



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
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MEDIA RELEASE

Kaeo a magnet for Methodist missionaries

In 1823 Wesleyan missionaries arrived in the Bay of Islands, providing some competition for the Anglican missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) who were already established at Hohi and Kerikeri, and were just starting out at Paihia.

The Anglicans and Wesleyans had something of an uneasy alliance in England – and this ambivalence stretched to the other side of the world. The CMS missionaries were happy for the Wesleyans to establish a mission, provided it was some distance from their own.

The Wesleyans decided to plant their mission at Kaeo – today a 20-minute drive from Kerikeri; though in 1823 it was a significant horse trek away.

“The unmarried missionary men stuck it out for over three years – with one eventually describing their chosen mission field as ‘this benighted corner of the earth’,” says the Northland Manager of Heritage New Zealand, Bill Edwards.

“Tormented by various temptations – both physical and spiritual – the mission was remarkable for its complete lack of success. In the three and a half years they were there the missionaries failed to make one Christian convert.”

The last straw came in January 1827 during a period of intense Maori political activity. Fearing attack, the Wesleyans abandoned the mission and fled to safety – first with the Anglican missionaries in Paihia, and then to Sydney.

“The Kaeo mission was pillaged according to the law of muru – and today nothing remains of it but a commemorative cairn,” says Bill.

The Wesleyans were undeterred, however, and nine months later they returned – this time to the Hokianga; and this time at the invitation of Ngapuhi leader, Patuone.

“Things were noticeably different, and eventually the missionaries purchased 850 acres at Mangungu from relations of Patuone. Initially they built two houses, followed by various mission buildings including a schoolroom, a house for their Maori servants and a store for goods for barter,” says Bill.

“They even had better results with conversions – most notably with the leaders Patuone and Tamati Waka Nene who became Christians.”

The original mission house used by missionaries Nathaniel and Anne Turner went up in flames in 1838, though John Hobbs – son of a coach builder – put his carpentry and building

skills to good use. The result was Mangungu Mission House, which still stands today, and which is cared for by Heritage New Zealand.

“Life for the missionaries and their families was hard, with little medical help available for example. The mission survived, however, and on February 12 1840 hosted the third and largest signing of the Treaty of Waitangi,” says Bill.

Fascinating stories from this extraordinary time are told in an exciting new app for Android and Apple smartphones and tablets entitled *Path to Nationhood*. Produced by Heritage New Zealand, the suite of six Northland app-based tours are available free to download, and are a must-have for visitors to Northland, as well as locals.

Written and researched by former Heritage New Zealand staff member Stuart Park, with Professor Manuka Henare and his team at the University of Auckland School of Business providing a Maori cultural and historical perspective, the tours incorporate audio using actors like Tui Ruwhiu and Michael Hurst. Sound effects also help bring the stories to life.

“Once downloaded the tours can be enjoyed anywhere – irrespective of whether there is wi-fi or a cellular connection – making it the perfect virtual tour guide,” says Bill.

“The *Path to Nationhood* tours take people to the places where these interactions occurred and introduce them to some of the characters that made this period of our history so dynamic and extraordinary.”

The tours tell a range of stories in an engaging and accessible way according to Bill.

“Many of the stories centre around some of our fantastic Heritage Destinations in Northland – like Mangungu Mission – so people can actually visit places where many of these people lived, and events took place,” he says.

“It’s fair to say that the app tours give people an opportunity to see history through new eyes.”

For a free download of the *Path to Nationhood* suite of Northland tours visit heritage.org.nz/apps or search for Heritage Trails through your online app store.