

## WDC District Plan Review – Built Heritage Assessment

### Historic Overview - Pokeno & District



HERITAGE  
CONSULTANCY  
SERVICES

## Pokeno

The fertile valley floor in the vicinity of Pokeno has most likely been occupied by Maori since the earliest days of their settlement of Aotearoa. Pokeno is geographically close to the Tamaki isthmus, the lower Waikato River and the Hauraki Plains, all areas densely occupied by Maori in pre-European times. Traditionally, iwi of Waikato have claimed ownership of the area. Prior to and following 1840, that iwi was Ngati Tamaoho, including the hapu of Te Akitai and Te Uri-a-Tapa. The town's name derives from the Maori village of Pokino located north of the present town centre, which ceased to exist on the eve of General Cameron's invasion of the Waikato in July 1863.

In the early 1820s the area was repeatedly swept by Nga Puhi war parties under Hongi Hika, the first of several forces to move through the area during the inter-tribal wars of the 1820s and 1830s. It is likely that the hapu of Pokeno joined Ngati Tamaoho war parties that travelled north to attack Nga Puhi and other tribes.<sup>1</sup>

In 1822 Hongi Hika and a force of around 3000 warriors, many armed with muskets, made an epic journey south from the Bay of Islands into the Waikato. The journey involved the portage of large war waka across the Tamaki isthmus and between the Waiuku River and the headwaters of the Awaroa and hence into the Waikato River west of Pokeno. It is likely warriors from the Pokeno area were among Waikato people who felled large trees across the Awaroa River to slow Hika's progress. According to Tainui historian Lesley Kelly (Te Putu), Hika's entry into the lower Waikato River 'caused great consternation among the tribes dwelling near the river mouth, and these, mostly Ngati Tamaoho, hurriedly retreated up the river and scattered up the many creeks and lakes to hiding places in the forest.'<sup>2</sup> Nga Puhi continued south until they arrived at the fortified pa Matakitaki on the Waipa River, which they overran with great loss of life among Waikato.

By the early 1840s the area had come under the influence of Church of England missionaries stationed at the Waikato Heads and at Maraetai on the Waitemata. Church Missionary Society missionary Robert Maunsell was instrumental in persuading Maori to sign the Treaty of Waitangi at meetings at the Waikato Heads in late March and early April 1840. The list of signatories does not include any who identify as Ngati Tamaoho, but Maunsell believed that among the 32 signatories on the Waikato Manukau copy of the Treaty were representatives of most of the iwi of the lower Waikato, as well as others from further south and as far afield as Tauranga.

In 1846 Pokeno became part of the Ramarama Block, purchased by the Crown from Ngati Tamaoho. Among the tribal leaders at that time was the chief Epiha Putini, husband of Te Paea. Further payments were made by the Crown in 1852 to hapu excluded from the original contract. The remaining blocks to the east of Pokeno came into Crown ownership through confiscation following the war in 1865.<sup>3</sup> On 27 May 1865 the Compensation Court determined that £30 be paid to the European trustees of Maori land acquired at Pokeno under the Settlements Act 1863. The beneficiaries of the decision were Ruria Takaanini, and her children Ernia Takaanini, Te Wirihana Takaanini, and Ihaka Takaanini.<sup>4</sup>

An early European observation of Maori life in the Pokeno valley was made by the scientist Ferdinand von Hochstetter on his passage through the area in March 1858. He described a village called Mangatawhiri, thought to be east of the later site of Queen's Redoubt on land overlooking the Tani Te Whiora (Leatham's) Stream. Hochstetter described Mangatawhiri as comprising

about twenty huts with about 100 inhabitants, who are enjoying considerable wealth. They very recently had a neat flour-mill built by an Englishman, on a small stream running by the village, which cost them not less than £400. The volcanic soil

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<sup>1</sup> Crosby's maps 'Ngapuhi and allies: battle sites and routes of taua,' and 'Waikato iwi and Ngati Whatua: battle sites, and routes of taua and migrations' shows repeated passages through the area by these three iwi during the 1820s and 1830s. R.D. Crosby, *The Musket Wars* (1999) following page 80.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie G. Kelly *Tainui* (Polynesian Society, 1949) p. 358.

<sup>3</sup> Russell Foster and Associates 'Pokeno Structure Plan Archaeological Assessment' (2007) p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Southern Cross* 30 November 1865, p. 4.

of the neighbourhood is extremely fertile, and there is no scarcity of horses, cattle and pigs in these parts.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to operating the flourmill, Maori were also cultivating crops of wheat, maize, peaches and potatoes. It is likely that some of these crops supplied the Auckland market via Waiuku and the Manukau.

Mangatawhiri appears to have been abandoned in favour of Pokino (sic) village within a couple of years of Hochstetter's visit. Following the Waikato war the mill was used to produce flour for the settlers before being later converted for use as a flax mill. Pokino village is thought to have been near the intersection of Avon and Fraser Roads, due north of the present village of Pokeno.<sup>6</sup> The current spelling of Pokeno is thus a corruption of the original Pokino.



Figure 47: Unidentified group of Maori men and women alongside a surveyor's tripod on the military road at Pokeno, Waikato, photographed between 1861-1863 by William Temple. PA1-q-250-27-2, Urquhart Album, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

### Colonial Settlement

European settlement of the area commenced in the late 1850s with the establishment of several farms on the valley floor. Sagg's Farm was at the western end of Hitchen Road, while the Austin and Selby farms were to the west and north of the present town, adjacent to the original line of the Great South Road (now Munro Road).<sup>7</sup> A Mr Mclean is also known as an early farmer.

Colonial settlement of Pokeno was delayed however by the difficulty of overland travel through the dense bush cover of the Bombay Hills. A clay track following traditional Maori routes existed from Papakura south to the Waikato River near present day Tuakau. When the surveyor Henry Hayr was faced with a tapu on this track he established a more direct route from the Waikato River, south of Pokeno, across the hills to Drury (1853-6). Hayr's Line, as it became known, was soon widened into a bridlepath although its muddy clay surface often made it impassable for bullock carts. Renamed the Great South Road, it was widened and metalled by the military to provide access to the northern Waikato. Eventually, a string of forts and redoubts were constructed along it, with the military headquarters moving further south as the road progressed until the construction of Queen's Redoubt in 1862.

<sup>5</sup> Hochstetter 1867: 290, quoted in Prickett, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Prickett, fig.1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 10.



Figure 48: Men of the 12th and 14th regiments (Imperial Army) digging a cutting down Pokeno Hill, on the military road to the Waikato, photographed between 1861 and 1864 by William Temple. PA1-q-250-52, Urquhart Album, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Hundreds of soldiers engaged in road-making camped at Austin's farm from December 1861. Pokeno Camp, as it became known, remained a focus for settlement in the valley for some time. A military camp was also established on Selby's farm in 1862 during construction of Queen's Redoubt. Lieutenant-General Duncan Cameron (1808-88) had his headquarters there until accommodation at the Queen's Redoubt was ready.

*Military History*

Queen's Redoubt was strategically located in the middle of the Pokeno valley, clear of any overlooking hills on which attackers might gain vantage points into the military stronghold. It was within an easy march of the Mangatawhiri Stream, the northern boundary of the Kingitanga territory, and served as General Cameron's headquarters between July and November 1863.

Local Maori, witnessing the build up of troops and the preparations by Cameron for the invasion of the Waikato, were further confronted by Governor Grey's edict of 9 July 1863 that Maori living north of the Mangatawhiri Stream swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen or be expelled southwards.<sup>8</sup> Cowan describes some Ngati Tamaoho hapu as being in favour of negotiations with the Crown, encouraged by Grey's offer of Maori autonomy, but his other policies soon drove them towards the Kingitanga camp.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Belich, p. 133

<sup>9</sup> J Cowan *The New Zealand Wars: A History of the Maori Campaigns and the Pioneering Period: Volume I (1845-64)* p. 252.

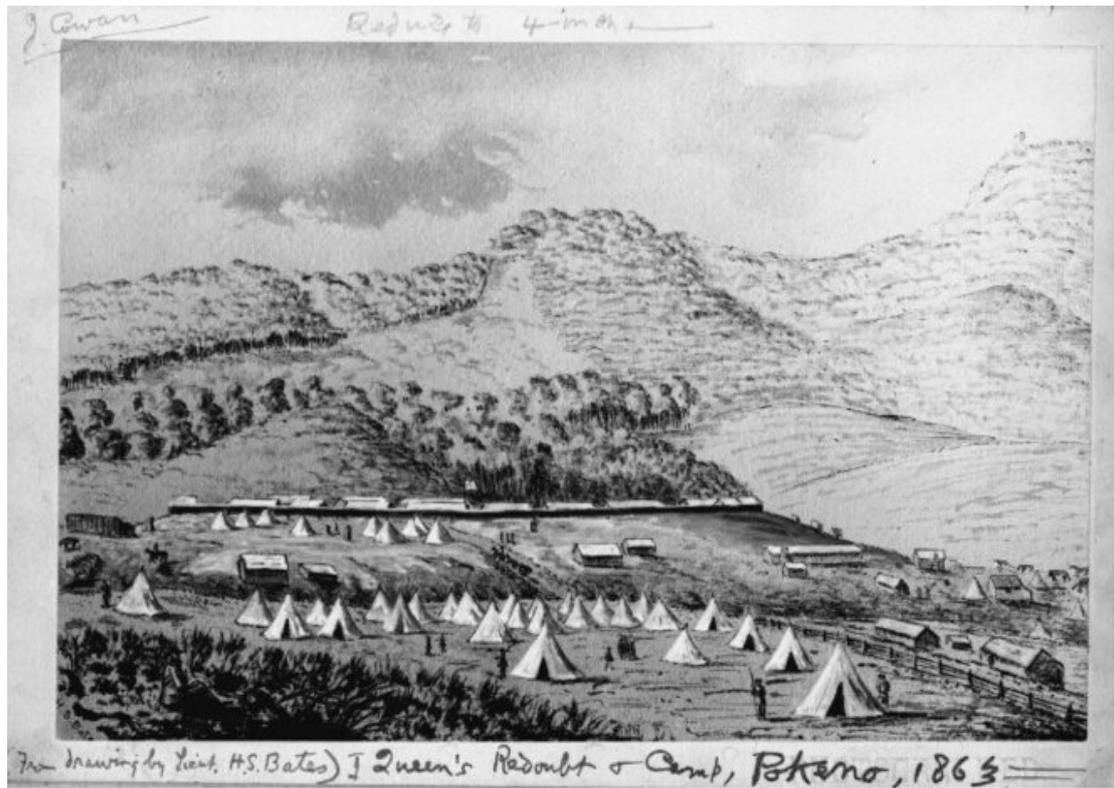


Figure 49: HS Bates 'Queen's Redoubt & Camp, Pokeno' (1863) published in James Cowan's *The New Zealand Wars* (1922). PUBL-0054-1-241, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

After a few violent skirmishes, war proper broke out on 12 July 1863 when troops under General Cameron crossed the Mangatawhiri Stream a few miles south of Queen's Redoubt. The village of Pokino was destroyed by 'an unauthorised expedition of soldiers' from Queen's Redoubt on the eve of the invasion of the Waikato. The kāinga may have already been abandoned, but its stocks of food and other supplies were certainly commandeered by the army.<sup>10</sup> As Cameron made his first moves against Maori entrenched at Koheroa only a few miles south of Pokeno, a body of Ngati Paoa were harassing a British supply convoy at Martin's Farm on the Great South Road. The British were pursued back towards Drury by the Maori war party, suffering 16 killed or wounded and the loss of horses and wagons. As a result, Cameron had to spend time and resources fortifying and manning the redoubts along his supply line from Drury. Maori continued to operate behind British lines in the Hunua Ranges and elsewhere during the hostilities, causing considerable fear among the settlers in the area.

The Waikato war ended with the Maori defeat at the battle of Orakau in April 1864 and a mutually recognised boundary line was established at the Puniu River to the north, Lake Taupo to the east and through north Taranaki to the south.

<sup>10</sup> Nigel Prickett 'The History and Archaeology of Queen's Redoubt, South Auckland' *Records of Auckland Museum* Vol. 40, p. 7.



Figure 50: Officers of the Imperial forces outside the mess whare at the 12th Regiment camp, Pokeno. From left to right: Lieutenant Murphy (12th), Lieutenant Lowry (12th), Captain Miller (12th), Major Hutchings (12th), Urquhart (65th), Lieutenant Mair (12th) and Captain Williams (12th). Photograph taken circa 1861 by William Temple. PA1-q-250-40-2, Urquhart Album, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Colonial surveying and land allocation went hand in hand with military action during the mid-1860s. In June 1863 the town sections and rural allotments of the future town of Pokeno were put to auction, including lots surrounding the redoubt and along the Great South Road. All were purchased, although many were bought by land speculators who later on sold them. Subsequently, sections were also acquired by the Auckland Provincial Government for allocation to new settlers under the short-lived Waikato Immigration Scheme.

As an early part of that scheme, the *Helenslee* sailed from the Clyde in Scotland on 10 September 1864 with 334 passengers aboard. The ship docked in Auckland on 22 December.<sup>11</sup> The *Helenslee* settlers were described as 'mostly Scotch' and predominately Presbyterian. The Pokeno valley was promoted to the settlers as fertile, adjacent to the newly completed Great South Road and with easy access to the Thames Road and the Waikato River, then the main means of passage south into the recently confiscated lands of the Waikato. Auspiciously, perhaps, the immigrants' arrival in the valley was heralded by the sight of large comet in the south-western sky.

The *Helenslee* was only one among several ships carrying new migrants that arrived at Auckland in late 1864. There was therefore considerable pressure for accommodation in the city and at the migrant camps. The *Helenslee* migrants were finally moved by cart from Drury to Pokeno in January 1865. Ten to twelve families were in the first convoy along with large quantities of stores and equipment. They were initially accommodated in the Queen's Redoubt, its garrison recently reduced to that of a maintenance standard. McLean's Canteen outside the redoubt and the Ngati Tamaoho flourmill, commandeered from its owners at the outbreak of hostilities, were also used to accommodate the new settlers. On the allocation of the town and farming sections, the settlers moved into tents on their holdings, where in some cases they remained for as long as ten months. With the war still being fought to the south, there were times when rumours of marauding Kingitanga war parties and fear of imminent attack forced the settlers to retreat inside the Queen's Redoubt.

The immigration scheme settlers were allocated quarter-acre town sections and ten-acre rural sections. They were required to work on and improve the sections for two years after which a Crown Grant would be issued, giving them ownership. Supplementary employment for male settlers was provided undertaking public works such as road building. However, with Government funds running low, many found it a difficult living and some men were forced to leave their families in Pokeno to seek work gum digging and labouring. When gold was discovered at Thames later in the decade many men left families behind to try their luck. The Rev Vicesimus Lush reported in September 1868 that '(a)lmost all the men

<sup>11</sup> *Daily Southern Cross* 25 October 1864, p. 4.

have left for the diggings and some have sent sufficient money home to their wives to purchase cows, pigs, etc. Though the village is not so populous as it was, it has a more thriving appearance.<sup>12</sup>

The Presbyterian minister Thomas Norrie from Papakura visited the settlement in March 1865 and held Sunday service in the chapel at the Redoubt and at the settlement itself. Anglican Bishop Selwyn also preached regularly at the redoubt chapel.<sup>13</sup> An Anglican Church was built on the north side of the redoubt in 1863 but within a few years had succumbed to fire or some other disaster.<sup>14</sup> On Sunday 11 November 1883, the Presbyterian congregation of Pokeno celebrated the opening of a new church. It was built adjacent to the Redoubt on the site of the former garrison library, earlier destroyed by fire. Grice Aked gifted a new site for St Andrew's in 1916, at the corner of Fraser and Avon Roads, to which the church was subsequently moved. In more modest accommodation, Catholic church services were held for some years in a former billiard room in Market Street, where the Vege Barn now stands.

### Village life

Historically, Pokeno was a more dispersed settlement than it might appear to be today. While the present town straddles the Great South Road north of Tani Te Whiora (Leatham's) Stream and the site of Queen's Redoubt, this was not the case prior to the 1920s or even later. Although place names have changed over time, it appears that Pokeno Valley was located east of the present-day junction of SH1 and SH2, in the vicinity of the Anglican church of St Mary, which was built in 1899-1900. Pokeno Camp, a military camp used prior to the building of the redoubt, was north west of the present village, on Helenslee Road north of the cemetery. Another node of settlement was Pokeno Hill, due north of the redoubt and near the later site of the Presbyterian church.

Using the village schools as markers of population density, Pokeno's changing centre(s) can be plotted. A school was established at Pokeno Hill in 1866 to serve the needs of settlers on the eastern side of the valley. This may be the Presbyterian schoolroom in which the first trustees of the newly established Pokeno Road Board of Franklin County met on 15 January 1870. With a roll as high as fifty pupils this school competed for Education Board funding with the Pokeno Valley School, established in 1878. Another school was opened at the redoubt in 1870, closing in 1888. Pokeno Hill School closed the following year at which time Pokeno Valley School became the only school. Located northeast of the town at Shank's Corner, it was eventually deemed too far for younger children to walk to and a side school for children to Standard Two was set up in the town with an opening roll of 40 pupils. By 1927, with the population of Pokeno steadily drifting south to cluster around the railway station, post office and other facilities, a move began to close the Valley School and shift the school to its present location. Eventually, in 1961 the Valley School was replaced by Pokeno School at its present location on Pokeno Road.<sup>15</sup> By this time the population of the village was 515.<sup>16</sup>

By 1871 the Helenslee and other settlers had made considerable progress in converting the town from a military outpost to a thriving township. Flax mills, farming, bush clearing and road construction had all brought improvements to the area. As many as six flax mills are recorded as operating within the valley during the late nineteenth century. Most appear to have been operated by the Dean family, Helenslee settlers whose descendants are still associated with the town. The first flax mill was set up by John Dean on Mr Clarke's farm, using water from the Tani Te Whiora (Leatham's) Stream. It may be that this used the former flourmill operated by Ngati Tamaoho. Another operated by a Mr Dougal employed 10 or 12 men and produced 8 tons of processed flax per month. Flax for the mill was brought from Underwood's farm, the mill being located on the Tani Te Whiora (Leatham's) Stream at Pokeno. Several mills were later converted to be run by stationary engines powered by coal brought from Huntly.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Nona Morris *Early Days in Franklin* (1965) p. 167.

<sup>13</sup> *Daily Southern Cross* 18 March 1865, p.5.

<sup>14</sup> Morris, p. 167.

<sup>15</sup> *Pokeno School Reunion 1866-1991 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> October 1991*

<sup>16</sup> Historical information courtesy of Robin Startup, NZ Post Historian, pers comm with Ann McEwan, 3 February 2008.

<sup>17</sup> M.R. Dean, 'Flax Mills', typescript lodged at Franklin Library, Pukekohe.



Figure 51: former Pirritt house, Razorback Road, Pokeno, c.1874/5. Photograph shows James family in residence, c. 1900. Richard Sisam Collection.

At the same time farms such as that of Mr Austin were well stocked and apparently thriving.<sup>18</sup> Puriri forest on the hills was also exploited during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A timber mill was in operation, owned by Mr Clarke, which used the Tani Te Whiora Stream to float logs down to the Mangatawhiri Stream and hence to the Waikato. As more land came into production for dairy herds a creamery was built at the foot of the hill below the Anglican Church. The daily deliveries by horse and cart made the factory an important meeting place for the community.<sup>19</sup> Robert Shanks (a Helenslee settler) built many of the permanent houses in the area, making bricks for their chimneys from local clay.<sup>20</sup>

A blacksmith's shop was an essential part of any colonial village, and in 1894 Pokeno's was operated by Mr G. Lewis. In 1922 Mr H. Draffin bought the shop from the then owner Mr L. Larson for use as a garage supplying petrol and repair services to local drivers and to the increasing number of vehicles passing through the village each day. Motorists faced challenges on each side of Pokeno, with the steep Bombay Hills to the north and with the regular flooding of the river at Mercer. In the early days of motor transport, when travelling north towards Auckland, it was important to have a full tank of petrol, as older vehicles such as Model T Fords relied on gravity to feed the petrol to the carburettor. If the level in the petrol tank was too low, vehicles had no option but to reverse up the hill. The journey north was eased in 1930 with the opening of the first deviation.

<sup>18</sup> *Daily Southern Cross* 10 March 1871, p.3.

<sup>19</sup> The Waikato Co-operative Dairy Company opened a dairy factory in Tuakau in November 1917 to replace one that had operated at Mercer. HG Philpott, *A History of the New Zealand Dairy Industry, 1840-1935*, Government Printer, Wellington, 1937, pp. 159-60.

<sup>20</sup> The Pirrit and Dean houses, on Razorback Road and Dean Road respectively, appear to have original chimneystacks that could have been made with Shanks' bricks.



Figure 52: Draffin's garage at the foot of the Razorback and New Deviation *Waikato* (Hamilton, 1928) p. 20.

The main trunk rail line reached Pokeno in 1874, running from Auckland via Pukekohe and Tuakau. Work had begun on a line south from Auckland towards the Waikato in 1865, but was abandoned when the military imperative eased. Work recommenced in 1872.<sup>21</sup> Prior to the arrival of the railway, Pokeno's location on the Great South Road gave it some advantage over Tuakau and Pukekohe, but this was now lost. With the advent of motor transport, in the early twentieth century, Pokeno's importance as a rest and fuel stop at the foot of the Bombay Hills was revived.



Figure 53: Pokeno Post Office, c. 1930 [before 1934 extension], Lucy Millard Collection.

Postal services began with the establishment of a military postal service at Queen's Redoubt in July 1863. As early as May 1864 a six-horse coach service was being run between Pokeno and Auckland by Quick & Company using Cobb coaches.<sup>22</sup> In 1863 a twice-weekly postal service was run between the

<sup>21</sup> WA Pierre *North Island Main Trunk* p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> *Startup*, p. 57.

Queen's Redoubt and Auckland, carrying hundreds of letters each week from soldiers fighting in the Waikato. On 22 August an official Post Office was established at Pokeno for the 'convenience of the troops'. The office's original name was Mclean Township. With the reduction of the Queen's Redoubt to a maintenance standard in October 1865 the redoubt post office was closed.<sup>23</sup> A second post office was established at Pokeno Valley in 1879, closing in 1926 after a new Post Office (1924) was built in Pokeno itself. Prior to 1926 mail was sorted at the schools for delivery home by the children.

As with all colonial settlements, fire was an ever-present danger to life and property. In December 1885 the Queen's Hotel was burned to the ground.<sup>24</sup> It had been built immediately southwest of the redoubt in 1866 by a Mr George to provide accommodation to travellers moving between Auckland and the Waikato. In 1865 Warne's Hotel was opened on Bluff Road, south of the town. (Bluff Road was and remains the southern remnant of Hayr's Line leading to the river at Te Ia or the Bluff, on the Waikato River west of the mouth of the Mangatawhiri.) In January 1873 a house owned by Christopher Leatham was burned to the ground in an apparent act of arson. One Helenslee settler family met with tragedy of another kind when, in February 1885, Robert Pendergast of Pokeno Valley murdered his wife at their farm several miles west of the railway station.<sup>25</sup>

A military cemetery was established north of the present town, on Austin's farm at what is now the corner of Munro and Helenslee Road. A memorial to the imperial and colonial troops killed during the war of 1863-64 dominates the small graveyard, which also contains the graves of several early settlers. An archaeological survey of the site in 2005 indicated that there are at least two and possibly three further graves outside the present fenced area of the cemetery. It has been recommended that the burial site be extended to include these graves.<sup>26</sup>

In the early decades of the twentieth century James Brown, storekeeper, and his son James, who ran the village bakery, were at the commercial heart of the village. One or the other is recorded as operating a taxi service in 1930, when Pokeno had a population of around 380 and boasted postal, telegraph, savings bank and telephone services. The village also had a butcher, H.F. Draffin, a draper, a postman, a greengrocer, a boarding house run by Miss S. Nixon, and both a stationmaster (C. D. Woodhead) and a postmaster (Robert Patton).

ANZAC Day (25 April) 1921 saw the dedication of a World War One memorial at the crossing of Market Road and Great South Road. The obelisk on a square plinth memorialises 52 local men who served in the war, including the twelve who died. Like many small rural communities in New Zealand, Pokeno suffered losses out of proportion to its size. (The 1916 census recorded a population of 362). Like the rest of New Zealand and much of the world, Pokeno also suffered in the influenza epidemic of 1918. In November of that year it was recorded in the *Pukekohe and Waiuku Times* that '(w)omen from Pokeno came down to help (the sick) at Mercer, but that only helped to spread the infection to Pokeno.'<sup>27</sup> A year before the monument was unveiled, Pokeno Hall was erected adjacent to Market Square. It was funded by private donations, possibly as a war memorial hall like so many others of this era. A larger hall was added in 1928-30, relegating the original building to the role of supper room. The hall has been condemned as unsafe for several years.

Pokeno's rural mail delivery service was in operation by the 1920s, a decade which also saw the first steps in Franklin County towards the introduction of electricity and the telephone. In 1938 work began on a direct rail link between Pokeno and Paeroa, on the eastern side of the Hauraki Plains. About 27 kilometres of track formation had been completed when work stopped in 1940 due to the Second World War. The track would have reduced the distance from Auckland to the Bay of Plenty by 80 kilometres.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Startup, p. 55.

<sup>24</sup> *Evening Post* 17 December 1885, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Te Aroha News* 28 February 1885, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Foster and Associates 'Pokeno Structure Plan Archaeological Assessment' (2007), p.14.

<sup>27</sup> *Pukekohe and Waiuku Times* 15 November 1918, quoted in Geoffrey Rice *Black November*, p. 216.

<sup>28</sup> Churchman and Hurst, p. 109.



Figure 54: Door in Pokeno Hall bearing inscription 'Dalton's Vaudeville Entertainers – All Star Show – Played Here on Feb. 2 1931 – First Show to Play in This Hall – Built 1930'. A McEwan.

By 1940, with Pokeno Valley having lost its post office, the community had focussed itself on the station, post office and commercial buildings on the Great South Road, north of the site of the Queen's Redoubt. A Plunket Society was active, as were the Pokeno Tennis Club, the Pokeno Football Club (R. Dean, Secretary) and the Pokeno Women's Division of the Farmers' Union (Miss S. Otto, Secretary). Retail and farming supply outlets included Wallace & Co. and Farmers Trading Company stores.

During World War Two, a group of Japanese women and children were interned at a house on the south-east corner of Market and Regina Streets.<sup>29</sup> The internees had been evacuated from Tonga and whilst in Pokeno they were under the close supervision of Policewoman Edna Pearce.<sup>30</sup> Pearce was amongst New Zealand's first intake of women police recruits in 1941 and she was initially responsible for a group of seven women and nine children. According to her biography, Pearce and the translator who accompanied her from Auckland lived in a Public Works Department hut, whilst the Japanese shared a 7-room house with live-in caretakers, said to be a Mr and Mrs Cooper. The latter was a retired nurse formerly of Norfolk Island.<sup>31</sup> Two more Japanese children were born in Pokeno in 1942. Local residents recall seeing the internees going for chaperoned walks during their time in the village between December 1941 and February 1943.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> This house is still extant but has been altered. Owner given as GV McNulty on FEBD map 1. Helen McComb & Lucy Millard, personal recollections, 17 March 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Jamie Mackay, 'Pearce, Edna Bertha 1906 - 1995'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>

<sup>31</sup> Helen McComb & Lucy Millard, personal recollections, 17 March 2008.

<sup>32</sup> See also V Fedshaw, *Tact and Tenacity: New Zealand Women in Policing*, Grantham House, Wellington, 2007.



Figure 55: Pokeno War Memorial, *Waikato* (Hamilton, 1928) p. 20.

Road construction and maintenance continued to be a source of employment for the town throughout the twentieth century. The Public Works Department, later the Ministry of Works and Development, provided housing in Pokeno for its local employees. Its depot was in Marlborough Street. The town also had Railways Department housing on Marlborough and Regina Streets and Maori Affairs housing on Pokeno Road.<sup>33</sup> In the mid-1950s the local economy benefited from the construction by the Government of a coal fired power station at Meremere, 14 kilometres south on State Highway One. Work commenced on the power station in 1956 and it was commissioned in 1958.

In common with the rest of New Zealand, recreational activities such as rugby, tennis and dancing were popular in Pokeno, which was especially known as a base for duck shooting in the surrounding wetlands, streams and the nearby Waikato River. The first rugby team was formed in 1896 and competed throughout the wider district. Tennis courts were among the first community sporting facilities to be constructed, with courts at the Valley School from 1910. Dancing was a popular activity made more enjoyable by the building of halls at Pokeno Valley in the 1890s and at Pokeno itself in 1920. Roy Needham showed movies in the latter during the mid-century. Amateur horse racing was also enjoyed in the early days of the community.

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<sup>33</sup> Bill Puru recalled that all of the MoW housing on Hitchen Road has been removed, but three remain in Marlborough Street. Modified railway houses are still extant on Marlborough Street (3) and Regina Street (1) and 1950s Maori Affairs houses are still extant on Pokeno Road, according to Mr Puru. Pers comm. to Kathryn Mercer, 17/3/08.



Figure 56: Shell Station and Pokeno Tea Rooms (Geo. Rodgers Proprietor), c. 1927, later Harris Butchery (left) & Willis & Campbell Store (right). Glenda Harris Collection.

By the mid-1960s, however, the pace of life in Pokeno had begun to slow a little, with the population having reached a plateau and only a modest level of building activity. Between 1961 and the century's end the village population settled between 500 and 600 and was a gradual ebbing away of shops and services.<sup>34</sup> That said Pokeno's position as a refreshment stop on State Highway One cushioned it, to some extent, from downturns in the rural economy such as occurred in the late 1980s.

After more than a century as a popular rest stop on the Great South Road, Pokeno was bypassed by State Highway 1 in 1995. Before this an estimated 11,000 vehicles passed through the town each day. With the bypass some Pokeno residents predicted that the town would go into decline, such as had occurred with Te Kauwhata further south. One attempt to forestall this was the transformation in 2000 of the town into *Jenniferann.com*, whereby an entrepreneur persuaded the Pokeno community to change the town's name for a year and become the physical locale associated with an internet site selling women's lingerie. The town's best known commercial outlet, the Pokeno Bacon Shop, also tried to ensure that Pokeno was not forgotten by travellers on the bypass, through advertising and other promotional efforts. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the future prospects of Pokeno were significantly altered by development of the township to house a population of c.6,000 people. Large-scale residential development has already commenced and is transforming the appearance of this strategic Waikato settlement.

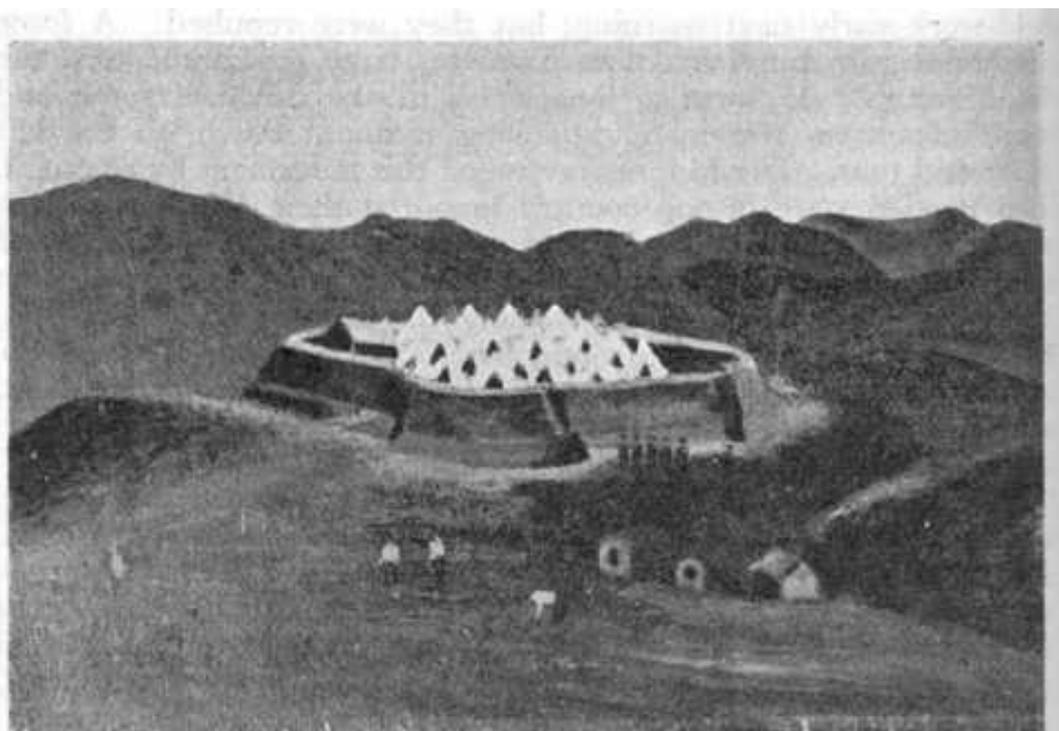
### East of Pokeno

State Highway 2, the main highway to the Hauraki district, begins at Pokeno and passes through Mangatawhiri, Kopuku and Maramarua. In the vicinity of Maramarua the highway has been the scene of many fatal road accidents, including that of historian Michael King and his wife Maria Jungowska in 2004. Lesser-grade roads from SH2 lead north to Happy Valley, Paparimu and the Hunua Ranges, and north-east through Mangatangi to Miranda. These localities were in Maori ownership until the confiscations of 1864.

Miranda became the point at which the Confiscation Line changed direction from roughly north-south to east-west, and Mangatangi was the point at which the line turned north again to embrace most of the Hunua Ranges. Most of this northern area was granted to Maori owners, whereas to the south and west the land was granted to Maori or sold to Europeans. Subsequently, much of the Maori-owned land was occupied and farmed by Europeans, however large tracts of the Hunuas remained in native bush. Surveys cut up the land into large (200-1000 acres) parcels, some of which were then granted to Maori

<sup>34</sup> *Franklin County Pokeno Report – Investigation of Future Planning Proposals*, February 1973 and *Franklin District Growth Strategy 2051*.

owners.<sup>35</sup> In 1867 Esk Redoubt became part of a 300-acre grant to Hori Rakina.<sup>36</sup> Many of the parcels in the Wharekawa No. 2 and 3 Blocks were occupied and farmed by Europeans by 1910 when it was subdivided.<sup>37</sup>



The Esk Redoubt

Figure 57: 'The Esk Redoubt' James Cowan *The New Zealand Wars: a history of the Maori campaigns and the pioneering period* Volume 1 (1845–64) p. 322.

In 1863-64, in a bid by the government to prevent an attack on Auckland from the south, a line of defensive positions was built from the major bend on the Waikato River near Tuakau across to the Firth of Thames. The redoubts were (from west to east): Alexandra Redoubt, Havelock near Mercer, Surrey, Esk and Miranda Redoubts. The large Queen's Redoubt at Pokeno provided a base to man and equip the outlying posts. Construction on the Surrey Redoubt began on 7 December 1863, to be the command post for the 70<sup>th</sup> Regiment. It was within sight of General Cameron's headquarters at Queen's Redoubt. The Esk Redoubt, under construction by late November 1863, was within sight of the Surrey and Miranda Redoubts.

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<sup>35</sup> E.g. SO 147.

<sup>36</sup> ML 755.

<sup>37</sup> DP 7211.

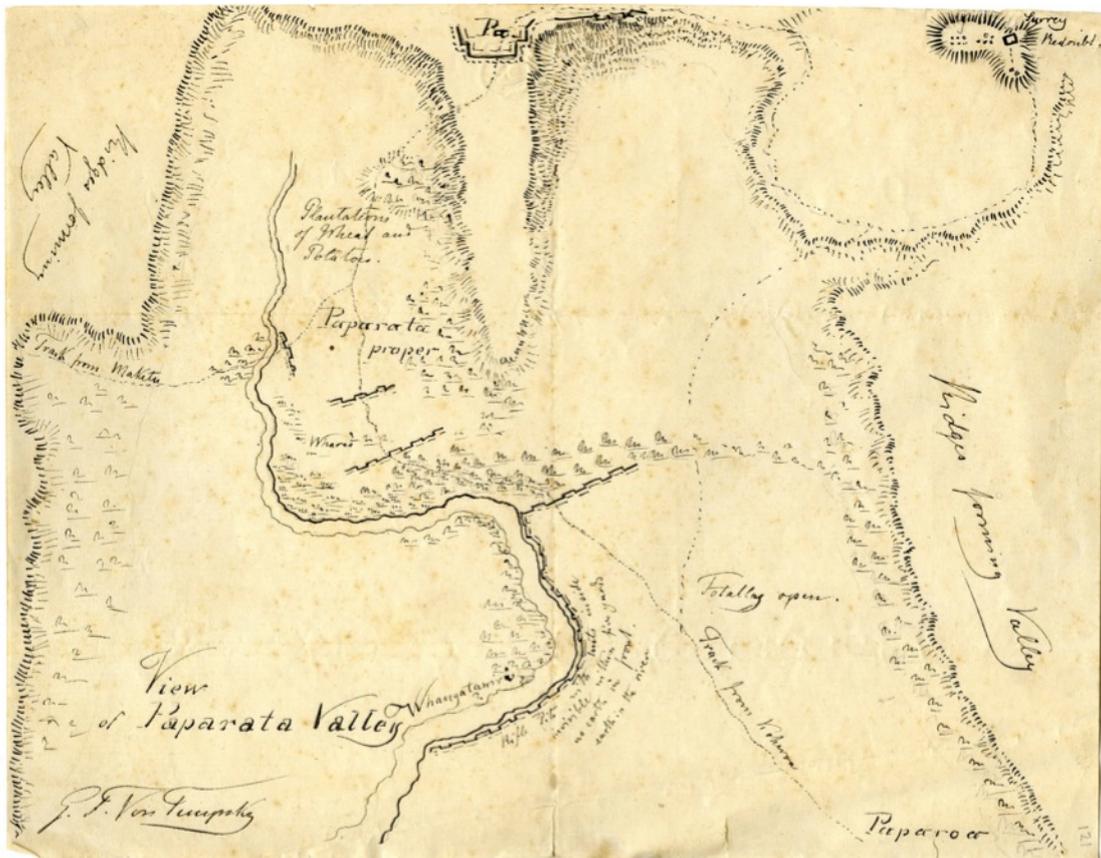


Figure 58: 'Sketch map of the Paparata Valley, Surrey Redoubt and Paparoa' drawn by Gustavus von Tempisky. Archives NZ G13 Box 3/ 121.

Land adjacent to the Mangatawhiri [Maungatawhiri] River was surveyed in 1867 and then became available for purchase.<sup>38</sup> Today Mangatawhiri is a dairying and market gardening district. The settlement, which includes a school and hall, is centred on the intersection of Mangatawhiri and McKenzie Roads, just north of SH2 and several kilometres from the Waikato River. The school was established in 1875. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the local post office was being run from the school.<sup>39</sup>

In 1895 the NZ Dairy Association established a creamery on the Keith property, but it later moved to Lyons Rd beside the Mangatawhiri Stream. The factory was converted to casein production before the First World War and continued until 1939 when the Japanese contracts ended. It re-opened for a short time during the Second World War, then closed.<sup>40</sup> A manager's house was built nearby.<sup>41</sup>

The upper reaches of the Mangatawhiri Stream are in the Hunua Ranges and have been dammed to form a reservoir for Auckland City. Construction of the dam was under way in November 1963. The reservoir is a popular trout fishing spot.

<sup>38</sup> SO 149, 150.

<sup>39</sup> *Cyclopedia* p. 699.

<sup>40</sup> More p. 113

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.mangatangi.org.nz/mangatangi-landmarks/2-mangatawhiri-valley-creamery>

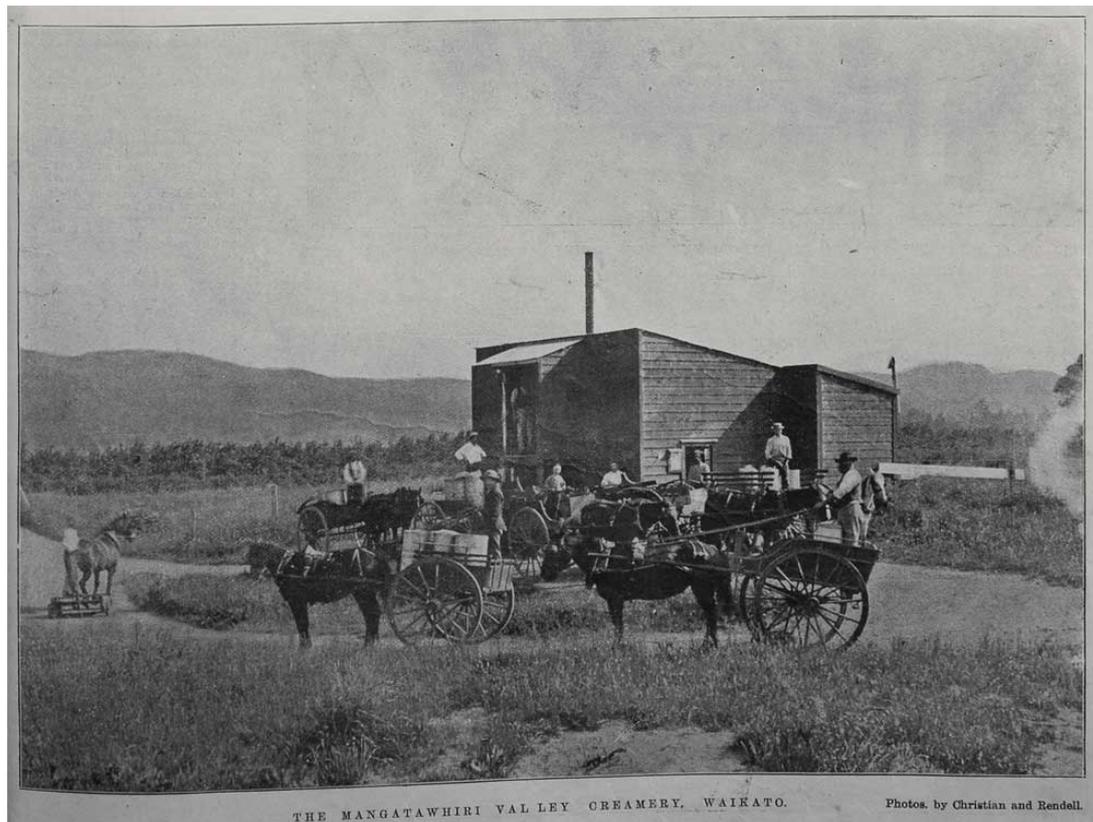


Figure 59: The Mangatawhiri Valley Creamery. Photographers: Christian and Rendell. *Auckland Weekly News* 13 April 1900. Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19000413-7-2

## Mangatangi

After trout ova were released in 1885, fishing in the Mangatangi area became a popular sport.<sup>42</sup> A bridge was constructed over the Mangatangi Stream in 1896, making access much easier for local settlers and visitors.<sup>43</sup> Another was built in 1922.<sup>44</sup> That bridge was washed away in 1966, but was replaced in the following year.<sup>45</sup>

A post and telegraph office opened in the Bentley home in 1910. A school was opened in 1919, with a new building in 1923 serving a roll of 30.<sup>46</sup> In 1932 a scheme for employing 60 men to clear the Mangatangi of willows was proposed.<sup>47</sup> In February 1932 a relief camp at Mangatangi was flooded and two men were drowned.<sup>48</sup>

The first hall in the district was erected in 1940. When major additions were made about 20 years later, the original hall became the supper room.<sup>49</sup> Montana Holdings planted a vineyard in Mangatangi in 1967. At the time it was the biggest single vineyard in New Zealand and in 1973 had the first mechanical harvester in New Zealand.<sup>50</sup> A new Presbyterian church opened in 2010, on Mangatangi Road where it meets Kaiaua Road. Previously the congregation had worshipped in the Mangatangi Hall.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Auckland Star* 2 September 1885, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> *New Zealand Herald* 4 December 1896, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> *Pukekohe & Waiuku Times* 24 August 1923, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.mangatangi.org.nz/mangatangi-landmarks/18-stubbs-bridge>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.mangatangi.org.nz/mangatangi-landmarks/35-mangatangi-school>

<sup>47</sup> *New Zealand Herald* 11 February 1932, p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> *New Zealand Herald* 5 February 1936, p. 10.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.mangatangi.org.nz/mangatangi-landmarks/4-mangatangi-hall>

<sup>50</sup> More, p. 129.

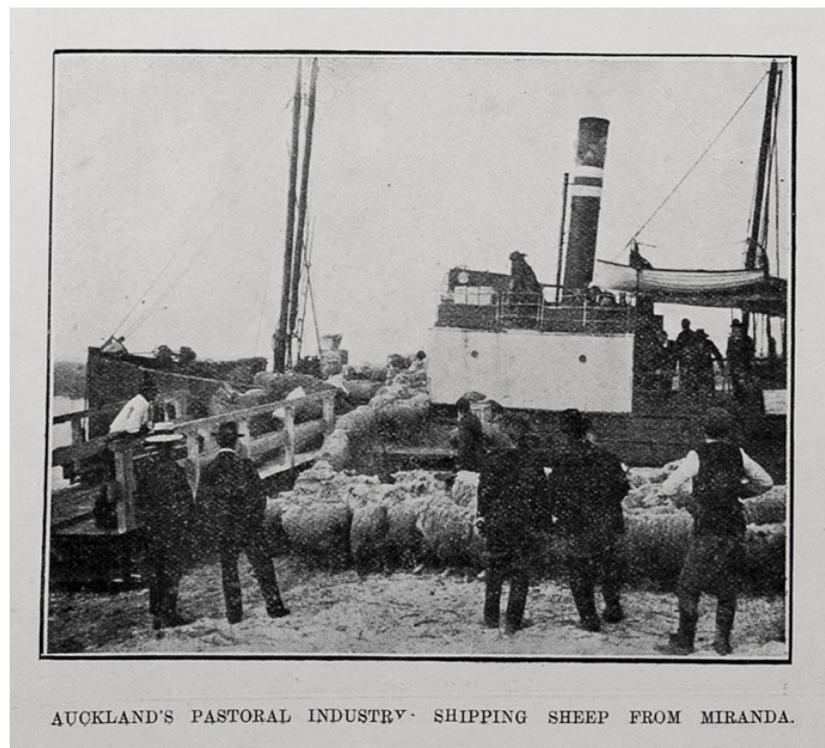
<sup>51</sup> <http://presbyterian.org.nz/for-parishes/press-go-for-church-growth/press-go-initiatives/crossroads>



Figure 60: The Mangatangi Bridge over the Mangatangi Stream, July 1925. Footprints 03285, South Auckland Research Centre, Auckland Libraries.

## Miranda

The easternmost military redoubt at Miranda was accessible from the Firth of Thames and provided a defensive base in case of attacks by Maori from the Waikato.<sup>52</sup> A wharf was built on the sand spit prior to 1913.<sup>53</sup> Miranda School opened in 1885, was converted for use as a Presbyterian church in c.1962 and has been in residential use since c.2001.



AUCKLAND'S PASTORAL INDUSTRY · SHIPPING SHEEP FROM MIRANDA.

Figure 61: Loading sheep at Miranda, 1908. *Auckland Weekly News* 22 October 1908, p. 12. AWNS-19081022-12-5, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

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<sup>52</sup> SO 160.

<sup>53</sup> SO 19558.

Today Miranda is known for its hot springs, the seabird sanctuary and the Miranda Naturalist Trust Centre, however these are not located within WDC's rohe. A war memorial hall, opened in 1955, was deliberately burnt down in 1998 after Franklin District Council sold it to a private buyer. The war memorial plaque was transferred from the hall to a new memorial, consisting of a wall, seat and tree, at Miranda Cemetery (also not WDC).<sup>54</sup>

## Kopuku and Maramarua

The Maramarua Creek was navigable by canoes and shallow draught vessels for a considerable distance. In 1862, with gold having been discovered in the Coromandel, Waikato iwi considered taking produce through to the diggings via the Maramarua [Whangamarino] Creek and across a short portage.<sup>55</sup> The Maramarua Creek was once the boundary between the Waikato and Franklin County Councils and in 1876, when the counties were formed, the area north of the mouth of the Maramarua where it flowed into the Waikato was Manukau County.

By November 1866 a large flax mill was erected at Whangamarino, utilising the extensive flax growing in the Maramarua Swamp.<sup>56</sup> Coal was discovered between the Whangamarino and Maramarua Creeks in 1869 and the property advertised for private sale.<sup>57</sup> Further prospecting followed and John Foote, believed to be the first European settler in the district, discovered coal on his Bridgewater Farm, Kopuku in c.1871, by which time it was being referred to as 'the Maramarua Coalfield'.<sup>58</sup> The first mine closed in 1878 but was re-opened as the Miranda Mine in 1885 by the Miranda Coal and Iron Company.<sup>59</sup> In 1880 Foote also opened a coal mine in the area, a short distance from the much later large open-cast mine. Foote's son Thomas bought land at Foote's Road in 1892 and worked a farm and milled flax on the property.<sup>60</sup> The coalfield was bought by the Kopuku Colliery and the coal worked in an open cast mine. Coal from the mine was later the main source for the Meremere power station. The field now belongs to Glen Afton Collieries Ltd.

Meanwhile, Maramarua School had opened in 1894, as a half-time school sharing a teacher with Waerenga.<sup>61</sup> An additional five acres was surveyed for a school site in 1931 and gazetted in 1932.<sup>62</sup> A school also operated at Kopuku by 1912.<sup>63</sup>

A war memorial was unveiled at Maramarua in May 1924 to commemorate local men who served in WWI; inscriptions to commemorate servicemen from later conflicts were added in subsequent years.<sup>64</sup>

In 1928 Maramarua Forest was established by the Forest Service, with 435 ha of radiata pine being planted; this was increased in 1929 when a further 223 ha of radiata and 540 ha of Corsican pine were planted.<sup>65</sup> Conscientious objectors were employed at the forest during WWII. Milling began in November 1951 and by 1976, most of the timber went to Carter (Maramarua) Ltd, who had established a large mill to the east of Coalfields Road.<sup>66</sup>

Maramarua's automatic telephone exchange was installed soon after 1955; the small building still stands on SH2 near the intersection of Coalfields Road.<sup>67</sup> Carter Merchants owned a property alongside SH 2 on which eight houses were built in about 1988.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/miranda-first-world-war-memorial>

<sup>55</sup> *New Zealander* 6 August 1862, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> *Daily Southern Cross* 1 December 1866, p. 6.

<sup>57</sup> *Colonist* 3 August 1869, Page 2; *Daily Southern Cross* April 1870, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Lumsden, p. 18; *Daily Southern Cross* 5 February 1872, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> More, pp. 139-40.

<sup>60</sup> Lumsden, p. 18.

<sup>61</sup> More, p. 169.

<sup>62</sup> SO 26096.

<sup>63</sup> *New Zealand Herald* 25 July 1912, p. 9.

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/maramarua-first-world-war-memorial>

<sup>65</sup> More, p. 128.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>67</sup> SO 37628.

<sup>68</sup> DPS 54766.



Figure 62: Carter Consolidated mill and associated housing at Maramarua, 15 October 1953. WA-33752-F, White's Aviation, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

## Mangatawhiri River

The Mangatawhiri River, three kilometres to the south of Pokeno, was one of the Waikato's most significant geographic features in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century; Tawhiao having declared that if the Imperial troops crossed it that would be a declaration of war. The military road was extended as far as Mangatawhiri in March 1863.<sup>69</sup> In early July 1863 a fortified camp was established by imperial troops on the northern bank of the Mangatawhiri, near its junction with the Waikato River. This was the place where General Cameron's troops embarked when they crossed the Mangatawhiri River on 12 July 1863. Surveys were called for the construction of a bridge across the Mangatawhiri River in July 1866, as part of the construction of Great South Road.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> South Auckland Research Centre, FRA; III, Footprints 04278 notes; <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/pokeno-nz-wars-memorial>

<sup>70</sup> *Daily Southern Cross* 4 July 1866, p. 1.

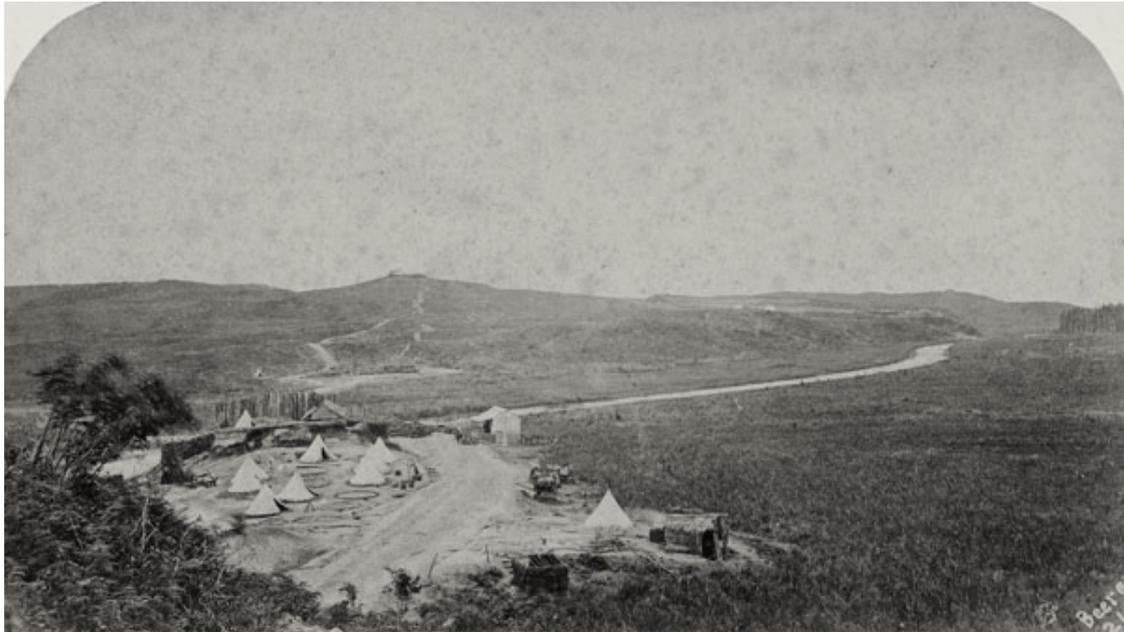


Figure 63: A view looking south over the naval camp beside the Mangatawhiri River, January 1864. The Eglinton Redoubt is in profile on the skyline and the Buckingham Redoubt is in distance far right. Footprints 04728, South Auckland Research Centre, Auckland Libraries.

## Mercer

Originally called Te Paina, then Point Russell, the locale was finally named in honour of Captain Mercer who was killed at the Battle of Rangiriri. Mercer was constituted a town district in 1914 and by 1951 had a population of about 400.<sup>71</sup> At that time it had a railway station on the NIMT, a post office, school, hotel, boarding house, tea rooms, sawmill, motor garage and stores.

For many years the road south from Auckland ended at Mercer, for wheeled traffic at least. Passengers and freight were taken from Mercer up the river by paddle steamer and because of this it became an important stopping place. In 1875 when the railway from Auckland reached Mercer, the situation was much the same – Mercer was essentially a riverine port. In 1866 tenders were called for the construction of a wharf in the settlement.<sup>72</sup> At the same time road construction employed 100 men.<sup>73</sup>

An 1879 survey plan (SO 2131) shows Mercer's buildings at the time: a hall, the Point Russell Hotel facing the river with its large stables, a store, the Railway Hotel, two buildings on the Telegraph Reserve, a long set of buildings called 'Station House etc', an engine shed and goods shed beside the railway line, a Court House Reserve with two buildings, and the school. Notable are several small buildings along the foreshore, but very few houses. The wharf siding is drawn as coming from the main railway line; the railway tunnel is also marked.

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<sup>71</sup> Bradbury, p. 44

<sup>72</sup> *Daily Southern Cross* 4 July 1866, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> *Daily Southern Cross* 1 August 1866, p. 5.

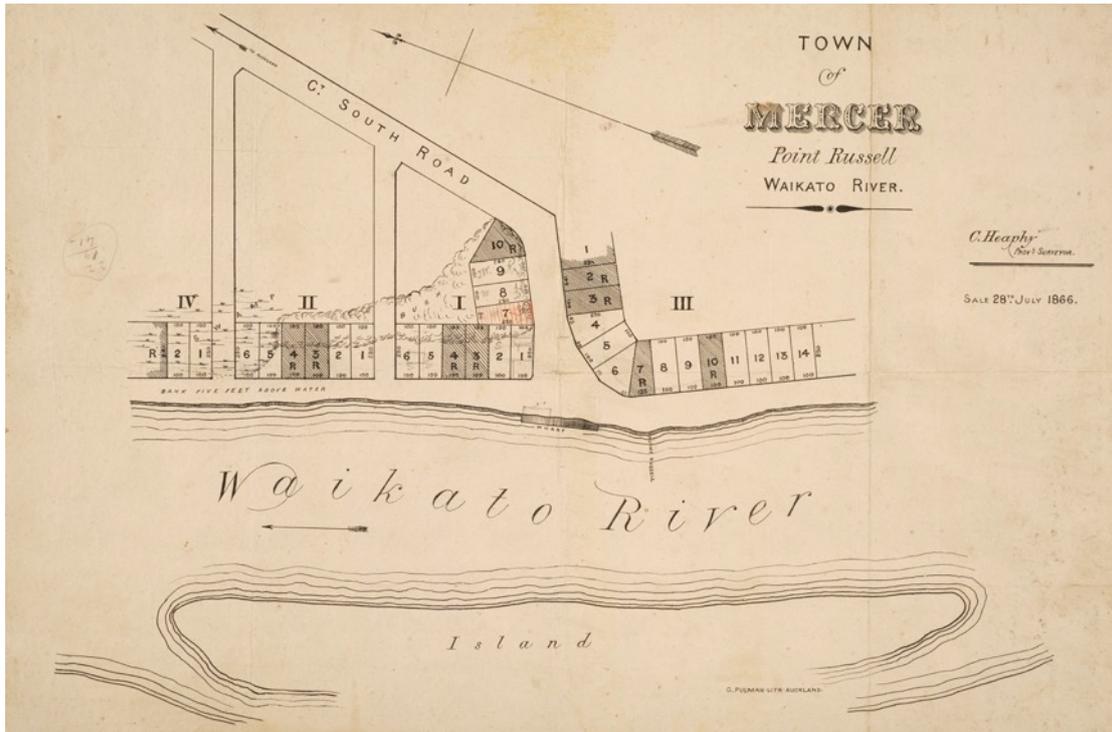


Figure 64: Town of Mercer, Point Russell, 1866. Shows allotments for sale, and the wharf along the river bank; north is to left. NZ Map 4498-20, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.



Figure 65: Mercer in 1866. ½-096119-G, DM Beere Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.



Figure 66: Part of SO 2131, surveyed in 1879, shows the layout of Mercer with its existing buildings. Newly laid-out town lots are to the north-west. QuickMap.

Mercer's growth through the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was underpinned by several industries: flax mills were in the vicinity, a saw mill was established in 1900, a creamery in 1896. The deep sand and pumice deposits along the river flats to the north and south were quarried by a succession of companies, including that of Caesar Roose.

The busy-ness of the settlement was evident in the number of accommodation and retail stores that were established. The Point Russell Hotel was erected by George Walters, to be run by William Cornthwaite, by early November 1866.<sup>74</sup> A second hotel, the Telegraph Inn, was erected in 1867.<sup>75</sup> Later known as the Railway Hotel, the hotel was rebuilt in 1898. A store was established by T Wells in the early 1870s; it was taken over by brothers Matthew and Scott Hunter, who ran a bakery as well as an 1150-acre farm.<sup>76</sup>

The school opened in about 1875; in 1901 there were 68 children on the roll.<sup>77</sup> A schoolhouse for the teacher was also on the school property. The Mercer Magistrate's Court was established by 1876. It was situated on the corner of Miranda Road, along with the police station, two cells, a seven-roomed residence and stables. The buildings were erected in 1888.<sup>78</sup> The two-cell lock-up is now located adjacent to Mercer School in Glass Road.

<sup>74</sup> *Daily Southern Cross* 8 November 1866, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> *Daily Southern Cross* 19 October 1867, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> *Cyclopedia* p. 702.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Cyclopedia* p. 703.

St James' Catholic Church, within the parish of Pukekohe, was erected in 1891 towards the west end of Koheroa Road.<sup>79</sup> The church is no longer extant but concrete steps that provide access to its site are extant. An Anglican church, St Jude's, was built further east on Koheroa Road in 1914.<sup>80</sup> By 1925 there was a butcher's shop, a few wooden shops and a billiard room on Roose Road, but just one hotel.<sup>81</sup> The Post and Telegraph office was replaced with a brick building in 1929.



Figure 67: An 1898 view of Mercer. *Auckland Weekly News* 11 June 1898. AWNS-18980611-4-1, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

Mercer was also a service centre for communities on the western side of the Waikato River. Initially a punt operated to take passengers and stock across the river. The Waikato Steam Navigation Company Ltd, who worked the Kupakupa Mine (later renamed Waikato Mine) soon after the war, sent coal to Mercer by barge and thence to Auckland by rail.<sup>82</sup> By 1926 timber from the Kaawa mill was taken first by road, then down the Awaroa Stream, across Lake Whangape and out to the river, loaded onto barges and brought to Mercer to the railway.<sup>83</sup> Mail and stores were also taken across the river to Glen Murray and nearby farms.

<sup>79</sup> *Cyclopedia* p. 702.

<sup>80</sup> DP 9698.

<sup>81</sup> DP 18946.

<sup>82</sup> Vennell and Williams p.216.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p. 230.



Figure 68: Caesar Roose. HCL\_05146, Hamilton Libraries.

Caesar Roose (1886-1967), one of the key figures in the history of the Mercer area, was born on the 67-acre Tuoro Island in the Waikato River at Mercer, where his parents, Henry and Mary, farmed. Caesar Roose bought his first boat in 1902 and thereafter commenced his shipping business.<sup>84</sup> In 1915 Roose inaugurated a regular service between Cambridge and Port Waikato; he had a substantial wharf and depot at Hamilton's Ferrybank. Having sold his business to the Waikato Shipping Company in 1916, he subsequently bought it back and in 1922 established the Roose Shipping Company. From 1906 Roose owned a flax mill on the river, and after WWI he bought timber mills at Mercer and Katikati. He established a workshop on Tuoro Island to manufacture the Roose-Atkins grab, designed for coaling ships, loading and unloading barges, and salvage work. His large paddle steamer, *Rawhiti II*, was a feature on the river for many years, as were his barges used in sand-dredging of the river.

Typical of so many other Waikato settlements, Mercer became a hub for the local dairy industry. The Mercer Creamery was established by the New Zealand Dairy Association in 1896; in 1900 it had 11 suppliers.<sup>85</sup> The Waikato Co-op Dairy Company established another dairy factory in 1912 but it closed in the 1917-18 season when a new factory was built at Tuakau.<sup>86</sup> The factory was built on the river bank, handy for delivery of milk from farms on the west side of the river as well as farms along the river.

The river was also a focal point for recreation and sports, with an annual regatta being held from the early 1880s. An 1886 advertisement for the 'Mercer Annual Regatta and Athletic Sports' was presented as a 'Festival of the Waikato Tribes ... and Full Fleet of Canoes'.<sup>87</sup> The sports day offered steamer excursions on the river and railway excursions. The 1887 event included canoe hurdling races, swimming contests – some events were just for wahine.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4r27/roose-caesar>

<sup>85</sup> *Cyclopedia* p.703.

<sup>86</sup> More, p. 113.

<sup>87</sup> *Auckland Star* 6 March 1886, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> *Auckland Star* 27 January 1887, p. 1.

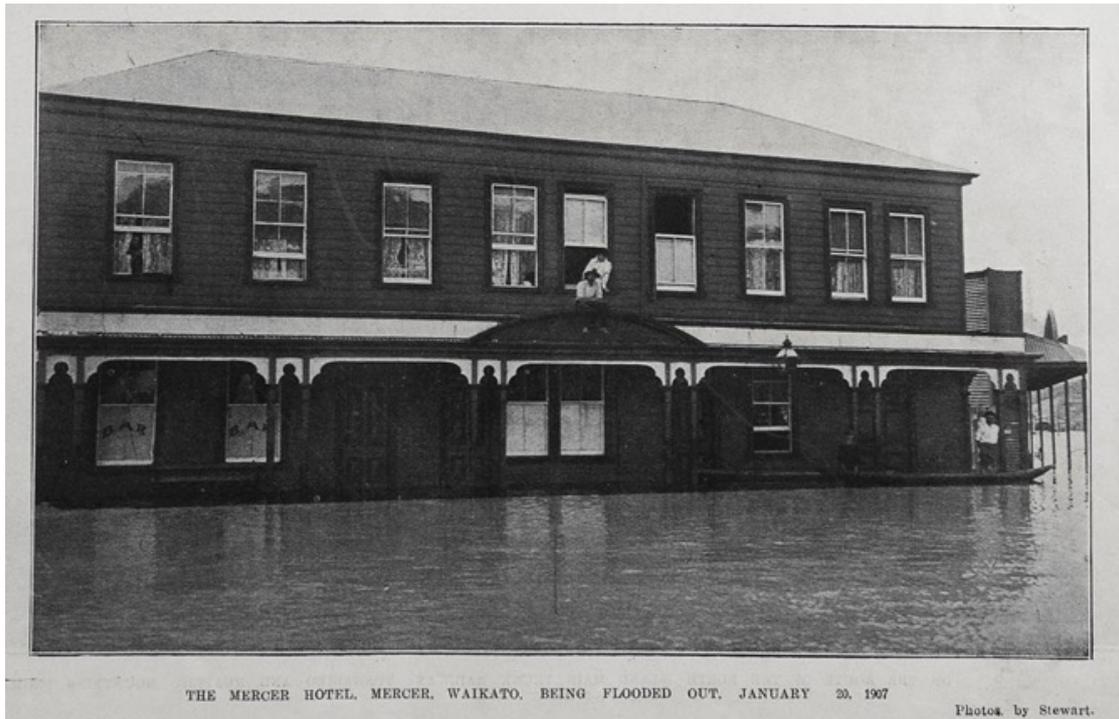
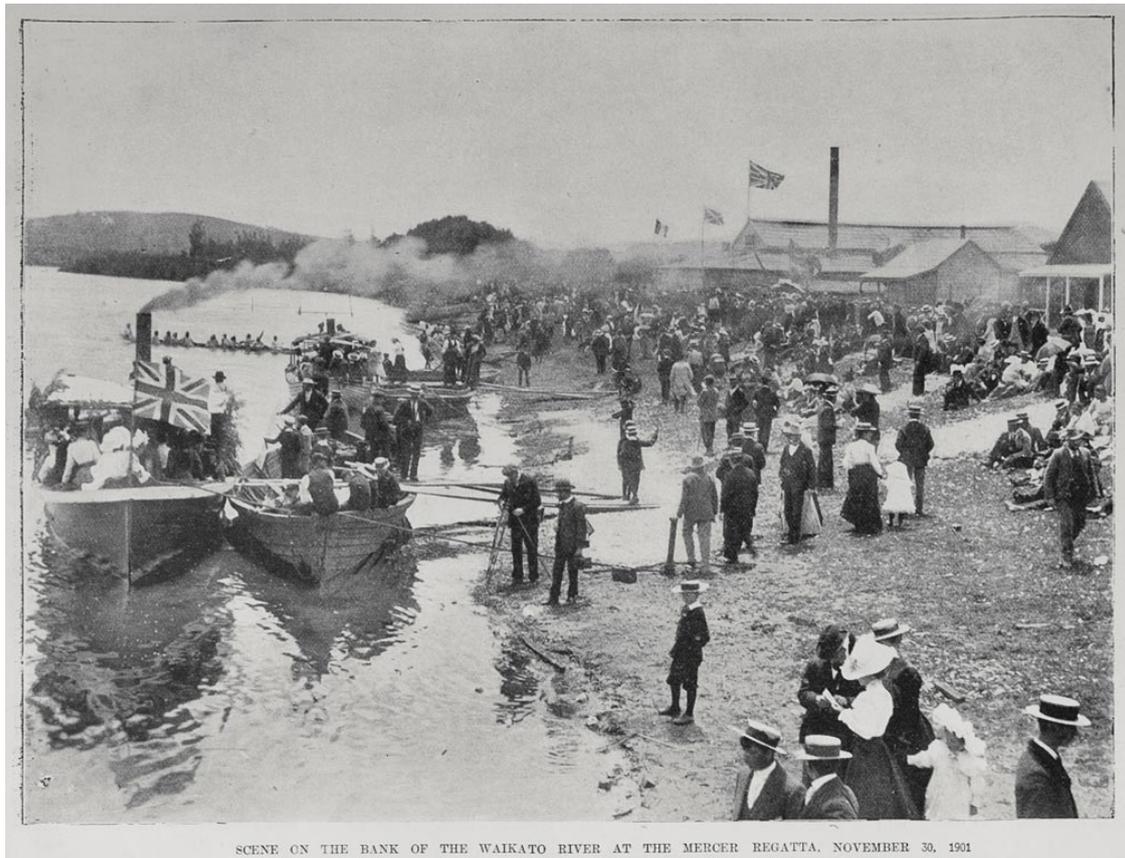


Figure 69: Mercer was subject to frequent floods, the 1907 arguably being the most famous. *Auckland Weekly News* 20 January 1907, p. 9. AWNS-19070124-9-2, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.



Figure 70: Waikato Co-op Dairy Company, Mercer, c.1910. ½-001841-G, WA Price Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.



SCENE ON THE BANK OF THE WAIKATO RIVER AT THE MERCER REGATTA, NOVEMBER 30, 1901

Figure 71: Mercer Maori Regatta scene on the bank of the Waikato river at the Mercer Regatta, *Auckland Weekly News* 30 November 30, 1901, p. 6. AWNS-19011205-6-1, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries.

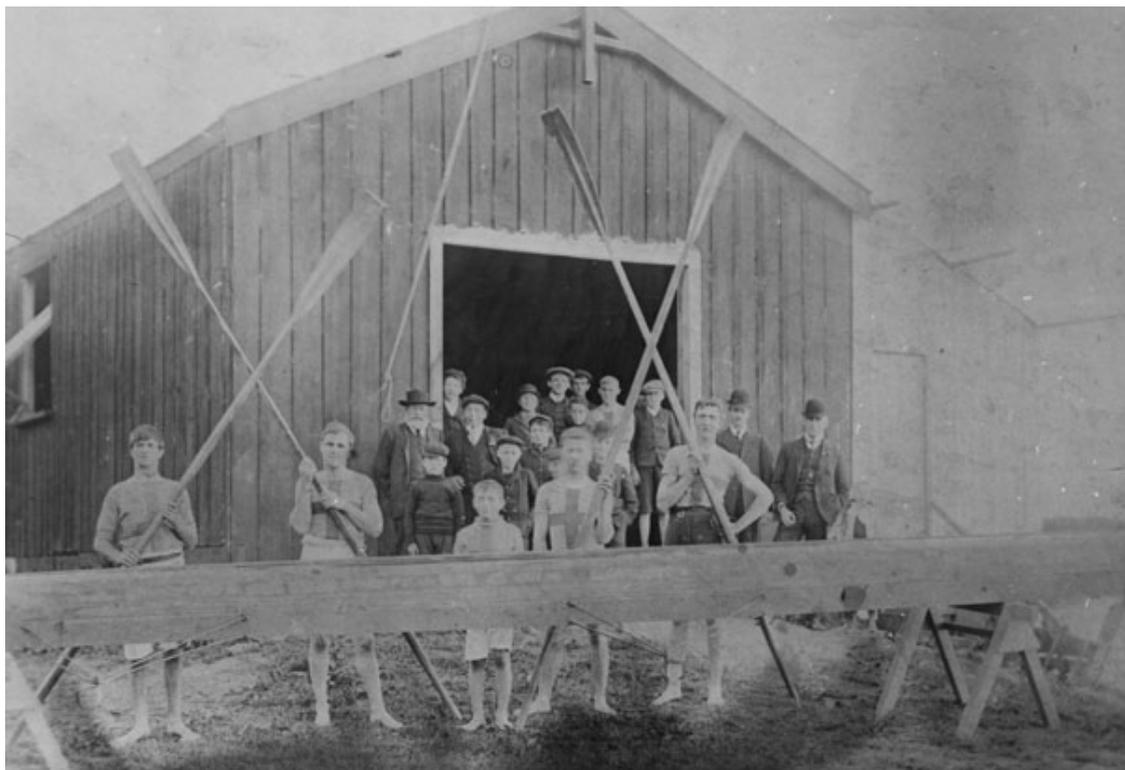


Figure 72: Mercer Rowing Club clubhouse, c. 1909. Footprints 00219, South Auckland Research Centre, Auckland Libraries.

A bridge was built in 1971-72, thanks in part to the generosity of Caesar Roose who donated \$100,000 towards its construction. The bridge was named after him when it was opened on 18 November 1972. A commemorative plaque was placed on the bridge in recognition of his role in the development of Raglan and Franklin Counties.<sup>89</sup>

The Waikato Expressway has had a major effect on the settlement, whose most prominent feature is now arguably a service centre for motorists: with a petrol station, cafés, fast food outlets and a large carpark.

## Meremere

A large pa built on the hill overlooking Meremere was the first major defensive line aimed at preventing the European advance into the Waikato.<sup>90</sup> In October 1863 General Cameron got past Meremere via the river, at which time it was abandoned by the Kingites. A redoubt was established on the site, which is now a historic reserve. After the confiscations, some land was returned to Maori as individuals and in the form of Native Reserves ( SO 586). An 1868 survey plan shows a flax mill on the river bank.



Figure 73: Charles Heaphy 'Mere-Mere from Whangamarino Redoubt' [1863]. C-025-011, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Between 1958 and 1991 a coal-burning thermal power station operated at Meremere, and the associated workers' village remains. It was the first government-built large scale thermal power station. Twin mono-cable ropeways carried buckets of coal from the Kopuku coal mine to the power station and returned them for refilling.<sup>91</sup> A causeway topped with a road was also built across part of the Whangamarino Swamp to the mine, construction taking place between winter 1956 until April 1958. The road also then provided access to Island Block.

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<sup>89</sup> Vennell and Williams, p. 184.

<sup>90</sup> Prickett, p. 76.

<sup>91</sup> More, p. 137.

On the hill above the power station, streets and residential lots were surveyed in 1957-58 and 1960.<sup>92</sup> Houses, built to the same specifications as state houses, were built to accommodate workers and their families.



Figure 74: Meremere power station under construction, 1958. EP/1958/1785-1-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Consent was given in 1971 to the Pukekohe Hot Rod Club to hold have a drag-car racing strip just outside Meremere and in 2009 a private motorsport park opened at Hampton Downs. Spring Hill Corrections facility, also just to the south of Meremere, was built in 2007.<sup>93</sup> In 2006 the Meremere population, which is predominantly Maori, stood at 459.<sup>94</sup>

### **Island Block & Whangamarino**

Whangamarino is on the NIMT, with a railway station built there by 1884 and still extant in 1917.<sup>95</sup> Settlement is dispersed, being largely pastoral.

Island Block, named for its higher elevation in the great Whangamarino Swamp, is primarily occupied by dairy farms, with sheep farms on the rugged hills to the east. By 1938 there were enough pupils to warrant a school, the land being gazetted that year.<sup>96</sup> The school opened in September 1938.<sup>97</sup> Earlier lessons were held in the Drake homestead on Falls Road near the end of Drake Road.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> SO 40342, 40344, 41304, LINZ.

<sup>93</sup> <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/waikato-places/page-2>

<sup>94</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meremere>

<sup>95</sup> SO 2831.

<sup>96</sup> SO 26966.

<sup>97</sup> *New Zealand Herald* 27 September 1938, p. 13.

<sup>98</sup> Jenny Kelly email to Lyn Williams, 24 March 2016.