

Cook Landing Site National Historic Reserve



Gisborne, Poverty Bay

"In my view there is no other single site of such significance in the history of New Zealand as this one. It is almost impossible to overstate the significance for New Zealand of the event commemorated by the Cook Monument at Kaiti Beach, Gisborne... in one afternoon, in October 1769, the Māori people suddenly found themselves face to face with a European technological world. Their history has changed irreversibly since that day..."

Sir Neil Begg, 1987

Cook's Landing Site National Historic Reserve, commemorates the first European landfall and meeting with Māori in New Zealand in 1769. It is also the landing place of the Horouta and Te Ikaroa-a-Rauru waka (canoes).

Cook's view

In 1769 there were four principle iwi living in the bay: Rongowhakaata, Ngāi Tahupoo (Ngāi Tamanuhiri), Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, and Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti. Sheltered by thickly forested ranges it was surrounded by lower hills, flats covered in scrub, ferns and grasses and had three rivers running through it. There would have been crops growing on the fertile river fans. A Salmond, 1991

... seeing some of the natives on the other side of the river whom I was desirous of speaking with and finding we could not ford the river, I ordr'd the yawl to carry us over and the Pinnacle to lay at the entrance. In the mean time the Indians made off, however we went as far as their hutts which lay about 2 or 300 yards from the waterside... Cook, 1769

The people he saw were Ngāi Tawhiri (Rongowhakaata) and the huts inland belonged to Te Whanau-a-Iwi (Te-Aitanga-a-Mahaki), two closely related hapū.

While searching on the western side of the river, for people and botanical specimens, they heard musket shots and hurried back to the west bank of the river. Four boys who had been left in charge of the yawl were rowing frantically away from four 'Māori armed with very long lances'. In panic, the coxswain fired several shots killing Te Maro of Ngāti Rakai (later Ngāti Oneone), Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti.

Monday 9th October

The longboat, pinnace and yawl were lowered in the early morning to carry a large party back to the landing site. As they headed towards Kaiti Beach a group of 50-100 Ngāi Tawhiri and Whanau-a-Iwi (Rongowhakaata) men assembled on the opposite side of the river and challenged Cook's party with a haka. After discussions with Tupaia (a Tahitian Priest and interpreter travelling with Cook) one man swam to a rock named Te Toka a Taiau where he greeted Cook with a hongi. This was a significant meeting place as Te Toka a Taiau is recognized as the anchoring place of various iwi waka in Tairāwhiti.

Following this exchange there was an uneasy meeting between warriors and sailors and eventually shots were fired, fatally wounding a warrior. As the warriors retreated to Te Toka a Taiau, three more were killed or wounded. Sickened by the bloodshed Cook and his men directed their boats to the south end of the bay to look for another watering hole.

Mid afternoon, near Te Kuri a Paoa, Cook saw two canoes coming in towards the river and decided to try and capture them and gain their friendship by treating them well. A further four men were killed and three boys captured. The three young fishermen were taken to the *Endeavour*, fed and clothed. They are remembered as Te Haurangi, Hikurangi and Maru Kaiti all of Ngāti Kaipoho, Rongowhakaata. They talked about their land.

Monday 8 October 1906, unveiling the monument.
www.tairāwhitimuseum.org.nz



Large fortified villages (pā) on river bends and strategic hills protected houses, cooking sheds and root crop storage pits. *The northern end of the bay was dominated by Titirangi (Kaiti Hill) and at the southern end lay Te Upoko o Te Kuri a Paoa (Young Nick's Head).*

A Salmond, 1991

It is believed Cook landed his smaller boats in a

natural channel, now buried under tonnes of land reclamation. An early 20th century photograph of the Cook Landing Site Monument, taken from the base of Kaiti Hill Titirangi, shows the channel and original shoreline.

A "continent or land of great extent"

In 1768, James Cook and the crew of *Endeavour* departed from Plymouth, England for Tahiti to observe the transit of Venus. After Tahiti Cook followed "sealed orders" to find a "Continent or land of great extent". On the 6th of October 1769 he may have thought he'd found one. Cook's first four days in New Zealand reveal a story of tragedy and confusion.

Friday 6th October

Nicholas Young, the surgeon's boy, was the first on board to sight the New Zealand mainland.

Sunday 8th October

The *Endeavour's* two small boats were lowered to take Cook, Banks, and others ashore to find a watering hole. They landed on the eastern bank of the Turanganui River by, what is now, the Cook Landing Site National Historic Reserve.

Measuring time

Cook used 'ships time' (noon to noon) and Banks used 'civil time' (midnight to midnight). Dates have been converted to the more familiar civil time. If the extra day 'lost' in crossing the 180th meridian is added the first landing was made on 9 October, 1769

Friday 6th October: *At half past one a small boy who was at the mast head called out Land. I was luckily upon deck and well I was entertained, within a few minutes the cry circulated and up came all hands.*

J Banks, 1769

Saturday 7th October. *This morn... a large smook was seen and soon after several more, sure signs of inhabitants... before we were well within the heads saw several Canoes across the bay, who after a little time returned to the place they came from not appearing to take the least notice of us.*

J Banks, 1769



The Banks Garden

Joseph Banks was a wealthy young landowner and botanist who had joined Cook's expedition to represent the Royal Society's general scientific interest in the voyage. Banks made the first scientific collection of plants in New Zealand. To commemorate Banks' botanical studies, the reserve landscaping includes a garden of native plants (Banks Garden) that was designed to include the range of plants collected by Banks during these visits.

Site significance

- First James Cook landing in New Zealand, 1769.
- First meeting of two cultures.
- Death of nine Maori.
- First scientific collection of plants by Joseph Banks.
- Public recognition as a national heritage symbol.

Related sites:

- Cook Bicentenary Plaza, Titirangi Domain, Kaiti Hill.
- Te Poho o Rawiri Meeting House (permission required).
- Young Nicks Statue, Turanganui River mouth, near Waikanāe Beach.
- Cook Statue, Turanganui River mouth, near Waikanāe Beach.

References

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- K Kerekere-Smiler (1996). *Historical Address of the Arrival in 1769 of the Endeavour to Turanganui-a-Kiwa*.
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Tuesday 10th October

After a night on the *Endeavour*, the boys were taken with Cook, Tupaia, Banks, Solander and others to the eastern bank of the Turanganui River. About 100 to 150 armed men (probably Ngāti Kaipoho and Ngāi Tahwiri hapū) gathered on the opposite side of the river. Finally an old man swam the river and presented Tupaia with a green bough as a gesture of peace. Later, the three boys were set ashore at Kaiti.

Wednesday 11 October

Weighing anchor at 6am the *Endeavour* sailed out of Poverty Bay, so named by Cook "... as it afforded no one thing we wanted."

Local tradition tells that Māori at the time perceived the *Endeavour* as an enormous bird with wings of great size and beauty. They regarded the longboats as fledglings, and Cook and his men were thought to be atua (gods).

These first encounters between Cook's men and Māori people had been short, suspicious and violent and not a great deal was learned about life on shore... On the whole, the local people must have felt profoundly relieved when... the Endeavour raised its anchor and sailed south out of the bay. A Salmond, 1991

Circumnavigation

When Cook left Poverty Bay thousands of miles of coastline lay ahead, mostly unknown to Europeans. On the way he stopped off at other East Coast bays.

On 21 October 1769, the *Endeavour* entered Anaura Bay and was welcomed by Māori in canoes. Cook and his men were given a cordial reception by local chiefs and were able to fill their casks with water from Hawai Stream where there is now a plaque to record this event.

The *Endeavour* spent some time at the place now known as Cooks Cove (Opoutama) where they dug a well to collect fresh water and were much taken with the Hole-in-the-Wall rock formation. The crew received warm and friendly support from Māori which left an extremely positive impression of the bay.

Cook weighed anchor and left Tolaga Bay in the early hours of the morning of Sunday 29 October 1769, after taking on supplies of wood, water and food.

Below: Cook's Landing 150th anniversary celebrations, October 1919. www.tairawhitimuseum.org.nz

The visit was remembered by local people in a number of accounts. Tupaia, the Tahitian that came with Cook was a great favourite and remembered long after the visit. Children were named after him, the cave where he slept was called Tupaia's cave, and the well that Cook's men dug around the spring at Cook's Cove was called Te Wai Keri a Tupaia, the well dug by Tupaia.

After six months Cook had circumnavigated and charted the North and South islands and by March 1770 he was on his way back to England, discovering and charting the east coast of Australia on the way.

National Historic Reserve

In 1902 a committee was formed in Gisborne to erect a memorial on the site. Money was raised nationwide with each school child contributing one penny. The handsome granite-sheathed, concrete obelisk and pedestal was built at a cost of £1,066 and was formally unveiled on Monday 8 October 1906 amidst street parades, speeches and a Māori haka party. The unveiling was carried out by Sir James Carroll in front of a crowd of 5,000.

In 1964 in response to the 1950s reclamations and industrial development, the Gisborne committee of the Historic Places Trust registered the reserve surrounding the monument an Historic Reserve. In 1987 the Planning Tribunal granted a 'cone of vision' which restricted development so that the open sea and Young Nicks Head can always be viewed from the Cook Monument.

In 1990 the reserve was designated a National Historic Reserve, the first on New Zealand mainland, and placed under the guardianship of the Department of Conservation. The Cook Landing Site National Historic Reserve is located on Kaiti Beach Road in Gisborne.

Further information

To learn more about Titirangi and the Cook Landing Site National Historic Reserve, contact the East Coast/Hawke's Bay Department of Conservation Conservancy office, 63 Carnarvon Street, Gisborne. Phone 06 869 0460, echb-conservancy@doc.govt.nz or www.doc.govt.nz

