



Maggie Papakura

Fifty years later and 12,000 miles away, a famous guide is still remembered

Recently returned from the United Kingdom, her home for twenty-three years, is Tony Curtis of Rotoiti. It was interesting to learn that even at the other side of the world is a small but close and thriving Maori community, based in London. We hope to hear more from them in future issues. Meanwhile Tony tells us about another Maori woman, also from Te Arawa, who made her home in Britain and died there over fifty years ago.

An unusual unveiling service took place in the small Oxfordshire village of Oddington last April. It marked the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Maggie Papakura, the well-known Whakarewarewa guide, scholar and author.

Her fascinating life began in 1872. She was born Makareti Thom at Tarawera, of a Tuhourangi mother and an English father. Following the Tarawera eruption in 1886 and Tuhourangi's migration back to their original home at Whakarewarewa, she became a guide at what was even then a booming tourist resort. It was during this period that she adopted the name by which she is best known: "Maggie" because few of her Pakeha charges could pronounce her real name; and "Papakura" after one of the Whakarewarewa geysers she showed tourists in the course of her work.

A further change of name occurred when she married an Englishman, Willian Dennon. She had her only child by him — Te Aonui Dennon, who was later to marry another famous Whakarewarewa personality — Guide Rangi.

A photograph of Maggie Papakura taken before she left New Zealand

Maggie in her home at Whakarewarewa

