



All the land between Takapuna Beach and the Mangawhai Heads formed part of the controversial Mahurangi Purchase signed in 1841. Displaced Māori tribes fought for their ancestral lands, gaining only a small measure of success.

My name is Wikitoria Eliza and after having only 14 years I was dead on the beach at Waiwerawera. I had been held in the embrace of the hot waters at my birth and death, and now they witnessed my rebirth, emerging from Papatuanuku's womb, the girl who should have died but who had been granted life anew.

Kakaha Pā was silent; its peoples were taken by the Ngāpuhi raiders from the north or left dead where they lay. Ngāti Rongo had nearly all perished in the Musket wars. I buried my friends and elders on the headland nestled between the Puhoi and Waiwerawera rivers, knowing that they lay with generations of tangata whenua buried in our sacred soil. The bodies of dead Ngāpuhi warriors I dragged down the steep slopes, pushing them into the water on an outgoing tide. I did the same for those that had died of their wounds in the warm pools of healing waters on the beach. When I got tired I slept. When I got hungry I ate. And when I was finished, I left my home.

Anyone who saw me wandering the land in the years that followed must have seen a scruffy, angry looking young woman that, like my father before me, had not seen a bath for months. When news of the Mahurangi Purchase reached my ears in 1841, I immediately made my way home. The Hauraki tribes that claimed my Ngati Rongo's land after our defeat, sold all of it between Takapuna and Mangawhai to the Crown. I had seen how many Māori had lost their land and with it their mana. I was determined that this would not happen to what remained of my tribe. The remnants of Ngāti Rongo lived at Te Mara on the flat land on the far side of the Puhoi River. Fearful of being recognised as a daughter of the tribe, who all thought was long dead, I dressed as a young man, cut my hair and even took a bath. I arrived with Pākehā missionaries who were looking to bring Christianity to the tribe. They were very grateful to have the services of such a young and talented Māori Go-Between.

The chief of the tribe was Te Hemara, a man that I was familiar with and who I trusted to do the best for our tribe. When translating conversations I made sure to impress upon Te Hemara the importance of protesting the Mahurangi Purchase. At my behest he determined that a direct appeal to Governor Hobson, who represented the Crown, should be made and that I should be the Go-Between. At our audience with Hobson we argued

that Ngāti Rongo had a long history of settlement in the area and sought that traditional lands ought to be protected from sale. Promises were made, our land appeared secure.

It would be 25 long years before the deed of land title was signed at the newly established Waiwera Thermal Spa, a business run by a Pākehā politician, Robert Graham. He had witnessed Māori bathing in the warm waters as early as 1842 and saw the potential to charge wealthy Pākehā to use the magical springs, as a way to cure what ailed them. He had purchased a small parcel of land from Te Hemara two years later to begin his venture and began to draw the waters into large pools for bathing. The Crown title agreement saw the creation of ten blocks of land, totalling some seven thousand acres, returned to the rightful owners. Te Hemara received the 70 acre block that was most special to me, Maungatauhoro, which included all the land between the Puhoi and Waiwera rivers. My joy in this victory was short-lived. The influential and wealthy Graham purchased Te Hemara's parcel of land legally for fifty pounds. The chief of our tribe had sold Ngati Rongo's heritage, sold my home, to gain position and wealth in a Pākehā world.

Robert Graham's spa at Waiwera became known throughout the world for the waters that made the sick feel better. He built a large homestead overlooking the Puhoi River and began an extensive planting programme of exotic trees, mostly from Europe. One of his Swedish guests called the place 'Wenderholm' meaning winter home in his language, and the name stuck. During the economic depression of the 1880's Graham sold the property to a land agent named Greenwood, who looked to establish a wealthy suburb. Thankfully his plans to cut the land up into little pieces for sale did not succeed. The land remained as a large block for almost a century, passing through the hands of wealthy Pākehā families until nearly all memory of Māori ownership and occupation had been lost.

Lifetimes would pass before I would set foot on the soil of my people again. In 1965 Auckland Council, realising the beauty and historical value of the Wenderholm area, made a compulsory purchase of the block, creating the first of Auckland's regional parks. When the park was opened to all, I joined others on weekends to plant native trees, returning the whenua to how it was. In the years since birdsong has returned to Maungatauhoro, Māori history has begun to be remembered and the sounds of children and families playing are ever-present. Now I regularly return to climb the path to Kakaha Pā, dipping myself into the magic waters of the past, brushing away the memories that are so thick it feels I am back with those that I loved. They are all there now, all bar one - I, Wikitoria Eliza - last of the Ngāti Rongo.



The images here (left to right) show Robert Graham's spa in Waiwera, his home named Wenderholm and the proposed suburb of Greenwood Estates.

- 1) What is the Māori name of the headland between the Puhoi and Waiwera Rivers?
 - a) Wenderholm
 - b) Kakaha Pā
 - c) Maungatauhoro
- 2) What language is 'Wenderholm' from?
 - a) Swedish
 - b) English
 - c) Māori
- 3) What was the main goal of the missionaries when speaking with tribes?
- 4) In what year did Robert Graham purchase land at Waiwera?
 - a) 1842
 - b) 1844
 - c) 1867
- 5) Why was Wikitoria like her father?
 - a) She was angry.
 - b) She was scruffy.
 - c) She was unclean.
- 6) Which Māori tribe sold Wikitoria's land as part of the Mahurangi Purchase?
 - a) Ngāti Rongo
 - b) Hauraki Tribes
 - c) Ngāpuhi
- 7) List three people we know were in the room when Ngāti Rongo's challenge to the Mahurangi Purchase was made.
- 8) Whose interests did Governor Hobson represent?
- 9) Based on hints in the story, why do you think that Wikitoria was able to survive her gunshot?
- 10) Briefly explain why you think Wikitoria did not bury the dead warriors of the Ngāpuhi tribe.
- 11) What is a place that brings forward many memories of the past for you? State why you think this is.

Word Salad

There are many unusual words and phrases in the story you have just read. Complete the following tasks to ensure your understanding:

1) Find the definitions of the following English words.

- a) womb
- b) perished
- c) nestled
- d) remnants
- e) behest
- f) influential
- g) exotic
- h) compulsory

2) Use at least five of the words above in a series of creative sentences. Underline the words you chose to use.

Parts of speech - Adjectives

Adjectives describe naming words (nouns). Identify each adjective in the following sentences:

- a) The warrior's body floated out on the tide.
- b) Arguments were fierce between the passionate men.
- c) The bird calls in the thick bush reminded me of the past.



Graham's original home at Wenderholm is now called Couldry House.

Local Histories / Mātauranga Māori

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