

Kawau Island Historic Reserve

After centuries of Maori occupation, Kawau Island in Auckland's Hauraki Gulf was the site of one of New Zealand's earliest mining ventures. Later it became the island home of Sir George Grey, one of New Zealand's most influential and controversial political figures. The Kawau Island Historic Reserve was created to protect Mansion House, Sir George Grey's former home, and the gardens and landscape he created, together with sites and relics from the historic copper industry. The reserve is a popular destination for visitors arriving by ferry or pleasure craft.

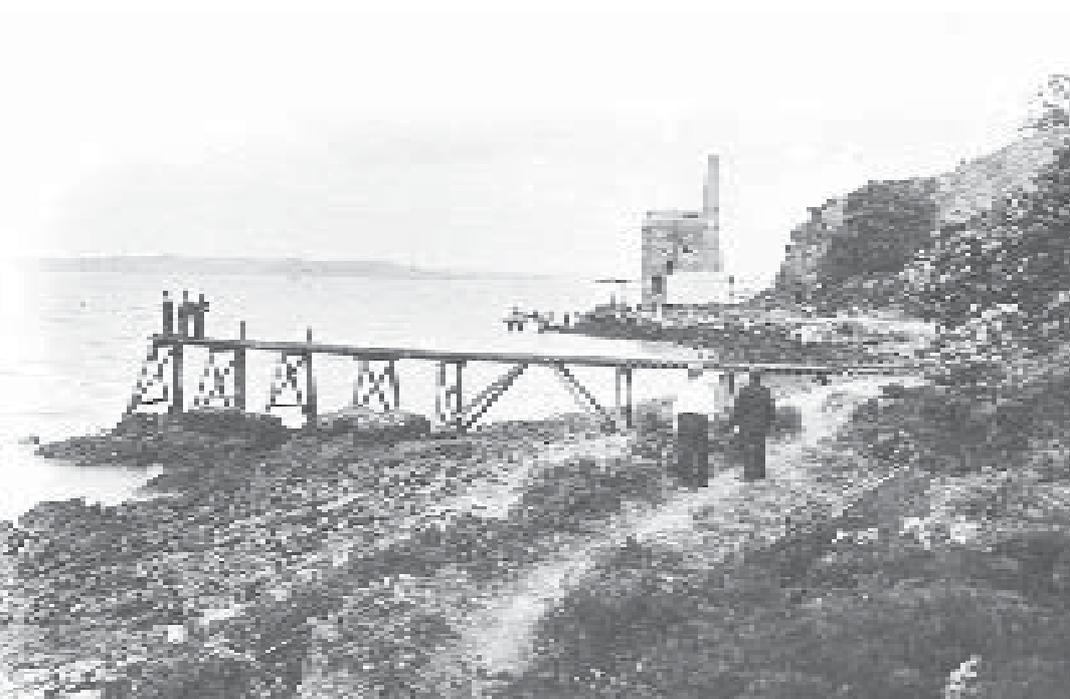
Maori History

Kawau is reputed to have been settled by descendants of Toi along with migrants from the Arawa and Tainui canoes. During the 18th century there was continuing conflict between the resident Kawerau and the Marutuahu confederation of tribes from the Hauraki area over access to the shark fishing grounds. This led to the subjugation of the Kawerau who lived on under the control of the Marutuahu. Kawau was later abandoned after the musket war raids in the 1820s by Ngapuhi, and remained unoccupied until the 1830s. After protracted debate over ownership Kawau was sold in the 1840s to W.T. Fairburn of the North British Australasian Loan and Investment Company.

Historic copper industry

Copper was discovered by accident. The original mining operations were to extract manganese. Copper was mined from 1844 until June 1852 when the mines were inundated. There were up to 300 people living on the island during this period. Mining villages were located at Mansion House Bay, Two House Bay, Sunny Bay, Schoolhouse Bay, Dispute Cove and Miners Bay. The copper ore eventually became difficult to extract, because most of the

mine workings were below sea level and had to be constantly pumped free of water. Problems were also encountered shipping the ore to the Northern Hemisphere. In 1849 a smelting works was built to partially process the ore on the island. A rival smelting operation was built on Motuketekete Island. Eventually flooding and competition between two companies working the same ore body led to closure of the mine in 1852. There were further attempts to reopen the mine in 1854-5 and 1900-2, but it is likely that little copper ore remains.



Coppermine Bay 1900.



The ruins of a sandstone building built to house the steam engine and pump which kept the mine free of water is one of the more visible relics of the copper industry. Built in 1854 during an attempt to de-water the mines, it is very similar to enginehouses found in Cornwall, the home of many of the Kawau miners. The enginehouse is located beside the mine workings at Mine Point. Another ruin which can be visited or viewed by boat is the old smeltinghouse in the Smelting House Historic Reserve, on the north side of Bon Accord Harbour. A busy industrial complex and village which once stood on this site is now marked only by the sandstone walls of the smeltinghouse building.

Sir George Grey and Mansion House

Kawau Island was purchased in 1862 by Sir George Grey who was at the time serving his second term as Governor. Grey had a keen interest in the natural sciences and in horticulture, and was an enthusiastic collector of plants and animals from around the world. Between 1862 and 1888 he spent a fortune developing Kawau as his island home, planting hundreds of different plant species and introducing many exotic and native animals including wallabies, kookaburras, weka, peacocks, zebras and monkeys. Sir George Grey enlarged and remodelled the former residence of the mine superintendent as his Kawau home. Sir Frederick Thatcher (architect, cleric, and Grey's private secretary) was responsible for the design. The original part of the house had been built between 1845 and 1847. Known today as Mansion House, it has been in public ownership since 1967 and was extensively restored to its former appearance in 1977-80 after many years of neglect. Much conservation and restoration work is still being done by the Department of Conservation. Mansion House has been furnished with a valuable collection of antique furnishings largely donated or loaned to the Department, and is open to the public. An entrance fee is charged.



Mansion House Jetty

Built for Sir George Grey in 1875, to replace the existing jetty which dated from 1844, the Mansion House jetty is thought to be the oldest surviving jetty in New Zealand. It features unusual masonry piers built from blocks of slag, a waste product from the smelting process carried out during the mining era. The jetty piers have recently been restored by the Department of Conservation.

Mansion House is set amongst a mixed backdrop of exotic conifers established by Sir George Grey. The Victorian gardens that surrounded the house were the focus of Grey's experiments with the acclimatisation of plants of potential economic value to New Zealand, and plant material was distributed throughout New Zealand from Kawau. While many of the plant species introduced by Grey have not survived, much is known about the original layout of the gardens and there are plans to progressively restore some parts with help from volunteers.

Produced by the Department of Conservation, Private Bag 68-908, Auckland, New Zealand.

The Department's mission: To conserve New Zealand's natural and historic heritage for all to enjoy now and in the future.

Ko ta Te Papa Atawhai he wbakaute he tiaki i nga taonga koiora me nga taonga tuku ibo bei painga mo te katoa inaianei, mo ake tobu ake.