



*Mangere Mountain is surrounded by housing and the volcanic shores of the Manukau Harbour.*

sun's heat, warming the soil and creating a microclimate in which to grow tropical vegetables. They also built low walls for wind shelters and used the stones to delineate the boundaries of family gardens and to form house-wall foundations.

Remnants of these boundary walls, which radiated out from the base of Mangere and up its slopes, can be seen from above or picked out when the light is right. Walking along the crater rim one is struck by the immense industry involved in the creation of what was the hub of a populous Maori town. More than 160 terraces, dug using a ko, or digging stick, rib the outside of the two cones. In some places they extend from the rim right down to the base of the mountain, and at others spill over into the inside.

These terraces were mostly living areas. It is likely that, while evidence of some ditch and bank defences have been found at Mangere, this mountain was never a pa or completely fortified village in the manner of other Auckland cones such as Maungakiekie (One Tree Hill) and Maungawhau (Mt Eden).

Mangere was, nevertheless, in a strategic position since it overlooked two portages from the Manukau to the Tamaki river. It was along one of these routes that two of the earliest Europeans to visit Mangere, the missionaries Samuel Marsden and John Butler, walked in 1820. They both left accounts of the thriving communities at Mangere and Onehunga and of the gardens they saw. Canoe trade and traditional communication routes had already spread a

range of European vegetables. The introduction of potato revolutionised Maori gardening because careful management allowed at least two crops a year — twice as many as kumara. The missionaries noted that maize was well established, as were pumpkin and watermelon. They also saw herds of pigs.

They would likely have met the eminent Ngati Whatua chief Apihai Te Kawau who was born at Mangere and who negotiated the sale of the first Tamaki land to Governor Hobson. But hardly a year after his birth, Apihai's people fled the place in fear of Hongi Hika who, with his muskets, decimated the nearby pa at Mokoia (Panmure) and on Maungarei (Mt Wellington).

Apihai and his people returned in about 1835 and by the early 1840s the gardens of Mangere were once more in full production, providing meat and vegetables for settlers in the newly established town of Auckland.

A few years later large chunks of Mangere land passed into settler hands and Maori gardens became market gardens. This land-use persisted until well into the twentieth century when population growth resulted in houses covering the fertile fields.

Mangere Mountain became a public domain in 1890. It encompasses an area of about 65 hectares, 70 percent of which is an historic reserve. The remainder is recreation or local purpose reserve.

— **PAT BASKETT** is an Auckland-based feature writer.

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