

It has always been my personal belief that one of the strongest driving forces in a conservationist is a feeling of quiet anger; a quiet anger at the years of destruction inflicted upon our country's environment for quick profit and because of a tragic determination by European settlers to remould this land into the image and likeness of parts of the Northern Hemisphere.

Today one can travel through miles and miles of many parts of New Zealand and view a landscape almost entirely dominated by exotic flora and fauna. For the environmentalist this can sometimes be very frustrating — at least that's the way it is with me.

How very satisfying it is therefore to be involved in a project in which one can, with a spade and one's own pair of hands, help repair and put back together an island for-est environment the way nature originally designed it.

This satisfying, even therapeutic, feeling of helping to heal the land perhaps explains the remarkable public success which is the Tiritiri Matangi revegetation project.

Literally thousands of people from all walks of life have enjoyed the Tiri experience and contributed to the project in many different ways. Credit must go first however to the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park Board which in 1971 had the foresight to remove stock from the island in order to allow Tiri to regenerate into native forest.

Tiri History

Tiritiri Matangi (its name means "moving in the wind") comprises 220 hectares and lies 20 km northeast of Auckland and 4.5 km east of the Whangaparaoa Peninsula.

As one of the hundreds of islands great and small which make up the New Zealand archipelago, Tiri's story is a microcosm of New Zealand's history.

12,000 years ago Tiritiri Matangi was a range of rolling hills standing out on a great wooded plain which is now the Hauraki Gulf.

With the ending of the last great Ice Age and the melting of the polar ice-caps the rising Pacific Ocean rolled in over the great plain, drowning it and forming the islands of the Hauraki Gulf.

Around 900 AD far ranging sea rovers

from tropical Polynesia first discovered these islands and not long after this Tiri first felt the tread of human footsteps. The Kawerau tribe who claim descent from their ancestral canoe Te Waka Tu Whenua have had an association with Tiri which stretches far back into the mists of time.

According to historian and ethnologist Dr David Simmons the Kawerau would have originally used Tiri as a seasonal station — a vital component in their semi-nomadic economy. According to tribal tradition gathered by Simmons Tiri was known as "he motu tohu hau" — literally "an island which indicates the weather". An ancient fisherman's tradition stated that if the island was seen to be above the horizon the weather outlook was good, if the island was seen to be below the horizon the weather outlook was bad.

For hundreds of years the Kawerau people occupied much of the Auckland region north of the Waitemata but their territory became gradually reduced by the southward movement of the Ngati Whatua and the expansion into the Hauraki Gulf of the powerful Tainui people, notably Ngati Paoa.

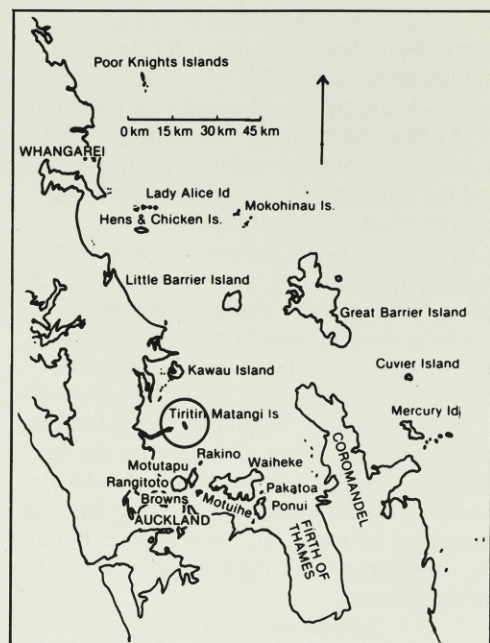
As time passed settlement on Tiri became more and more intensive (today there are at least 26 identified archaeological sites on the island) and by around 1700 a sub-tribe of Kawerau, Ngati Poataniwha were in permanent occupation with a fighting Pa named Tiritiri Matangi on the north-west coast. By this time Ngati Paoa also had a Pa on the island named Papakura located about a mile further along the coast.

Perhaps because of the pressure of population on natural resources fighting broke out between the two tribes, and Kawerau with the aid of the powerful Wai o Hua people from Tamaki eventually expelled Ngati Paoa and destroyed Papakura Pa. In the late 18th century war returned to the region when Ngapuhi from the Bay of Islands began raiding southwards.

In 1821, led by Hongi Hika and armed with muskets, the northerners brought devastation to much of northern New Zealand.

Lighthouse Established

Tiritiri Matangi lying across the sea approaches to the inner gulf, Tamaki Peninsula and the Thames, (Waihou), was



extremely vulnerable to such attack and Kawerau were forced to abandon their island and flee to the hinterland. However, it was not to Ngapuhi that Kawerau lost their island but to the Pakeha. Tiri was an attractive proposition for grazing and the settler government wanted the island as a site for a lighthouse to guard the approaches to the burgeoning port of Auckland. In 1841 the Crown purchased the whole Mahurangi block from Ngati Paoa. The Kawerau disputed the sale, which the Government claimed included Tiri but which Kawerau maintained did not. Indeed the island is not specified in the Deed of Purchase and does not appear in the two sketch maps of the block drawn up at the time of purchase. Regardless of all this, in 1863 materials for a lighthouse were ordered from Britain and in 1865 the lighthouse became operational.

In 1867 Matini Murupaenga on behalf of the Kawerau tribe appealed to the Native Land Court to confirm Kawerau's legal title to their ancestral island. By this time the lighthouse was already built and despite Kawerau's strong case the claim was thrown out, thus terminating Kawerau's one thousand-year association with Tiritiri Matangi.

Throughout the present century Tiri became renowned for its lighthouse, for many

North Shore Branch and Tiri

The North Shore branch of the Forest and Bird Society has taken a keen interest in the replanting scheme and as they have no reserves of their own have "adopted" Tiritiri Matangi. Members have made monthly trips through the winter months for several years and some have stayed for extended periods to help with large projects such as building a reservoir dam and working on the house conversions.

Until recently the only accommodation on Tiritiri Matangi was an old University hut and a small bach. With the wind down of the P.E.P. schemes one of the two families left the island

and their home has been converted into a bunk house. Some money for this was supplied by the University and the Hauraki Maritime Park Board but the project ground to a halt when partially completed because of lack of finance.

To celebrate twenty five years of Forest and Bird on the North Shore an appeal to members was launched to raise the necessary \$5000 which with subsidies completed the house. Comfortable accommodation is now provided for 18 people.

Bookings must be made with the ranger to stay there.

Top: About 90 percent of Tiritiri Matangi was pasture before the revegetation project began. Since the early 1980s, 100,000 trees have been planted. The photo shows the island's lighthouse, once the most powerful in the Southern Hemisphere. Photo: Murray Douglas.

Bottom: Endangered species such as the North Island saddleback have been reintroduced on Tiri. There is potential for others such as the little spotted kiwi (inset) to be located there too. Photos: DoC.