

MAORI TE AROHA BEFORE THE OPENING OF THE
GOLDFIELD (MOSTLY THROUGH PAKEHA EYES)

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Abstract: *The various names of the peaks of the mountain and the legends concerning it reflected a violent past. As proof, several pa have been located, both at Te Aroha and at Waiorongomai, and the names of some of the streams indicate the nature and consequences of the battles fought in this contested area.*

Ngati Rahiri was subdivided into three hapu: Ngati Tumutumu, Hgati Hue, and Ngati Kopirimau, descendents of these ancestors. In the nineteenth century, when the population was small, Hou was the senior rangatira, with Tutuki being the subordinate rangatira of the plains. A pa (later known as Tui pa) was constructed at Omahu, to the north of the hot springs, which were prized by Maori and increasingly enjoyed by Pakeha. Some of the land was cultivated, though visiting Pakeha considered that settlers could do much more to develop the agricultural potential. Most Ngati Rahiri were regarded as being 'friendly', welcoming (and benefiting from) visitors. Elaborate welcoming ceremonies were held for officials and rangatira, and a hotel operated by a rangatira's son provided basic accommodation. Under Maori auspices the first race day was held in January 1878.

Also in 1878, negotiators obtained an agreement to make a road to Paeroa, using Maori workers, and as the benefits of such improvements became apparent there was increased willingness to permit the construction of more roads, a bridge, and the snagging of the river, over the objections of a minority. Pakeha disapproved of how money raised through land sales in particular were wasted on extravagant displays of mana, which were not possible after the end of the 1870s because of lack of money, necessitating seeking paid employment. Friendly contact increased steadily, apart from occasional worries prompted by such events as the shooting of Daldy McWilliams, and a football match in May 1880 reportedly revealed 'the utmost friendly feeling' existing between Maori and Pakeha.

MAORI EXPLANATIONS FOR THE NAMES USED FOR THE MOUNTAIN

According to Taimoana Turoa's history of Hauraki landmarks, Te Aroha mountain was known to Marutuahu as 'Te Tatau ki Hauraki whanui', meaning the 'portal or doorway to Hauraki widespread'. Te Aroha

was the prow of the Hauraki canoe and its stern was at Moehau, at the far end of the peninsula.¹ The Waitangi Tribunal noted that the name meant ‘love, yearning, or compassion’, and was

a shortened version of a name which appears in Tainui, Te Arawa, and Mataatua traditions as “Te Aroha-ki-tai, Te Aroha-a-uta.” The Mataatua version relates that the ancestor, Rahiri, took this canoe from Whakatane to its resting place at Takou in the far north. In old age, he returned south with some of his people, naming features of the land on his way. He ascended Te Aroha mountain, where he viewed the Bay of Plenty and the volcanic island Whakaari (White Island) offshore. He exclaimed, “Te Aroha ki tai, Te Aroha a uta,” an expression of his yearning for his coastal homeland (tai) and its inland territories (uta). Rahiri returned to Whakatane but some of his people remained at Te Aroha and became the ancestors of Ngati Rahiri.

As the tribunal noted, other versions placed the stern of the canoe at Te Aroha, and have different ancestors naming the mountain, ‘but the meaning is the same, an expression of yearning for home’.² Turoa translated Rahiri’s exclamation as: ‘My yearning flows out to the sea where my homeland stands, and back inland from whence I have come’.³ An older name for the mountain, ‘probably of early Ngati Hako origin’, was Pukekakariki-kaitahi. The ‘two very prominent spurs to the east and west of the lower crater rim’ were Te Aroha-ki-tai and Te Aroha-a-uta, the latter, the inland spur, also being known as Keteriki, a source of ‘the spring-fed waters of the mountain’.⁴

On behalf of Ngati Rahiri Tumutumu, as the local hapu was calling itself by the twenty-first century, Mapuna Turner told the tribunal that all Hauraki Maori considered the entire mountain down to the river as wahi tapu [sacred].⁵ He translated the earliest known name, Puke Kakariki Kaitahi, as ‘the place where the Kaka parrots flocked to feed. It is symbolic that the mountain supplies an abundance of food and resources’.⁶ A

¹ Taimoana Turoa, *Te Takoto o te Whenua o Hauraki: Hauraki landmarks* (Auckland, 2000), p. 152.

² Waitangi Tribunal, *The Hauraki Report* (Wellington, 2006), vol. 3, p. 901.

³ Turoa, p. 153.

⁴ Turoa, p. 138.

⁵ Waitangi Tribunal, *Hauraki Report*, p. 902.

⁶ Waitangi Tribunal, *Hauraki Report*, p. 903.

descendent of Mokena Hou,⁷ Tane Mokena, said the mountain was ‘traditionally associated with our ancestor Te Ruinga. On one side Te Ruinga descended from Taukawa, on another side he came from this area’. The highest peak was Te Aroha-a-uta, and lower was Te Aroha-a-tai. The mountain’s burial caves contained his ancestors.

Associated, as they were, with the ancestors and the tapu state of death, mountains were perceived as eerie, tapu places – spiritual halfway stations between this world and the next. Mountains were places where earth – the realm of mortals – met the sky – the realm of the supernatural. Te Aroha mountain was such a tapu mountain. In a number of traditional stories Patupaiarehe [fairies]⁸ inhabit its misty peaks. Patupaiarehe seemed to slide in and out of this world and the next. They both embodied, and intensified, the tapu nature of the mountain.

Our ancestor Te Ruinga came from the mountain; he descended from the spirits who inhabit its misty peaks. The Hot Springs at Te Aroha, because they flow out of the heart of the mountain, are also part of the mountain, and also partake of the tapu associations of the mountain. The Hot Springs symbolize the giving, caring nature of the mountain and the ancestors.

The hot springs which lie at the foot of Mount Te Aroha were a very special place to our ancestors. They rise out of the base of the tapu mountain, and right underneath Te Ruinga’s pa site at Whakapipi [Bald Spur], were considered to be very tapu, and had to be approached with respect and caution.⁹

TALES OF THE PAST

The ancestry of Ngati Rahiri was of considerable importance to the hapu, but the details are hard to disentangle. Even modern-day experts find it difficult to elucidate all the details of the whakapapa, but it is clear that Rahiri was a very important ancestor and was given the credit for naming the mountain.¹⁰ His descendents, Ngati Rahiri, lived at Te Aroha before the Marutuahu peoples conquered the area. According to Turoa, Marutuahu made ‘no serious attempts to undermine their authority’,¹¹ a view that

⁷ See paper on his life.

⁸ P.M. Ryan, *The New Dictionary of Modern Maori* (Auckland, 1974), p. 32.

⁹ Waitangi Tribunal, *Hauraki Report*, p. 903.

¹⁰ Turoa, pp. 50-51.

¹¹ Turoa, p. 51.

ignored the conflict over ownership that was not resolved by the land court until 1878.¹²

Pakeha love of romantic tales about Maori history is illustrated by an article published in 1926 by 'J.C.', undoubtedly historian James Cowan:

Te Aroha Mountain.
Its Legends of the Ancient People.
Folk Tales and Place Names.

Fastness of aboriginal tribes from immemorial time, refuge of broken clans in war, fairy haunt invoked in poetic chants of the Maori, Te Aroha – “Mountain of Loving Greetings” – is a place whose human interest heightens its landscape beauty. This three thousand feet wooded bastion of the Moehau-Hautere range, which builds a high sky-line a hundred miles long, is more than a mere rugged mass of rock and soil and tall timber. It is one of those mountains with a personality, like Taranaki’s lone peak, the type of mountain that came naturally into the animistic mythology of the olden race. It looked to them a giant watchman overlooking riverside and valley and plain.

Some people have fancied the name Te Aroha a reference to the love and pity symbolized in the fact that the mountain was a refuge for defeated and hunted tribes in the days of continual warfare. Undoubtedly its ravines and forests often gave secure sanctuary to Maoris retreating from their enemies. But the origin of the name antedates the inter-tribal wars, and there is a definite explanatory tradition.

Kahu the Pathfinder.

Five centuries ago a chief of the Arawa people climbed to the topmost peak of Te Aroha range, and surveyed with wonder the vast expanse of territory that stretched west and south and north as far as vision could carry. His name was Kahu-mata-momoe, which means “Sleepy-eyed Kahu.” But the adjective belied this explorer of old; he was by no means one of the dozing kind. “Kahu” – “Hawk” – described him well no doubt, for, like most Polynesians, pathfinders of that most adventurous epoch in Pacific Islands’ history, it was his habit to ascend as high as possible above the lower world. Kahu was the son of Tama-te-Kapua, the captain of the Arawa sailing canoe, who had died and been buried on the summit of Moehau (Cape Colville), and he was on his way home to Maketu from a visit to a kinsman at the Kaipara. As was his way, he kept to the tops of the ridges on his travels, and when he came to these parts he ascended the

¹² See paper on the Aroha Block to 1879.

mountain heights that loom like a blue cloud above the Upper Waihou. When he felt the soft sea breeze fanning his cheek he murmured words of affection for the friends and places far away, his father, whose grave was high on cloudy Moehau, and the words “Muri-Aroha” came to his lips – love for those left behind. As he stood on the mountain top he thought of his kinsfolk on the distant sea slope, and he said, “Let this mountain peak be called “Aroha-tai-o-Kahu” - his love towards the sea. Then he went to where he had a clear view over the western plains and hills and as he gazed long upon that wild lonely land he chanted his words of affection and regret for his kinsfolk who had gone to Taupo and other inland parts, and he named that peak “Aroha-uta-o-Kahu,” or “Kahu’s Landward Love.” And so this place-naming accomplished the explorer travelled leisurely homeward to Rotorua and Maketu, giving names to many more places as he went....

Tales of Fairy Foresters

The Maoris call them Patu-paiarehe or Turehu, a term which means fairies, enchanted people, furtive woodsmen, and sometimes mohoao, or wild people of the bush. I have a legend of Te Aroha which peoples the mountain with a fairy tribe, whose chief was called Ruatane. He was the chieftain of all the fairy people inhabiting the Colville Range, as it is now called, extending from Moehau down to Te Aroha and the ranges on the south. No doubt these Patu-paiarehe were really fugitive tribes of the ancient people who preceded the Hawaiki Maoris in the land. The legend refers to them as a mystic people, skilled in enchantments. Ruatane once seized a woman of the Ngati-Matakore tribe, far away in the Rangitoto country, south of the present Rohepotae [King Country] boundary, and bore her off to his village high up on cloudy Aroha. But there was another fairy chief, Tarapikau, whose home was in the Rangitoto Ranges, and he pursued Ruatane, and by stratagem and the exercise of powerful hypnotic charms, which steeped the abductor and his tribe in deep slumber, he recovered the stolen woman and restored her to her tribe. An angry fairy was Ruatane when he awakened from his heavy sleep, and he made war on Tarapikau, and he hurled from the top of his mountain a burning dart which set fire to a tree on which his foe was perched on the top of Rangitoto, fifty miles away! Of a truth there were wonder-workers in that enchanted period of our Maoriland’s story.¹³

¹³ J[ames] C[owan], ‘Te Aroha Mountain’, *Auckland Star*, 13 November 1926, p. 42; reprinted , slightly revised, as ‘Mountain of Love – Te Aroha, Its Forested Peaks, Its

Another version gave the credit for naming the mountain to Rakataura, son-in-law of Hoturoa of the Tainui canoe, in memory of his wife Kahu-rere. 'One peak of the range he called Aroha-a-uta (love of the inland parts), and another Aroha-a-tai (love towards the sea). Other accounts say that one peak was named by Rakataura, the other by Ihenga of the Arawa canoe'.¹⁴

For the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Te Aroha, the borough council published a book glorifying its Pakeha pioneers. Not till page 226 was its Maori history mentioned, in a five-page survey by Cowan entitled 'When Te Aroha was No-Man's Land'. His Pakeha-centric version of history emphasized the civilizing mission of the new settlers was made obvious by his sub-headings: 'From Savagery to Peace and Plenty', 'A Picture of Cannibal Times', 'Traders of the Early Days', 'The Heroic Missionaries', 'Clearing the River', and 'The Gold-Diggers'. These themes were developed in the text:

Te Aroha a century ago, according to the testimony of both Pakeha and Maori, was a kind of No-Man's Land, a rugged tract of country of little use in the economy of the Maori as a place of residence but resorted to occasionally for large trees for canoe-making, and for birds and pigs to fill the cooking ovens. Sometimes a stray forager from up-river went into the oven too. For a perfect little picture of these parts as they were in the year 1830, one cannot do better than turn up some remarks made by the celebrated Judge F[rederick] E[dward] Maning in his judgment on the Aroha block, the title to which was investigated by the Native Land Court in 1871¹⁵....

"No human flesh and blood, however hardened, could endure much longer the excitement, privations, danger and unrest which the equally balanced force and ferocious courage of the contending parties had now protracted to several years' duration on that small spot of the earth's surface, and between two petty divisions of the human race. War had attained its most terrible and forbidding aspect; neither age nor sex was spared; agriculture was neglected; the highest duty of man was to slay and devour his neighbour. Whilst the combatants fought in front, the ovens were heating in the rear. The vigorous warrior, one

Explorers and Its Legends', *New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol. 5 no. 7 (1 December 1930), p. 26.

¹⁴ A.W. Reed, *Treasury of Maori Folklore* (Wellington, 1963), p. 216.

¹⁵ See paper on the Aroha Block to 1879.

moment fighting hopefully in the foremost rank, exulting in his strength, laying enemy after enemy low, thinking only of his war-boasts when the victory should be won; stunned by a sudden blow, instantly dragged away, hastily quartered alive, next moment in the glowing oven; his place is vacant in the ranks; his very body can scarcely be said to exist. While his flesh is roasting the battle rages on, and at night his remains furnish forth a banquet for the victors, and there is much boasting and great glory.”

These inter-tribal wars were waged with the greatest ferocity for several years in the period 1830-40, until the people at last wearied of the continual unrest and alarm and frequent battle-slaughter, and were ready to accept the advice of the missionaries and abandon war and cannibalism. But there were still occasional raids and reprisals. The Ngati-maru people owned the Aroha land and occasionally exercised their rights over it by cultivating patches of potatoes, hunting pigs, and making canoes. Sometimes a few of the Ngati-haua would return to assert a claim by marking trees, but they did not dare to live on the land.¹⁶

Cowan cited early traders about continuing Ngati Haua fear of Ngati Maru, despite peace having been made. He summarized the efforts of the missionaries who first arrived in 1835, soon to be forced to leave after seeing ‘some of the most fearful phases of cannibal warfare’.¹⁷ After praising ‘those danger-surrounded pioneers who sought with little success to change the heart of the savage’,¹⁸ he had no more to say about Maori and turned his attention to the snagging of the river. Te Aroha changed from being ‘merely a Maori camping ground’ prior to the discovery of gold to ‘a town of health and wealth; not only a holiday town and a spa-town, but a little metropolis of as productive and solidly dependable a farming district as there is in the whole of this Dominion of ours’.¹⁹

More succinctly, a stanza from the poem ‘Te Aroha’, written in 1882 by a Thames poet known only as ‘J’, encapsulated the Pakeha view:

Couldst’t thou but speak, what histories might be told -
Of scenes oft witnessed here in many a glen
When Maori warfare raged in days of old, -

¹⁶ James Cowan, ‘When Te Aroha was No-Man’s Land’, *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley: Pioneering in the Thames Valley 1867-1930*, ed. F.W. Wild (Te Aroha, 1930), pp. 226-228.

¹⁷ Cowan, pp. 228-230.

¹⁸ Cowan, p. 230.

¹⁹ Cowan, p. 231.

The cruel strife of furious savage men.²⁰

Also succinct was a travelling correspondent, who in the previous year described the development of farms to the west of Te Aroha:

A few years ago, there were trackless wastes, only passable to a few sad blood-thirsty savages, whose sole happiness was supplied by mutual extermination, and whose utmost limit of human sympathy was the absorption of a fellow-being's life with his body into another being's belly.²¹

TRACES OF PAST CONFLICTS

Were stories of a savage history in a beautiful landscape valid? Some local names suggest that inter-tribal warfare over the land was indeed common. An elderly member of Ngati Tamatera gave Cowan some previously unrecorded names, including one for what Pakeha called Bald Spur, immediately behind the domain, originally called Whakapipi:

On its summit once stood a fortified place occupied by the Ngati-Tumutumu tribe, one of the very ancient clans of bush-dwellers who were here long before the Hawaiki immigrants reached New Zealand in the Arawa and Tainui, and other historic canoes. Whakapipi means "heaped up," a pile of stones or timbers or other material.²²

In 1897, when visiting Te Aroha, Gilbert Mair²³ was told the meaning of the names of the streams flowing through the township by 'an old man'. The Tutumangeo, on the western side of the hot springs, where Boundary Road would later be made, took 'its name from a famous old Pa situate on the left side of the little waterfall which was built by Hue, the son of Hako 10 generations ago.' His sons Tutuki and Rakateuru, who lived in Tutumangeo pa and defended it against Ngati Haua, were the ancestors of Ngati Rahiri.²⁴ This pa was covered in bush when Pakeha arrived, but after

²⁰ J, 'Te Aroha', *Thames Advertiser*, 21 January 1882, p. 3.

²¹ Travelling Reporter, 'The Piako County', *Waikato Times*, 3 May 1881, p. 2.

²² J.C., 'Te Aroha Mountain', *Auckland Star*, 13 November 1926, p. 42.

²³ See R.D. Crosby, *Gilbert Mair: Te Kooti's nemesis* (Auckland, 2004).

²⁴ Gilbert Mair to Joseph Hickson (Receiver of Gold Revenue), 15 October 1897, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1897, BBAV 11584/5b, ANZ-A.

a bushfire swept the area in 1908 two residents, one being John Richard William Guilding,²⁵ when hunting near the waterfall behind Te Aroha township discovered 'a hole in the mountain side'.

On delving into the rock they unearthed portions of ten human skeletons, some of which were in a good state of preservation, whilst others crumbled to pieces on being handled. The strange part is there are no rib or body bones. Most of the heads are large and well-formed. The discoverers have little doubt but that there are more skeletons in the cave, but owing to the presence of an unsafe looking rock which overhangs the entrance they deemed it inadvisable to attempt to widen the opening.

Mr Guilding was fortunately in a position to supply the following particulars which he obtained from a grandson of one of the warriors, Tutuki²⁶....

About 150 years ago there were two pas at Te Aroha, one near the present site of the railway bridge, occupied by the elder brother, called Hau Hau Pah, and the other on the ranges near the waterfall occupied by the younger brother, called Tutumangeo Pah. Both brothers belonged to the Ngatihue tribe. The tribes were composed of warriors, but there was never any fighting between the two pas, the brothers living peacefully, but being always ready to meet any hostile tribes who threatened their territory. Owing to the people belonging to the two tribes being warriors they were buried on the opposite side of the town, in the ranges, so as to prevent their bodies being devoured by any enemies who might come along, and who would easily have discovered the bodies had they been buried in the open country. This accounts for the skeletons being found on the south side of Tutumangeo.

A short distance from where the find was made may be seen the old camping ground, or pa. No doubt the natives who camped there carefully guarded the last resting place of their departed warriors whose remains they sought to conceal.²⁷

According to Tutuki, a Ngati Tumutumu rangatira born (in one version of his age) on the block in the early nineteenth century, there were three pa 'peopled solely by N'tumutumu', a name sometimes used for the ancestors of Ngati Rahiri and sometimes for a hapu of Ngati Rahiri. 'The pahs were there when I was born. Otatako [or Otataka] was to the Southward of Wairakau, Omatika was to the northward of Wairakau, Orua stood on the

²⁵ See paper on his life.

²⁶ See *Te Aroha News*, 18 August 1888, p. 2.

²⁷ *Auckland Star*, 18 March 1908, p. 8.

Mountain'.²⁸ According to his 1888 obituary, Tutuki 'took a leading part in retaining Te Aroha against Waikato and Tauranga natives. The remains of old fortifications used in this warfare' could still be seen.²⁹

The Tutumangeo pa was considered to be a 'very fine specimen of ancient Maori fortification' and 'well-nigh impregnable'. Its south flank descended abruptly to a waterfall, while on the north there was 'a wall of rock as steep as a house'; in 1910, 44 terraces were traced.³⁰ The following year, 'V.H.' told the local newspaper that he had traced 39 terraces, many cut close together, especially near its summit, where the height between some was ten feet high. Mokena Hou, who had died in 1885 aged 89, had told him that it 'was in full occupation in his father's young days, and that in earlier times it was very strong indeed'.³¹ This appears to be the area traversed by a reporter visiting the Mount Morgan and Montezuma mines in 1897:

One my way up the hill I passed through the "Let Her Rip Gully," wherein a tragedy is said to have been enacted in the long ago. On my return, by another route, I visited the site of a great Maori battle. To the north of the stronghold there is situated a precipice, while to the west the ascent is steep and open. From this "coign of vantage" the whole surrounding country is visible. In fact, for defensive purposes the place was admirably chosen. There are numerous ancient trenches on the rugged hillsides hereabouts.³²

In mid-December 1849, Sir George Grey and his party camped two miles upstream from an apparently deserted Te Aroha, where the Mangawhenga Stream entered the Waihou on its western bank.³³

²⁸ Evidence of Tutuki re Aroha Block, 20 July 1878: Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 10, p. 478.

²⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 18 August 1888, p. 2.

³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 3 December 1910, p. 2.

³¹ Letter from V.H., *Te Aroha News*, 5 January 1911, p. 3.

³² 'Werahiko', 'Our Te Aroha Letter', *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 27 February 1897, p. 5.

³³ George Sisson Cooper, *Journal of an Expedition Overland from Auckland to Taranaki by way of Rotorua, Taupo, and the West Coast: Undertaken in the summer of 1849-50, by His Excellency the Governor-in-Chief of New Zealand* (Auckland, 1851), pp. 32, 40; Lands and Survey maps, ML 3449 (1876), ML3503 (c. 1878), Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton [the stream is now called Mangaawhenga].

Some natives came from a settlement lower down the river, amongst whom was a man named Mauwhare, who is next to Taraia, the principal chief on the Thames. He told me that a strong pa had once existed on the top of the mountain opposite to us, (Te Aroha Uta), called Nga tukituki a Hikawera, which had been built by a famous chief, his ancestor, called Ruinga, and had been considered almost impregnable. The posts of it still remain. As an instance of the great distance at which the sound of the pahu or ancient native gong could be heard, he informed us that the pahu in this pa had been heard at Matamata, which is not less than eight or ten miles in a straight line from our present position, which again must be at least four from the top of Te Aroha Uta.³⁴

(No evidence of a pa at the summit of the mountain has been traced in recent times. A map by Te Hurinui Jones of the main tribal areas of Tainui in 1880 called the summit Te Aroha a uta and a peak slightly to the southeast as Te Aroha a tai.³⁵ The earliest Lands and Survey map for the district, of the Ruakaka Block in 1868, recorded the same name for the summit but called the peak above Ruakaka and to the north of Omahu Creek Te Aroha a te.)³⁶ A 1934 version of this story stated this pa was ‘on the inland-facing peak of Te Aroha mountain’,³⁷ presumably meaning the summit. It was the second of the two pa recorded as being at Te Aroha.³⁸

Place names suggested a turbulent past. Cowan’s Ngati Tamatera informant explained the meaning of the name of the Tutumangeongo stream (later shortened to Tutumangeo) that came through the township where Boundary Street was made:

The stream derived its name from a combat between two long-ago champions who met each other in front of their war-parties on the creek side. Both were armed with long spears. They fought so desperately that each was fatally pierced by the other’s spear, and both died on the bank of the bush stream. And in memory of that duel of long ago the name-givers combined the root-words

³⁴ Cooper, p. 52.

³⁵ Te Hurinui Jones, map of the main tribal areas of the Tainui area in 1800, n.d., University of Waikato Map Library.

³⁶ Plan of Ruakaka Block, 1868, ML 1085, Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton.

³⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 31 March 1934, p. 1.

³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 20 January 1932, p. 6.

“tu,” meaning wounded, and “mangeo,” meaning pain, or acute smarting.³⁹

A tourist agent based at Te Aroha recorded the same story, his version ending with one chief dying slowly after being speared and the name being derived from his ‘long-drawn-out agony’.⁴⁰ In 1937 the local newspaper mistakenly transferred this meaning to the Tunakohoia Stream, also known as Lipsey’s Creek after George Lipsey,⁴¹ the first Pakeha settler.⁴² However, in the 1950s a rangatira, Reha Kau Hou, explained that the name of this stream was correctly Tuna-kohi-ao, meaning ‘eels collected at day-break’,⁴³ with no gladiatorial overtones.

Pakeha preferred to believe in the more bloodthirsty and ‘romantic’ alternatives of the meanings of names and versions of events in the, to them, barbaric past. A prospector fossicking in the ranges behind the Hot Springs Hotel in late 1880 found some human bones in a cave, ‘evidently those of Maories who were killed in battle, as all the skulls’ were ‘much battered’.⁴⁴ Thirty years later the *Te Aroha News* reported a tradition that ‘the cave rock on the Bald Spur’ once ‘played an important part in the savage practices of olden days. It is stated that hither the Maoris led their prisoners of war to thrust them, bound hand and foot, over the edge of the precipice’. It wanted such information included in guidebooks to attract visitors.⁴⁵

In 1911, when an ‘ancient’ Maori skeleton was uncovered when excavating a bank at the western end of Terminus Street, traces of trenches were reported in this locality; being close to the river, it was assumed a defensive position had been constructed to prevent hostile tribes from crossing.⁴⁶ Much archeological evidence of the Maori past did not survive modern development; for instance, in 1912 a resident unsuccessfully asked

³⁹ J[ames] C[owan], ‘Te Aroha Mountain’, *Auckland Star*, 13 November 1926, p. 42.

⁴⁰ K.C. McGirr, ‘Te Aroha: Early Days’, unsourced newspaper cutting in Mahara Royal Scrapbook, p. 34, MSC 22, Hamilton Public Library.

⁴¹ See paper on his life.

⁴² *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1937, p. 5.

⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 6 April 1954, p. 5.

⁴⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 December 1880, p. 17.

⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 3 December 1910, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 27 May 1911, p. 2.

the Tourist Department to preserve a pa because a quarry had 'lately been opened there by the local authority'.⁴⁷

There had once had been a pa on Fern Spur, the hillside above Waiorongomai village. In 1881, one miner applied for a residence site 'at Old Pah, Waiorongomai' and the mining inspector recommended that the upper road start at the flat below Buck Reef and continue 'on an equal grade up to the old pah'.⁴⁸ The following year, a visitor wrote that 'the spur of the wall of quartz so often heard about', meaning Buck Rock, could 'be seen with a good glass [telescope] from the river adjoining the High School endowment, where the remains of an old Maori pah or "look out" ' was 'still sufficiently elevated to give a good view of the surrounding country'.⁴⁹ At the junction of the Waiorongomai Stream with the river Ngati Tara formerly erected a pa named Omarutatai before settling permanently in Ohinemuri.⁵⁰ According to Pita Te Kohiwi, there had been two pa at Waiorongomai.⁵¹ Some distance to the east was Wairakau, a Maori reserve with a prominent pa on the top of an outlying hill that can still be seen.

Pita Te Kohiwi's explanation of the meaning of 'Waiorongomai' indicated that Pakeha belief in a long history of local warfare had a factual basis:

A woman of the Ngatiraukawa tribe had run away from her home and settled among the Nga-ti-kopiri-mau, a section of the Ngatimaru people residing at Te Aroha. The Ngatiraukawa paid a visit to the Te Aroha people in order to bring back the woman who had left her tribe. The visitors were hospitably received and for a time dwelt in apparent friendship beside the pa of their hosts.

The Te Aroha people, however, decided to slaughter the Ngatiraukawa, and sent messengers to their friends at Ohinemuri, asking them to take part in the killing.

⁴⁷ F.S. Pope (Secretary of Tourism) to Director of Tourist Department, 2 July 1912, Tourist Department, AABN 408/2h, 1912/431, ANZ-W.

⁴⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 228, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A; George Wilson to Harry Kenrick, 15 October 1881, Mines Department, MD 1, 81/1118, ANZ-W.

⁴⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 April 1882, p.3.

⁵⁰ Turua, p. 181.

⁵¹ W.G. Hammond, 'Waiorongomai', p. 2, W.G. Hammond Papers, MS 134, folder 22, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

The Nga-ti-kopiri-mau in preparation of the anticipated slaughter and subsequent feast sent their slaves to collect firewood, and stones for the hangi in which the flesh of their victims was to be cooked.

Two girls of the Ngatiraukawa had gone down to the river with their calabashes for water. While resting by the bank of the stream they heard the voices of the slaves who were gathering wood. "Why are our masters collecting all this wood?" asked one. "Oh," replied another, "the Ngati Kopiri-mau intend wiping out the Ngatiraukawa, and this wood is for the ovens, for a great feast will follow."

Horror-stricken the two girls made all haste to their people to acquaint them of the intended attack by their neighbours.

The Ngatiraukawa immediately held a council and made preparations to forestall the enemy.

Immediately they set to work and prepared a great feast, to which they invited the Ngati Kopiri-mau.

The latter accepted the invitation, laughing to themselves at the humour of the situation, as they were to be the guests of those whose bodies would soon supply them with another feast.

During the night the Ngatiraukawa removed the soil from round the posts of their meeting house, then replaced it loosely and covered the disturbed soil with fern. The following day the feast was prepared. The assembled Ngatikopiri-mau sat in groups entertained by the haka and Kani-Kani [dance]⁵² of the Ngatiraukawa. Suddenly the dancers rushed into the meeting house, where they continued the dance, then all inside seized the supporting poles and lifted. Up and down rose the great building. "What manner of men are those?" asked the Te Aroha people of themselves. "They must be more than mortal."

Out rushed the dancers and continued the haka. One stage of the dance was the signal for action. Suddenly the Ngatiraukawa dancers drew concealed meres from their garments and dashed on the unarmed and unsuspecting spectators.

The Ngati Kopiri-mau were annihilated, the women were taken as slaves and the corpses of the men thrown into the river: and back to their home went the Ngatiraukawa. When the people from Ohinemuri came to participate in the fight against the Ngatiraukawa they found the corpses of their friends floating down the river.

"It was lucky for the victors that the girls listened by the water, and lucky for me," said old Pita, "for the Ngatiraukawa were my ancestors."⁵³

⁵² Ryan, p. 17.

⁵³ W.G. Hammond, 'Waiorongomai', pp. 2-5, W.G. Hammond Papers, MS 134, folder 22, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

A variant of this story had it that 'Waiorongomai' meant 'listening waters', derived from a story of 'two maidens who, listening by the river, heard some strangers making plans for an attack on their village'.⁵⁴ A much less exciting explanation was 'water sounding hitherwards', appropriate, Cowan considered, because 'waterfalls abound'.⁵⁵ The *Te Aroha News* believed it referred to 'the sound of waters in the distance'.⁵⁶ The literal translation was 'the waters of Rongomai', a 'mystical being' mentioned in tribal histories throughout New Zealand.⁵⁷

Whatever the real meanings of the names, there had indeed been centuries of conflict over ownership of the district.⁵⁸

THE POPULATION

Te Aroha and environs had a fluctuating population, reflecting inter-tribal relations. In 1869, Ngati Maru and adjacent tribes, whose ownership of the block was to be accepted by the land court at its second hearing, comprised 1,485 men, 1,295 women, and 890 children, giving a total population of 3,670.⁵⁹ Ngati Rahiri, the sub-tribe of Ngati Maru that was (mostly) resident at Te Aroha, numbered 20 in 1870.⁶⁰ That had risen to 33 by 1874: 15 males over 15 and four under, and 11 females over 15 and three under.⁶¹ At the beginning of 1877, when objecting to Ngati Maru being granted the block, 71 men and women signed a letter to the Native Minister claiming to be Ngati Tumutumu (otherwise Ngati Rahiri).⁶² In 1878, when Ngati Rahiri returned from Kaitawa, near Thames, after their ownership

⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1959, p. 2.

⁵⁵ James Cowan, 'Maori Place Names', *New Zealand Illustrate Magazine*, vol. 1 no. 9 (June 1900), p. 654.

⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 12 January 1931, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Turoa, p. 181.

⁵⁸ See for instance James Mackay, 'Te Aroha: A Historical Retrospect', *New Zealand Herald*, 28 May 1898, Supplement, p. 1; 'Maratuahu', 'Te Aroha: Past and Present', *New Zealand Herald*, 14 April 1900, Supplement, p. 1.

⁵⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 April 1869, p. 5.

⁶⁰ *AJHR*, 1870, A-11, p. 5.

⁶¹ *AJHR*, 1874, G-7, p. 7.

⁶² Letter from Ngati Tumutumu to Sir Donald McLean, printed in *Thames Advertiser*, 13 January 1877, p. 3.

had been confirmed by the court, 98 Ngati Maru were recorded as living on the whole block; Ngati Rahiri was not mentioned.⁶³ The census of 1881 recorded 55 Ngati Rahiri: 26 males over 15, and seven under, 17 females over 15 and five under. In addition, six half-caste Ngati Rahiri lived at Thames.⁶⁴

Karauna Hou,⁶⁵ the principal rangatira of Ngati Rahiri,⁶⁶ told the land court in 1878 that all hapu with a claim on Te Aroha were included in ‘three great divisions’: Ngati Tumutumu, Ngati Hue, and Ngati Kopirimau. Ngati Rahiri was ‘a new name and included in N’Tumutumu’.⁶⁷ According to a younger rangatira, Reha Aperahama,⁶⁸ Te Ruinga was the ancestor for the southern part of the Aroha Block, Hue for the northern, and Kopirimau for the central portion.⁶⁹

Rangatira based their status on ancestry and possession of land. Before Pakeha arrived in New Zealand, Hou ‘was one of the “bosses” of the mountain in the old days, when he held suzerainty over the chief of the plains, Tutuki’.⁷⁰ The latter, who had had cultivations on the Ruakaka block on the northwestern side of the mountain before the war in Taranaki,⁷¹ would be the leading antagonist to Pakeha settlement. He claimed to have seen Captain Cook, either at Coromandel or at Thames; when he died in 1888, Ngati Rahiri gave his age as 124.⁷²

BEFORE PAKEHA SETTLEMENT

⁶³ *AJHR*, 1878, G-2, p. 20.

⁶⁴ *AJHR*, 1881, G-3, p. 19.

⁶⁵ See paper on his life.

⁶⁶ G.T. Wilkinson to Under-Secretary, Native Department, 25 May 1886, *AJHR*, 1886, G-1, p. 10.

⁶⁷ Evidence of Karauna Hou re Aroha Block, 12 July 1878: Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 10, p. 389; confirmed by evidence of Tutuki, 20 July 1878, p. 479.

⁶⁸ See paper on his life.

⁶⁹ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 10, pp. 389-390.

⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1910, p. 2.

⁷¹ Evidence given on the Aroha Block, 25 January 1871: Maori Land Court, Auckland Minute Book no. 2, p. 185.

⁷² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 September 1885, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 18 August 1888, p. 2.

The main settlement was on the edge of the river at Omahu, near the head of the navigation of the Waihou River,⁷³ to the northwest of the hot springs. This settlement was later called Tui pa to distinguish it from another Omahu near Thames.⁷⁴ Other Maori lived further up the river, in particular at Wairakau and near Firth's Stanley Landing.⁷⁵ There were plantations in the bush at the start of the future Tui Track.⁷⁶ In 1878, Ngapari Whaiapu, of Ngati Maru, Ngati Tumutumu, and Ngati Rahiri,⁷⁷ told the land court that Ngati Rahiri had 'a cultivation at Paharakeke, also at Wairakau also from Waipuhia to Haianga there are cultivations – they have cultivations on the banks of the river and on the mountain.... We have cattle & pigs running on both sides of the river'.⁷⁸

When not recalling inter-tribal battles, Pakeha tended to give an idyllic picture of life in the 20 or so years before 1880. For instance, a land speculator wrote about his first visit to Omahu pa in the early summer of 1878:

After spending three days of the most rural character, enjoying the balmy atmosphere of rivers, glens, valleys, and mountains, and receiving the friendly hospitalities of the natives in all directions, one feels almost inclined to resign the boast of civilization of the present century, with all its attendant anxieties, the competition of life, and the attendant responsibilities, and become a Maori.⁷⁹

A 1923 recollection of an 1877 ride alongside the river between Te Aroha and Paeroa described this track leading 'through a veritable Garden of Eden. Peach and cherry groves covered every piece of dry land, while in

⁷³ *Brett's Auckland Almanac, Provincial Handbook, and Strangers' Vade Mecum for 1880* (Auckland, 1880), p. 60.

⁷⁴ Frederick Marychurch Strange, oral reminiscences recorded by Mobile Unit of New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, 1948, MU 356A, Radio NZ Archives, Wellington.

⁷⁵ Letter from 'Old Settler', *Te Aroha News*, 22 November 1910, p. 2.

⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 31 October 1885, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 10, pp. 403, 405.

⁷⁸ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 10, pp. 404-405.

⁷⁹ Samuel Stephenson, 'A Trip to Te Aroha Hot Springs', *Thames Advertiser*, 4 December 1878, p. 3.

places grapevines formed arches under which we rode'.⁸⁰ In 1927, the *Te Aroha News* wrote that

there was an abundance of wild game and every swamp, lagoon, and river was alive with ducks, while around every Maori settlement were numerous flocks of pheasants. The river banks were lined with peach trees, and cherries and grapes were so plentiful that they were free to all. Every few miles there was an eel weir in the river.⁸¹

Even larger sources of protein were available, according to one story. In 1919, 'an old resident' claimed 'to have been told by an old Maori 40 years ago that he (the Maori) had seen real live moas in the Thames Valley'. This unnamed Maori, who was at least 90 years old, claimed that 'moas roamed the Valley when he was a youth, but a fire starting at the Thames swept the entire valley, and destroyed the great birds'.⁸²

In 1939, what was described as a Maori workshop was discovered at Ruakaka:

The site of the find is a little piece of land abutting the mountainside, and yielding after a brief search no less than sixty adze heads in all stages of construction. Many are still in their rough state, while others are nearly finished, the smoothing process having all but obliterated the rough outline of the raw stone.... The largest stones measure from 9in to 10 1/2in, and ranged down to the smaller hatchet adzes used for wood-carving. The discovery is all the more interesting on account of the complete absence of similar stone near the site. The adzes in the main are of a dark flint-like stone [obsidian?] which it is surmised was brought from some distance, in view of the fact that the rock formations on the Te Aroha mountain are of the grey granite type. Piles of flint chips in the locality tell of the patient toil of the workers who shaped the stones.

The discovery also serves to indicate that the Maori population in the locality was at one time a fairly large one, and far more numerous than the remnants of the sub-hapu of the Ngati-maru which occupied the land about the thermal springs when the whites first arrived. A workshop of the dimensions disclosed bespeaks a progressive community which demands a fair supply

⁸⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 15 February 1923, p. 4.

⁸¹ *Te Aroha News*, 12 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 27 January 1919, p. 2.

of implements and weapons of war. It is considered that it is at least one hundred years since the workshop was last in use.⁸³

The cemetery adjoining the Omahu/Tui pa was well known,⁸⁴ but Pakeha discovered other burial sites accidentally. In 1912, when human bones and a greenstone ear ornament were unearthed at the top of Bridge Street, 'old Maori identities' stated that 'this locality was formerly the site of a native burying ground'.⁸⁵ Halfway between Te Aroha and Waiorongomai, some boys spreading flax out to dry in 1889 'came across a considerable quantity of human bones. The bodies apparently had been laid on the surface and then stones piled around them, "cairn" fashion'. The spot was assumed to be 'an ancient burial place'.⁸⁶

EARLY PAKEHA VISITS AND THE START OF SETTLEMENT

Te Aroha was a 'frontier' until the early 1880s, when Maori were, in James Belich's term, 'swamped', meaning 'the massive outnumbering of a shrinking or static Maori population by a growing Pakeha one'.⁸⁷ In March 1878, there were only four Europeans living at Te Aroha itself,⁸⁸ although more were starting to settle in the Waitoa and Waihou districts. By April 1881, despite the first goldrush fading and many miners leaving, there were 289 residents,⁸⁹ and numbers rose steadily after gold was discovered at Waiorongomai.

Relations between Pakeha and Maori had both advantages and disadvantages for the latter. One early advantage was an end to intertribal fighting and its consequences. Reha Aperahama told the land court in 1891 that 'at the time of the missionaries there were many of N'Maru living at the Bay of Islands', including some Ngati Tumutumu. Taken there by

⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, 27 March 1939, p. 4.

⁸⁴ *Waikato Argus*, 8 May 1897, p. 3.

⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1912, p. 2.

⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 14 August 1889, p. 2.

⁸⁷ James Belich, *Making Peoples: A history of the New Zealanders, from Polynesian settlement to the end of the nineteenth century* (Auckland, 1996), p. 249.

⁸⁸ *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand taken for the night of the 3rd of March, 1878* (Wellington, 1880), p. 23.

⁸⁹ *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand, taken for the night of the 3rd of April, 1881* (Wellington, 1882), p. 255.

Ngapuhi as slaves, under missionary influence they were freed and returned home.⁹⁰ From the 1860s onwards, a few Pakeha-Maori were encouraged to live locally and trade, the main trading station near Te Aroha being on the river at Waiharakeke, at the southern boundary of the Aroha Block, where Albert John Nicholas,⁹¹ William Nicholls,⁹² and John William Richard Guilding⁹³ all traded.⁹⁴ Maori who owned land at Thames, as some leading Ngati Rahiri did, shared in the prosperity produced by goldmining,⁹⁵ encouraging them to permit Pakeha into their domains. Te Karauna Hou was noted as being chief of a 'friendly tribe' in 1867, and on his death was recalled as a protector of the first settlers on the Waihou River.⁹⁶

Some early travellers into this virtually unknown district published their experiences. A *New Zealand Herald* reporter who visited in 1871 spent a night at Matauraurau,

having passed a tree called Kawana or governor's tree, for Sir George Grey having stayed there during a visit which he made to this part of the country. There was also a tree called the Governor Browne. Here was a settlement of three or four whares, some fine hot springs, and a small volcano which puffs away.... I have been eaten by mosquitos several times in my life, but seldom ... as bad as on this occasion.... The place where we had camped was just at the foot of the highest peak of the Aroha mountain.⁹⁷

From his description, he had spent the night with Mokena Hou's hapu at the hot springs, two miles upstream from Omahu. He carefully examined the soil quality and looked for signs of alluvial gold, without success:

⁹⁰ Evidence of Reha Aperahama, 9 March 1891: Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 27, p. 188.

⁹¹ See paper on Maori land in Hauraki.

⁹² See paper on his life.

⁹³ See paper on his life.

⁹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 January 1873, p. 3.

⁹⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 November 1867, p. 19; M. Whitehead, 'Early Days of Thames', *Jubilee of Thames Goldfield 1 August 1867 - 1 August 1917: Historical record* (Thames, 1917), p. 23.

⁹⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 October 1867, p. 6; *Thames Advertiser*, 2 February 1885, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Special Commissioner, 'The Opening of Ohinemuri', *New Zealand Herald*, 13 May 1871, p. 2.

This however is only the judgement of the eye, the extreme jealousy with which the natives have watched any attempt at prospecting, and the frequency with which they have examined the boats for anything like mining tools, has rendered it impossible to do any prospecting. The natives may be innocent people, as all the children of the wilderness are presumed to be, but I would be much rather watched by a European when I wanted to do anything on the quiet. At Wairakau we found an encampment of the natives, and that ploughing of land of which we have heard so much lately, and the taking possession of the Aroha country. There were two whares of considerable extent apparently new, and as much ploughed land as a man and two horses could get over in a day, other settlement there was none. On the opposite side of the creek there was a whare evidently in settled occupancy by some of the natives, and some distance further up towards Okauia [?]⁹⁸ there was a church and two or three whares. As the principal of the chiefs who were now here belonged to the Shortland natives, I was pretty well known, and received the compliment of having some potatoes sent to me. There was no pork however forthcoming, and the only provisions we had with us was biscuits and tea and sugar. An attempt was made to present me with a pig, but as the pair of trousers which were offered in barter for him were somewhat gone about the knees I was not surprised that the owner of the pig refused to “duke” [give it].⁹⁹ I had to pay for the pig in cash, and to pay about his price in a retail pork butcher’s of Shortland; the intention, however, was good, and I make my acknowledgements accordingly. Having rigged our tent we managed somehow to scramble our supper, boiling one-half the pig for the occasion. While supper was cooking I went on my usual visiting tour to the two camps of natives. Amongst other introductions I got one to a prophet, and another to Tahau, late an officer of Te Kooti.... There was a very strong impression left on my mind and on that of others that Te Kooti himself was not far distant. In any case we found at a later period of the night that our tent had a sentry placed upon it, and that no movement could be made without its being visible to the person on the watch. As is usual with the natives when our candle was lit we had at once a crowd within the tent. I was standing outside the tent at the fire, and saw the light in the tent suddenly extinguished. There was a little confusion inside, and it took three or four minutes to get the candle re-lighted. When it was re-lighted it was found that every

⁹⁸ Wrongly recorded as Ohinemuri.

⁹⁹ *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, ed. Tom Dalzell and Terry Victor (Abingdon, 2006), vol. 1, p. 471.

swag in the tent was plundered, and goods lost to the extent of some £5 or £6. That the biscuits and half the remaining portion of the pig had disappeared, and that one person had his pocket picked of a pocket book, containing some cheques and orders, but fortunately no cash. For myself I lost nothing, except they had stolen my blanket and swag straps, there was nothing else to steal from me. The thing could not have been more rapidly and dexterously done by a gang of London thieves and we all of us felt that the Maoris are indeed an innocent and open-hearted people. Complaint was made to the chiefs, but the pocket book alone was recovered, and that not until the following morning. One of the things we could badly afford to lose went - our tomahawk.... I was told by a European to-day that he had been robbed recently in the district of some ten or twelve pounds worth of clothes; that he had discovered the thief, and that the theft was admitted, but that restitution was not made, although a meeting of Maoris had gone through the form of imposing a penalty of £16 on the thief.... Of Wairakau I will say that I hope there may never be a township there. It is a bleak exposed flat, and I have not felt the cold during many years as I did during the night I was on it, although I wore a heavy habit coat and a soldier's coat over that.¹⁰⁰

Wairakau was to become a Maori reserve, not a township, and soon after 1880 was leased to Pakeha farmers.¹⁰¹ In defence of the honesty of Ngati Rahiri, many of those asserting their ownership of the land by ploughing it and building whare were Ngati Maru from Thames,¹⁰² not all of whom necessarily had ancestral links to this land. In 1948 the son of the early Waitoa settler Frederick Strange recalled Ngati Rahiri of the late 1870s as being 'strictly honest' before being corrupted by storekeepers, who charged Maori and Pakeha different prices, as Maori well knew. After the government vetoed his father's purchase of the Wairakau Block, the sellers voluntarily returned £1,000 of the £1,700 paid, and would have returned the remainder but for unexplained 'outside influence'. Strange ran cattle on this

¹⁰⁰ Special Commissioner, 'The Ohinemuri Country', *New Zealand Herald*, 20 May 1871, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ See paper on Harry and Charles.

¹⁰² *Auckland Weekly News*, Ohinemuri Correspondent, 8 April 1871, p. 5, Thames Correspondent, 22 April 1871, p. 6; *New Zealand Herald*, 13 May 1871, p. 3, 16 May 1871, p. 3, 25 May 1871, p. 3.

land for two years while attempting to acquire it, and they were never taken.¹⁰³

Albert James Allom, a government official,¹⁰⁴ along with other Thames residents, after unsuccessfully attempting to climb the mountain on Christmas Day 1872 were well received at Omahu, which he described as ‘a small native settlement lower down on the banks of the Waihou, about two miles from the foot of the Aroha’. After they described their painful encounters with mosquitoes during the previous evening, their hosts

exerted themselves most successfully to secure us a good night’s rest, for which we shall ever be grateful. A well-smoked, but sufficiently ventilated, comfortable whare, and clean mats (whariki) were provided for us, and so perfect were the arrangements that the mosquitoes, plentiful enough outside, were this night completely circumvented.¹⁰⁵

To prevent any theft of their property whilst climbing the mountain, Allom had scratched

with my pen-knife upon a leaf of phormium tenax, tied to the tent pole, a notice in the Maori language that the horses and property were mine, adding the words, “Kaua a tahae” (do not steal them). This use of the New Zealand flax leaf is well understood by the old hands, and they also know that no native, however disreputable his character, would be likely even to think of touching any article so *tapued*.

Whether because of the tapu, or the moral character of Ngati Rahiri, nothing was stolen.¹⁰⁶

Although members of Ngati Rahiri were hospitable to visitors, they were quick to respond to any encroachment on their land by Pakeha or rival tribes. When Henry Alley¹⁰⁷ brought cattle onto the Waiharakeke Block, upstream from Te Aroha, which he had leased from Ngati Haua in 1873,

¹⁰³ Frederick Marychurch Strange, oral reminiscences recorded by Mobile Unit of New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, 1948, MU 356A, Radio NZ Archives, Wellington.

¹⁰⁴ See Barrie Allom, *Dear Tyrant: An extraordinary colonial life* (Masterton, 2014).

¹⁰⁵ Albert James Allom, *A Holiday Trip to Maungatautari, Being the Journal of a Tour to the Waikato, via Ohinemuri and the Upper Thames* (Thames, 1873), p. 21.

¹⁰⁶ Allom, p. 20.

¹⁰⁷ See paper on the Aroha Block to 1879.

armed Ngati Rahiri under the command of Karauna Hou drove them to Alley's farm at Hikutaia because Ngati Haua had been using its lease to claim ownership of this disputed land.¹⁰⁸ No violence was offered to Alley, and when a surveyor, Timothy Sullivan, was murdered near Cambridge in 1873, a meeting of Maori at Thames that included leading Ngati Rahiri condemned his killing. 'Te Karauna said: Let no person rush into the fight at Waikato, but let everyone in Hauraki stop at his own place. If any one of you goes I will seize his property for the wrong in going'. Aperahama Te Reiroa, father of two Ngati Rahiri rangatira, Reha Aperahama and Aihe Pepene,¹⁰⁹ also spoke:

An oath (agreement) had been made here formerly that none of them should go and join the Waikatos in their bad work. He now said to them, let them keep to that oath, and remain in Hauraki. They must send notices to Piako and Ohinemuri, and all through their boundaries, for all the people to remain quietly at their own places. Let not even those who were called Hauhaus at Piako enter upon this bad work. If any of the people within these boundaries went, let them never return.

The meeting agreed to post these notices in all Maori settlements.¹¹⁰ A later meeting, to which some of the 'leading Europeans of the district' were invited, was addressed by Mokena Hou and others; should a war break out between the Waikato tribes and the government he wanted Hauraki Maori to stay quietly in their own district.¹¹¹

On Christmas Day, 1873, four young Pakeha and the son of a Maori clergyman came from Thames to let off a magnesium flare on the mountain's summit. At Omahu, Ngati Rahiri 'received them very hospitably, killing a pig and giving them buttermilk, tea, potatoes, and biscuits. Prayers were said in the evening by an old Maori', possibly Mokena Hou, although his usual place of residence was close to the hot springs,¹¹² 'and again in the morning, but before anyone was awake with the exception of one of the pakeha visitors and the Maori who read'.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ *AJHR*, 1876, H-14.

¹⁰⁹ See paper on Reha Aperahama.

¹¹⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 May 1873, p. 11.

¹¹¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 May 1873, p. 11.

¹¹² See paper on his life.

¹¹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 January 1874, p. 3, 9 January 1874, p. 3.

One year later, the first steamer to reach Omaha was well received, one passenger writing that Ngati Rahiri ‘were most friendly, giving us a whare to sleep in, potatoes etc etc and cooked them for us’, and, when they left, ‘expressed a hope that we would come back soon’.¹¹⁴ This visit was reported in detail because Thames residents wanted to know about the prospects for settlement. The first report was a Pigeon Express:

Maoris along the banks came to see the novelty, and one man ordered the steamer back, but he was a King native on a visit to the district. At Omaha last night natives gave us great welcome, and made customary speeches. Kepa [Te Wharau],¹¹⁵ Tutuki, Erua, and others spoke, and appeared delighted that [the] steamer [had] ventured so far.¹¹⁶

An expanded version recorded their sighting Omaha at 6.30 in the evening:

The whistle was sounded, and some 40 or 50 natives at once made their appearance on the banks of the river, and being in a state of considerable excitement and astonishment, as the visit was totally unexpected by them, it was the first time that ever a steamer’s whistle had been heard in that uncivilized region. When we landed we were most heartily welcomed, but the natives expressed much regret that we had not sent them some kind of intimation that a steamer was to visit their settlement, that they might have been prepared. However, they soon put on potatoes, boiled our billies for us, and we thoroughly enjoyed tea al fresco - very al fresco I may say. But there was one experience regarding this tea that was new to nearly all of us. We took a liberal supply of new milk from Mr Creagh’s farm, and our providore kept careful watch over it when we landed. To keep it out of the reach of Maori dogs and children, he hung it up in one corner of the whare, unfortunately in close proximity to a spot where the hair of some departed chief had once adhered. Our tea, I must explain, was boiled in a large billie which we borrowed from the natives and we naturally put the milk into it without anticipating any evil result. An old Maori found out at once, and his unfortunate billie was immediately “tapued,” and we had to purchase it for the sum of 5/-, as the natives could never think of using it again! Such is a sample of the superstitions of the New Zealand natives after

¹¹⁴ James N. McLaren to Superintendent, Auckland Province, 27 January 1875, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, Box 28, Session 30, MS 595, Auckland Public Library.

¹¹⁵ See paper on his life.

¹¹⁶ Pigeon Express, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 December 1874, p. 3.

40 years of “missionary influence!” When tea was finished, a small fire was made in front of the whare to keep away the mosquitoes, and in the glow we formed a circle around it, to the number of 50 or 60 - of Europeans and natives. Kepa, a really fine specimen of a native, who showed the utmost anxiety to make us comfortable, then rose, and in true Maori style, with proper emphasis and gesticulation made a long speech of welcome. Tutuki an old chief of some note, followed him, and gave us a song of welcome. But they all soon began to travel into land questions and matters of business, and Mr [James] Mackay cut them short, and after thanking them on behalf of the Pakehas for their welcome, he plainly intimated that he was out for a holiday, and could not talk business. We all then returned to our whare.

On the following morning some of the party went down to the lagoons and river where the trout (or supposed trout) had frequently been seen by the natives....

Some of the party went in the early morning to the hot springs.... After returning to the native settlement at Omahu we made preparations for our return journey, and at 12.30 parted with our Maori friends, who strongly urged that the name of the steamer should be changed from the “Fairy” to “Aroha” in commemoration of the opening up of steam communication with that district.

At least some Pakeha had not come just to admire the scenery:

From the hot springs a magnificent view of the Upper Thames valley is to be obtained, and what surprised us most was the enormous extent of splendid country which might be made available to agricultural settlement.... There was not a single cultivation to be seen except at Omahu, where the natives have a few acres of potatoes, maize, &c, which are looking remarkably well, and prove by their appearance that this soil is [of] good quality, and capable to producing fine crops.¹¹⁷

Capable, they believed, only in the hands of Pakeha settlers.

Ngati Rahiri also permitted sick Pakeha to use the hot springs. For example, after being discharged from hospital a young man visited with his mother and Priscilla Mitchell, wife of Charles Featherstone Mitchell of Paeroa.¹¹⁸ She told the press that ‘they had experienced nothing but kindness at the hands of the natives; but nothing did him any good, and he

¹¹⁷ Own Correspondent, ‘Navigating the Thames River: A Holiday Excursion’, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 December 1874, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ See paper on the Thames Miners Union.

died'.¹¹⁹ All visitors mentioned their friendly welcome'; for example, in 1923 it was recalled that, upon arrival, 'Crown, the Chief', meaning Karauna Hou, 'placed a large whare at our disposal, and the women vied with each other in preparing our supper'.¹²⁰ Visitors in 1876 discovered that Ngati Rahiri continued to ignore some government restrictions on their autonomy:

A Thames gentleman was spending a few days in the Aroha district ... shooting, and was strongly tempted by the natives to remain a little longer in the neighbourhood, where some good sport presented itself. When the sportsman (who was a lawyer) explained that the shooting season, as prescribed by the Act, was about to expire, and he could not remain longer to indulge his favourite past-time, the natives poo-pooed at the law, and assured him that the Government would not interfere so long as he remained the recipient of their hospitality. They did not fear or respect the operation of such a law in that district.¹²¹

In 1877, 'another breach of the laws and customs of Europeans' was reported: 'Te Karauna and others of the Aroha natives' required a payment of £5 before a Pakeha was permitted to drive a small herd of cattle through their land to the Thames market.¹²²

Visitors quickly discovered that Ngati Rahiri saw them as a source of income. A report on an excursion to the hot springs in the summer of 1877 noted that they had

a keen appreciation of the value of money, and of the best means of making it. There are two shanties, which are well supplied with grog, and worse might be found in many town hotels. No great profit was charged on the grog, but bathers were charged one shilling each for the privilege of immersing themselves in the hot springs.¹²³

In the late 1870s Ngati Rahiri assisted settlers and also provided themselves with a good income by transporting stores from Thames for £3 10s per ton.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 November 1875, pp. 2, 3.

¹²⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 15 February 1923, p. 4.

¹²¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 August 1876, p. 2.

¹²² *Thames Advertiser*, 4 May 1877, p. 3.

¹²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 January 1877, p. 3.

¹²⁴ Letter from 'A.B.', *Te Aroha News*, 9 May 1908, p. 2.

An excursionist provided details of a trip in January 1877 to inspect land for settlement as well as to enjoy the hot pools. Beyond Paeroa ‘as far as the eye can reach vast plains and gentle rises appear, the land being of good quality, apparently, with here and there a patch of swamp, which if properly cultivated would produce enough grain to feed all New Zealand’. And above Te Aroha was ‘all good land, and would cut up into splendid farms’. On nearing Omahu,

we were surprised to see a number of Natives peeping out here and there through the titree, and on coming round a bend of the river we were still further surprised to see some 60 or 70 Maories armed to the teeth, with double-barrelled guns, revolvers, swords, pistols, and arms of a ruder character. These formidable looking aboriginals hailed us to come into the bank which the steamer captain proceeded to do, and a lot of the warriors at once jumped on board, nearly swamping the Fairy. They were very bounceable, the crowd being the same that has lately issued a manifesto protesting against [James] Mackay’s proceedings and saying they will not give up the Aroha. They wanted to know if we had any Ohinemuri natives on board, asserting that if we had we could not be allowed to proceed, except at the risk of being shot.¹²⁵ We hadn’t any Ohinemuri Maoris, so we were allowed to proceed without further hindrance from these hostile-looking gentlemen. The banks of the river upwards is one immense peach grove, and is charming to look upon. The natives have a “pub” at their settlement, where they supply ale and porter at two shillings a bottle, and other liquors at sixpence a glass.... The hot springs are not imposing looking, but could be wonderfully improved. The Natives charge one shilling for a bath, contending that the land is theirs still. We left Omahu about four o’clock under a storm of Maori yells and gesticulations, and warnings not to return until the war with the Ohinemuri natives was over, and much other bounce of a similar character.¹²⁶

A report of a meeting held at Te Aroha in April 1877 to end this quarrel with Ngati Tamatera gave details of the life and attitudes of Ngati Rahiri (and of the attitudes of Pakeha). When the steamer bearing rangatira from Thames and Paeroa along with Pakeha officials and observers approached the pa newly erected beside the river,

¹²⁵ See paper on Ngati Rahiri versus Ngati Tamatera.

¹²⁶ ‘Excursion to Paeroa and Te Aroha’, *Thames Star*, 15 January 1877, p. 2.

various conjectures were made as to the reception we would receive, when to our surprise the women came out and cried "haerimai," and waved their shawls.... It transpired that Mr George Lipsey¹²⁷ [son-in-law of Mokena Hou] had witnessed our arrival at the Puke [the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waihou rivers], and had ridden overland and informed the Aroha people that we were coming. On landing we were shown by Mr Lipsey the quarters assigned to us, which were situated about 50 yards from the pah. Te Karauna, the head chief (better known to the people of Shortland as Crown...), was inside the pah, but as most of the men were out at the cultivation, about four miles from the pah, he was unable to appear, for it would have been a breach of Maori etiquette to have appeared without his followers. Meanwhile horsemen were dispatched in various directions to bring the people together. At six o'clock Parota was sent by the other envoys to interview Karauna. They met outside the pah, and Parota returned and said that nothing could be done until the other natives arrived. The women of the Ngatirahiri then brought out food for the visitors, walking in single file from the pah to our quarters, and in solemn silence and without any recognition, although intimately acquainted and related to each other, they deposited the food in front of the visitors. On Sunday morning, after prayers, Parota again met Karauna outside the pah. Karauna said his young men had not yet arrived....

After breakfast was over, several of the party visited the hot springs, and bathed in them, and also drank of the water from the soda springs. On the way out Taipari met several old friends, but they merely shook hands and passed on, without exchanging words, the etiquette of the position smothering, pro tem., the best feelings of the human heart.... In the evening Tuterea [an Anglican lay reader from Kirikiri] again read prayers very earnestly, and the solemnity and reverence observable on the occasion would have done credit to the most devout pakeha assemblage. The remainder of the evening was spent arranging the business for the next day, and telling Maori legends and other stories, some of which were of a most interesting and practical character, both Maori and pakeha enjoying them very much. On Monday morning Tuterea went within 20 yards of the pah. He called out, "We are come; we are come;" on hearing which, Karauna and his people came out, and there was a general shaking of hands, rubbing of noses, and a great crying match on account of Rapana [Maunganoa]'s death, Rapana's widow taking a most prominent part, and crying very bitterly. I may here state that nearly all the people of the pah were well known by the [majority] of the visitors, some of them being residents of Parawai

¹²⁷ See paper on his life.

[a Thames suburb] and the vicinity ever since the [Thames] field was opened. After the tangi was over,

HOTERENE arose and greeted the Te Aroha natives, and the other envoys followed suit; Karauna, Aperahama, Pirika [Te Riupoto?],¹²⁸ Tutuki, and Mango [Whaiapu?]¹²⁹ responding.

The real talk then followed, the envoys stating their case in the usual style followed suit.

The korero continued for some time, resulting in an agreement to cease hostilities. That settled, ‘most of the party visited the pah to see old friends and have a talk with them’.

Various enquiries were made about absent friends, and most of the natives appeared to be well posted up regarding the improved prospects of the Thames goldfield. Our old friend Pineha, who used to figure at reviews of the Volunteers, and who appeared on those occasions at the head of the troops, elaborately got up, with spear in hand, was making enquiries about Moanataiaris and Waitekauris [shares in mining companies]. He has an interest in the Moanataiari ground, and said he did not care how long he remained up there, the money was accumulating, and he would have all the more money to spend when he returned to Parawai. He also enquired after Captain [Thomas Leitch] Murray,¹³⁰ and his handsome men of the Thames Scottish, and if they still had the band, and the pakeha Makirina [Charles David Lindsay McLean, Drum-Major of the Thames Scottish Volunteers]¹³¹ who carried the big walking-stick [baton]. I was the bearer of a letter from Riki Paka¹³² to his loving friend Crown, who sent word, in reply, that he would soon see him at Shortland. Some of the County Councillors, with an eye to business, interviewed those interested in the land adjacent to Totara Point [Kaitawa, south of Thames], and they conceded their authority to making the road past there through their land, only stipulating that the burial-places should be fenced and kept sacred....

¹²⁸ See letter from Ngati Rahiri to Donald McLean, printed in *Thames Advertiser*, 13 January 1877, p. 3.

¹²⁹ See *Thames Advertiser*, 25 June 1898, p. 4.

¹³⁰ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 7, pp. 96-97; *Thames Advertiser*, 27 March 1873, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 19 January 1900, p. 2.

¹³¹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 502; ‘Yorick’, ‘Waihi Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 13 August 1896, p. 3; *Observer*, 10 February 1917, p. 5.

¹³² See *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1870, p. 4, 12 March 1877, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 4 June 1877, p. 2; Native Land Court, *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1888, p. 2.

The Aroha people miss the luxuries of European life, and are extremely desirous of having flour, sugar, tobacco, and tea sent. Crown asked Mr [Edward Walter] Puckey [the native agent], as a great favour, to send him up a boat-load of small sharks.

After inspecting the pa being erected because of the conflict with Ngati Tamatera, the visitors 'returned to the steamer, Karauna and the other chiefs accompanying them. Just as the rope was let go Karauna sang out that he and his people were getting a large flagstaff from the bush, and as soon as they got it down he and his people would come down to Shortland'.¹³³

One of the chiefs mentioned, Pineha, was recalled in 1948 as being a bent old man with a remarkable memory who could quote chapter after chapter of the Bible.¹³⁴ In 1877 he assisted Frederick Strange's efforts to purchase the Wairakau Block, despite government opposition, by obtaining the necessary owners' signatures; and kept asking Strange for more money.¹³⁵

Although most visitors came from Thames, some from the Waikato struggled across the swamps. In early 1877, a report of a trip from Hamilton to Omaha was 'written expressly for' the *Waikato Times*. After arriving with difficulty at the riverbank opposite the hot springs, the party met Akuhata Mokena,¹³⁶ 'who was in charge of the store and hotel (!), who ferried us across, leaving our horses' on the Hamilton side, 'tied to a bush, to refresh themselves as best they could'.¹³⁷ A son of Mokena Hou, Akuhata had not yet obtained a liquor license;¹³⁸ the '(!)' indicated the quality of his hostelry.

¹³³ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1877, p. 3.

¹³⁴ Frederick Marychurch Strange, oral reminiscences recorded by Mobile Unit of New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, 1948, MU 356A, Radio NZ Archives, Wellington;

¹³⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, Ohinemuri Correspondent, 27 November 1877, p. 3, 17 October 1877, p. 3.

¹³⁶ See paper on his life.

¹³⁷ 'A Trip from Hamilton Through Piako to the Thames Valley and Back Again', *Waikato Times*, 1 March 1877, p. 2.

¹³⁸ George Stewart O'Halloran, unpublished memoirs (1894), p. 54 of typescript, MS 1345, Alexander Turnbull Library; *Thames Advertiser*, 14 December 1878, p. 3, 9 April 1879, p. 3.

Our next business was to try the tap, of which I cannot speak favorably. After trying several kinds of drink, gin was the only one that could be swallowed with any safety. After a little rest, the springs received a visit from us, but we did not bathe, as several of our colored brothers and sisters were trying their hands at that sort of thing. We explored the locality until our colored relatives took their leave. Then, we descended, and let off the water in the bath room (!) so that we might have a clean start in the morning. On returning to the store, we enquired for kai, but could get none, not even a biscuit, all sold out. The storekeeper stating they were nearly out of everything and could not get down to Shortland to purchase more, as the natives [Ngati Tamatera] had blocked the river by falling trees across – would we like to see the pah they were building at Omahu – if so he would take us down and provide us with something to eat &c. We said we should like to see it – so we started, and after travelling about two miles through some really very fine land we came upon the village of Omahu, and sure enough here was a very formidable pah in construction under the immediate direction of chief Jimmie Currie.¹³⁹ “The Crown” [Karauna], another, and I believe a bigger chief was helping in the work – but Jimmie Currie appeared to be a presiding genius and chief military engineer.¹⁴⁰

William McLear, a Pakeha brought up by Maori since early childhood,¹⁴¹ was their guide:

Our guide appeared to be well known and respected by the natives here, for, one and all greeted him with a hearty welcome. On entering the pah, *our* storekeeper left us for a short time. He was no sooner gone, than another Maori came and asked if he should provide tea for us. We declined the kind offer, stating we would wait until they had their evening meal, which was being prepared. In the mean time, to wile away the interval, we visited the river.... Why Omahu is considered the head of the navigation, is simply because there is a native settlement there, and travellers wishing to reach the Thames by this route, come here, to ensure crossing, there being always some one at the pah to ferry them across, whilst, at the springs, a traveller would, most likely, have to swim. The natives charge one shilling for each foot passenger. The depth of water here, is about four feet for more

¹³⁹ Not identified; could he, just possibly, be Tutuki?

¹⁴⁰ ‘A Trip from Hamilton through Piako to the Thames Valley and Back Again’, *Waikato Times*, 1 March 1877, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ See paper on ‘Pakeha Bill’.

than half-way across from the east bank, but is deeper near the west bank. This, we discovered by our guide, while bathing, walking out as far as the current would allow, the water reaching nearly to his armpits. Here, we found some Maori women fishing for whitebait. Their fishing tackle consisted of a thin ti-tree stick, to which was fastened a short piece of fine string, to which a small hook was attached. Bait: a small worm. My friend was asked to join them. He did so, and the result certainly astonished the natives! They thought they were hauling them in fast, but my friend could throw them into the canoe, at least three times as fast as they did. They came and examined his line and hook (one they had lent him) to see what enchantment he was using. They could not understand it, but looked on in amazement. It was kapai [good], they said. This continued for nearly half-an-hour, when we all adjourned to dinner (a six o'clock dinner), which was like the breakfast – eels and potatoes – and like, as at breakfast, my friend could not do the justice to it he would have done had he a pinch of salt. Dinner over, fishing was resumed, but, alas, the spell was broken; the fish did not “show up,” so, my friend not wishing to lose the reputation he had previously gained, retired from the scene, pleading the coming darkness as the cause of non-success. Just about sun-down, we heard the sound of a large bell, asked the cause of its being rung, and were told a missionary was going to hold prayers. A Hauhau Missionary? (They had previously told us they were Hauhaus.) No! English Church. We waited, and shortly the ladies emerged from their dwellings, dressed in shawls, and the gentlemen in clean blankets. All approached the entrance to the pah, where my friend and I were standing, and the women commenced “playing pitch-and-toss!” [a tossing game],¹⁴² one or two of the men assisting. The rest divided into two lots. One entered the hotel, which was close to, and the remainder became spectators of the pitch-and-toss going on as aforesaid. When my surprise somewhat abated, I asked for the missionary, and was told he was gone – prayers all over – and this was all we saw or heard of him.¹⁴³

It is likely that this missionary was not a Pakeha, but Mokena Hou, a fervent Anglican who conducted services regularly.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Described on Google.

¹⁴³ ‘A Trip from Hamilton through Piako to the Thames Valley and Back Again’, *Waikato Times*, 8 March 1877, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 June 1881, p. 2; *Church Gazette*, January 1883, p. 6; *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7, 27 June 1885, p. 2, 1 August 1885, pp. 2, 7.

When darkness put an end to “pitch-and-toss,” as many as could, entered the Hotel to spend the rest of the evening. We asked several times for our guide, and were told each time, “William gone to the bluff,” from which we concluded William was gone to some point down the river. When we wished to retire, we were shown to our apartments, which were a little distance outside the pah. On entering, we found William busily engaged playing cards, with about fourteen or fifteen natives. The “to the bluff” meant, the name of the game they were playing. We were shown where we were to sleep. A clean large flax mat was spread upon the ground, and a couple of clean, white blankets - one to lie upon, the other to cover us. We slept as well as we could for the noise made at “the bluff,” which game did not wholly cease until about dawn of day. These natives are certainly notorious gamesters. We arose next morning at six o’clock, and started at once for the springs, where we had each a bath, my friend up to his ankles, mine up to my knees. Nice and warm it was, and we contrived to have a good wash, which we needed. Called at the Hotel, and then got ferried across to where we had left our horses.¹⁴⁵

To encourage further visitors, Ngati Rahiri announced that there would be sports and horse races during the Christmas holidays. As steamer travel would be at excursion prices, the *Thames Advertiser* saw this as ‘a good opportunity for Thames tourists to visit the hot springs, soda springs, and other wonders of that, comparatively speaking, terra incog. at a cheap rate’.¹⁴⁶ An account of Te Aroha’s first race day was published:

The races which were held near Omahu on New Year’s Day were a success in every particular. The money was collected, programme arranged and all matters connected with the meeting carried out entirely by the Maoris themselves, in the most orderly and masterly manner. The course had been previously marked off, and the fern, etc, cut, affording capital galloping ground. Two booths were erected for the sale of refreshments on the rising ground, and from this place a capital view of the running could be had, as indeed of the whole country for many miles around. The refreshment booths belonged to the natives, and were well stocked, and appeared to do a roaring business, the liquors being served by some good-looking young Maori women, assisted by their friends of the opposite sex. There were four races on the programme, and Mr F[rederick] Strange, settler of Waitoa,

¹⁴⁵ ‘A Trip from Hamilton through Piako to the Thames Valley and Back Again’, *Waikato Times*, 8 March 1877, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 November 1877, p. 3.

officiated as judge. The clerk of the course appeared resplendent in scarlet, and the jockeys in coats of many colours.... The greatest good feeling existed on all sides, and there was not even a fight (so usual on race courses) during the day. Some of the visitors went to the hot springs in the evening to enjoy the luxury of a hot bath after the heat and dust of the day.¹⁴⁷

OPENING UP THE DISTRICT

Since the early 1870s, the government wanted to make roads to open up Maori districts to traders and settlers, but faced opposition. For instance, at a meeting in Thames in 1874, Mackay raised the issue of making a road between Te Aroha and Waitoa to connect with the road from the latter to Hamilton. ‘The natives interested’, a newspaper was told, ‘expressed themselves against the road being made as of course they will do when they are all met together, but we hope the Government will go on with the work without further asking their opinion’.¹⁴⁸ As the government did not, it would be years before this road was constructed. The following year, some Ngati Rahiri attending a meeting at Matamata had supported the majority in opposing making roads from Cambridge to Taupo and Tauranga.¹⁴⁹ One year later, the district engineer recommended that settlers’ desire for a road between Mackaytown and Te Aroha be declined because of ‘the feelings of the Te Aroha Natives’ and the government decided that ‘it would not be judicious’ to make it ‘at present’.¹⁵⁰ Not till 1878 was Reha Aperahama delegated to tell the Premier, Sir George Grey, that Ngati Rahiri were ‘anxious for the construction of the road between Ohinemuri and Omahu’.¹⁵¹ Upon receiving Reha’s request, Grey immediately agreed to employ Maori to make it. Reha also said his hapu wanted the Native Minister to visit to ‘see the wants’ of the Aroha district.¹⁵² Accepting the invitation, three weeks later council officials visited Omahu to make arrangements for the road.¹⁵³ ‘As soon as the

¹⁴⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 January 1878, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 May 1874, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 February 1875, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ J.M. McLaren (District Engineer) to Reader Wood (Provincial Secretary), 1 March 1876, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8180, 500/76, ANZ-A.

¹⁵¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 February 1878, p. 3.

¹⁵² *Thames Advertiser*, 2 February 1878, p. 3.

¹⁵³ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 February 1878, p. 2, 21 February 1878, p. 3.

preliminary compliments and food had been disposed of, the korero began 'beneath a majestic flagstaff'. Alexander Brodie,¹⁵⁴ the council chairman, explained that he wanted the road made 'amicably, and for the good of all parties, or left alone', and offered seven shillings per day for labourers and eight for overseers. 'Various opinions' were stated during the 'considerable discussion', but the opponents of the road were a minority, 'amongst them being the old chief Tutuki, to whom, however, little attention was paid'. Brodie reassured them they would neither lose their land nor be liable for rates and that land taken would be paid for at a value to be determined by representatives of both council and landowners. At his suggestion, there was a two-hour adjournment for the latter to discuss the issues while the visitors retired to the hot springs and a nearby lake. When the meeting re-assembled, 'Karauna said the matter was sealed': the road would be made where the council wanted, and at the wages offered. He 'presented to Mr Brodie a flat stick, representing the road from Shortland to Te Aroha, the Parawai portion being smooth, the Te Aroha portion rough. Te Karauna was at the rough end, Brodie at the other; all that was to be done was to make it smooth alike'. It was agreed that the warden and two rangatira would determine the value of land taken for it. One rangatira, Pineha, presented Brodie with 'a carved stick representing the sections of the tribe who had agreed to the road, and that the stick was to be held as a witness, and returned when the work was completed'. Ngati Rahiri, a newspaper commented, 'were evidently pleased with the business'.¹⁵⁵

Within three weeks, the Native Minister, John Sheehan, anxious to encourage co-operation in a still unsettled area, arrived at Omahu. An accompanying journalist reported his visit,¹⁵⁶ starting with the 'La Buona Ventura' steaming upriver:

The native settlement near Rangiora was reached after nearly three hour' steaming. Captain [Wiropo Hoterene] Taipari [of the Thames Native Volunteers] landed and informed his uncle, who is chief of the settlement, and one of the Aroha claimants, that the Native Minister wished him to accompany the party to the Aroha. The old man soon discarded his Maori attire, and shortly afterwards appeared on board clad in European costume. Both himself and his wife appeared much pleased to meet the Hon. Mr

¹⁵⁴ See *Observer*, 21 April 1894, p. 17.

¹⁵⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 February 1878, p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ See paper on the Te Aroha Block to 1879.

Sheehan, and kindly presented him with a quantity of succulent water melons, which were greatly appreciated by all on board....

The Maori steamer 'Riroriro', owned and commanded by Captain Aihe Pepene, being at the Paeroa, it was decided to charter her to convey the party to Te Aroha, on account of her light draught, as the river is very low at present....

When within a mile of Omahu the whistle was sounded to warn the people of the steamer's approach. The whistle was promptly responded to by their several times dipping three flags that had been hoisted on the magnificent flagstaff on the pah, the top flag being a Union Jack. This was plainly discernable in the moonlight. On nearing the landing it was observed that the women of the tribe had ranged themselves along the banks of the river, each with a lighted torch in her hand, with the men ranged behind them. The reflection of the torches on the water and through the trees had a beautiful effect. When the party landed the usual "haeremais" were given, amidst the waving of shawls; after which the Arohaites formed a procession, walking two and two, and headed by the chiefs, proceeded to the pah, which was well lighted up for the occasion. Here three large tents had been pitched, the first being for the Minister, the next for the County authorities, and the next for the other members of the party. Each tent floor was covered with fern and beautiful matting, and provided with new blankets, pillows, and sheets, and outside in front of the door, on boxes, were laid new knives and plated forks and spoons, with cups and saucers and plates, for the use of visitors. The tents were well lighted up with candles. The effect of the whole looked like a magical fairy scene. The processionists halted and formed themselves in a semi-circle in front of the tents, when the Hon. Mr Sheehan informed them that he was compelled to leave Aroha early next morning, and would take it as a special favour if they would proceed with the talk that evening. After some consultation it was stated by one of the chiefs that it was not customary to talk at night, but in deference to the wish of their illustrious visitor they would concede the point and talk after food. The food, consisting of potatoes, meat, and tea, cooked in European style, was promptly placed by the women of the tribe before the visitors, who were very hungry, and enjoyed it immensely. After supper the korero began.

The main topic was the government's purchase of the block and the allocation of reserves. Afterwards, the visitors departed 'amidst the cheers of those assembled'. Reportedly, Ngati Rahiri liked Sheehan because of 'his candour when giving them wholesome advice, some of which was very

unpalatable, like most efficacious medicine'.¹⁵⁷ Another account estimated that 'about 300 Maoris, most of whom had torches in their hands, welcomed Sheehan; if this estimate was accurate, Maori from all around the region must have been present. 'The war-dance was also indulged in'.¹⁵⁸

In early March, when land to be taken for the road was valued by the warden, Ngati Rahiri appeared 'very anxious that no time should be lost in commencing work'.¹⁵⁹ As the warden asked them to appoint three rangatira to confer with him, three 'influential natives' were selected. 'The result was that a very small sum - a few shillings per chain - was agreed upon'.¹⁶⁰ To resolve further disagreements, Brodie and Puckey once more visited Omahu:

The natives at first were a little bounceable on the score of wages, demanding 9s per diem for working in the swamp, but eventually everything was satisfactorily settled, the natives agreeing to do the necessary work ... at the usual wages, 7s per diem. They, however, stipulated that they were to be treated exactly as the Shortland natives, so far as exemption from taxation was concerned. This was acceded to by Mr Brodie, when all further opposition to the making of the road was withdrawn.¹⁶¹

Supervised by John Gibbons, a future sawmiller and investor in Te Aroha mining,¹⁶² who was then 'in charge of native works, Aroha district', it was started in April by about 40 men in four parties and with rangatira as foremen. Gibbons reported in late April that work was progressing well despite many of those employed being 'but sorry workmen whom it would be a mistake to employ in the future'; in contrast, 'some' were 'well disposed, intelligent as to the work in hand, and very industrious'.¹⁶³ After the road was completed, 'all the principal chiefs from Te Aroha, accompanied by some of their people', told a council representative that they wanted it up-

¹⁵⁷ Own Correspondent, 'Visit of the Native Minister to Ohinemuri and Te Aroha', *Thames Advertiser*, 18 March 1878, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ 'The Native Minister at the Thames', *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 March 1878, p. 15.

¹⁵⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1878, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 March 1878, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 April 1878, p. 3.

¹⁶² See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 446; *Thames Star*, 29 January 1900, p. 3; *Observer*, 13 December 1902, p. 4, 7 July 1906, p. 4.

¹⁶³ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 May 1878, p. 3.

graded to take wheeled traffic and extended to Tauranga, and also asked for a bridge over the river.¹⁶⁴ The *Thames Advertiser* explained this enthusiasm for making roads by their having ‘tasted the sweets of Government expenditure’ and being ‘anxious for an increase of the same’. A letter ‘signed by all the chiefs of the district’ had been sent asking the Premier and the Native Minister to extend the road from Te Aroha to the Waikato.¹⁶⁵ These chiefs, unnamed apart from Reha Aperahama, also wrote to Brodie:

Friend, greeting, this is a word of ours to you. The road which we arranged with you about is finished. We wish you to know that we have written to Sir George Grey and Mr Sheehan, asking for a sum of money to make the road to Tauranga, so that we may be able to get shellfish. We are very much pleased at the opening of the present road, and found no fault with anyone connected with the supervision. We wish you not to cease asking the government for money for these roads, so as to back us up in what we are asking for, in order that the roads may be completed.¹⁶⁶

Forty Ngati Rahiri, after attending the mid-year hearing of the Aroha Block held at Thames, ‘invested some of the proceeds of the sales of their land in the purchase of ploughs, harrows, and other agricultural implements, and the “Memsahib” had four boats in tow, containing about 20 tons of cargo’.¹⁶⁷ They were working industriously, telling a visitor that they could ‘plough and sow wheat’ at Wairakau ‘without fallowing it’, indicating the quality of the land that Pakeha sought to acquire.¹⁶⁸ A visitor to Omahu in October ‘found very few natives here, they having gone further down the river to plant potatoes, etc’.¹⁶⁹ Cattle were being reared for sale to Thames merchants.¹⁷⁰ A survey on the state of Maori health stated that ‘in the Upper Thames’, which presumably included Omahu, ‘the wretched hovels have given place to convenient dwellings, and bad food and clothing to comfort and even elegance’.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 May 1878, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 May 1878, p. 3.

¹⁶⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 May 1878, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 September 1878, p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 April 1878, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1878, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, Te Aroha Correspondent, 11 August 1879, p. 3, 13 August 1879, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ Editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 November 1878, p. 2.

Ngati Rahiri also prepared for increasing Pakeha settlement. In late 1878 the Surveyor General was informed that surveys had discovered the best site for a village, 250 acres at Te Kawana, on the western bank of the river opposite Ruakaka, had ‘unfortunately been made a Native reserve’. Ngati Rahiri were ‘already building wooden houses here, being well aware of its advantages’.¹⁷²

To encourage more visitors, in December Akuhata Mokena was granted a license for a hotel at the hot springs that had been built by his brother-in-law, George Lipsey.¹⁷³ Te Meke Ngakuru, otherwise Ngakuru Te Arero, the ‘native policeman’ for the district, objected ‘on behalf of the natives in the vicinity, because it would cause drunkenness’, but his opposition was rejected by the licensing commissioners, one of whom was Taipari.¹⁷⁴ (As an interesting sidelight, Te Meke, who had been appointed earlier in the 1870s,¹⁷⁵ much later informed the land court that he had taken part in the Waikato War,¹⁷⁶ presumably against the Crown.)

OPPOSITION TO PAKEHA INTRUSION

Not all Ngati Rahiri approved of the government or the changes brought by Pakeha. When in 1875 a constable was sent from Mackaytown to the Waikato to collect bedding and other requirements for the Armed Constabulary, he was instructed ‘to proceed in plain clothes, having to pass through and make inquiries at the Native settlement at Omahu ... where

¹⁷² S. Percy Smith to Surveyor General, 13 December 1878, Te Aroha Block, Lands and Survey Department, LS 1/2344, ANZ-W.

¹⁷³ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 March 1878, p. 2 [the European version of his name, August Morgan, was used on the license].

¹⁷⁴ Licensing Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 December 1878, p. 3; see also Licensing Meeting, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 December 1878, p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ As the Native Office records have been destroyed, and the Police Department files are incomplete, the precise date of his appointment cannot be determined. See Armed Constabulary Force, Description Book: List of Native Constables transferred from the Native Department, P 1/81, no. 232; T.W. Lewis (Under-Secretary, Native Office), to Harry Kenrick, 11 January 1881, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Applications 1881, BBAV 11582/1a, ANZ-W; *Thames Advertiser*, 25 October 1880, p. 3.

¹⁷⁶ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 59, p. 372.

uniform might not be acceptable'.¹⁷⁷ Some Ngati Rahiri had opposed making the road to Omahu, although a Pakeha-Maori, Joseph Harris Smallman,¹⁷⁸ who lived a short distance down-river from Te Aroha, named Karauna, not Tutuki, as the principal 'obstructionist'. According to Smallman, when Karauna tried to stop the survey of the road until money was paid, 'Tutuki then came forward, took a flag with his name upon it, and planted it upon the highest point in proximity to the line of road, and proclaimed it open for survey. And in the presence of the tribe, his son and relatives commenced cutting lines'.¹⁷⁹ This was the only account of Tutuki assisting development. In March 1878, 'the heads of the two hapus at Omahu' were said to be 'at loggerheads over the piece of land at the Springs there', where Lipsey was erecting a hotel. 'They each forbid the other from sanctioning the erection of it', Tutuki's hapu claiming Mokena had 'no claim or title to the land'.¹⁸⁰ The quarrel soon became 'warmer. Yesterday a quantity of timber was seen floating down' the river. Brought for the hotel, it had been thrown into the river by one hapu 'in order to show the superiority of their claim over that of the other hapu'.¹⁸¹ No more was heard of this quarrel: Tutuki lost the argument, and the hotel was built. As well, Tutuki was defeated over snagging the river. At the 1880 festivities at Matamata to celebrate the clearing of the snags, Josiah Clifton Firth¹⁸² related the following story:

Our friends (the natives) at first did not thoroughly appreciate the great advantage of freeing a river like the Thames [Waihou] from the obstructions which impeded its natural course. They did not, therefore, at first heartily co-operate with me. But after a great deal of intercourse, after a good deal of what is known in Maori parlance as korero, most of the native difficulties were averted. If you will permit me, I will mention a little of this only to illustrate much of the difficulties with which Europeans have to contend when dealing with the native people. Sometime after my operations were commenced for the second time,

¹⁷⁷ Sub-Inspector Stuart Newall to Major Clare, 15 March 1875, Mackaytown Armed Constabulary Letterbook and General Order Book 1875-1877, BAVA 4895/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁸ See paper on his life.

¹⁷⁹ Letter from J.H. Smallman, *Thames Advertiser*, 9 March 1878, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 March 1878, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 March 1878, p. 2.

¹⁸² See paper on the Battery Company.

in 1878, after the alarm caused by the murder of Timothy Sullivan six years previously had subsided, Firth 'received an epistle from an old chief relating to my removing the stones, rapids, and snags from the river'.

I met him and his people, with some European friends at Omahu. Tutuki¹⁸³ said to me, "You pakehas are always wanting some new thing. It was only the other day that one of your magistrates said to me, 'Give us a road'; now you, Hohaia (Josiah), come to me and say, 'Give us the river'. It seems to me that you will not leave the Maori a bit of land to walk over, or a piece of water in which to sail his canoe. I do not like your new works (assuming an air of dignity which is natural to many of our native race), these snags that you would remove were in the river when I was a boy. They were there when my father was a boy, and when my ancestors were boys. You come now and say, 'Let me take them away'. This river is mine. Your new ways and your new works, I hate them." Having delivered himself in this fashion, he seemed exhausted with his oratorical effort. I saw that he wore a gay coloured shawl. I told him it was a pakeha shawl, and asked him, "Did you wear a shawl like that when you were a boy, or did your father, or did your ancestors when they were boys?" He replied, "No." Then I said to him, that is a new thing, take it off, and throw it into the river, if you will have no new thing. The old gentleman said no more - to use a common phrase, he subsided.¹⁸⁴

Firth was so proud of winning this argument that he wrote a much expanded version in his 1890 book, *Nation Making: A story of New Zealand: Savagism v. civilization*, a title that reflected his interpretation of settlement. In this account, he emphasized that Captain Hayes Henry Tizard,¹⁸⁵ a Pakeha Maori, commanding a Maori crew, did the work.¹⁸⁶ There was no indication that any of the crew came from the district. After clearing obstructions from his Stanley Landing as far as the Waiorongomai Stream, in Ngati Haua land, Firth was informed by Ngati Maru rangatira that he must not clear these through their land. 'I appointed a meeting with them at the Omahu *Pah*, where the principal Chiefs resided'. About 50

¹⁸³ Recorded as Tutekai.

¹⁸⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 March 1880, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ See J[ames] C[owan], 'At the Opal Spring: Old-Timer's Adventurous Days: Digging on the Golden Coast', *Auckland Star*, 21 April 1928, p. 1; *New Zealand Herald*, 16 September 1929, p. 12.

¹⁸⁶ J.C. Firth, *Nation Making: A story of New Zealand: Savagism v. civilization* (London, 1890), pp. 228-229.

Maori faced Firth, his two or three Pakeha companions, and Hori Parengarenga, 'a friendly half caste Ngatihaua Chief'. Those speaking against him were, in sequence, 'a young Chief', 'another Chief', and 'a withered old woman', all of whom insisted that the snags must remain because they had suited their fathers and were useful for catching eels. Then 'Tutuki, an aged Chieftain', brandished his spear at Firth whilst giving a variant of the speech reported in 1880. Firth's 1890 comment was that he 'could not help admiring the fire and passion of the old man, and, if he wished to prevent his nation from dwindling before the face and power of the White man, he was probably right, in desiring to keep the aggressive Englishman out of the river'. Firth's jibe about the shawl, recounted in different words, 'was received with grunts of approval by the elders of the tribe and with hearty laughter by the younger ones'. Firth rebuffed the argument by 'another old Chief' that the river was theirs' by saying that they should fence it in and he would do likewise with his portion. Then 'one of the young Chiefs' and 'three or four young fellows' told him to ignore the old men, who did not 'understand new things and new ways', and asked for £50 for clearing the river. Firth agreed, placed £5 on the mat as a deposit, and promised to pay the remainder when the work was completed. An hour's argument ensued about whether he should pay £50 immediately:

I would not consent, for I knew well the consequence of doing so, without a guarantee of good faith, not of those present, which would have been right enough, but of that of absent Chiefs, who I knew would say that they did not receive any of the money, and had not consented.

It was now late in the day, and I had a long distance to ride, so, stepping again into the middle of the square, where the five pounds lay, I took them up, saying as I did so,

"This river with its five golden eyes has looked at you long enough. You will see them no more."

And drawing on my glove, by way of avoiding as much as possible, the evil taint of stinking shark and putrid maize, which, though apparently relished by Maories, is not particularly agreeable to Europeans, I shook hands with all the principal people, and departed.

Several young Chiefs accompanied me to the river, urging me to give fifty pounds, and it would be all right. I refused, and accompanied by my friend Hori Parengarenga, we crossed the river to the place where our horses were tied.

Before mounting, I said to Hori, "Return to the *Pah* and wait there. When they find they have lost the fifty pounds, they will talk the whole matter over again, and the result will probably be,

that all the Chiefs will agree. If they do so, you will suggest that they write a letter to me, to be signed by all the Chiefs interested agreeing to my proposal. Should they do that, take two of the Chiefs with you to Matamata, and I will instruct my son to pay the money to them”....

As I expected, after some hours’ talk, they consented, wrote the letter, got the signatures of the Chiefs interested; [and] in a day or so, went to Matamata and received the money.

After this, I had no further trouble with the Ngatimaru tribe, and the work of clearing the river went on as before.¹⁸⁷

Firth exaggerated in implying there was no further trouble. In March 1882, John Bryce, then Native Minister, visited Thames partly to arrange for snagging the river below Te Aroha, near the Ngati Hako settlement. When he met representatives of all the Hauraki tribes, ‘Reha Aperahama said certain logs had been kept there as lodgment for eels, and he asked that these should continue where they were’.¹⁸⁸ At a subsequent meeting at Ohinemuri, Bryce stated that, as there was conflict over payment for eel weirs, these would be moved to one side and not destroyed.¹⁸⁹ The Paeroa newspaper supported Bryce’s assumption and Firth’s experience that Maori were not so much opposed to snagging as seeking payment for permitting it.¹⁹⁰

FEARING ATTACK BY MAORI

In August 1879 the attitudes of some Ngati Rahiri to Pakeha were highlighted by their response to news of the wounding near Paeroa of ‘Daldy’ McWilliams.¹⁹¹

The natives of the Aroha district are much annoyed at the outrage. A large and influential meeting of the Maoris and Europeans living at and about Omahu was held at that settlement on Sunday afternoon, and a resolution ... arrived at:- “We have heard of the pakeha that has been shot, and are exceedingly dark about it. On the 31st August (Sunday) a meeting of the Maories and pakehas was held here, in order to lay down

¹⁸⁷ Firth, pp. 232-239.

¹⁸⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 March 1882, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 March 1882, p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ *Hauraki Tribune*, n.d., cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 10 April 1882, p. 3.

¹⁹¹ See paper on this ‘outrage’.

rules for our guidance and protection, so that neither we nor our pakehas might be killed, because they (the Ngatihakos) are Hauhaus, whilst we think that the law of the Queen is a good law; and secondly, that after six o'clock at night neither Maori or European shall walk about."¹⁹²

'Our pakehas' were the shopkeepers, farmers, and Pakeha Maori living in the Aroha, Waihou and Waitoa districts, some of whom, 'very uneasy' after hearing of the 'outrage', petitioning the Armed Constabulary at Paeroa to provide them with arms and ammunition

to enable them to protect themselves, wives, and children, no action apparently being taken by the government to that end. We desire to offer our services, if required, to assist in the capture of the offenders, and would further urge on the authorities the advisability of immediate action being taken in that direction.¹⁹³

As the government, wishing to avoid conflict, did not attempt to arrest McWilliams' assailants at this time, a policy that George Stewart O'Halloran,¹⁹⁴ the Te Aroha correspondent of the *Thames Advertiser*, felt to be unwise:

I do not pretend to be a fire-eater myself, but nevertheless I cannot help feeling ashamed when the natives ask me the news as to whether or not the government have arrested the Ngatihako Maoris for the attempted murder, and when I am driven to confess that they have not, a contemptuous smile illuminates their swarthy countenances.

Pakeha wanted an Armed Constabulary force located at Te Aroha to provide more protection than that 'signified by a badly paid Maori policeman'.¹⁹⁵ Five days later, O'Halloran again worried about local attitudes: 'People on the spot cannot help seeing and noticing the difference in the demeanour of some of the natives. No doubt, on the other hand, there are many loyal and well disposed natives in the district'. Some settlers had

¹⁹² *Thames Advertiser*, 2 September 1879, p. 3.

¹⁹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 September 1879, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ See paper on his life.

¹⁹⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 29 September 1879, p. 3.

acquired arms and ammunition from the Thames Volunteers, feeling that they were living ‘in the power of hostile natives’.¹⁹⁶

MAORI AND PAKEHA IN THE LATE 1870s

Contact between Maori and Pakeha increased markedly at the end of the 1870s, encouraged not only by O’Halloran and Lipsey¹⁹⁷ but also by most rangatira. The removal of snags meant that more men visited to shoot birds in the swamps.¹⁹⁸ In April 1879, when many Thames people travelled via Omahu to the Easter Review of Volunteers in Hamilton, Aihe Pepene, ‘the chief of Omahu’, promised there would be ‘no scarcity of horses’.¹⁹⁹ For those not wishing to travel so far, ‘a pigeon match’ was arranged for Easter Monday, when ‘crack shots and excursionists’ would arrive from Thames.²⁰⁰

When it was decided to make a road to Te Kawana landing, the owners of the latter, brothers Aihe Pepene and Reha Aperahama, anticipating financial rewards, encouraged its making and offered a site for a store.²⁰¹ By 1880, there was a weekly steamer service from Paeroa to Omahu.²⁰² Increasing numbers of Pakeha settling or visiting led to more socializing, as in May 1880. ‘A number of settlers and natives gathered at Waihou to play a match at football, but the intention to play Europeans against Natives was abandoned, and mixed sides were picked’. Rewi Mokena²⁰³ captained one team and surveyor George Henry Arthur Purchas²⁰⁴ the other. ‘The play on both sides was very good, although several players were new to the game, and unacquainted with the Rugby rules which were adopted’. When the opposition looked like winning, Rewi ‘called on his men, who went to work with renewed vigour’, and won by six points to one, all those scoring being Pakeha.

¹⁹⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 October 1879, p. 3.

¹⁹⁷ See papers on their lives.

¹⁹⁸ See, for example, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 July 1878, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 April 1879, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 April 1879, p. 3.

²⁰¹ See papers on their lives.

²⁰² *Thames Star*, 11 February 1880, p. 2.

²⁰³ See paper on his life.

²⁰⁴ See paper on Maori land in Hauraki.

The natives were highly delighted with the afternoon's amusement, and in great glee that the side of which [Davie] Morgan [Rewi Mokena] was captain had obtained so decisive a victory. Amongst the players and spectators, of whom there were a large number both Europeans and natives, were representatives of all the Hauraki *hapus*, showing that the utmost friendly feeling exists between the settlers and the natives in this district.²⁰⁵

Another example of 'friendly feeling' was that a Pakeha woman named Abbott was 'living with the natives at the pah'.²⁰⁶

MONEY PROBLEMS

Although Maori were often regarded by Pakeha as lazy and feckless, in early 1880 it was reported that they were 'busy gum-digging, making roads to the field, etc, and a large quantity of kauri gum will soon be to hand'.²⁰⁷ A month later, another report stated that 'a rich gumfield' had been 'discovered at the back of the Aroha Mountain within the last few days, and thither all the natives of the vicinity have gone'. As the gum was on their land, only Maori were permitted to dig.²⁰⁸ Digging continued during the year,²⁰⁹ but there was no indication that much money was made from this small gumfield.

Much of the money acquired by selling land resulted in lavish displays of tribal pride. For example, when Marea Purewa, Te Karauna Hou's wife, died in 1875, more than 250 Maori from Thames and Ohinemuri attended her tangi at Thames. An observer noted that 'a great deal of food' was consumed'; four bullocks were roasted on one day.²¹⁰ The next year, at Karauna's settlement at Kaitawa, near Thames, a massive feast was held:

The row of food was 89 yards long, one end of the row being 13ft high, and the other being 17ft. There were 3,668 kits of potatoes, 300 kits of mohimohi (small fish), 39 kits of dried mussels, 25 bullocks (alive), 28 pigs (dead), 5 horses, 6 native mats, 1 greenstone mere, 4 guns.... Karauna's people took pride to

²⁰⁵ Waitoa Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 27 May 1880, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1880, p. 3.

²⁰⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 February 1880, p. 3.

²⁰⁸ *Waikato Times*, 20 March 1880, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 April 1880, p. 3.

²¹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 September 1875, p. 2.

themselves from the fact that all they presented was the work of their own hands, the product of their own industry. They boasted that they had not to pay money for any of their presents. The food was grown by themselves, the fish caught by themselves, and the bullocks, horses, mats &c, were their own property.... The mats were the great centre of attraction to the European onlookers, as well as to the natives themselves, not only on account of their value, but to enhance the latter the generous donors had fairly lined them on the outside with Bank of New Zealand £1 notes. To one of the mats 100 of these attractive notes were attached, and there were 50 attached to each of the others.²¹¹

This occasion was exceptional because the tribe had neither spent money nor sold land, but such displays could not continue; this was the last report of such a feast being provided by Ngati Rahiri. Similar behaviour did continue, though on a more modest scale.²¹² In July 1880, before the goldrush eased the immediate financial needs of some Ngati Rahiri, one resident wrote, disapprovingly, that ‘the migratory birds, the Maoris, are off the Cambridge to a feast. They seem to me to fill up their time pretty well in feasting. A death, a marriage, a visit from distant relatives, a lands court, etc, all mean feasting. What will become of them when the loaves are all eaten?’²¹³ Smallman wrote from the same perspective about government attempts in 1877 to purchase the block: Maori were, ‘like ourselves, too fond of money to refuse it; present time with them is everything, the future they care very little for’.²¹⁴

Some of the expensive ways of the Pakeha were now preferred to the old, inexpensive, ways, such as using steamers instead of canoes.²¹⁵ The steamer ‘Riro Riro’, captained by Aihe Pepene, owned by himself, Karauna, Hohepa, and others of the tribe in the late 1870s, had to be sold in 1881 because of Pepene’s indebtedness.²¹⁶ A preference for Pakeha food was revealed when a boat returning to Te Aroha from a tangi at Thames sank after hitting a snag; £10-worth of flour, sugar, tea, biscuits, and other food

²¹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1876, p. 3.

²¹² For assessments of why Maori behaved in this way, see paper on Maori and goldfields revenue.

²¹³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 July 1880, p. 3.

²¹⁴ Letter from J.H. Smallman, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 December 1877, p. 5.

²¹⁵ For instance, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 January 1876, p. 3, 22 July 1879, p. 2.

²¹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 December 1879, p. 3, *Thames Advertiser*, 26 March 1881, p. 3.

was lost.²¹⁷ Horse racing became popular amongst Maori, but horses were expensive: for instance, in 1878, Venus, the winner of the Flying Stakes and the Hurdle race at Tararu', was sold 'to Aperahama and several other Te Aroha natives' for £80.²¹⁸

In 1878, the Aroha Block was sold to the Crown for £14,389 8s 3d,²¹⁹ much of which would have gone to meet debts. Pakeha immediately profited from the sale. Before the court hearing in June, Maori from Te Aroha arrived in Shortland, where 'a number of buildings' had been 'rented for offices, and for native quarters, as well as for business purposes, in anticipation of the influx of Maoris, and the expenditure of considerable sums of money paid over to the owners'.²²⁰ After Mackay met with them, he informing the Minister that they were 'willing to let the land be inalienable but in their present frame of mind they will not be brought into any great scheme for the proper management of the estate', but hoped that, eventually, they would realize the benefits of the latter.²²¹ Accordingly, the Minister decreed that their reserves should be inalienable except with the consent of the Governor: 'I would like to see them obtain the fullest benefit possible from their interest in the property'. The reserve at Te Aroha would be a good site for a township, and 'by a judicious admixture of freehold and leasehold of the town, suburban, and rural lots, it might be made the source of great permanent value to the Native owners'.²²²

Some Ngati Rahiri had a reputation for drunkenness.²²³ At the tangi for Marea Purewa, 'several of the young sparks drowned their sorrows too deeply in the "flowing bowl," and for this unseemly conduct a drum-head court-martial was held, and the delinquents fined in the sum of 2s 6d each, which will also probably be spent in drink'.²²⁴ At another tangi held at Thames, 'amongst the good things provided for the mourners were some casks of beer, the contents being carried away wholesale in billies and other

²¹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 July 1879, p. 3.

²¹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 December 1878, p. 3.

²¹⁹ *AJHR*, 1878, G-4, p. 10; *Thames Advertiser*, 24 July 1878, p. 2, 14 August 1878, p. 3.

²²⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 June 1878, p. 3.

²²¹ James Mackay to John Sheehan, 10 July 1878, Maori Affairs Department, Te Aroha Block, MLP 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

²²² John Sheehan to J.W. Preece, 6 August 1878, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

²²³ See, for example, paper on Karauna Hou.

²²⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 September 1875, p. 2.

utensils. Partly owing to that, and the money paid on account of the Aroha block, several natives got on the “spree”’.²²⁵ Cases of ‘liquor’ were taken to Te Aroha in Aihe Pepene’s steamer, one shipment being worth £18 11s.²²⁶ In 1923, William Moon, who had farmed near Te Aroha since the late 1870s and had a Maori wife,²²⁷ described the making of a road to the river across two and a half miles ‘of swamp absolutely impassable for either horses or cattle’:

We then had no road board formed so in the first place applied to the Government for assistance. Quite hopeless. Old Karauna of Ngatimaru and his people had erected a pah at Omahu ... and they objected to the opening up of the country and to Steamers running up and down the Waihou river. Major George then asked me if I would undertake to make the road in spite of the native objections.... Went to the Thames and engaged about twenty good men and filled two large canoes with flour, sugar, tools and stores of all kinds. As I was leaving the Thames Mr [Louis] Ehrenfried [a brewer]²²⁸ ... sent a man with a ten gallon keg of 30% rum which he put in one of the canoes. My men and one of the canoes got up all right [but] the other canoe was impounded at Omahu. However we made a good start on the job. When stores began to run short I went to Omahu to interview Karauna, leaving instructions with the foreman of the party, that if any natives interfered with them in my absence to drop them into the ten foot outlet drain and to let the water on to them. It only required a few strokes of a pick to do the trick. My instructions appear to have been carried out and some of the native objectors got wet. About 2 p.m. Karauna who was a fine big man came to me growling furiously and accused me of having murdered his children. He had a bunch of keys in one hand and a big pannikin in the other. He opened the storehouse in which my goods were stored and told me to tap the keg of rum as his heart was very sore at the murder of his children. I did as he requested and a liberal libation had a soothing effect upon him and I was enabled to rescue my goods and finish the road.²²⁹

²²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 August 1878, p. 2.

²²⁶ Magistrate’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 29 June 1878, p. 3.

²²⁷ See Death Certificate of William Moon, 1924/9079, BDM; ‘A Trip from Hamilton through Piako to the Thames Valley and Back Again’, *Waikato Times*, 27 February 1877, p. 2.

²²⁸ See paper on Harry Kenrick.

²²⁹ William Moon, unpublished memoirs (1923), pp. 28-30, MS 551, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

Because most of the money received from selling land was soon spent, many Ngati Rahiri were forced to seek paid work. Gum digging and road making were popular, and there were other labouring jobs on farms or in the bush; and the discovery of gold at Te Aroha created other opportunities to make money.²³⁰

SOME OLD WAYS CONTINUE

Despite their apparent adoption of Christianity, at least some Ngati Rahiri retained some old beliefs. When Hoterene Taipari, father of Wirope Hoterene Taipari, was aged 80, was told by his doctor that there was no hope of his recovering from an illness. 'His friends then resolved to try and work a cure in their own way, and a Maori wizard named Tupara was sent for from Te Aroha'. Despite 'the reading of lengthy prayers for his recovery', Hoterene died.²³¹ Three or four years later, a man named Pita was brought by Ngati Tumutumu 'as a medicine man to cure the sick', but he settled at Puriri, not at Te Aroha.²³²

CONCLUSION

Maori at Te Aroha were quick to adapt to the inevitable intrusion of Pakeha, although some only reluctantly accepted their impact. Pakeha were welcomed as visitors, and the early settlers were accepted, although some Pakeha felt insecure, being as they saw it on the frontier of civilization and threatened by Hauhau. Most Ngati Rahiri were 'friendly', to use the contemporary term, and ready to adopt the benefits of the new cash economy. For many of them, however, the changes would bring loss of land and economic and social marginalization.

Appendix

Figure 1: Lawrence Cussen, Plan of Block IX Aroha District, June 1879, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/520, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand

²³⁰ See paper on Maori in Te Aroha after the opening of the goldfield.

²³¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 March 1880, p. 3.

²³² Evidence of Ranapia Mokena, 3 July 1890: Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, p. 64.

The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

Figure 2: The Te Aroha District, 1880, mapped by Max Oulton, University of Waikato, and published in Waitangi Tribunal, *The Hauraki Report: Wai 686* (Wellington, 2006), vol. 3, p. 902; used with permission.

Figure 3: George Wilson, 'Native Names of Creeks at Te Aroha', 24 November 1880, Mines Department, MD 1, 12/353, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua o te Kawanatanga, Auckland Regional Office]; used with permission.

Figure 4: Thomas Spencer, Omaha pa residents and visitors, 1877, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission. Reproduced in *New Zealand Gazette*, 1 April 1905, p. 34, as 'A Souvenir of Bygone Days: Photograph of a Picnic Party which went up to Te Aroha [from Thames] in Mr Thomas Spencer's launch Memsahib in 1877, before the Goldfields Rush'; the Pakeha in the photograph are named, the Maori are not.

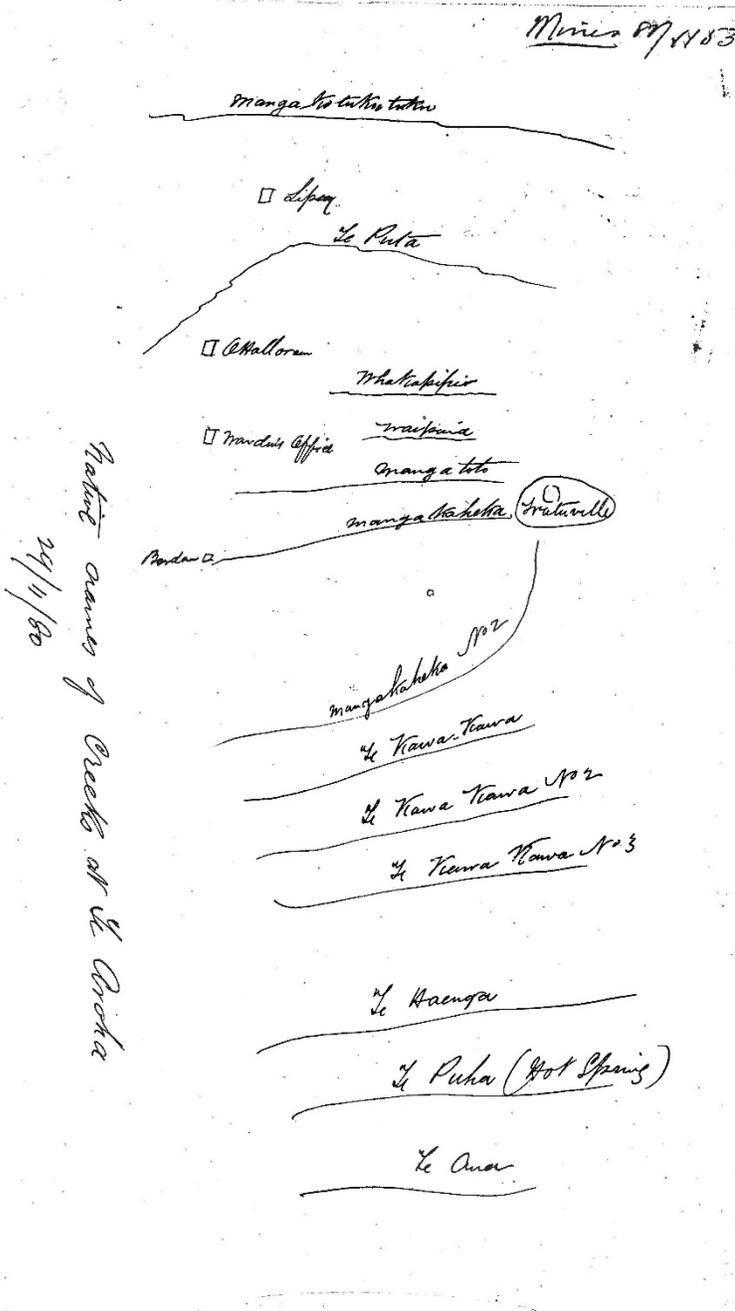


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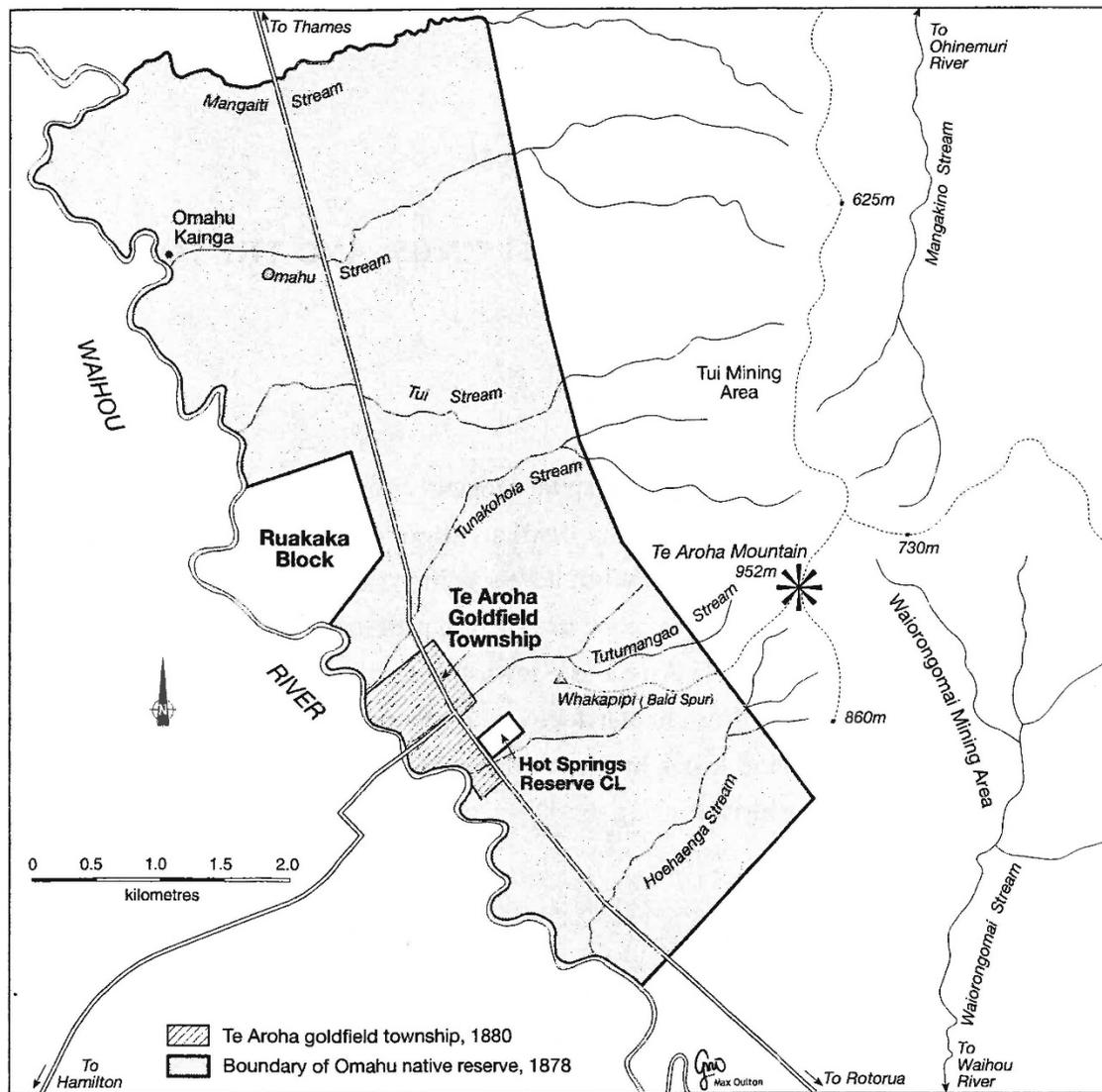


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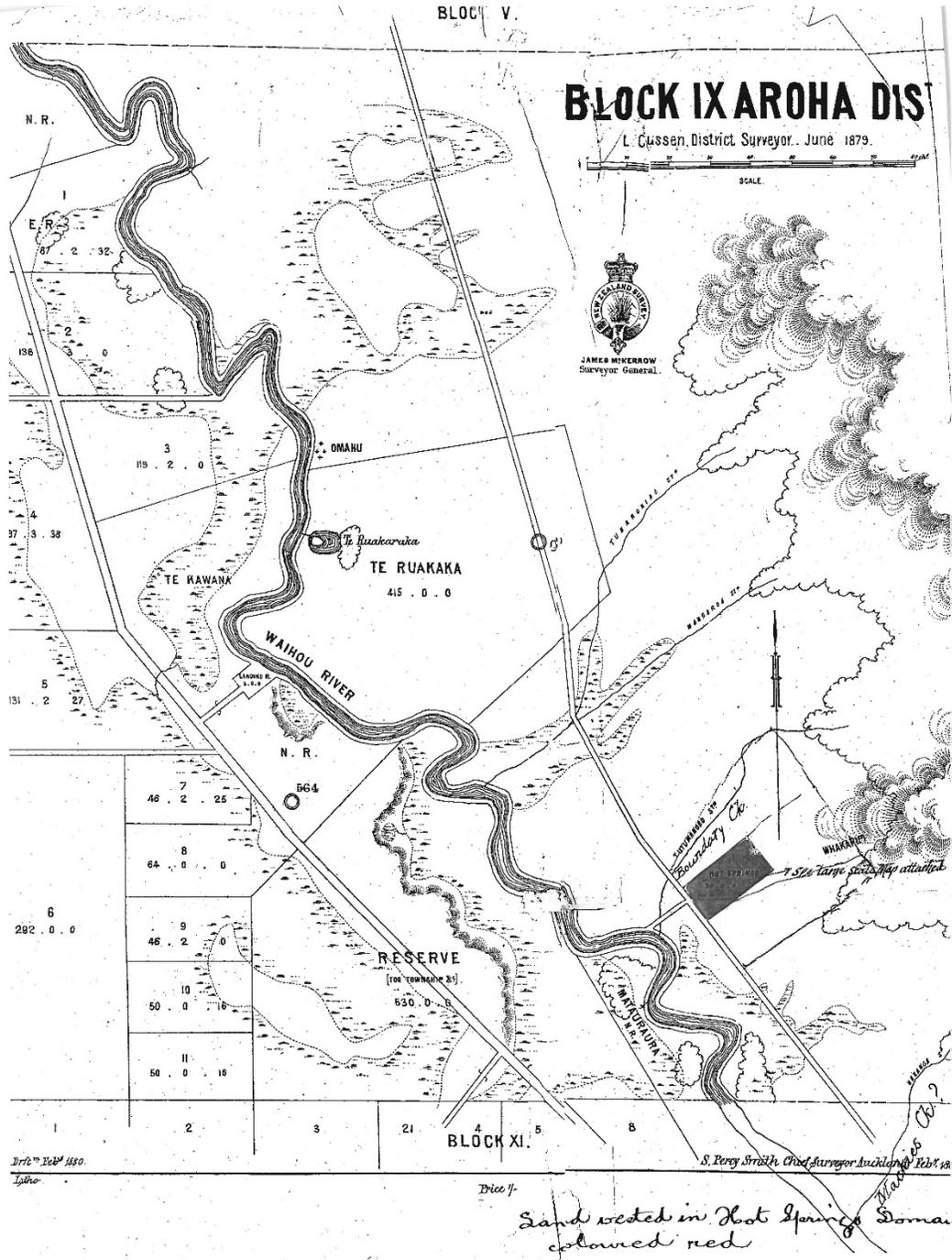


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Figure 4: Two dwellings at Omahu pa, with visitors from Thames, 1877, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.