

The History of North King Country

Waitomo and Otorohanga are part of the legendary King Country, a reference to the second Māori King, Tāwhiao. After the New Zealand Wars of the early 1860s Tāwhiao and his followers found refuge in the rugged, almost impenetrable countryside.

From 1864 to 1883 The King Country (Te Rohe Potae) was closed to Europeans except by express permission of Tāwhiao and his Ngāti Maniapoto brethren. The following oral narrative tells of the origins of the encircling boundary¹.

"Te Rohe Potae, or The King Country in European terms, came into being after peace was declared between the Māori and the European. It wasn't a full peace for there was still conflict up and down the river. Governor George Grey and his representatives discussed the situation. Grey said there was only one person to resolve the situation and that was Tawhiao, the chief Rangatira of the Tainui waka, the Māori King.

So Grey met Tāwhiao at Waahi (Huntly). Grey said: 'Tawhiao, I come to you with a proposal to solve the conflict up and down the Waikato River. I hope you will agree to our proposal and peace will be brought to our two peoples'.

Grey produced a map of New Zealand and said: 'Tawhiao, this is a map of the land. It is my wish that you agree to cut the land in half to avoid further conflict - half for you and your people and half for me and my people. If we do this, there will be peace'.

Tāwhiao thought about this for a long time and then said to Grey: 'Give me your hat'. Grey handed his hat over and Tāwhiao put it on the map. He then grabbed his tomahawk, raised it above his head and prepared to cut Grey's hat in half.

But before he could do this Grey said: 'Whoa, Tawhiao, if you cut my hat in half it will be damaged!'

Tāwhiao then said: 'you were afraid that if we cut your hat in half it would be damaged. But would the land not be damaged if we cut it in half?'

Grey realized what Tāwhiao was on about. He said: 'you are right, Tawhiao, but if we don't come to an agreement, there could be more bloodshed'. Tāwhiao thought for a long time. Then he picked up Grey's hat and returned it to him. Tāwhiao then got his own hat - a magnificent bowler hat - and put it on the map. He said: 'Huri, huri, huri ' round and round and round the brim of the hat, you can have all that. This is mine'.

Grey agreed. The area under the hat then became known by the Māori as Te Rohe Potae. While to the Europeans it was the Māori King Country".²

¹ <http://www.waitomo.org.nz/waitomo-region-facts.asp>

² Maniapoto Oral History

Te Kuiti³

The original Māori settlement was situated near the Mangaokewa Gorge portal and was called Te Kuititanga. The name is said to mean “the narrowing in or closing in”, and refers both to the closing in of the hills as the locality is approached from the north, and to the settlement being a significant gathering place for Ngāti Maniapoto.

One of the first notable European visitors was the Rev. Richard Matthews who, with his family, passed through the district in 1841 during a journey from Putiki Mission near Wanganui to Auckland.

Following the siege of Orakau in 1864, the “kingite” warriors took refuge in and about Te Kuititanga, and for some time the valley was the temporary headquarters of Tāwhiao. Te Kooti was invited to take refuge in the Mangaokewa Valley in 1872 with the Ngāti Maniapoto. In the late 1870s Reihana te Huatare Wahanui and other Ngāti Maniapoto leaders, despite the opposition of Tāwhiao, agreed to permit the central King Country to be opened up to the railway. A route was explored between Te Awamutu and Waitara in 1883 by Charles Wilson Hursthouse, but in the same year John Rochfort explored a central route and the Waitara route was abandoned.

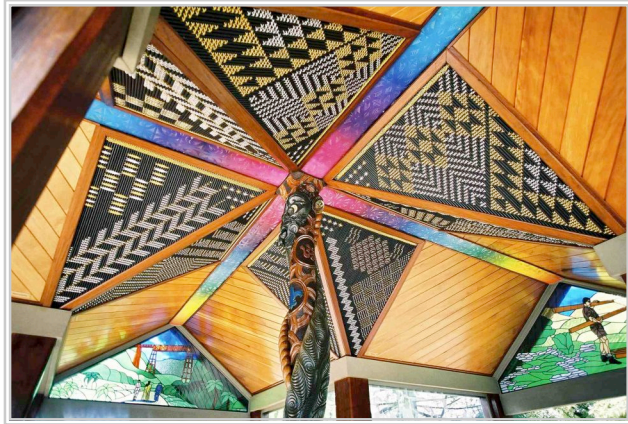


Figure 1 - Tukutuku Panels, Te Kuiti Millennium Pavilion

Te Kuiti is the main service centre for the Waitomo district. The Waitomo district includes landforms that range from the dramatic black sands of the West Coast beaches to forest, farmland and the fabulous and world-renowned limestone caves of Waitomo.

Otorohanga⁴

Pronounced Or-tore-raw-hung-ah, the area was recognised for its rich and fertile lands, welcoming of human agricultural endeavour, and so was named for the spreading (torohanga) of the arms in greeting⁵.

With that reputation firmly established among the Ngāti Maniapoto, 150 years ago Otorohanga was home to some 3000-4000 Māori inhabiting the present town site and the fertile banks of the Waipa River. Successive communities constructed terraced pa (villages) on the hills surrounding the river and spent much of their time growing food and fending off other tribes.

³ <http://www.teara.govt.nz/1966/T/TeKuiti/TeKuiti/en>

⁴ <http://www.otorohanga.co.nz/cms/index/4>

⁵ 'Ko te Torohanga o ngā Ringa' by Tom Roa, 2005, published by Taarewanga Marae, Otorohanga.

European access to the 'King Country' surrounding Otorohanga was greatly restricted during the time of the Waikato section of the New Zealand Wars (1863 - 1881). Once the tension abated and the Main Trunk Railway Line was completed in 1887 the number of European settlers increased significantly. Most of the first settlers were timber millers and in 1898 the first sawmill was built at Otorohanga. Most of the land is now developed with highly productive dairy and sheep/beef farms.



Figure 2 - Otorohanga Library

Kāwhia⁶

Pronounced Car-fee-a, is well known for its historic links with the past and remains a major Māori cultural centre. Kāwhia is famed as the resting place of the great Tainui Waka (canoe) that brought the Tainui Māori people to New Zealand from the Pacific.

Approximately 1350 AD, the Tainui waka arrived in Kāwhia harbour after an arduous sea voyage from their original home, Hawaiki. The waka was eventually hauled ashore and buried where Maketū marae is still today. Maketū marae at Kāwhia is recognised as the hearth and primary settlement of the Tainui people.

By the time the first Pakeha came to Aotearoa, Tainui had grown into a confederation of large and powerful tribes which occupied all the territory from Mōkau to Tamaki, and east through the Tiroa ranges to Putaruru then northwards along the Kaimai ranges to Coromandel, including the Islands of the Hauraki Gulf and the Torere community on the East Coast.



Figure 3 - Ocean Beach

Eventually the movement inland resulted in the Kāwhia area becoming the tribal domain of the Toarangatira and allied tribes, with Maniapoto occupying the upper reaches of the harbour at Hauturu, Waiharakeke and Kinohaku.

⁶ <http://www.kawhia.maori.nz/first.html>

In the second decade of the nineteenth century serious and widespread warfare erupted among the Tainui tribes. There were a series of battles culminating in a decisive victory for the Waikato river tribes over Ngāti Toarangatira at Te Karaka, Tahāroa.

This final defeat of Te Rauparaha led to the forced migration of most of them led by Te Rauparaha, and many of their Ngāti Raukawa kin to the Kāpiti district of the southern North Island and across to Marlborough and Nelson in the South Island.

The other tribe which migrated with the Ngāti Toarangatira were the Ngāti Rarua who occupied the lands from Waikawau in the south to the southern boundary of the lands of the Ngāti Te Aka-mapuhia to the south of Moeatoa Peak.

The vacated lands were occupied by Ngāti Te Kanawa of Maniapoto and by sections of the Waikato tribes of Ngāti Mahuta and Ngāti Hikairo.

By founding settlements and cultivations at Tahāroa, Ngāti Mahuta, under the leadership of Kiwi te Pihopa, established their mana over the southern reaches of the Kāwhia harbour, including settlements on either side of the harbour entrance.

Although Maketū is considered to be part of all the Tainui tribes, the current tangata whenua, (people of the land) of Maketū are Ngāti Mahuta.

Piopio

Situated 20km southwest of Te Kuiti on State Highway 3, Piopio lies in the heart of the King Country. Nearby Orongokoekoea was the birthplace of the second Māori King, Tāwhiao, from whom came the name the King Country.

European settlements in the area were established in 1843. The rich pioneering history is demonstrated through the local museum – complete with a pioneer blacksmith's shop and cottage, original Piopio Presbyterian Church and Bank of New Zealand displaying pioneering artefacts and an early photographic collection.

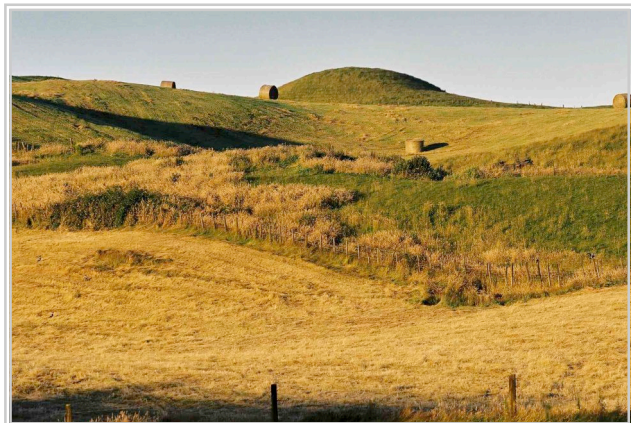


Figure 4 - Piopio Fields

Benneydale

Situated southeast of Te Kuiti, on the edge of the Pureora Forest Park, a central location to some of the North Island's greatest natural amenities, gateway to Lake Taupo and the volcanic plateau.

Benneydale was built in the 1940s to house miners and families related to the new state-owned underground coal mine, which opened at that time further up the valley. When

the mine closed in 1962 the local labour force transferred to the nearby Mangapehi timber mill.

The original mine has been successfully rehabilitated by a planting programme agreed with the Department of Conservation. Temporary water treatment facilities are in place while a long-term treatment facility is being developed. Solid Energy has a caretaker present on the site undertaking pest and weed control and operation of the water treatment facility.

Marokopa

The village is situated on the coast of the Tasman Sea west of Te Kuiti and Waitomo Village.

The Marokopa peninsula was settled by the Ngāti Te Kanawa and Ngāti Pēhi sections of Ngāti Maniapoto. The early European Pioneers in the valley had to cut and burn many acres of bush, sow grass seed, build homes and fences and put stock on their land. A regular passenger and cargo service was maintained between Waitara and Marokopa for a number of years, giving the settlers a reasonable service, but rough seas often made the service difficult.

In 1905 the first shop opened by Jonathan Ltd of Kāwhia and in 1907 Mr & Mrs J Williamson built a boarding house and shop. A flax mill operated from 1900-1903 until this was destroyed by fire and the venture was moved up the coast to Hari Hari Station. The fibre was loaded onto waiting steamers until its demise in 1908. In 1911 the Dairy Factory was opened and operated until its closure in 1937. In the early days the Marokopa cream was brought up the river by launch from the township.

Today, Marokopa is known for its stark landscape and rugged yet beautiful west coast beach. It is a popular destination for fishermen and holidaymakers.

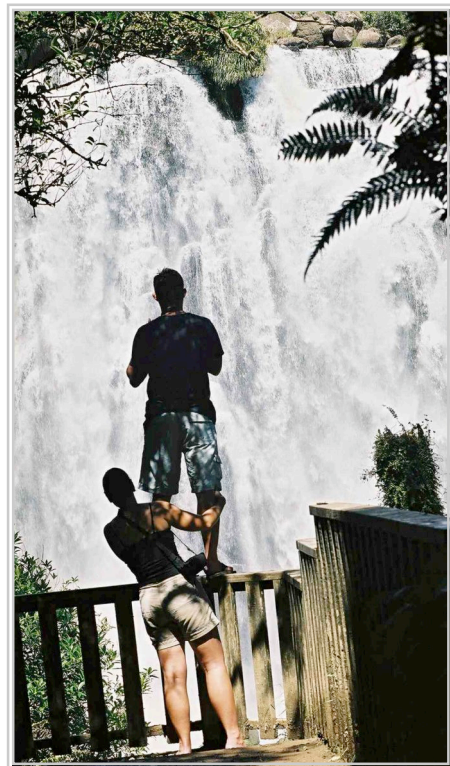


Figure 5 - Marokopa Waterfall

Mōkau

One of the earliest settled townships in the history of New Zealand, situated on the coast of the Tasman Sea at the mouth of the Mōkau River.

In pre-European times the Mōkau River marked the boundary between the Tainui and Taranaki tribal areas. The territory was often under dispute between Ngāti Maniapoto and Ngāti Tama. Although a small tribe, Ngāti Tama, held their own against all comers until early nineteenth century when two battles altered the traditional power balance in the district. About 1815 there was a disastrous battle, Nga-tai-pari-rua, against Ngāti Rakei on Mōkau beach. Six years later a strong Maniapoto war party, armed with



Figure 6 - Mōkau Beach

muskets, invaded the district. There was a fierce engagement at Pararewa in September 1821, when the Ngāti Tama and Te Ati-awa were heavily defeated and Tupaki, the great Ngāti Tama war chief, was killed. After this the remnants of Ngāti Tama joined Te Rauparaha's trek south to Cook Strait. Their departure left Taranaki open to the attention of Te Wherowhero and his Waikatos.

The river for its whole length once formed the boundary between the Auckland and Taranaki Provinces, and today forms the boundary between the land districts. The port, Mōkau, at the mouth of the river, is no longer used.

The meaning of the name is obscure. One variant is "winding stream"; another, that the river was named Mōkau by Turi from his having slept there. The river was a major stumbling block to transportation and expansion in the 1880's. The first hand winched ferry service was operated by a Mr Reardon from 1889.

The small townships of Awakino and Mōkau are rich in culture, renowned for bountiful seafood (fish & whitebait especially), and because it is the West Coast of New Zealand, you can sink your feet into the warm black sand. White baiting is a major activity between the months of August and November each year and the locals love to cook these into tasty fritters for all to enjoy.

Tahāroa

The village is situated on the West coast, approximately 45min from Kāwhia. It was once the home of the great Te Rauparaha and by 1822 they were being forced out of their land. Te Rauparaha then began a fighting retreat or migration southwards, one which ended with them controlling the southern part of the North Island and particularly Kapiti Island, which became the tribal stronghold.

Since 1972 the ironsand in the dunes and beach sands has been mined and exported to overseas through the local port, Port of Tahāroa.



Figure 7 - Tahāroa Ironsand