

Auckland Domain History

The Auckland Domain has been an important landmark throughout the storied history of Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). Its volcanic landscape has provided benefits to its inhabitants, from the early days of Māori occupation right through to modern day, where it serves a diverse range of purposes for the people of Auckland.

The Domain is the remnant of an ancient volcano, named Pukekawa. Its crater can be seen extending right around the outside of the sport fields in the present day Domain. A second volcanic feature, named Pukekaroa, is the smaller hill on the opposite side of the sports fields from the museum.

Māori History

Pukekaroa was the site of a pā inhabited and fought over by many different iwi (tribes) throughout the early history of Tāmaki Makaurau.

The benefits of this pā to its inhabitants were numerous. The volcanic geology meant the pā was built on a stable scoria hill, and therefore was more desirable than a number of other high points in the region which were made up of mainly soft soil. The volcanism also resulted in soil rich in nutrients, which meant crops would grow well, especially on the northern facing side of the hill. Deep swamp surrounded three sides of the pā providing natural defence against invasion, and the Waipapa Stream gave a constant water supply. The height of Pukekaroa provided good vantage points to look across the Waitematā Harbour, which allowed inhabitants to keep an eye on people who may be landing on Auckland's shores.

When people from Hawaiki arrived in Tāmaki Makaurau on the Tainui waka (ocean-going canoe), they encountered other people who had settled from earlier voyages. Through intermarriage their descendants contributed to the populating of Tāmaki Makaurau. Tribal names recorded from this early period include Ngāiwi, Ngāoho and Ngāriki.

A few centuries after the arrival of the Tainui the area around Pukekawa saw much fighting. The earliest known occupants of the pā, Waiohua, were raided by Ngāti Awa from Taranaki, Marutūāhu from Hauraki, and Ngāti Whātua from Kaipara. The tribes descended from Waiohua today include Te Ākitai Waiohua, Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua and Ngāti Tamaoho.

Waiohua tradition is they retained control of Pukekawa until the death of the paramount chief Kiwi Tāmaki in the mid seventeenth century, when many Waiohua moved to sites further south. After this time, tribes descended from Waiohua continued to engage with, live alongside, and at times fight with other tribes in the heart of Tāmaki Makaurau.

Other traditions include battles that followed the killing of two Ngāti Maru rangatira, Kahurautao and his son Kiwi, after being hosted by their Waiohua relations. Rautao (son of Kahurautao) led Ngāti Maru and other Marutūāhu Iwi in retaliation against the responsible Waiohua hapū. Warfare was brought to an end with a peace-making marriage. It was from this campaign that the Marutūāhu Iwi (Ngāti Paoa, Ngāti Maru, Ngaati Whanaunga and Ngāti Tamaterā) settled pa and kainga in Tāmaki Makaurau, including Ngāti Maru at Pukekawa.

Ngāi Tai Ki Tāmaki have a customary pattern of association with the Auckland Domain which is traced back to at least the mid-late 1600s. This customary pattern of ahikā continued both before and after the turbulent period known as the musket wars.

In the mid eighteenth century the pā at Pukekaroa was raided by Ngāti Whātua from the Kaipara. After severe fighting across the region, Ngāti Whātua defeated Waiohua and gained control of the pā. Parts of Ngāti Whātua remained and settled in Tāmaki Makaurau.

In the early 1820s Ngāpuhi from the Bay of Islands area carried out a series of attacks on the Tāmaki region and beyond. Ngāti Whātua, the Marutūāhu Iwi, and a number of the Waiohua groups, moved south to the Waikato region. The Marutūāhu Iwi were the first to return to the Tāmaki region in the early 1830s, with Ngāti Whātua returning around five years later with Waikato, led by the paramount chief Te Wherowhero. In recognition of a peace-making marriage with Ngāpuhi, and as a memorial to those who had died in battle, Te Wherowhero named the hill Auckland Museum now sits on to Pukekawa – ‘The Hill of Bitter Memories’.

Early years of European settlement

In 1840 a number of chiefs from the wider Tāmaki area signed the Treaty of Waitangi. Soon afterwards government officials entered into various land transactions which facilitated the establishment of the colony and town of Auckland. One of the first of these transactions, signed on 20 October 1840 with Ngāti Whātua, included land around the Domain.

In 1843, the new Governor, Robert Fitzroy set aside the land as a public reserve. However, the boundaries were not established until 1860 with the Public Domains Act 1860. The land was originally given the two names of ‘Auckland Park’ and ‘Government Domain’. In 1865 an amendment to the Public Domains Act allowed administrative authority to be established and the Auckland Domain board was thereafter appointed to administer the Domain.

In 1847, following tension with settlers in the Wellington region, the Ngāti Toa chief Te Rauparaha was held as a prisoner by the government aboard the ship *Calliope*. In 1847 Waka Nene and Te Wherowhero petitioned Governor Grey for his release and pledged for his good behaviour. Te Rauparaha was released into their care to reside in the Auckland Domain, in a house Governor Fitzroy had earlier built for Te Wherowhero. Te Rauparaha was allowed to return to Otaki in 1848, where he lived until his death the following year.

In 1872 an international observation of the Transit of Venus took place on Pukekawa, which also became known as Observation Hill, later the site of the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

Between 1884 and 1893, the Auckland City Council acted in the capacity of the Domain board, before the passing of the ‘Auckland Domain Vesting Act’ in 1893 which officially put the Auckland Domain under the jurisdiction of the Council. This Act also explicitly provided for that portion of the Domain that was used as a botanic garden to be protected for this purpose and similarly provision was made for the on-going use and enjoyment of the cricket grounds. Sport has continued to be a feature of the Domain over the years with cricket, tennis and bowls all being provided for in the subsequent Auckland Domain Act 1987.

Development and use of the Domain environment

Soon after the Domain was set aside as a reserve, a government garden was established close to the duck pond, and a nursery was set up approximately where the kiosk is today.

The earliest recording of a tree planted in the Domain was in 1841 and was an oak *Quercus robur*, which was sourced from Sydney’s botanic gardens. The first recorded native plantings were in a section of bush above the now Stanley Street tennis courts in 1865. It included kauri, totara, rimu and miro planted into an existing canopy of kanuka. In 1869 the Duke of Edinburgh planted the giant

sequoia, *Sequoia sempervirens*, and Norfolk Island pine, *Araucaria heterophylla*, both located outside the nursery. A diverse range of exotic and native trees, creating a unique and important arboretum, have been planted throughout the Domain since its inception as a park.

The two major roads in the Domain, Domain and Lower Domain Drive, were constructed in 1880.

In 1866 Auckland's first piped water supply was drawn from the Domain springs near the duckponds to the inner city area. This was used with some modifications until 1877. An underground reservoir was established in 1853 to supplement supply.

The Acclimatisation Gardens were created in 1867 by the Acclimatisation Society, which included gardens, aviaries and a house erected for a curator. The gardens were used to propagate imported trout, grains, grasses, shrubs, flowers, fruit trees, and song and other birds to be acclimatised in New Zealand. The society moved from the Domain site during the 1880s.

The sports fields have been used for military displays and camps for short periods of time during the South African War (1899-1902) and as a camp for the mounted special constables in November 1913. People gathered at the Domain to farewell troops, and military parades, presentations and reviews of cadets took place during both World Wars.

A military carnival was held at the Domain in March 1919 as part of the peace celebrations at the end of the First World War, and on 25 April 1919 an Anzac Day service was held to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the Gallipoli landing.

In 1940, as part of Auckland's centenary celebrations, and to represent the continued peace agreement between the Waikato tribes of Te Wherowhero, Ngāti Whātua and Ngāpuhi, a totara tree was planted in the Auckland Domain. The planting was overseen by Te Puea Herangi, the great granddaughter of Te Wherowhero.

Between 1942 and 1944 Camp Hale was established for a United States forces stationed in New Zealand. Its 15 buildings housed up to 750 US Army personnel.

The Auckland Industrial exhibition was held in the Auckland Domain over five months during 1913-1914.

The Wintergarden complex was built in the 1920s in art deco style. The building at the eastern end (temperate /northern/cool house) was completed in 1921. The building at the western end (known as the palm house or more recently as the tropical house), completed in 1928, as was the court connecting the two, the balustrade, the main entrance steps, and framework for the fernery.

William Gummer designed the main Domain gates, in association with Mr Gross, a sculptor. On the top of the left pylon is a bronze figure of a male pointing towards the sports fields. Allan Elliot, a NZ medallist at the Los Angeles Olympics was the model for the statue. On the right pylon is a sandstone swan. The gates are made from Darley Dale sandstone and were completed in 1936.

The cenotaph (empty tomb) and the first section of the Auckland War Memorial Museum was built between 1925 and 1929 as a memorial for the sacrifice of those New Zealanders who served the British Empire in the Great War. The cenotaph was modelled on the Whitehall Cenotaph in London, designed by architect Sir Edwin Luytens. It and the museum building are constructed of imported Portland stone. This is the same radiant sandstone from which were quarried the 580,000 Imperial (now Commonwealth) gravestones and many of the Great War monuments erected across northern France and Belgium. The cenotaph and surrounding court of honour was consecrated in November 1929. At the same time the first section of the museum was, officially opened.

The back half of the museum was completed in 1960 at a cost of nearly £470,000. This section serves as a memorial to those killed in World War II. Auckland architects Aimer and Draffin were responsible for its design.

On 19 October 1955, an Auckland City Centennial Memorial was unveiled behind the Domain nursery. This included a reflecting pool and bronze statuary in classical Grecian style funded by a bequest from Alexander Richard Dickey Watson. This area is commonly referred to as Watson's Bequest.

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