

Ship Cove

LOCATION: MARLBOROUGH, NEW ZEALAND

The site of Ship Cove celebrates the foundation of the nation; the place where two peoples meet for the first time.

The initial brief from the Department of Conservation was to design a shelter for the end of the Queen Charlotte walk and upgrade the ablutions. This evolved to include a bridge and outdoor furniture. The successful completion of the job represents an extraordinary partnership between the government and the two iwi with affiliations to the site, Te Atiawa and Rangitane.

The shelter was inspired by the whare form and has elements of primary shelter. Details make reference to the boat building technology of the time; tree nailing of the floor, and lashings to ridgepole, reflecting both European and Polynesian backgrounds.

The bridge celebrates the natural resource of fresh water that attracted both Maori and European to the place; a continuum from that first meeting to now. Forms from the surrounding vegetation along with elements of rope technology, which brought both people to explore this part of the world, are incorporated into the structure.

The ablutions block was designed in collaboration with a local artist who provided the graphics for the panel insets. This essential facility has been eased gently in to the bush surroundings and designed with simplicity using details such as screen walls and wooden bolts.

Wooden picnic tables were designed to evoke the boat/canoe form creating an elegant response, again carefully detailed with treenail fastenings.

Materials used display a sensitive approach to the site being robust without overtly displaying vandal proof detail. Chosen to age with grace, the enduring materials, such as steel wire rather than sisal, ensure an ease of care in this remote site. Colours blend effortlessly with the environment evoking traditional colours from Maoridom and early European settlement.