

## A Brief History of the Hutt Valley

Rather than attempt a narrative account of the Valley I will give a brief account of the first European settlement and then show how the Valley's development can be seen in a few historical sites, often shamefully neglected. The early European settlement revolved around four men: Te Rauparaha, Te Puni, Dicky Barrett and Edward Gibbon Wakefield.

The tangata whenua were the Rangitira and Ngati Ira tribes, pushed out by invading Ngati Toa and Te Atiawa moving down from Taranaki in the Musket Wars. Te Puni (Te Atiawa) welcomed the New Zealand Company's proposal to start a settlement in the Valley. A plinth in Lowry Bay marks the site of the purchase agreement.

The first ships arrived in 1840 but the only signs of the first settlement are a small, run-down signpost in Petone and the names of many streets running back from the foreshore. Having survived the voyage out, often taking around four months in sailing ship, the settlers faced early problems from non-local Maori remembered by the Military Road memorial and the Boulcott Stockade which stands, neglected, in the grounds of Heretaunga College, while signs of growth and co-operation include Christchurch, Taita (rescued by a group of local people in a campaign that led to the formation of the Historic Places Trust, and now being enhanced by the labours of our John Terris) and the waterwheel of Percy' Mill (rescued by a local group of concerned citizens).

The growth of the city was encouraged by the railway line and the Railway Workshops in Petone (no record, although Lower Hutt Station still stands in Station Village). A War Memorial remembers World Wars and other conflicts. The depression of the 1930s hit the Hutt hard until the new Labour government's policy of building state houses increased employment and furthermore encouraged the growth of local industry, of which the Ford factory is one of numerous examples.

The late 50s and sixties was a period of prosperity and growth with a superb art-deco Civic Centre, a concrete St James, and the fully planned integrated shopping centre of Naenae. There followed a period of stagnation as the old industries died, but recently there has been a revival with new high-tech industries such as Resene Paints and others, and there are now more people employed in Seaview than there were at the height of the 1860s. of interest in maintaining our history and encouraging a community spirit, as exemplified by Roy Hewson's work in Petone and the current improvements in Naenae.

David Gledhill