

‘Too Much Land?’
Maraekakaho Station, 1877 – 1929.

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in History at Massey University.

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RODERICK MACDONALD

HEAD SHEPHERD AT MARAEKAKAHO STATION

WORKED AT STATION FOR 40 YEARS

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Inside Back Cover	Plan of the Maraekakaho Estate, circa 1884. (this plan was produced as clear as possible within the constraints of size reduction.)

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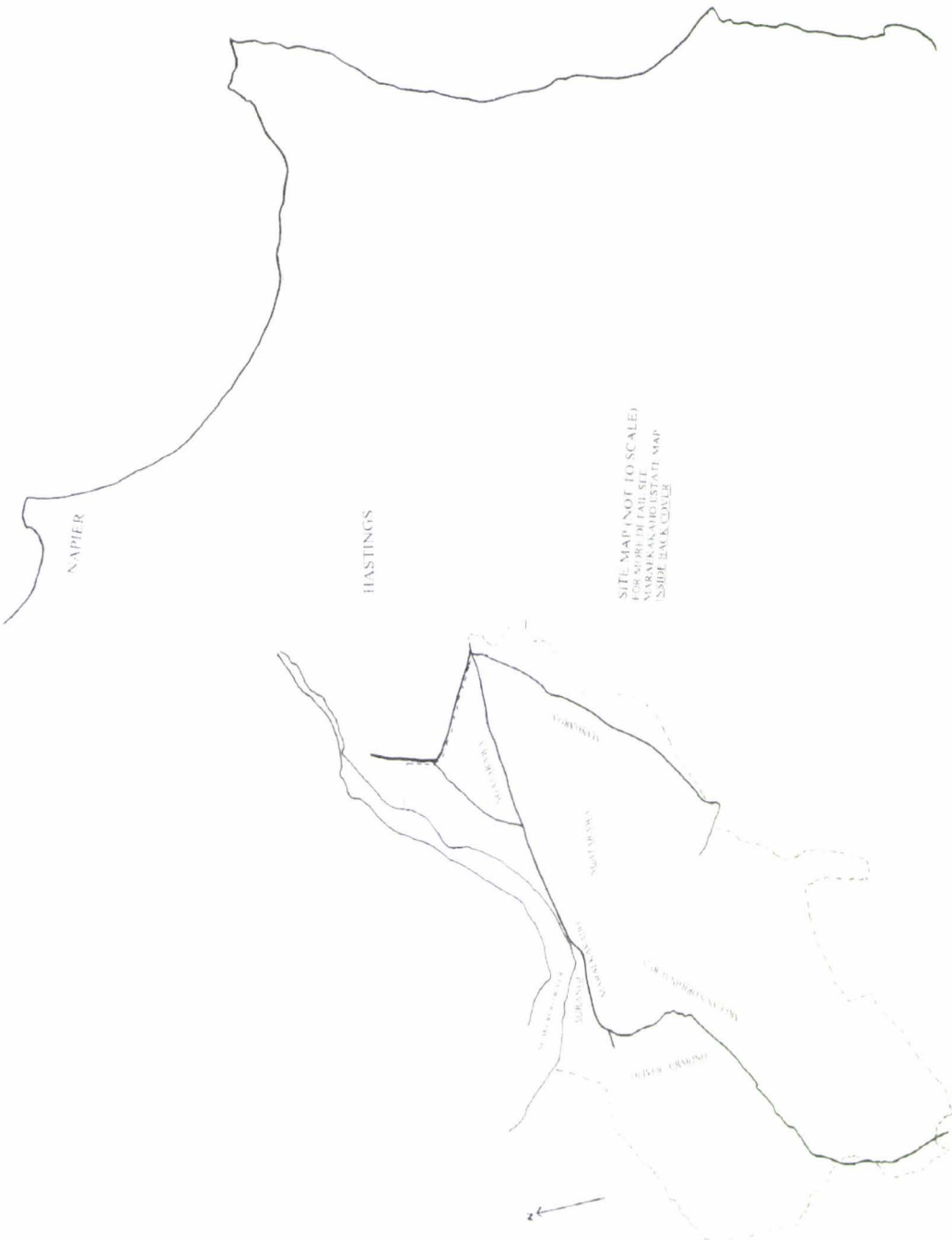
The following are the people of Maraekakaho, or their relatives, present and past, that have granted me interviews. I cannot express my thanks enough for them for welcoming me into their homes and allowing me to read their family treasures. They are not placed in order of importance, as all their information was important to understanding the people and their lives at Maraekakaho.

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Illustrations

Silverfish loving the cellulose in old photographs have eaten parts of some photographs leaving small white blemishes, however as much care as possible has been taken to present clear photographs without compromising their authenticity so these have not been eliminated from the negatives by computer.

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IMPERIAL / METRIC CONVERSION TABLE.

1 Mile = 1.61 Kilometres 1 Kilometre = 0.621 Miles

1 Foot = 0.305 Metres

6 inches = 150 Millimetres

1 inch = 25.4 Millimetres

Money

Pound £1 = 2 Dollars

Shillings 10/- = 1 Dollar

7/- = 70 cents

Pence 2^d = 2 cents

Weight

Pound 1lb = 0.454 Kilograms

Ounce 1oz = 28 grams

Liquid

5 gallons = 22.730 litres

Area

1 Acre = 0.405 hectare

300 Acres = 121.5 hectares

3500 Acres = 1417.5 hectares

58,093.2 Acres = 23,527.746 hectares

TRANSLATIONS OF MAORI NAMES.

APPARENTLY THERE IS NO TRADITIONAL TRANSLATION FOR THE WORD 'MARA EKAKAHO' OR MANY OTHER LOCAL NAMES. SIMILAR TO ANCIENT NAMES IN MANY COUNTRIES THERE CAN BE MANY DIFFERENT MEANINGS, BUT THE FOLLOWING MEANINGS OR SOMETHING LIKE THEM, ARE ACCEPTED BY SOME OF THE PEOPLE OF THE DISTRICT.

'MARA EKAKAHO', ITS TRUE MEANING MAY BE LOST IN THE MISTS OF TIME, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO H.W. WILLIAMS DICTIONARY 'MARA E' IS THE VILLAGE COMMON GROUND, 'KAKAHO' IS THE CULM OF THE TOETOE. (Pampas Grass)

'RAUKAWA' A SWEET SCENTED PLANT, *nothopanax edgerleyi*.

'NGATARAWA'.. or 'NGA TA ARAWA', THE RIPPLES OF THE ACQUIFER.

'MANGAROA' LONG STREAM.

'AORANGI' NAME OF A SACRED MAT BELONGING TO AN ANCESTOR

'PARITUA' a version of PARI ATUA, A CLIFF OF THE GOD(S)

'WHAKAPIRAU' MAKE, or CAUSE TO GO ROTTEN.

'AOMARAMA' WORLD OF LIFE AND LIGHT.

'WAIPIROPIRO' BAD or STAGNANT WATER, (the stream ended in a swamp.)

'ONGARU' OF, or, BELONGING TO NGARU, (a person.)

'NGARURORO' THE WAVES or SPLASHING OF THE GRAYLING, a small fresh water fish.

INTRODUCTION

As a builder I built houses and farm buildings at Maraekakaho, on some of the pastoral farms that had been sub-divided out of the once vast Maraekakaho Station. Maraekakaho is a district situated about 20 miles southwest of Napier in Hawke's Bay, it has a landscape of rolling hills pierced and surrounded by fertile flat land. After retiring I did not have the need to visit the area for a few years until my grandson went on a holiday camp at Stoney Creek. I was astounded at the changes in what had been only pastoral country. I was driving across the Maori flatlands of Ngatarawa along the Bridge Pa – Maraekakaho Road that had once been the main highway from Napier towards the south and eventually Wellington. When Douglas McLean owned Maraekakaho Station it farmed land on both sides of this highway.

Changing the landscape were vineyards, olive groves and alpaca farms, along with other land uses. My interest in Maraekakaho initiated with noticing the changing landscape. This had mainly occurred on the flat lands of Ngatarawa and Mangaroa, the country behind was still pastoral though even some of this was yielding to high intensity cropping. The steeper dry pastoral land was changing with lifestyle blocks and small plantations springing up. I was as surprised at the changes as Maori must have been when they saw pastoral farms appearing from the fern and scrub. I wondered whether the extent of the changes would mean the original hard work that the colonists and their families had endured would be remembered. Or would all this disappear like the history of many of the Maori people who had once lived there.

There is a Maori gravesite at Maraekakaho said to be that of someone called Sarah. I wondered who was Sarah. And where was Sarah's lane? Residents knew about them but were not very positive about where they were or why they were called after Sarah? I wondered how long it would be before people also forgot about the McLeans and the station.

I learnt that Sarah was Hera Te Upokoiri a chieftaness who occupied her Pah, Sarah's pah, near the main highway, and rented land to Douglas McLean.¹ The remainder of this thesis is a report on what I have discovered about the station in the period 1877 to 1929. In short this thesis is about some of the people who worked for Maraekakaho Station during the ownership of Douglas McLean, later Sir Douglas McLean, their work on it and the farms sub-divided from it.

It is study of a successful colonial farm. It is not focussed on one particular individual or a small group, it centres on the people, on a particular piece of land in the lifetime of the owner, and even after the land was sold. It is impossible to include all of the individuals and work that was done on the farm in the time frame in a thesis of this length.

Donald McLean, the government land buyer who later became Native Minister, had established Maraekakaho Station in Hawke's Bay in 1857, and his son Douglas McLean inherited the station from him in 1877. Robert Donald Douglas, known as Douglas, was Sir Donald McLean's and his wife Susan's only child. Douglas' mother died shortly after his birth in 1852 and Sir Donald never remarried.

When I first mooted the idea of writing a history of Maraekakaho Station I was reminded of the three existing theses on Sir Donald McLean and his estate. They are R.W.S. Fargher's 'Donald McLean: Chief Land Purchase Agent (1846-1861) & Native Secretary (1856-1861)', Carol Yeo's 'Ideals, Policy & Practice: The New Zealand Protectorate of Aborigines (1840-1846)' and Bruce C. Parr's 'The McLean Estate: a Study of Pastoral Finance and Estate Management in New Zealand, 1853-91'.

The first two of these focussed on Sir Donald McLean, the latter was on the management under him and his son Douglas McLean in the nineteenth century. This thesis is not a history of the McLean family, they are only relevant to this work in conjunction with their work for the farm.

This project is not an attempt to reassess those theses from a different perspective, but to add another dimension to the work that the McLeans and their employees did at Maraekakaho. I was more interested in the people who farmed

¹ Simpson, Miria, (ed), *Nga Taumata, A portrait of Ngati Kahungunu, 1870-1906*, Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2003, p.72, Letter A. Lockie to Douglas McLean, 15 Oct 1897, microfilm 0726-reel 56, folder 1045, Alexander Turnbull Library, & Plan of Maraekakaho Estate, Hawke's Bay, Hawke's Bay Regional Council, (see reduced copy inside back cover of thesis).



SIR DONALD McLEAN

SKETCHED BY A. KOCH
SURVEYOR

the land, the methods they used, the animals they raised and how successful they were. This work will give some idea of these aspects of Maraekakaho Station in the lifetime of Sir Douglas McLean. I recorded 1,180 names of people that I discovered during my research who worked for Douglas at the station, many have been forgotten and except for their occupations I could not find any details about most of them. Naturally there were many more employees whose names were not on the rolls or worked at the station before rolls were instituted.

Ann Macphee and her family the McKinnons arrived at Maraekakaho about 1925, Ann still lives at Maraekakaho and kindly spent time informing me of station matters and any details about those people that she could remember. Any questions that I had forgotten to ask in our first interview she gladly answered subsequently. I was fortunate to be able to interview two elderly women, Eden Robertson nee Macfarlane and Sheila de Gruchy nee McLean, who were able to share their memories about Maraekakaho Station from the start of the twentieth century. Many descendents of the original owners of the sub-divided farms still farm their land successfully and they and descendents of Maraekakaho Station workers allowed me access to family papers and photographs. Oral tape recordings and written interviews left by older family members of the sub-divided farms were invaluable.

An unsigned and undated map of Maraekakaho Estate drawn circa 1884 and measuring 1.2 metres x 1.6 metres was located, forgotten and water stained in a Hawke's Bay Regional Council storeroom, this map delineates the size and boundaries of the station at that time and the range of this thesis. The map showed 58,093.2 acres in approximately 111 paddocks, ranging between 2.2 acres to 3,485 acres, and incorporated a store of other information. This map reduced in size is located inside the back cover of this thesis.

Inter-loaning microfilms of the few Douglas McLean papers from the Turnbull Library were another source of information, microfilming these allowed me to study them in my hometown. These letters were written mainly during the early days of Douglas' ownership when he was absent overseas. Records became sparser when he was in New Zealand and supervising the station personally. Information on the station at that time nearing the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th was taken mainly from reporters' records of the time, primarily in *The Farmer*, *Dominion* newspaper and *New Zealand- Aotearoa*.

Bruce C. Parr's M.A. thesis, 'The McLean Estate' was to prove invaluable for my understanding of Maraekakaho Station, by providing a timeline and background to the people who managed the station. M.D.N. Campbell's M.A. and Ph.D. theses on 'Hawke's Bay Landed Gentry' and 'Hawke's Bay Politics 1890-1914' were also helpful, as was Agnes Jameson's *Old Memories* about early days on one of the sub-divided farms. Hawke's Bay Agricultural and Pastoral Society catalogues besides being a mine of information about the breeds of animals on the station furnished the names of station workers who exhibited at their Shows. With names from the Electoral Rolls all of these sources allowed me to compile a database to refresh people's memories.

I have taken the liberty of calling many of the main participants by their Christian names as an easier way to differentiate them. Many of these people were clansmen but not related, and the use of McLean so often only tends to be confusing at first. Robert Donald Douglas the owner was known by many as R.D.D. and this was suitable for a figurehead. However I have used his more personal name of Douglas because of his friendship to Archie, and because of his being personally involved in the supervision of the station.

Some of the present owners thought that the demise of Maraekakaho Station was due to bad management, would this perception become accepted? I hope this thesis will counteract this perception.

Donald McLean's friends Alexander Alexander the first storekeeper at Napier and Donald Gollan a local settler had chosen the land for him. They chose hilly land, as the frequently flooded swampy land of the Heretaunga plain was not suitable for sheep farming. Maraekakaho Station, as it was to be named later, was an ideal prospect for sheep farming being above the area that flooded. Donald McLean enlarged the station in the years after 1863 from its initial 10,000 acres by acquiring approximately 21,000 acres from George Oliver and Frederick Ormond on his southern boundary, then buying or leasing the Maori flat land of Ngatarawa, Mangaroa and Raukawa from 1871. All of these blocks of land had different groups of Maori owners, five blocks comprising the area called Ngatarawa and each block had to be negotiated separately.²

² See sketch map, & B.C. Parr, *The McLean Estate: A Study of Pastoral Finance and Estate Management in New Zealand, 1853-1891*, MA Thesis in History, Auckland University, 1970, pp.100-104.

The well-watered fern and scrub clad rolling hills and valleys of the area would prove to be easier and cheaper to break into pastureland than bushland, although there was an area of bush on the Whakapirau that would provide the necessary timber for initial needs.³ While the bush-clad districts of Kereru and Raukawa, adjacent to the south and west, would provide for future buildings.

Between 1857 and 1877 the station became renowned because it belonged to Sir Donald. From 1877 until 1929 his son Douglas McLean, became renowned because of the success of his station. Noted for the quality of his animals, his treatment of his employees, and later how by pre-empting the Liberal Party's Land Reform policy being applied to Maraekakaho Station he was able to choose for himself which areas of his land to sell.

Maraekakaho Station became a very successful business under Douglas McLean, but then when at its best it was progressively sub-divided with most of these sub-divided farms being sold to station workers. This thesis explains why and how this occurred.

It does not try to compare in detail the differences between Maraekakaho Station and other Hawke's Bay stations but to concentrate thematically on the station's geography, people and how the estate was farmed.

The first focus is on the land and climate of Maraekakaho and how it influenced farming decisions and contributed to the station's success. It shows how the people of Maraekakaho began to understand the climate and the landscape and use it to their advantage. Then in Chapter two we meet some of the people who lived there and farmed it and how all concerned with the station made it successful, and what changes occurred after sub-division. While Maraekakaho was noted for its Scottishness not all of the workers were Scots, there were many Irish and English. Then why did the station fragment when it was so successful and how did that affect the station people?

The final chapter is about the farm and how they farmed it. What stock they bred and reared and the results of their experimentations and how they coped with conditions they were not familiar with. What farming changes occurred after sub-division on the new farms and the smaller station?

³ McLean Letters and Journals, 31 May 1859, J1 39, p.71, Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust.

By the time Douglas McLean inherited the Station in 1877 his father's original purchase of 10,000 acres had grown to nearly 30,000 acres plus leased land.⁴ Further buying and leasing by Douglas extended this to just over 58,000 acres.⁵ The Station had extended onto the leased Maori flat land of Ngatarawa, Mangaroa and Raukawa in the north and east. Some of this land was purchased after a period of leasing by his father, while other parts of Ngatarawa and Raukawa were still in dispute.⁶

Under the guidance of his father and Tom Condie, Sir Donald McLean's long time manager, the basis for a breeding plan had been put in place, and by the time of Douglas's ownership the station had already gained a reputation for the quality of its stock. Condie was a brilliant stockman and a Tiree man like Sir Donald.

Another Tiree man, Archibald McLean and known as Archie, was Condie's assistant manager since 1868. Archie, unrelated to Douglas, was recommended by Condie to become the new manager on his retirement in 1876.⁷ This managerial continuity, and Douglas' involvement in station affairs during Sir Donald's long illness with rheumatism and dropsy meant that there was a smooth handover of ownership after Sir Donald McLean's death. With the efficient staff and excellent stock Douglas probably felt that it was his responsibility to continue with what station people believed was his father's hopes and expectations for Maraekakaho Station. These were to help his family and gather Scots to work for him. Douglas' uncle Archibald still lived on the station and it was generally understood by workers that no Scot, or a person with Mac in their name, would be refused employment.⁸

Douglas's success was to be based on the land and climate of Maraekakaho Station, and how successfully he and his people coped with its challenges. How these people in an alien environment strove to find new ways to

⁴ McLean Letters and Journals, 11 Jan 1856, J1 40, pp.30-31, Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust, & Parr, p.39.

⁵ Plan of Maraekakaho Estate, Hawke's Bay.

⁶ Letter Archibald McLean to Douglas McLean, 5 Dec 1879, microfilm 0726-reel 25, folder 850, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁷ McLean Letters and Journals, 27 Mar 1876, Micro-MS- 0032-0799, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁸ Interviews with Sheila de Gruchy, granddaughter of Donald McLean, 1 Oct 2003, & Ann Macphée, daughter of Donald McKinnon the blacksmith and resident of Maraekakaho for 78 years, 1 Sep 2003.

combine the differing components of pastoral farming life to balance with the natural elements of a district that had never been farmed before. This thesis argues that the station's success should not be measured in the narrow financial meaning but incorporate the social aspect of the people's lives.

Maraekakaho Station was not the only large station in Hawke's Bay that reared Shorthorn cattle and Clydesdale horses, and experimented successfully with breeding sheep more suited to the land and climate of Hawke's Bay, there was a rivalry between these stations that was obvious at the Hawke's Bay Agricultural and Pastoral Society Shows. Maraekakaho Station however, won more than its fair share of rewards in these competitions, competing in a wider range of events and for a longer time than any of their competitors.

The station was distinctive in Hawke's Bay because many of its managers and workers came from a little Inner Hebridean island named Tiree. Some of these came because friends and relatives who had immigrated to Maraekakaho Station previously informed them that the station was a good employer. This Scottish west coast island was where Sir Donald was born, and when Douglas sub-divided the station some of these men from Tiree became the new farm owners.⁹

Douglas did not agree with the land limitation ideas of the Liberal Party, but had enough common sense to see that with increasing public pressure on the government in the first decade of the twentieth century closer land development was inevitable.¹⁰ He had great faith in the farming ability of his workers, preferring to give some of them the chance to own their own farms, rather than having the government appropriating his land. He did this in the knowledge that by doing this he and his station were losing their skills, but this way he could choose which land he preferred to retain. Death duties continued the pressure on the sub-dividing of the station, however this fragmentation while causing the demise of a successful business did benefit the new owners, many of whose families continue to farm their land today.

⁹ Older spelling, Tyree.

¹⁰ David Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals, The years of Power, 1891 – 1912*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, endnote 191, p.393.