

Discovery by Beach and Ridge

Kupe, Cook and early Maori History

Bridging the Wairarapa valley with the exterior, the only road to Castlepoint is tormented by rockfalls and slips, is straddled by weary pines and cabbage trees, and falls over wide saddles and deep gullies. Motorists first reach the east coast and the Pacific Ocean at the Mataikona road junction and the wooden pub the Whakataki Hotel, signs of life in an isolated coastal community. A windswept path inland and descent back to sea level then marks the end of the road, signalled by the white outpost of Castle Point Lighthouse.

The Castlepoint story begins long before this passage from the valley existed. In what he described by candle at sea in his journal as a 'remarkable hillock', explorer, chart-maker, and navigator Captain James Cook saw the fortress-like bastion of Castle Rock looming over the Pacific seas on the 11th of February, 1770. That day Cook was on a voyage to make the first recorded circumnavigation of the North Island.

It is noted in the journal of Sydney Parkinson, the *Endeavour's* artist, that Cook penned the name 'Castle Point', along with Flat Point further south, on his charts from this early sighting. Later, 'Castlepoint' was used for the station and settlement, while 'Castle Point' was kept for the profoundly spectacular rock formation.¹

The first chapter in the narrative of Castlepoint predates European discovery by several hundred years, long before Cook's *Endeavour* appeared from the east. One version widely believed has its beginning with a bait-thieving pet octopus – a giant whelk that took refuge from the chief and fisherman Kupe in the ocean cave



Castle Point Lighthouse, Taurepi, one of the few safe harbours between Napier and Wellington on the east coast of the North Island.

beneath the present-day lighthouse. Te Ana o te wheke a Maturangi, the Octopus. Maturangi was a ritual mythical land where some Pacific Maori trace their origins. It was Maturangi that is thought to have stolen Kupe's fishing line, ending in a pursuit that led to Aotearoa. It is from Kupe's voyage that the Maori name Rangivahikaomaori translates as, 'where the sky runs'.

The other version of Kupe's discovery relates directly to the dangerous waters. The lesser-told alternative tells that Kupe was with another man's wife and as a result was banished to exile. The places mentioned on his voyage often coincide with places of myth and legends of the Pacific region: the river tanwha, the tale of the octopus. These have been used as an encoded message to others. Just as likely, it is said that the name actually passed on to Kupe, some time after his fire.

Discovery and Coming of the Settlers.

* COOK'S VISIT AND LATER EXPLORATION

Captain Cook, about to complete the circumnavigation of the North Island on his first voyage, was off Castlepoint on Sunday, 11th February, 1770. Cook does not refer to the name which he gave to this "remarkable hillock which stands close to the sea," although it appears on his chart. Canoes came alongside the ship "with whom we had some little traffic." At Cape Turnagain he called his officers on deck to witness that the land they had discovered was indeed an island, after which they turned back into the Strait and entered Queen Charlotte Sound.

* The first recorded white visitors to tread the sands of Rangiwakaoma were Archdeacon William Williams with his son Leonard, then a boy of 14, and William Colenso. Leaving Turanganui (now Gisborne) in the missionary schooner Columbine on November 1st, 1843, they met very bad weather, ran short of water and were unable to reach Wellington. Driven back by the storm from the strait they were able to land at Castlepoint on the 15th. Colenso describes the landing and subsequent movements of the party:—

"As we neared the shore we found to our almost despair the coast presented a perpendicular line of cliff against which the sea broke incessantly. It appeared as if we must return again to the vessel if we should be able to reach her, the wind having taken her considerably further off. In this strait and after some search we found a little opening and got at last into a little harbour just under Rangiwakaoma (Castlepoint) where we landed and where I (though I could scarcely stand through weakness, having never had my clothes off and confined to my berth for 15 days) in looking about fortunately found water. God be praised for all His mercies! Having filled the casks belonging to the vessel and collected also a little firewood for her (a scarce article hereabouts) we lost no time in despatching the boat with these timely supplies. . . . Our Natives at length succeeded in procuring fire by friction, which enabled us to boil a little rice which we had from the vessel. While engaged in doing so a party of natives seeing our smoke came suddenly upon us. After a little conversation we agreed to go with them to their habitations, about two miles distant by the coast in a northerly direction. This small village of only a few huts, called Wai-

orongo, serves merely as a resort for fishing for the natives of Mataikona, a village about 12 miles further north. It was not without difficulty and pain that I walked as far as Waiorongo from the little cove where we landed and which I named Deliverance Cove. At the village we got a good meal of potatoes and crayfish (of which latter some hundreds were hung up on poles to dry) and spent the remainder of the day. At evening I read prayers expounding to the natives from the second lesson."

They spent some days at Mataikona waiting for the baggage bearers who had earlier been left at Palliser Bay during an interrupted landing, to catch up with them, after which the reunited party went north to Ahuriri. The name Deliverance Cove, given by Colenso, was to be seen on world atlases until the '90's, but now seems to have been lost.

The next visitors to Castlepoint who have left a narrative of their journey were H. S. Harrison and J. Thomas. Leaving Wellington on October 9th, 1844, they travelled rapidly by the coast to the Wairarapa Lake and the Pahaua River which they followed to the sea. On the evening of the 17th, they reached the mouth of the Whareama River, and by noon next day, Castlepoint. Two days later they were at Mataikona pa. Their destination, Table Cape, was reached on November 5th. Harrison, in his account of the journey, said that he had descended the Mataikona River in April of the same year but although his route is shown on a contemporary map no accounts of his walk have been found.

The reports brought back by Harrison and Thomas of the country they had passed through no doubt decided some later settlers, such as the Camerons, of Pahaua, and Guthrie, of Castlepoint, to occupy the east coast. However, hot-foot behind Harrison and Thomas, the first runholders of the Lower Valley, Charles Clifford, F. A. Weld and William Vavasour were investigating the possibilities of the Whareama Valley and the coast.

WELD'S TRIP TO WHAREAMA IN 1844.

With about six Maoris under the chief Te Koro as guide, the three men left Wharekaka on the 18th November, 1844, to examine the Whareama flats which Te Koro declared to be suitable for sheep. As few place names are



THE REV. WILLIAM WILLIAMS.



WILLIAM COLENZO.

THE FIRST EUROPEANS KNOWN TO LAND AT CASTLEPOINT—IN 1843.

evening about 15 miles south of Castlepoint, and all on board providentially escaped from the wreck unhurt. Mr. Perry walked from Castlepoint to Wellington where he arrived on Saturday evening. The Maoris who saw the vessel from the shore on Saturday concluded, as she was not driven ashore that day, she had gone down and all hands perished. The master of the vessel has returned to the wreck in the hope of recovering, with the assistance of the Maoris, the anchors, chains and anything else belonging to the vessel that may be serviceable. The vessel belonged to Messrs. Fitzherbert and Perry and is the second they have lost within the last seven months, both of which were uninsured. The loss in itself is a serious one, and occurring towards the end of the whaling season, will also prove a serious inconvenience to the coast trade, as the present number of vessels engaged in it are by no means adequate to its requirements."

The ship was nearly buried in the sand when Colenso went by the following month. He refused to shake hands with those Maoris at the mouth of the Whareama who had taken some goods from her, but was disappointed later when in Wellington at not being able to get Mr. Fitzherbert to agree to his tipping the "ardent spirits on board into the sea."

In November another ship brought back a more favourable report on the Castle, as reported in the "Nelson Examiner" of November 6th, 1847: "The schooner Gipsy arrived in Wellington from the East Coast, on return passage from Tauranga. Mr. Story (captain) was compelled to run into the bay at Castlepoint for shelter from a strong N.N.W. gale. This bay is not generally known to mariners, who will find good shelter from most gales save the north-east."

* THOMAS GUTHRIE'S ARRIVAL.

In the absence of exact information on Guthrie's negotiations with the Maoris for his run and the arrival of his first stock, his movements must be deduced from occasional references in newspapers or diaries. Fortunately there are enough of these to permit us to follow him during the first six months of the station's history. There is a newspaper reference early in December, 1847, to a "person returned from the East Coast." This is quite likely to have been Guthrie following the completion of his bargain with the Maoris, for the "Wellington Independent" of 9th February, 1848, contained the following advertisement: "The undersign-

ed being about to proceed to his newly formed station at Castlepoint early in March, will take in cattle on reasonable terms.—Thomas Guthrie, Wellington." The advertisement appeared later in the month and again in March.

From the diary of Charles Pharazyn of Whatarangi Station, Palliser Bay, we learn both details of Guthrie's movements and his stock purchases. On 17th March, 1848, Guthrie called at Whatarangi and bought some young rams. He must then have been on his way to Wellington, for Pharazyn mentions that he agreed "to take Buxton's lot in about a fortnight." As Buxton did not take up his Whareama run until later, Guthrie may have agreed to graze Buxton's sheep on "thirds," a fairly common arrangement at the time. On the 18th April, Pharazyn records that Guthrie had arrived the night before with 700 sheep and 150 head of cattle, presumably on his way to Castlepoint. On the 19th, at 10 o'clock Guthrie set out on his journey with the addition to his flock of four young rams bought from Pharazyn for 50/- each. It is interesting to note also a reference to the future owner of Waitawhiti, William Spinks, for Guthrie, in addition to his own rams, took "2 for Spinks, to be delivered at Russell's station." Several men, later runholders, appear to have been putting out sheep on the runs of friends until they could themselves take up land.

Guthrie, on his long journey, would not have learnt until his return to Wellington, of the death on 21st April of his twelve months old daughter, Catherine, a notice of which appeared in the "Independent" of 26th April. There are no other records of the journey nor do we know whether he saw the Camerons at Pahaua where they had some months earlier made arrangements for grazing, as we learn from Colenso's diary. However, tradition relates that when the first of Guthrie's cattle appeared on the ridge above the Basin, the Maoris, not having seen cattle before, performed a haka of welcome. They were, however, quickly disillusioned for the animals were driven to the homestead and turned out to graze. The homestead, a raupo-thatched building, had been erected by the Maoris for £11, and Colenso later reported it to be strong and commodious, contrasting it unfavourably with the neglected Maori chapel for which there had been no such financial inducement.

All stores and heavy goods came by sea which in the Basin at that time reached right up to the hills. There were three safe anchorages, the northern bay providing shelter from

friend of the sheep man and later a very successful runholder himself, but duty was duty.

That night, the party camping at the Whareama "made supper of some boiled corn, got fires up, and at 10 slept in a wharepuni till daylight." On the 18th they crossed the river in a canoe but had to wait for their horses which had gone off with "two young wild horses belonging to the place." These must have come from Guthrie's, where they later had breakfast with a Scotch shepherd "in a neat little cottage well supplied with provisions," presumably the out-station. They later reached Castlepoint and "had a good dinner and kind reception from Mr. Guthrie, who, with his wife appear kind industrious people." Comment is unnecessary on McLean's observation that Mrs Guthrie was "a particularly good natured clean Englishwomen whose attention and politeness speaks volumes in her favour."

Guthrie told McLean that the expenses of a station for 1000 sheep were about £100, made up as follows: Station £10, wages £55, supplies £35 and expenses £10. The wool returns for the first year Guthrie estimated at about £100. The station must have been showing returns in at least the fifth year of its operation as evidenced by two news items in the "Wellington Independent." The paper for 24th January, 1852, reported that on the 21st the schooner "Sea Belle," 17 tons (Capt. Foster) had arrived from Castlepoint with 40 bales of wool, while the issue for the 18th February reported the arrival on the 15th of the schooner "Twins," (Capt. Munns) from the same place with the following on board, "passengers Mr. Guthrie, son and daughter, 41 bales and 3 bags of wool, 6 kits of onions, 10 kegs of butter, 4 kits of whale bone, 8 hams, 1 bundle of bacon, 5 live pigs."

From the autumn of 1853 McLean was busy with the Wairarapa land purchases and his first success was the completion of the Castlepoint block, purchased on 22nd June. The block included, except for reserves for the Maoris, practically all the land between the Whareama River on the south and on the north the Waimata, the later provincial boundary between Wellington and Hawkes Bay. The inland boundary followed roughly the line of the Puketoi south to the Mangapokia and the Whareama. The price was £2,500. Of the five European witnesses to the deed three were local residents: "William Marshall, school master, Castle Point; John Sutherland, stock-

holder, Castle Point; Thomas Guthrie, settler and stockholder, Castle Point."

William Marshall had then just arrived as tutor to Guthrie's family, a position he was to occupy until 1857. John Sutherland, seeing that he did not, like Guthrie, describe himself as settler and stockholder, must then have been in the district awaiting the completion of the sale before occupying his station on the north side of the Mataikona.

Later in the year the Waihora and Whareama blocks were purchased for a total of £1200, the latter block being in four sections.

It is difficult at this point to say who actually was the next settler after Guthrie to take up land following the sale. John Sutherland, Valentine Smith, Meredith and Wilson were all in the district at the time or in the next few months more or less "on their marks" to apply for depasturing license or purchase under the new regulations of Sir George Grey. We know that Sutherland was negotiating for land at Uruti in December, 1852, while in the same month Valentine Smith was writing to McLean about the native reserves on the land south of the Mataikona he intended to occupy although there is evidence that he did not stock it until the end of 1853 or early 1854. Smith on this occasion appears to have ridden from the Ruamahanga by the overland route having had to swim his horse over both rivers in the bush.

EDWIN MEREDITH TAKES UP "ORUI."

South of the Castle the next land taken up was "Orui" Station by Edwin Meredith, in November, 1853. Coming from Tasmania, he first grazed sheep on the south of the Clutha in Otago, but was obliged to surrender his claim to the Otago Association. Early in 1853 he visited Hawkes Bay but again failed to secure the land he had selected. After this second disappointment the events leading to his settling at "Orui" are best told in his own words:

"I bought one hundred and twenty head of cattle from the late Mr. Wm. Donald, of 'Mania,' and with these I started for Hawks Bay, with the intention of taking occupation of any available land that might be acquired from the Natives. As there was no inland route on account of the dense forest, I had of necessity to drive my cattle right down the valley to the mouth of the Wairarapa Lake and then by the coast, and I looked forward to a long, tedious drive—but before I reached the Pahau River I heard that Mr. Donald McLean had completed



the toitoi thatch and glass was substituted for the calico. Until Mrs. A. Nicholls came to a whare near Ngapopatu the closest neighbours were at Castlepoint. Some of the furniture carried on the first trip is still in use today.

ISAAC CRIPPS AT MATAIKONA
AND "SEVEN OAKS."

Among the early arrivals was Isaac Cripps, who, with his wife and five children, came by the "Kitty" in February, 1854, under engagement to Valentine Smith at Mataikona. They were met by Smith with a pack bullock to transport their belongings, and set out on the nine-mile coastal journey next morning. It was a hot summer day and progress was very slow, each parent carrying a child, the youngest being a boy ten months old. At the Mataikona pa the travellers received a hearty welcome. An oven had just been opened and Maori hospitality did its best for the weary family.

After two years at Mataikona, Mr. Cripps moved to Whareama to shepherd for Buxton. Here they lived in a slab and thatch shanty on the banks of the Whareama, a little below what is today the Ica Ford. While living here they were flooded out at some time in January, 1858, the family making a hazardous night escape to a Maori whare on a small hill about a mile and a half away across flooded hollows. The site of the whare and native terracing can still be seen at the bottom of the Langdale flats.

In 1857 Cripps purchased the site of "Seven Oaks," the receipt being as follows:—

Chief Land Commissioner's Office,
Wellington, 1st October 1857

N^o 167

Received from Isaac Cripps for L. R. Ling

in payment for 2000/- Acorn of Rental

Land in the Whareama District the

sum of Twenty Pounds (£20/-)

Money

David Lewis
for the Chief Land Commissioner.

Entered:
David Lewis
Chief Clerk.

For many years Mr. Cripps was wont to devote the end of February and all March to getting in stores, etc., to last the long winter out. From his homestead to Castlepoint, a distance of 15 miles, fording the Whareama at Hikurangi, and crossing the Trooper to the coast, he would start in early morning driving a sledge drawn by two bullocks. The next day he would return with his load. Mr. Cripps's first homestead, if so it can be called, was not in the Mangapokia Valley, but was on a curious knoll, the only rise for a couple of miles north and south on the bank of the Whareama River—a couple of old kahikateas on the Ica side still mark the spot—and the knoll is still there, but the raupo hut has long since disappeared.

The original "Seven Oaks" homestead was wattle and dab—walls a foot thick, the roof being toi-toi or raupo; the chimneys were of stone blocks set in clay; divisions between the rooms of sacking, and the floor of hard tramped clay. The fireplace was very large; would hold a back log to last a week, which helped to decrease the cutting up of firewood.

To eke out the slight income Mr Cripps made by farming, Mrs Cripps opened a general store, which was also the local Post Office.

* JOHN GROVES AND HIS EARLY LETTERS
FROM CASTLEPOINT.

On July 10th, 1855, again in the schooner "Esther," Mr. and Mrs. John Groves and family sailed for Castlepoint. Mr. Groves was the brother-in-law of Mr. Guthrie. It is most fortunate the following interesting letters of Mr. and Mrs. Groves have been preserved to give us their impressions of isolated station life in the years that followed:—

Sunday, November 17th, 1855.

We landed at Castle Point on 13th July and my sister Ann and her husband (Thomas Guthrie) were overjoyed to see us land on their shore, for we landed about 300 yards from her house, for her house is close to the seashore.

We sailed from Downes on the 20th March with a very fine wind. We passed a few vessels out but we beat all that we fell in with. We had a very fine passage taking it all together. We had a few very rough days..

Whitsunday was a very rough day but the sea was awful grand, for the sea was like mountains above us sometimes, and at another we were on the top of them. We never put in anywhere all the way out. We saw Vande-