



grandmother's at Wharekaho and at my Aunt Maraia's, also at Wharekaho. While our children were young we often holidayed at Whitianga. My mother would return to Whitianga from time to time when her mother was not well, to care for her. At times she took my grandmother back to our farm at Manawatu, a farm 6 miles from Matata, where my parents finally settled.

As children we went floundering at the mouth of the Taputapuatea stream with our uncles and sometimes our older cousins. Mostly the younger children collected pupu around the rocks and we would enjoy those with bread and butter at lunch time.

We used to collect cockles from among the eel grass where the old wharf used to be. On the other side of the present wharf we used to collect pipi and we still do though one wonders how long we will be able to do this, with the development that will occur.

I remember as a child visiting my grandmother in the Whitianga Hospital when she was ill. My Aunts would take kaimoana for her. She always seemed to get a bed in the front of the hospital and she was able to see the sea from there. I can imagine all of the memories she would have recalled, having spent all of her life in Whitianga and Mercury Bay. She would have had some sad thoughts about her father's struggle to retain land in and around Whitianga, even the very land she was hospitalised in was taken away from them. No doubt her father would have told her about thousands of acres granted to them.

I do remember my grandmother endeavouring to get back the sale yards in Whitianga on the Wharetangata block. My Aunt Rebecca Fleet had the task of taking Granny to the Maori Land Court, but to no avail.

Granny didn't live to see the day the Ohinau Island came back to Ngati Hei, but she sent back the cheque for 23 pound the government paid her for Ohinau Island. She said to the government she did not want to sell it, but the government took the island to build a lighthouse. No one was allowed on it. That was terrible for Granny because that Island had played a great part in the lives of her predecessors. It was a place that they rowed to every year to put in their crops, being an Island it was 5 degrees wanner and things matured a litter earlier there.

On my grandmother's death the only land that remained was at Wharekaho and few parcels of land outside of Whitianga. Something that would have made Granny sad -I doubt she would have let it happen

- was the changing of the name of Wharekaho Beach to Simpson's Beach. All the history that took place there, both Maori and European, all the battles that were fought there, the burial grounds there, some warriors her father Peneamene told her about - blood relatives who lost their lives there. Granny wept when she could not get Ohinau Island back but she would have been grief stricken had she lived to see the day that Wharekaho Beach lost its Maori identity.

The European history was that Wharekaho beach was mentioned in Cook's journals and was the beach that he landed on and walked up to Wharetaewa to the Ngati Hei stronghold to receive a warm welcome from the tribal people of the day. I share the feelings that my grandmother would have felt - feelings of shock, devastation, and a deep feeling that once again our mana has been trampled upon and taken away.

In 1984 I returned to Whitianga to live, at Catherine Crescent which is on the Whakau block. I lived there for three years. My sister Valerie also returned to live at Whitianga, in 1994. I now live in Kuaotunu.

My husband is Russell Loft. His family have been farming in Whitianga since 1973. Sadly the farm has been sold to Hopper Developments and Whitianga Waterways is being developed with no thought given to the damage that will be done to the harbour bed, fish and bird life.

Lastly, if the ocean and harbour, rivers and streams are ours according to the Treaty of Waitangi, why have we been trampled upon again? Not all of Ngati Hei are in favour of the Waterways Development; especially when the harbour bed is interfered with, to the tune of 80,000 cubic metres of the bed being scooped out. The delicate ecosystem will sustain great damage, it will affect mangroves and birdlife and who knows what else. One can only wait and see. To me this claim is important to re-establish the mana and rangatiratanga over this land.

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Alice Loft