



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND  
POUHERE TAONGA

## New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero – Report for a Historic Place **Mirek Smíšek Beehive Kilns, TE HORO (List No. 9722, Category 2)**

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Mirek Smíšek Beehive Kilns. Miranda Williamson, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, 20 Sept 2022

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DRAFT: Last 22 March 2023  
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### *Disclaimer*

*Please note that entry on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero identifies only the heritage values of the property concerned, and should not be construed as advice on the state of the property, or as a comment of its soundness or safety, including in regard to earthquake risk, safety in the event of fire, or insanitary conditions.*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *Purpose of this report*

The purpose of this report is to provide evidence to support the inclusion of Mirek Smíšek Beehive Kilns in the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero as a Category 2 historic place.

### *Summary*

The two beehive kilns at Te Horo were constructed by Mirek Smíšek OBE (1925-2013) between 1971 and 1973. A charismatic figure, Smíšek is remembered and celebrated as New Zealand's first professional studio potter. Today the kilns represent the centrality of studio pottery to New Zealand's craft scene in the 1970s and provide insight into studio pottery practice at the time. Smíšek gained fame, in particular for his mastery of the technique of salt glazing, and his output was recognised by an OBE in 1990. The effort to move and rebuild the kilns in 2021 is an indication of esteem in which they are still held.

The Kāpiti Coast has a temperate climate and an abundance of natural resources. Because of this a succession of iwi and hapū battled to make their home there and land occupation in the region was unstable. Early Māori settled in the area included Ngāti Māmoe, Muaūpoko, Ngāti Apa and Rangitāne; later Te Rauparaha and his Raukawa and Taranaki kin and allies made their home there. In 1834, inter-tribal conflict erupted between Ngāti Raukawa and Te Āti Awa; iwi boundaries were again redrawn and Ngāti Raukawa became the kaitiaki for Te Horo. In 1881 the Native Land Court granted Ngākaroro No.3 to Ngāti Huia (Raukawa) and Ngāti Kauwhata hapū. The land in question was sold from Māori ownership in 1906 when Archibald Hall purchased the property. After a succession of owners Mirek Smíšek, a Czechoslovakian-born potter, and his wife Jane Beverley brought the property in 1970 and Smíšek designed and constructed the beehive kilns there for firing their pottery.

The two brick beehive kilns have a striking appearance. The domed kilns are 2.25 metres high internally and have a capacity of approximately 4.2 m<sup>3</sup>. Each kiln sits on a concrete base. Both are of uniform dimensions and have openings with voussoirs on their southern side. The two kilns look very similar on the exterior, but only the most western one was used for the salt firing method for which Smíšek was best-known. An external brick flue originally connected both to provide ventilation to the kilns. A red shed (formed of an 1880s cottage) and the former Te Horo railway station, both relocated on the property by Smíšek, also formed part of his pottery centre and are included in the listing extent.

Smíšek passed away in 2013 and other potters lived and worked at the property. Unfortunately, the two Beehive kilns sat directly in the path of the new Peka Peka to Ōtaki Expressway. A large section of the western side of the property became the path for the new roadway, with an anticipated eventual subdivision of the property. Faced with the dilemma of saving the kilns, in 2021 Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency undertook to relocate the kilns 20 metres east of their original location but still on the same land parcel. Potter Duncan Shearer and master brick layer Rick Meade worked together to dismantle and rebuild the kilns and flue. The kilns are now unable to be used to fire pottery but function as a memorial to Smíšek's artistry. The Mirek Smíšek Arts Trust / The Kilns at Te Horo has formed to develop a new arts centre here with the kilns at its heart.

## **1. IDENTIFICATION<sup>1</sup>**

### **1.1. Name of Place**

#### *Name*

Mirek Smíšek Beehive Kilns

#### *Other Names*

The Kilns at Te Horo

Mirek's Kilns

### **1.2. Location Information**

#### *Address*

990 State Highway 1

Te Horo

ŌTAKI

#### *Additional Location Information*

NZTM E 1779509; NZTM N 5481699 (+/- 1 metre)

#### *Local Authority*

Kāpiti Coast District

### **1.3. Legal Description**

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<sup>1</sup> This section is supplemented by visual aids in Appendix 1 of the report.

#### **1.4. Extent of List Entry**

Extent includes the land described as Pt Ngakaroro 3D1 6 Blk (RT WN201/17), Wellington Land District and the buildings known as the Beehive Kilns, Red Shed and the Railway Building (Former) thereon. (Refer to map in Appendix 1 of the List entry report for further information).

#### **1.5. Eligibility**

There is sufficient information included in this report to identify this place. This place is physically eligible for consideration as a historic place. It consists of a combination of land, buildings, structures, or associated buildings or structures that are fixed to land which lies within the territorial limits of New Zealand.

#### **1.6. Existing Heritage Recognition**

*Local Authority and Regional Authority Plan Scheduling*

Not scheduled in Operative Kāpiti Coast District Plan 2021.

## **2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **2.1. Historical Information**

The Kāpiti Coast is a place abundant in natural resources. The acquisition and settlement of this land sparked conflict throughout its history as boundaries were drawn and redrawn by successive waves of people. Global events, like colonisation and the spread of firearms, influenced the story of the region.<sup>2</sup> The first people probably arrived in the canoes Matiti and Uruao, before they migrated onwards to the South Island.<sup>3</sup> Ngāti Māmoe later settled in the area.<sup>4</sup> After initially prospering they were supplanted by the arrival of three related hapū

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<sup>2</sup> Angela Ballara, 'Te Whanganui-a-Tara: phases of Maori occupation of Wellington Harbour c. 1800-1840' in *The Making of Wellington 1800-1914*, Edited by David Hamer and Roberta Nicholls, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990, p.9

<sup>3</sup> Rex Kerr, *Ōtaki is the river = Ko Ōtaki te awa*, Ōtaki: Black Pony Express, 2012, pp.29-30

<sup>4</sup> Te Maire Tau, 'Ngāi Tahu - The move south', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/ngai-tahu/page-2>, Accessed 3 February 2023; Kerr, p.29

groups from Muaūpoko, Ngāti Apa and Rangitāne.<sup>5</sup> They migrated south to the area from Mahia.<sup>6</sup> The victors split the land between them: Ngāti Apa settled north of the Rangitikei and Kāpiti Island, Muaūpoko settled the Horowhenua and Rangitāne settled in the Manawatū and the southern Hawkes Bay.<sup>7</sup>

Te Rauparaha of Ngāti Toa Rangitira (a hapū of Tainui) travelled south and invited his Raukawa and Taranaki kin to migrate south to join his people in the Kāpiti region. They did this to move away from the musket wars underway in the Waikato / King Country.<sup>8</sup> These allies included groups from Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Tama, Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Koata and Ngāti Rarua.<sup>9</sup> Iwi and hapū battled south to the Kāpiti Coast 'through dangers both human and natural' in a migration which came to be known as 'Te Heke Mai I Raro'.<sup>10</sup> These new arrivals were successful in wresting the land from Muaūpoko, Ngāti Apa and Rangitāne iwi. The volatility of land ownership at this time was influenced by the increasing numbers of whalers and sealers working and settling in the area; the accessibility of guns and alcohol; as well as the influences of missionaries and the burgeoning of colonial forces. Discord culminated in the Haowhenua war in 1834, a significant inter-tribal conflict with battles at Haowhenua, Nga Totara, Pakakutu and Rangiuru.<sup>11</sup> Another key battle was fought at Kuititanga in 1839.<sup>12</sup> These battles resulted in the demarcation of new tribal boundaries in the area; Te Āti Awa's tribal land now sat south of Pekapeka, and Ngāti Toa and Raukawa regrouped to occupy land from Pekapeka to Whangaehu. Ngāti Raukawa became the kaitiaki for Te Horo.

### *European Settlement*

By the 1820s trading was built around a desire for not just muskets but blankets, clothing, metal tools, jewellery, new varieties of food and alcohol.<sup>13</sup> It was discovered that Southern Right Whales made an annual migration between Kāpiti Island and the mainland and by 1827 several shore-based whaling stations were established, 'perched like evil-smelling rookeries

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<sup>5</sup> Kerr, p.30

<sup>6</sup> AJ Dreaver, *Horowhenua County and its People: A Centennial History*, Levin: Dunmore Press, p.21; Kerr, p.30

<sup>7</sup> Kerr, p.30

<sup>8</sup> Mīria Pōmare, 'Ngāti Toarangatira', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/ngati-toarangatira>, Accessed 3 February 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Kerr, p.30

<sup>10</sup> Kerr, p.30

<sup>11</sup> Kerr, p.31

<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> Kerr, p.40



on rocky islets'.<sup>14</sup> Europeans brought with them Christianity which offered a more peaceful path in renouncing the cycle of utu and infighting between hapū.<sup>15</sup> Octavius Hadfield and Henry Williams were key figures who arrived on the Kāpiti Coast in 1839 and strove to influence local religious practice.<sup>16</sup> The following year Hadfield and Williams used their influence to encourage signatories to the Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>17</sup>

Horowhenua was covered in forest and swamp when pit-sawing of timber began by the Dodds family in around 1849.<sup>18</sup> But a proliferation of small sawmill operations enabled settlers to both clear the land to establish dairy farms and also provide timber for the burgeoning construction industry.<sup>19</sup> A turning point for the region was the establishment of the Wellington-Manawatu Railway line, built with locally milled sleepers. The Waikanae section of this track, of which the Te Horo stop was a part, opened in November 1886.<sup>20</sup> The new railway made it possible for dairy farmers to sell their surplus milk and cream to consumers further afield.<sup>21</sup> In 1881 there were 10 Europeans living in the Hautere-Te Horo area— this had increased to 477 by 1886.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, it is believed that the Māori population fell 'dramatically' in the same period.<sup>23</sup>

The land in question is approximately 1.724 hectares and sits at the centre of what had been a large block grouping collectively known as Ngākaroro.<sup>24</sup> Today this area is the location of Te Horo.<sup>25</sup> Ngākaroro in its entirety was originally comprised of a total area of 27,088 acres

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<sup>14</sup> Dreaver, p.27, The whaling industry continued until it collapsed in 1847.

<sup>15</sup> Ballara, p.10-11

<sup>16</sup> June Starke. 'Hadfield, Octavius', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published in 1990. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1h2/hadfield-octavius>, Accessed 3 February 2023; Peter J. Lineham, 'Missions and missionaries', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/missions-and-missionaries>, Accessed 3 February 2023

<sup>17</sup> Kerr, p.41; p.66

<sup>18</sup> Kerr, p.55; Francis Selwyn Simcox, *Otaki: The Town and District*, Wellington: AH & AW Reed, 1952 p.100

<sup>19</sup> Kerr, p.55; Vivienne Bailey, 'Te Horo – A Rural Heritage', *Heritage Matters*, Issue 21, Summer 2009/10, p.29

<sup>20</sup> "Wellington-Manawatu Railway", *New Zealand Times*, 8 October 1886, p.7

<sup>21</sup> Kerr, p.69

<sup>22</sup> Kerr, p. 59-60

<sup>23</sup> Kerr, p.60

<sup>24</sup> The land in question is 3D1, Block 6. See RT WN201/17.

<sup>25</sup> 'Block Research Narratives Vol I', CFRT 2881, Porirua ki Manawatu Inquiry District Research Programme, Waitangi Tribunal, 26 November 2018, p.511 and 263 [https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/WT\\_DOC\\_144741695/Wai%202200%2C%20A212.pdf](https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/WT_DOC_144741695/Wai%202200%2C%20A212.pdf), accessed: 18 August 2022

which was first awarded title in 1873.<sup>26</sup> The Crown purchased just over 19,045 acres of this land between 1874 and 1880.<sup>27</sup> Much of it was described as 'hilly to mountainous terrain'.<sup>28</sup>

In 1881 the Native Land Court granted Ngākaroro No.3 (part of the larger Ngākororo block) to Ngāti Huia and Ngāti Kauwhata hapū.<sup>29</sup> There followed various subdivisions.<sup>30</sup> Unlike the wider Ngākaroro area which was acquired by the Crown, the land in question was still in Māori hands until it was privately sold from Rawiri Te Ruru to Wellington-based tram proprietor Archibald Hall in 1906.<sup>31</sup> Archibald, his wife Catherine Hall and other family members had invested in several properties in the larger Ngakaroro block between 1896 and 1906.<sup>32</sup> In 1911 Hall sold it to Herbert Addington, late of His Majesty's Royal Fusiliers.<sup>33</sup> The following year Addington sold the property to Joseph McChesney, a local builder.<sup>34</sup> McChesney operated a small pit saw-mill on the site which continued in operation until the late 1920s and also built an Edwardian villa on the property. Studio potter Mirek Smíšek and his wife purchased of the property in 1970. He became a renowned New Zealand potter working from this Te Horo base.

#### *Pottery in Aotearoa / New Zealand*

Despite a wealth of clay sources around Aotearoa / New Zealand, Māori did not make pottery. The know-how was brought across the Pacific from South-East Asia as far as Tonga and Samoa before the skill was lost.<sup>35</sup> However, the motifs prevalent in Māori art are similar to some designs on the Lapita pottery objects crafted in New Caledonia.<sup>36</sup> When Europeans settled in Aotearoa / New Zealand they soon saw the potential for the wealth of various clay deposits throughout the country. During the 1870s and 1880s many pottery operations around Britain closed due to upheavals caused by the Industrial Revolution.<sup>37</sup> Some of these

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<sup>26</sup> 'Block Research Narratives Vol I', p.511; and Map 105 on p.286

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*, p.285

<sup>29</sup> Otaki Native Land Court Minute Book No.5, 22 October 1881, pp220-238

<sup>30</sup> 'Block Research Narratives Vol I', p.289

<sup>31</sup> RT WN97/128; 'Block Research Narratives Vol I', p.286 (Map 105)

<sup>32</sup> RT WN97/128; 'Block Research Narratives Vol I', p.520

<sup>33</sup> RT WN97/128; RT WN201/17

<sup>34</sup> RT WN201/17

<sup>35</sup> John Wilson, 'History - Māori arrival and settlement', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/history/page-1>, accessed: 29 August 2022

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

<sup>37</sup> Gail Henry, *New Zealand Pottery: Commercial and Collectable*, Auckland: Reed Books, 1999, p.9



newly redundant British potters eagerly grasped new employment opportunities in New Zealand where they found their artisan skills valued for the practical tasks of making drainage pipes and bricks.<sup>38</sup>

#### *The Arts and Crafts movement and Anglo-Oriental style*

Pottery in New Zealand was strongly influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, a trend that emerged in the United Kingdom in the first half of the twentieth century. It promoted pottery as a response to disillusionment with Victorian society.<sup>39</sup> They valorised the ‘honest craftsmanship’ of the Middle Ages when crafts were made ‘with love and pride’.<sup>40</sup> Architect JW Chapman-Taylor (1878-1958) was probably New Zealand’s best-known adherent. He explained that ‘beauty in our homes will help put beauty in our hearts’.<sup>41</sup> These ideas fed into the ‘first flowering’ of studio pottery in New Zealand in the 1920s.<sup>42</sup> Most of these early New Zealand potters were women, and included Elizabeth Lissaman, Briar Gardner, Elizabeth Matheson and Olive Jones.<sup>43</sup> The next wave of influence was the Anglo-Oriental movement—‘a British interpretation of Asian ceramics’.<sup>44</sup> Beginning in the 1940s and 50s the movement gained in influence just as Arts and Crafts was ‘being quietly put to bed’.<sup>45</sup> Elliott and Skinner explain that studio potters sought to:

*‘draw on the strengths of New Zealand’s cultural youth, pioneering origins and bountiful natural resources, while also adopting the exquisite traditions and aesthetic principles that characterised Japanese ceramics.’<sup>46</sup>*

The Anglo-Oriental movement resulted in an ‘international pot’ which could equally be crafted in Australia or England.<sup>47</sup>

#### *Influence of Leach and Hamada*

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

<sup>39</sup> Moyra Elliott and Damian Skinner, *Cone Ten Down: Studio Pottery in New Zealand 1945-1980*, Auckland: David Bateman, 2009, p.29

<sup>40</sup> ‘The Arts and Crafts movement’, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/1092>, accessed: 6 September 2022

<sup>41</sup> Elliott and Skinner, p.30

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p.31

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*, pp.31-33

<sup>44</sup> ‘The Arts and Crafts movement’

<sup>45</sup> Elliott and Skinner, p.38

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*, p.9

<sup>47</sup> Ronnie Watt, ‘From Anglo-Oriental’, 2014-15, [http://www.aic-iac.org/wp-content/uploads/Anglo\\_Oriental\\_to\\_Afro\\_Oriental.pdf](http://www.aic-iac.org/wp-content/uploads/Anglo_Oriental_to_Afro_Oriental.pdf), accessed: 9 September 2022

British Bernard Leach (1887-1979) and Japanese Shōji Hamada (1894-1978) were highly respected potters who exerted a huge influence on the development of pottery in New Zealand. Connections with both amateur and professional potters in New Zealand were cemented by 'pilgrimages' in both directions.<sup>48</sup> Bernard Leach had gained fame as 'the father of British studio pottery' when he published the internationally successful *A Potter's Book* in 1940.<sup>49</sup> He expounded his philosophies in a filmed interview shot during his visit to New Zealand in 1962.<sup>50</sup> In 1965 the 'master' Hamada visited.<sup>51</sup> Hamada, a major figure in the Japanese '*mingei*' folk art movement, exerted even more influence in New Zealand than Leach.<sup>52</sup>

### *Kilns and salt glazing*

Kilns have been used for centuries to turn shaped clay into various types of pottery, tile and bricks. Beehive kilns are a particular type of kiln, they have a circular brick structure with a domed roof. The pottery to be fired was placed inside and a fire would be started inside the kiln. A flue increased the ventilation and encouraged the distribution of heat. Hot air circulated within the kiln and exited through the flue or the bottom of the kiln. A single firing required regular tending and took around 4-5 days, but the entire process from loading, heating, firing, and cooling could take as much as 14 days.<sup>53</sup> Leach and Hamada both mastered and taught the technique of salt glazing. Salt glazing is a process of pottery firing in which salt is thrown into the kiln at a high temperature and the salt vaporises. The sodium from the salt reacts with the silica in the clay and forms a hard coating of sodium silicate on the object being fired. Salt glazing began in the Rhineland of Germany in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and became popular in England in the fifteenth century. Pots produced in this way were usually a distinctive orange colour, but potters were able to experiment with the process to create different effects with the texture and colour. Its results can be 'unpredictable, unique, and beautiful'.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Elliot and Skinner, p.10 and p.75

<sup>49</sup> Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book*, London: Faber, 1940.

<sup>50</sup> 'Bernard Leach in New Zealand', F223968, Nga Taonga Sound & Vision, [https://www.ngataonga.org.nz/collections/catalogue/catalogue-item?record\\_id=296028](https://www.ngataonga.org.nz/collections/catalogue/catalogue-item?record_id=296028), accessed: 9 September 2022

<sup>51</sup> Elliot and Skinner, p.75

<sup>52</sup> *ibid*, p.43

<sup>53</sup> 'A Brief History of the Beehive Kiln', <https://brickheadnews.com/2019/08/21/a-brief-history-of-the-beehive-kiln/>, accessed: 13 September 2022

<sup>54</sup> 'How to do salt glazing', The Spruce Crafts, <https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/how-to-do-salt-glazing-4147659>, accessed: 7 September 2022

*Mirek Smíšek (1925-2013)*

Smíšek was a potter not just remembered for his 'award studded career' but also for a 'creative life well lived'.<sup>55</sup> He was born in Czechoslovakia in 1925, emigrating to Australia in 1948 to escape the occupation of his homeland and the labour camps and factories he had been forced to work in.<sup>56</sup> He explains that these formative experiences of 'horror upon horror' made him 'worried about humanity' and concluded the solution was 'to be creative'.<sup>57</sup> He began learning about pottery in Australia where he worked in a brickworks and pottery and undertook a course in ceramic design at East Sydney Technical College.<sup>58</sup> He then moved to New Zealand where he found work as an assistant to potter Ernie Shufflebottom at Crown Lynn Potteries in Auckland.<sup>59</sup> There he experimented with 'free-flowing Bohemian' vases.<sup>60</sup> He then shifted to Nelson in 1952 where he worked at the Nelson Brick and Pipe Company. He continued to experiment with pottery in his spare time. During this period he also taught pottery at Nelson Technical School (part of Nelson College) and night classes at Waimea College.<sup>61</sup> Seeking new opportunities away from factory production in 1954 he built his first salt-glaze kiln and began experimenting with the salt glaze firing technique.<sup>62</sup>

At this time Smíšek was part of a cohort of potters working around New Zealand. They included Wilf Wright, Helen Mason, Mary Hardwicke-Smith, Doreen Blumhardt, Yvonne Rust and Patricia Perrin. Smíšek formed particular friendships with pottery 'trailblazers' Barry Brickell, Len Castle and Terry Barrow who together set out on prospecting trips throughout the Nelson region in search of new and interesting clay deposits. Together they discussed 'technical problems, clays, glazes and especially kilns ... long into the night'.<sup>63</sup> Smíšek's work developed and by 1956 he was established as New Zealand's first full-time professional potter, producing work recognised as being of a quality in its own class.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> 'Smíšek survey celebrates an illustrious career', *Art News New Zealand*, Winter 2009, p.125

<sup>56</sup> *ibid*

<sup>57</sup> 'Mirek Smíšek', *Ceramics Quarterly: New Zealand Potters Magazine*, Vol 33, No. 2 June 2013, p.16

<sup>58</sup> Elliot and Skinner, p.61

<sup>59</sup> 'Smíšek survey celebrates an illustrious career'

<sup>60</sup> 'The Kilns at Te Horo', <https://www.thekilnsattehoro.co.nz/>, Accessed: 29 September 2022.

<sup>61</sup> Elliot and Skinner, p.108

<sup>62</sup> The kilns that he built there were demolished for the Nelson bypass project.

<sup>63</sup> 'Strength and Freedom', *New Zealand Crafts: Crafts Council Magazine*. 18 Spring 1986, p.8

<sup>64</sup> *ibid*.

Smíšek was influenced by international trends. He travelled to Japan in 1961 and studied at the Ceramic Department at Kyoto University.<sup>65</sup> In 1963 he went to St Ives in England to study with celebrity potter Bernard Leach. Fellow potters Peter Stitchbury and Len Castle also spent time overseas.<sup>66</sup> They were exposed to new techniques and ideas and flourished in an environment where pottery was ‘a complete way of life’ – underpinned with the belief that ‘the slow perfection of line and form should take years and absorb the craftsman utterly’.<sup>67</sup> The influences of these overseas experiences can be seen in Smíšek’s work; ‘a new earthiness and freedom’ were evident in his creations.<sup>68</sup>

Smíšek moved to Manakau on the Kāpiti Coast in 1968 with his partner, fellow potter Jane Beverley, and their daughter was born there shortly after. He built a temporary beehive kiln on their property. But they were seeking a more permanent base and found and purchased the Te Horo property in 1970— an ideal place to both live, teach and work. They moved into the Edwardian homestead on the property that previous owner and local miller McChesney had constructed c. 1915.<sup>69</sup> Smíšek then set out to create a hub for the creation and sale of pottery. It was common in the 1970s for potters to establish potteries in rural areas. Potters experimented with kiln construction, sharing designs and expertise. Barry Brickell had designed and constructed a salt glaze kiln at nearby Reikorangi.<sup>70</sup>

Smíšek designed and built the first glost kiln (a kiln for firing stoneware) at the Te Horo property in 1971 and a second kiln beside it, specifically for salt glazing between 1972-73.<sup>71</sup> To do this he repurposed 4,000 second-hand bricks sourced from Golden Bay.<sup>72</sup> Smíšek took six weeks to build each of the kilns, hand chipping bricks to fit together into their iconic beehive shape. The bricks were not fixed together by mortar, but rather ‘a mixture of clay and dust and grog’ which enabled the bricks to expand in the heat.<sup>73</sup> The salt glazing kiln was

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<sup>65</sup> Elliot and Skinner, p.78

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p.99

<sup>67</sup> *New Zealand Crafts: Crafts Council Magazine*, p.8

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p.9

<sup>69</sup> Personal conversation with John Draper, 25 August 2022. This house was moved off the property and relocated to a property on Ringawhata Road in Ōtaki in 2020.

<sup>70</sup> Reikorangi: gateway to heaven: Janet and Wilf Wright’s life as potters, from Stockton’s to tainga whenua, Waikanae: Mahara Gallery, 2013, p.26.

<sup>71</sup> Elliott and Skinner, p.113

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> ‘Moving the historic Mirek Smíšek kilns’, 1 May 2028, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffF0pE\\_e4i0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffF0pE_e4i0), accessed: 19 August 2022

designed to be heated up to 1,300 degrees.<sup>74</sup> Smíšek experimented with the salt glazing process. The firing time was approximately 18 hours— every firing required around 59kg of salt, feeding into the kiln ½ kilogram 40 to 50 times during a firing.<sup>75</sup> To shelter the kilns from the elements he constructed a timber shingle roof over them made from old apple boxes.<sup>76</sup>

Smíšek became a leading figure in New Zealand pottery circles and the ‘freedom and independence’ of his own style developed.<sup>77</sup> A major exhibition at the Dowse Art Gallery in 1973 really ‘put him on the map’.<sup>78</sup> Salt firing became the process for which Smíšek was most well-known. He explained: ‘I saltglaze to simplify the procedure, to depend more and more on the simplest materials; to make textures which are natural and do not demand excessive preparations for special effects.’<sup>79</sup> Smíšek’s subsequent partner Pamella Annsouth, also an accomplished potter, joined him at Te Horo in 1979, by which time the kilns were in regular use.<sup>80</sup> Smíšek himself described his Te Horo kilns as a ‘significant cultural asset in the history of New Zealand pottery’.<sup>81</sup>

Smíšek moved two structures on to the property. He purchased the former Te Horo railway station and relocated it onto the property to provide accommodation for visitors. The first Te Horo Station burnt down in November 1923.<sup>82</sup> The new replacement station (No 3, Class A) was built to a design by Alexander Troup (1863-1941) and was completed in 1924.<sup>83</sup> Troup was in charge of the architectural branch of the New Zealand Railway Department and left a legacy of railway stations around the country.<sup>84</sup> Described at the time as a ‘more modern

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<sup>74</sup> ‘Mirek Smíšek kilns relocation’, 1 September 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-RdpO83Wcs>, accessed: 19 August 2022

<sup>75</sup> ‘Mirek Smíšek’, *New Zealand Potter*, vol 20/1 Autumn 1978, p.27

<sup>76</sup> Elliott and Skinner, p.113

<sup>77</sup> ‘Passionate potter’s work was ‘subtle and refined’, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/obituaries/8744890/Passionate-potters-work-was-subtle-and-refined>, Accessed: 10 October 2022

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> ‘Mirek Smíšek’, *New Zealand Potter*, p.24

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> ‘Conservation Plan Smisek Kilns, Te Horo’, February 2015, Ian Bowman and Elizabeth Cox, p.13

<sup>82</sup> ‘Te Horo Railway Station Destroyed’, *Evening Post*, 5 November 1923, p.2

<sup>83</sup> ‘The Otaki Mail. Friday, June 27, 1924. Local and General’, *Otaki Mail*, 27 June 1924, p.2; 1914 NZR Engineering notebook, p. unknown

<sup>84</sup> James Veitch. ‘Troup, George Alexander’, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published 1993. Te Ara – the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2t49/troup-george-alexander>, accessed: 7 September 2022; Other HNZPT listed railway stations include: Clyde Railway Station (Former) List No.7391, Gisborne Railway Station List No. 3531, Glen Eden Railway Station List No. 7435 and Moana Railway Station List No. 5004.

structure', it was comprised of a lobby, ladies' waiting-room, porter's office and toilet.<sup>85</sup> It is believed that the original paint scheme was brown and cream.<sup>86</sup> Advertised for sale when it was no longer required, Smíšek won the tender to purchase it in 1971 for \$100 and he relocated it onto his Te Horo property for a further \$1,000.<sup>87</sup> He also moved a small cottage, called 'the red shed' onto the property. It was originally built elsewhere (c.1860s) and moved by Smíšek in the early 1970s.<sup>88</sup> Little is known about it, but it is believed to have been a former railway workers' hut.<sup>89</sup> It was used as a working space and show room for the sale of pottery work crafted there.

Pottery dominated craftwork in New Zealand in the 1970s. Smíšek found a ready market in the Kāpiti Coast for his 'elegant salt glazed teapots, casseroles, bowls and cider-jars'.<sup>90</sup> The period is described as 'a time when many people were questioning society's expectations and values and opting for a return to a basic self-sufficient life.'<sup>91</sup> Smíšek's centre became a hub for both aspiring and accomplished potters from all over New Zealand with similar aspirations. From supervising digging clay, teaching kiln construction and undertaking potting and firing, Smíšek had a talent for teaching and bringing people together. He became a well-known resident in the area and the kilns became a local landmark, a particularly dramatic landscape visible from the main road when the beehive kilns were lit up for an overnight firing. He taught two-week long pottery courses, he and Annsouth sold their pottery from the site and held regular open days. In doing so they became part of the Te Horo community, hosting a Christmas Festival for the locals every year at which Deirdre Tarrant's Dance School 'Footnote Dance' and other musicians performed.<sup>92</sup>

Smíšek was influenced and inspired by the Kāpiti Coast and the forms and colours he saw around him. When they purchased the property in 1970 it was largely farmland, with a stand of Tōtara trees, but they encouraged the northern portion of the property to gradually return to regenerating native forest. He created a marked path through the forest. The form of his

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<sup>85</sup> 'The Otaki Mail. Friday, June 27, 1924, p.2

<sup>86</sup> 'Railway Sleepers', *Dominion Post*, 15 March 2003, p.F16

<sup>87</sup> *ibid*; NZTA Document, Chapter 25, Part G, Vol 2: Built Heritage, p.309, <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/peka-peka-to-otaki-application/docs/aee-section-25.pdf>, Accessed: 31 August 2022

<sup>88</sup> Personal conversation with John Draper, 25 August 2022

<sup>89</sup> NZTA Document, Chapter 25, Part G, Vol 2: Built Heritage, p.310, <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/peka-peka-to-otaki-application/docs/aee-section-25.pdf>, Accessed: 31 August 2022

<sup>90</sup> 'Strength and Freedom', p.8

<sup>91</sup> 'Pottery in Nelson', <https://makeshiftspaces.nz/artists/pottery-in-nelson/>, accessed: 29 August 2022

<sup>92</sup> Personal conversation with John Draper, 25 August 2022



work reflected horizon lines of the Tararua Range and the colour of his pots echoed the 'subdued tones of native bush'.<sup>93</sup> Shades of grey and brown came from manipulating the iron content in the clay.<sup>94</sup> Wishing to see the Cook Strait from the property, he erected a 10-metre high 'crow's nest', a perch from which he could view the surrounding area. It became dangerously derelict and was eventually demolished.

Film director, screenwriter and producer Peter Jackson sought out Smíšek for the pottery he required for the Lord of the Rings film trilogy, released in 2001, 2002 and 2003. He commissioned him to create about 700 items in 8 months including an assortment of goblets, bowls, wine bottle and jugs. Smíšek explains: 'Before I started making the pots, I re-read the books again to get a fresh approach to everything I was going to make'.<sup>95</sup> The task was 'to make three sizes because the size of the people— dwarves, normal and giant. That was a bit of a challenge because they all had to look the same'.<sup>96</sup> Smíšek embraced the work which he found both 'exciting and challenging'.<sup>97</sup>

Smíšek and Annsouth sold the property in 1997 after a final pottery sale on the property in 1996. They moved south to Waikanae where they again set up a small glost kiln— but chose not to pursue salt glazing again. In recognition of his achievements in pottery Smíšek was awarded an OBE in 1990 and in 2009 the Czech Government awarded him the Medal of the Senate.<sup>98</sup> Smíšek died in 2013 shortly after an exhibition of his life's work called '60 Years 60 Pots' held at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts in Wellington. At this exhibition curator Gary Fremantle brought together pots from both public and private collections to celebrate his life's work.<sup>99</sup> Smíšek is recognised as a leading potter of his era alongside the likes of Barry Brickell, Len Castle and Peter Stichbury.<sup>100</sup> His work has been collected by major New Zealand museums including Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, the Dowse Art Museum,

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<sup>93</sup> *ibid*, p.140

<sup>94</sup> Peter Lane, *Studio Ceramics*, Hong Kong: Collins, 1983, p.232-233

<sup>95</sup> 'Lord of the Rings Pottery, by Mirek Smíšek', <http://potters.blogspot.com/2004/02/lord-of-rings-pottery-by-mirek-smisek.html>

<sup>96</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>98</sup> 'The Kilns at Te Horo'

<sup>99</sup> Anneke Borren, 'Mirek Smíšek 1925-2013', *Ceramics Quarterly: New Zealand Potters' Magazine*, Vol 33, No 2, June 2013, p.16

<sup>100</sup> 'Artist Barry Brickell dies aged 80', Radio New Zealand website, 24 January 2016, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/294797/artist-barry-brickell-dies-aged-80>, accessed: 12 October 2022..

Auckland Museum and Nelson Provincial Museum. It is highly sought after and regularly passes through various auction houses.

### *Later History*

In 1997 the property was purchased by potter John Wineera and his wife Helen.<sup>101</sup> John continued in the tradition of creating salt-glazed pottery on the site and built another kiln for this purpose on the land (now gone). The railway station building had by now fallen into disrepair. The Wineeras initially considered turning it into a place for pottery display but instead opted to undertake a major refurbishment which included the addition of a new veranda awning. They chose to paint the building red, green and cream which was 'not authentic' but they thought it 'more attractive' than the original colour scheme.<sup>102</sup> In 2003 work was complete and they opened as a self-contained bed and breakfast.<sup>103</sup> They hosted guests there until John passed away in 2008, whereupon the property title transferred solely to Helen's name.

In October 2010 the land parcel upon which the kilns sit was transferred to the Crown for the State Highway One Wellington Northern Corridor – Pekaeka to Ōtaki Expressway (O2PP).<sup>104</sup> Through consultation with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, The Mirek Smíšek Arts Trust/ The Kilns at Te Horo, tangata whenua and the Kāpiti District Council and artists, a plan was devised to relocate the kilns 20 metres east and restore the buildings. Potter and kiln-builder Duncan Shearer and master brick layer Rick Meade dismantled, moved and rebuilt the kilns and flue.<sup>105</sup> Jamie MacDuff project managed the 'tremendous 3D jigsaw'.<sup>106</sup> Meade described the task as 'a little bit technical', using compass points with measurements.<sup>107</sup> Every course was layered, numbered and stacked in shipping containers on site so that every brick went back into its same position – to make them 'like they are ready to be lit and ready to be used', although they were now non-functional.<sup>108</sup> A replica timber and timber-shingled roof was

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<sup>101</sup> Also spelt 'Wi Neera'

<sup>102</sup> 'Railway Sleepers', p.F16

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> RT WN201/17

<sup>105</sup> Jane Manthel, 'The Kilns at Te Horo: an update from The Mirek Smíšek Arts Trust', Ceramics New Zealand, <https://ceramicsnz.org/2021/05/21/the-kilns-at-te-horo-an-update-from-the-mirek-smisek-arts-trust/>, accessed: 19 August 2022

<sup>106</sup> 'Magic of Smíšek's beehive kilns still alive after reconstruction', Kāpiti News, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kapiti-news/news/magic-of-smiseks-beehive-kilns-still-alive-after-reconstruction/>, accessed: 13 September 2022

<sup>107</sup> 'Mirek Smíšek kilns relocation', 1 September 2020

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

also built to shelter them. Fletchers undertook this work for them with the involvement of WSP as consultants working to retain the heritage values of the property. In 2020 the Edwardian villa was relocated off the property to Ringawhata Road in Ōtaki.

#### *Mirek Smíšek Arts Trust / The Kilns at Te Horo*

The Mirek Smíšek Arts Trust / The Kilns at Te Horo formed in 2019 in response to the O2PP proposal to secure and preserve the kilns and their site, with the mission: ‘Hei whakamanawa, hei whakaako me te whakanui’ / ‘To inspire, educate and celebrate’.<sup>109</sup> The Trust are working towards creating a centre to celebrate both pottery and other arts and crafts of tangata whenua.<sup>110</sup> The Trust plans to restore the railway building and make it into accommodation for visiting artists. The red shed will also be restored and road access improved.<sup>111</sup> They are keen to celebrate what are believed to be the only remaining beehive kilns in New Zealand.<sup>112</sup> From the early 1980s beehive kilns lost popularity in New Zealand because of the huge quantity of time and effort required to operate them. Today the skill of designing and building beehive kilns has been lost as potters opt to use more efficient and easier to use gas or electric kilns for firing their pots.<sup>113</sup>

## **2.2. Physical Information**

#### *Current Description*

Mirek Smíšek’s Beehive Kilns are located 70 km north of Wellington city on the Kāpiti Coast of Te Ika-a-Māui / the North Island, sitting just north of the Te Horo township and on the eastern side of State Highway 1, which runs southwest to northeast through the rural settlement. The area is home to a population of approximately 1,400 people, some of whom are farmers and market gardeners. The kilns are located outside of the township and inland from Te Horo Beach and the settlement there, sitting south of the Ōtaki river, and just north

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<sup>109</sup> ‘The Kilns at Te Horo’

<sup>110</sup> ‘Historic Smíšek kilns moved to safety’, *Otaki Historical Journal*, Vol 42, 2021, Otaki: The Society, p. 11

<sup>111</sup> ‘The Kilns at Te Horo: an update from The Mirek Smíšek Arts Trust’

<sup>112</sup> ‘Smíšek’s beehive kilns reinvigorated with new arts and cultural centre’, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kapiti-news/news/Smíšeks-beehive-kilns-reinvigorated-with-new-arts-and-cultural-centre/>, Accessed: 13 September 2022

<sup>113</sup> Jenny Shearer, Personal Conversation, 7 October 2022.

of the Mangaone Stream which descends from the Tararua Ranges to flow westward into the Ōtaki river mouth and the Tasman Sea.

The kilns, red shed and railway building sit in close proximity on a very small and flat triangular section of land, bound by regenerating native bush on the northeastern side, State Highway 1 and railway track on the northwest, and farmland and industrial storage to the southeast. In the immediate vicinity are further native bush, gardens and farmland. Nearby, there is an angled intersection to Te Waka Road veering northwest from the State Highway. This is a tranquil location with singing birds, lush undergrowth and wildlife, but still within earshot of the busy dual-carriageway State Highway 1 and the noise of trains passing on the train track that runs parallel to the roads.

The focal point of this complex are the two large beehive-shaped kilns. They were moved on to their current site in 2021, 20 metres east of where Smíšek originally built them. Today they sit on the westernmost point of the newly demarked property extent. Their impressive design is both robust and intricate and they visually dominate the locality. The kilns have an internal height of 2.25 metres and have a capacity of approximately 150 cubic feet. Both kilns sit on connected concrete plinths which echo the circular form of the kilns upon them. The westernmost one has '1971' inscribed on it and the easternmost one has '1970' inscribed on it. The two kilns look very similar on the exterior - both are of uniform dimensions and have their chief openings with snugly fitting voussoirs on their southern side. Both have three vents in the kilns and floors of arranged bricks forming a circular pattern, a decorative single course of salt glazed bricks at the top course of the external walls and chains and a metal band as strapping around the girth of the kilns. The internal diameters of both are 1.86 metres. Despite these similarities, the use and purpose of the two kilns was quite different. The westernmost kiln was used for Smíšek's signature salt glazing and evidence of this can be seen in its interior where splashes of glaze coat the kiln walls. This kiln has an additional small opening, stopped with a removeable brick, in the kiln wall on its eastern elevation where salt could be thrown into the kiln for the explosive process of salt glazing. The easternmost kiln was for more standard glost firing and contains a makeshift shelf on which pottery would have been placed. After the relocation cement mortar was used in the

reassembly of the kilns and the kilns are no longer able to be used for firing as the bricks cannot expand with heat.



*Figure 1. The top of the eastern kiln, with chain strapping and metal band. Constructed 1971.*

The flue is also a striking feature. Originally connected to both kilns, today it is only connected to the easternmost kiln. The brick flue is approximately 4 metres high rising from a square footprint, constructed of brick supported by steel externally. The flue extends through the roof of the sheltering canopy.



*Figure 2. The interior of the easternmost kiln with a shelf for placing pottery on. Constructed 1971.*

The kilns sit beneath a new canopy which is a replica of the original one Smíšek built. It has exposed timber struts supported by eight poles. The design of this structure took instruction and inspiration from [Grant Tilly's 1972 drawing of the kilns](#) and their shelter. The roof is a simple structure with timber shingles.





*Figure 3. The flue, no longer connected to the western kiln. Constructed 1971.*



*Figure 4. The hole through which salt was thrown to create salt glazing. Constructed 1972-3.*

This List Entry also includes the red shed and the former Te Horo railway station. The red shed (also known as the cottage) is located at the eastern side of the cluster of structures. It is a 24m<sup>2</sup> simple rusticated weatherboard structure with a corrugated iron gable roof with barge boards. Its front porch is supported by three timber posts. On the front elevation there are two four-panel doors, and two six-paned casement windows flanking it on either side. There are also two two-pane casement windows on the rear wall. The internal space was originally two equal-sized rooms, but at some point were opened up to create a single internal space. The front elevation, porch, timber posts and roof are all painted a distinctive red, after which the structure gets its name. There is a small, simple, timber and corrugated iron lean-to woodshed at the south-western side of the building. There is no kitchen or toilet.



*Figure 5. The red shed (cottage)*

The former Te Horo railway station is a long rectangular wooden structure with a total area of 87m<sup>2</sup>. It was built to a New Zealand Railway Station Building, No.3, Class A Troup design. There are two volumes to the structure, a larger main section and a smaller one that extends from the southern side of the building which was the original bathroom. The roof is corrugated iron. It has a fascia which continues around three of the elevations, a bold feature of Troup's design, today picked out in dark green. The smaller section has a lower roof but echoes the slope and fascia of the larger section. The exterior is constructed with rusticated timber weatherboards. The front elevation has an awning with white plastic guttering and down pipe supported by four white timber brackets (probably a later addition – not a feature of Troup's original plans). The main, centrally placed, entrance door was stolen so the void was boarded up by Fletcher Building. There are two small glass panes set above it. The

original windows, also currently boarded up, are double paned sash windows. The shallowly sloping shed-type roof has a soffit decorated with eaves brackets at each corner of the western elevation. There are three main spaces in the interior and it contains the original train ticketing counter. It is currently derelict. The original 'Te Horo' signage has been removed and is in storage to protect it from vandals, but there are plans to restore it to its original situation fixed above the main entrance door. The rear of the building has windows which are similarly boarded up. A metal chimney extends from the roof.



*Figure 6. The Railway Station building, boarded up for security while undergoing restoration.*

The northern part of the property is native forest and there are bushwalks originally marked out by Smíšek which wend their way through the forest.<sup>114</sup> Today there is a canopy of tall Totara trees and a regenerating undergrowth of mainly native plants with some introduced species. Early aerial photography shows that this strand of forest has been regenerating since the 1940s.

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<sup>114</sup> This forest is scheduled in the Kāpiti Coast District Plan, Operative 30 June 2021, Schedule 1 – Ecological Sites, Ref. K037 Cottle's Bush.





*Figure 7. Cattle Bush, the regenerating native bush at the north of the property.*

#### *Construction Professionals*

Kilns: Mirek Smíšek (Builder)

Former Te Horo Railway Station: George Troup (Architect); New Zealand Railways Department (Builder)

#### *Construction Materials*

Bricks

Steel

Concrete

Timber

Glass

Corrugated iron

#### *Key Physical Dates*

c.1860s	'Red shed' built
1924	Railway station built
c.1970s	'Red shed' moved onto site
1971	Railway station moved onto site
1971	First easternmost kiln built
1972-3	Second westernmost kiln built
2020	Edwardian house is moved off the property
2021	The two beehive kilns are moved 20 m east

### *Uses*

Manufacturing - Kiln Pottery (Former)

Accommodation - Artist's Residence (Former)

Accommodation – Shed/store – Residential out-building (Former)

Transport - Railway station/platform/refreshment room (Former)

## **2.3. Chattels**

There are no chattels included in this List entry.

## **2.4. Sources**

### *Sources Available and Accessed*

Rex Kerr's book *Ōtaki is the river = Ko Ōtaki te awa*, Ōtaki: Black Pony Express, 2012 was an excellent resource, particularly for the early history of the Te Horo area.

Retrolens provided a useful photographic record of the land since 1948.

Unfortunately, there are no existing original plans for the Beehive Kilns and almost no information is available for the Red Shed. There is some information, including plans, for the Railway Building.

'The Kilns at Te Horo' is a website set up to promote the work and accessible here:

<https://www.thekilnsattehoro.co.nz/>.

'Moving the historic Mirek Smisek kilns', Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, has a short clip about the moving of the kilns accessible here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffF0pE\\_e4i0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffF0pE_e4i0)

A site visit was undertaken on 20 September 2022. It was not possible to see the interior of the Railway Building on this visit.

### *Further Reading*

Peter Lane, *Studio Ceramics*, Hong Kong: Collins, 1983.

Moyra Elliott and Damian Skinner, *Cone Ten Down*, Auckland: David Bateman, 2009.

Janet Bayley and Justine Olsen, *Mirek Smíšek: 60 years, 60 pots*, Waikanae: Mahara Gallery, 2009.

### **3. SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT<sup>115</sup>**

#### **3.1. Section 66 (1) Assessment**

This place has been assessed for, and found to possess cultural, historical, social and technological significance or value. It is considered that this place qualifies as part of New Zealand's historic and cultural heritage.

##### **Cultural Significance or Value**

The Smíšek Beehive Kilns represent the centrality of studio pottery in New Zealand's twentieth century craft scene and its dominance as a craft form by the 1970s. Smíšek's construction of his own kilns and creation of a pottery centre in a rural area was characteristic of studio pottery practice in this period. The kilns were the centre of an artistic hub centred around Smisek for nearly four decades, the importance of which is recognised in the creation of the Mirek Smíšek Arts Trust / The Kilns at Te Horo. They are a cultural memorial to a major potter and craft practice.

##### **Historical Significance or Value**

From this place Smíšek made a significant contribution to New Zealand studio pottery and he is lauded as one of the major practitioners of his era. He was particularly skilled at the technique of salt glazing. The importance of his work was first recognised in 1973 when he was the subject of a major exhibition at the Dowse Art Gallery, and later by the awarding of an OBE in 1990 and the Medal of the Senate from the Czech Government.

##### **Social Significance or Value**

The kilns and their immediate environment have a history of bringing people together – both potters and the local community. The creation of the Mirek Smíšek Arts Trust / The Kilns at Te Horo, a community enterprise seeking to recognise, share and celebrate the significance of the kilns to the pottery scene today, is an expression of community appreciation and interest in this place. The Trust has played a vital role in the relocation and preservation of the kilns.

##### **Technological Significance or Value**

Smíšek constructed the brick beehive kilns with considerable technological and engineering skill, chipping each of the 4,000 bricks sourced from Golden Bay individually to fit together

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<sup>115</sup> For the relevant sections of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 see Appendix 4: Significance Assessment Information.



into the dome-shaped structures which featured voussoirs and a connected flue. The kilns reflect Smíšek's ongoing experimentation and expertise in building and operating salt glazing kilns, expertise which began with the first kiln he built in Nelson in 1954 and was fully realised in his creation of these kilns. Their value to demonstrate the technology is somewhat diminished by the fact that they are no longer able to be used for the function for which they were originally designed.

### **3.2. Section 66 (3) Assessment**

This place was assessed against the Section 66(3) criteria and found to qualify under the following criteria a, b, e, f, g and j. The assessment concludes that this place should be listed as a Category 2 historic place.

(a) The extent to which the place reflects important or representative aspects of New Zealand history

The Beehive Kilns represent the dominance of pottery in crafts in New Zealand in the 1970s. Together with the red shed and former railway station building they were an important hub for pottery artists, at which Smíšek's kilns were the heart. Today they are a memorial to a celebrated potter particularly renowned for his mastery of the salt glaze technique.

(b) The association of the place with events, persons, or ideas of importance in New Zealand history

The beehive kilns were designed, built and used by renowned New Zealand potter Mirek Smíšek (1925-2013). He lived and worked at the Te Horo property between 1970 and 1997 and gained national fame as a master potter, famous in particular for his mastery of the technique of salt glazing. His eminence was recognised by an OBE in 1990 and the Medal of the Senate from the Czech Government for his contribution to Czech culture.

(e) The community association with, or public esteem for the place

The Mirek Smíšek Trust recently formed with the mission to restore the site to its original function as a hub for creating and celebrating pottery. The major effort to move and rebuild the kilns is an indication of esteem and recognition of the kilns value as cultural artefacts.

(f) The potential of the place for public education

Despite the kilns being non-functional, their otherwise faithful reassembling means they have the potential to educate the public about Smíšek's creative output and his techniques, particularly his signature method of salt glazing. Their preservation alongside the railway station and cottage provides insights into studio pottery practice in the late twentieth century.

(g) The technical accomplishment, value, or design of the place

The kiln and flue design are visually striking and carefully built to a very ordered and attractively finished design, featuring an ornate row of salt glazed bricks set below the dome. They represent Mirek Smíšek's significant technical accomplishment in his execution of designing and building these beehive kilns for the purpose of firing pottery.

(j) The importance of identifying rare types of historic places

The Mirek Smíšek Beehive Kilns are believed to be the only surviving beehive kilns in New Zealand. They represent a type of pottery kiln that is no longer in use due to the prevalence of gas and electric kilns.

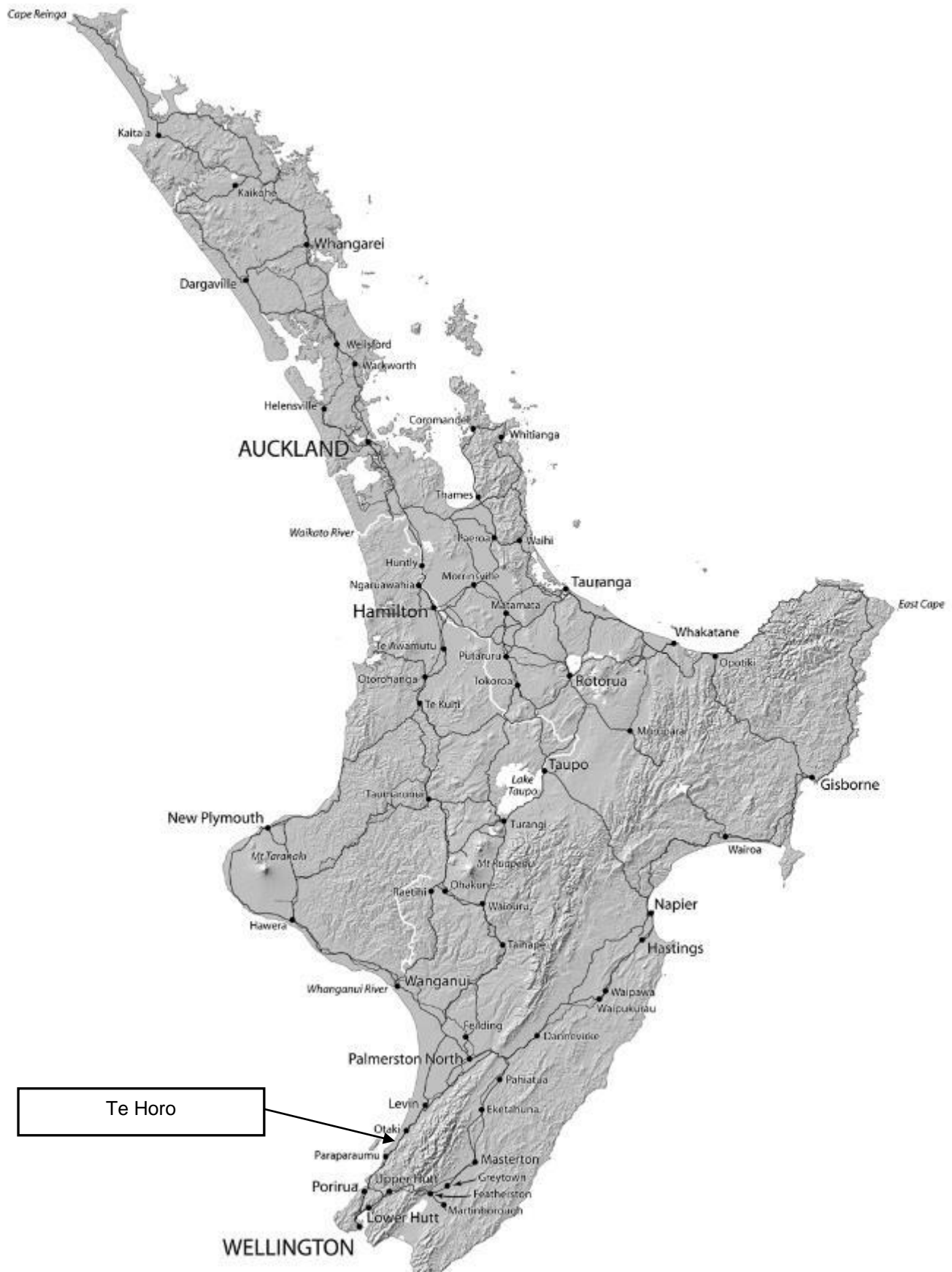
*Summary of Significance or Values*

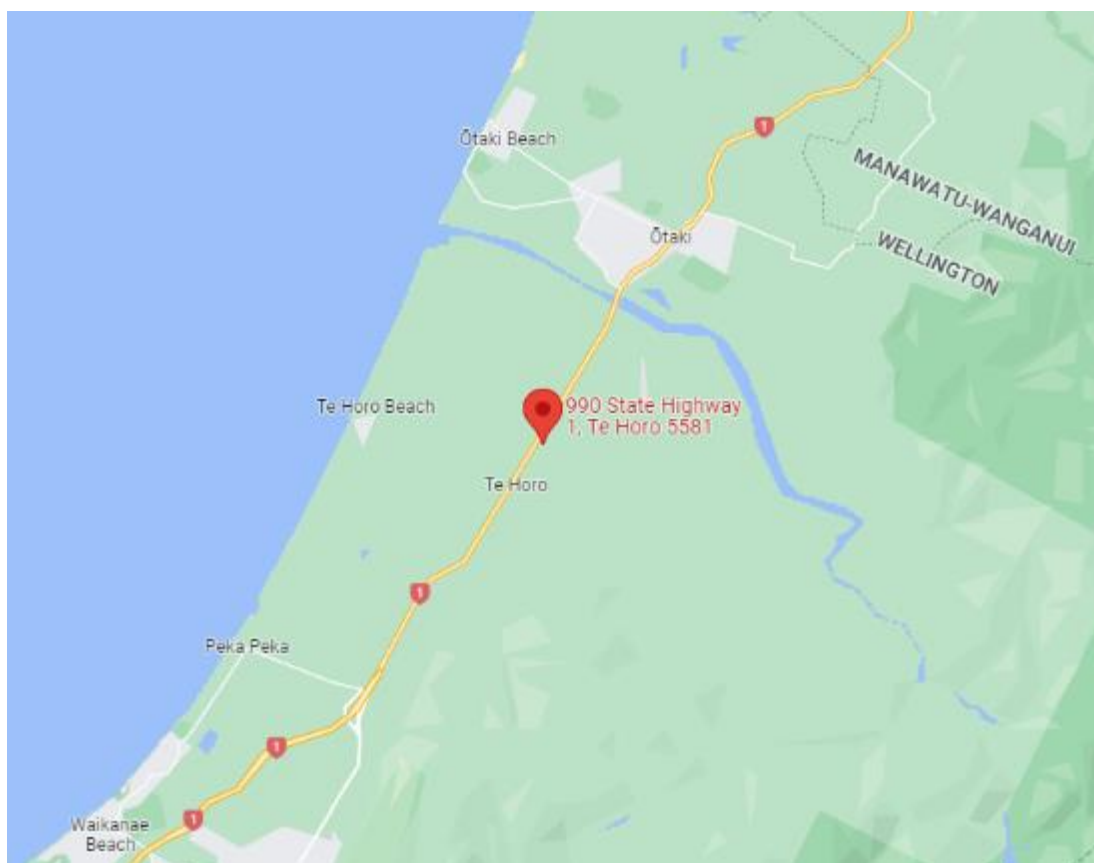
Today Mirek Smíšek is celebrated as New Zealand first professional studio potter. He was based at his Te Horo property between 1970 and 1997, where he designed and constructed two brick beehive kilns with considerable technological and engineering skill. They were part of a hub, which along with the red shed and the former railway station building, today represents the centrality of studio pottery to New Zealand's craft scene in the 1970s and provides insight into studio pottery practice then. Smíšek gained fame for his mastery of the technique of salt glazing. His output recognised by an OBE in 1990 and the Medal of the Senate from the Czech Government. The effort to move and rebuild the kilns in 2021 was a major project. Although they are now non-functional, today the kilns are a significant memorial to Smíšek and his life's work.

## 4. APPENDICES

### 4.1. Appendix 1: Visual Identification Aids

#### *Location Maps*





*Figure 8. The location of the Mirek Smíšek Beehive Kilns between Ōtaki and Te Horo on the Kāpiti Coast, Google Maps*

### Maps of Extent

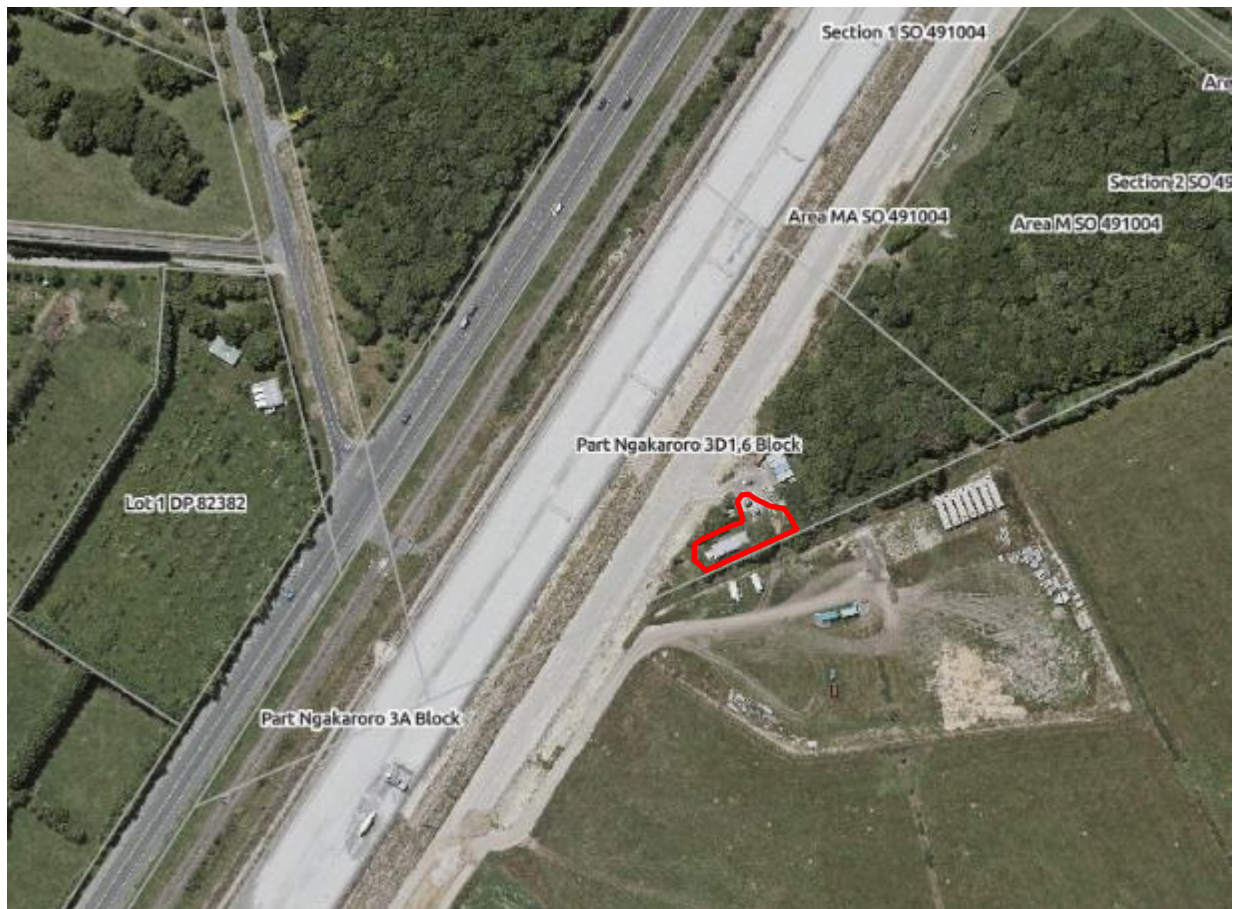


Figure 9. Fig 9: Extent includes the land described as Pt Ngakaroro 3D1 6 Blk (RT WN201/17), Wellington Land District and the buildings known as the Mirek Smisek Beehive Kilns, Red Shed and the Railway Building (Former) thereon. Source: Pātaka Maps





Figure 10. Dotted outline showing the original land parcel and site, since reduced for the new roads. Courtesy of Alex Pirie, WSP.



Figure 11. The new, smaller site. Courtesy of Alex Pirie, WSP.





**RECORD OF TITLE  
UNDER LAND TRANSFER ACT 2017  
FREEHOLD  
Search Copy**



  
R. W. Muir  
Registrar-General  
of Land

**Identifier** **WN201/17**  
**Land Registration District** **Wellington**  
**Date Issued** 24 January 1911

**Prior References**  
WN97/128

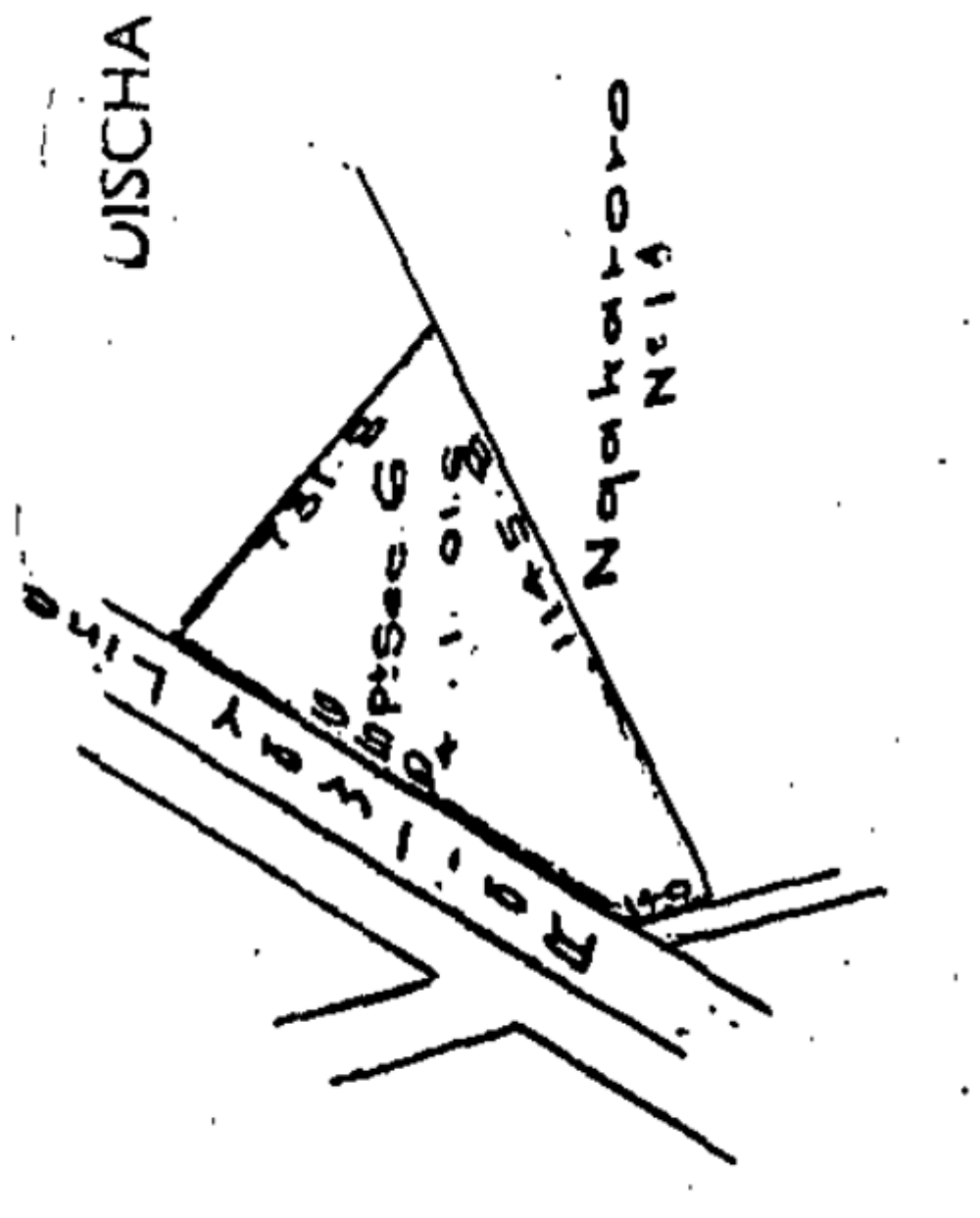
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<b>Estate</b>	Fee Simple
<b>Area</b>	1.7240 hectares more or less
<b>Legal Description</b>	Part Ngakaroro 3D1 6 Block
<b>Purpose</b>	for use in connection with State Highway One (Wellington Northern Corridor - Peka Peka to Otaki Expressway)

**Registered Owners**  
Her Majesty the Queen

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**Interests**



## 4.2. Appendix 2: Visual Aids to Historical Information

### *Historical Plans*

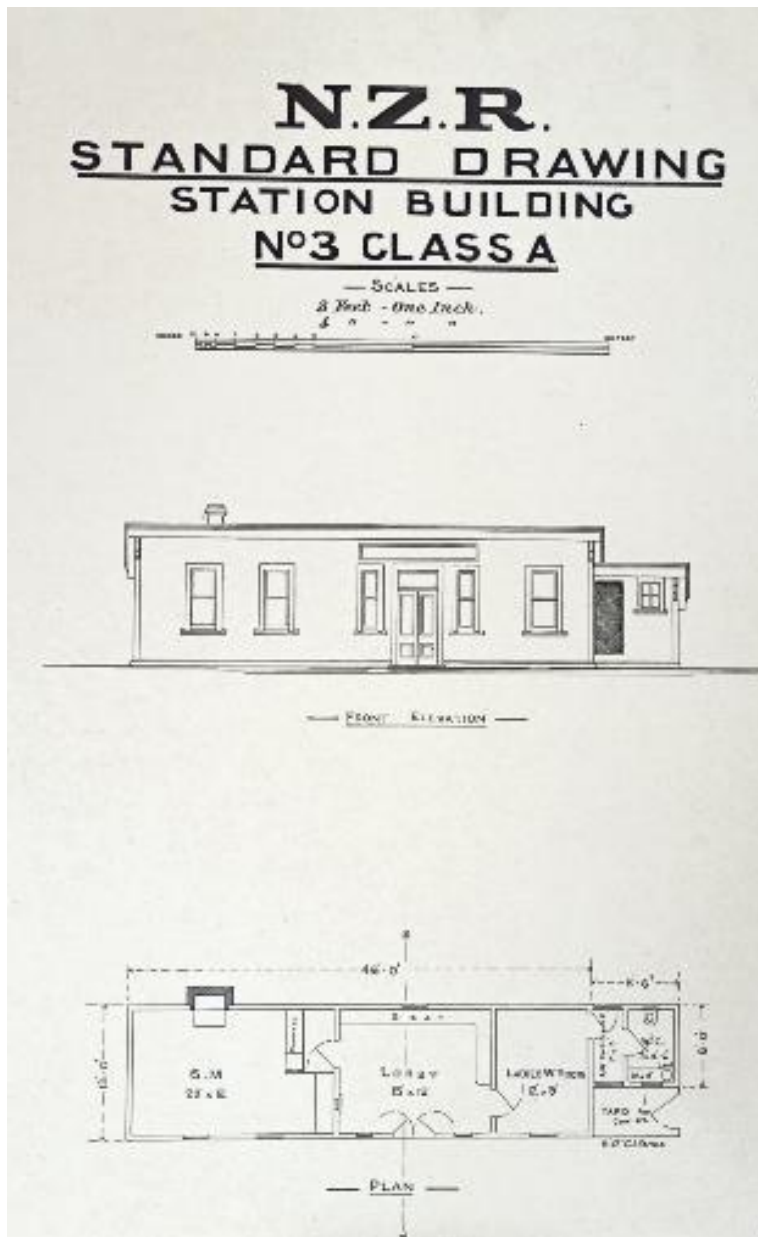


Figure 12. New Zealand Railways Standard Drawing Station Building No3 Class A, 1914 NZR Engineering Notebook, Provided by Alex Pirie, WSP.



Figure 13. The easternmost glost kiln in use. Photographer: Cleal, Archives New Zealand – Communicate New Zealand Collection, R24808117, 1973-1973, Box Number B2910, Creative Commons BY2.0 license.



Figure 14. The Former Te Horo Rail Station, being relocated to the Smíšek property, c.1970s. Photo courtesy of Alex Pirie, WSP.

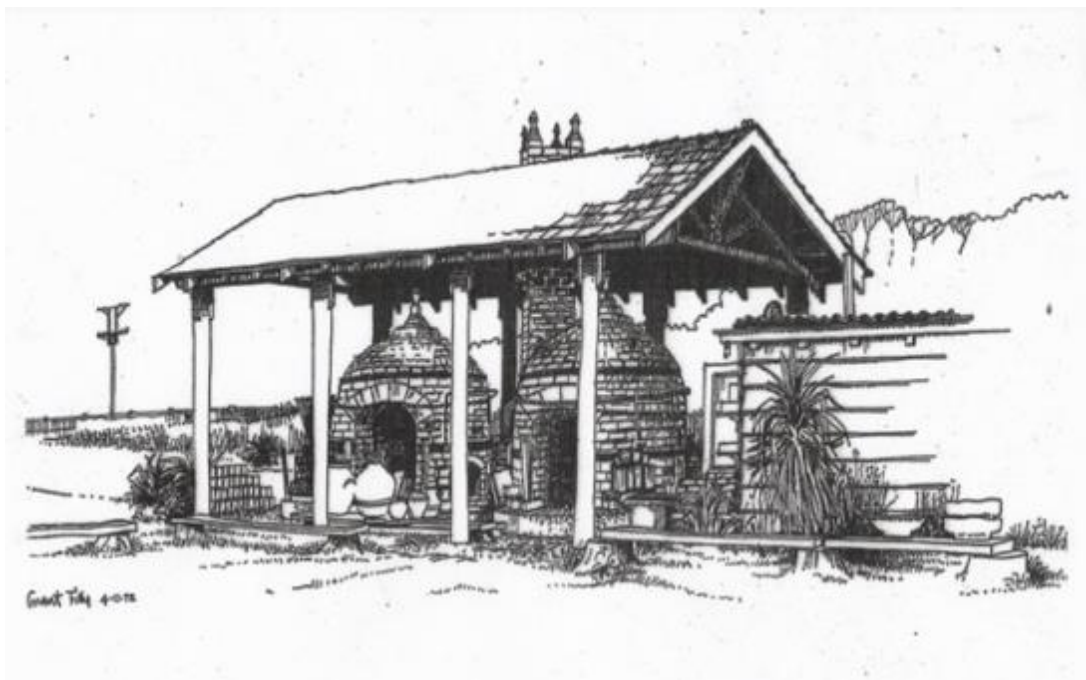


Figure 15. Grant Tilly's 1972 drawing of the Mirek Smíšek Beehive Kilns. This drawing was used for the recreation of the replaced canopy. Ceramic New Zealand. <https://ceramicsnz.org/2021/05/21/the-kilns-at-te-horo-an-update-from-the-mirek-smíšek-arts-trust/> Accessed: 21 September 2022





Figure 16. 18 April 1986, Survey Number SN8640, Elevation 8080, Run Number F, Scale 8000, LINZ CC-BY 3.0, <https://retrolens.co.nz/map/#/1779649.7772882981/5480343.554891615/1782064.7096507465/5481922.457257173/2193/11>

### 4.3. Appendix 3: Visual Aids to Physical Information

#### *Current Photographs of Place*



Figure 17. The rear of the boarded-up Railway Building and the Red Shed's gable is visible on the right, taken from the current access point, September 2022.





*Figure 18. The Mirek Smíšek Beehive Kilns, Railway Building and Red Shed on their new smaller land area, newly bound on the left by the Winiata Link Road. Photo courtesy of Sacha Haskell Fletcher Buildings, September 2022*

#### 4.4. Appendix 4: Significance Assessment Information

Part 4 of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014

*Chattels or object or class of chattels or objects (Section 65(6))*

Under Section 65(6) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, an entry on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero relating to a historic place may include any chattel or object or class of chattels or objects –

- a) Situated in or on that place; and
- b) Considered by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga to contribute to the significance of that place; and
- c) Proposed by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga for inclusion on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero.

*Significance or value (Section 66(1))*

Under Section 66(1) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga may enter any historic place or historic area on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero if the place possesses aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, technological, or traditional significance or value.

*Category of historic place (Section 66(3))*

Under Section 66(3) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga may assign Category 1 status or Category 2 status to any historic place, having regard to any of the following criteria:

- a) The extent to which the place reflects important or representative aspects of New Zealand history
- b) The association of the place with events, persons, or ideas of importance in New Zealand history
- c) The potential of the place to provide knowledge of New Zealand history
- d) The importance of the place to tangata whenua
- e) The community association with, or public esteem for, the place
- f) The potential of the place for public education
- g) The technical accomplishment, value, or design of the place
- h) The symbolic or commemorative value of the place
- i) The importance of identifying historic places known to date from an early period of New Zealand settlement
- j) The importance of identifying rare types of historic places
- k) The extent to which the place forms part of a wider historical and cultural area

Additional criteria may be prescribed in regulations made under this Act for the purpose of assigning Category 1 or Category 2 status to a historic place, provided they are not inconsistent with the criteria set out in subsection (3)

Additional criteria may be prescribed in regulations made under this Act for entering historic places or historic areas of interest to Māori, wāhi tūpuna, wāhi tapu, or wāhi tapu areas on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero, provided they are not inconsistent with the criteria set out in subsection (3) or (5) or in regulations made under subsection (4).

NOTE: Category 1 historic places are ‘places of special or outstanding historical or cultural heritage significance or value.’ Category 2 historic places are ‘places of historical or cultural heritage significance or value.’