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THE AHIPARA GUMFIELDS

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THE AHIPARA GUMFIELDS

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in part fulfilment of the requirements of the Diploma in
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Produced by P.R. McConnell, Reserves Ranger
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THE AHIPARA GUMFIELDS

A study of the Ahipara Gumfields Historic Reserve and surrounding Crown Land, their potential as a wilderness area and possible public usage.

Introduction

The Kauri Gum Industry has played an important part in the development of Northland for more than one hundred years. Kauri gum was valued for its use in the manufacture of varnish, paint and linoleum; it is sought after today primarily for its ornamental qualities. For the most part the old Gumfields where the diggers roamed at will have vanished, being converted into fertile farm land; the Ahipara Gumfields are an exception; here little development has taken place.

The Historic Reserve area has been modified by machine washing and sluicing, leaving permanent scars in the landscape where the topsoil has been washed away; these workings are from the later period of gumdigging about 1930 onwards; however, in parts the ground is pockmarked with shallow holes where earlier generations of gumdiggers have left their mark.

The surrounding Crown Land on this plateau south of Ahipara is partly covered in stunted scrub where frequent fires occur; pockets of bush survive in the gullies and sandhills stretch from Tuaroa Peak 201 metres down to the sea, the area as a whole having an atmosphere of true wilderness.
CHAPTER 1
The Setting

The Ahipara Gumfields Historic Reserve is situated on the plateau above the southern end of Northland's Ninety Mile Beach; eight kilometres from Ahipara, the nearest settlement, and twenty two kilometres from Kaitaia. Ahipara itself was one of the very early places occupied by the Maori and is now a quiet beach resort and dormitory area for Kaitaia.

The area has been known locally as the "Ahipara Gumfields" for many years, but in early reports is sometimes referred to as Ahipara Hill. In 1973, 56 hectares of this gumfield was set aside as a Historic Reserve. This was increased to 226 hectares in 1979 to take in the majority of the sluicing remains on the hill, including Paeroa Flat, 3½ kilometres from the main area.

The surrounding Crown Land is unoccupied, as is the immediate Maori Land to the north, south and east. There is one farm to the west at Reef Point, with the farm house located back beyond Ahipara.

The only permanent resident is Tony Yelash, the last gumdigger to work the field, and the only one who stayed to make his home on the gumfields.

The Exploitation of the Kauri

The Kauri is found in its natural state only in the North Island, north of a line between Kawhia and Te Puke.

When the European arrived, great stands of bush with Kauri present were common from Coromandel northward; today only relatively small pockets of Kauri survive, the largest tract being the Waipoua Forest in Northland (9,100 hectares), of which one third is Kauri forest.
AHIPARA GUMFIELDS
HISTORIC RESERVE

A 1 Big flat
2 Poverty flat
3 Comfort flat

B Paeroa flat

Scale .......................... 1 2 km.
A visit to the Trounson Kauri Park in Northland makes the visitor realise just what we have lost. Similar stands must have covered a large part of the Kaipara and Dargaville districts where today so little remains.

The Beginning

The first ships sent out by the Admiralty specifically to procure Kauri spars were the Dromedary and the Coromandel. The Dromedary equipped with five pairs of working bullocks to haul the timber she was seeking, finally loaded one hundred and twenty spars (18-25 metres long, 50-80 centimetres in diameter) in Northland's Whangaroa Harbour and sailed on 29 November 1820: one of this ship's masts was Kauri taken at an earlier date, so the quality of this timber were well known by this time. The Coromandel sailed on to the Thames area where she procured spars and left her name as a permanent sign of her almost twelve month duration visit.

After spars, the quality of the Kauri as timber was soon recognised. It is well summed up in the advertisement below: (Simpson, 1973)

Russell 25 August 1840

Required for the Superintendent of Public Works Department about five hundred and fifty thousand shingles eighteen inches long and from four inches wide: to be supplied at the Waitemata on or before the 1st of November 1840

.... W Hobson.

The exploitation of the Kauri had begun.

As the population grew with the settlement of thousands of immigrants (reaching half a million in 1880), the demand for Kauri timber increased and an export market was established.

For the next thirty years more Kauri was cut for timber than all the other timbers combined.
Cutting continued at the rate of well over 236,000 cubic metres sawn a year, about 40% of this being exported. By 1903, output reached 340,000 cubic metres from 36 mills and the end of its cutting as a major industry was in sight. A Parliamentary report asserted that if this production level continued unchecked, the supply of Kauri would be exhausted within eight years.

This had been the age of the Kauri bushmen: of driving dams used to flush the logs downstream; and of very large sawmills in the Auckland district but also, of tremendous waste, destruction, and exploitation of the Kauri.

Fire

Hochstetter wrote in his New Zealand 1867 (Simpson, 1973)

"Extensive districts which have formerly been covered with Kauri woods, are now totally destitute of such and the extermination of that noble tree progresses from year to year at such a rate, that its final extinction is as certain as that of the natives of New Zealand."

Despite this very large industry, it is estimated that more than half of the Kauri forests were burned. Vast quantities were destroyed in bush fires some by settlers in the course of settlement.

A quote from the Lands and Survey Forestry Papers C8 1897 (Simpson, 1973)

"Although, however, the gumdigger is justly credited with being fire-raiser in chief, others come a good second, both sheep farmer and pastoralist adding their spokes to the wheel of destruction. Yet the government is actually permitting settlement in the heart of the forests, and even ahead of the mills. The result is of course, free use of the firestick..."
It is estimated that a quarter of the Kauri forests had been cut or burned by 1865, one half by 1886 and three quarters by 1900 - so little of these once extensive northern forests survive today.

The Kauri Gum Industry

The export of Kauri gum was one of New Zealand's very earliest industries and played an important part in the development of Northland. It is not generally recognised that the value of Kauri gum exports from the Northern region, has been well over half that of gold exports from any of the three major goldfields: Otago, West-coast and Hauraki. In many ways the hunt for Kauri gum in the mid 1800's was like the gold rushes of the same period.

The Early Days

Captain Cook was the first European to see and handle Kauri gum. In his journal of the 16 November 1769, he mentions a resinous substance very much like resin, found in the mangrove trees. After Cook, Samuel Marsden the pioneer missionary is credited with identifying the origin of fossil gum about 1914.

By 1845 Kauri gum was being exported to America. An extract from William Brown's 'New Zealand and its Aborigines' 1845 states (Reed, 1972):

"Large quantities of gum ...... have already been exported to America, where it is manufactured into copal varnish and promises to become an export of great value......."

This year saw the Maoris of the Kaitaia district digging 'gum which they bartered for goods with the traders. A brisk trade in Kauri gum was established.
The Diggers

Ferdinand Von Hockstetter who travelled through New Zealand in 1859 said (Reed, 1972):

Gumdigging is limited almost entirely to the Maoris who gathered the fossil gum which lay on the surface of the ground...." 

European diggers became prominent in the late sixties. By the early nineties the first people from what is now Yugoslavia arrived and from this time onwards, they played a prominent part in the production of gum. They were first referred to as Austrians, later Dalmatians or "Dallies" and later still Yugoslavs: Their descendants now form a significant part of the population of the Far North.

It is not known who the first Yugoslav diggers were, but there is a story of deserters from a visiting Austrian ship. Word on the opportunities available on the gumfields soon spread back to the Dalmatian Coast. About three thousand Yugoslavs are estimated to have worked on the gumfields at any one time.

By 1898 the total number of diggers was about 8,000 with 1,500 to 1,600 being Yugoslav.

The Kauri Gum Commission 1898

The Commission estimated the area of the gumfields to be:

North of Auckland City 724,000 acres
South and east of Auckland City 90,000 acres

Total 814,000 acres

The numbers of aliens digging for gum increased and their number alarmed the settlers; the fact that these diggers sent large amounts of money out of the country was resented. Settlers then regarded Kauri gum as a source of support, relying on it to supply part of their income.
As a result of strong representations to the Government, a Commission of Inquiry into the Kauri gum industry was set up: The outcome was the passing of the Kauri Gum Industry Act. The major significance of this Act was the Kauri Gum Reserves totalling 250,000 acres were set aside for the New Zealand and naturalised subjects; The Ahipara Gum-fields was one of these reserves. One of the clauses in the Act states:

"That no person, other than an aboriginal native be allowed to dig for Kauri gum unless he be in possession of a license...." the license cost 5/-, aliens paid 20/- and were restricted to unreserved Crown Land or by arrangement on freehold properties.

Another recommendation from the Commission was:

"That land be allotted for the settlement of landless gumdiggers both British and Austrian......"

Operations on Freehold Land

A license was still required but there was no control of digging operations or the methods used. The usual practice was for the owner to charge diggers either a royalty on gum won, or to let the digging rights at a fixed sum per acre.

There is little doubt that some control of gumdiggers was necessary at this time - one submission to the Commission on burning by the diggers states: (Kauri Gum Industry, 1898):

"Hundreds, sometimes thousands of acres are burned when the object was simply to work a few square yards or chain of ground - Repeated burnings have destroyed the topsoil...."
As the Industry was effected by unstable prices, men were drawn to other occupations gold-mining and timber.

By the 1930's both naturalised and non-naturalised diggers were working the Ahipara Gumfields, one supposedly paying 5/- and the other £5. This was in the great depression and reports note that police were not forcing collection of fees.
CHAPTER 2

The Product

There are two main types of gum: fossil and bush gum.

1 Fossil Gum

Kauri gum that resin with the distinctive pleasant smell when crushed, comes from the Kauri tree *Agathis australis*. Fossil gum is found in the soil where sometimes a succession of forests have come and gone. Swamp areas often yielded large quantities of gum, such areas near Kaitaia are full of Kauri logs many thousands of years old, and as the Kauri grows only in well drained positions, the land form itself must have changed, in the long period since these forests flourished.

Carbon dating of huge Kauri stumps, uncovered at Lake Ohia, near Kaitaia, when the Lake was drained, shows that these trees grew about 30,000 years ago. From Ruakaka Whangarei, wood taken from One Tree Point proved to be 34,600 years old and geological surveys on the Aupouri Peninsula suggest a date of 60,000 years.

Kauri gum has been found in limestone and coal seams, evidence of very much earlier forests.

The majority of the gum recovered over the years was of this fossil variety and it was found where ever the Kauri grew, from the Coromandel Peninsula to the North Cape.

2 Bush Gum - (The Living Tree - GUMBLEEDING)

When Kauri trees were felled for timber, great lumps of gum were often found in the forks of the branches, where it had accumulated over the years. This immature product was worth less than the fossil gum but was still eagerly sought after. These deposits attracted the climbers first with ropes, then climbing irons and spiked boots, where they literally walked up the perpendicular trunks to harvest the gum.
Climbers then turned their attention to bleeding the Kauri – a series of cuts were made in the trunk while being lowered by an assistant. Bleeding was outlawed around the turn of the century; but it is one thing to ban a practice and another to police it: (Reed, 1953)

"In a Supreme Court case in 1905 a Mercury Bay bushman pleaded guilty to damaging eighty Kauri's from which he had taken 16 cwt of gum; his defence was he didn't know it was illegal."

Bleeding of the trees for gum caused dry rot to set in and in many cases the death of the trees followed: (Reed, 1953)

"Many thousands of pounds worth of the finest Kauri timber was literally sacrificed for a few pence worth of bled gum."

Bleeding was practiced much later as this quote from a Lands and Survey Department report on Kauri gum (1947) testifies:

"The State Forest Department state that it is their policy to bleed a forest just before felling operations, if convenient. The State Forest charge Royalty 25/- per cwt."

In May 1971 the publication - Forest and Bird referring to the Manaia Kauri stand on the Coromandel Peninsula stated: (Reed, 1972)

"That about 60% of the Kauri's are in reasonable good condition, and the remainder had been badly bled for gum and are dead or dying."

Examples of damaged Kauri's are common throughout the north.
The principal uses of Kauri gum were:

1. The manufacture of varnish; the Kauri resin sometimes called shallac or copal was added to give hardness and strength. (Small quantities are still sent to Germany to make a specialist varnish).

2. An emulsifier in the making of paint.

3. The manufacture of linoleum.

By 1951 the majority of the gum exported went to the United Kingdom and was used for making linoleum.
CHAPTER 3

The Local Scene

Diggers have worked on this field from the 1870's and possibly before as this quote from "The Journal of W G Puckey" from the early missionary school states:

April 1st 1856 (Ahipara School Jubilee Booklet 1978)

"All our Schools at Ahipara are closed for a month or two, Natives both great and small engaged in digging Kauri gum which realised 10 guineas a ton...." 

Other interesting references from the Education Department School records are:

(Ahipara School Jubilee Booklet 1978)

1883 Letter to the Secretary, Education Dept Wellington

"I beg to inform you that the teachers of the Ahipara and Pukepoto Native Schools have notified me that upon opening their Schools on January 29th no children attended and after consultation with the committees, it was decided they should prolong the holidays for another week to enable notice to be given to parents to send their children at the specified date. I learn that the cause of non attendance is owing to all the Natives, men, women and children being away digging gum on the plains and swamps. The price having risen considerably on the market. All the settlements appear deserted Signed H M Bishop R M Office Mangonui".

November 7 1883

"Closed the school temporary. All the Natives digging gum."
1890 Letter sent to the Education Department wishing to lengthen the school vacation as the Native pupils were working on the Gumfields.

1905 From the Headmaster's report:

"One factor in the improvement in attendance has been the low price of Kauri gum and the return of many from the fields. Many Maori children walk to school a distance of 10-15 miles along a gumfield track."

In 1874 the Ahipara Township area had a population of about 500, Kaitaia, now the main centre in the district, 20.

Ahipara hill was virtually abandoned by the early twenties, however, in 1925 the discovery of rich areas of "chip" gum brought the diggers back to the field. A large area was set aside to be leased for gum recovery. The "chip" gum recovered here was of good quality and several sections returned £4,000 per acre in gum.

1927 - 1936 Practically all the gum recovered by machine washing.

1936 - 1954 In 1936 N. Covich was the first to introduce sluicing to the field, from this time onwards both sluicing and machine washed were used.

1955 The price of "chip" gum had fallen so low that it was not worth recovering so the field was abandoned.
One of the official reports for 1953 states: "That the Kauri gum Industry is experiencing one of its periodic recessions", with the advantage of hindsight we can now see that it was more than that - it was the end of an era.

The workings visible on the Ahipara Gumfields Historic Reserve are from this later period 1925 onwards.

In 1937 the areas set aside by the Crown as Kauri Gum Reserves were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Area (hectares)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mangonui County (Includes Ahipara)</td>
<td>29,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay of Islands County</td>
<td>9,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobson County</td>
<td>2,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whangarei County</td>
<td>746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodney County</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otamatea</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Barrier Island</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>43,127 hectares</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ahipara hill may have been of minor importance in the early days, but towards the end of the digging was considered a major field.

There were three sluicing areas in the Mangonui County:

Ahipara Hill, Waihopo and Parengarenga

Ahipara Hill was the largest of these and at its height of production in 1937, had 120 diggers.

This list of holders of gum washing leases on Hellfire Flat - Ahipara Hill in 1939, shows that people of Dalmatian descent were strongly represented on the Gumfields at that time, (most of these names are Dalmatian.)

CONSEQUENCES OF KAURI GUM INDUSTRY

A hard pan is general throughout the Ahipara Gumfields, with a very shallow band of topsoil, consequently when this soil is removed, long lasting scars are created. After sluicing, or machine washing in the steeper ground, most of the topsoil has been lost having been washed into the streams. Scars then show up as a grid pattern with a band of cleared ground followed by a strip of manuka or other vegetation then more cleared ground. These grid patterns are very noticeable when viewed from the air.

The cover of this manuscript shows a typical worked out area with Kauri stumps and roots remaining in the pan, the manuka in the background leading to further workings.

Today manuka and gorse have moved in to shield a lot of these old workings from view.

The methods used to work the gum deposits are explained in the next chapter.
DAM FORMED OVER WORKED OUT AREA

KAURI STUMP INDICATING GROUND LEVEL PRIOR TO SLUICING OPERATIONS
CHAPTER 4

Methods Used on the Ahipara Gumfields

Kauri forests have come and gone over many thousands of years leaving behind in the soil the resin called Kauri gum. In the Otamatea Museum in Northland is a piece of gum taken from a coal seam with coal formed around it testifying to its lasting quality and great age of this commodity.

Three samples of Kauri timber taken from areas that had been worked for gum in the reserve were carbon dated, the results were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Years Before Present</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NK 7709A</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>Poverty Flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NK 7709B</td>
<td>1,890</td>
<td>Poverty Flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NK 7709F</td>
<td>29,700</td>
<td>Paeroa Flat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fire**

In all the methods used, fire was an important ally of the Gumdigger, before the ground could be dug the ground cover had to be removed. Any book on gumdigging mentions the endless fires of the Gumfields.

1. Spade and Spear

Of the methods used to obtain gum by far the most important was the spade and spear. The spear was a long slender instrument fitted to a spade handle a length of about one metre being sufficient in shallow ground but sometimes seven metres long for working deep swamps. Near the point was a coil of fine wire bound tightly around called the 'Joker' or 'Jigger' this enabled the spear to be pushed into the ground with little resistance. After locating the gum with the spear, it would then be dug out.

The essential equipment for a gumdigger in this period besides the spade and spear were a file to keep the spade sharp, an axe and a knife to scrape the gum clean, a process required before it could be sold, then a pikau to carry the load.
2  The Hurdy Gurdy

The first of the machines used appeared about 1915 when the smaller gumchips became saleable. In its simplest form was a container with small holes in the bottom fitted with a shaft with paddle attached moved by hand. They were often made from small water tanks cut down, and were used to wash the gum nuts and chips from the soil, usually in a swamp situation.

3  Machine Washing

By the 1930's, the areas that had been speared and dug in the past were being worked again by machine washing, this systematically covered the whole area and a greater proportion of the smaller chip gum was recovered.

The machine washing outfit was a direct descendant of the Hurdy Gurdy and consisted of a large tub, water pump, winch and motor all mounted together on two substantial runners; these machines were worked by two to five men according to size.

The machine washing process -

(a)  Preparation

In the dry summer period long parallel trenches, sometimes three metres wide would be dug with the gum bearing soil heaped up in long mounds between, ready to be washed. Dams were made as the washing process required a plentiful supply of water, previously washed areas were often used for this purpose.

(b)  Washing

This had to wait till the wet part of the year when water was readily available usually the autumn or winter.

The gum bearing soil was shovelled into the tub where it was mixed with water by the pump, a power driven agitator moved backwards and forwards and a constant stream of muddy water poured out from the base of the tub; the gum and other debris being caught in the bottom by sieves.
THE HURDY GURDY
MACHINE WASHING AT AHIPARA HILL
The gum etc was cleared constantly by means of a trap-door in the tub and taken away by wheelbarrow for further processing.

The machine washing plants were moved along by means of a deadman buried ahead, so they were always within easy shovelling distance of the mound. The wire rope from the winch would be unrolled and secured ahead, the power driven winch then pulled the plant along as required.

(c) Cleaning

Large pieces of gum were first picked out by hand.

Forty to sixty metres of ditching was required for the next cleaning process: here the gum etc was shovelled by degrees into a channel of running water, the lighter rubbish floated out with mud being deposited in the ditch, the gum eventually being caught at the tip or storage area, some distance down stream using a box with a sieve.

After drying the wind was often used to assist in separating the gum from the small pieces of wood and charcoal, it was thrown by shovel into the wind from one pile to another, simple but effective.

(d) Grading

The gum was now graded according to size by passing it through wire mesh screens.

The residue after using a half-inch screen was called gum, a three-eights screen nuts and finally a quarter-inch screen chips.

Powerdriven winnowing machines were used in this grading process, usually on the fine chip material as a final cleaning process to remove the sand.

(e) Bagging

After washing, cleaning and grading the gum was put into large sacks (similar to wheat sacks) and stored ready for sale.
MOUND OF KAURI GUM WITH DEBRIS FROM CLEANING PROCESS IN THE FOREGROUND.
(PHOTO FROM THE NORTHWARD COLLECTION)

'GUM TIP' THE GUM IS HERE BEING CLEANED AND GRADED AND FINALLY BAGGED READY FOR SALE.
(PHOTO FROM THE NORTHWOOD COLLECTION)
By 1937 a water race wound its way to the field from the nearby Tanutanu Stream. This made sluicing possible. Areas that had been dug over then machine washed were now given the final treatment - sluicing.

High pressure hoses swept the soil into prepared trenches. It travelled down these trenches eventually passing through a power driven rolling screen being caught on the other side in a box sieve, it was again floated down the trenches for further cleaning then taken to the tip for grading etc.
SLUICING OPERATIONS AT AHIPARA HILL

'WEEKLY NEWS 5 SEPTEMBER 1939'
CHAPTER 5

Interpretation

Before an interpretative programme can be produced for a Reserve a study of its potential is necessary.

A. Significance of the Ahipara Gumfield

Museums throughout the north have relics of the gumdiggers era, and Kauri Gum on show, but here is an actual gumfield with extensive workings available to the public. Ahipara also has the advantage of being easily accessible. Parengarenga Harbour in the Far North has some workings but in a more remote setting.

Extent of Workings

Ahipara Hill was previously a Kauri Gum Reserve and sections were leased by the Lands and Survey Department for gum washing, as follows:

- **BIG FLAT** - Thirty two three acre sections, two six acre sections and three nine acre sections, 135 acres.
- **POVERTY AND COMFORT FLAT** - Twenty four three acre sections, seventeen others from three to nine acres, 196 acres.
- **PAEROA FLAT** - Six three acre sections, and seven nine acre sections, 81 acres.
- **TOTAL** - 412 acres approximately.

Conditions of Workings

Many of the workings have remained virtually unchanged over the years partly due to the sandstone pan and removal of topsoil. Only where machine washing was used on reasonably flat ground has the topsoil been replaced leaving little sign of disturbance.
Dams have been formed over worked out areas to provide water storage to work the next section. These dams can easily be repaired and allowed to fill again, providing an overflow is installed to prevent them washing out after heavy rain.

The water race bringing the main water supply from Tanutanu Creek can be seen and trenches are numerous.

On the 'Gum Tips' where the grading and cleaning was carried out, the sometimes tarred surfaces have now broken up, but debris from the cleaning process is still evident.

Kauri roots and stumps are exposed in places and small pieces of gum are imbedded in the sandstone pan throughout.

To conclude, these workings will last and stand public use, with the possible exception of the Kauri stumps, these grew into interesting contorted shapes and are sometimes removed by the visitor.

B. Management Problems

Original Artifacts - The availability of original artifacts are an immense help to interpret the workings. The object in displaying these artifacts should be to reduce the spoken or written word so that the visible features speak for themselves.

These artifacts are available:

Two five man machine washing plants which have been partly restored for eventual display. One rolling screen used in sluicing still in the position it was last used. In addition Tony Yelash has a two-man machine washing plant, a fire pump used for sluicing and a box trap once used to collect the gum in the trenches.

Access

A good sealed highway from Kaitaia to Ahipara. The road from Ahipara to the gumfields is below acceptable standards for the general public. Any development of the Reserve will require an upgrading of the road access.
A ROLLING SCREEN USED IN SLUICING

A GUMDIGGER'S WHEELBARROW AND BUCKET
Public Usage

The gumfields are 22 kilometres from Kaitaia, itself an established tourist centre for the Far North, with development of the Reserve we can expect a sharp increase in the numbers of visitors. At present, one commercial operator takes the tourists, in large especially built "off road" vehicles, around the coast south of Ahipara across the sand country then to the gumfields.

In the three month period December 1978 to February 1979 approximately five hundred visitors to the Reserve signed the visitor's book kept by Tony Yelash, this gives some indication of visitor numbers in the summer. Very few people visit this area in the winter at present.

C. The Interpreter

Tony Yelash, former gumdigger and gum buyer, came to Ahipara Hill from Yugoslavia fifty three years ago, in 1927, to work on the gumfields. Today he is the last resident of the settlement that flourished during the 'heyday' of the field in the 1930's. Remains of this settlement are gradually disappearing, posts from a tennis court from this time, stand outside Tony's home and evidence of huts used by the gumdiggers also remain.

Tony lives at the cross-roads near the centre of the Reserve. In his sheds are sacks full of Kauri gum, unsold when the prices collapsed in the 1950's, and remains of machinery used by him on the field.

A Tourist Company now runs regular trips from Kaitaia around the coast south of Ahipara using large off road vehicles, one of the highlights of this tour is a visit to the gumfields. If Tony happens to be home he shows these people around his "museum" for a small charge and sometimes continues on around some of the old workings. To the visitor his presence is of tremendous value, his colourful character and knowledge adds immensely to the visitors experience. He has a good sense of humour, enjoys meeting people and showing them round. These guided tours bring the old workings to life again. Every effort must be made to encourage Tony to continue to help the visitor understand what the gumfields are all about.
TONY YELASH

TONY'S HOME AND SHEDS
When Tony Yelash eventually leaves or no longer wishes to be available a caretaker would be desirable, to protect exhibits and also to add that personal touch to interpretation.

D. Interpreting the Workings

Self Guided Walk - The most satisfactory way of interpreting these workings initially is by a self guided walk, to show a representative sample of the diggings. Sluicing areas as well as machine washed claims should be clearly illustrated through the various stages of production.

Tracks

Duration of this walk to be about thirty minutes, arranged in a loop, with a short cut back to the start for those not wishing to walk any great distance. An all weather track is necessary, well drained to allow for winter use, to shoe standard. The track to merge in with its surroundings rather than stand out.

Signs

Information boards would be required at the start of each major section.

All small signs to be anodised aluminium weather proof and long lasting, this allows photographs to be produced with explanatory texts. Signs to be strongly mounted on posts set in concrete, waist level or lower and angled for easy reading.

Every effort must be made to procure old photographs of the Ahipara Gumfields, to be reproduced in aluminium and used, where possible, on the actual site they were taken.
ANODISED ALUMINIUM SIGNS
Artifacts

The aim should be to display any machinery in a working position.

Some exhibits will have to be housed in a display building for their protection against the weather and vandals. The use of such a building would not be practical until there is a caretaker on the Reserve.

Viewing Platform

A viewing platform along the walk would allow the visitor to get a better understanding of the extent of the workings. A satisfactory view could be obtained from a structure four metres high.

E. The Surrounding Crown Lands

Here is an area of wide open spaces, sand hills bush covered gullies, low stunted scrub and open grass lands.

The soil is poor and the land is unsuitable for farming except for limited open range grazing. Forestry is only practical in the valleys or on the sand hills. Because of these severe limitations it has remained unoccupied Crown Land.

A walking track is proposed - the route would be around the coast south of Ahipara, up through the sand hills to Tuaroa Peak and onto the Gumfields plateau.

The sand country around Tuaroa Peak offers the visitor outstanding views of the sandhills and the long stretch of the Ninety Mile Beach, this area has Reserve potential in its own right.
SANDHILLS STRETCH FROM THE SEA TO THE GUMFIELDS PLATEAU.
TAUROA PEAK SHOWS ABOVE FIGURE IN LOWER PHOTOGRAPH.
CONCLUSIONS

The Kauri Gum Industry played a unique and tremendously interesting part in the history of Northland. On the Ahipara plateau an opportunity exists to interpret this Industry to the public, in the best possible place, on the gumfields. This barren, sometimes windswept country, with its lack of man made objects, also offers the visitor, because of its character a wilderness experience in a psychological sense.

A buffer zone around the Ahipara Gumfields Historic Reserve is essential so that:-

The quality of the visitors experience relating to the understanding of history will not be diminished by the development of the surrounding countryside.

Recommendation

That the Crown Land surrounding the Ahipara Gumfields Historic Reserve be declared a Wilderness Area to be classified as a Scenic Reserve under the Reserve Act 1979.
AHIPARA GUMFIELDS

HISTORIC RESERVE

PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREA

A 1 Big flat
2 Poverty flat
3 Comfort flat

B Paeroa flat

Scale .......................... 1 km.
REFERENCES


"Kauri Gum Industry" 1898. (Report and evidence of the Royal Commission on) New Zealand.

Lands and Survey Department, 1947. "Annual report of the Kauri Gum Industry".

Reed, A.H., 1953. "The Story of the Kauri"

Wellington A.H. and A.W. Reed. pp. 30, 100, 104.

Auckland, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd. pp. 211, 224, 264.
APPENDIX B

QUANTITIES AND EXPORT VALUES OF KAURI GUM

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