

New Zealand's Ancient History The Search Continues

Readers' Contributions

Thanks to all our readers who are coming forward to tell us about their own experiences and thoughts about New Zealand history. Continue to contact us (elocal 092391699 ext 5 8:30-12noon or editorial@elocal.co.nz) so we can share your views and discoveries about our ancient past with other readers.

Rea Anderson of Pukekohe is of Ngati Tipa descent. Her family lived at Port Waikato for several generations. Now almost 70, Rea was raised by her grandmother Te Rewanga Wi Putini Kahui, known as Rewa.

"She told me there was a very tall Pakeha race living at Port Waikato long before Maori. They were very fair. She had been told about them by her father and her grandfather. I met an old lady from the Chatham Islands. She told me how Maori sailed from Taranaki to the Chathams and killed the people. She said they were Moriori and she was of their descent. When she was a girl, she and her grandmother walked along the shore of the harbour and saw bodies that had been thrown in the water, uncovered in the sand. They buried them. Her grandmother told her that they were a tall, fair haired people, that they were there before the Maori. She said "my people didn't fight. They were slaughtered." ■

Grace Herbert and her family were told about a strange 'meeting house' near Benneydale in the King Country 40 years ago.

"We took the children to see it a couple of times. It was so different from the usual Maori meeting houses, even my youngest can remember going there. It fascinated us – it was in good condition and down the sides where mattresses are piled in meeting houses, there was dry bracken laid down. It was a good size, in the shape of a cross. It was made of wood, but there were no signs of any carvings, none of the decorations usually found in meeting houses. We took photos of Edith and Joanne (then aged 4 and 3) standing in the doorway. It was tiny. Next



Grace's daughters Edith and Joanne at Miringa Te Kakara meeting house

to the meeting house was a round food hall – a wharekai. It looked modern but wasn't shaped anything like those we are used to." (refer Franklin elocal archives October 2008, page 20: Miringa Te Kakara meeting house. Maori encountered the early builders of this structure when they first entered the district. The building eventually fell into disrepair and was destroyed by fire.)

Grace also talks about seeing "a place with igloo mounds" at Pakaraka, between Moerewa and Kerikeri. "Maori told the early settlers that they didn't build them. My great grandmother was Horiana Arapata and her father was Taniwha Arapata of Ko Te Aitanga a Mahaki te iwi of the East Coast. The first Europeans commented on his blue eyes – there were a lot of people in the area with red hair. Taniwha and his family were sent to the Chatham Islands during the Hauhau uprising because they lived in the same area as Te Kooti. Some of them died there, but Taniwha made it back home. He told of the Turehu, the little people and they were told about to each generation. It is said they were little timid people with bright blue

eyes. When they were seen, they used to run away. They were spoken of around the East Coast, but you don't get told that in school. Until recently, I thought they were fairy stories. Now I think they were part of our history."

Grace's family had another amazing connection to history seekers when Kontiki, captained by Thor Heyerdahl was shipwrecked on an uninhabited Pacific island in 1947. With their radio apparatus soaked, they had to dry it out and get an urgent message to the radio operator on Rarotonga before a full scale rescue mission was launched. Just in the nick of time, the message was sent "All Well." That radio operator on Rarotonga was Grace's brother Trevor Hamon. Trevor, who now lives in Canada, missed meeting Thor Heyerdahl during a visit to New Zealand by one week, so the great explorer never met the Kiwi who helped him during his voyage. ■

More intriguing contributions from our readers in the next edition of Franklin elocal! Continue to email or ring us with your thoughts and stories.



Vince Heatley and Harold Herbert looking at the stone structures at Pakaraka