

*Captain of the ancestral Kurahaupo waka - Whatonga discovered and named the great forest Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga 26 generations ago. His descendents the people of Tara-ika (Ngai Tara) and Rangitāne (Rangitāne) have maintained their relationship with the land from the earliest times through to the present.*

This book covers aspects of the history of Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga particularly the area between Opaki/Kopuaranga (north of Masterton) and Pahiatua.

# *Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga*

## *The great domain of Whatonga*

This book is one in a series of four written about the histories and whakapapa of Rangitāne people who have lived in the Wairarapa. The series includes (1) Origins, (2) Tupuna, (3) Ngāti Hāmua and (4) Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga.

These publications have been produced by Rangitāne o Wairarapa with the help of Te Puni Kōkiri.



### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to the Rangitāne advisors - Koro Jim Rimene,  
Mike Kawana, Horipo Rimene, Jason Kerehi,  
Tipene Chrisp and Manahi Paewai.  
Also to Mikis van Geffen from Design Unlimited.

ISBN 978-1-234-56789-7

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Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated 2012



**Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga (The great domain of Whatonga) was a huge forest that stretched from Opaki-Kopuaranga (just north of Masterton) and stopped at Rakautatahi (north of Dannevirke).**

Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga was named by Whatonga, captain of the ancestral canoe Kurahaupō. Whatonga lived 26 generations before the present time (2012). His descendents remain to this day as mana whenua (guardians) although much of the land has been sold.

Rangitāne’s great-great-grandson was Te Hāmua who became the ancestor of a hapū called Ngāti Hāmua. It is the wider network of Hāmua sub-hapū who remain the mana whenua of the land where Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga once stood.

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## Whatonga names Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga

**The Kurahaupō waka landed at Nukutaurua on the Mahia Peninsula after sailing across the Pacific Ocean from the ancestral homeland called Hawaiki.**

The captains of Kurahaupō were Whatonga, Popoto and Ruatea. The descendents of all three chiefs spread to occupy land throughout the lower North Island. Whatonga’s descendents also made it to the top of the South Island of what we now call New Zealand.

Whatonga and his first wife Hotuwaipara decided to live at Te Kauae o Māui (near Cape Kidnappers). He built a house further inland which was named Heretaunga. The wider region where Whatonga settled is today known as the Hawkes Bay although the Māori name for the area is still Heretaunga.

An event saw Whatonga venture further afield on more exploratory journeys. One day he went on a fishing trip. It was a good day with many tāmure (snapper) and other species caught. Amongst the catch was a nohu (rock cod) that had sharp spiny scales. Whatonga brought the fish home and proudly laid them in front of his wife Hotuwaipara. She started to prepare the fish for a meal but cut her finger on the nohu. Being of a very high rank, the

spilling of her blood in this manner impacted upon the mana of Hotuwaipara. She was therefore extremely angry with her husband. Whatonga thought it best to give her space to calm down and so decided to take some time out. The couple’s first son was born soon after and he was named Tara Ika (meaning fish spine) after his mothers’ accident.

Whatonga sailed off on what was to become a trip of discovery and by chance when he met his second wife in Aotearoa, Reretua. He ventured down the Wairarapa coast stopping at Rangiwahaoma (Castlepoint) where he established Matirie pa (where the lighthouse is today), and then to Te Whanganui a Tara (Wellington Harbour) before sailing across to Te Waipounamu (South Island).



The 1876 map shows Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga

Finding no reason to settle in the South Island he returned to the North Island, paddling up the west coast until he came to the Manawatū where he followed a river inland. At Apiti (The Manawatu Gorge) he climbed up a high mountain in front of him.

When he came out onto the eastern side he was amazed to see a great unbroken forest in all directions. This was to become known as Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga – The great domain of Whatonga (or as settlers called it in the 1800s ‘The Seventy Mile Bush’). The forest began at Opaki-Kopuaranga (just north of Masterton) and stopped at Rakautatahi (north of Dannevirke).

Because he had been away from home for a long time he missed his family. As he looked southward he could see the mountain he was on was a part of a range that stretched as far as he could see. Two points in the distance made him think of his wives so he named the mountains Tararua or twin peaks after them. Such was his longing for his family that Whatonga then returned home to Heretaunga.

## What was Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga like?



**It is said that the only people who entered the forest were those that knew it because chances were that if you went in a stranger you would never come back out.**

Ngāti Hāmua moved through Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga for centuries, living in clearings while making use of the abundant resources available in the swamps, waterways and dense forest.

Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga was still intact when Europeans first walked through the forest during the mid 1800s. Then between 1872 and 1900 it was virtually destroyed. Only the 942 hectare Mount Bruce reserve remained as a substantial remnant.

The following selection of extracts have been chosen to illustrate the forests grandeur and Ngāti Hāmua associations

## The people of Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga

**The mana whenua of Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga are the Ngāti Hāmua hapū of Rangitāne.**

There are two modern takiwa (branches) of the Rangitāne iwi involved. These are Rangitāne o Wairarapa and Rangitāne o Tamaki nui a Rua. The Wairarapa branch are in the southern end, the Tamaki nui a Rua branch at the northern end and there is a shared area from Pukaha Mt Bruce to Woodville in the middle.

### Rangitāne people

Over the centuries descendants of illustrious tupuna such as Kahungunu, Tahu-makakanui, Iraturoto and more recently others have married into Rangitāne people. One hundred and seventy years ago Rangitāne were joined by people who originated from Great Britain and Scandinavia.

Since then people from all around the world have come to live in Te Tapere Nui O Whatonga.

The one constant human presence has been the people of Rangitāne.

“Ngāti Hāmua and other hapū in its complex were spread throughout the Wairarapa, although centred east of the Tararua Ranges; from the Manawatū Gorge to Masterton, and eastwards to the coast.” p217

Ballara A, 1991

“The vast area of bush westward to the Ruahine Ranges was about forty miles wide and seventy miles long, and this became the source of the name ‘Seventy-Mile-Bush’. The only access through it was by river or along tracks used for centuries by the Māori people who lived in or passed through the area.” [www.geocities.com/scandannevirke/danesarr.html](http://www.geocities.com/scandannevirke/danesarr.html)

“In a report he stressed the fertility of the soil, the magnificent stands of Matai, Rimu, Tawa and Maire. One Rata was 66 feet in circumference and the trunk of another used by the Māoris [sic] as a sleeping place when travelling would comfortably accommodate eight to ten persons. The bush contained innumerable wild pigs, cattle, even horses while the pigeons perched in the trees like bees.” p259, 1976

Bagnall AG

“So dense was the forest, that even in its clearest patches, the sky was seldom visible with the result that travellers through it would often carry lanterns by which to see their way.” 1985 p6

McCallum A

An 18th century descendent of Ngāti Hāmua called Te Rangiwhakaewa is the specific ancestor through whom the main lines of descent to the land come from. Te Rangiwhakaewa's elder son Parikoau and his descendents occupy the Tamaki nui a Rua end while Tamahau, the younger son and his people are at the Wairarapa end.

The Ngai Tahu o Makanini iwi were known to live in places at the southern end. The Ngāti Moe hapū that is usually associated with Greytown have interests at Makirikiri behind Pukaha Mt Bruce through a 1895 gift of 200 acres due to their relationship with Ngāti Hāmua.

Rangitāne people from the Manawatu and Ngāti Kahungunu from the Hawkes Bay were involved with selling land in Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga during the 1800s. After investigation by the Native Land Court a majority of these sales were found to be illegal although some of the Rangitāne o Manawatu people proved that they had some rights in the area through whakakapapa to the eastern branches of Rangitāne.

## Places in Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga

The rest of the booklet is dedicated to describing the Rangitāne connections to places within Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga. The area concentrated on is between the town of Pahiatua and Mokonui which is better known as the Mauriceville turnoff north of Masterton (double bridges).

## Pahiatua

The town of Pahiatua was built near an old village and cultivation site. This villages' name was Te Pohatu and was named by Te Kurukitangi the wife of Te Whetuki who was the younger son of Rangitaane.

Later the land became associated with the Rangitāne chief Te Raekaumoana and his spiritual guardian called Rongomai. According to a legend Te Raekaumoana was flying on Rongomai (a large eagle creature) in order to seek assistance from his daughter Hinerangi's father n law Te Rangiwhakaewa. They had flown from the Maungarake mountains (west of Carterton) and so Rongomai was tired.

Te Raekaumoana dismounted at the place we now call Konini. Rongomai decided to make the area his home and found a cave to live in. Although the entrance has been covered by a landslide for a long time Te Ana o Rongomai (the sacred cave of Rongomai) is on the hill above the township.



The hill in the background was the home of Rongomai

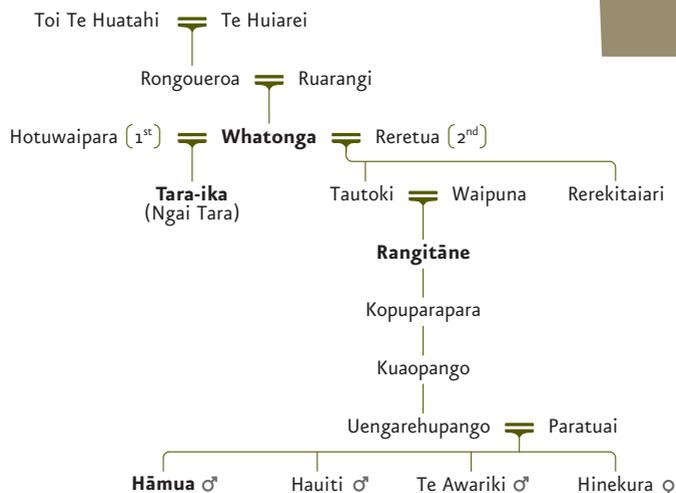
*“The delay in final purchase of this block can perhaps be attributed to the presence of several sacred places and Pa sites within the area. At Konini one of the sacred places was given the name ‘Pahiatua’ which means ‘abode or resting place of the god or spirit’. Whatever reason for his reluctance, Mikaera Te Rangiputara of Tutaekara, a high chief of the Rangitaane tribe, was among several chiefs who would not sell.” p7*

Bentley BJ, 1980

At Pahiatua itself mana whenua of the land call the area Keremutupou which means ‘the water that flows through the buttocks of Rongomai. The Keremutupou stream emerges from a spring in between two hills behind the town. It was the main water supply for tupuna and still flows through Pahiatua today.

*“The new Pahiatua hospital which was expanded in recent years has the name Waireka. The name ‘Waireka’ is in fact a reference to Rongomai and his “sweet running waters”. Wai166 statement of evidence 2004*

MH Gilbert-Palmer



## Tutaekara

Tutaekara kainga was located one kilometre south of the State Highway 2 Mangamaire Road junction. Tutaekara is a shortened version of Te kara o te tu tae maire (the nice smell of the maire juice in the belt). The tu was a belt worn around the waist containing the sweet scented juice of the maire and titoki. [www.eketahunakiwicountry.co.nz](http://www.eketahunakiwicountry.co.nz)

The meeting house at Tutaekara the once busy kainga was called Raupani which means blistered feet. The specific hapū of Tutaekara was called Ngāti Te Kapuarangi, another in the wider Ngāti Hāmua complex. Today the name Te Kapua o Te Rangī has been given to the Kohanga Reo at Pahiatua.



Tutaekara Pa archive photo



Site of Tutaekara 1km south of SH2 junction

## Moroa (Alfredton)

Moroa means a big wide clearing. The area has always been peopled by Whatonga descendants. The Ngāti Pariri hapū of the Horowhenua based Muaupoko iwi were also Ngāti Hāmua and so would return to their original home at Moroa during autumn. Ripe berries, fat birds, pigs and fish kept them going over the winter before returning to the west coast for summer.

Māori hill, Pah Flat farm, Pah Valley Road are well known places at Alfredton. The names are not coincidental because there are a number of pa sites and earthworks in the area.

Interestingly in earlier times kumara was able to be grown in this inland site and the remains of stone walls have been found. These features are normally associated with horticultural activities of early Rangitāne people in coastal areas.

## Te Hawera - Hāmua

The Hawera clearing and kainga was used as a winter residence by Ngāti Hāmua people for centuries. In the early 1900s this place blossomed as the milling industry took hold. The town's name was changed to Hāmua (named by local chief Nireaha Tamaki) as all the mail was wrongfully sent to the Hawera settlement in Taranaki by mistake.

Today the remnants of Hāmua township can be seen on SH2 midway between Eketahuna and Pahiatua. Although only a hall, and converted church are the only visible buildings.

Nireaha was one of the last traditional rangātira having been born in the 1830s and only dying in 1911. He is remembered as being an expert in iwi history, an entrepreneur, land rights advocate and exceptional leader.

The township of Nireaha is named after him and he lived at Te Ore Ore for a time but his main residence was at Hāmua. His marae was called Te Poari (The Board) and the whareniui was Te Mihi ki a te Kuiu.



Nireaha



Te Poari on the hill



Hāmua in 2012, Te Poari used to sit on the hill behind the hall

## Eketahuna

The town of Eketahuna was once a Papakainga or small settlement. The word Eketahuna means to run aground on a sandbank. The name refers to the fact that waka could go no further up the Makakahi (stream of freshwater mussels) stream behind Eketahuna.

There is an old pa site called Otukirihau beyond the northern end of the town.

The following extract comes from an 1853 report from surveyor W Mein Smith to Commissioner of Crown Lands Donald McLean

*“here we found ourselves on the edge of a high bank, the river running below us and we soon emerged from the bush onto a piece of open land nearly square in form, containing from ten to twelve acres covered with fern and koromiko. This place is called Eketahuna...”*

www.mtbruce.org.nz/colenso\_4omilebush.htm retrieved 17 September 2008

## Waiwaka

Waiwaka is south of Eketahuna. A bridge that crosses the Makakahi river has a sign on it with Waiwaka. When travelling south Te Waiwaka was the last Papakainga before moving into Te Kauru, the upper Ruamahanga valley.

The word Waiwaka is a misspelling of Wii Waaka who was a Ngāti Hāmua chief who had cultivations and kainga in the area. He is also recorded as having helped early settlers.

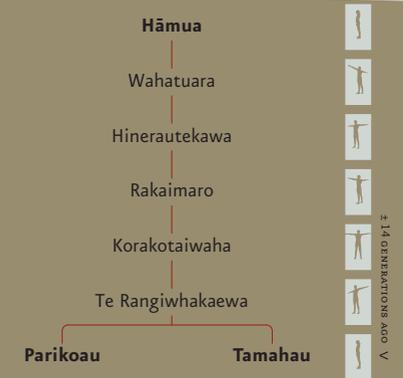
An equally appropriate meaning for the name is Te Waiwaka or wet canoe.

## Ihuraua

The full name of the Ihuraua area is Te tutakitanga o raua ihu (the meeting place of their noses). At one time Ihuraua was a main settlement for Ngāti Hāmua and its resident hapū that were called Ngāti Rangitu and Ngāti Rangi Pirika. Te Hāmua himself was known to have lived at Ihuraua for a while and this was part of Nireaha Tamaki’s inspiration to change the name of the Hawera township to Hāmua.

Ihuraua was a stopping point for people moving north from the Kopuaranga and Whangaehu Valleys towards Moroa or Eketahuna which was to the west.

When the land sale period occurred Ihuraua was one block where crown officials used Ngāti Kahungunu chiefs to sell the land without the knowledge of the Rangitāne owners.



*Hāmua (top) and Rangiwhakaewa (bottom) represented on Nga Tau E Waru whare nui at Te Ore Ore marae Masterton.*

In later Native Land Court hearings the actual owners proved beyond doubt that the land was theirs. In the nearby Puketoi 1 block rangātira Huru Te Hiaro and Hohepa Paewai successfully claimed the land on behalf of 71 Rangitāne people.

*Petitioners pray that a block of land called Ihuraua, which they say was theirs, was sold by the Ngāti Kahungunu without their knowledge. They pray that it may be returned to them.*

(AJHR 1886 1-2: 39 / No.[ 415] Renati, Paehora and others, 11 August 1886.)

## Pukaha

Pukaha Pu = wind, kaha = strong. The mountain Pukaha was once one of many that were used for hunting birds, fishing and gathering berries within Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga. But it was also important as a navigation point when moving northward up the valley. The Māori land referred to in the following quote are the Makirikiri blocks at Hastwell.

*“Today, this forest remnant serves as a poignant reminder of the great forest that once existed. Pukaha Mount Bruce (PMB) is one of only three significant remnants of this dense lowland podocarp forest; and at 700m it stands as a significant landscape feature...”*

*In the 1870s the Crown purchased the greater part of the Seventy-Mile Bush and the bush was subsequently surveyed, sold and cleared. The PMB block (942 hectares) was retained as Forest Reserve; bounded by Māori land across the north-eastern boundaries, and otherwise by farms in private ownership.” pp3-4*

Field D, 2003

The continued relationship is recognized through Rangitāne o Wairarapa being a Partner of the Pukaha Mt Bruce Board.

## Te Kauru and Kotukutuku

The Wairarapa “name” as we know it today only came into use after European settlement, actually after the Hawkes Bay province broke away from Wellington in the 1850s. The south eastern section of Wellington started to be known as Wairarapa. Prior to this Te Kauru which means River Head was used to describe the Upper Ruamahanga valley. The Wairarapa only applied to the valley around Wairarapa Lake (Moana).

Pukaha Mt Bruce and Tawera are the two mountains that mark the northern end of Te Kauru. Travelling north from Masterton Pukaha is on the right (east side) and Tawera on the left (western) side of State Highway 2. The Ruamahanga River comes out of the Tararua Mountains at the foot of Tawera and starts to follow its course southward.



The northern most part of Te Kauru was called Kotukutuku which refers to the area and a papakainga.

There was also a place like a camping ground called ‘Tarewa’ where a track can be seen in the photo to the left.

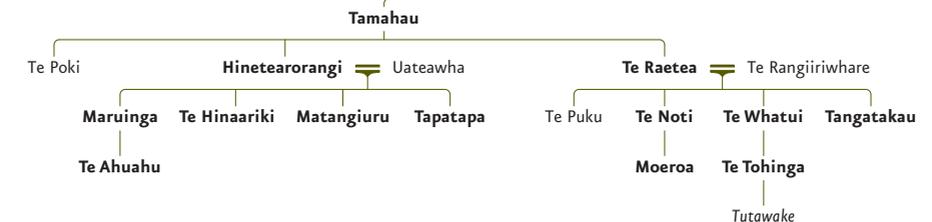
## Te Tirohanga a Hineteaorangi ki te Motu ki a Kapiti

### The lookout of Hineteaorangi as she gazed towards Kapiti

Hineteaorangi was the rangātira daughter of Tamahau, granddaughter of Te Rangiwhakaewa and the sister of Te Raetea. The four of them are famous descendents of Ngāti Hāmua and Rangitāne. Representations of Te Hāmua, Te Rangiwhakaewa, Tamahau, Hineteaorangi, Te Raetea and their spouses are the main carvings on the Nga Tau E Waru whareniui at Te Ore Ore marae, Masterton.

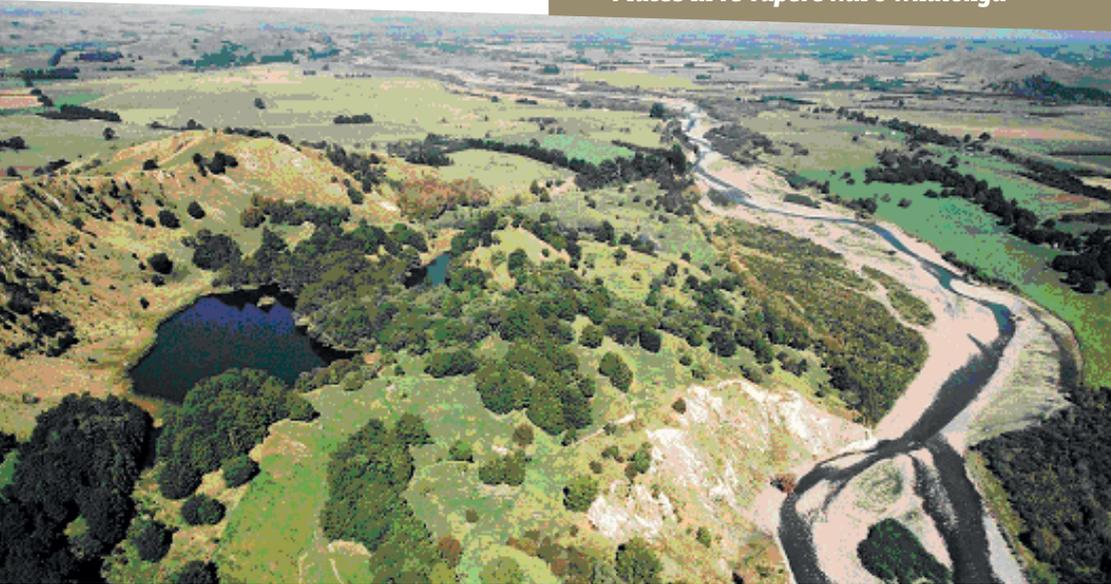
Hineteaorangi would go to sit on the highest point above her pa which is referred to as Tirohanga Pa. Whenever she did this she would look south westward out across the valley and set her gaze upon the Twin Peaks of the Tararua Mountains, Pukeamohau and Pukeahurangi. She knew that by doing so the island of Kapiti was in a direct line to where she sat. She would close her eyes and let her third unseen eye take her to the place where her tupuna lay at rest. Hineteaorangi wept for her tupuna (ancestor) Whatonga, Hotuwaipara, Tara, Tuteremoana and Te Wharekohu who were buried in a cave at the southern end of Kapiti island. This is why Te Tirohanga a Hineteaorangi ki te Motu a Kapiti received its name.

Tuteremoana of Ngai Tara and Te Wharekohu II of Rangitāne are the parents of Moeteao, ancestress of the Ngati Moe hapū at Papawai in Greytown.



The names in bold are hapū ancestors of Ngāti Hāmua. Mana whenua land from Masterton to the top of the Tararua mountains in the west, to Pukaha in the north, Taueru in the east and Te Whiti o Tutawake to the south east of Masterton came through one of these people or another Rangitāne descendent.





Hidden Lakes shown on the left with the Ruamahanga River to the right (looking south towards Masterton)

## The Hidden Lakes

Tirohanga Pa was destroyed during a major earthquake in 1855. The result of the hill called Rerenga collapsing was that the Hidden Lakes were formed.

*“The earthquake occurred at night when the ground suddenly opened up and engulfed the pa, said Mr H Ngatuere, a descendent of paramount chief Ngatuere, in an interview in Masterton. A few escaped but the others perished.” A, 1985 p5*

McCallum

## Ruataniwha

The Ruataniwha papakainga was found on the west side of the Ruamahanga River directly opposite the Hidden Lakes. Up until the mid 20th century a block of land called Ruataniwha 39 was owned by members of the Karaitiana family.

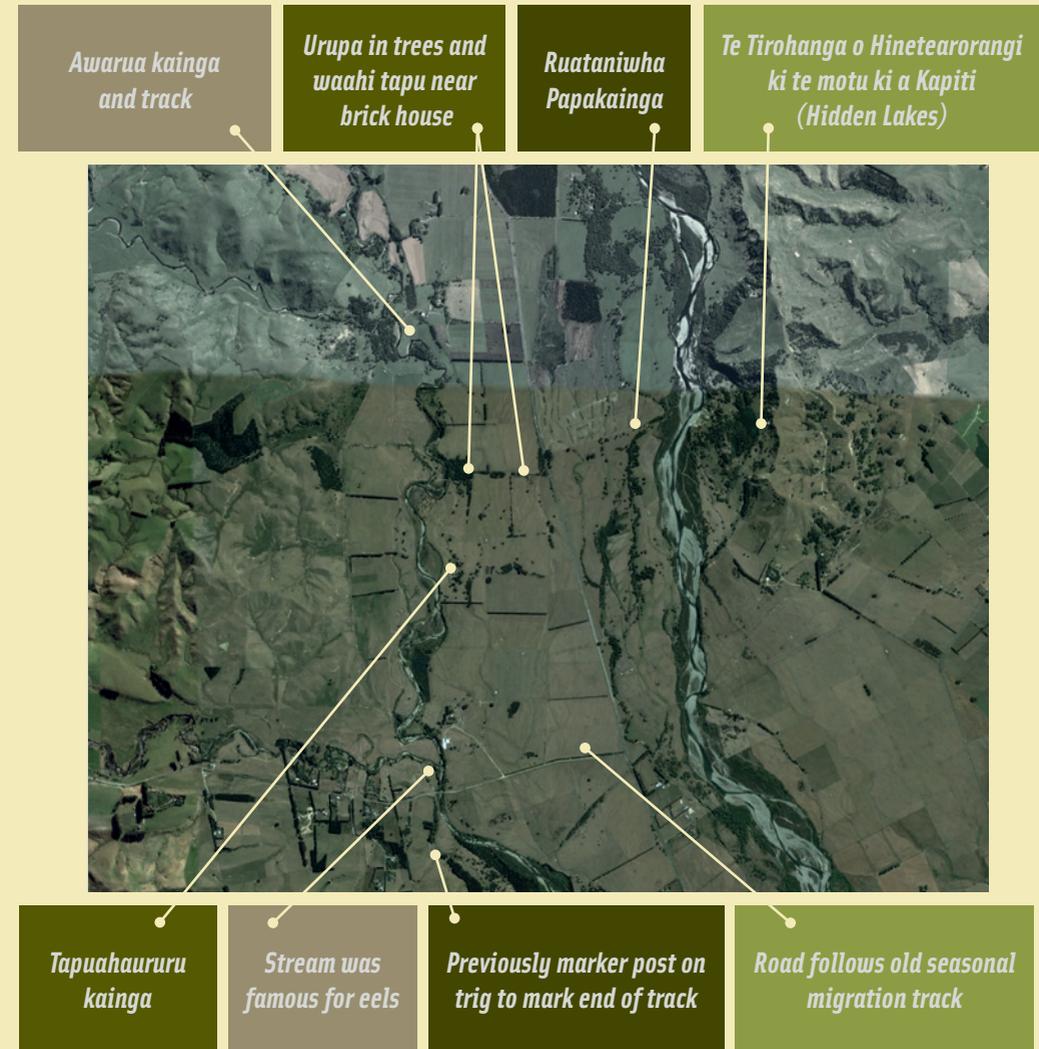
It is said that the kainga got its name around 1830 during an earthquake. To the people a taniwha had dove into the ground near Wairoa and didn't emerge again until reaching Te Waipounamu. The event gave rise to the name Ruataniwha.

Opposite to Ruataniwha and to the eastward of it, the hill called Rerenga rises abruptly from the river, it consists chiefly of light blue clay.

[http://www.mtbruce.org.nz/colenso\\_40milebush.htm](http://www.mtbruce.org.nz/colenso_40milebush.htm) p2 -29/05/2005

## Tapuahaururu

Tapuahaururu was a 19th century papakainga that according to exact coordinates left by early pakeha explorers was on today's Riverside Farm at Mikimiki. There are also a number of other sites of significance to the descendents of Hineteorangi (as above).



Tapuahaururu kainga

Stream was famous for eels

Previously marker post on trig to mark end of track

Road follows old seasonal migration track

## Teawhahanui

At the turnoff to Dorsetts Road, south of Mauriceville, the Kopuaranga River used to be shaped like a big bow and hence the name Teawhahanui was given to that place. In that vicinity there are archaeological sites, storage pits, a cave and a paddock that the local farmers refer to as Māori paddock. Dorsetts Road is the link between Kakaamu Road on Rangitumau maunga and the Opaki Kaiparoro Road. This road follows the old track out of the Kopuaranga Valley towards Eketahuna and Ihuraua. This route avoids the Ruamahanga gorge below Pukaha and the high hills of Kotukutuku at the head of the Ruamahanga River Valley.



Kainga sites indicate where main water ways used for transportation and where the old tracks used to meet.

The hill in the foreground has earthworks on it. The low ground in the middle of the photo is where the old track (and current road) used to be beside the Kopuaranga River.

## Kopuaranga

The Kopuaranga (fish in a deep pool) Valley through which the Kopuaranga River flows was at the southern end of Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga and was not so densely forested as places further north. With the Ruamahanga River forming a natural western boundary for the valley there were rich fertile soils to use for growing foods. This led to a number of Papakainga and pa being built in the area.

The most prominent was Te Tirohanga a Hineteorangi ki te Motu ki a Kapiti, as above and another on Tirohanga mountain on the south eastern side of the valley. Off Knights Road in the modern Kopuaranga township there was a Papakainga. Small isolated blocks of Māori land near the road still exist today as pointers towards where Ngāti Hāmua hapū of Ngāti Tangatakau and Ngāti Te Raeteta used to live.



## Tirohanga maunga

Tirohanga means to gaze into the distance. Tirohanga maunga rises above the Ruamahanga awa at the Double Bridges 10 km north of Masterton. From the Road Bridge looking east you see the river turn right as it follows the bottom of a limestone cliff. There are two small recesses in this cliff that are called the caves. These were once the home of two legendary tuere or blind eels. One of these eels was the embodiment of a bad chief who would attempt to prey upon children from a pa on the maunga and nearby papakainga. Kuia and koroua would keep the taniwha away from children bathing in the river. In other words the current of the river can sometimes become dangerous especially if the children are swept into the caves. The story warns everyone to be careful when swimming near the caves of the taniwha.



Artist Huia Donovan donated this painting to the Kopuaranga Community. It hangs in the Kopuaranga Hall. The painting shows the entrance to the kainga (village) in the old days when large tree ferns and trees were still present in the area.

*"There was a "Kainga" (village) on the Eketahuna clearing. At Kopuaranga, about half a mile from the camp, about where the present railway station stands, was a large fine pa, and there was a large one north of Eketahuna, at Hāmua."* p308

Adcock I, 1973

## Mikimiki

Mikimiki Road is located about 11 kilometres north of Masterton. The name came about through the actions of a group of nine Wairarapa chiefs who bravely went to face a large, apparently aggressive force.

In 1868 followers of the Pai marie religion, who were also known as Hauhau camped on the terrace of what is now Mikimiki Road. Pakeha were concerned that the Hauhau were going to attack Masterton. A delegation of chiefs led by Ngatuere Tawhirimatea Tawhao met with and successfully negotiated that the Hauhau leave the Wairarapa peacefully.

The name for the site came about as a result of Ngatuere being surprised to see so many people camped on the terrace. So the full name is “Mikimikitanga o te mata o nga Ngatuere Tawhirimatea Tawhao” or “the surprised look on the face of Ngatuere”.

Ngatuere’s land within the Masterton District was derived through Rangitāne whakapapa, especially Ngāti Tangatakau and Ngāti Te Whatui while lands that he owned in the southern Wairarapa were usually through his Ngāti Kahungunu whakapapa.

The Wairarapa is remembered as one of the only regions in New Zealand where Māori and Pakeha did not fight during the 19th century. There are a number of signs and monuments in the Masterton District that commemorate the peace between local Māori and pakeha.



*The Mikimiki sign and monument on State Highway 2. The low hill in between the sign and monument used to have a huge totara post on it that acted as a ‘road sign’ for Rangitāne people travelling from west to east across the Tararua mountains.*

## Paerau (Paierau)

Paierau Road or the bypass is named after a grove of trees and later a village that were located near the State Highway 2 – Paierau Road intersection. Further evidence is found in the Paierau block of land and a close by urupa.

*“The path they were following led them to a pa stated by C Bannister to have been Paerau”* p3  
Bagnall AG, 1954

The Paierau grove took in modern State Highway 2, another one called Matuhurangi was beside the Waipoua River to the west and a third called Hawaeki beside the Ruamahanga River to the east. The Kopuaranga Valley was across the Ruamahanga.

## Mokonui

Mokonui is the rise on the corner of State Highway 2 and the Opaki – Kaiparoro Road (Mauriceville turnoff) intersection about 8 kilometres north of Masterton. The Opaki plains end at the bottom of the rise and the Whakauma plain begins at the top, it is here that Te Tapere Nui o Whatonga began. There was a papakainga called Mauku Rangi above the intersection and a 17th century one called Mokonui further south near Wingate Road.



*Mokonui at the intersection of State Highway 2 and Opaki Kaiparoro Road with Tirohanga maunga top right and the Kopuaranga Valley in the distance.*