The Rise and Rise of Umuariki

MANY of today's descendants of Uepōhatu and Te Rangi-whakaoma trace a line of descent from their great-grandson Umuariki. Umuariki was born about 1650AD and through his mother, Kura-unuhia, was also the grandson of Materoa — the founding ancestor of Te Āitanga-a-Mate.

As a warrior, Umuariki's reputation was legendary. He was schooled in all the disciplines of combat and was unmatched among his fellow students. But having easily dispatched all challengers, what better test than to pit your skill against the hand of your teacher? It is said that Umuariki fought and killed his master in an act that could only be described as the ultimate recognition of the supreme skills of the master bettered by his best pupil. Umuariki's reputation spread, and among the keen observers was none other than the undisputed champion warrior of all, Tū-whaka-iri-ora.

Tū-whaka-iri-ora wasted no time in recruiting the emerging star. But it was more than just a case of adding the best new talent to the ranks — Umuariki was also a nephew. His grandmother, Materoa, and Tū-whaka-iri-ora's mother, Te Aataakura, were sisters. Thus two of the greatest warriors of Te Tairāwhiti, bonded by whakapapa (genealogy), would become involved in a number of the battles directed by the elder statesmen, Tū-whaka-iri-ora, from his fortress in Kawakawa (Te Araroa).

Umuariki had established himself in his pā, Pura-o-te-aruhe in Tūpāroa. He had two known wives — the first was Whakaroro, the daughter of Hinetū, a sister to his own mother, Kura-unuhia. They had a son named Tapu-te-ira-kāhia (or Tapu-te-rakahia). His second wife was Uepare, the famed pāua diver from Kawakawa. From Uepare was born a son, Te Rangikaputua, who married Hinetāpora and together they had two sons, Kōparehuia and Ngakonui. The descendants of Ngakonui are Ngāti Rangi of Reporua while the descendants of Kōparehuia and of their mother, Hinetāpora, centre on Mangahānea marae just east of Ruatōrea. The descendants of Umuariki at Tūpāroa, together with these hapū, form part of the collective identified as Ngāti Uepōhatu.

Umuariki would take leave of the relative sanctity and security of his base at Pura-o-te-aruhe to join his uncle, Tū-whaka-iri-ora, and his cousins at Kawakawa in preparation for battle. Umuariki is credited with involvement in at least three battles organised or led by Tū-whaka-iri-ora — the battle of Waihakea, where Umuariki and his cousin Kau-taha-rua were requested by Tū-whaka-iri-ora to avenge an insult to his sister-in-law, Hinerupe, by her half-brothers Moko-tara and Ue-kai-whare, whom they promptly dispatched; the conquest over the death of Kōhaki, involving Rerekohu, Kau-taha-rua and Rangi-te-eke-hua, which resulted in the consolidation of Marangai-roa and Mākirikiri; and the battle of Tārera-kōau over the attack on Te Aotāihi (wife of Tū-te-rangi-whiu) by Te Wahine-iti, resulting in the conquest of their lands in the Waiapu valley. From Tārera-kōau, Umuariki claimed parts of the Roto-kautuku block in Tūtū-o-kura and Tūtū-matai.

Umuariki's reputation as a skilled warrior and leader, together with his unique relationship with Tū-whaka-iri-ora, consolidated his hold on the Uepōhatu estate. And being bordered on all sides by the lands of his uncle and cousins ensured his own lands would remain in the hands of his descendants in generations to come.

Umuariki Marae at Tūpāroa.

Pura-o-te-aruhe, the pā of Umuariki at Tūpāroa.

Umuariki and Uepare
Te Kāwhiu Pāua

Anei rawa te wahine
Here indeed is the woman

Hei ruku i ngā kai o taku kāinga o Tokaroa
Who can dive for the seafood at my home at Tokaroa

UMUARIKI'S fame as a warrior was undisputed. However he also possessed another highly-valued skill as a tohunga tārai waka — a canoe-carving expert. It was during a carving project that Umuariki met his second wife, Uepare, after being commissioned by his relation Tū-te-rangi-whiu (son of Tū-whaka-iri-ora and Ruataupare) to carve a waka for him at his home at Ō-kau-whare-toa in Kawakawa (Te Araroa). An added attraction to the job was the opportunity to feast on the famous tasty seafood of Kawakawa, as he knew he would be well looked after and handsomely rewarded for his work.

Umuariki began his work in earnest and at the end of each day would retire to the nearby foreshore to wind down. It was during this down-time that Umuariki noticed a young local girl, Uepare, who, with a kete (kit) strapped to her back, made her way to the rocky foreshore and then disappeared beneath the waves only to resurface with her kit full of tasty kaimoana (seafood).

The more Umuariki observed the young woman, the more fascinated he became. Uepare's beauty didn't go unnoticed — however it was Umuariki's obsession with the thought of her plying her skills in the waters of his own home at Tūpāroa that caused him to utter the words, "Anei rawa te wahine hei ruku i ngā kai o taku kāinga o Tokaroa." Tokaroa is a well-known fishing rock located between Reporua and Tūpāroa.

Upon completion of the building and carving of Tū-te-rangi-whiu's waka, Umuariki was lauded for his skill and the magnificence of his work. He was well rewarded but he also made a request for the hand of the diving queen of Kawakawa, the beautiful Uepare. Uepare was a granddaughter of Uetaha and his senior wife Rua-taretare. Uetaha's junior wife was Rongomai-tāpui, the mother of the ancestress, Hinerupe, therefore the aunt of Uepare.

Umuariki and Uepare returned to Tūpāroa and before long had a son they named Te Rangi-ka-putua. When the son reached manhood he, together with his older half-brother Tapu-te-ira-kāhia, paid a visit to the home of Hine-tāpora in Uawa, with the intention of asking for her hand in marriage. But who exactly was asking for whom?

One version of the story says Tapu-te-ira-kāhia approached Hine-tāpora on behalf of his brother Te Rangi-ka-putua. Another story says Tapu-te-ira-kāhia himself was keen on the Uawa beauty. However, it was Te Rangi-kā-putua who won the hand of Hine-tāpora, but not before she uttered her famous remark, "Mahara au i haramai koe ki a au māu tonu, kāore mā te kāwhiu pāua o Tokaroa nei — I thought you had come to claim me for yourself, but alas you seek me instead for the pāua diver of Tokaroa".

The retort by Hine-tāpora was obviously aimed at Te Rangi-ka-putua's mother, Uepare, the famed diver of Kawakawa and Tūpāroa and a reminder that in no way would she succumb to the same fate.

Well, Te Rangi-ka-putua and Hine-tāpora did marry and returned to Manutahi in the Ruatōrea area, where they lived in their pā, Tūranga-rāhui. Their children, Kōparehuia and Ngakonui, would in time assume the mantle of leadership and continue the legacy of Umuariki and Uepōhatu.

(Note: In *Ngā Maunga Kōrero – Pukemaire and Reporua* — September 2007 — the same story was told. However, the perspective was slightly different with Umuariki being the messenger in the story in asking for the hand of Hine-tāpora for his son Te Rangi-ka-putua, rather than the brother, Tapu-te-ira-kāhia).

Hinetāpora meeting-house at Mangahānea Marae near Ruatōrea.

The interior of Uepōhatu War Memorial Hall at Whakarua Park in Ruatōrea.

Uepōhatu — *Centre of a Community*

UEPŌHATU War Memorial Hall at Whakarua Park in the heart of Ruatōrea stands as a commemoration to, "The war service of Māori and Pākehā of the Tairāwhiti". It was officially opened on September 13, 1947 by the Governor-General Sir Bernard Freyberg. The project was supervised by Sir Apirana Ngata and took about three years to complete. It involved two working groups — the tukutuku (woven wall panels) and kōwhaiwhai (painted rafters) work was done by the local Ruatōrea people, while the whakairo (carvings) was led by brothers Pine and John Taiapa and done in Tikitiki.

About five to six thousand people attended the opening, which included other activities such as the investiture of war medals and civilian awards, a school kapahaka competition, an exhibition of student art work, an official ball and a game on Whakarua Park between the Māori All Blacks and Te Tairāwhiti.

Four years earlier Whakarua Park was the site of one of the largest gatherings ever seen in Ruatōrea, the investiture of the Victoria Cross (VC) to the parents of Second Lieutenant Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa Ngārimu of C Company, 28 Māori Battalion. Ngārimu was killed in the attack on a hill called Point 209 in Tebaga Gap in Tunisia, on March 26, 1943.

Over 7000 people attended the VC hui in October 1943, including 3000 Māori servicemen, over 1000 school children from throughout Te Tairāwhiti, a 90-member party of government officials and heads of the armed forces, together with the Prime Minister Peter Fraser and Governor-General Sir Cyril Newall. All marae from Tokomaru Bay to Te Araroa were booked to accommodate the visitors. This hui was also organised by Sir Apirana Ngata.

Until Uepōhatu War Memorial Hall was built, the main building at Whakarua Park was a hall called the Pavilion and the grandstand. It stood near or on the site of the current whare-kai (dining-room).

The idea of building a memorial hall was raised by Apirana Ngata before the VC investiture hui, and he raised it again during the hui itself. Support for the building grew and a project committee was formed with J.M. Penfold as chairman and H.P. Rangihuna as secretary. Various fundraising activities were organised, with a Government subsidy as well.

Foundations for the new building were laid in 1944 and carving and tukutuku work began at the same time. The building project was put on hold for about 12 months due to wartime rationing of materials, but the carving and tukutuku work continued. Ngata's continued prompting ensured that needed materials were obtained and the project put back on track.

The choice of the name Uepōhatu for the hall is not clear, although the land upon which it sits is close to the centre point of the traditional Uepōhatu boundary between Hikurangi and the eastern seaboard. The carvings, tukutuku and kōwhaiwhai inside the hall are consistent with the style and quality associated with Apirana Ngata, to whom the revival of these traditional art forms owes a lot. To be able to mobilise Māori throughout the country, let alone in his own rohe (region) of Te Tairāwhiti, says a lot for his foresight and energy. Then again, being a descendant of Uepōhatu, this particular project, one of the last he would be involved with, stands as much a testimony to the legacy and mana of Uepōhatu as it does to the servicemen of Te Tairāwhiti, and the revival of Māori arts, as it does to Ngata himself.