



Whakaahurangi Trail Plaque

East Road

1959

Use:	Commemoration	Historic Value:	4 out of 5
Materials:	Marble	Architectural Value:	- out of 4
NZHPT Registered:	Not registered	Technical Value:	- out of 2
Legal Description:	S.H. 43 2km East of Stratford	Symbolic Value:	2 out of 3
		Rarity Value:	- out of 2
		Townscape Value:	- out of 2
		Group Value:	- out of 2
		Overall Heritage Value:	6 out of 20



Centuries ago, when New Zealand was uninhabited by Europeans, a small party of Maori people traversed the eastern base of Mt Taranaki to explore the land. Their track began at Kairoa Pa, near Lepperton and they ended up at Ketemarae Pa which was near present-day Normanby.

From Lepperton they travelled almost due south, crossed the Manganui River half a mile below the bridge on Tariki Rd then having waded through the Patea River (about 2 miles east of Stratford) they turned south-west and went around the Ngaere swamp ending up on the eastern side of present-day Eltham.

On their return the Maori party blazed the trail and it began to be used quite regularly by various parties and came to be used for base for the war trail. Not long after this though, it was used primarily for a path to the Maori settlements of the south.

The naming of Whakaahurangi has two different stories, both involving Ruapu-tahanga, a chieftainess of Patea. The first version tells of her return journey from Kawhia, when she camped on the trail where Stratford is now. Apparently she retired for the evening, and she lay on her back staring at the clear starry night, contemplating the events of the day. Her followers withdrew to leave her to herself, but observed that she slept with her face to the sky: Whakaahu (to look to) Rangī (the sky).



Plaque reads: Whakaahu Rangī, Ancient Maori Trail, From Kairoa Pa near Lepperton to Ketemarae Pa near Normanby

Another version states that Ruapu-tahanga was returning from her second marriage at Mokau and when she was near Stratford she set about stretching snares for ducks. She chased them to try and trap them, but when they felt the snares tightening they flew away. To see them, she was forced to look up (Whakaa) at the sky (Rangī).

The Taranaki Regional Committee of the National Historic Places Trust organised a plaque to commemorate the trail where it crossed East Road at the Kahouri Bridge. It was unveiled in 1959 by a scholar of Maori history, Mr John Houston (Hawera).

The plaque remains today, in good condition, and as it marks the beginning of the Heritage Trail, there is a lot of interest as cars stop to look at it and read the information boards alongside.



Bibliography:

Stratford District Council Archives
Heritage Trail Information

'Stratford Jubilee: 1878-1928'