

PATAKA ART - MUSEUM

TEACHER NOTES

Plimmerton: A Colourful History

7 July – 11 November 2012



Motuhara Rd showing Taupo Hall c1924, Postcard- Smith Series, PATAKA Coll.

From Taupo Pa, arrival of the railway, weekend resort and beach baches to the birth of a village, war years, skeletons and rusty pistols; Plimmerton has had a fascinating past. Through many photographs, panels, posters, poems, postcards, articles and artefacts – the colourful story of Plimmerton is unravelled.

Education resource compiled by Linda Fordyce, Education, Pataka Museum of Arts and Cultures, 2010. Pataka Education programmes are supported by LEOTC (Learning Experiences Outside The Classroom) and funded by the Ministry of Education.

Historical Notes

The following information has largely been taken from the information panels used in the *Plimmerton* exhibition, written and curated by Bob Maysmor.

1840s

Taupo Village

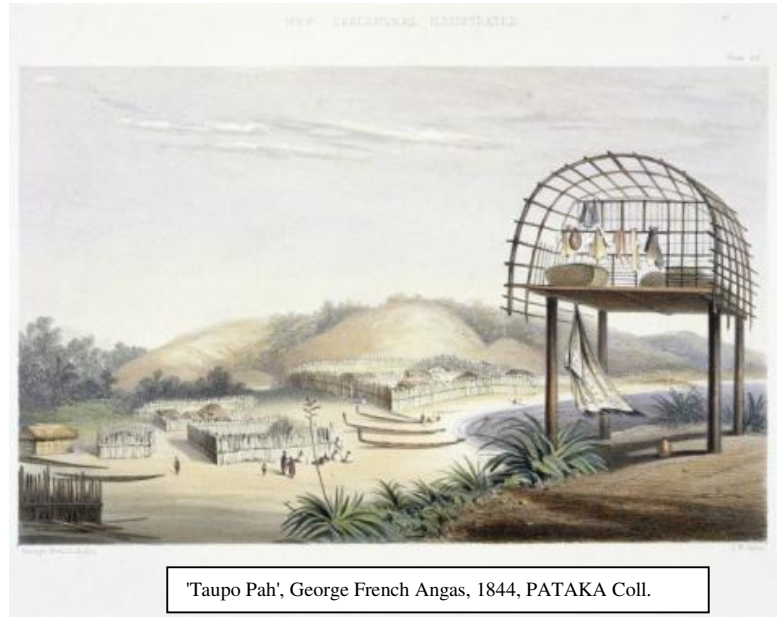
Taupo was established as the main kaainga of Ngati Toa sometime between the years 1838 and 1848. Taupo Village was located close to the site of the present day Plimmerton railway station.

Up until 1846 it was the domestic home of the Ngati Toa chief Te Rauparaha and therefore the centre of Ngati Toa influence. As a domestic kaainga it was not initially fortified but this probably changed after the events at Wairau in 1843. A lithograph by the artist George French Angas [right] shows the village with a palisade surrounding it in 1844.

Taupo Village was located midway between Taupo Swamp and the waters edge – the perfect place for trading flax from the swamp for muskets and other European

goods and an ideal crossing point between the North and South Islands

It was from this site that in June 1846 British troops and Armed Constabulary, acting under the orders of Governor Grey, walked through the open gates of Taupo Village and captured Te Rauparaha. He and five or six other chiefs including Hohepa Tamaihengia, Wiremu Te Kanae and the Ngati Tama chief Te Kaeaea were also taken. Taupo Village gradually lost its importance after Te Rauparaha's decision in 1848 (after his release) to retire to Otaki. An 1850 survey showed the village as abandoned and noted that both the people and some of the building materials had moved to Takapuwahia.

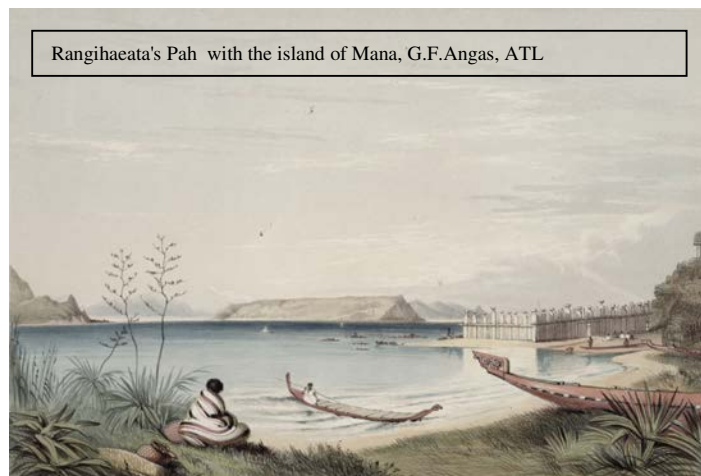


'Taupo Pah', George French Angas, 1844, PATAKA Coll.

Turi Karewa Pa -

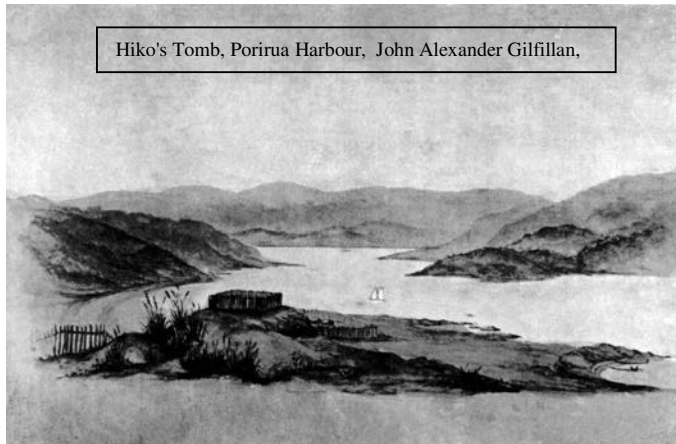
Taupo

The Wairau affair in 1843, where the deaths of both Europeans and Ngati Toa led to a fear of war, had a profound influence on life at Porirua and it led to the decision by Te Rangihaeata to move, along with his followers, from Mana Island



Rangihaeata's Pah with the island of Mana, G.F. Angas, ATL

to a newly built pa at Taupo, close to where the present day corner shops and fire station are located. In September 1843, not long after the skirmish at Wairau, Edward Jerningham Wakefield recorded that there were 200 Maori living in a new village at Taupo Bay. Land Court records include Rawiri Puaha, Te Hiko and Hohepa Tamaihengia as the builders, but it is Te Rangihaeata, who occupied it until early 1846, that the pa is most closely associated with. Of the other chiefs, Wi Parata claimed, in Land Court evidence, that he stayed there with Te Hiko and Ngati Te Maunu hapu until the death of Te Hiko in 1845. Te Hiko was buried in the urupa on the bluff behind the pa where a daughter of Te Rangihaeata was also buried. In 1844 the artist George French Angas [above] saw that the wahi tapu held clothing, food and an assortment of other items all considered tapu. The location remains today as an urupa and a native reserve.



Hiko's Tomb, Porirua Harbour, John Alexander Gilfillan,

The pa not only had a commanding view over the entrance to the inner harbours and coastline, it was also at the start of the most important route north; the Taua Taupo track. All who travelled the track could be watched and if necessary questioned. Turi Karewa was located in close support of the paramount chief Te Rauparaha at

Taupo Village. Contemporary illustrations show a semi-subterranean wharepuni (sleeping house), an elevated pataka and the interior of a house with carved ridgepoles, all indicating a substantial settlement. The whare were made of thatched nikau and cabbage tree leaves. Several European writers and painters, notably John Gilfillan, George French Angas and Charles Gold recorded the pa. These images depict the pa as having extremely large palisades extending from the edge of the exposed rocky shore back to the bluff behind where the wahi tapu was located.

In 1846 Te Rangihaeata with his followers left Turi Karewa and moved first to Motukaraka and then to Matai Taua at Pauatahanui. With the arrival in February of the steamship *Driver* and the frigates *Calliope* and *Castor* and two troopships, it was apparent that any pa on the coast was vulnerable. However some Ngati Toa remained at the Taupo Pa until at least 1848.

Hongoeka

Hongoeka was given by Te Rauparaha to Watarauhi Nohorua, his wife Miriama Te Wainokenoke and her Haumia hapu of Ngati Toa.

Along with nearby Motuhara and much of the Porirua coast, Hongoeka has been occupied since the mid 1820s when Ngati Toa spread from Kapiti Island. The testimony Wi Parata gave at the Maori Land Court was that Nohorua lived at Hongoeka up until the time of the Wairau fight in 1843.

In November 1839 the missionary Octavius Hadfield attended church services at Hongoeka and described it as '*a small pa with few people present*'. Later, at a hui held in 1843 between government officials and Ngati Toa some 200 Ngati Toa men including Te Rauparaha were present.

In 1846 when Governor Grey ordered the seizure of Te Rauparaha from Taupo Village, Hongoeka was also searched.

In 1850 officers on HMS *Acheron* surveyed the coast and on the chart subsequently published, marked two sites close to each other where Hongoeka now lies: A northern area being marked "Hongoeka settlement" and the other - "Pah (old fort)" The general area was named as Anchorage Bay. Hongoeka remains today as an active marae with a new meeting house opened in 1997.



View of Hongoeka, Robert Guyton photo, 1936, PATAKA Coll.

Motuhara

This was a settlement whose origin pre-dates Ngati Toa. Archaeological finds suggest that prior to the Ngati Toa occupation it was a small kaainga with an urupa lacking any defensive function. According to Matene Te Whiwhi, the Ngati Te Maunu hapu of Ngati Toa were the occupiers of this pa.

When Te Rauparaha was seized from Taupo Village in 1846, Motuhara, like Hongoeka, was also searched and when Te Rauparaha was being taken to HMS *Driver* he called out for help from Motuhara. Described by James Cowan as a "small beach settlement" although permanently occupied, Motuhara appears to have been a small kaainga – considered almost an annex to the larger pa and kaainga surrounding it.

Te Kanira also called (Kanira Tuhi) had the official certificate of title to Motuhara, he died around 1875 and the nearest relative, his niece Raiha Prosser (nee Puaha), succeeded him in ownership.

Motuhara was still occupied in the 1890s by the old chief Te Karehana Whakataki who was at that time described as living alone. He lent his name, Karehana, to the nearby bay. Whakataki was Elsdon Best's primary Ngati Toa source in his researches. By 1894 Whakataki is said to have moved to Takapuwahia

As late as 1909 Te Rauparaha's canoe, Te Ahu a Turanga, was still visible as it lay rotting at Motuhara - too tapu to be used.

1880s

The Coming of the Railway



Plimmerton c1885-1890, Frederick James Halse photographer, ATL, G-10349-½

As Wellington expanded in the 1870s, there was a growing demand for a rail link to Manawatu. The government started building a railway in 1879 but with costs soaring, the project ceased within a year.

Several leading Wellington businessmen, annoyed at the delay, decided to form a company to build the railway. Among them were John Kirkcaldie, James Smith, William Levin, George Shannon and John Plimmer. They established the Wellington-Manawatu Railway Company in 1882 and began construction work shortly after.

By 1885 the single track had reached Paremata where earlier that year the bridge across the tidal entrance to the inlet had been completed. The first excursion train, laden with members of Parliament and their wives, together with various government officials, made the journey from Wellington to Plimmerton on 3 September [see above photo].

From 10 October 1885, with a return fare of two shillings, regular trains and weekend excursion trains carrying excited day-trippers were scheduled to Plimmerton. This was the beginning of the new coastal resort of Plimmerton – so named after John Plimmer, one of the founders and shareholders of the railway.

By 1886 John Plimmer's son Charles had built an imposing 32 room two-storied accommodation house known as Plimmerton House right alongside the railway station. The building was capable of sheltering 500 people and its dining room seating up to 100 at a time.



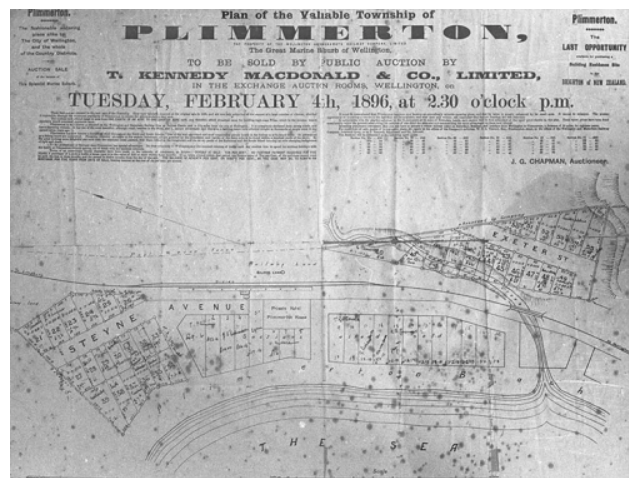
Plimmerton House c1890, PATAKA Coll.

With the railway's arrival, Plimmerton became accessible for tourists and holidaymakers. By the late 1890s Plimmerton had become a popular holiday destination. Large numbers of people stayed at the two-storey hotel, Plimmerton House, until it burnt down in 1907, and others camped out in tents for months at a time.

The Birth of Plimmerton

With the new railway access, land in Plimmerton was in high demand. The fledgling settlement was advertised as the 'Future Brighton of New Zealand'. In June 1888 the first 'superb marine sections' were being offered for sale along what was to become Steyne Avenue. In October 1891 and February 1896 further land in Exeter Street and at the northern end of Steyne Avenue was put up for auction.

'The views from the township are most varied and beautiful. Cooks Strait, the Island of Mana, the snowy mountains of the South Island, and the calm waters of Porirua Bay present together, in sunshine or storm, a picturesque grouping of all that is charming and lovely in nature.'



Further growth

An 1894 photo of what was to later become Sunset Parade and Moana Road shows the untouched coastline with native forest coming down to sand dunes and a rocky shore. A photo dated around 1909 still depicts an untouched foreshore with the hint of the old tramway track skirting the base of the hill. A few tents, typical of those erected by weekend visitors can be seen.

By 1900 the township of Plimmerton consisted of 30 summer cottages, two private hotels and one general store. By 1908 the permanent population was over 100 and this increased to 300 in the summer.

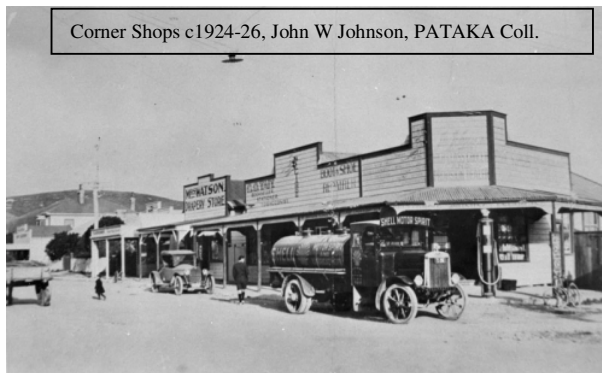
Around 1912 local landowner Sir George Troup who had earlier bought 373 acres, subdivided some of his property and laid out several streets including Cluny, Gordon, Airlie and Ogilvie Roads. Around this time a number of baches had already started to appear in Karehana Bay including those of Ernest Gyton and Frederick Bilton.

When we first came out to Plimmerton in 1914 by train, Karehana Bay was known as the Plimmerton Extension. My father bought the cottage and the land for £250. There was a three strand wire fence around the place. There was nothing, there was no road, there were no neighbours, there was nothing. Betty Kensington (nee Bilton).

The 1920s

Through the early 1920s Plimmerton continued to grow. Steyne Avenue, now a through road after Plimmerton House was destroyed by fire, featured Martin's Store, a new St Andrew's Church and the twin-gabled *Erenora* homestead named after a local Maori dignitary, and owned by the Plimmer family. The house burnt down in 1920 and was replaced four years later with Steyne House, an accommodation lodge featuring 27 rooms and a large dining hall that could also be used as a dance floor. An advertisement of the day proclaimed: *Visitors are assured of every comfort. Great attention has been paid to the finishing of the dining room and the catering will be of the very best.*

Across the road Mrs Watson had established a drapery store alongside a tobacconist and stationery store owned by Mr Tait. There was also a boot and



shoe repairer and on the corner a grocery and provision store run by J.W. Johnson.

This corner store also had a petrol pump and sold a range of photographic supplies. Mr Johnson was an accomplished photographer who took many photos of Plimmerton, some of which he sold as postcards in his store.

At the southern end of town Cochrane's Bakery had been established in 1922 at which time most of the southern sections and those immediately to the east of the railway line already had dwellings built.

By November 1923 a new Post and Telegraph office had been opened. A newspaper article stated that '*the P&T Department... has been engaged in erecting poles, and so far over twenty subscribers are to be connected, and it is anticipated a further number will join up by Christmas*'.

In 1924 the Taupo Hall was built by Joseph and Arthur Buckland on land owned by Andrew Vella. The hall was to become the centre for the town's social activities including movies and dances until it burnt down in 1932.



Taupo Hall, detail of
Smith Series postcard,
c 1924, PATAKA. Coll.

In January 1925, 32 sections that ran up the eastern side of Motuhara Road were made available by auction from the Walker Estate. At this time, houses on the opposite side had already started to creep up the lower reaches of Motuhara Road which was still only a dirt track.

By 1925 the properties - along what was to become Sunset Parade, were fully occupied although there was still no seawall along the beach. *High tide and high seas used to come up through the front gate – there was no road along Sunset Parade then.*

Ray Mildenhall

In 1925 the Hutt County Council built a Pavillion structure – an open air shelter for visitors. Dwellings lined Moana Road around to Karehana Bay where houses filled the available flat land and peppered the hillsides. St Paul's Presbyterian Church had been built in 1924 and within two years the Cameron Guesthouse, later to be known as Aspel House and now as Moana Lodge was established.



Plimmerton Beach, c1924-1926, John W Johnson photo, PATAKA Coll.

1930s

Plimmerton during the 1930s, despite the depression years, changed from a seaside resort into a seaside suburb, thanks to the construction and opening of major Public Works projects towards the end of the decade. In 1931 St Theresa's Catholic Church was opened and, as a result of the opening of the Paremata Bridge in 1936 and the subsequent increase in population, St Theresa's became a separate parish [from Johnsonville] in 1940. The parish school was opened in 1949.

February 1934 at a meeting in Sollit's billiard rooms saw the founding of the Plimmerton Volunteer Fire Brigade. Prior to this there had been several fires that had spread quickly between the wooden houses without fire-fighting equipment. Back in 1930, on the night of 12 March a fire had broken out in Steyne Avenue that destroyed eight houses and the Beach Stores shop. Of the nine buildings only the brick chimneys were left standing [see photo below]. A few weeks later Hazelwood's Butcher shop was also destroyed by fire.



12 March, 1930 fire at South End, ATL, G-3538-½

By far the biggest event of the decade occurred in 1936 with the opening of the Paremata road bridge. Finally there was a direct route to Plimmerton without having to travel right around the Pauatahanui Inlet.

Bill recalled the days before the Paremata Bridge was put in if they were coming to Plimmerton for a holiday his parents would drop him and his sister Mary by the railway bridge at Paremata and they would run over the bridge and along the sand dunes to Plimmerton while their mother and father would have to drive right around the harbour by car. Jean Bryson

The bridge was officially opened on 3 October 1936 by Hon Robert Semple, the Minister of Transport. *The Dominion* newspaper proclaimed the event under the headline: 'New Bridge Open, Gay Crowd at Paremata Ceremony'.

The Paremata Bridge was opened in conjunction with the building of the road not only to Plimmerton, but the Centennial Highway north to Paekakariki. Various work camps were established to house the 292 men working on the highway from the Plimmerton end, the main one being the Public Works village at Pukerua Bay named Tawatapu (correctly spelt Taua Tapu after the original Maori track). There was a smaller tented camp established under the hillside at the southern end of Plimmerton Beach [see photo below]. By the end of the 1940s the tents had been replaced by permanent housing.

The other big project of note during the 1930s was the building of the seawall along Sunset Parade. Started in 1938 and completed three years later, the wall, built of rock and concrete, was created using just one concrete mixer.



Construction of the main road north with the workmen's camp in the foreground. 1936-38, PATAKA Coll.

The 1940s - War years

The Plimmerton Boating Club clubhouse was taken over for several years by the New Zealand Army who used it as a base to watch for a Japanese seaborne invasion. About 20 soldiers were stationed there. The Army had set explosives and was ready to blow the boat club up if the Japanese appeared on the horizon thereby ensuring that visibility was not obscured for the nearby gun emplacement. Army sheds were later used as boatsheds by club members.

Around the Plimmerton coastline a total of 10 concrete machine gun posts known as pillboxes were constructed between 1942 and 1943. There were five in Karehana Bay, three along the Plimmerton Beach (two of which have been preserved and can be seen today) and two further south along the coast.

The arrival of the US Marines in the area from mid 1942 - 1943 for 'Rest and Recreation' between operations in the Pacific also affected many households in Plimmerton who offered local dances and home visits to many of the young men of the Second Division.



Plimmerton pillbox, Bob Maysmor photograph

After the war as the Plimmerton community began to recover, fundraising activities and events, despite rationing, helped to rejuvenate various sporting and social clubs. Local industry was boosted by arrival of Winstone's Brick and Tile factory on the road north which started making roof tiles in 1946, employing about 55 staff.

The 1950s



11 February 1954 Fire, Evening Post Coll., ATL

On the School Road site on 25 July 1955. "The six classrooms and dental clinic had cost £51,000 and a great deal of 'blood, sweat and tears' over more

The 1954 fire that destroyed the main business corner block of shops in Steyne Avenue was one of the most disastrous fires in Plimmerton's history and was a distinctive memory of the 1950s. Four shops, a picture theatre [The Theatre Royal] and a house were destroyed in the blaze. Another memorable and a more positive occasion was the long-awaited opening of a new Plimmerton school

than 25 years [in the planning]."* Construction of a new swimming pool just over two years later "spelt the end of swimming lessons being held at the beach in sometimes difficult or even dangerous conditions".* The old school site at the northern end of Steyne Ave, eventually housed the current Plimmerton Kindergarten and the Tennis Club.

[*Plimmerton School 75th Jubilee booklet]

Plimmerton Today



Plimmerton, Cnr of Steyne Avenue and Moana Avenue.

Photo by Hannah Sutton, 2009

Plimmerton was part of Hutt County until 1 April 1973 when it was incorporated into the Porirua City Council, along with Pukerua Bay, Cambourne, Whitby and Paremata, to become one of the northern suburbs of Porirua.

Plimmerton today consists of around 2,000 residents, more than half of which travel outside of Porirua City for work. Many of these workers catch the train to work from the Plimmerton Railway Station. The suburb has a number of shops on Steyne Avenue, including several cafes, a dairy and medical centre.

The beach which stretches around Moana Road is popular with daytrippers, local residents, surfers and boating enthusiasts. It is possible to walk around the coast from Plimmerton to Pukerua Bay or there are several routes across the hill through native bush.

There is a Plimmerton Promenade Heritage Trail and pamphlet detailing sites of interest in Plimmerton. These include the site of Taupo Pa, and historic buildings such as Somme House, St Teresa's and St Andrew's Church, and the Kirkaldie family holiday home. A community website has also been established which serves as a current bulletin board and historic archive: www.plimmerton.org.nz

CURRICULUM LINKS

LEARNING AREAS

Social Sciences – L1: Understand how places in New Zealand are significant for individuals and groups.

L2: Understand how time and change affect people's lives.

L3: Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways.

L3-5: Understand how the movement of people affects cultural diversity and interaction in New Zealand.

PRE AND POST VISIT ACTIVITIES

CREATE a timeline showing the settlement of Plimmerton.

FIND OUT who Te Rangihaeata and Te Rauparaha were.

MAKE a diorama showing Taupo Pa.

INTERVIEW some long-standing residents and ask them what Plimmerton was like when they were growing up and how it has changed.

PHOTOGRAPH modern day locations and compare them with historical paintings and photographs.

DESIGN a postcard for Plimmerton featuring its many seaside attributes.

DISCOVER how the streets of Plimmerton have got their names.

