

# Provenance of Land

## Walking Cheerfully on Whose Land?

By Robin Watts

Why is the Trust Board hosting a session on the provenance of land? Don't we hold the deeds of title that show that we own the land? Well, yes, we do, but that isn't all we are required to do.

For the Trust Board, Object 1 is "To hold in its name land, buildings and other property owned by the Religious Society of Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand / Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri in order to promote religion for the public benefit in accordance with the faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends / Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri (Quakers)."

Our book of *Faith and Practice: On These Islands - I runga i ngā motu nei* is a rich source of material about our history, thought and action in Aotearoa. It quickly becomes clear that holding deeds of title is not enough in itself. If we see ourselves as stewards or kaitiaki, then we are part of a thread that extends both backwards and forwards.

Before we were known as Quakers, our name was Friends of the Truth. Part of the task we have ahead of us is to identify some of the truths that we may have overlooked, and understanding the provenance of our land is one of them. Seeking for understanding is the start of a truth and reconciliation pathway - we are proceeding in the faith that understanding more helps us to see both the past and the future more clearly.

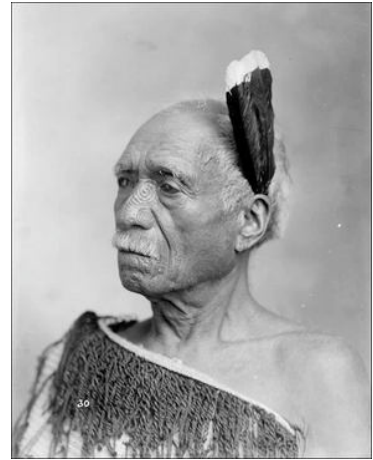
Of course, what we see around us now is not how it was. We are participants in and witnesses of the history of place - change that takes place in a local context. Each Quaker property has gone through centuries of activity, some of which we know about, and a lot that we don't.

What can we make of this? We will need to work out how to make sense of this through our engagement with the individual history of our property. There may be different paths followed, depending on our experiences, availability of source material, the history of the land that we meet and worship on, and ultimately the tangata whenua who are still present and have their own knowledge of the time before our title deeds start.

We will need to support and encourage each other. In the Quaker Lecture 2014 - Standing in this Place, David James, Jillian Wychel, Murray Short and Linda Wilson wrote: ..we should be able to count on one another for support and understanding towards those of us who make Māori/Pākehā relationships an active priority. More than that, we should be able to count on wider participation by other Quakers at key moments...

We don't necessarily know where this will take us and we may have fears about some particular outcomes. But we still need to ask the questions. In Faith & Practice 2.11 Philip MacDiarmid says: Of course, I will have doubts and hesitation. Sometimes I will be unsure of the form in which my support can best be expressed. I will often have to be patient, but to trust that in faith, I will be rightly led by the spirit.

Alistair Hall then gave a presentation based on the following article.



Te Hirawanui Kaimokopuna



## **Investigation of how land was acquired: Palmerston North Meeting House**

By Alistair and Anne Hall

In the May 2023 issue of the Aotearoa New Zealand Friends Newsletter, Quentin Abrahams in his article 'Walking Cheerfully on Whose Land?' challenged Friends to find out more about the history of the land on which our Meeting Houses sit. Our interest was therefore piqued in July 2023 when our local newspaper, in its weekly feature on local history 'Back Issues', featured an article about the sale of the block of land on which Palmerston North now sits, called Te Ahu a Turanga block. These 250,000 acres of land were purchased by the Crown in 1864 for £12,000 (about 1 shilling per acre). The sale was negotiated over a period of six years by Rangitāne paramount chief Te Hirawanui Kaimokopuna. The initial offer of \$6000 in 1858 had been rejected.

A web search for 'Te Ahu a Turanga' led to our surprise to articles about the new highway being constructed to replace the old Manawatū Gorge Road - it has also been named Te Ahu a Turanga. A good quality map of Te Ahu a Turanga land block was found in a Cultural Impact Assessment report for the highway. Overlaying the map from 1864 on a modern map to determine the location of our Meeting House was not straightforward (landmarks such as bends in the river have changed considerably), but we were able to confirm that it was part of Te Ahu a Turanga block. We also located and downloaded the deed of sale for the block, which had been signed by more than 150 uri o Rangitāne. The names are surprisingly clear.

We were delighted to discover that as part of 'Local History Week' held during the first week of March this year, Ruma Karaitiana (Rangitāne o Manawatū) was to talk at Palmerston North Public Library, sharing Te Hirawanui Kaimokopuna's perspective into the sale of the Te Ahu a Turanga block. Ruma is a direct descendant of Te Hirawanui. Although the sale was a 'success', supported by the great majority of iwi, Te Hirawanui signed 'without the taste of success in my mouth'. He was relieved but despondent at the process. While he had developed a great friendship with the surveyor J.J. Stewart, he was not impressed by the government negotiators. The negotiators played 'hard ball' over what areas would be reserved for Māori, and Te Hirawanui was despondent that many areas which he tried to have reserved for Māori were included in the sale. We were told he played 'hard ball' himself by forcing the government negotiators to come to him. After the sale, land was on-sold for £1 per acre (rural) or £2 per acre (urban), and some iwi chose to buy back some of the land at these prices.

In the Rangitāne o Manawatū Claims Settlement Act 2016, the apology from the Crown acknowledges that on a number of occasions it failed to protect Rangitāne o Manawatū interests when purchasing land in their rohe. By 1866 Rangitāne o Manawatū had been alienated from many of their traditional kainga, taonga, and wāhi tapu, and were left with insufficient reserves. Despite the efforts of Rangitāne o Manawatū to retain and reacquire these lands, many have been lost forever.