

NEW ZEALAND HISTORY

News Of The Day Scoop!

READ ALL ABOUT IT IN PAPERS PAST!

'Maori' Did Not Exist Before 1832

The reporting of the news of the day was an exciting event in colonial New Zealand and was carried out with much detail. The newspapers of the 19th and early 20th century carried many stories of unusual finds and intriguing clues unearthed of the earliest inhabitants of this land. What Maori said was reported faithfully, as the colonialists discussed and absorbed what lay about them in this fascinating new country, so different from their European homelands. But who were 'Maori'? To the ignorant European eye, all of the people were the same, predominately brown skinned Polynesian, apart from some with red hair, blue eyes and light skin. What to call the people living here? In 1832 the name 'Maori' ("of the usual kind") was settled upon, used by the people of all tribes (Ref. Oxford Dictionary). The fact that each iwi carried a separate, unique and detailed genealogy was buried by the desire to lump the aborigines together under a clearly understood definition. The term masked the rich diversity of cultures and racial mixes achieved by the integration of peoples of many kinds, over the long history of human settlement in New Zealand. But it did not destroy it. Any of this land who carry 'Maori' lineage also may carry those who came before, some acknowledged, some not. Their heritage is alive today and always will be through their descendents. In old newspaper excerpts it is clear that terminology presented a struggle to the writers. All things were 'Maori,' yet some articles clearly pointed to people 'before the advent of modern Maori.' Today, as in the past, it is true to say, "These are all said to be tangata whenua: The people of the land where the placenta of their birth is buried and where their ancestors have lived."



Ancient stump, cut through by humans and discovered in Auckland 25 feet below volcanic deposits (Ref John Goodall picture plate VI p144)

On the Discovery of the Cut Stump of a Tree, Giving Evidence of the Existence of Man in New Zealand at or before the volcanic Era.

By John Goodall T&P NZI Vol VII - 1874

"I have to record this evening a discovery giving a trace of human life on this island, and in this locality, reaching back beyond history, and supporting the Maori tradition that this island was inhabited before their arrival here and that the Maeros of the North Island and the Ngatimamaeros of the South Island may yet be found to be real aborigines, and not degenerate or wild Maoris, as has been supposed by many. Heavy excavations have been carried on at and about the Albert Barracks by the Auckland Improvement Commissioners for the purpose of making new streets for the benefit of the city. During last March, while works were being carried on in Coburg Street, near the junction of Wellesley Street East, the workmen came upon the tree stump, now before you, ly-

ing in the centre of a narrow channel...it being important that the discovery should be verified by undoubted authority. I immediately went for, and returned accompanied by Theophilus Heale, Esq., Inspector of surveys, who satisfied himself as to the genuineness of the discovery, and the undisturbed stratification of the volcanic debris of about 25 feet lying above...this stump is asserted by those who have a knowledge of New Zealand woods to be of tea-tree (manuka) ...It has an undoubted appearance of having been cut by some kind of tool, and being so must have been the hand of man. T&P Editor's Note: It is therefore beyond any doubt that we have evidence of the existence of man long before the period indicated by the traditions of the Maoris of their advent to this island, and at a period before what is probably the oldest volcano in Auckland became extinct... (Ref. The Secret Land People Before by Gary J Cook and Thomas J Brown Pages 38-43, also containing section plans of stump location.)