

WAIARI RIVER

The traditional meaning for the name of the Waiari is the ‘soft, soothing sounds of flowing water’.

Other meanings refer to the river being ‘a place where the voices of our ancestors are heard’; and describes the clearness of its waters (*wai*, water; *ari*, be clear, visible). It was said the water of Waiari was so clear, eels could be speared from the river banks and there was no need to use weirs or *hīnaki*.

The two *taniwha* who are the guardians of the river are Nainainui and Mangakino.

Eight generations on from Hei, Takakōpiri controlled Tauranga and claimed the land between the Waimapu and Waiari Rivers for Waitaha, calling it *Te Uku o Takakōpiri*. The Waiari traditionally marks the boundary between Waitaha to the west, and Tapuika, to the east.

Within the Waiari catchment area were numerous *pā* and other significant sites. These include *wāhi tapu* where Waitaha *tūpuna* were born, dedicated to the Gods and secretly buried.

Flax grew in abundance along the banks and in the wetlands of the Waiari and its waters were an important source of food for many Waitaha *pā*.

This included *Te Ngaeo*, a *pā* that stood on an island at the confluence of the Waiari and Kaituna river; *Te Pōhue*, which sat on a site within the wetlands of the Waiari and formed a triumvirate with *Te Puke Taweare* *pā* on the Waiari and *Atuaroa* *pā*, on the western side of the Ōhineangaanga River; *Te Arapaiaka*, so named after a battle where the dead strewn on the side of the hill resembled tree roots protruding from the ground; *Te Aore*, which contained large food gardens called *Te Tarutarutu* (Te Puke’s old town cemetery is now on this site); *Kahikatia*, a small Waitaha *kāinga*; *Ōtaraninia*, which had a carved meeting house called Te Manuhiri but is now a Waitaha *urupā* (hence the saying: ‘*Ka tanuhia ki ngā parapara o Waitaha*’ *The burial place of the remains of Waitaha*’); the small *nohoanga* of *Pātete*; *Pukerimu*, where Rimu branches were placed in a mound in the Waiari as a *tau koura* to trap fresh-water crays (*puke*, hill, mound; *rimu*, native tree); and *Horoauahi*, which was occupied by Hakaraia in his time.

These *pā* were linked to *Te Puke Taweare*, a hill on what is now known as Te Puke block. (The hill lends its name to the present-day township of Te Puke.)

Nearby were the *pā*, *Putaruru*, a *nohoanga* where Waitaha travellers rested on route to Rotorua; *Ōtaumarū*, the home of the *tūpuna*, Hineata, and the people of Ngāti Rereāmanu who grew crops and harvested forest foods such as fern root, *hīnau*, *pikopiko*, *harore*, *ure* and *tāwhara* (it was also a Waitaha burial ground); *Ōturuturu* Creek, the site of another *nohoanga* that had food gardens and was used as a base to harvest food from the bush; *Waiwiri*, whose name described the terrified trembling of a Waitaha *tūpuna* *kuia*, Hinehou, during a battle; and *Whataroa*, a seasonal food encampment for Waitaha, where the Whataroa Stream joined the Waiari.

Further on, following the Mangatoī River towards Ōtānewainuku, was *Te Rerenga* Stream whose headwaters originate at Ōtānewainuku. The stream feeds into both the Waiari in the

east and the Waimapu River in the west. Te Rerenga was a boundary marker of Waitaha's lands. It was also an important water source for *Ōkōtare* and *Maungapiripiri* pā at the top of Ōtānewainuku.

Hakaraia recorded all pā sites along the Waiari with the Native Land Court, in a bid to retain Waitaha lands in Te Puke. But most of these pā were destroyed by flood protection schemes and the development of farms and urban growth in the 20th century.

The pā, *Ōtāne*, *Te Pokapoka*, *Pukututu*, and *Kōkōtahi* were listed by Hakaraia as being near the Waiari River but their exact location is unknown.