

1930s plan of the
proposed new tunnel
and development for
Wainuiomata



Wainuiomata Tunnel history

Sources

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Photos

Wainuiomata Tunnel under construction, Lower Hutt, Wellington. Ref: 1/2-065767-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://beta.natlib.govt.nz/records/22917032>.

Group of men outside the Wainuiomata tunnel, 1951. Negatives of the *Evening Post* newspaper. Ref: 114/280/02-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://beta.natlib.govt.nz/records/23139125>.

Illustrations

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How it started

The Wainuiomata Development Company was formed in the late 1920s with the intention of building a town on recently purchased farmland in Wainuiomata.

One of the company's first projects was to make travel between Wainuiomata and the Hutt Valley easier by building a road tunnel through the Waiwhetu hill.

Project derailed

In January 1932, the Wainuiomata Development Company began constructing the Wainuiomata Tunnel with work starting at the Gracefield end of the tunnel. Unfortunately the tunnel only got as far as 330m into the hill (approximately 40% of the total proposed length) before work was stopped due to a lack of finance (the Depression made it hard to secure sufficient funds).

However, all was not lost for the unfinished tunnel – it was used to store explosives during World War II.

Various attempts were made in the 1950s and 1960s to resurrect the road tunnel but these came to nothing as the tunnel didn't meet modern traffic requirements.

Back on track – with changes

In 1975, the Wellington Regional Water Board bought the partially completed tunnel with the intention of finishing it and using the tunnel to pipe water from Wainuiomata to Wellington.

Project completed!

Codelfa Construction NZ Ltd was contracted to finish the tunnel at a cost of approximately \$650,000. They broke through to Waiu Street (Wainuiomata) in September 1980 – seven months after they started and only 50mm off-course.

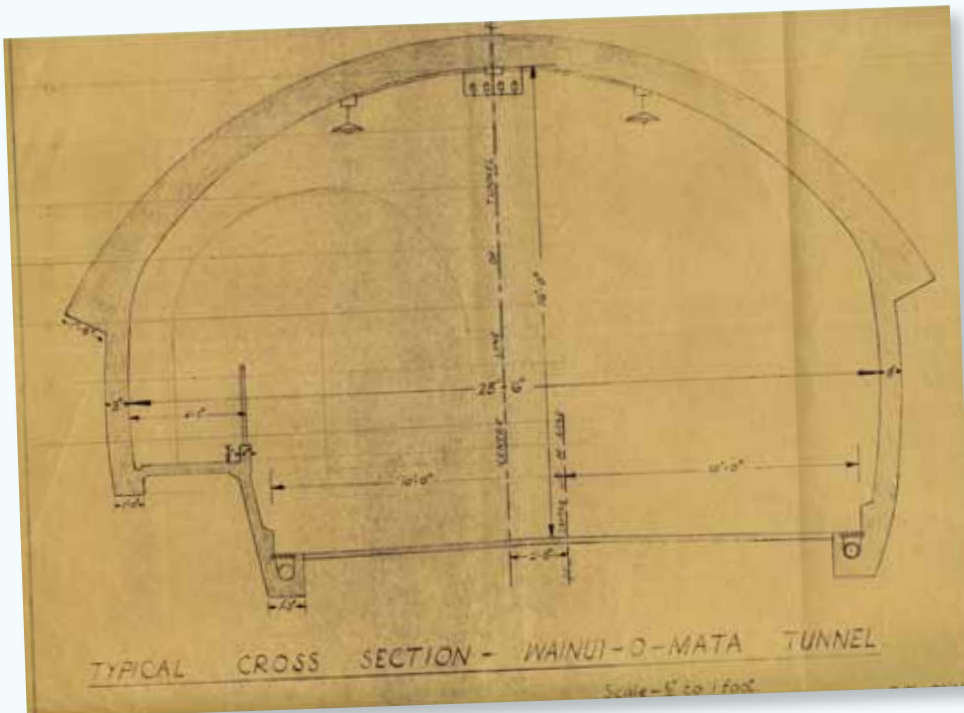
The last 540m of the 870m tunnel was completed at a much smaller diameter (2.4m wide) than the original section (approximately 7.85m wide). The tunnel rises approximately 70m from the Gracefield end to the Wainuiomata end of the tunnel.

A 1,100mm steel water pipe has been laid through the tunnel – it typically carries around 20 million litres of water a day for consumption in Wellington. Water from Wainuiomata usually contributes around 15% of the annual water supply for Wellington, Porirua, Upper Hutt and Lower Hutt.

Since the tunnel was completed, telecommunications cables and a Hutt City Council sewer pipe have also been laid through it.



Wainuiomata tunnel under construction, 1932



Did you know?

The Wainuiomata tunnel wasn't actually the first tunnel between Gracefield and Wainuiomata.

Back in the 1880s, a brick-lined water supply tunnel was laid through the Waiwhetu hill to bring water from Wainuiomata to Wellington. This tunnel housed a 750mm pipe, which by the 1970s needed replacing.

The tunnel was too small for the proposed replacement 1,100mm pipe. The partially completed road tunnel located just a few hundred metres south of the original brick tunnel proved to be a suitable replacement. The brick water supply tunnel is no longer in use.