

BYRON RANGIWAI

## Nan's Stories

### **Introduction**

This paper explores some of the many stories that my grandmother, Rēpora Marion Brown—Nan, told me when growing up and throughout my adult life. Nan was born at Waiōhau in 1940 and died at her home at Murupara in 2017. Nan was married to Papa— Edward Tapuirikawa Brown. Nan and Papa lived on Kōwhai Avenue in Murupara. Nan's parents were Koro Ted (Hāpurona Edward (Ted) Maki Nātana) and Nanny Pare (Pare Koekoeā Rikiriki). Koro Ted and Nanny Pare lived around the corner from her on Miro Drive. My sister and I were raised on the same street as my great-grandparents, just six or seven houses away. I could see Koro Ted's house— located on a slight hill—from my bedroom window.



*Figure 1. Koro Ted and Nanny Pare (see Figure 2; B. Rangiwai, personal collection)*

### **Koura and Patuheuheu**

Nan often talked about her Patuheuheu hapū and her ancestor, Koura (see Figure 2). In a battle between Ngāti Rongo and Ngāti Awa, Koura's mokopuna was killed. (Rangiwai, 2018). To memorialise this tragedy, a section of Ngāti Rongo was renamed, Patuheuheu (Rangiwai, 2018, 2021b).

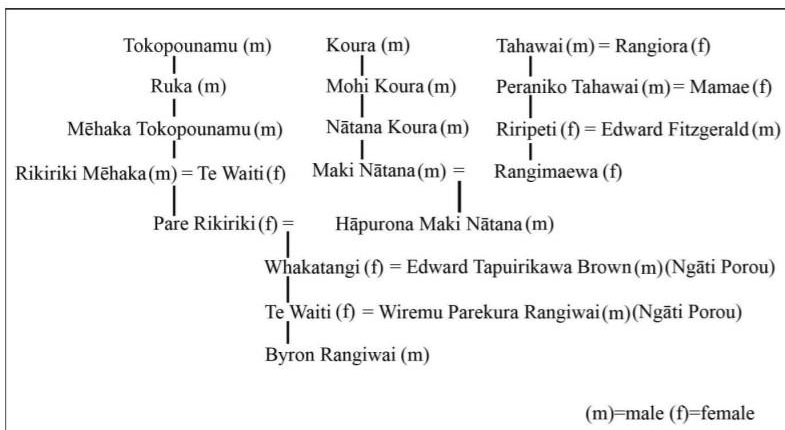


Figure 2. Whakapapa

Koura was a Ngāti Rongo and Patuheuheu chief who resided at Horomanga in the 1830s and was closely connected with Ngāti Manawa (Mead & Phillis, 1982; Waitangi Tribunal, 2002). Local history maintains that Koura was responsible for upholding and retaining the mana of Tūhoe in the Te Whaiti, Murupara, Horomanga, Te Houhi and Waiōhau areas (Rangiwai, 2018). Koura was acutely implicated in the political negotiations regarding the tatau pounamu—enduring peace agreement—between Tūhoe and Ngāti Awa in the early 1830s (Binney, 2009; Waitangi Tribunal, 2002).



Figure 3: Koro Ted's paternal grandparents, Riripeti and Nātana Koura (see Figure 2; B. Rangiwai, personal collection)

Concerning the tatau pounamu, Mead and Phillis (1982) maintain: “Koura ...is remembered by Ngati Awa and Patuheuheu of Waiohau and Ngati Manawa of Murupara as the principal man on the Tuhoe side” (p. 241). Indeed, Te Kooti's renowned waiata tohutohu, *Kāore te pō nei mōrikarika noa*, reminds Tūhoe and Ngāti Awa of that very arrangement: “He rongo ka houhia ki a Ngāti Awa” (“A peace made with Ngāti Awa”) (Binney, 2009, p. 269). This agreement was of immense significance as it brought 200 years of inter-tribal struggle to an end (Waitangi Tribunal, 2002). Mead and Phillis (1982) contend:

...the peace treaty is remembered by the people of the Mataatua region as being between Koura and Hatua (p. 243).

Lesser men could not have cemented the tatau pounamu.  
... Koura and Hatua did not fail and as a result their names live on in the memories of the people...

Koura of Ngati Rongo and Patuheuheu representing the Tuhoe side of the bush at Ohui, and Hatua of Ngati

Pahipoto representing the Ngati Awa side of the bush. One is symbolised forever by Tawhiuau which can be seen clearly at Galatea and Murupara and the other is symbolised by Putauaki which dominates the land around Kawerau, Te Teko and Whakatane (p. 245).

It was below Tāwhiuau maunga that Mead (cited in Waitangi Tribunal, 2002) argues that Patuheuheu and Ngāti Haka lived under Koura's leadership. For his descendants, Koura is a venerable figure; in the Maki Nātana whānau in particular, those who display strength and resilience are noted to have 'shoulders like Koura' (Rangiwai, 2018).



*Figure 4: Koro Ted's father, Maki Nātana (see Figure 2; B. Rangiwai, personal collection)*

### **Mēhaka Tokopounamu**

Mēhaka Tokopounamu (c.1835-1920) was of Patuheuheu, Ngāti Koura and Ngāti Tāwhaki (W. Milroy, 10 September, 2013, personal communication; Rangiwai, 2015). Mēhaka was also closely connected to Ngāti Manawa and Ngāti Whare (Rangiwai, 2015). In the mid-nineteenth century Mēhaka Tokopounamu and the older chief, Wi Pātene Tarahanga, were the rangatira of Te Houhi (Binney, 2009). These men led their people in the struggle against colonial oppression and so “[t]heir example of leadership and their determination to right the wrong must not be allowed to rest” (Paul, 1995, p. ii).

Koro Mēhaka’s name is very prominent in the historical archives (J. Binney, personal communication, 30 November, 2009; Rangiwai, 2015) as he was heavily involved in the Te Urewera land issues of the 1890s (W. Milroy, personal communication, 6 July, 2012; Rangiwai, 2015). Koro Mēhaka was very much involved in the tribal politics and leadership of his time. According to Wharehuia Milroy:

Mēhaka Tokopounamu was associated very closely with my great-grandfather; they were extremely close. They lived together at Ōtenuku. The Rikiriki family, who are descended from Mēhaka Tokopounamu, used to make their appearances at Ōtenuku marae, because Mēhaka shared his time with my great-grandfather Tamarau Waiari, or Te Wharehuia as he was known, on a lot of different tribal issues, where they always supported each other. When I look at the whakapapa, yes I can understand why they did this, because of the proximity to each other in the whakapapa – that’s one part of it. But the other part of it is that Mēhaka lived, for quite a period of time, with Tamarau Waiari; they shared a lot of leadership. So Mēhaka was one of the main witnesses to a lot of those Te Urewera land issues of the 1890s and I’m not sure when he died, because my great-grandfather

died in 1904, I think Mēhaka may have lasted longer than him. Mēhaka was a central figure in those debates over the land issues; not only that, but Mēhaka came over and lived at Ōtenuku for a long period of time. He was also involved in the Rūātoki meetings as one of the main witnesses for those Rūātoki lands which challenged the Ngāti Rongo claim that substantial areas belonged to the ancestor Rongokārae. Rongokārae was really from Ngāti Awa but he took to wife the daughters of Kuramihirangi and Tahatū-ki-te-ao, Tawhiwhi and Rangimāhanga. Their land interests were the subject of the debates that took place during the course of the Te Urewera Land Commission hearings (Rangiwai, 2015, p. 7).



*Figure 5: The inscription states: “Mehaka Tokopounamu died on 29 June 1920 at age 85” (see Figure 2; B. Rangiwai, personal collection)*

### **Koro Ted, the midwife**

My great-grandfather, Koro Ted, was known to many in Waiōhau as a type of midwife in that he supervised the births of many children in Waiōhau. Koro Ted was known

too for his ability to settle babies with karakia; some babies were taken to him to be settled down when they were very ill or very unsettled, and Koro would use karakia and ancient techniques to settle them.

### **The lady in the white dress**

When Nan was seven years old, she lay ill in bed (Rangiwai, 2019). As she watched from her bed, out of the front door of their very humble home in Waiōhau, she saw a female figure wandering through the field towards her (Rangiwai, 2019). In Māori society, seeing spiritual entities is commonly accepted (NiaNia et al., 2019).



*Figure 6: First school house at Waiōhau (Henry, ca 1920s, 1/2-030876-F). While this is not my great-grandparent's home, this might have been a typical home in Waiōhau during this period. This home was built for Presbyterian teachers. A Māori home would have featured an outdoor kitchen or kāuta, rather than an indoor kitchen.*



The figure wore a pale dress, characteristic of Edwardian fashion, featuring a bow (Rangiwai, 2019). The woman continued moving toward my grandmother until she arrived at the fence post, where she remained and gazed at my grandmother (Rangiwai, 2019). Alarmed, Nan called out to her father; he, however, could not see the woman but asked my grandmother to describe the woman's attire (Rangiwai, 2019). After listening to the description, my great-grandfather informed Nan that the woman was his aunt and that she had come to let them know that Nan would recover soon (Rangiwai, 2019).



*Figure 7: This image from Little (1973, p. 33), taken in 1919, echoes the earlier Edwardian era. I imagine that the figure seen by Nan wore a similar style of clothing. This photo was taken by William Berry around 1905.*

### **Koro Rikiriki's tokotoko**

When Nan was a young girl, she witnessed something quite powerful. Her mother's father, Rikiriki Mēhaka, was a tohunga in the Ringatū Church; he used a tokotoko.

One day, Nan witnessed a dispute taking place between some men. Koro Rikiriki was present, and one of the men lunged toward him. Koro Rikiriki took his tokotoko and pointed it at the man. As a result, Nan recalled the man was “frozen” and unable to move.

### **Nan's tiki**

Nan's tiki is large, dark green, and the lower legs and feet are missing. The damage happened when the tiki fell out from its storage spot in the rafters of their simple whare in Waiōhau. Nan inherited the tiki from her mother, Pare, who inherited it from her mother, Te Waiti.



*Figure 8: Nan's tiki (B. Rangiwai, personal collection)*

Te Waiti was the wife of Rikiriki Mēhaka, who was the son of Mēhaka Tokopounamu—a prominent figure and chief

among the Patuheuheu hapū who were once based at Te Houhi. In the following image of Te Waiti, Rikiriki and a baby, the tiki is worn by the child. In this image, the tiki is intact.



*Figure 9: Nanny Pare's parents, Te Waiti and Rikiriki, and baby  
(B. Rangiwai, personal collection)*

I inherited the tiki when Nan died. It sits with my mother and sister in Waiōhau and is worn, from time to time, at tangihanga and other functions.

**Uncle Joe and the halo**

Uncle Joe (Joseph Arthur Brown), Nan's youngest child, died in 1986. He had heart problems and passed away in Rotorua Hospital, following a major operation at Greenlane Hospital. At some point before Uncle's death, he had a dream. He saw a halo of light, and inside this gleaming ring, he saw his grandfather, Koro Ted. In the dream, Uncle Joe decided to take Koro Ted's place inside the iridescent sphere. When Nan told her father of this dream, he was upset as he knew what it meant: Uncle Joe would take Koro Ted's place in heaven.

Koro Ted's guilt caused him to grieve intensely for his grandson, Uncle Joe. During the tangihanga, my Mum was asked by Koro Ted to accompany him to the urupā. He told Mum that he wanted Uncle Joe to be buried next to his mother, Nanny Rangimaewa. Mum's response to Koro Ted was, "but Koro, there's no room next to Nanny Rangimaewa as the urupā fence is in the way". At his request, several of Koro's male mokopuna dismantled the fence and changed the boundary of the urupā to make room for Uncle Joe.

**Papa and the Rūrū**

Nan said that on Papa's (Edward Tapuirikawa Brown) side, our kaitiaki is the rūrū. One night she and Papa were in bed. They could hear a rūrū calling. All of a sudden, there was banging and crashing at their bedroom window. They opened the curtains, and the rūrū was furiously flapping its wings against the glass. The rūrū had come to tell Papa that one of his sisters had died.

### **Uncle Joe and Papa's ring**

When Uncle Joe died in 1986, he was taken to Gray's Funeral Home in Rotorua. When the embalming process had concluded, Papa was invited in to dress Uncle Joe. However, Papa was so wrought with grief he was unable to dress his son. Papa managed to place his favourite ring on Uncle Joe's finger after being dressed by the undertaker, but not without difficulty as the ring was tight. Once Uncle Joe had been casketed, karakia took place in a viewing room. As our whānau were about to leave, the funeral director handed over Papa's ring, which had been found on the embalming table. Papa took this to mean that Uncle Joe did not want the ring to be buried with him. Following Papa's death in 1995, I came to inherit the ring some years later. This ring now sits with the whānau in Waiōhau.

At Uncle Joe's tangihanga, Papa refused to leave the wharemate. In Tūhoe, a man's place is not in the wharemate but because of his grief he was permitted to stay there. Uncle Joe's grave was made big enough to bury his Triumph motorcycle, but Papa changed his mind and rode the bike himself for years. Uncle Joe's ghetto blaster was placed in the grave and was playing a particular song that could be heard very faintly as people exited the urupā.

At some point following Uncle Joe's tangihanga, my mother went to see Nan. Nan was sitting at her dining room table. One of the cupboards above the fridge was ajar, and a small gust of wind uplifted a piece of paper from inside the cupboard. The piece of paper gently floated to the ground; it was Uncle Joe's death certificate.

**Koro Edward Fitzgerald**

Very little is known about my Irish ancestor Edward Fitzgerald (Rangiwai, 2021a). He was born in Tauranga to Elizabeth Blackburn and Tom Fitzgerald (Rangiwai, 2021a). He was married to Riripeti—a Ngāti Manawa high chief's daughter (Rangiwai, 2021a), and was survived by his only daughter, Rangimaewa Fitzgerald, who, according to his death certificate, was 55 years old when her father died.



*Figure 10: Fitzgerald Coat of Arms. Argent, a saltire gules (Boutell et al., 1966, plate IV).*

Edward Fitzgerald was part of the first wave of Pākehā to live in Murupara (Bird, 1980). He probably spoke fluent te reo Māori (Rangiwai, 2021a). Nan described her great-grandfather, Edward Fitzgerald, as bedridden and frightening (Rangiwai, 2019). She said he spoke with a strong accent and rang a bell when he wanted something,

but that when she would go in to see what he wanted, he would try to hit her with his cane! (Rangiwai, 2019). Although his death certificate says that he was born in Tauranga, I imagine his accent probably would have sounded quite different to what my grandmother was used to (Rangiwai, 2021a). It is understood that children develop linguistic identities from a young age (Stanford, 2008) and so the Irish brogue that his parents might have spoken (see McCarthy, 2011, pp. 63-87) could have influenced his own accent.

In 1921 he purchased Waiohau 1A9 block from Te Whaiti Paora for £40 (Arapere, 2002). He died in Waiōhau, at 82, of chronic myocardial degeneration, and he is buried at Waiōhau urupā where an engraved pillar monument marks his grave (Rangiwai, 2021a). From his obituary we know that he was coach driver, a shepherd, and a rabbitter. His obituary states:

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Mr Edward Fitzgerald whose death occurred on Sunday at Waiahou [sic], at the age of 82. The funeral which was attended by many took place at Waiohau on Tuesday. The graveside service was conducted by a Catholic Priest from Rotorua. Pall-bearers were Messrs. Benson, Dixon, Bungers, Maki, Turnbull and Cook all of whom had known the deceased for many years. Mr Fitzgerald is survived by his daughter Mrs Maki.

The passing of this pioneer is regretted by his many numerous friends throughout the area. It is interesting to recall that the deceased was one of the first coach drivers over the Rotorua-Wairoa route before roads were actually formed. For some years he was shepherd on the Galatea Estate and subsequently rabbitter for some 25 years in the district. He captained the first rabbit gang of some twenty-five men on the Kaingaroa Plains. His wife predeceased him by two years. Until only a few months ago he lived an active life (Bay of Plenty Beacon, 1947b, p. 5).

In another story titled *Car and Lorry Collide*, it says:

A car driven by the Catholic Priest journeying to Waiahou [sic] for the funeral of the late Mr Edward Fitzgerald was involved in a collision with a logging truck driven by Mr Waugh, of Murupara. The truck belonged to Mr Terry London of Te Whaiti. The collision took place in the Bluff on the Whakatane-Murupara Road. The Priest's car was severely damaged and was removed by a breakdown truck dispatched from Rotorua. The logging truck, although damaged, was off the road only one day. The priest after the accident walked some four miles to perform his religious duties. Considering the condition of the vehicles it is very fortunate that neither driver was hurt (Bay of Plenty Beacon, 1947ba, p. 4).



Figure 11: Fitzgerald headstone, Waiōhau urupā (B. Rangiwai, personal collection)



The image above is the Fitzgerald headstone located at Waiōhau urupā. At the top of the headstone, we see a cross containing the Christogram—a monogrammatic abbreviation for the name of Christ (Hörandner & Carr, 2005)—“IHS”. This symbol almost looks like a dollar sign. According to Keister (2004): “This symbol is often seen emblazoned on crosses. Usually, the letters are overlaid on each other, which, curiously enough, looks like a dollar sign” (p. 146). Concerning the meaning of IHS, Keister (2004) argues that it “derives from the first three letters of Jesus’ name using the Greek alphabet: Iota, Eta, Sigma” (p. 147). As Koro Edward was Irish Catholic, it is not surprising to see this symbol etched into this monument.

Interestingly, the ivy design on the headstone may also connect to Koro Edward’s Catholic faith. According to Keister (2004):

Because ivy is eternally green even in harsh conditions, it is associated with immortality and fidelity. Ivy clings to a support, which makes it a symbol of attachment, friendship, and underlying affection. Its three-pointed leaves make it a symbol of the Trinity (p. 57).

### **Nanny Rangimaewa Fitzgerald**

Nanny Rangimaewa’s portrait is one of the largest that hangs in Tama-ki-Hikurangi wharenuī in Waiōhau. Her image is one of the more prominent images displayed in the wharemate at our whānau tangihanga; not only due to the sheer size of the portrait, but also because of her beauty. I am always comforted when I see her image at the marae.



*Figure 12: Koro Ted's mother, Rangimaewa Fitzgerald (see Figure 2; B. Rangiwai, personal collection).*

Nan said that her grandmother, Rangimaewa, frequently fasted, prayed the Rosary and consumed fish instead of meat on Friday. Rangimaewa was of Ngāti Manawa and

Irish descent, and Catholicism is a major denomination in Murupara, the home of the Ngāti Manawa.

### **Conclusion**

This article explored some of the stories told to me by Nan. It is anticipated that more of her stories will be revealed in the coming years as memories are sparked at whānau gatherings, during kōrero and wānanga, or as part of a research process to discover and record whānau histories.

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