

After Mr. Stout had sat down Hote Tamehana, of the Ngatihaua Tribe, one of the sons of the late Wiremu Tamehana te Waharoa, stood up and suggested that, as Tawhiao had not given his consent, and was not present, they should adjourn the ceremony until some future time. He was quietly replied to and figuratively sat upon by the chief, Taonui, who, although one of the Ngatimaniapoto's greatest chiefs, is of a more retiring disposition than Wahanui and some others, who, as a rule, do most of the talking and negotiating when required; but, this being a case where the dignity and independence of the tribe was assailed, Hote was no sooner seated than quiet and unobtrusive Taonui was on his feet and in a few words gave Hote to understand that his interference was not wanted, and that he had better confine any remarks he had to make to land at Maungakawa (which Hote's people own, and where they reside), and not trouble himself by interfering with Ngatimaniapoto's lands or people—a Maori way of telling him “to mind his own business.” After Taonui's speech nobody cared to support Hote's proposition, and the matter dropped; but it must have been apparent to any of the King party who might be present that, from what Taonui had said, Ngatimaniapoto did not intend to put up with any obstruction or nonsense on that day from those who objected to their action.

After this, several Natives came forward to shake hands with Mr. Stout, and, as it was then past ten o'clock, a general move was made, on horseback and in vehicles, for the Puniu River, some eight miles away, where the ceremony of turning the first sod was to take place.

Mr. Stout was driven there by myself, and accompanied by Captain Capel, of the Armed Constabulary Force, on horseback, and two mounted orderlies. We stopped at Te Awamutu, *en route*, where we were met by the Volunteer cavalry, who took up a position on each side of the road to enable the Premier to be driven through their lines, they saluting at the time. Mr. Stout stayed a short time only at Te Awamutu, to receive a deputation, and visit the graves of the soldiers who fell at the siege of Orakau in March and April, 1864; after which, he proceeded to the Puniu River, where the ceremony was to take place. He was accompanied by the Volunteer cavalry as a guard of honour, and by a large concourse of Europeans on horseback and in conveyances of all kinds. Many visitors had arrived by excursion train from Auckland and also from different parts of the Waikato for the purpose of witnessing the proceedings.

The following gives a correct account of what took place, and of the speeches that were made:—

TURNING THE FIRST SOD.

[Extract from the Auckland *New Zealand Herald* of the 16th April.]

The excursion train for Waikato, with accommodation for eight hundred, left Auckland yesterday morning at 7 o'clock about half filled, and took a large number of passengers at the several stations on the line of railway for Puniu and for the Cambridge races, those for the latter branching off at Hamilton. After some little delay at Frankton Junction, owing to having to water three engines, the start was made about twenty-five minutes to 1 o'clock; but the time was pulled up between Hamilton and Te Awamutu by the extra speed put on. At Hamilton, amongst the large number of passengers taken up were Mr. J. B. Whyte, M.H.R.; Mr. W. A. Graham, Mayor of Hamilton; Captain Steel, Mr. Hay; Mr. D. M. Beere, District Engineer; Mr. A. H. Northcroft, Mr. Hume, Mr. Knox, Mr. Mountier, and many ladies. Arrived at Te Awamutu the passengers were pleased to find that local enterprise had not been behindhand in providing accommodation for proceeding further. A long row of public omnibusses, wagonettes, and traps of all descriptions were drawn up, so that accommodation for nearly all was available. Amongst those who went up from Auckland were Mr. W. R. Waddel, Mayor; Hon. T. Henderson, M.L.C.; Hon. P. Dignan, M.L.C.; Mr. Moss, M.H.R., and Mrs. Moss; Mr. T. Thompson, M.H.R.; Mr. R. Cameron, manager, Auckland Savings Bank; Mr. C. Atkins and Mrs. Atkins, Mrs. Porter; Mr. W. H. Hales, District Engineer; Mr. F. L. Prime, Mr. W. Crowther, Mr. Motion, Mr. J. Stewart, Mr. Constable, Mr. Von der Heyde, and others, including a large number of ladies. When the visitors reached the Te Awamutu Township, the Volunteer cavalry, which had met the Hon. the Premier halfway on the Alexandra Road on his return from the place where he had spent the night and escorted him into Te Awamutu, were drawn up, and their band played some lively tunes, whilst settlers, in all kinds of vehicles and on horseback, were gathering in large numbers from Kihikihi, Rangiaohia, Alexandra, and neighbouring settlements, Cambridge, even, being well represented. A cavalcade was then formed and started for the scene of ceremony, some two miles away, over a villanous cross-road to the south bank of the Puniu River, where the sod was to be turned, on land belonging to Rewi's ancestors. A substantial foot-bridge had been placed over the Puniu, and on ascending the opposite bank the site was at once observed by the marquee and flags and banners, inscribed with Maori welcomes. A large semicircle was formed and kept by the Te Awamutu cavalymen under Major Jackson and Captain Rutherford. About fifteen hundred persons, Natives and Europeans, were upon the ground, including a very large number of ladies. Amongst those present with Mr. Stout at this time were Wahanui, Taonui, Rewi, Hopa Te Rangianini, and other chiefs; Colonel Fraser, M.H.R.; Mr. White, M.H.R.; Mr. Lake, M.H.R.; Mr. Thompson, M.H.R.; Mr. Patrick Dignan, M.L.C.; Mr. Blair, Assistant Engineer-in-Chief; Mr. I. Coates, contractor for the first section of the new railway; Mr. Hursthouse, and Mr. Beere; while standing around were most of the principal settlers of the surrounding districts. Amongst those present were Mr. Storey, Mr. Westney, Mr. Newland, Mr. Goodfellow, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Walton, Mr. Roache, Mr. Ellis, Mr. A. G. Horton, Mr. Rutherford, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Sloane, Mr. W. S. Wilson, Mr. Farrell (Chairman, Kihikihi Town Board), Major Wilson, and others. The barrow used was the same which Sir George Grey used at Claudelands in turning the first sod of the Waikato-Thames Valley Railway. Mr. G. T. Wilkinson acted as interpreter throughout the ceremony.

Mr. W. H. Hales, District Engineer, said: Wahanui, as engineer having local charge of public works, I am deputed to ask you, on behalf of the Native people, to commence the great work to-day, and the construction of this railway, by turning the first sod.