

Kaitoke Regional Park History
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B. HISTORICAL

There is comparatively little evidence regarding the specific use of the land within the Pakuratahi Block. However, in pre-European times the Whakataka Pa belonging to the Ngati Ira people was located at Te Marua just south of the Park's boundaries on a hill overlooking where the Mangaroa Stream joins the Heretaunga (Hutt) River.¹ It is also said that in pre-European times, the Hutt River was navigable as far as Pakuratahi and that Maori used it frequently to travel up and down by canoe.² Furthermore, Maori tracks from Wairarapa into Heretaunga crossed through the Pakuratahi Flats. The name Kaitoke has been interpreted as referring to the eating of worms and is said to relate to a time when Maori from the Maoribank area made camp in the district during a journey across the Rimutakas but could find nothing to eat other than worms.³

Early in the nineteenth century, the occupation of Te Whanganui a Tara was to change dramatically. Following military excursions in 1819 and 1821, during which the Whakataka Pa was sacked, a series of migrations to Te Whanganui a Tara came from Kawhia and Taranaki. These began in the early 1820s and continued for a number of years bringing groups such as Ngati Toa, Ngati Mutunga, Ngati Tama, Te Atiawa, Ngati Raukawa and several others to different places around the Wellington district. During the nineteenth century, a pa was maintained at Maoribank and so nearby Maori occupation persisted generally in the area.

(a) The Transfer from Maori Ownership

Entries for other Regional Parks have fully described the processes through which Wellington and Hutt Valley land was transferred from local Maori to the ownership of the New Zealand Company and then the Crown. This involved a long complex process that extended from 1839 to 1850. A brief summary of that process will be given below to show where the land which is included in the Kaitoke Regional Park fits into this history.

¹ Kelleher, John Arnold. *Upper Hutt: the history*, Picton, Cape Catley, c.1991, p.16

² Brown, James. "Reminiscences of a Pioneer Settler", *Journal of Early Settlers & Historical Association of Wellington*, No.3 Feb 1923, p.14

³ Kelleher, John Arnold. [draft of] "Upper Hutt: the history" National Library 993.14 KEL 1971, pp.88

In 1839, the New Zealand Company arrived in Wellington with plans of establishing a colony. A scheme to establish the town of Port Nicholson had been set out in a prospectus launched on 2 May 1839. Amid rumours that the British Government would soon intervene in New Zealand to seek sovereignty over the islands, the Company fitted out a ship named the *Tory* and their officials voyaged to New Zealand to buy land for their colonisation scheme. On 20 September 1839, the *Tory* sailed into Te Whanganui a Tara.⁴

The arrival at Te Whanganui a Tara of New Zealand Company officials on the *Tory* was soon followed by negotiations with local Maori to acquire land for settlement. On 27 September 1839, the Port Nicholson Deed was signed with Te Puni and others from Pito-one being involved in this land transaction. At this time, most of the Kaitoke Regional Park was within the boundaries identified by the purchase deed. There were numerous difficulties with this attempt to purchase land, however. The deed was in English, the interpreter had only a basic grasp of te reo, the boundaries were so poorly recorded that they remain difficult to map, no plan of the land transaction was available during the negotiations and certain key groups of Wellington Maori did not sign. Later deeds signed with Ngati Toa chiefs on 25 October and with Te Atiawa at Queen Charlotte Sounds on 8 November had the same problems.⁵

Soon after the Company's arrival, Crown officials landed in New Zealand and, on 6 February 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi was signed. One of the first actions of the new Government was to set up a Commission of Inquiry to generally inquire into all the many hundreds of land transactions between Europeans and Maori that had allegedly occurred prior to 1840. If these were found to be valid, then they would be ratified by the Crown and a title awarded. During the hearings into the New Zealand Company's transactions for the Wellington district, the problems with the Company's purchase emerged. The Commissioner, William Spain, having heard this testimony, expressed his view in a preliminary report of 12 September 1843, that there were serious difficulties in the way of seeing the New Zealand Company's 1839 land transactions as being valid. Despite these findings, a major difficulty existed. On 21 January 1840, the first

⁴ Ibid, pp.45-8

⁵ Information on which this subsection is based has come from Waitangi Tribunal *Te Whanganui a Tara me ona takiwa*.

ships carrying the first Company migrants had arrived in Wellington and since then hundreds of colonists had settled in the town and countryside on the harbour's southern shores. Any finding that the Company's claims had no validity would have major ramifications for these settlers.⁶

With Commissioner Spain reaching a view that this purchase did indeed have problems a compromise was sought which entailed getting the various groups of Port Nicholson Maori to sign 'deed of release' giving up all their interests in Wellington, for a further payment and the granting of reserves. Recent evaluations of this arbitration process, which took place in February and March 1844, have found that it proceeded in a coercive manner.⁷ However, following the completion of the arbitration process, Commissioner Spain issued his final report for the Port Nicholson claim in March 1845 recommending that the Company receive a Crown Grant for 71,900 acres of land which effectively equated with the sections that had been surveyed for settlement up to that time. This Grant was issued by Governor FitzRoy in July 1845. It appears that at this time there were no surveyed sections within the area of land now known as the Kaitoke Regional Park, therefore this land was not initially considered as included in the Grant to the New Zealand Company.

Before FitzRoy's Grant could be accepted as having validity, further concessions of land had to be awarded to various groups of Wellington Maori who were losing important cultivation lands as a result of the Grant having been made. By 1847 a series of land exchanges were made following which a new Crown Grant was drawn up by Governor Grey and awarded to the New Zealand Company. However, rather than being based on the Company's surveyed land, as recommended by William Spain in 1844, Grey's grant covered the whole of the original block claimed by the New Zealand Company. Therefore, instead of receiving almost 70,000 acres as Spain had recommended after investigating the Company's claim and determining that this was the extent of land that had been paid for, the Company was granted all 209,247 acres of their original claim. This extended Grant included much of the hill lands around Wellington. When the New Zealand Company collapsed from financial ruin in 1850, that land became Crown land.⁸

Wellington: Waitangi Tribunal, 2003, pp.52-59

⁶ Waitangi Tribunal, *op cit*, pp.60-65 and 199

⁷ *Ibid*, pp.145-179

⁸ *Ibid*, pp.227-278

Within the Kaitoke area, no sections had been surveyed in the initial layout of the settlement. By the issuing of the 1847 Grant, however, a few sections had been surveyed in what is now the lake storage area of the Park. Aside from this, the lands that are currently in the Kaitoke Regional Park and lay east of the Hutt River, which is most of the Park's lands, went into Company and then Crown ownership through the extended award given by the 1847 Grant. The exact process of what became of this part of the Kaitoke land after it became Crown land has not been fully researched. If it passed into private hands, there has been little record of how the land was used.

As for the remainder of the Park land which lies to the west of the Hutt River, this was presumably included either as part of the 1848 Kapiti land transaction between Ngati Toa and the Crown or as part of sales that took place along the Kapiti Coast before 1860.

(b) Early European Explorations and Settlement

Soon after the arrival of Europeans, the Hutt River that lays within the Kaitoke Regional Park became the focus of exploration. The New Zealand Company naturalist Ernest Dieffenbach, seeking to cross the Tararua Mountains and find a way back into the Manawatu Valley, decided to follow the course of the Heretaunga (Hutt) River. He set off with a company of Europeans on 30 July 1840. From his description, it appears that he reached the part of the River now included within the Regional Park on 4 August. At this time, Dieffenbach noted that supplies were "rapidly decreasing." Over the course of the day, the exploring party crossed the river back and forth a total of sixteen times. At one point, Dieffenbach records "the river is shut in by elevated banks" – possibly a description of the Hutt Gorge. In the afternoon, the group reached what appears to be Pakuratahi Forks. On 5 August, there were heavy showers of rain, hail and snow. The river became swollen and could not be crossed. So Dieffenbach's group stayed put for a day. On 6 August, the explorers took the left branch of the fork but found that they could not proceed far as the hills again came down close to the water's edge. Dieffenbach therefore ascended the hills to obtain a view of their location but found that having reached the summit, trees obscured their view in every direction. When a tree was climbed, a view of the snow-covered hills of the

Tararuas was seen, inspiring the group to continue onwards in their quest. For the moment, however, they remained stuck at the forks as the river was still deep and rapid and several of the group could not swim. During the night of 7 August, however, the river level quickly dropped and on the following day the party headed along the eastern fork, which would be the Pakuratahi River. Dieffenbach describes the plateau flats surrounding the river as being covered in tawai and rimu. During the course of the day, the party left the boundaries of the Regional Park following the river into what is now the Pakuratahi Forest Block. Further exploits of their journey are covered in the Pakuratahi Resource Statement.⁹



Upper Hutt River, near junction of the Mangaroa River, 1886.

Barraud, Charles Decimus 1822-1897 : Alexander Turnbull Library. C-007-006

⁹ Dieffenbach, Ernest *Travels in New Zealand*, London, John Murray, 1843, pp.82-3

The area around Kaitoke, with its steep forest-clad hills, was not really a site of intensive early settlement for European colonists. However, at some time in the late 1850s, the Benge family established a sawmill in the vicinity of the Kaitoke Park. Benge had come to Wellington in 1841 and lived in the area around Taita. In 1857 he moved north into Upper Hutt buying an existing sawmill located at the Te Marua junction of the Mangaroa River at the present intersection of State Highway 2 and Plateau Rd. The sawmill was water powered.¹⁰ Possibly by the 1860s, however, the Benge had established a pit sawmill just within the boundaries of the present day Regional Park. Archaeological evidence of waterways constructed to remove waste has been located. In addition, the family built a two-storeyed homestead within the Park boundaries close to where the state highway passes. In addition to the sawmill, the family farmed on this location also. This area remained a site of family occupation for many years. Although the original homestead was burnt down, it was rebuilt by David Benge and remained there until 1930 when the homestead was replaced by a cottage which stood on the site until the 1970s.

In the late 1920s and mid 1930s, large fires are recorded in the Kaitoke area which destroyed parts of the native forest. In addition, however, there is also evidence of tree felling within the Park boundaries. The Maymorn Timber Company operated a sawmill in the vicinity through until the late 1930s. The tramway through the Park used by the company to drag logs from the Hutt Gorge to its mill can still be discerned. Another tramway stretches into the hills from the Te Marua end of the Park, but its exact history is not known.

(c) Kaitoke and Wellington's Water Supply

Early nineteenth century efforts to provide a water supply for Wellingtonians focused on Karori and then Wainuiomata. [See Resource entry for the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area] The potential of the Hutt River for usage began to be ascertained from the turn of the century when measurements of volume and flow were recorded within the context of possibilities of harnessing energy for electricity production. Although by 1915, a decision had been made that a hydro-electricity scheme on the Hutt River would not proceed, by 1919 a report on Wellington's

¹⁰ Kelleher, op cit, pp.57 and 60-2

water supply flagged the potential of the Hutt River for future development once the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo catchment had been developed to full capacity.

In 1927, amidst ongoing discussions over ensuring a permanent water supply for Wellington, the Wellington City and Suburban Water Supply Board was established. Catchment areas identified for the Board included the land currently within the Kaitoke Regional Park. Although the land to the west of the Hutt River was in private hands, being part of the Maymorn estate, the rest was held by the State Forest Service who vested the catchment land in the new Board.

A major report by the Wellington City Engineer in 1929 concluded that of all the potential possibilities for water supplies, the Hutt River provided the most cost effective district-wide scheme. It was estimated that £1 million was required.¹¹ Despite this recommendation, the Petone and Lower Hutt local authorities chose not to go ahead with the scheme choosing to further develop their artesian water supplies. In the face of losing this support and increasing water shortages, Wellington City also opted in the short term to develop artesian supplies. The artesian improvement scheme was completed in 1935.¹²



¹¹ Wellington Regional Council, *History of Water Supply in the Wellington Regional 1872-1985*, Wgtn, Spectro Print Ltd, c.1985, pp.19-20

¹² Hendriksen, E.E. "Wellington Metropolitan Water Supply: Hutt River Scheme". *New Zealand Engineering*: 11 (1), 1956 pp-2-15, found as WRC PAM 628.109936 HEN

Nevertheless, the Hutt River Scheme was still a long term plan for water supply. In 1939, 157 acres of land at Kaitoke was acquired as the site for the headworks for the Hutt River Scheme. Although work had been gradually proceeding, it was the intended location of a large scale state housing programme in the Hutt Valley that gave the impetus for the Hutt River Scheme to get underway as the national government became involved and was prepared to put in funding and expertise to expedite the work. From 1946, Ministry of Works labour accounted for 90% of the headworks construction and 75% of the pipe laying operations. Despite the involvement of central government, the post-war situation brought shortages in labour and then in raw material that somewhat slowed down the progress of the Scheme. Furthermore, the Scheme was extended to fulfill the water supply requirements of a number of Wellington district suburbs. Therefore the Hutt River Scheme was not completed until April 1957 at a cost of £3.4 million.



Building the Weir across the Hutt River:

Wellington Regional Council

In its final form, the Scheme had involved building a weir across the Hutt River, within what is now the Kaitoke Regional Park, as an intake. From here the water passed through a tunnel of just under a kilometre to a water treatment plant. The water then entered a 3 km tunnel to take it through to Te Marua where it was piped through to Karori reserve. In all six tunnels, 54 km of main pipelines and 12 km of branch piping was constructed.¹³ The weir is a low concrete gravity dam 40m long and 8m high. The water is piped 56 km down the Hutt Valley, over the Haywards Hill and down the northern motorway to the lower Karori dam. By completion, the water initially supplied Wellington city, its northern suburbs, Upper Hutt and the Porirua Basin. Over time it has been extended to other Wellington and Lower Hutt suburbs.

(d) Further Land Acquisitions

The Maymorn estate was a large block of land that stretched from the Kaitoke area across to the Otaki hills. Discussions by the private owners of selling the estate to interested local bodies began as early as the mid-1920s but nothing eventuated. Then years later, in 1936, the possibility of acquiring the Estate from the English owners again came up. It was found, however, that only 3,000 acres of the land being offered for sale was within the officially designated catchment area. Therefore there was no interest in acquiring the whole block. Furthermore, the price being asked for at the time was considered too high.¹⁴

Nothing further occurred until 1950 by which time the Akatarawa Sawmilling Company had acquired 8,000 acres of the Maymorn estate. Knowing that 3,000 acres had been identified as being within the Hutt water catchment area, the Company offered the land to the Water Supply Board.¹⁵ The offer was accepted and the land vested in the Wellington City Corporation on 20 November 1951.¹⁶ Part of this land is now within the Kaitoki Regional Park. As part of the deal, the Company was paid cash but was also given the right to cut in the Deadwood (1,776 acres) and Putaputa (826

¹³ Wellington Regional Council, op cit, pp.19-20

¹⁴ 12 Mar 1936, *The Dominion*, WCC File 00001:1751:52/6 pt.1

¹⁵ WCC File 00001:1751:52/6 pt.1

¹⁶ WCC File 00001:1751:52/6 pt.2

acres) blocks. The Deadwood block is located in the Akatarawa Forest Block. The Putaputa Block, which is located within the Kaitoki Regional Park, had been unlawfully cut over in 1952 and little timber was left. Nevertheless, milling continued. A decade later, the only millable trees were situated in a long inaccessible gully.¹⁷ By the early 1970s, the Akatarawa Sawmilling Company transferred its cutting rights in the Putaputa Creek area to W Crighton and Son Ltd. of Levin. Soon after, the Wellington Regional Water Board revoked these cutting rights and paid compensation to the company that held them.

From the completion of the water supply works in 1957, recreational access and facilities had been prohibited at Kaitoke that were not inconsistent with water supply developments. In the mid-1970s, when the Wellington Regional Planning Authority (successor to the Water Board) published its plan for establishing a network of regional parks, a bush land park at Kaitoke was envisaged centred on land already owned by the Wellington Regional Water Board.

The discussion of establishing the Park led to further land being brought into the Kaitoke Regional Park. A large triangular block of 1155.62 ha lay to the east of the Putaputa Creek and Hutt River. In 1974, the Forest Service had purchased much of this land from a private logging firm to protect what was seen as a sequence of unlogged forest stretching down from the Tararua Forest Park. As part of the arrangement to acquire this land for the Regional Park, an exchange was agreed to which led to part of the Water Board's Estate at Orongorongo being exchanged so as to be included in the Rimutaka Forest Park.

Also at this time, the Wellington Regional Water Board purchased 394.9 ha. from the Maher family. This involved land on the southern side of the Hutt River near its junction with Putaputa Creek.

¹⁷ Ibid