

The Gary Cook Newsletter



OF SHIPS AND STONES AND STORIES.

by Gary Cook DSc. KtJ. KGCStA

The black river worn basalt boulder makes a comfortable place on which to sit. The Waipoua River is running low, but the voice of the waters is still strong. A nearby shoal funnels the swiftly flowing waters into a number of shallow rapids that laugh and chuckle reflecting the forest green of the trees that overhang the river banks. The clouds are low on the forest at this early morning time, and wind borne showers bless the landscape in refreshing waves that flow over the steep hills.

Wisps of mist linger, slowly caressing the tree tops. All is still at this moment. I am caught up in the magic that nature so easily produces every time I visit this forest. I try to relax into the writing of my notes, but the air of expectancy is high. There is a feeling that something is about to happen.

I look to my diary notes from the past six days, to find the most interesting point at which to start to tell you, the reader, of the events that have occurred around me.

I have stopped writing again. I look hopefully at the forest on the opposite bank seeking to see the folk that I have sensed are watching. I put my thoughts into voice and present a Karakia, or prayer, that will hopefully establish my intention with the silent, hidden watchers.

A perfume of sweet smelling flower nectar wafts around me carried by a gentle breeze that has risen from up river. The aroma is so strong that my senses are sweetened and awake for what is to follow.

Sounds rise on this gentle breeze, and a song is carried toward me. Then the chatter of distant voices. Then stillness. Being the worldly person that I am, I quickly stand and walk up the bank behind me to see if there are people walking along the forest road. The voices have gone. The road is empty. The



perfume is stronger.

Once again, an open heart and a desire for contact has been fulfilled. The forest, a haven for many small and subtle creatures, has provided a place of connection with the Patupaiarere.

The scene shifts. Back to the mundane. I have to finish this article and select suitable pictures to add to the stories I am about to share with you.

The week commenced with a dawn rendezvous on the west coast beach at the small coastal village of Omamiri, a comfortable drive north west from Dargaville.

It was an ebb tide, and the cloud covered sky reflected darkly on the wet sand. Then, the distant chatter of a helicopter engine and the sleek Robinson 44 came into view, circled over the beach and quickly landed a little distance from our vehicles. This was a day that had been long in planning to seek further proof of the site of a 2nd world War German U-boat that was said to have been scuttled off the coast in this area in late 1944 or early 1945. The story we have been given tells of the crew coming ashore at this remote place, bringing with them a number of wooden cases that contained much in the way of valuable works of art and artifacts. The one point that has held my interest for the past 4 years we have been investigating the possible sinking and the validity of the story, is that one of the items that came to these shores is the legendary Ark of the Covenant. This is one aspect of the events that took place more than 60 years ago, that has captured my interest. As a Temple Knight of the Supreme Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem, it is beholden on me to pay attention to such stories, and to either prove or disprove this event. Members of the Knights Templar declare much with the oath of allegiance. So, here we are on the beach again. Low tide beach searches with metal detectors and a high powered magnetometer had so far failed to find any trace of

wreckage. We were about to sling the magnetometer under the helicopter on a 30 meter wire and fly a search pattern over the breaker line. On board would be the technician Nick Freeman and maritime archaeologist, Noel Hilliam.

For more than one and half hours the little chopper flew a grid pattern up and down the coast.

As I write this story, the data collected from this flight is being collated and further analysed.

Early indications do not show a strong reading, but a promising strike at the very end of one of the runs is to be further investigated.

So whether or not these events did take place, the story as it stands today is worthy of our interest and further investigation.

Let us now move forward a few days to another investigation in the Waipoua Kauri Forest.

The adjoining Waipoua Forest that is soon to be transferred to a local Iwi as part of a claims settlement, has provided much in the way of speculation as to the origins of the ancient people who had left a legacy of more than 2000 surveyed stone sites and structures. Radio carbon dating has placed early occupation at 960 years ago. Timber milling and stock damage has done much to the integrity of many of the stacked stone features. Access has always been difficult, and now that the land is being moved into different ownership may be lost to the outside world.

With this in mind, I have been following up on the stories of pig hunters and local residents on the location of many more stone sites that lay outside the claimants area of interest.

I made a foray into the Kauri forest area on Thursday with accomplished dowser, Gordon Heathcote to look for alternative stone sites. We crossed the Waipoua River near the DOC headquarters and spent a number of hours searching among the relatively open forest on the northern banks. We forded the river a number of times to get around steep banks making our way further west and down river. We noted a number of stone heaps spread over a wide area and one location that had laid stones. Our first journey to these places was very exciting and will hopefully open up sites that will be fully accessible to all that may wish to visit. It is not my wish to impose any sense of the history behind the people that lived at these sites, however indications



are that these places were inhabited a long, long time ago.

The stones rest under a deep cover of forest humus, and are set under the umbrella of ancient Kauri and towering Totara. The forest offers this place a protection from wandering stock and the predation of modern timber milling. The Kauri Forest of Waipoua is indeed a place of well kept secrets. Our next journey to this area will entail a search for a vast stone amphitheater like structure that has been sighted by hunters on number of occasions over the past 20 years or so.

On the Friday morning I returned to the forest to visit Tane Mahuta and to walk the ricker forest track to visit the twin trunk Kauri that in the past has been a personal launching place for much of the pattern of my writing and the directions of my many journeys of discovery through these regions. I was not to be disappointed on this day. My camera was able to capture the flare of energy around the twin trunks and the unique spectacle of water droplets falling from the leaves of the Kauri from a height of more than 12 meters above, to swim and float downward to shower me with the strength and wonder of this pheromone.

The forests and waters of this land constantly speak with an inner language to which we are always open, but often are too busy to pay attention too. We have but to stop and listen.

Saturday has arrived, and I am preparing to leave the camp and head back to Auckland, first calling on Noel Hilliam to plan our next beach journey.

Noel was busy putting the finishing touches to a machine that would help to move sand from around shipwreck sites. The 100 km beach is the scene of more than 150 shipwrecks, of which only 86 have been identified. and within the sites we are examining are the wrecks of a Spanish and a Portuguese ship. Archival research in Europe has, to this date provided us with information from the log books of these early explorers, that tells of ship wrecks in New Zealand, and of the French Dieppe maps that date from 1550. This tells us that French, Spanish and Portuguese explorers reached, and mapped, these shore well ahead of Tasman and Cook. When proven, this information will go a long way to extending the European contact dates and explaining



the number of Maori family names that can be traced back to these early explorers.

What an exciting and interesting country we live in.

Three hundred years after the arrival of the Polynesian Maori in New Zealand there was a strong contact with these early sailors. We believe that more personal information will become available from private family documents and records that were kept by the Church in Europe. The Captain of the Portuguese ship was Gaspar Corte Real, who challenged by the epic voyage of Columbus set out on a voyage of discovery that included landing in New Zealand.

Within this information we may find in depth reference to the people that were met in New Zealand. A recently released map of Chinese origin shows a map of the world that was created following the epic voyages of the fleets of Admiral Zheng He in 1421. The islands of New Zealand are easily recognizable, and Gavin Menzies Author of the "*Chinese Fleets of 1421*" explains the early Chinese interest in New Zealand as a possible source of alluvial gold found in the rivers of the South Island. We then went to look at a sample of timber that had been recovered from the nearby beach 3 nights previous. Noel explained that this was part of a ship's mast, the base still secured to the keel structure, and the timber a close grained hardwood that probably came from equatorial forests. This leads us to believe that this was a large ship, constructed in either South America or the Philippines. A sample has been sent away for analyze. And as we

looked at the timber we discovered what appeared to be the head of copper nail.

A surface search of the beach around this site recorded a strong response on the metal detector , but at this stage an accurate assessment of whether this is metal or bronze will have to be carried out in



a few weeks time when the tides are more favorable. Timber previously taken from another wreck site has proven to be of an Asian origin and from a tree that would have been felled in about 1530.

All in all, we are steadily progressing this part of our research. When results are finally published, this will provide a platform to explore even further into the deeper history of this land. To bring forth more on the Waitaha Ta Whiro, Maruiwi, Nga Hue and those who came before.

The door is still firmly open for Martin Doutre to further research his theories on the Pre Celt contact in this land.

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