



Hinemihi, alone in the wilderness of England.

An Arawa whare whakairo lies lonely among tall trees and green pastures in Surrey, England.

Clandon Park, the ancestral home of the Earls of Onslow is the resting place of Hinemihi.

On June 11th 1886 Mount Tarawera blew its 'top belching a fiery rain of mud and ash. Devastation was widespread but worst affected was the tiny settlement of Te Wairoa. Buildings in the village sagged, crumpled and were obliterated.

Photographs taken at the time vividly portray the destruction. One photo clearly shows Hinemihi in a chaotic lunar landscape it stands charred but intact under its mantle of mud. Tarawera's night of anger effectively ended occupation of Te Wairoa in the Rotorua district.

Whare had been destroyed and the silica terraces of Rotomahana were no more. Te Wairoa was abandoned.

In 1892, some six years after the nightmare of Tarawera, the 4th Earl of Onslow resigned as New Zealand's Governor General. Before departing he appointed an agent to negotiate the purchase of a whare whakairo... a small memento of his time in office that could be shipped to England. Hinemihi was an

**For sale: Hinemihi  
— a Maori house  
£50**

obvious possibility.

Onslow's agent began negotiations. Initial offers of £25 were rejected. Up-ped to £50 the proposal couldn't be refused.

An ageing bill of sale at Clandon House shows that on January 29th 1892 a cheque was issued for the purchase of twenty three pieces of carving "originally part of the meeting house at Te Wairoa known as Hinemihi". The bill was apparently translated into Maori and the recipient of the cheque, "appearing to understand it's meaning and purpose," concluded the sale.

Hinemihi was dismantled and carvings shipped to the Onslow ancestral home at Clandon Park.

As a decorative jig-saw Hinemihi proved a headache to reconstruct. The building suffered the indignity of being used as a boat shed, and later saw service as a summer house.

In 1956 Britain's National Trust assumed responsibility for Clandon Park. Clandon House was subject to extensive restoration. Work progressed slowly and by 1976 when attention finally turned to Hinemihi, the once proud structure had succumbed to the onslaught of successive winters... the ele-