

seen from the site, Mr Emery said. There are smaller niu poles also on the site.

These axes had been lined up with certain stars which rose exactly at the four main points of the compass at a certain time of the year.

It is said the tohunga who ran the whare wananga there was a man called Te Ra, who died as recently as 1949 and is buried in an unmarked grave on the site. Apparently he asked that his grave be unfenced, saying he preferred the company of sheep and cattle to that of humans. This may have been a reference to his dissatisfaction with the passing of the old traditions and beliefs, Mr Campin wrote.

Two attempts have apparently been made to fence the grave, but both fences have been destroyed by animals, so it has since been left unmarked, in accordance with Te Ra's wishes. Mr Emery said there may still be one or two people who know exactly where the grave is, but they would be unlikely to reveal it to anyone.

Again, the Te Ra story has its doubters. Mr Mahue does not remember Te Ra, and feels sure that if he did die as recently as 1949, he would remember him. He says other people his age do not remember him either.

#### Most debated

But perhaps the most debated story about the house is the one about a visit to it by Te Kooti while he was on the run from the armed constabulary after escaping capture west of Taupo.

It is said Te Kooti wanted to boost his mana by visiting Tawhiao in the Waikato. News of his approach was brought to Te Ra, who conducted a ceremony with two heaps of gunpowder, only one of which burnt.

He then told his people they must not be the first to fire in any hostilities with Te Kooti, and if Te Kooti's followers fired the first shot, they would die by their own actions. When Te Kooti arrived, he was challenged, and directed to Te Kuiti.

Another version has it that Ngati Rereahu wanted to stop Te Kooti getting through to the Waikato, thus reducing his mana further, but Te Ra apparently decided Te Kooti was no threat to the peace and prevailed upon his people to let him through.

Mr Emery does not believe Rereahu did not offer their hospitality to Te Kooti, and he is sure he stayed at Te Miringa Te Kakara. To refuse hospitality would have been unthinkable to Rereahu, he says.

But Mr Mahue believes Te Kooti did not go to Te Miringa Te Kakara at all.

He believes Te Kooti only went as far as Te Kuiti.

"Why would Te Kooti want to go to Waikato while Tawhiao was in the King Country at Benneydale?" he asked.

There are more stories. Mr Campin wrote that a group of tohunga moved in-



Top:

The south wing. The interior of the porch wall was well preserved. Half a door is shown on the right of the opening, and the shaping of the heke is shown.

Right:

The top of the poutokomanawa, showing the junction of the ridge beams and valleys.



to Te Miringa Te Kakara during the First World War in a bid to revive the old religion, but nothing seems to be known of their beliefs. It is thought possible they were responsible for a number of inscriptions found in the building.

The number 12 was found repeated among the inscriptions, and local people told Mr Campin it represented Christ's 12 apostles.

Mr Mahue doubts that story too, saying he does not remember anything about a group of tohunga moving into the house.

Ngati Rereahu attempted a revival of the site between 1929 and 1931, and undertook some alterations to the house, as well as building a kitchen and dining room on the site. Mr Mahue's parents helped in the work.

But two other marae were established in the district soon after, and Te Miringa Te Kakara again fell into disuse.

An attempt was made to restore it in the 1960s, but it fell through for lack of workers.

However, high hopes were held for

the latest plans to restore it, which were to do away with the 1930s alterations and restore the original 19th century configuration and techniques, which included treating the totara bark in the traditional fashion.

Now, with the house a pile of ashes, those hopes and plans have been transferred to the idea of building an almost exact replica.

The trust still needs some more money for things like hiring a portable sawmill, but the timber, bark and labour will all be donated, and as far as they are concerned, it's all on.

The end result, they hope, will be a unique marae to be used by all people, Maori and pakeha, who respect the traditions of the site.