

Hawera walkway open for business

Historical area's many interests

Hawera now has its own walkway thanks to the efforts of local resident Frank Bourke and the Normandy Lions Club.

It travels across the historic pa site on the reserve and visits a cairn erected in memory of a battle fought during the land wars last century. Frank Bourke first raised the idea of a walkway at the reserve's committee meeting last November. He felt there was a need because there was no walkways near it. There are quite a few in North Taranaki but none at all in this area, he said.

The committee approved the idea and the Normandy Lions Club was invited to help.

Route
Together with Frank Bourke, club members planned a route for the walkway and held working bees to build the signs and stiles needed.

The work has just been completed and the track is now ready. Frank Bourke thinks the 45-minute walk is a good afternoon out for families. "They could come out to the reserve, have a picnic lunch and then do the walk," he said.

He hoped a pamphlet could be published with a map of the walkway explaining the different features.

"This could include notes on the different trees and plants as well as the historical aspects of the reserve," he said.

People wanting to take the walk could pick the pamphlet up from the Hawera Information Centre.

The new walkway starts at the kiosk area near the reserve's road entrance. It crosses a small bridge over the Tawhiti Stream and skirts the side of the "lake" area.

The walkway passes through the old reserve gates and goes up the closed road.

Over a stile and up a hill walkers approach the memorial cairn at the old pakeha redoubt.

The track then heads down the hill across another stile and through a planting of native trees.

After crossing a third stile walkers head uphill on to the main pa site.

Defences

There they can see the trench defences built by the Maori and pits in the

ground left by food stores and huts.

"Also on top of the pa is a carved post placed there in 1838 when a tapu on the area was lifted."

The walkway continues down the other side of the

pa and turns left towards the kiosk.

Instead of continuing over the bridge walkers turn left again and follow a track round the edge of the former stream course.

The track passes a condemned swimming and paddling pools left over from the 1950s redevelopment.

It continues round the "lake" area's edge and rejoins the outward journey at the old reserve gates.

Then people retrace their steps to the start of the walkway.

To extend the trip at the end, people can walk up the smaller pa opposite the kiosk area. This was formerly a satellite pa to Turuturu Mokai, providing advance warning of attacks.

Two massacres and various controversies are part of the Turuturu Mokai area's history.

About 400 years ago the pa's resident tribe, the Ngati Tupua, was nearly decimated in battle by another tribe, the Taki Ruahine.

After the victory, the smoke-dried heads of the beaten warriors were impaled on stakes thrust into the ground.

The pa's present name came from this event, turuturu "the dried heads", mokai "the stakes".

During the land wars last century a pakeha redoubt was built and manned near the abandoned pa site.

In the early hours of July 12, 1868, it was attacked by

a Maori war party from Te Ngutu led by Titokowaru.

He was Taranaki's principal Maori leader at the time and a Ngati Ruahine chief.

Killed

Nearly all the 25 men stationed at the redoubt were killed in the battle.

Control of the redoubt area was taken over by the Hawera Borough Council in 1901 and it accepted responsibility for the main pa site 17 years later.

In 1929 a memorial cairn marking the battle was unveiled at the redoubt runs.

During the Depression years before World War II unemployed labour was used to restore the main pa's earthworks.

As part of this work, local Maori elders lifted a tapu on the area.

The ceremony was held on the 70th anniversary of the redoubt's battle.

A carved post was placed on top of the pa as part of the tapu-lifting.

In 1940 Hawera schoolchildren planted native trees at the reserve to mark New Zealand's anniversary.

An ambitious plan for developing the reserve was presented to the council by a local man, Mr C. W. Williams, in 1963.

He suggested the stream course around the kiosk area should be altered, creating swimming and paddling pools and a lake.

A representative from the Ministry of Internal Affairs objected to the plan on conservation grounds but it was approved by the borough council.

Backing

With financial backing from Mr Williams and a lot of volunteer work, the project was completed in 1964.

It was officially opened a year later but by 1977 the lake was too shallow for boats because of silting.

The Health Department condemned the swimming pools because of water pollution and the development fell into disuse.

Most of the native trees planted 17 years before by schoolchildren died because of the water level change made by the project.

During the early 1960s Turuturu Rd was realigned to its present path and the land between that the pa site included in the reserve.

A \$16,000 bequest to Turuturu Mokai by Samuel G. Larcom caused some controversy later that decade.

About 1950 the money was spent on the reserve then the council decided to use the rest to build a new swimming pool at King Edward Park.

The move was strongly opposed by the Turuturu Mokai committee but the council still went ahead with the plan.

LEFT: A pleasant part of the track on the new walkway.

BELOW: The old gates to the Turuturu Mokai Reserve.



ABOVE: Philip Nixon (left) and Trevor Barr, of the Normandy Lions Club, erect the sign at the start of the new walkway.

RIGHT: The carved pole erected when the tapu was lifted in the 1930s.

A member of the pa site committee, Mr Rod Syme, resigned in protest at the action.

Over the last few months the reserve has been the subject of renewed interest.

Two students were employed by the Hawera District Council in January to tidy up the kiosk area and show tourists around.

The new walkway is another aspect of this renewal of interest.



BELOW: The memorial cairn marking the site of the pakeha redoubt attacked by a Maori war party in 1868.



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