

Historic pole 'left to rot'

One of Fitzroy's most historic landmarks is being left to rot — along with its illegible signpost.

The 25-foot high Maori totem pole near the Smart Rd-Devon Rd intersection is falling into disrepair and local residents believe it may not last much longer.

Originally the pole, Te Pou Tutaki — pou (pole), tutaki (to block) — was erected about 1847 by Waitere Kātore and other dissident natives as a symbol of Maori humiliation of the Pakeha.

BLOCKED

Sir George Grey tried to force the purchase of land across the Waiwakaiho but this move was blocked by Governor Fitzroy and the pole was erected with the figures facing the forbidden land.

The top figure, a Maori, depicted virility and potency and the bottom figure impotency and dejection and the pole was topped by a four-foot flagpole.

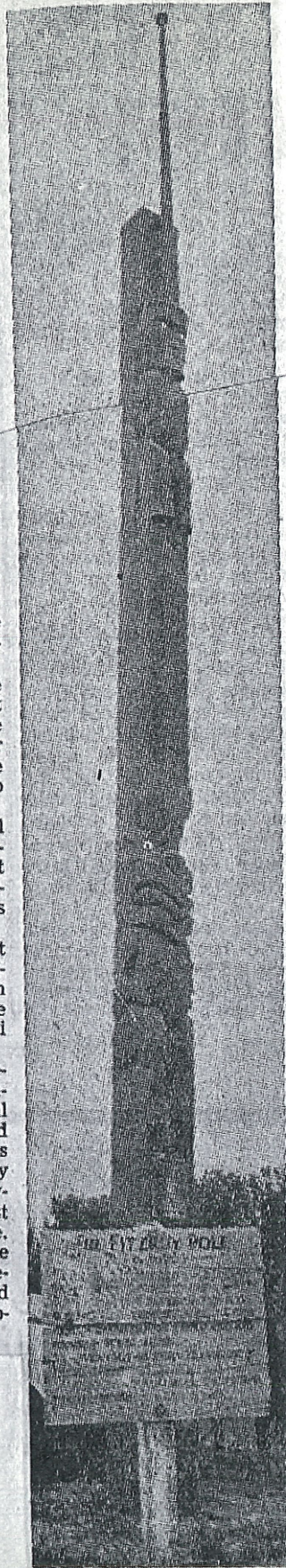
This magnificent pole stood for 30 years until it was burnt down by a hedge fire during 1877 and later chopped up by a tollgate keeper at the Waiwakaiho River bridge for firewood.

Paikea Henare, a local Maori carver, was commissioned to carve a replacement pole for the Taranaki Province centenary and this was erected in June 1940.

Soon after the pole was set up, scandalised Pakeha officialdom sent workmen with a ladder to reduce the degree of potency of the top Maori figure.

Mr M. J. Moorhead, secretary of the Taranaki Regional Committee of the National Historic Places Trust said that although the pole was in the Taranaki County Council area, the New Plymouth City Council did most of the periodic maintenance.

"Any complaints about the condition of the pole are referred to the council and they normally take appropriate steps," he said.



T.H.
3/4/1974

TARANAKI HERALD, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 1974

