

## TEACHER NOTES

# Mana Island



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**Mana Island** is a remnant of an old penepplain. It is one of the region's oldest marine terraces formed at a time of high sea level during an interglacial period 198,000 years ago.

The island is bounded seaward by the Wairau fault and to the east by the Pukerua fault that skirts the mainland coast and runs from Hongoeka Bay through to Pukerua Bay. Unlike much of the Wellington region including Kapiti Island, Mana Island has not been tilted but simply uplifted.

## Legendary Island

Maori legend tells of the taniwha *Te Awarua o Porirua* who lives in Porirua Harbour and was the cause of Mana Island's distinctive shape.

*Long ago Awarua longed to join his friends the birds, as they flew across the sky so he decided to teach himself to fly. With the birds cheering him on Awarua raced from one end of the harbour to the other and eventually felt himself lifting into the air. As he attempted to gain height he crashed into the slopes of Whitireia. On his second flight he soared over Titahi Bay cheered on by his friends the birds. Once again he failed to gain adequate height and struck Mana Island, skimming the top of the island level as he ploughed along on his clumsy landing thus leaving the flattened top of the island as we know it today.*

## Discovery By Kupe

There are numerous stories and versions relating to the exploits and achievements of the Polynesian explorer Kupe about a thousand years ago. On one of his voyages in his canoe Matahourua, Kupe visited Mana Island at which time it was named *Te Mana o Kupe ki Aotearoa* - commemorating Kupe's ability to cross the ocean to Aotearoa.

Another reference to Kupe's visit is the stone anchor named Maungaroa [also known as Te Punga o Matahourua - the anchor of Matahourua] that was left on the shore near Paremata. The anchor was exchanged for another in order for Kupe upon his return home to prove he had reached another land. It is now held in Te Papa's collection.

## Early Maori Occupation

Prior to 1800 Ngai Tara and Ngati Ira lived around the Porirua shore and on Mana Island. Other tribes said to have at times resided in the area include Muaupoko, Rangitane, Ngati Apa, Ngati Kahungunu and Ngati Hotu. Before them, earlier unknown tribes lived in this important food gathering location, leaving evidence of their stay in middens and excavated sites.

In 1820 Ngati Ira suffered heavy losses following the raid by the musket-armed northern tribe of Nga Puhi. In the early 1820s facing continued warfare against the newly arrived Ngati Toa, they moved to the Wairarapa and to the South Island.

## Ngati Toa Occupation

Ngati Toa arrived in the area around 1822-23. One of their chiefs, Te Rangihaeata, and his mother Waitohi [Te Rauparaha's eldest sister] made their home on Mana Island. When Colonel Wakefield visited the island on 30 October 1839 he noted: *On the side of Mana facing the mainland is a small amphitheatre formed by hills. The settlement is abreast of our anchorage, at the foot of the slope, and consists of the owner's house and small whaling station, and the huts of Te Rangihaeata and forty or fifty resident Natives.*

Te Rangihaeata built a carved house on Mana Island and named it Kaitangata - 'eat man'. The artist George French Angas visited the island around 1844, when the island was "nearly deserted" with "not more than a dozen houses," and described Kaitangata:

*The portico or verandah of the house is about twelve feet deep (3.6metres) and the ridge pole and frame boards of the roof are richly painted in spiral arabesques of black and red; the margin of each spiral being dotted with white spots, which adds richness to the effect.... Above the centre of the gable-roofed portico is fixed a large wooden head elaborately tattooed, with hair and a beard fastened on composed of dog's tails.*

Inside the house was an elaborately carved figure representing Te Rangihaeata.



George French Angas, Kaitangata [left] and Waitohi's tomb [above], 1844.

A short distance from Kaitangata, Te Rangihaeata built a decorated tomb for his mother Waitohi. Waitohi died on Mana Island in 1839. Wakefield described her tangi held on the island on 15 November, as being '*celebrated by some thousand natives*'. Chiefs of all the local tribes attended with one account suggesting that there could have been up to 3000 Maori present. Wakefield recorded that *fifty sheep had been sacrificed* for the feast together with a Rangitane slave who was killed and eaten - this being the last act of cannibalism on the island.



Te Rangihaeata continued to live on Mana Island until 1843 when he left the island after the Wairau incident to prepare for an inevitable confrontation with government troops. After being pursued up the Horokiwi Valley by Governor Grey's troops he eventually settled in the Horowhenua where he died in 1855.

## Disputed Claims of Ownership

In 1831 Alexander Davidson, master of the brig *William Stoveld* visited Kapiti Island and asked about acquiring Mana Island. A year later he and two Sydney merchants met with Te Rangihaeata, Te Rauparaha and Nohorua and concluded the deal.

*"The agreement with the chiefs was made on Kapiti. They were two nights talking about it. On the second night the bargain was completed, and I went on the following day and took possession".*

Evidently as a result of the deal, made on 25 April 1832, Sydney traders John Bell and Archibald Mossman together with Alexander Davidson traded a ship's cannon, two swivel guns, two 50lb kegs of gunpowder and several shirts for the purchase of Mana Island from Te Rangihaeata, Te Rauparaha and Nohorua. The traders saw the arrangement as being permanent and binding - the three Ngati Toa leaders saw it as a temporary granting of the use of the island. The total value of the goods traded was about £24.

After the purchase of Mana Island, Davidson sailed to the island taking George Ross who had witnessed the deed of sale, to live on Mana as their manager. Ross, an American whaler and fluent Maori speaker, built the house and prepared the garden in preparation for Bell's arrival.

### John Bell, 1834 - 1838

On 14 April 1834, John Bell arrived at Mana on the schooner *Martha*. The ship's cargo included 102 Merino sheep, 10 head of cattle, seed, fruit trees and several tons of hay. Bell arranged for a tapu to be placed on his stock to ensure the local Maori would not take them for food.

By August 1834 an article appeared in *The Sydney Herald* describing the fine provisions available at Mana:

*The anchorage is safe at all times; wood and water are both good and plentiful, and fresh beef, mutton, lamb and pork, with rabbits, poultry, and vegetables may be procured at Mr Bell's establishment on reasonable terms.*

John Bell purchased Alexander Davidson's third share of Mana Island in 1836. He also went back to Sydney and returned with his wife, Mary, and their adopted son John Knochs together with ducks, geese, poultry, two horses and two farm servants.

A year later Archibald Mossman sold his third share to Frederick Petersen who sent the Fraser brothers to the island to set up a whaling station.

In 1838, John Bell's farm was recorded as having 400 to 500 sheep and 27 cattle as well as the two horses. That same year John Bell died of alcoholism and was said to have been buried in a rum cask as there was no timber available for a coffin. Bell's two third shares were inherited by his father Thomas Bell in Sydney who then sold them to Henry Moreing for £750.

### Henry Moreing 1838 - 1860

In May 1841 Henry Moreing bought Frederick Petersen's third share for £250. Now holding all three shares, Moreing claimed full ownership of the island and in 1843 submitted his claim to the Land Court. At the hearing held on 8 June despite protests from Te Rangihaeata and Te Rauparaha, the Land Commissioner William Spain awarded Moreing legal title over 1872 acres excluding *'one hundred feet from high water mark, and any native Pahs, cultivations and burying places'*.

In 1850-51 a further claim for the island by the whalers, the Fraser brothers, declared that they had purchased Petersen's share and that they had entered an agreement with Bell to buy his shares prior to his death. The claim was disallowed due to a lack of documentation and Moreing having been already given legal title. Moreing moved from Wellington to Sydney where he died in May 1860. Moreing's wife Regina inherited his estate but died on 26 September 1864.

The title to Mana Island was disputed until 1865 when the government purchased Mana Island for £300 from the executor of Regina Moreing's will. In December three Ngati Toa chiefs, Hohepa Tamahengia, Tamahina Te Rauparaha and Matene Te Whiwhi signed a Crown purchase agreement and were paid £300 compensation with the court ordering that the payment be shared among the 81 members of the tribe.

### Government Ownership

The government took ownership of Mana Island in 1865 and advertised the leasehold for 21 years at a rate of £1 per week. The island was farmed by successive leaseholders and sub-leaseholders including John Wright, the Vella family and John Gault until 1973 when the government reclaimed the island and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries established a quarantine and research station there. All stock was removed in 1986 and a year later the Department of Conservation took over control of Mana and declared the island a scientific reserve initiating programmes of ecological restoration and revegetation.



## Mana island as a whaling station, 1837- 1845

As early as 1822 the American whaler *Independence* visited the waters around Mana Island. But it was after the questionable purchase of the island in 1832 that the new owners' agent, an American named George Ross established a whaling station on the shore just north of Te Rangihaeata's pa. In 1837 a share of the ownership of the island was purchased by Frederick Peterson who sent the Fraser brothers to Mana from Sydney to operate the whaling station.

Alex and Thomas Fraser were identical twins. They were whalers, coopers and shipwrights by trade. The Mana Island station often worked together with the shore whaling station of Te Korohiwa (known as Coalheavers) just south of Titahi Bay. In a northerly wind Mana offered shelter and likewise the shore station was protected from the southerly. The Mana Island whaling station was considered to be a minor station by the American whalers. The local shore-based stations concentrated on hunting the Southern Right Whale, which produced whale oil called black oil.

In 1839 James Coutts Crawford was onboard the *Success* when it anchored off Mana Island. He recalls his visit to the whaling station on Mana Island and coming across Te Rangihaeata who was living there:

*"I landed after dark with Captain Munn, and visited the Messrs. Fraser, who then had a whaling station on the island. They received us hospitably, that is to say, they gave us a glass of grog. In the corner of the room sat a large Maori, wrapped in his mat. He listened to the conversation, but said nothing. At last, as if displeased, he uttered a hideous and prolonged grunt and rose to his feet; - I was struck with his height and imposing, although savage, appearance; - he grunted again and walked out of the room without speaking."*

It is unclear when whaling ceased on the island. The Fraser brothers were still operating with two whale boats in 1844. A year later, records show that fourteen men and two boats had secured 15 tons of whale oil and two tons of baleen. The Fraser brothers lodged a claim for the island in 1850 and so were probably still living there at that time.

It is not clear when the Fraser brothers left the island but in 1867 when the government had hoped to build a hut near the lighthouse that had been built two years earlier it was reported that the Frasers who were still farming the island would not permit it. By this time Henry Moreing had died. The Fraser brothers gradually disposed of their land and lived in Wellington where they became well known and respected financiers. Neither ever married.



## Mana Island as a Quarantine Station, 1973 - 1978

In August 1973 the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries established a research station and quarantine facility on part of the island. The wharf and landing stage were upgraded and two houses, offices, laboratory and barns were constructed. Fences were erected to protect both stock, endangered species habitats and vegetation.

Four breeds of sheep were imported including Oxford Down, Finnish Land Race, East Friesian and Oldenburg. These sheep were to be selectively bred with a flock of 1000 Romney ewes to hopefully increase lambing percentages and improve the wool and meat yield.

As early as September 1976 an East Friesian ewe died of suspected scrapie disease with other animals suspected to be at risk. The 280 affected sheep were killed and burned. In 1978 scrapie disease was confirmed in the remaining flock and a total of 2000 sheep on the island were slaughtered and buried with the station subsequently closed down. The failed project was said to have cost over \$2 million.

The Lands and Survey department then took over the research station land and established a temporary cattle farming operation under manager Jake Jacobs. Strict quarantine controls remained in place for five years. In April 1986 the island was cleared of stock with the last 350 Aberdeen Angus cattle being returned to the mainland by barge.

Following the removal of stock in 1986 the uncut pasture provided a home for an exploding mouse population that threatened some of the island's endangered species.

## Mana Island as a Scientific Reserve, 1987+

In 1987 Mana Island is named a scientific reserve under the new Department of Conservation. Endangered species include the gold-striped gecko, McGregor's skink, takahe, tuatara and giant weta.

In 1987 the entire magpie population was shot and over a three year period from 1989-1991, there was a major mouse eradication program which involved placing 5500 bait stations across the island. In 1993 the island's wharf was removed to ensure rodents cannot arrive on visiting boats and strict quarantine rules were established for visitors.

The eradication program was achieved with the help from the Conservation Corp, Forest & Bird and DOC staff. The island was declared rodent free eighteen months after the last mouse was caught. At the time Mana was the largest island in the world to be cleared of mice. Before the control started a simple bucket trap caught 204 mice in one night.

Ongoing bait traps and monitoring ensure the island is kept rodent-free.

## Mana Island ecological restoration programme

The programme aims to establish a self-sustaining ecosystem that includes seabird colonies, diverse reptile and invertebrate populations, coastal forest, shrubland and wetland inhabited by native birds.

Eight bird species have been introduced, including over forty takahe, the largest population of this bird outside of Fiordland. There are ten species of lizard, four of which have also been introduced along with two flightless weevils.

In 1999 a wet land was created as a habitat for the endangered brown teal and other birds.

The island is home to the Cook Strait giant weta, the goldstripe gecko, the brown skink and McGregor's skink. Mana is also a breeding ground for a number of seabirds including the sooty shearwater, blue penguins, red-billed and southern black-backed gulls, white-fronted terns, variable oystercatchers and reef herons.

The revegetation of Mana Island began in 1987, using cuttings and seeds sourced from the island or from identified forest remnants within 8 kilometres of the island.

Although managed and led by DOC staff, the programme has had huge volunteer involvement in seed collection, nursery work and planting, primarily from members of the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society and the Friends of Mana Island Society. In 2008 the 500,000th tree was planted.

## Names of Mana Island

The original name of **Te Mana o Kupe ki Aotearoa** was given to the island during Kupe's visit to commemorate his crossing of the ocean to Aotearoa. Te Mana o Kupe ki te Moana nui a Kiwa is another early name with a similar meaning. With the arrival of European explorers, whalers and traders many new spellings were derived from the word Mana and other names bestowed on the island.

**Table Island** - was attributed to Captain Cook by Ernst Dieffenbacher in his book *Travels in New Zealand* and also by George French Angas in 1844. Although there was no mention of it in Cook's logbooks, the name started appearing on maps in the early nineteenth century and in the 1859 edition of *The New Zealand Pilot*. However it failed to achieve ongoing acceptance.

**Isle d'Sud** - shown on a chart of Cook Strait drawn in 1827 by P E Guilbert, one of Durmond d'Urville's officers on the *Astrolabe*.

**Flat Island** - logbook of the 3<sup>rd</sup> voyage of *Marianne* of Hobart 10 July 1836  
Also mentioned by Capt. Green in a Sydney newspaper November 1836.

**Warspite Island** - when the British warships *Warspite* and *Volage* passed through Cook Strait in 1827 on a voyage from Sydney to South America, one of the officers on the *Volage* named P.E. Guilbert, gave it the name Warspite Island. That name however, never reached the general charts.



# Glossary

baleen -	A fringe of keratin plates lining the mouth of a whale, instead of teeth, used to sieve plankton and krill from sea water for food. Baleen was cut out and used as a stiffening material in underwear, umbrellas, carriage seats etc.
constabulary -	a police force organized like a military unit.
interglacial -	A comparatively short period of warmth occurring between times of glacial action - characterized by the melting of ice and a change in vegetation.
Land Court -	Set up after the Treaty of Waitangi to investigate land sales made before 1840. Land Commissioner Spain investigated land claims made by the New Zealand Company in 1839 and found that Maori had never thought the sales meant giving up their continued use of the lands.
mana -	Power or prestige, demanding high respect.
middens -	Rubbish heaps of past settlements
musket -	long-barrelled shoulder gun
Ngati Toa -	A tribe [iwi], now the tangata whenua of Porirua - who migrated from Kawhia Harbour, coastal Waikato in the early 1820s.
penplain -	A geological term used to describe an area worn down and reduced almost to a flat plain by erosion.
scrapie -	An infectious, usually fatal disease of sheep and goats - initially detected by twitching and intense itching where infected stock 'scrape' themselves against objects losing their wool, their muscular coordination and the degeneration of the central nervous system.
tangi -	Maori burial ceremony
tapu -	sacred
Wairua -	Hostilities between armed settlers from the NZ Company
Incident	settlement in Nelson and Ngati Toa in the Wairau Valley [Marlborough] in 1843 - resulting in the death of twenty two Nelson settlers and four Ngati Toa, including Te Rangihaeata's wife.

## Pre and Post Visit Activities

- MAKE a timeline on the history of Mana Island
- COLLECT some images or maps of Mana Island
- WRITE some questions you have about Mana Island, geographical, environmental, historical, or something else - then send it to our online Education Forum at [www.pataka.org.nz](http://www.pataka.org.nz)
- FIND a map of Mana Island and plot the history of who claimed ownership of the island over different time-frames
- RESEARCH the story of John Bell and CREATE a drama about it
- CREATE a sculpture of the giant WETA using wire
- MAKE a diorama of Te Awarua o Porirua flying into Mana Island
- FIND OUT who Te Rangihaeata was and who his mother was
- VISIT [www.manaisland.org.nz](http://www.manaisland.org.nz) and [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) (click onto parks and recreation to find the Mana Island information) and discover what recent conservation work has been happening on Mana Island.