

EXCLUSIVE

OPEN APPEAL

NEW ZEALAND HISTORY

Hidden Wonders In Waipoua Forest Undeniable Proof Of Nz Civilisation Before Kupe

The huge 25,000 acre plus area covered by Waipoua Forest in Northland is a massive archaeological treasure trove, where once a large population lived, gardened, worshipped, raised their families and died. The stone structures in the forest had been noted and written about by early Europeans, who wondered about the stone builders who had lived there. In 1983 archaeologists from Auckland University were employed by the NZ Forest Service to investigate and document these ancient structures, prior to tree felling in the area. The area under investigation was limited, confined to about 500 acres and split into five sections on both sides of the Waipoua River. It was a 'drop in an ocean,' but a start, a chance to document and protect the country's heritage, to tell the people of New Zealand about an ancient civilisation, predating Polynesian settlement and acknowledged as such by the Pacific voyagers who came after them.

But most of the people of New Zealand do not know what was found in Waipoua Forest over the three year investigation, at a cost to the taxpayer then of \$500,000. The detailed mapping and notes of the complex of stone walls, hearths, stone structures defined as altars by the archaeologists, incised obelisks, petroglyphs (rock carvings), standing stone circles, circular stone mounds and stone-lined waterways were instead sent away to remain hidden under a 75 year embargo, restricted until 2063. In 1988, archaeological records on the Waipoua Forest excavations were transferred from Kaikohe to the National Archives in Auckland. The Transfer of Archives form states: "Prior consultation requires approval of the Te Roroa-Waipoua Archaeological Advisory committee or other appropriate subsequent Te Roroa authority." Te Roroa iwi around that time were engaged in a land claim of the Maunganui Bluff and Waipoua No 2 block with the Waitangi Tribunal. The transfer agreement was modified to include a 75 year moratorium and signed by DOC archaeologist Michael Taylor. It specified a 14 page index identifying all the material to be embargoed.

At the end of the archaeological excavations, all public access to the area was denied. Visitors wanting to see the stone artefacts were turned away. DOC denied access requests by historians and archaeologists, while members of the public were threatened by certain locals when they went to view the 'stone city.' Reasons given by DOC was that the area had been declared tapu and that it was under a Waitangi Treaty claim. Meanwhile, people who knew what was hidden in the forest waited for the release of the report on the excavations. They knew it was a significant site for the history of New Zealand. Noel Hilliam was with a group who had seen some of the radiocarbon dating data. He heard Ned Nathan (Te Roroa) exclaim "that's 500 years before we got here!" ('We' referring to Maori)

In 1996, archaeological researcher Dr Gary Cook successfully challenged the legality of the embargo. Submissions to the Ombudsman lead to the release of the large body of material, but the radio carbon dates were absent. When questioned as to why the information had been hidden, the New Zealand National Archives stated that there were no access restrictions, but after numerous Official Information requests from people all around New Zealand, Associate Minister of Conservation the Hon. Phillida Bunkle confirmed that between 1988 and 1996, Te Roroa authorities fully controlled the archaeological results. She wrote: "I am advised that the papers referred to in the recent documentary were lodged in Archives without the knowledge or authority of the Department of Conservation...my department has no specific information about the restriction placed on the papers by a

PROOF

NATIONAL ARCHIVES
AT 58/57
BATH

AGREEMENT FOR THE TRANSFER OF ARCHIVES

THIS BLOCK TO BE FILLED IN BY THE TRANSFERRING DEPARTMENT

From: Department of Conservation
Kaikohe

File ref. _____

The Chief Archivist,
National Archives,
P.O. Box 6148,
Wellington.

The records listed on the attached 14 sheets are offered for transfer to your custody, for deposit in the National Archives, under the Archives Act 1957.

Restricted until 2063

No restrictions on the use of the records by bona fide research workers are required.

Prior consultation requires approval of the Te Roroa-Waipoua Archaeological Advisory Committee or other appropriate subsequent Te Roroa authority.

The quantity of records to be transferred is _____ metres

Signature of authorising officer: M. Taylor

Date: 15/9/88 Designation: Archaeologist

Name of officer responsible for compiling the list: M. Taylor

Designation: Archaeologist

THIS BLOCK TO BE FILLED IN BY NATIONAL ARCHIVES

I agree to accept the custody of these records.

I hereby undertake to abide by the restrictions, if any, placed on the use of the records.

The records should now be sent to the National Archives Auckland

When they have been received one copy of the list and form N.A. 4 will be returned to you as a receipt.

Date: 7-9-1988

M. Nathan
Chief Archivist.

LA 170 ORIGINAL 02104-200001310000
325

Waipoua Forest's history – hidden away under embargo