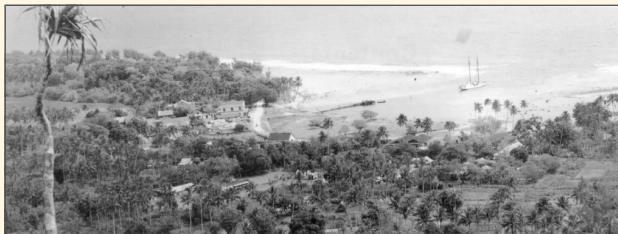


# Aitutaki Port Facility

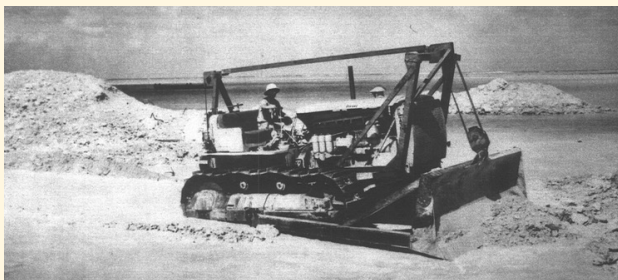
Modified in 1942 for military purposes during World War II

Before construction of Aitutaki's airfield could begin, heavy machinery and equipment had to be shipped in. In August 1942, civilian personnel from the US engineering firm of Sverdrup & Parcel, under US Army Captain H.H. Hockensmith arrived at Aitutaki on MV "Southern Seas" and "Kiloware" from Hawaii to build the airstrip, joining a team of New Zealand Public Works Engineers and local labour.



Arutanga prior to occupation of US Army. Tiare Taporo lies at anchor.

What they found on arrival was a narrow concrete pier at Arutanga and a very narrow channel through the reef that was virtually impassable for any vessel other than local craft. This meant the engineering teams were first faced with providing a port facility that could handle large amounts of military equipment and supplies. Supplies and light equipment, including jeeps, were brought ashore on local boats. Heavier items had to wait. A drag-line dug its way into shore, deepening the channel to about six feet. The spoil was used to build a ramp, which made it possible to walk six caterpillar tractors, several carryalls and a crane onto the jetty.



US engineers constructing jetty and port at Arutanga.