

APPENDIX 1

History of Point Britomart

The Auckland Isthmus has witnessed over a millennium of Maori occupation and use. *Tamaki Makau-rau* or 'Tamaki-the bride sought by a hundred suitors' is the ancestral name for the area. The volcanic soils of the isthmus provide rich cultivating soils, abundant fresh water sources and valuable material and marine resources. Other names for the Isthmus refer to the many tribes and layers of associated histories such as those descended from the Aotea, Mataatua, Arawa and Tainui waka. Ngati Whatua claim common descent from the Māhuhu waka, which is a name that has been placed on a reserve in nearby Quay Park installed by Ngati Whatua.

Te Rerenga Ora Iti ('the leap of the few survivors') is the name for the now destroyed Point Britomart, Britomart Place. Named by Ngati Whatua this site commemorates an incident in about 1680AD during the time of the renowned military leader - Kawharu. Kawharu led Ngati Whatua on a number of raids on the Tamaki Isthmus in this era, the wars of which were known as the Stripping Conquest or 'Te Raupatu Tihore'. Ngati Whatua attacked a defending party of Ngati Huarere here with the survivors leaping from the cliff to their freedom or deaths. This method of attack, forcing defending parties over cliff edges was utilised a number of times along the coastal edge now known as Tamaki Drive at Onepu Whakatakataka (Hobson Point) and Takaparawhau (Bastion Point) and again at Britomart Point on a Nga Puhi raiding party in 1822AD during the notorious 'Musket Wars' period. The nearest village site to Britomart was Horotiu (located near Albert Park), also the name of the ancestral stream that ran down the Queen Street Valley into the Waitemata (Simmons, 1987¹).

The manawhenua of Ngati Whatua in Tamaki Makaurau is synonymous with the following 18th century prophecy by Ngati Whatua visionary – Titahi, that a new order would come to be established at their invitation on their land in Tamaki. This prophecy emphasises that in the wake of a major event that would take place in the north (ie. the Treaty of Waitangi), strange vessels (represented by the uncommon puputara or nautilus shell) would appear in the Waitemata followed by a pou whakairo (carved post). A pou whakairo is a symbol of mana, so the inference was that a new governing authority would come to be established on the shores of the Waitemata and would do so at the invitation of Ngati Whatua ('...e tikina e au...' ; '..fetched by me – Ngati Whatua...').

*He aha te hau e wawa ra, e wawa ra?
He tiu, he raki, he tiu he raki
Nana i a mai te puputara ki uta
E tikina e au te kotiu
Koia te pou whakairo ka tu ki Waitematâ
Ka tu ki Waitemata i oku wairangitanga
E tu nei, e tu nei?*

*What is the wind that was roaring yonder?
It was the north wind, the wind from the north
It was indeed the north wind I perceived driving the puputara ashore.
And then to my amazement there was the carved post standing (by the shores of) Waitematâ, standing, standing thus.²*

On 20 March 1840, the grandson of Tuperiri - Te Kawau, and other Ngati Whatua leaders signed the Treaty of Waitangi at Manukau. Te Kawau actively sought a partnership with the Crown. In return for land for a settlement, and provisions and shelter for the early settlers he hoped to obtain military protection, technological advancement and participation in the arts and commerce. Accordingly he sent his nephew, Reweti, and others to the Bay of Islands to ask Governor Hobson to come to Tamaki. Hobson, anxious to find a more central location for his capital, agreed and made an inspection of the area on 23-28 February 1840.

Te Kawau gave Hobson some 3,000 acres of land, and on a wedge-shaped block of land that extended from a point about Maungawhau (Mount Eden) and lines running east to Hobson Bay (*Mataharehare*) and west to Cox's Bay (*Opou*) the first colonial capital in New Zealand was established. The area takes in the Central Business District and bays including Britomart and suburbs from Parnell through to Ponsonby, Grey Lynn and Westmere. In January 1841 Governor Hobson arrived in Tamaki. He promptly repaid the Ngati Whatua delegation's visit to the Bay of Islands by greeting Apihai Te Kawau on the foreshore at Okahu Bay and the prophecy of Titahi had been realised. Over one thousand Ngati Whatua were assembled there to meet the Governor and Te Kawau spoke for them all with the words:-

*"Governor, Governor, welcome, welcome as a father to me: there is my land for you... go and pick the best part of the land and place your people, at least, our people upon it."*²³

Place names are potent and durable statements of identity and sites of significance to Ngati Whatua within the Britomart Precinct are:

Te Rou Kai or 'the food gathering', a former pipi bank that lay between the site of the Waitemata Hotel and Point Britomart at the mouth of the Horotiu Stream (aka – Ligar Canal/Queen Street).

Te Whatu or 'the rock' was a rocky ledge located at the foot of present day Shortland Street, a convenient landing place where canoes were moored.

Nga U Wera or 'the burnt breasts' was a headland at the mouth of the Horotiu Stream where the Waitemata Hotel formerly stood.

Te Tara Karaihi (a small tern) was another canoe landing at the foot of what is now Swanson Street, opposite Te Whatu. Birds provide standard metaphors for conferring respect for Ngati Whatua, a party of visitors may be welcomed as a flight of Kawau Tikitiki (black cormorant) arriving from their nesting grounds.

From the outset the bay to the east of Point Britomart was the commercial centre of the new settlement. It was given the fitting name of Commercial Bay. In 1841 Surveyor General Felton Mathew drew up a plan for the new city. Though parts of the plan were later abandoned, Mathew's plan provides the layout of the reclamation of Freeman's Bay, Commercial Bay and Mechanics Bay. This created deep water berths for visiting ships. The plan also showed Quay Street, Customhouse Street (later Customs Street), Lower Queen Street and an unnamed road, which appears to be Britomart Place.

From the early days of Auckland's history, the harbour was a busy one. The focus of the fledgling settlement was the port at Commercial Bay. By the early 1860s improvements had been made to the port. The 1,400 foot Queen Street wharf had been completed. The reclamation of Commercial Bay had reached as far as Customhouse Street. In 1879 work began on extending reclamation from Customs Street to Quay Street. The central portion of this reclamation had been earmarked by the government as a railway reserve.

By 1882 the reclamation was sufficiently advanced to allow land on the north side of Customs Street East to be leased. While the railway reserve formed the central portion of the land, there was much land from which the Auckland Harbour Board could earn revenue. Work on the Auckland Railway Station, designed by William Hales, was completed in 1885. By August 1886 the Quay Street frontage of the reclamation was completed by the Auckland Harbour Board.

Some buildings were erected before the mid 1890s but much of the land remained bare. With the dawn of the new century came an improvement in the economy. As business confidence returned, so too did the demand for commercial land in the Quay and Customs Street area. By 1910 virtually all of Customs Street, Quay Street and Breakwater Road (later Britomart Place) had been built upon. The General Post Office was completed in 1912.

The renaissance in trade and mercantile confidence saw the construction of the grand collection of company warehouses and head offices which now characterise much of the precinct, and in particular the Customs St face of the precinct.

The 1930s brought changes for the area with the removal of the train terminus to a new building in Beach Road. The redundant station was redeveloped as a municipal bus terminal, which opened in 1937. During the 1950s the Auckland City Council was considering ways to cope with parking demands from increasing numbers of private vehicles in the city. In 1958 Auckland's first car parking building, named the Britomart Car Park, was opened with accommodation for 452 cars.

Customs Street gradually took on more of a retail flavour with shops being installed in the ground floors of several buildings. New uses came in the 1970s and 80s with restaurants, bars and nightclubs operating from buildings in Customs Street, Quay Street and Britomart Place.

By the 1990s the Auckland City Council decided to redevelop the area. The bus terminal was run-down in appearance and solutions were sought for the growing transport problem in the city. The Council secured ownership of the buildings backing onto the bus terminal site and in 1997, a comprehensive new development was proposed but later shelved. Today the eastern end of Customs and Quay Streets stands in stark contrast to the western end of these streets. Where properties in the western end of these streets were demolished and developed, those to the east have retained much of their original building stock and finer-grained roading network.

In 2001, after an international design competition, Auckland City adopted a master plan for the Britomart precinct and downtown transport interchange, based on the winning concept by Mario Madaayag together with Jasmax Architects. This concept plan formed the basis of the development of the Britomart transport centre and above-ground redevelopment of the historic precinct.

This brief history was prepared by Auckland City's Heritage Division with assistance from Ngati Whatua o Orakei (June 2004)

1 Simmons, D. 1987 *Maori Auckland*. Auckland, The Bush Press.

2 Blair, N. 2001 Britomart: A Ngati Whatua Response. Report to the downtown transport interchange project.

3 Reed, A.W, 1955, Auckland, the City of Seas. Wellington, A.H & A.W Reed. Cited in Waitangi Tribunal, 1987, Orakei Report (WAI 9), Page: 23