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Celebrating 50 years of regional parks

Wenderholm Regional Park

Our History

Please do not remove or disturb any archaeological remains. They are an important record of our history and are protected by law.



Welcome Haere Mai

Wenderholm Regional Park sits between the mouths of the Pūhoi and Waiwera rivers and has a forested headland, a large sandspit and saltmarshes. People have gardened, lived, fought and died on this land for hundreds of years.

This brief history tells some of the stories about the people who once lived at Wenderholm. Visitors to the park can still see physical reminders of these people, such as Couldrey House, the historic trees and the remains of Māori settlements.

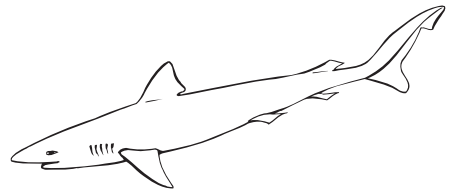
Ngā Pou Herenga a Ngā Tūpuna – 'The post that ties our ancestors to the land'. This pou is situated at the entrance to the Maungatauhoro Te Hikoī Heritage Trail.

Early Māori settlement

Wenderholm's natural resources and strategic position have attracted people for hundreds of years. Māori gathered shellfish from the river mouth, fished in the coastal waters, built gardens and settlements on the warm soils and found food and medicinal plants in the forests. The nearby Mahurangi shark fishing grounds provided sharks for drying as a winter food, while Te Oro Karaka (Orokaraka), on the northern banks of the Pūhoi River mouth, provided an abundant supply of karaka berries and birds. The Pūhoi and Waiwera rivers gave Māori canoe access inland to the walking tracks over to the west coast and the famous Waiwerawera hot springs were just a short paddle away.

Māori had their own names for the land we know today as Wenderholm Regional Park. The flat sandy spit at the mouth of the Pūhoi River was called Te Akeake, while the forested headland was called Maungatauhoro. Te Akeake and Maungatauhoro were part of a larger land block known as Te Pūhoi, named after the slow-flowing Pūhoi River. The whole coastline from Matakana to Waiwera, including Te Pūhoi, was known as Mahurangi.

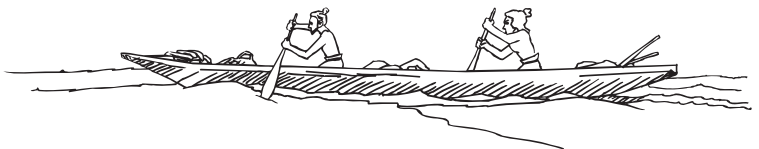
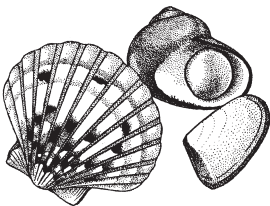
Although Mahurangi is associated with the Mahurangi Harbour today, the name originated from the small rocky island called Mahurangi, which is joined to the Maungatauhoro headland by a reef that is exposed at low tide. In legend, Mahurangi was an elderly woman in Hawaiki, the ancestral homeland of Māori.



Her special powers enabled the construction of the Tainui canoe to proceed, and this island was named Mahurangi during the exploration of the Hauraki Gulf by the Tainui canoe. Mahurangi Island is now part of Wenderholm Regional Park.

People are thought to have lived in the Mahurangi area since New Zealand was first settled by Polynesian ancestors of Māori, about 800 years ago. Sandspits at the mouth of a river, such as Te Akeake, are typical of sites favoured by the earliest settlers in the country. According to Māori tradition, the first people to live in the Mahurangi area were the Tūrehu (those who rose from the earth), who are considered the earliest inhabitants of the North Island. After the Tūrehu, a number of tribal groups settled in the area, conquering and intermarrying with the people already there. Early occupants of the Mahurangi area include the Tini o Maruiwi people and the descendants of the famous explorer, Toi te Huatahi.

Tradition records that from the 1300s, tribal groups associated with the voyaging canoes from Hawaiki arrived in the Mahurangi area. Descendants of the Tainui crew known as Ngāoho travelled from the south to occupy Mahurangi, while descendants of the Moekakara canoe crew arrived from the north.



These two groups intermarried with the earlier people of Mahurangi and by the 1600s they had settled the whole coastline between Tāmaki and Mahurangi.

Te Kawerau and Ngāti Rongo settlement

When Europeans first arrived in the early 1800s, the Mahurangi area (including Wenderholm) was occupied by a tribal group known as Te Kawerau and Ngāti Rongo. Although these people were generally referred to as Ngāti Rongo, by this time it was their Te Kawerau ancestors that gave them mana whenua (traditional status, rights and responsibilities) over the land. As Te Hemara Tauhia, the leading rangatira (chief), stated in 1866: "The name of one portion of my ancestors are called Ngāti Rongo but the Kawe-rau, who are another portion of my ancestors were the original proprietors of the soil." (*Native Land Court, Waiwera, January 25, 1866*).

Te Kawerau descended from a large group of Ngāti Awa people who migrated north from Kawhia in the early to mid 1600s. Led by Maki, the tribal group occupied Tāmaki (Auckland), before expanding north as far as Te Arai Point and to the Hauraki Gulf Islands. Maki settled in the Mahurangi area for some time before moving on but his son, Ngawhetu, remained on the land between Whangaparaoa and Pūhoi. Over time, the descendants of Maki became known as Te Kawerau. Through Ngawhetu and his descendants, Te Kawerau gained occupation rights to Te Pūhoi.

Shortly after the Te Kawerau conquest, another powerful tribal group migrated to the nearby Kaipara Harbour. Ngāti Whatua arrived from the Hokianga, led by Haumoewharangi. Haumoewharangi's children each established hapū (sub tribes) in the Kaipara Harbour. One of his children

was called Rongo, whose descendants settled on the north-eastern shores of the Kaipara Harbour and became known as Ngāti Rongo.

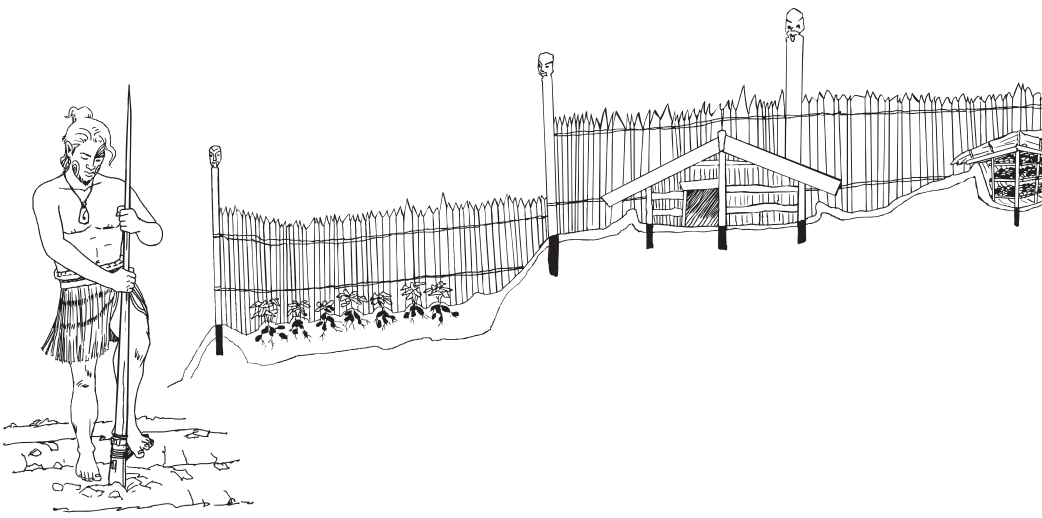
Although Te Kawerau and Ngāti Whatua fought, they also secured peace by arranging a number of important marriages. One of these was the marriage of Ngawhetu (of Te Kawerau) and Moerangaranga (daughter of Rongo, of Ngāti Whatua). The couple settled on the land at Te Pūhoi for a long time. Their descendants took the tribal names Te Kawerau and Ngāti Rongo.

This tribal group kept close links with their wider Te Kawerau relatives in Waitakere, the Manukau Harbour, Pakiri and the Hauraki Gulf Islands, as well as their Ngāti Whatua relatives in the Kaipara area.

As with all Māori in pre-European times, Te Kawerau and Ngāti Rongo did not occupy permanent settlement sites, but moved around their land according to the seasons, in a cycle of fishing, hunting, gathering and harvesting. They had kāinga (villages) throughout Te Pūhoi, including several on what is now Wenderholm Regional Park.

The extensive shell midden (rubbish dump) deposits on the sandspit give an indication of the huge amounts of shellfish that were collected, cooked and eaten at Te Akeake over hundreds of years. These deposits contain mainly pipi shells, along with some tuatua, cockles and mudsnails. They also contain charcoal and hangi stones which are signs that the shellfish were cooked on this site. Today, you can see exposed parts of the midden deposits all over the sandspit and in the eroded banks of the Pūhoi River. For at least 150 years Te Akeake has been identified as wāhi tapu (a sacred place) to Māori.

Te Kawerau and Ngāti Rongo also built large kūmara gardens with small clusters of houses on the warm, sheltered, northern slopes of the Maungatauhoro headland. They made large flat terraces for the gardens by



cutting into a steep slope using a kō (wooden digging stick) and carrying the soil from the slope to the front of the terrace. They stored the kūmara in rua (rectangular pits) with thatched roofs. You can still see a number of these terraces and pit earthworks on the headland.

Shell samples from middens on the Maungatauhoro headland have been dated by archaeologists to the period 1550 to 1670 (figure 1). This is about the time that Te Kawerau arrived in the Mahurangi area. Māori gathered shellfish from the beach and carried it up to the terraces, where they cooked and ate it. Afterwards they threw the shells over the edge of the terrace on to the track below, along with some charcoal and hangi stones. Sometimes shells were scattered purposefully to make parts of the track less slippery or so that a visitor could be heard approaching.

At the top of Maungatauhoro is Kākaha Pā (defended fortifications). It is one of a number of pā in the Mahurangi area, including one on Mahurangi Island.

These pā were built sometime after the 1500s, when tribal groups began fighting over resources. The pā were built to provide

safe places in times of war and were often constructed on a coastal headland with several steep sides. At Kākaha Pā, Māori built a deep defensive ditch with an internal bank across the ridge-line. They also erected timber palisades (high fences) around the boundary of the pā. Today, you can see the remains of the ditch and bank from a small walking bridge on the Maungatauhoro Te Hikoi Heritage Trail.

Maungatauhoro is also the burial place of important Te Kawerau and Ngāti Rongo ancestors, who are the kaitiaki (guardians) of Wenderholm.



Figure 1: Midden deposit on the Maungatauhoro Te Hikoi (Heritage Trail).

War with the Hauraki tribes

Throughout the 1700s, Te Kawerau and several other tribes fought a number of battles with a powerful group of Hauraki tribes known as the Marutūahu Confederation (which comprised Ngāti Paoa, Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngāti Maru and Ngāti Tamatera). The battles were over establishing control of the Mahurangi shark fishing grounds and other resources in the wider Mahurangi area.

On one occasion a combined Te Kawerau taua (war party) gathered at Maungatauhoro before setting out to fight against the Hauraki tribes. They returned victorious, bringing with them the jaw bone of a Ngāti Paoa rangatira, Te Mahia or Totokarewa, which they made into a hook for shark fishing. This story was commemorated by naming a tributary of the Pūhoi River, Hikauae (Hungry Creek).

The event instigated utu (revenge) from Te Haupa, Te Waero and Pokai, the sons of Te Mahia, along with their Hauraki allies. After a number of battles, the Hauraki tribes defeated Te Kawerau on the Tokatu

Peninsula, where they killed the Te Kawerau leader, Ponui. The two opposing tribal groups met to negotiate a peace settlement at Te Pūhoi. After lengthy discussions, a peace settlement was reached and the name Mihirau (many greetings) was given to the area in honour of this historic occasion.

As part of the settlement, Te Kawerau gave Te Ngare, a great granddaughter of Maki, to the Hauraki tribes. In return, the Hauraki tribes gifted a mere (greenstone weapon) called Hinenuiotepaua to Te Kawerau (figure 2). After the meeting the Hauraki tribes rested at Mahurangi Pā, planning to return home the next day. That night a storm erupted, which Te Kawerau interpreted as a bad omen. Te Kawerau reclaimed Te Ngare and returned the mere to the Hauraki tribes. The peace settlement was broken and fighting resumed.

War finally came to an end in the late 1790s, when the Hauraki tribes once again overpowered Te Kawerau and gained permanent control of the Mahurangi resources. Te Kawerau continued to live in the Mahurangi area, but was now a smaller and less powerful group.

Hinenuiotepaua

According to a Te Kawerau descendant in the early 1900s, the mere was involved in an interesting string of events after the peace meeting at Mihirau. The Hauraki tribes gave the mere, along with other taonga, to Hongi Hika of Ngāpuhi in an unsuccessful attempt to secure peace before he attacked Mauinaina Pā at Panmure, during the tribal musket wars of the 1820s. Ngāpuhi later returned the mere to the Hauraki tribes during a peace meeting at Kohimarama.

The Hauraki tribes then gave the mere to Governor George Grey as a token of peace after threatening to attack Auckland in 1851. Governor Grey displayed the mere at his Kawau Island residence for some time before giving his collection of 'curios', including seven mere, to the Auckland Public Library in 1854. Hinenuiotepaua is believed to be one of the mere in Grey's collection, although its name was not recorded at the time the collection was catalogued. The collection is now held by the Auckland Museum (figure 2).



Figure 2: One of two mere given to Governor Grey by the Hauraki Tribes. Hinenuitotepaua is thought to be one of the two mere. Auckland Museum. Reference 13927 (G7).

The Musket Wars

In the 1820s and 30s Ngāpuhi carried out a series of raids on tribal groups throughout the North Island, armed with the Pākehā weapon, the musket. Ngāpuhi easily defeated their enemies who did not have the advantage of the pū (musket), but kept to traditional Māori hand to hand combat with mere and taiaha.

Many people from the Mahurangi area died supporting their Ngāti Whatua relatives in the battles of Te Ika a Ranganui (near Kaiwaka) against Ngāpuhi in 1825. After these battles, a Ngāpuhi war party attacked the Mahurangi people near the mouth of Mahurangi River and killed Murupaenga, the famous Ngāti Rongo leader. Although Murupaenga had been based at Kaipara, he was buried at Maungatauhoro on the land of his ancestor, Ngawhetu. Following this attack, most of the Mahurangi people left the area for over 10 years. A group of only 60 - 100 survivors returned to the area in 1836, once it was considered safe again. Ngāti Whatua as a whole had been weakened by the musket wars and was now surrounded by other powerful tribes.



The people of Te Pūhoi were now under the leadership of the Ngāti Rongo chief, Tauhia, who was a descendant of Ngawhetu. Tauhia and his group settled at Te Muri, just north of Wenderholm, where they established a kāinga (village) with large gardens and an orchard.

Pākehā arrive

By the early 1830s, European sawyers and missionaries had begun visiting the Mahurangi area. The Ngāti Rongo people converted to Christianity and Tauhia adopted the Christian name 'Te Hemara' after the missionary, James Hamlin.

Te Hemara witnessed a huge amount of activity and change in these early years of Pākehā settlement. At the time of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, Te Hemara was in the Bay of Islands, although it is unclear whether or not he signed the document. He also visited the new town of Auckland when the first allotments were sold to settlers in 1841.

The Mahurangi purchase

While he was in Auckland, Te Hemara heard the news that the Mahurangi area had been sold to the Crown by the Hauraki tribes. The Mahurangi Purchase was a transaction in which the Hauraki tribes sold their ancestral interests in the coastal area between Takapuna and Te Arai Point.

Before the sale was finalised, Te Hemara disputed the claim. He appealed directly to Governor Hobson to return Mahurangi, in particular Te Pūhoi, to Ngāti Rongo. Shortly afterwards, he received an assurance from the Governor that some land would indeed be set aside for his people.

The Pūhoi Reserve was created by the Crown in 1853. Title to the 6,691 acre reserve was established at a Native Land Court hearing at the Waiwera Hotel in 1866. The Pūhoi Reserve was surveyed into ten

blocks. Te Hemara Tauhia was granted title to Maungatauhoro (70 acres), Orokaraka (8 acres) and Pūhoi (2537 acres) on behalf of the descendants of Ngawhetu. Te Akeake (9 acres) was granted to his relative, Henare Winiata.

A winter home

Te Hemara sold the Maungatauhoro Block to Robert Graham (1820 -1885) in 1868, for £50 (figure 3). Graham had already bought land from Te Hemara at Waiwera Beach in 1844, where he had established a small hot springs resort. You can still see the remains of the curved brick bathhouse in the seawall at the southern end of the beach.

Robert Graham was a well-known Aucklander. Arriving in Auckland in 1842, Graham soon established his Waiwera business and later opened thermal resorts in Rotorua and Wairakei as well (figure 4). He lived on his farm at Ellerslie (part of which later became the Ellerslie Racecourse) and ran farms on Motuihe and Motutapu Islands and at Waiuku. From 1855 to 1869 Graham was also a prominent national and local politician.

Graham built a modest homestead on the Maungatauhoro Block naming it Wenderholm, which means Winter Home in Swedish. The origins of the name are unclear, but according to one story it came from a Swedish friend of the Graham's who visited the homestead.

Wenderholm was built as a holiday house for the Graham family, as well as an extension of the Waiwera business. Graham had three children with his first wife, Sophia. After Sophia died in 1866 he married Jane Horne, with whom he had three further children. The family spent their holidays at Wenderholm for many years, entertaining guests and relaxing at the homestead and in the surrounding grounds.

The homestead was a simple, colonial style single storey cottage with two gables. It was built entirely from kauri, with a split kauri shingle roof. It was originally situated under the cliffs at the southern end of the beach, but was moved in the 1860s by marines and a bullock team, to a more sheltered site in front of the current position of the house. The homestead has since been shifted, extended and renovated by successive owners, including the Couldrey family, after whom it is now named.



Figure 3: Portrait of Robert Graham, the first European owner of the homestead at Wenderholm (now known as Couldrey House). Friends of Couldrey House.

Wenderholm gardens

Graham planted a large garden around the Wenderholm homestead. It is likely that some of the trees and plants were given to him by his friend Governor George Grey, who had extensive gardens at his home on nearby Kawau Island and was a regular visitor to Wenderholm.

Some of the trees planted by Graham still survive, including a Moreton Bay fig, a bunya-bunya tree, Norfolk pines, magnolias,



olives, walnuts, coral trees and holm and cork oak trees. Both the native and exotic historic trees are now recognised as a nationally significant collection. Graham converted most of the flat land into pasture and built stables beside the homestead. He left much of the Maungatauhoro headland in native forest, apart from one area which he developed into an orchard. If you look at the lower slopes of the headland from the main access road to Wenderholm, you can still see two large olive trees amongst the regenerating mānuka bush.

A tourist attraction

By the 1870s Waiwera was a successful international resort with a hotel, several bath-houses and extensive fruit and flower gardens (figure 5). During their stay at the resort, visitors were invited to visit Wenderholm and its surrounds. On a typical outing, visitors were taken across the Waiwera River by early Mahurangi pioneer, John Sullivan. Sullivan had a jetty and three buildings in the small bay on the

northern side of the Waiwera River mouth. The foundations of these structures are still visible today. From Sullivan's property, visitors walked over the Maungatauhoro headland to enjoy the views and then headed down to the beach at Wenderholm for a swim. Visitors were also encouraged to visit the nearby Māori village Te Rapa and the Bohemian settlement of Pūhoi.

Suburb by the sea

During the depression of the 1880s, Graham sold Wenderholm (excluding the Maungatauhoro Block) to a land agent called Robert Greenwood. Greenwood drew up plans to subdivide the Wenderholm property, Te Akeake and Te Muri village into small



Figure 4: Sketch of Waiwera Thermal Resort looking towards Wenderholm, showing a wharf and buildings in the small southern bay of the Maungatauhoro headland, 1878. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



Figure 5: Waiwera Thermal Resort with Mahurangi Pā island in the background, 1907.

sections, to create a luxury holiday resort called the Greenwood Estate.

He put the estate on the market in 1885, advertising it with a large poster (figure 6). The poster provides a great picture of Wenderholm in Graham's era, showing the homestead with its surrounding gardens and orchard, a jetty at the tip of the sandspit and the Māori village, Te Muri.

Greenwood's subdivision plans did not eventuate, which is not surprising given the economic climate at the time. Later that same year he sold the Wenderholm property in two pieces. Samuel Jagger (1840-1890), an Auckland brewer and hotel owner, bought the homestead and flats while the Waiwera Company Limited bought the headland.

Neighbours

Pūhoi village

Nearby Pūhoi village was settled by Bohemian immigrants from former Czechoslovakia in 1863. The village is situated on the banks of the Pūhoi River, inland from

Wenderholm. The land had originally been purchased from Te Hemara by the Crown, which had begun a scheme offering 40 acres of free land to new settlers to try and attract Pākehā settlers to the Auckland region. Descendants of these Bohemian settlers still live in and around Pūhoi today.

Ngāti Rongo played an important role in the early years of Pūhoi village. Te Hemara and his people transported the first Bohemian settlers up the river to their new home and also provided them with food from the Māori village Te Muri, until the settlers had cleared their land and established gardens of their own.

The Pūhoi river mouth

Wenderholm was a well-known stop on the east coast shipping route in the late 1800s, when coastal steamers were still an important form of transport in New Zealand. George Ryan bought the Te Akeake sandspit from Henare Winiata in 1873. He built a jetty there and began operating a ferry across the Pūhoi River.

Across the river mouth, at Orokaraka, John Ryan operated a boat-building business, having bought the land from Te Hemara in 1866 (figure 7). In 1895 the Ryans sold Orokaraka to John Schischka, a Bohemian settler (figure 8). The Schischka family spent their holidays at Orokaraka for many years and built the cottage you can see on the property today. Orokaraka is now part of Mahurangi Regional Park.

Te Rapa Village

Sometime in the 1860s, Te Hemara moved from Te Muri to Te Rapa, a small village located on the flats beside the Pūhoi River.

After Te Hemara left Te Muri, Reverend William Pomare built a small chapel there. He also consecrated the burial ground at Te Muri, which contains the graves of many local Māori and early European settlers in the Mahurangi area. Te Muri Cemetery is now part of the Mahurangi Regional Park and can be accessed by foot at low tide.

The site of Te Rapa village is now part of Wenderholm Regional Park. By the 1860s,

Te Hemara was in a position to build himself a weatherboard house and own a sailing cutter. He was also employed by the Crown as 'Native Assessor', a role which involved mediating between the Crown and Māori and which earned him the name Mr. Mahurangi.

Te Hemara died in 1891. He was taken by his relatives and buried alongside the Kaipara Harbour at Te Rurunga, an important Ngāti Rongo settlement (figure 9). In 1893 Te Hemara's family sold their remaining land on the Pūhoi Reserve and settled permanently on the eastern shores of the Kaipara Harbour.

The land was purchased by Joseph Schischka, shortly before Orokaraka was purchased by his older brother, John. The Schischka family built their homestead in the vicinity of Te Hemara's village, Te Rapa.

Recreation and Restoration

In 1896 Major John Whitney bought the Wenderholm homestead as a place to enjoy retirement with his wife, Harriet, and their children. A few years later he bought



Figure 7: Orokaraka during Ryan's time, showing logs awaiting shipment. Auckland Museum Library, DU436.1165 P97.



Figure 8: John Schischka (who bought Orokaraka in 1895) with his grandson at Schischka Cottage, c.1935. Parkinson Album.

the remaining Wenderholm land from the Waiwera Company Limited.

Major Whitney was an Auckland gentleman who founded the Colonial Ammunition Company (CAC) in 1885. The shot tower, today a Mount Eden historic icon, was once part of the CAC factory.

The family lived at Wenderholm for over 20 years, during which time the place bustled with people and activity. The Whitneys were known for their hospitality. Over the years they had many friends and relatives to stay at Wenderholm, as well as entertaining national and international personalities. Visitors enjoyed swimming, fishing, boating, riding horses, playing tennis and relaxing in the garden. Water for the extensive and well-kept gardens was provided by the dam



Figure 9: The grave of Ngāti Rongo rangatira, Te Hemara Tauhia, at Te Rurunga beside the Kaipara Harbour.

which you pass on the Maungatauhoro Te Hiko Heritage Trail.

The Whitneys moved the homestead to its present site and carried out a number of alterations and additions (figure 10). One of these changes was the addition of a music room by incorporating an old chapel. The small chapel was brought to Wenderholm by barge in the late 1890s. The chapel is believed to be Reverend Pomare's Te Muri Chapel (figure 11).

There were many more changes made to the homestead over the following decades, which transformed it from a simple cottage into the rambling and eclectic house that stands today (figures 12-14). Major Whitney sold the Wenderholm property after his wife died in 1919.

A Great Native Festival

An 1872 newspaper report in the Weekly News described a 'Great Native Festival' at Te Rapa to celebrate the consecration of William Pomare as a church minister. The report provides a vivid description of Te Hemara, his village and the surrounding area in these years.

"... The day was a lovely one; all that man could wish for; one of New Zealand's balmy days; a fine sun, with a delicious cooling breeze: and the scene of the festival was well chosen for its beauty... The banks of this river – the Pūhoi – are all covered with umbrageous bush of most luxuriant growth; and the tints and shades of its foliage in the glowing sun, with the rippling murmurs of the silver current, the lowing of the herds on the fertile flats, and now and again the tinkling bells of the distant team, with here and there the cottage of the bushman and its trim clearing, together form a scene of enchanting loveliness, holding forth a promise of health and invigoration of body to all beholders...

A dinner in good style

Mais revenons a nos moutons [sic]. Māori and pakeha had assembled, and seemed resolved to make the most of an enjoyable day. Te Hemara, the host of the occasion, and his kindly disposed and amiable wife, Miriam, did their utmost to make those who had accepted their invitation feel themselves truly welcome; and hospitality to its greatest extent was bestowed on one and all. A dinner was served, the entire preparation having been performed by natives in their own 'kapa māori', the cookery whereof was all a gourmand could desire, and would have put to the blush the best restaurants in Auckland.

The native addresses

After the dinner, to which, I need scarcely add, all did ample justice, Te Hemara addressed those assembled... Te Hemara's speech was long, fluent, and eloquent, and seemed to produce great effect on his hearers; and no wonder, coming from such a man. He is a fine specimen of the human genus, standing some six feet and equally proportioned, with a countenance at once candid and determined, and with the eloquence and gesture of a thorough orator: he carried conviction to all unbiased minds with his utterances."



Figure 10: Plan of north elevation of Couldrey House, showing the incorporation of the old chapel. Dave Pearson Architects Limited.



Figure 11: Te Muri Cemetery, where many Māori and early European settlers are buried. This was the site of Te Hemara's village and also Reverend Pomare's Chapel, which is now believed to be part of Couldrey House.



Figure 12: Major and Mrs Whitney with their family in the grounds at Wenderholm, 1914. Winklemann. Whitney Family Album.



Figure 13: Major and Mrs Whitney outside the homestead, c. 1915. Winklemann. Whitney Family Album.

The Whitney era at Wenderholm

An obituary of Major Whitney in 1933 provides a colourful picture of Wenderholm during the Whitney era:

"The house was very picturesque, set in amongst the native flora, tennis lawns and gardens. Situated on a flat, it is surrounded by bright gardens and fine level paddocks. The gardens in which there were a number of orange trees covered with bloom, as well as a lot of English and semi tropical shrubs, attracted the eye at once. There were beautiful lawns on either side, and a useful looking tennis court. In the well-kept paddocks behind the house were the horses, pony, donkey and cows; the latter were kept to supply the house with milk. Mrs Whitney used the donkey to carry her painting outfit to the places she desired to paint...she was a tall, beautiful woman, and, with a bunch of keys hanging at her waist, was quite the typical British chatelaine. Her welcome, like the Major's was bright and it was evident she shared in his great hospitality, as well as in his love of nature... Major Whitney was a keen nature lover...in many ways he was typical of the English Squire."



Figure 14: A walk on the beach in the Whitney era. Whitney Family Album.



Figure 15: Mrs Geddes and family outside the homestead, 1920s. Friends of Couldrey House.

Mrs Annabella (Mary) McKail Geddes (1864-1955) bought Wenderholm from the Whitneys (figure 15). Mrs McKail Geddes was a wealthy Auckland widow of Ngāpuhi descent. She took a leading role in many community organisations in Auckland, as well as caring for her seven children. The McKail Geddes family lived in an Auckland mansion called Hazelbank (which later

became the Elam School of Art) and spent their holidays at Wenderholm.

Mrs McKail Geddes sold Wenderholm to Captain Thomas Caradoc Kerry (1859-1944) in 1927. Kerry was apparently a charming and eccentric man who had a colourful past as a trader in the Pacific Islands (figure 16). Kerry lived alone at Wenderholm but often



Figure 16: Captain Kerry having a picnic beside the beach at Wenderholm, c1935. Tudor Collins Collection.



Figure 17: Captain Kerry, Lady Bledisloe and Governor's Aide outside the homestead, 1932. Auckland Regional Council.

entertained prominent visitors such as Lady Bledisloe, the wife of the Governor General, at the homestead (figure 17). Captain Kerry also invited friends to camp on the property during their holidays. During this time, the Forrest family built a fibrolite bach at the tip of the sandspit. The bach has since gone, but the front steps still remain under the trees.

Mr. Herbert William (Tim) Couldrey, an Auckland shipping agency owner, was one of the guests who camped at Wenderholm in the 1930s. In 1940, Mr Couldrey and his wife, Phyllis, bought Wenderholm from Captain Kerry as a holiday place to enjoy with their daughter, Carolyn (now Carolyn Reid). After Mrs Couldrey died in 1955, Mr Couldrey married Miss Brenda Edmonds.

The Couldrey family owned Wenderholm for over 30 years (figure 18). By the time they bought the property, the homestead

had become rundown. The Couldreys built a bungalow under the pohutukawa trees which they used during their holidays instead of the homestead. The bungalow was destroyed by fire in 1970.

Friends of the Couldreys continued to camp on the property, just as they had in Captain Kerry's time. The Richwhite family built a Lockwood bach on the sandspit, which is now the ranger's house.

The Couldreys renovated the homestead in the 1950s after encouragement from former British Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, who had stayed at the property for several weeks. The family moved back into the homestead in 1960, after four years of renovations. Over the next decade, they entertained many friends and notable guests at the homestead, continuing the tradition of hospitality shown by the previous owners.

A royal picnic

In 1953, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip spent a day picnicking at Wenderholm. Carolyn was a young girl at the time of this event and described it some years later:

"A marquee was set up and the Queen had a lovely picnic...About 3.30pm we were summoned to meet them. The Queen was extremely pretty she had on the same dress she'd worn earlier that day at Warkworth, and a hat and toe peeper shoes. She walked very carefully so as not to snag her stockings. It was quite exciting."



Figure 18: Mr and Mrs Couldrey in the music room at Couldrey House, 1980. Auckland Regional Council.

Auckland's first regional park

In the early 1960s the Couldrey family prepared a subdivision proposal to create a number of lifestyle blocks on the Wenderholm sandspit. The proposal was approved by the Rodney County Council, but the Auckland Regional Authority (now the Auckland Council) appealed the decision and subsequently purchased the property from the Couldreys under the provisions of the Public Works Act. In 1965, Wenderholm became the first regional park in Auckland. It was the beginning of a network of parks that now comprises over 38,000 hectares throughout the Auckland region.

The Couldreys retained the Wenderholm homestead and 15 acres surrounding it until 1973, when they sold it to the Auckland Regional Council (ARC). The ARC renamed the homestead Couldrey House to acknowledge the restoration work undertaken by the Couldreys. The homestead was opened to the public in 1981 and since 1990 it has been run by the Friends of Couldrey House.

A further block of land was acquired from the Schischka family in 2002, increasing the size of Wenderholm Regional Park to 148 hectares. In 2013 the Schischka Campground was opened alongside the Pūhoi River.

Its yours! Use it!

During its 50 years as a regional park, rangers have continued to enhance the recreational, ecological and historical attributes of Wenderholm. Visitors can launch their boats from the boat ramp or kayak up to Pūhoi, picnic or follow one of the walking tracks; and they can stay overnight in the campground or one of the baches.



Figure 19: walkers reading Maungatauhoro track interpretation

Rangers and volunteers have planted over 100,000 trees at Wenderholm as well as undertaking an intensive pest control programme, which has created a sanctuary for native birds such as the kereru (wood pigeon).

The rich Māori and European heritage of Wenderholm is celebrated with the Maungatauhoro Te Hiko Heritage Trail and the homestead at Couldrey House. Today, Wenderholm is as popular as ever (figure 20). Over 240,000 people visit this Auckland treasure every year.



Figure 20: Maungatauhoro Te Hikoi (Heritage Trail).

This booklet was written by Lucy Mackintosh in 2005 and updated in 2015. The author would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of Graeme Murdoch's

'Background History of Wenderholm Regional Park' (in the 'Wenderholm Regional Park Management Plan', 1995). The Māori history, in particular, is based on his work.

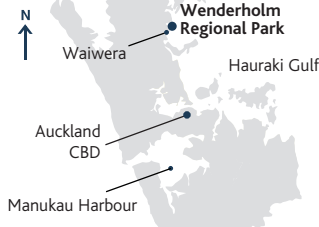


What to see and do

- Follow the Maungatauhoro Te Hikoi (1 to 1½ hours return) heritage trail, which begins at the Pou Whenua (carving) and follows a loop around part of the headland.
- Visit historic Couldrey House and gardens to see how earlier owners of the house lived. The Friends of Couldrey House open the historic homestead – see the noticeboard for opening times.
- Walk along the beach and around Te Akeake sandspit where people have camped, fished and swum for hundreds of years.
- Have a picnic under the historic pohutukawa trees. Use the barbeques provided.
- Explore the waterways by boat or kayak (but take care in the swift tidal currents at the river mouth).

How to get there

Wenderholm is located 48km (35 minutes drive) from Auckland. Head north from Auckland on State Highway 1 (Northern Motorway). Wenderholm Regional Park is located just north of Waiwera – turn right at the signs.



Map key

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| ● Heritage Site | P Parking |
| --- Maungatauhoro Te Hikoi | No Swimming |
| --- Te Akeake Walk | Cliffs |
| --- Couldrey House Lookout | Roads |
| --- Perimeter Track | Parkland |
| --- Te Araroa – New Zealand's Trail | Bush |
| --- Pūhoi Track | Wetland |
| --- Other tracks | Sand |
| | Non-parkland |



This page: Carolyn Reid (nee Couldrey) at Couldrey House.
Cover image: 'Sunset On The Pūhoi River' by Alfred Sharpe, 1880 (The Fletcher Trust Collection).

Wenderholm timeline

