

2001 – May/June. Jonathon Maxwell, Alan Macrae, William Macrae, Nicky Sydall, (DOC) and Bruce Ngauma , (Ngati Kuri) visit Island to under-take exterior cladding repairs.

2002 – March. Alan Macrae, Jono Maxwell, Rodger Cawte, Richard Parrish visit island to prepare the structure for fit of a weatherproof roof.

2002 – August. Nick Conrad, Alan Macrae, Jono Maxwell and C Barr go to island to fit the new roof with helicopter assistance in transportation and lift of the same.

2007 – July. The Lighthouse, all other buildings and structures, (inc. tramway, derrick & winches.), receive their final CAT II. Historic Places Trust registration.

In April 2011 Historic Assets Ranger, Alan Macrae and the department extended an invitation to the museum to visit the island. This initial visit has developed into an ongoing program to assist in the relocation, recording and preservation of the remaining lighthouse station machinery and features.

The twice yearly visits to the island run in conjunction with Weed Eradication and Fauna Monitoring programs which have been highly successful in maintaining the islands special status as a nature reserve.

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