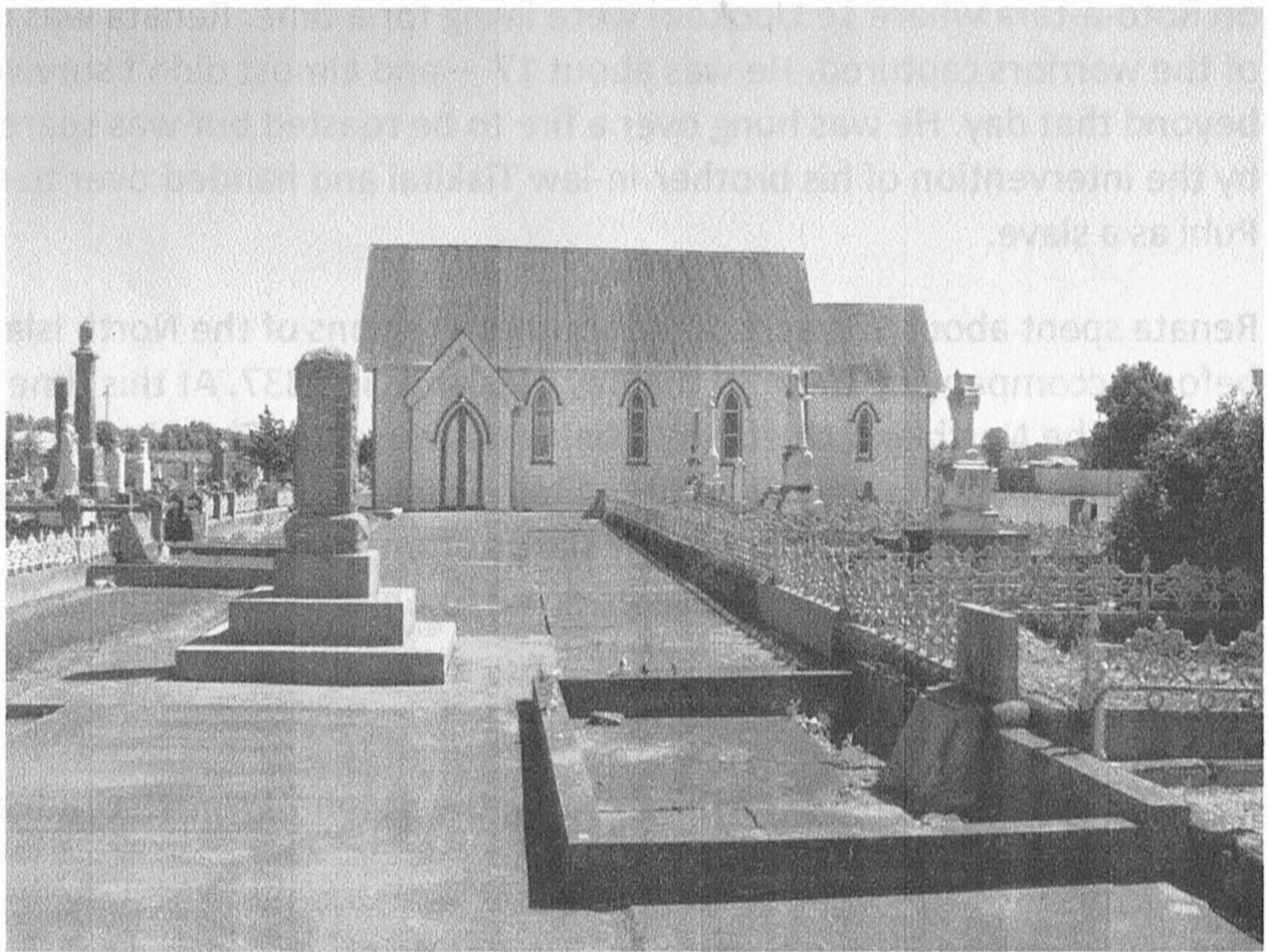


# ***ST JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, OMAHU***



Te Whakatauki na Renata Kawepo

Kati rawe ake te Whare Karakia nei, he maara ma koutou, hei waiü, hei oranga mo koutou.

*Let the Church be the grounds that will produce a rich harvest in you, and let it also be the milk that nourishes you.*

## A HISTORY OF RENATA KAWEPO & ST JOHN'S, OMAHU

Renata Kawepo is acknowledged as the last of the Paramount Chiefs, the ariki, of Heretaunga. He was born at Taumata Pa on the Mangatahi Stream, approx 20 k's west of present day Hastings, in about 1808. His given name was Tama ki Hikurangi. His mother, Te Pakapaka, was the daughter of the great chief Te Uamairangi.

In about 1827, a war party joined forces with Nga Puhi over-ran the pa on Roto-a-tara where Te Upokoiri were living for a time. Renata was one of the warriors captured. He was about 17 – and almost didn't survive beyond that day. He was hung over a fire to be roasted but was spared by the intervention of his brother-in-law Tiakitai and handed over to Nga Puhi as a slave.

Renata spent about 10 years in the southern regions of the North Island before accompanying them to the Bay of Islands in 1837. At this time many of the Northland chiefs were being converted to Christianity. Before their baptism they were urged to release their slaves and it seems Renata was freed in this manner. As slaves often attended the same baptism classes many were also converted to Christianity. Apparently Renata resisted conversion at first, but was eventually converted after an all-night session with an old Nga Puhi teacher.

He stayed on in Waimate North attending the St John's Native Graduate School.

The newly arrived Bishop George Selwyn decide on an evangelical journey from Waimate North, down the centre of the North Island, to Te Ngae, Ruapehu, over to Turakina, down to Otaki, Wellington, over to Nelson, back up to New Plymouth, to Pirongia, the Waikato, Taupiri, back to Tamaki – 60 destinations in all. This momentous journey began from Waimate North on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> October 1843 and concluded on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February 1844.

In December 1844, Colenso, his wife and 5 Maori teachers set sail for Clive to establish the Ahuriri Misson; Kawepo was one of the party. From this vantage point Kawepo was eventually able to organise the return

home of Ngai Te Upokoiri and Ngati Hinemanu, who had become scattered between Tuwharetoa, the Manawatu and Inland Patea during the raids from other iwi to Heretaunga in the 1820's.

Eventually, they settled at Omahu.

Renata was a fascinating mixture of qualities:

- He was a leg-break wrestler, but gave that up after being baptized as he thought that it didn't quite fit into the Christian principals.
- He was a strong and resourceful leader, with a talent for diplomacy in all situations.
- He was a man for whom honour was an integral component of his life.
- He was a progressive, in that he was able to see opportunities for development and he took advantage of them.
- Christianity was interwoven with his Maoritanga to become the basis from which his life operated.

When you integrate Christian beliefs into your life, you not only enhance your own life, you also affect the lives of those around you – for the better. And that is exactly what Kawepo did; he led his people through the period of transition, the time of integration of what ever Pakeha had that was beneficial to his people, into their lives - and that included the Christian faith. He knew from his own experience and teachings that forgiveness, loving your neighbour as yourself brings peace and harmony.

Renata believed that whakapono (faith) and matauranga (knowledge) were vital to each person and with that in mind he decreed his people required at Church at Omahu. Land was donated by members of the hapu, the building was funded by Kawepo, it was built by the hapu. It was consecrated by Bishop EC Stuart, Bishop of Waiapu on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1879.

Kawepo also funded the building the school at Omahu and provided funding for the Head Master at Te Aute College.

Anything that he considered would bring prosperity both to his people and the area as a whole, Kawepo supported and funded out of his own pocket. This included contributing to the development of the road between Patea and Heretaunga – bridges and all. He gave sheep to his hapu to farm for themselves; he had a mill built on the river to mill flour which was then sold to the townspeople. And much, much more.

Kawepo died on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1888. The newspaper obituary stated “At a quarter past 8 o’clock on Sat morning, at Omahu, there passed away to the shadow land the greatest of all the Maori chieftains whose names are bound up in the history of this district. Renata Kawepo was all that is conveyed in the expressive word “Rangatira”, and this as true of him with regard to the old days, prior to European settlement, as it is of him since with a rare sagacity he saw that it was for the good of his people that they and the pakeha should live together in amity.”

The whole town of Hastings closed the day he was buried. About 6000 attended his tangi.

---

#### SERVICES FOR SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2014

21 <sup>st</sup> Sept	11.00am
5 <sup>th</sup> Oct	11.00am
19 <sup>th</sup> Oct	11.00am

#### *Directory*

The Rev Johan Hakiwai **Minita** Ph: 06 8703840 / 027 4495088

Email: [rungaahi@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rungaahi@xtra.co.nz)

Chairperson:	Hinemoa Hakiwai	Ph: 021 179 262
Secretary:	Eve Kupa	Ph: 027 814 1970
Treasurer:	Narina Tumarae	Ph: 027 931 4975