Date: Wednesday 22 August 2018  
Time: 6.02pm  
Meeting Room: Whau Local Board Office  
Venue: 31 Totara Avenue  
New Lynn

Whau Local Board

OPEN MINUTE ITEM ATTACHMENTS

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Poor Te Kotuitanga — left high and dry

Avondale/New Windsor has a new reserve. It is a shame, though, that it will bear the name “Te Kotuitanga Reserve.” The real Te Kotuitanga has nothing to do with the site.

I first came upon references to Te Kotuitanga years ago as an early place name in the Avondale district, somewhere hundreds of years ago where a skirmish or attack had occurred while a waka was being dovetailed together (the meaning of the name, “the dovetailing”) at the head waters of the Whau River.

Te Kawerau a Maki recognise it as a place of ancestral significance included amongst four pre-emption warer transactions by Europeans with “another iwi” between the Whau Portage and Titirangi, a “canoe building site” somewhere on the Whau Portage according to the Deed of Settlement Claims c.2014. So, this seems to indicate a more “west of the Whau” placement for Te Kotuitanga, rather than east.

Added to this, from 1921 we have George Graham’s account (published in The Journal of the Polynesian Society Volume 30 No. 19 (1921) pp.166-168) of the story of the sons of Whao-roa, from Ngati-huarere, descended from the ariki of the Te Arawa waka, an iwi who had mana over much of north Coromandel and the Hauraki Gulf in the 1700s. Whao-roa and his sons had historic links with Te Tatua at Three Kings, and according to Graham lived during the time of Kiwi Tamaki, who was a cousin of theirs. Judging by the additional information Graham obtained from Te Tete Ngahuripoko of Awataha/Shoal Bay who related the story, that all of the Whao-roa’s sons died at the battle in West Auckland which also killed Kiwi Tamaki in the 1780s to 1790s, this places the story of Te Kotuitanga at around the 1770s or so, therefore our district’s oldest dateable event.

“Whao-roa... had several sons, Tai-haro the eldest, and Rau-iti the youngest but cleverest of these sons; and these all lived in their respective pas at Te Tatua with their wives of Ngai-Riu-ki-uta [Three Kings].

“When Whao-roa was in extreme old age, he addressed his sons thus: “This is my ‘ohaki’ (desire expressed before time of death). “Oh sons, prepare a canoe for us to go to see our relatives at Moehau [the sacred mountain, northern Coromandel Peninsula] that I may again taste of the foods of those forests, streams, and coasts of my ancestors, that I may be wept over by my relatives there; that you may also become acquainted with those relatives, and take wives from among your cousins at Moehau, and that our daughters here may marry with their brothers (cousins—male): lest it be said our genealogical descent has erred (Kei he nga whakapapa).” Such were the ideas and customs of those olden people of ours.

“When Whao-roa thus spoke there was a long silence—none of his elder sons responded; they merely listened and talked among themselves. Hence a proverb, “Nga uri o Whao-roa whakarongo puku” (the offspring of Whao-roa who listened in silence—that is, without making appropriate reply).

(Below) Map from Auckland Council GIS website, showing the new reserve on Tiverton Road, in comparison with the location of the Whau River, its head waters, and Olympic Park.
canoe parts had been dragged to be completed. There is also this proverb said of a well-joined tribe or family: —“He wakakotuita, kahore e tukutukua nga mimira.”

“A dove-tailed canoe—not unloosened, shall become its lashings.”

“It would not be easy to defeat such a tribe if its various hapus were in unity in peace and war.

“However, this quarrel was regarded as a tohunga-omen of evil portent—predicting the death of the person for whom the canoe was being built—Te Whao-roa, their father. In due course the canoe was finished, but before it was launched a taupa set forth and killed a man as a koha (sacrificial offering). After the canoe had been ceremonially performed over and made noa by their sister, it was launched and made ready for their expedition. The canoe was called “Kawenga-roimata.” (Carry the tears, i.e., the mourning offerings of men, precious garments and weapons who were about to proceed to Moehau.) On such occasions offerings were brought as condolences for those dead since last meeting, such offering was called roimata.”

Interesting that Te Kawerau a Maki list this as a significant place, as there was apparently at one point a battle between them and Ngati-Huare, which Te Kawerau lost. However, Whao-roa’s family as cousins to Kiwi Tamaki would have been more or less kin to Te Kawerau as well.

The parts of Kawenga-roimata were thus carved on the Tiritangi slopes, and dragged to the head waters of the Whau River where the parts were dove-tailed together, and the waka launched on the river. To me, this indicates strong association with either the Avondale or the Whau Streams, and the place where they flow together as head waters for the main river. A spot today called Olympic Park.

However, today, “Te Kotuitanga” has been applied by the Whau Local Board since their September 2015 meeting as a name to a reserve distant from the waters with which it is associated, up on the ridge leading to New Windsor Road, at 72-80 Twerton Road.

This site was once farmed by the French family from 1908, who owned the block from Whitney Street through to New Windsor Road, with their homestead up on the hill. The family subdivided the farm into strips from the 1930s, and in 1955 five of the strips were purchased as a block by Chinese market gardener Lowe Nam. Lowe Nam’s name appears in Auckland newspapers from the 1920s, meaning he was part of the generations affected by the infamous poll tax in this country. He was also part of the post-World War II period when Chinese market gardeners set themselves up briefly in Avondale, especially on Rosebank Peninsula, before industrialisation took over. The part played by Chinese landowners and market gardeners in our community, of course, goes back to the early 1900s, when Ah Chee set up his gardens on the future Avondale College site.
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The glasshouses belonging to Lowe Nam on Tiverton Road in 1959. Detail from Auckland Council aerial.

Lowe Nam owned and worked the Tiverton site from 1955 until his death at the age of 90 in 1991. The site remained in Lowe family hands until 2007, meaning more than 50 years ownership, when it was transferred to Auckland City Council.

The site was used by Auckland Transport as a construction site from 2012-2014, and as compensation for this AT allocated funding towards its redevelopment along multicultural lines. Quoting the report by Council staff to the Whau Local Board at their September meeting, “During the initial consultation, the local community and stakeholders were consulted on the look and feel of the park as well as its intended use. The surrounding area is multicultural with strong Indian and Asian influences which have been reflected in the design of the park. The park is designed around a central lawn to be used as a kick-around space and incorporates a shelter structure for Tai Chi, yoga and a reflexology feature. The shelter has been designed to reflect the cultural influences and the planting plan has Asian themes including flowering cherry trees.”

I suggested to Council staff, among other options, that Lowe Nam be remembered in the naming of the reserve, a name which would reflect on the park’s design, and New Windsor’s multicultural present-day make-up. There is no reserve or street name in Avondale/New Windsor which commemorates the Chinese gardeners who were part of our community in the past, or reflects upon those from South and East Asia who are part of our community now.

Council staff advised the Local Board that Te Kotuitanga “is located some distance from the park and it is considered that a name which associates more closely with the area may be more appropriate.”

However, the Whau Local Board completely rejected the suggestions of Jimmy Nam Lowe or Lowe Nam for the new reserve. In their decision, adding an extra resolution to those suggested in the Council report, they said that they as the Board:

“notes that Te Reo Maori is an official language of Aotearoa, yet within the vicinity of 72-80 Tiverton Road, there is not one park or reserve area with a name that is of any significance to mana whenua.”

Thing is, the park at 72-80 Tiverton Road is not of significance to mana whenua, but it appears that the Local Board have now declared that it is, by the application of an important place name which actually belongs elsewhere. Board Chairman Catherine Farmer, in an email response to me regarding this issue, stated: “While Mr Nam Lowe played an influential role in the development of the area, the majority of the reserves and parks located within a 3km radius of 72-80 Tiverton Rd already carry the names of prominent non-Maori landowners, such as: Dickey Reserve, Dallas Reserve, Hendon Park, Brydon Place Reserve, Chalmers Reserve and Bob’s Hill Reserve. This is indicative of the colonial history of the area and our board decided to provide some balance that acknowledges the thousands of years of history and occupation that Tangata Whenua have with the whenua and awa.”

Apart from the fact that Hendon and Chalmers Reserves aren’t named after land owners at all, within the Avondale/New Windsor/Blockhouse Bay area are to be found the following:

Temuka Gardens Reserve, Maoiro Street, Peter Buck Road, Puketua Street, Matata Street, the Whau Stream, Maire Street, Taramea Street, Te Wiata Place, Patiki
Avondale and the Avondale community deserve better than this. The Lowe family deserved better, as with the Chinese community. But, sadly, it is unlikely that the Local Board will now change their minds, and let Te Kotuitanga be where it belongs, with the waters associated with that waka from nearly 300 years ago. It deserves to be the alternate name for Olympic Park, instead of attached to a cold clay spot up on the ridge. It is that important to our history, both Maori and Pakeha.

The new sign with the name may already be up at the reserve. When I walk past from now on, and see that sign, I shall forever think, “Poor Te Kotuitanga, left high and dry.”

Lisa J Truttmann

Avondale’s early constables and their station – 1895-1906

Before the purpose-built police station/constable’s residence dating from 1906 that still exists today in the shopping centre as a boarding house, those constables tasked with the job of overseeing Avondale and West Auckland either didn’t live, or were based, here at all. From 1895, at least, they did rent a place. According to files held in Archives New Zealand in Wellington (another part of my “information raid” for the Society when I was down there last May), this early police station was on property rented from W J Binsted from July 1895, so I think it is likely that the first police station was on St Judes Street, just up from Binsted’s butcher shop at the corner with St Georges Road.

Leading up to 1895, mounted constables were based in the city and had to ride out on their official business. Avondale and New Lynn weren’t too far away to be practical, but Henderson Valley and the Waitakeres were, as seen by the letters in the police department file dating from 1894, asking for more police presence in that part of West Auckland.

“As the pic-nic season approaches and as this district is greatly frequented by such parties and as the depredation of many causers great loss to the settlers from time to time & the danger to lives and property is considerable: I deem it advisable to ask for proper protection on such occasions ... Individuals in other parties ... damage trees, carry off all they can lay their hands on & commit havoc with impunity ... Today I happened to be away from home & my wife and family with difficulty prevented the bridge & other store I use being burnt down by a fire lit by lads from the Beresford Street School ...”

Constable W Kelly, already hard at work in the remote area trying to keep on top of things, wrote to Inspector Hickson that the stories were true, and added, “The great danger ... feared by the settlers residing at Waitakerei [sic] is that some day during the dry weather that a large bush fire will be raised through some of the persons wandering about the bush and lighting fires to boil their Billy’s and their thoughtlessly going away without taking the precaution of extinguishing the fire ...”

John Bollard of Avondale stepped into the matter, sending Inspector Hickson a letter dated 15 November 1894.

“Sir,

On behalf of the inhabitants of Mount Albert, Point Chevalier, Avondale and the districts beyond extending to the West Coast, and as far north as Taupaki, I have the honour to apply for the transfer of one of the

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