

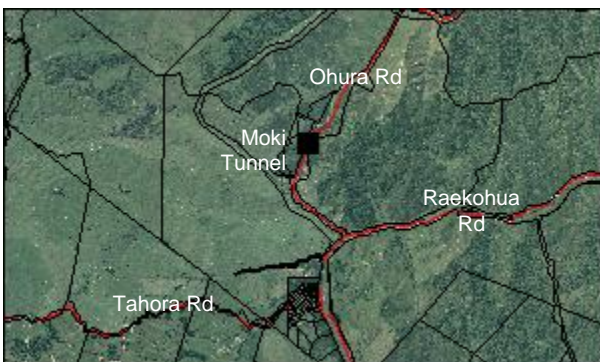


Moki Tunnel

Ohura Rd

1936

Use:	Road tunnel	Historic Value:	3 out of 5
Materials:	Timber, concrete	Architectural Value:	1 out of 4
NZHTP Registered:	Not registered	Technical Value:	2 out of 2
Legal Description:	S.H. 43	Symbolic Value:	- out of 3
		Rarity Value:	1 out of 2
		Townscape Value:	1 out of 2
		Group Value:	- out of 2
		Overall Heritage Value:	8 out of 20



The Moki Tunnel was one of five tunnels proposed by Joshua Morgan (a road surveyor in Whangamomona) in the 1890s, before his unfortunate death in 1893. This tunnel was the only one to be constructed out of the five, and it is still used today, along the route between Tahora and Mount Damper.

The tunnel was constructed in 1935-1936 by the Public Works Department, after they had completed metalling the road. Mr. Townley was the engineer, and Mr. Birss the overseer. It was dug using two power jack-hammers driven by a coal-fired steam compressor, which was situated at the western Tahora end of the tunnel. The coal was supplied from the Tangarakau Gorge mine, and was brought to the site by Mr. Ron McCartie, a Tahora settler. As the work on the tunnel continued, the coal-fired compressor was replaced with a diesel-powered air compressor, lessening the need for coal. While the tunnel was being dug, many unique fossils were found.

The spoil from the tunnel was carried out by horse and skip on steel rails that had been laid from the tunnel to the tip face, making the road wider on either side. The spoil was used to fill where the road presently runs, which has been broadened to a two-lane sealed road.



The Moki Tunnel was opened in December 1936, with Laurie Cadman and Roland Kennedy being the first through on a bullock, and Bill Shine riding his horse and cart through. The new tunnel was a huge improvement on the road over the Moki Saddle, which would become so flooded in winter that it was virtually impassable. Now, settlers and visitors to the region could come and go as they pleased, no matter what the weather or season. (The old road over the saddle is still accessible as an on-foot track from the Tahora portal of the tunnel).

The tunnel is approximately 180 metres long, and was originally built five metres high. However, with the introduction of stock trucks and trailers onto the road, this was not high enough. In 1985, Colin Boyd (from Inglewood Metal Supplies) lowered the floor a further two metres.

About two decades ago, a witty traveler nailed up a sign re-naming the Moki Tunnel as the “Hobbit’s Hole”. This nickname is still used today. *(see insert picture)*

The Moki Tunnel is a fine example of the unusual and well thought-out work completed by the road engineers and surveyors of early New Zealand. It has been appreciated by many travelers on the road, and is seen as one of the remote tourist attractions of Taranaki.

Bibliography

Heritage Sign

Tahora & Raekohua, Upper Whangamomona School Centennial, 1897-1997

Taranaki Wiki Website: <http://www.taranakiwiki.com/tiki/tiki-index.php?page=Moki+Tunnel>