

Amended version: 12 January, 2002

Taiaroa Wananga, Te Hirangi Marae, Turangi:

Held 30 December, 2001 to 2 January, 2002

This is written for the immediate descendants of Tamatea Te Waati Taiaroa (aka Tom, Dad, Grandad).

Members of the greater Taiaroa family started arriving at the marae which is situated in Turangi, a small tourist (and former hydro-electric camp) town at the southern end of Lake Taupo, from 10.30 am. Our family was represented by Mervyn and Rosemary, Keri and husband, Richard, and children Ariana and Marco, Tamati and his friends from Argentina, Eli and Sergio.

At first, we were worried that there were so few of us, but by 11 am a bus-load of the Hohepa (Joe) line from Waiuku arrived and then we were joined by several cars bringing the contingent from Ratana Pa and we were called on to the marae. At this stage, there were probably about forty of us.

The kawa, or protocol, was very informal and instead of the welcome speeches taking place in front of the meeting house we were shown straight into the meeting house. In response to the greeting from the local kaumatua, (who was supported by a group dressed in pink blazers, ties and white caps) Nakata Taiaroa (representing the Te Waati line) and Pat Heremaia (representing the Hohepa line) welcomed us all and thanked the representatives of the marae for allowing us to use their facilities.

Then the elder explained there would be a short break while they changed; he and others then proceeded to dress in the vestments of the Ratana clergy (see separate explanation) and a regular service proceeded. By this time another twenty to thirty participants had arrived. The pink-coated supporters turned out to be the choir, the elders were joined by another minister who was to receive his registration certificate and a baby was brought forward to be baptised as "Jacob Anthony James Blake." The service was relatively short and the hongis and individual greetings followed.

Lunch was then served in the wharekai and the timetable for the hui outlined.

The first event on the programme was a boat trip on Lake Taupo. Nearly sixty people climbed on to the old bus from Waiuku, drove up the eastern side of the lake and boarded a huge catamaran run by Chris Jolly tours. This event had been arranged thanks to Uncle Archie (see later explanation). It was a fine afternoon but very windy and very choppy waves made it relatively unsafe for small boats. However, we were lucky to be able to proceed around the Western Bays observing the various marae, waterfall and rivers and on the way back from our three hour trip the Maori carvings on the cliffs at Acacia Bay.

On our return, we found Dalvanius (from the Hohepa line) and his Prime brothers were writing a song for the hui. It was fascinating to listen to them working together and how they repeated and repeated the words and the harmonies until they (or I should say Dalvanius) were happy with the result.

Taiaroa Waiata chorus:

Taiaroa nga uri (We are the descendants of
Taiaroa)

Tuwharetoa te iwi (Tuwharetoa is the iwi)

Taiaroa-tumai (Taiaroa-stand up)

E mau nei ki te aroha (We are surrounded with love)

After the meal, a church service was held in front of the meeting house as the sun went down...there appears to be no shortage of actual or aspiring preachers in our family...on this occasion it was Nephi Prime (from the Hohepa line) and Hone Williams (also from the Hohepa line but also connected to Tainui and a prominent speaker on behalf of the Maori Queen) who led the charge.

Later that evening, each branch of the Hoani I Taiaroa family introduced their families. Fortunately Nakata (who is Uncle Nev's son) was still with us at this stage, as was his sister, Irene and Harae Meihana (Uncle Mick's son who was adopted out) and his son Matiu who used to be a professional musician (he was a backing guitarist for the

Platters at one stage) so we were ably represented when it came to our waiata.

Prior to this we had secured our sleeping places in the main meeting house and the children retired exhausted. In the meantime, under instructions from Dalvanus, we tried to write a verse on Te Waati for the "Taiaroa Waiata". Fortunately, I was helped by Tiriana, Bernard and Mike (from the Hohepa line). Unfortunately, we know nothing about our grandfather—even Nakata and Haere could add nothing except that he was born between 1879 and 1882 probably at Whangaehu and later married Ngakarehe Haimoana. He is said to be buried at Kaungaroa, a small community up the Whangaehu river valley—I have been to the area but have yet to find the headstone. So for our Te Waati verse we have talked about him being "the silent one"!

Taiaroa Waiata, Te Waati verse:

Ngu ra koe e Te Waati e (You have been silent Te Waati)

Kei hea ra i to wairua? (Where are you?)

*Tangi ana te roimata whakarongo ki o mokopuna.
(Listen to the tearful cries of your mokopuna)*

*Repeat chorus.
(see complete waiata later)*

Next morning the Te Waati, Kahukura and Hoani lines of the family were on duty so some of us were up at 6 am to prepare the huge pot of porridge, two trays of chops and a fry up of the previous night's leftover potatoes. After the clean up, preparation of the cut lunches for the upcoming bus trip took place and the vegetables (potatoes and kamukamu) and pork chops for the evening meal were also prepared.

Today there were two buses on duty: one took the kids to the hot pools...the second took a group to the Papakai Marae which is said to be the place where Te Waati's father (Hoani I) was born.

(Insert picture of marae)

There was a tangi taking place there so the group were only able to pay their respects and then proceeded to the

National Park airstrip where nearly 40 of them had the opportunity to take a flight around Tongariro and the lake. Again, this had been arranged thanks to Uncle Archie Taiaroa.

.According to Tamati, "beautiful clear skies provided spectacular views of Lake Taupo, Lake Rotopounamu, Lake Rotoaira and the craters of Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu and gave the fliers a far more interactive understanding of the Tongariro National Park area than can be taken from any map."

(Insert picture if available)

By this time the other bus had caught up and both groups proceeded to the Tongariro National Park Headquarters to view videos on the history of the area and Tuwharetoa.

On the return journey we stopped at Otukou Marae which is the nearest marae to Lake Rotoaira since the famous Tuwharetoa, Motuopihi Pa, situated on an island in the middle of the lake was destroyed in 1970's when this lake became part of the central North Island hydro-electric power system. (Motuopihi Pa is the place where Te Rauparaha found refuge when he was chased by the Ngati Maru around 1818 and when he emerged from his hiding place he is said to have proclaimed his famous haka: Kamate, Kamate!)

The two poles at the entrance of the Otukou Marae came from the Motuopihi Pa. The marae itself is relevant to the Taiaroa family because Hoani I owned land here and his picture hangs in the meeting house.

(Insert picture from booklet)

Unfortunately we were unable to view the picture at this time because the family from the marae were absent at the tangi at Papakai.

By this time it was New Year's eve. Dalvanus was still composing/conducting/directing/polishing up the Taiaroa Waiata. Others were practising their items for the evening's entertainment.

Our dinner of pork bones, water cress, kamukamu, potatoes and fruit salad and ice cream was just enough to feed the starving multitude which by now had expanded to well over a hundred and twenty.

The evening's entertainment got off with a bang when Meri's line performed a stirring action song, Hoani's line produced a comedy loosely related to their family's history, Ruuma's sole representative sang a beautiful solo, Nephi Prime (from Hohepa's line) had the kids (and their parents) rolling off their chairs (and the boat) but when it came to Te Waati's turn all our family had disappeared and I was stranded. All I could do was sing "You are my whanau/sunshine..." helped by the kids. Then Andre (Uncle Mick's grandson) returned from babysitting with a saxophone and played a couple of tunes to save Te Waati's reputation!

Skits hilariously depicting the day's flights over Tongariro, competitive Maori word games and a saxophone-led musical quiz interspersed with singing led by the Prime Brothers filled up the time till midnight...and the heralding of the New Year in a novel manner, for us at least. An impromptu hour-long church service was led by five different "preachers" representing the Catholics, Ratana, Mormon and Pai Marire religions. After such a start we all expect the year 2002 to be fully blessed.

New Year's Day was a stay at home, korero and sports day, golf for some, cricket and touch for the younger ones rewarded with sweets as prizes for all. The children were taken in the bus to Lake Taupo for a swim followed by a treat at Burger King for lunch. All these activities allowed the kids to get to know each other. Names Ariana can remember include: "Adama, Helena, Josephine, Hemi, Hoani, Tama, Taiaroa, Linda, Seany, Kimiora and Wairua."

Some of us spent time editing the whakapapa book, learning about where each of the families fitted, sharing what knowledge we had of the history and whereabouts of information about the Taiaroa family. Others prepared the hangi and food, and others arranged the flowers and set the tables for the final evening meal. Elsewhere Dalvanus was composing another couple of songs.

The evening meal, a hangi, included smoked eel, pork, potatoes, kumara, a range of salads and steam pudding with whipped cream all beautifully presented and more than enough for those present. A framed woven kite decorated with feathers had been designed and prepared by Lynette Gunderson (Hoani's line) and was presented by Joan Pirere? (Hapimana line) to a representative of the Te Hirangi marae, Gene (or Sonny?) Heremaia (Meri's line) by way

of appreciation...this prompted another burst of speeches and waiata (Richard, a Canadian in explaining this procedure to his mother explained that "the speeches are so long that when they finish the speakers are required to sing to wake everybody up") before people retired to rest for the evening event.

The bus left for the local Chartered Club for a few drinks. This was the first time any drinks had been available during the gathering and even then many of the group were not drinking alcohol. Although there was a disc jockey—Stewart Heremaia (Meri's line)—by about 11 pm the guitars were out and the singing led again by the Prime Brothers (assisted from time to time by Tu Taiaroa). Hit songs from the 50's through to the 90's, popular, Maori and assorted other renditions almost assured that there were no repeats (usually a Prime requirement) in the two hours of continuous singing. Closing time at midnight did not stop us and the bus left for the marae at 1 am. By this time night starvation had set in...the leftovers from the evening meal reappeared in the wharekai...but even at 3 am some of the elders were heard, above the snoring, in earnest discussions.

Next morning an early start at 7 am was required to ensure that we had all cleaned up for a tangi to start at 9.30 am. Our hui was ended with another brief karakia led by Joe Malcolm (married into Meri's line), Pat Heremaia (Hohepa's line) and Hone Williams.

And so we made our way back, slowly and wearily to Auckland.

This ancient proclamation of a famous Tuwharetoa tipuna, Ngatoroirangi, when he arrived in the Bay of Plenty still seemed appropriate:

*Ka u ki Matanuku,
Ka u ki Matarangi;
Ka u ki tenei whenua.
Hei whenua.
Mau e kei te manawa o Tauhou!*

*I arrive where unknown earth is under my feet,
I arrive where a new sky is above me;
I arrive at this land, a resting-place for me,
O Spirit of the Earth! The stranger humbly
Offers his heart as food for thee!*

