



Old Coach Road History walk -

THE HISTORY OF THE ROAD

1840's and before

Part of what is now the road was used by Maori well before European settlement. The route taken by Te Marnaku's raid on Boulcott Farm in 1846 was probably from Pauatahanui up Belmont Road and then down the spur North of Speedy's stream. The retaliatory military action by the Hutt Militia and others also travelled back this way to attack Te Rangihaeata in his pa at Pauatahanui.

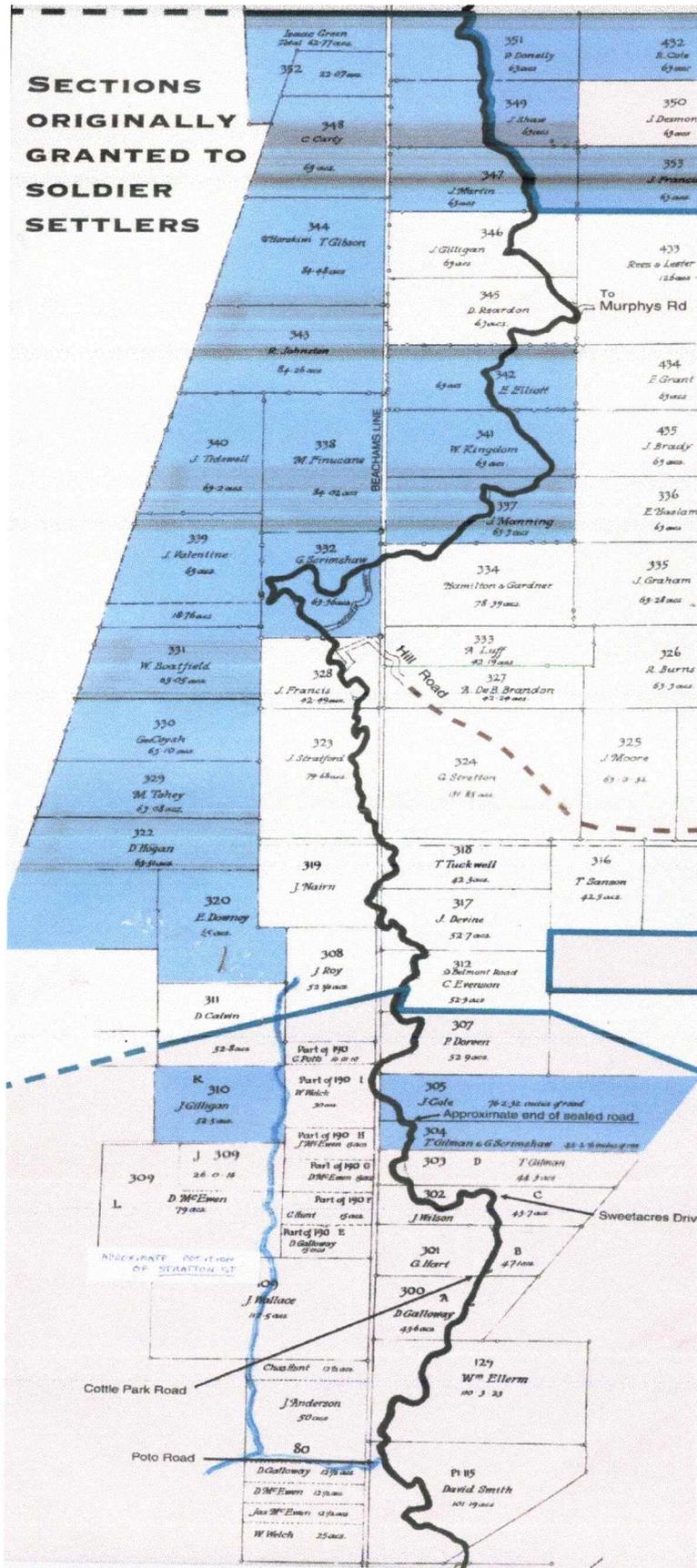
1850's

Settlement at Belmont (the area now known as Normandale) started when sections were granted up the hill from where the Normandale overbridge now stands. These early settlers included John Cole, Peter Doreen, Christian Everson, William Gardner, Thomas Gilman, David McEwan, George Scrimshaw, George Stratton, C & S Potts and Henry Sanson. Many of these early settlers were soldiers in the 65th Regiment of Foot who chose to stay in NZ rather than return to Great Britain on completion of the Regiments tour of duty to assist in the Land wars. (See map 1)

Some of the early settlers complained to the provincial council that their sections were not yet surveyed, and as a result, a surveyor, Albert Beacham, was engaged to establish a base line for the definition of lots. This straight line, cut from Pauatahanui to Belmont in 1857, still forms the boundary of several properties adjacent to the Old Coach Road. (see Maps 1 & 2)

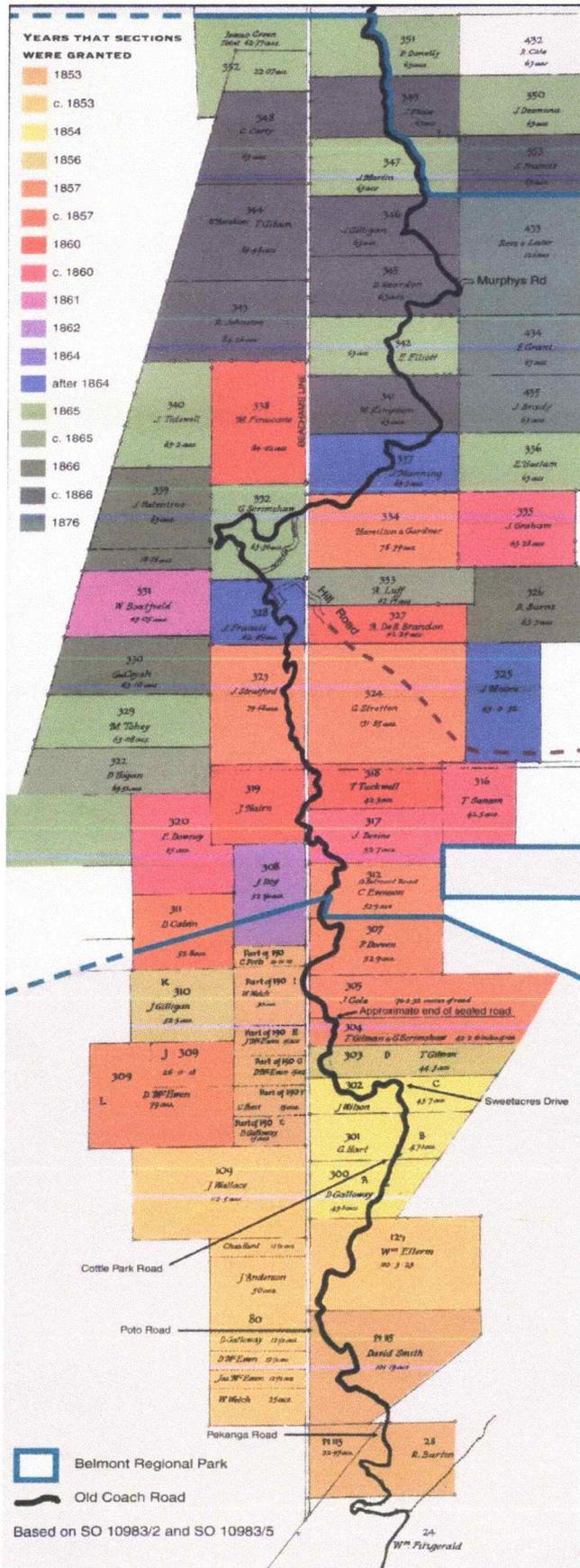
In the same year another settler, David Galloway and his son walked from Belmont (Normandale) taking two days to reach Pauatahanui. They considered that a good road could be constructed along the route.

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Map 1
Section ownership
Mainly ex members
of the 65th
Regiment of Foot

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Map 2
Chronology of land grants



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1860's

In this decade, further complaints and a petition about the lack of definite boundaries led to E. A. Campion being employed to survey section boundaries. Subsequently more sections, some of which extended up on to the crest of the hills on land that is now in the Belmont Regional Park, were granted. Although the road would have been the only access to the newly surveyed sections, it still did not exist formally. Many sections were not occupied but just cleared for grazing.

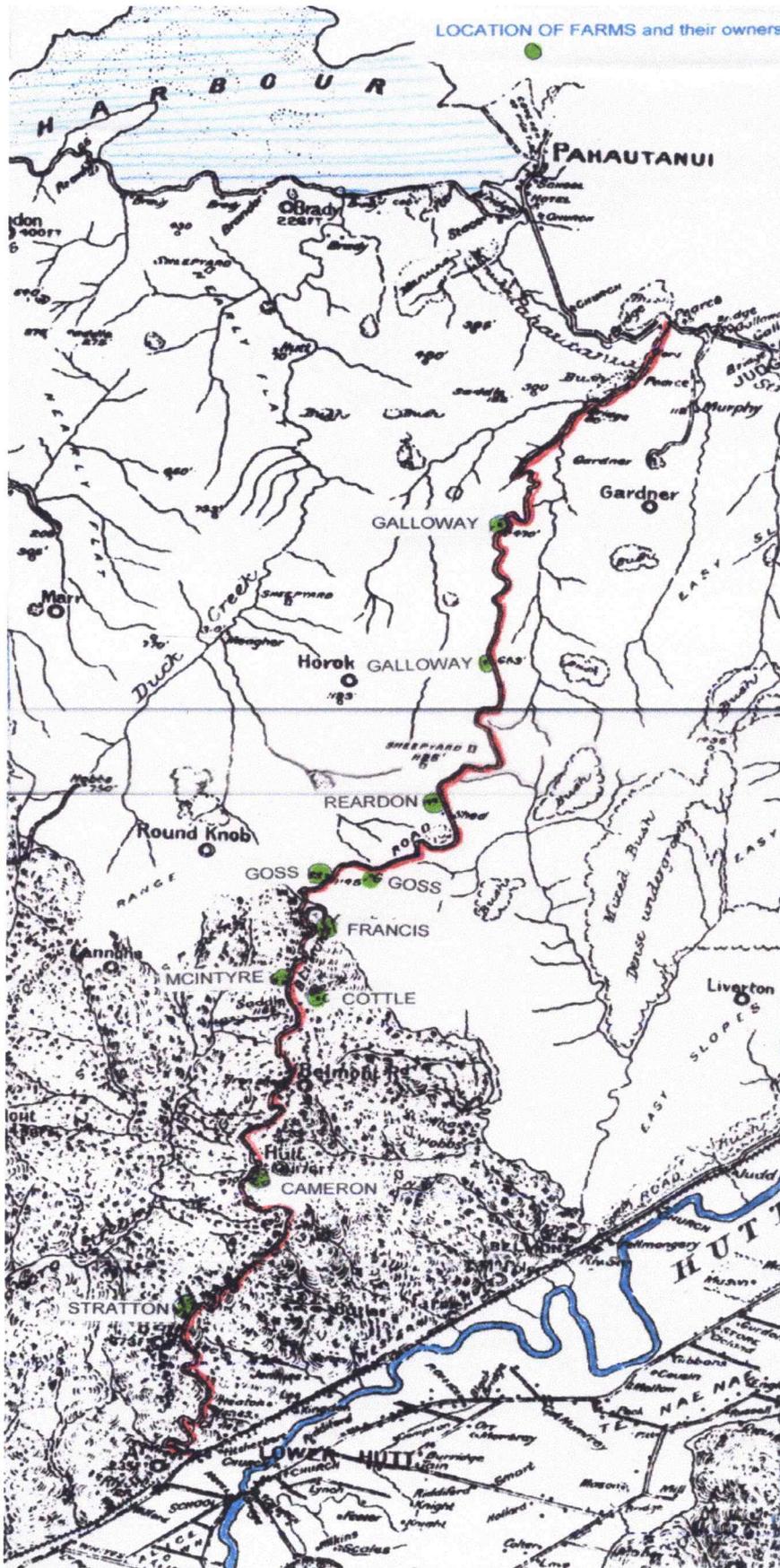
Map 2 also clearly shows the pattern of settlement extending along the route of the road during this period and as the more distant plots were settled in the need for better access to Lower Hutt increased.

1870's

William Golder, the "shepherd poet", built his *Mountain Home* near what is now the Sweetacres Drive and Normandale Road junction. He complained to the provincial government that no Belmont Road District had yet been declared, but in 1870 the Board was formed and its Chairman, William Ellerm led a team of local settlers who 'cut the line' and subsequently built the road. By the end of 1873 the road had been completed from "Upper Belmont" through to Pauatahanui. ("Upper Belmont" was used to differentiate the area from "Lower Belmont" the area near the present Belmont domain

The road, known from then on as the **Belmont Road**, was originally built as a pack horse track, about 1.2 m wide but was widened to take wheeled vehicles before 1876. It must have been in a reasonable state because several settlers now built houses on their land including Charles Cottle, John & Jesse Francis, William Golder and William Gosling. Their farms were located from the upper part of Normandale road up to the Hill road junction on the Waitangarua farm in the Belmont Regional Park. (see Map 3)

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Map 3
Farms along Belmont Road 1880 - 1890



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1880's & 1890's

It is believed that in this period the road was the main coach link to Pauatahanui. At this time Pauatahanui was a coaching stop between Porirua and Paekakariki as the road north went up the Horokiri valley. However once the Haywards Hill road was opened coaches ceased to ply the Belmont Road. It continued to be used for farm traffic for the next two decades.

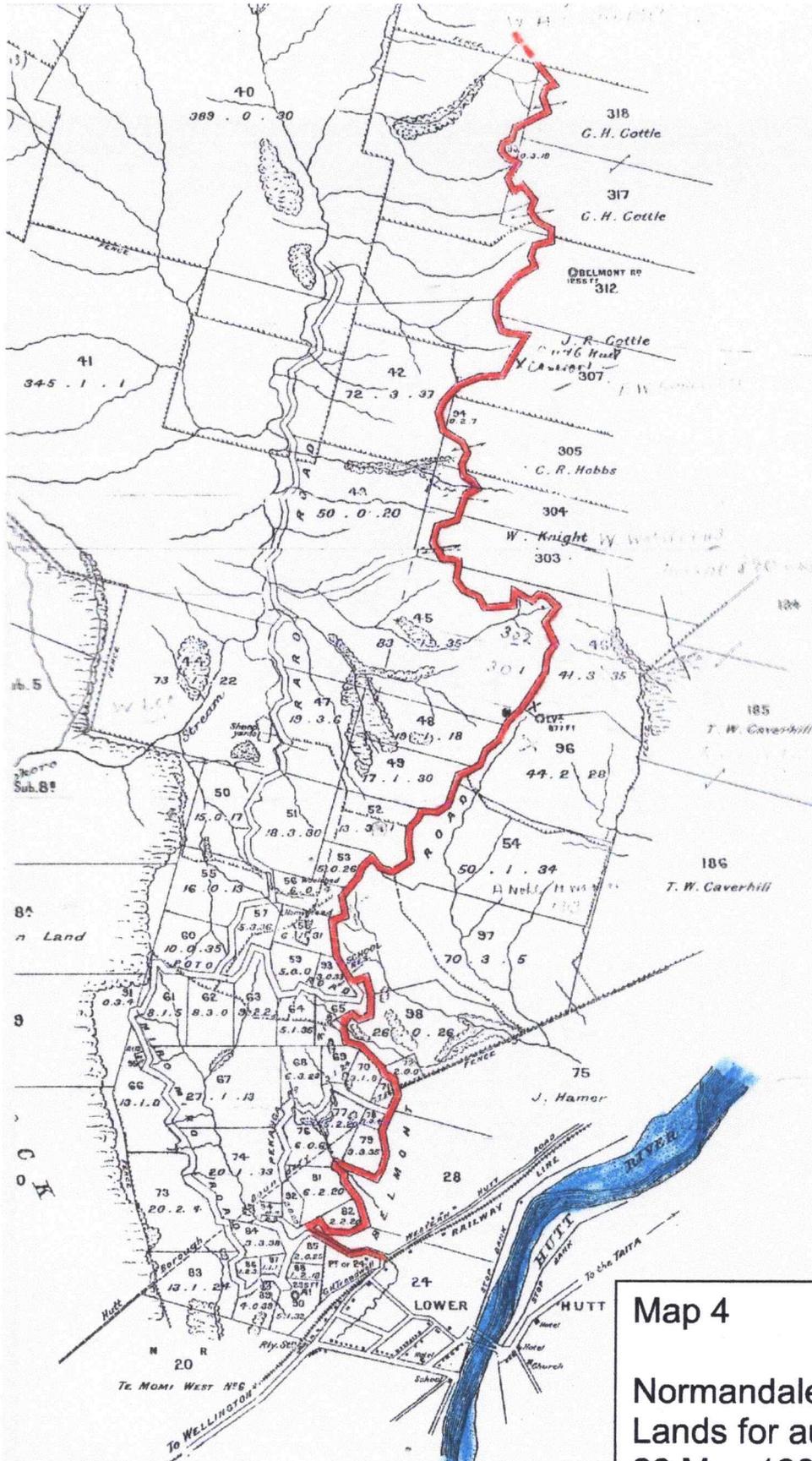
1900 - 1940

In 1903 and 1909, Normandale settlement lots were offered for sale, (see Map 4) and in 1904 the road was surveyed and considered to be "in good shape all the way to Pauatahanui except for the first 15 chains above the railway line". An advertisement at this time called the road a "formed dray road".

During the Twenties and Thirties, local residents, led by the Normandale Progressive Association wrote and campaigned repeatedly for better maintenance. At several times the road was reported as being impassable due to gorse growth. Many farm houses along the road had been abandoned.

There is now no physical evidence of these early houses, but the sites of some can still be discovered near the road by the presence of 'indicator species' of garden plants. Around the end of the current Normandale Road, stands of *Macrocarpa* are obvious, and near the small streams, Lilies can still be found, whilst further into the Park Daffodils can be seen in Spring in the middle of otherwise bare pasture.

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1940 – Present

During WW2 the Army acquired tracts of land on either side of the road for an ammunition magazine (see Map 5), and parts of the road were “widened and improved” to allow access by heavy military vehicles.

In 1962 the road was described in a report to the District Commissioner of Works as a “formed road to Pahautanui [sic] ...used by Post Office linesmen and farmers.”

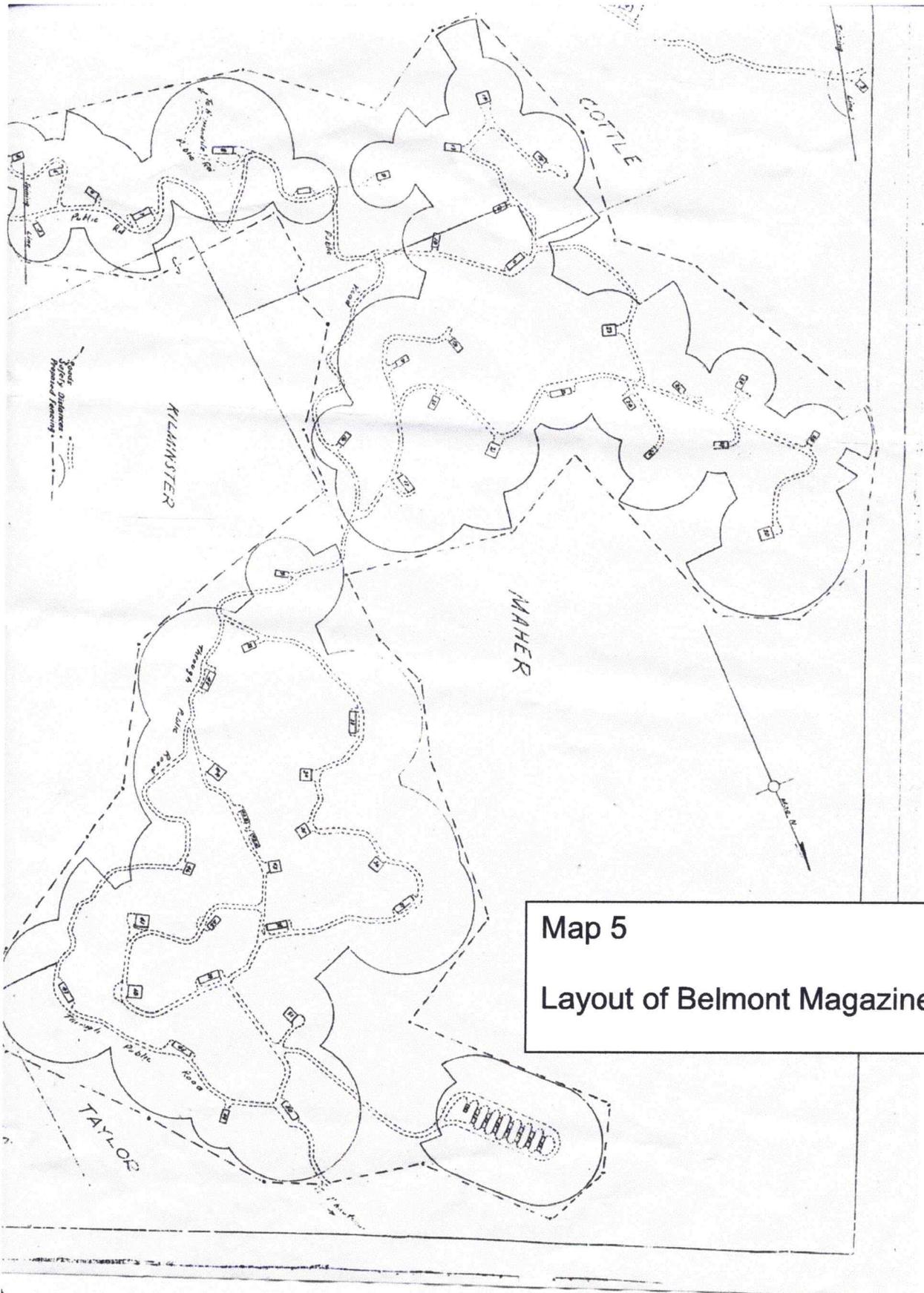
Normandale Road was still gravelled in the 1930's but it was slowly sealed, the last 3km being completed in 1990. However, apart from the replacement of the initial steep incline by the Normandale Overbridge, and the widening and realignment of the first 1.5 km above that in the 1990's, Normandale Road still retains the original course and width for most of its length.

Beyond, the original road bed is still in place and its narrow width, gentle grade, and tight bends show how a road for horses and oxen was built over 130 years ago. Now walkers, runners, and cyclists use it as part of the Park's network of tracks.

2006

In 2006 as a result of an application by the Friends of Belmont Regional Park, the Board of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust Registered the bed of the road from the end of the sealed section of Normandale Road through to the junction with the sealed section of Belmont Road as a Category II historic place.

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Map 5
Layout of Belmont Magazine