

Annexure 1a

The history of human settlement of the islands

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1.0 Introduction

The islands held several attractions for the first settlers. They lay along strategic waterways, offered shelter to seagoing travellers, were rich in resources, and were close to the Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland) isthmus. The environmental impacts of human settlement began in Maori times, and accelerated exponentially with the arrival of Europeans. By 1900, the inner islands were almost completely deforested and had lost much of their indigenous fauna.

2.0 Maori settlement

The islands were probably among the first places settled by east Polynesian voyagers to Aotearoa (New Zealand) some 800 years ago. A very early arrival, the legendary explorer Toi, named the islands: nga poito o te kupenga o Toi Te Huatahi (the floats of the fishing net of Toi Te Huatahi). The two great, ocean-going waka (canoes), Tainui and Arawa, arrived in the Hauraki Gulf almost simultaneously some 600 to 700 years ago. In the same period, three other founding waka landed at Aotea (Great Barrier) before travelling further: Aotea (giving rise to Great Barrier's Maori name), Takitimu and Mataatua.

The islands lay at the crossroads of New Zealand's busiest waterways, linking Northland, the Bay of Plenty and the Waikato. These waterways were connected by portages (places where waka were dragged across a short stretch of land). The Tamaki portage, connecting the Waitemata and Manukau harbours, and the Waiuku portage, connecting the Manukau Harbour and Waikato River, enabled travel between Northland and the interior of the North Island.

All waka travelling between the Bay of Islands and the Bay of Plenty (and beyond to the East Coast) passed close by Aotea (Great Barrier) and Hauturu (Little Barrier). Here diverse peoples met, fought and periodically displaced or absorbed one another. This made for turbulent times for the islands' inhabitants; their homes could never be completely secure. To protect themselves, they fortified most island headlands and a few summits as pa (fortified villages) to serve as refuges in times of danger.

Maori settlements on the smaller islands were mainly temporary or seasonal. Visits were made to tend gardens, gather shellfish, harvest muttonbirds or set up temporary fishing stations. Only larger islands like Great Barrier and Waiheke sustained longer-term settlement. In fact, the scattered interests of Hauraki iwi in the Hauraki Gulf and Coromandel Peninsula demanded mobility, since those interests could lapse if not reinforced at regular intervals by ahi ka (occupation). At some sites the building of pa with provision for kumara storage suggests longer occupation, since people had to stay around long enough to justify the work involved. However, most of the time the people lived in undefended kainga (villages).

A thousand years ago all of the islands were forested. The eruptions of Rangitoto in the 14th century destroyed the forests on neighbouring Motutapu and Motuihe and probably damaged those on western Waiheke. Maori use of fire to clear land for gardening and to stimulate the growth of bracken (for food) further reduced forest cover. Fire disturbed the natural process of regeneration and could easily spread well beyond the intended areas. The dominance of kanuka and manuka forest and fern on western Waiheke at the time of early European contact suggests that these forests were in the early stages of regenerating; extensive kauri and other large trees were then present only at the island's eastern end.

Soon after the arrival of humans and their companion species (rats and dogs), many indigenous species disappeared from Waiheke including the giant eagle, huia, fur seal and tuatara. Investigations of middens (old rubbish sites) on Motutapu show that bird remains virtually disappeared after the Rangitoto eruptions, and kai moana (fish and shellfish) were the main wildlife consumed. Following an initial wave of extinctions, for several centuries Maori successfully maintained a relatively stable co-existence with the remaining indigenous fauna based on horticulture and harvesting kai moana.

3.0 European contact 1769-1840

Captain James Cook dropped anchor off Pakatoa on his exit from the Hauraki Gulf in late November 1769. He mistook the eastern ends of Ponui, Waiheke and Motutapu for extensions of the mainland, writing "it appear'd very probable that these form'd some good harbours". His nautical eye also noted the "noble" timber of the Waihou River, which he believed "would furnish plenty of materials either for the building of defences, houses or Vessels". Flax and spar timber were essential to the maintenance of British naval supremacy. Once published, Cook's journals brought the natural resources of the islands to Europe's attention. A new phase of exploitation of the gulf's natural resources had arrived. An essentially subsistence economy was being replaced by one that aimed at producing surpluses for far off markets.

The raid of Hongi Hika on Tamaki in 1821 was a calamity for local Maori. Many were killed, others were taken captive to the Bay of Islands, and the remainder fled to the Waikato. The Auckland isthmus and islands remained depopulated until the return of peace between the tribes and the arrival of European missionaries and traders in the early 1830s. Returning Maori communities were drawn to places of European activity at Waiheke, Coromandel Harbour, Great Barrier and Maraetai. In 1836 Thomas Maxwell established a timber and boat building station at Man O'War Bay, Waiheke. Across the Tamaki Strait, WT Fairburn founded the Church Missionary Society station at Maraetai in 1837, relatively close to the Ngati Paoa community at Putiki, Waiheke. Maori were quick to engage with the new economy as labourers in the timber industry and the suppliers of food to European ships.

Local Maori experienced the full pressure of European land purchasing even before the Treaty. The accessibility by water, timber resources and good prospects for boat building and farming resulted in the islands being considered premium real estate. Additionally, in 1839 growing rumours that the Waitemata Harbour would be the site of the colony's capital suggested good returns on island purchases. Transactions between 1836 and 1840 involved land on Great Barrier, Waiheke, Motutapu, Motukorea (Brown's Island) and Motuihe (pre-Treaty claims). Another spate of land transactions involving the islands was triggered by Governor FitzRoy's authorisation of direct land sales between Maori and Europeans in the mid 1840s (pre-emption waiver claims).

Extensive crown land purchasing in the gulf in the 1850s left Maori with only two substantial blocks: Te Huruhi (2100 acres) on Waiheke and Katherine Bay (3510 acres) on Great Barrier. The sale of Te Huruhi before World War I left only Katherine Bay in Maori ownership until the return of the Waiheke Station (2050 acres) to Ngati Paoa in settlement of a Treaty claim in 1989.

4.0 Extractive industries 1840-1962

In the gulf, extractive industries started earlier and finished later than probably anywhere else in New Zealand. Lt Governor Hobson's choice of the Waitemata Harbour as his seat of government and the young colony's urgent need for export goods to reduce its reliance upon imports drew immediate attention to the gulf's resources (primarily timber and minerals).

The availability of kauri spars, fresh water and firewood between Cowes and Man O'War Bays made the Waiheke Channel a popular route for outward-bound shipping from Auckland until 1860. By the 1850s, there were only sufficient spars to meet the needs of individual ships - ship-loads of spars were already a thing of the past. Kauri was worked in sawpits on Waiheke until the late 19th century, but there was insufficient timber to warrant a local mill. Shipbuilding, a spin-off from kauri extraction, was important on Waiheke (about 12 vessels from 15 to 60 tons were built) and Great Barrier (including the 400 ton Stirlingshire built in 1847, the largest ship in New Zealand at the time) until the 1860s. Waiheke was also Auckland's principal source of firewood, with smaller quantities coming from more distant Great Barrier. Much of the islands' forests were cut to supply the first stage in Auckland's urban and industrial development, either as fuel or building timber.

Mining seemed to offer good economic prospects in the gulf. Manganese was mined on Waiheke briefly in the 1840s and then more extensively from 1872 until 1900. Copper was mined on Great Barrier in the early 1840s and late 1850s. Gold and silver were mined on

Great Barrier in the decade after 1896, tapping into extensions of the quartz formations of the Coromandel Peninsula.

In the 1880s another extractive industry began on the islands: the removal of shingle and sand for use in concrete construction in Auckland, notably Grafton Bridge. Scows were run onto beaches two hours after high tide, loaded and re-floated on the next high tide. Scows were particularly active at Owhanake and Hooks bays, Waiheke, where work above the high water line led to coastal erosion that is still visible today. Huge quantities of shingle and sand were also removed from Ponui and Pakihi. In about 1920, with the best beaches already mined out, the practice was stopped on Waiheke to protect the beaches' recreational values, now essential to the success of the new subdivisions.

While the exploitation of kauri on Great Barrier began in the 1840s, milling and the bulk of logging did not occur until the 20th century. The Kauri Timber Milling Company built a mill at Whangaparapara in 1909, to handle logs brought to the island from Northland. The island's kauri were not logged until the period between the two world wars, as the trees were younger and located in difficult terrain. Large amounts of timber were unused and usually dispensed of by burning. These fires caused the loss of up to half of all kauri trees still standing as well as other tree species. Only Hiramata (Mount Hobson) escaped the loggers because of its difficult terrain, and is now the core of the island's remaining kauri forest.

Whaling was the last extractive industry to start in the gulf and was undertaken in the industry's twilight in New Zealand. The whaling station established at Whangaparapara, Great Barrier in 1956 had a successful first year then quickly ran out of whales (mainly due to the unrestricted activities of Russian and Japanese whalers offshore). It closed in 1962.

5.0 Horticulture and farming

In the 1840s and 1850s the local Maori supplied the young settlement of Auckland with wheat and vegetables. In the heyday of this trade (the early 1850s), ship's surgeon John Jolliffe recorded the presence of extensive Maori wheat cultivations in all of Waiheke's eastern bays. By 1860 the trade was in steep decline, but Maori from Te Huruhi in western Waiheke continued to grow food for Auckland until the early 20th century.

Forest clearance was the first step towards pastoral farming. The industry began with cattle grazing on bush and fern land. By the 1880s only small stands of mature forest remained on Waiheke and the island's main pastoral properties were taking shape. Between 1900 and 1920 the process of converting forest into pasture for stock was completed.

6.0 The benefits of isolation

From the late 1870s visionary scientists and politicians saw new uses for the islands, given their physical isolation yet closeness to Auckland particularly with the advent of steamers in the gulf.

In the late 1870s Auckland Museum botanist, Thomas Kirk, deplored the illegal removal of vast areas of kanuka and manuka on Waiheke and was concerned about the destruction of the island's forest for pasture. He advocated for the legal protection of pohutukawa, which had been used for firewood.

By the 1880s concerns over the loss of indigenous bird species were also mounting. Although forest reserves had already been created on the mainland the Auckland Museum curator, Thomas Cheesman, was troubled by their vulnerability to introduced predators. Cheesman and Kirk became staunch advocates of island reserves to protect indigenous species. The crown purchased Hauturu (Little Barrier) from its Maori owners and declared it a nature reserve in 1892. Meanwhile, Rangitoto functioned as a reserve, although long leases were granted to bach owners in the 1920s.

The isolation of the islands also had other uses. Motuihe was used as a human quarantine station for about 50 years from 1872. During World War I, Motuihe served as a camp for 'enemy aliens' and prisoners of war.

7.0 Defence

In the 20th century, ever-improving naval technology increased the strategic importance of the gulf. In the 1930s, fears of enemy raids on Auckland's port and fuel installations led to plans for defence works on several islands.

A naval training station was established on Motuihe. Two batteries of 6-inch guns were installed on Motutapu in 1938; and work on three 9.2-inch guns at Stony Batter, Waiheke, was commenced in 1941 but remained unfinished at the end of the war. When no longer needed for defence purposes, Motuihe and Motutapu were added to the conservation estate.

8.0 Recreation

From the late 1870s the recreational values of the gulf were increasingly appreciated. In the 1880s steamer excursions began to Waiheke, Motutapu and other islands where happy crowds of day trippers enjoyed picnics, bathing, beach games and regattas. In 1893 a Weekly News journalist declared: "Aucklanders are beginning to realise what a beautiful resort Waiheke Island is, and this summer is doing much to establish its reputation as the watering place of Auckland par excellence". Boarding houses flourished at Cowes, Orapiu and Awaawaroa, that at Cowes matching the best in the country. More affluent Aucklanders, who owned yachts, found their own way out to the islands, especially to the western bays of Waiheke.

Opportunities for the recreational enjoyment of the gulf were greatly enhanced by the subdivisions on Waiheke: Orapiu and Ostend in 1916, Onetangi and Surfdale in 1921, Palm Beach in 1922, Rocky Bay in 1923 and Oneroa in 1924. No longer were visitors restricted to day trips; now at modest cost they could own baches for holidays or retirement. In the absence of local government, the subdivisions were private ventures carried out independently following Public Works regulations that made landowners responsible for their own roads and wharves. Waiheke's idiosyncratic road system (notably, the main road between Oneroa and Onetangi, with its many name changes and unexpected turns) is an enduring legacy of this. Each subdivision generated its own vibrant, self-contained community, represented today by historic community halls, stores and post offices.

Only one other inner gulf island underwent subdivision, Rakino in the 1960s.

9.0 Towards the present

Waiheke had no form of local government until the formation of the Ostend and Orapiu Roads Boards in 1921 (these were combined in 1947), which only presided over roads. Other areas like building, wharves and health continued to be supervised at a distance by government departments and the Auckland Hospital Board. In the absence of close government regulation, a local culture of independence, self reliance and individualism developed. The formation of the Waiheke County Council (with authority also over the inner gulf islands) in 1970 at last brought full local government to Waiheke. In 1989 Waiheke County Council amalgamated with Auckland City.

Two acts of parliament recognise the special importance and needs of the islands: the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park Act 1967 and the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000. The shift from 'maritime' to 'marine' suggests a shift in focus from recreational to environmental values. The public is encouraged to participate in current reforestation projects on Motutapu and Motuihe, and walkways are making the islands more accessible. The gulf is a place to be enjoyed. However, unless it is protected there could be much less to enjoy. History has shown how rapidly environmental damage can occur.