

TOURISM  
The Potential  
For The  
South Waikato

New Zealand Rural Leadership  
Project 1990.  
Sandra Goodwin.

Tourism - The Potential for the South Waikato District.

CONTENTS.	PAGE.
Preface.	2.
Location - Where are we?	3.
Map 1. South Waikato District Road Map.	4.
Table 1. Traffic Volumes in the South Waikato District.	5.
Economy and Geography - What do we do here? - What does the area look like?	6.
Why look at Tourism?	9.
Step One - Survey Visitors Passing Through the District.	
The Questionnaire	10.
Step 2 - Analysis of results of survey.	12.
Actual Results of Survey.	13.
Problems with the survey and other comments.	16.
What attractions do we have at present to offer visitors? 1. Tokoroa area.	17.
Map 2. Elders NZFP Recreation Reserves and Other Facilities in District.	18.
Attractions of Putaruru Area.	20.
Attractions of Tirau Area.	21.
Map 3. South Waikato District Road Map showing Locations of Attractions.	22.
Future directions and prospects - Where to from here?	24.
How can we capitalise further on these attractions?	
What aspects could be promoted more?	27.
Map 4. Place Distances.	28.
What possibilities are there to develop further?	29.
Conclusion.	30.
Bibliography and Acknowledgements.	31.

## Tourism - The Potential for the South Waikato District.

### Preface.

Before proceeding into the study it is necessary to clarify the writer's reasons for choosing this topic.

The prime motivation was to seek information that would be useful to the writer, for personal reasons.

As the study progressed, it has become apparent that some of the information gained may be useful to others - individuals and organisations within the district.

Another reason for carrying out this study was for the writer to meet people within the district who are involved in some way or other with tourism, or businesses or hobbies which have tourism potential.

This study is not seen by the writer to be the end of these investigations. It is merely a starting point. As will be seen from the conclusion there is much further work to be done, and ideas to be explored.

To all those people who helped in some way - with questionnaires, interviews and answering questions - I would like to thank you publicly, most sincerely.

My deepest thanks go to my husband, Michael, who has been a spur and an inspiration in completing this study.

The views which are expressed in this study are the writer's personal views alone, and in no way represent those of any organisation which the writer may represent or be associated to.

Sandra L. Goodwin,  
September 1990.

## Tourism - The Potential for the South Waikato District.

### Location - Where are we?

The district lies approximately 60 kms southeast of Hamilton, and encompasses three towns.

Tirau, in the north (closest to Hamilton), Putaruru about 12 kms south of Tirau, and Tokoroa another 20 km south.

The district is dissected by State Highway 1 - Auckland to Wellington which runs in a north / south direction through the district. In the north of the district State Highway 5 leaves SH 1 at Tirau and heads east to Rotorua.

At Tokoroa, SH 32 leaves SH 1 and heads in a south westerly direction to the Whakamaru Dam on the Waikato River. This state highway provides an alternative route south, around the back of Lake Taupo.

At Whakamaru, SH 32 crosses SH 30, which runs in an east / west direction, linking Te Kuiti to Whakatane. State Highway 30 runs along the southern boundary of the South Waikato District, linking Whakamaru and Atiamuri. (see Map 1)

Traffic volumes (see Table Traffic Volumes in South Waikato District) for the main state highways which traverse the district are very heavy. In particular, State Highway 1 which has between 6000 - 7000 vehicles per day. Other feeder routes are also quite heavily trafficed. Much of this traffic is flowing through the three townships - Tirau, Putaruru and Tokoroa. It was for this reason that there would seem to be potential in pursuing tourist and travelling public oriented business activities, to service their needs. Many people are doing just this. Are there further opportunities?



TRAFFIC VOLUMES IN THE SOUTH WAIKATO DISTRICT

NUMBER	ROAD	LOCATION	DATE	VEHICLES / DAY
1	SH 1	Tokoroa-opposite SWDC Council Office (south bound)	7/'90	5636
2	SH 1	Tokoroa-opposite SWDC Council Office (north bound)	7/'90	6006
3	SH 1	Putaruru-south of railway bridge	12/'88	5961
4	SH 1	Putaruru-north of Oraka Bridge	12/'89	6010
5	SH 1	Tirau-in township-north Okoroire -south Okoroire	5/'90 5/'90	7843 8114
6	SH27	Out of Tirau at Totman's Road	12/'87	1986
7	SH 5	Out of Tirau-west of Whites Rd.	5/'90	2539

Information supplied by South Waikato District Council, from  
Traffic Count Figures.

See Map 1 for location of Traffic Counting Sites.

## Economy and Geography - What do we do here?

### What does the area look like?

The northern area, surrounding Tirau township, is undulating, pastoral land. The primary type of farming is dairying, with a dairy factory at Tirau. There are also sheep and beef units, horse studs and deer and goats farmed in this area. The latter are often farmed in conjunction with dairy or dry stock. Some farms have small areas of horticulture, such as kiwifruit, asparagus, autumn raspberries. There are some farms growing quite large areas of potatoes. There are a few pip fruit orchards in the area and some farms also have broiler chicken sheds.

Tirau township is a small service centre for the surrounding farmland. It has, in recent times been adversely affected by the increased mobility of the farming community, as well as by the rural downturn and government restructuring. Some shops closed, including the chemist. The post office closed, and in recent weeks the BNZ agency has closed.

In the east, the area is bounded by the Kaimai Mamaku Range and Plateau. The Kaimai Range is to the north and much steeper. These ranges become lower to form the Mamaku Plateau. State Highway 5 to Rotorua crosses the plateau. Much of the Kaimai Range which can be seen from the area remains in native bush, some of it regenerated from earlier logging. The Mamaku area has been in the past extensively logged. However, both areas have been incorporated into a State Forest Park, which affords some protection.

In the west, the South Waikato area has the Waikato River as its boundary. The river has been dammed at intervals to form Lakes Karapiro, Arapuni, Waipapa, Maraetai, Whakamaru, Atiamuri and Ohakuri. (see Map 1) Lake Ohakuri lies just outside our area, but is used for recreation by the locals and promoted to visitors. It is an area which enjoys great support from Elders NZFP.

All of the lakes offer recreational opportunities - fishing, boating, water skiing, wind surfing, picnic grounds and so on. Many of the Lakes have boat launching ramps which have been developed by the Electricity Department in conjunction with the former territorial authority, the Matamata County Council.

The Putaruru district is rolling, undulating land. The land in this area is generally at a higher altitude than around Tirau. This even more true the further south that you travel. The land rises slowly towards Tokoroa, which is on the volcanic plateau. The origin of the soils of both the Putaruru and Tokoroa areas has had a significant bearing on the way in which the economy, and therefore their present day appearance has developed.

The Putaruru district was first surveyed in 1873, and was originally settled for pastoral farming. However, the early settlers found that Putaruru and much of the land to the south was 'sick'. Stock just wasted away. The land lay within the 'Black Ring' and stock suffered from 'bush sickness'.

The soil was actually deficient in cobalt, because of its volcanic origins. It was not discovered that this was the problem until the early 1930's. The trials with cobalt on a large scale were carried out by Messrs Cox and Purchas on their property 'The Crossing' at Lichfield, in February 1936. Lichfield is situated about halfway between Putaruru and Tokoroa.

In the meantime, much of the land affected by bush sickness was deemed to be no use for livestock farming, so it was sold to timber companies and planted in pine forests.

As a result of these historical events Putaruru district and more so Tokoroa, have a mix of pastoral and forested land use. The Putaruru area has a number of small streams which are ideal for trout.

The pastoral land use around Putaruru is similar to Tirau, with mainly dairy farms, some deer units and some dry stock, sheep and beef. The forestry areas are there but not quite so apparent as further south around Tokoroa.

Within the township of Putaruru it is a different story. There are four quite large timber milling operations. So Putaruru serves two main economic bases - dairy / pastoral farming and forestry, mainly saw milling.

Putaruru, too has been hit by economic hardship in the past year or so. With a large part of the town's income from forestry, which has faced its fair share of restructuring many businesses have been forced to close. The town has quite a number of unemployed. The town's former Borough Council made quite extensive use of government funded and aided employment schemes in various ways for the town and its people.

Around Tokoroa, the forestry plantings are much more evident. Tokoroa township has developed as the residential town for the staff of the giant Kinleith pulp and paper mill and those who manage the forests which feed the giant. A number of other industries have been attracted to the town, and it also serves the surrounding pastoral farming land as well.

A special feature of Tokoroa's population is that there are people from over 25 different national origins residing in the town. This gives Tokoroa a multi - culturalism that no other New Zealand community can match. Consequently, the range of arts and crafts, clubs and societies, cultural, recreational and sporting activities which are available to the residents of Tokoroa and their visitors is quite extraordinary.

Putaruru and Tokoroa areas also have a diversity of small scale horticulture such as pip fruit orchards, mainly servicing the townships. As the climate is cooler, the number of these type of operations is fewer than in the Tirau area.

### **Why look at Tourism?**

With the large daily volumes of traffic passing through the district, and considering the central location which the area enjoys, it would seem that this was a positive way to make better use of the resources that we do have.

The area has an appealing topography, with interesting features such as the mix of pastoral and forestry, both exotic and native. There are many recreational areas - forests, lakes parks and reserves in the area. There are a number of specific 'tourist - type' attractions already in the area, such as museums golf courses, speciality shops (pottery, art and craft, wool crafts) hot springs.

Many questions came to mind when assembling lists of present resources. These had to do with whether visitors present needs were being met, and whether there were areas which could be improved upon, extended or developed.

It was felt that future developments could provide considerable opportunities for income and employment for the local people.

### **Step One - Survey Visitors Passing Through the District.**

It was necessary to survey visitors who were stopping in the area at present, to find out from them some basic information in order to make future decisions. Some of the things required were reasons for them stopping now, and what they might like to see and do on some future visit. It also gave an idea about how much they knew about what was already available to see and do in the area. It was necessary to find about their origins as travellers, as this will impact on future advertising. It was necessary to find out about accommodation requirements.

The survey also endeavoured to assess age groups of those stopping at present, the predominant form of transport, and how long they were staying in the area.

SURVEY OF VISITORS TO THE SOUTH WAIKATO AREA

Dear Visitor,

I am conducting a study of tourism in the South Waikato Area. Could you please help me by giving me a few minutes of your time, and fill out this questionnaire ?

1. Where are you from ?

New Zealand	<input type="checkbox"/>	Overseas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Auckland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Japan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bay of Plenty	<input type="checkbox"/>	USA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waikato	<input type="checkbox"/>	Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>
Northland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
East Cape	<input type="checkbox"/>	Europe	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taranaki	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hawkes Bay	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Wellington	<input type="checkbox"/>		
South Island	<input type="checkbox"/>		

2. How long are you in the area ?

- passing through	<input type="checkbox"/>
- a day trip	<input type="checkbox"/>
- 2 days or longer	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Are you - on holiday ?

- working?

4. Which age group are you in ?

0 - 15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	16 - 25 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	26 - 40 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
41 - 50 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	51 - 65 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	66 plus years	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. What is your reason for stopping here ?

Refreshments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sightseeing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rest Rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. If you are staying for more than one day, is your accomodation

motel	<input type="checkbox"/>
hotel	<input type="checkbox"/>
campervan / camping ground	<input type="checkbox"/>
other	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. What type of transport are you using?

- |              |                          |              |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| private car  | <input type="checkbox"/> | hitch-hiking | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| rental car   | <input type="checkbox"/> | tour coach   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| cycling tour | <input type="checkbox"/> | mini bus     | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. Would you be interested in visiting, using or doing any of the following things, if you had time - please tick as many as you like

- |                                   |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| the Kinleith Pulp and Paper mill  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| antique shop(s)                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| farm visits e.g. dairy, deer etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Putaruru Timber Museum        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a game of golf                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| home spun wool craft shop         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| pottery shop                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| conference facilities             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a swim in a warm thermal pool     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| visit country gardens             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| go trout fishing (guided or not)  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| art and craft shop(s)             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| pony trekking                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| forest / bush walks               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| others - suggestions please _____ |                          |

9. Which type of accomodation would you prefer if you could stay longer than a day?

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| motel                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| hotel                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| camping ground        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| farm stay / home stay | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other _____           |                          |

Thank you very much for giving me your time.

I hope that you enjoy the time that you spend in the South Waikato area.

*S.L. Goodwin*

Sandra L. Goodwin

Kellogg Rural New Zealand

Leadership Scholar.

## **Step 2 - Analysis of Results Of Survey.**

The survey was distributed to various places throughout the district where the travelling public were stopping e.g. hotels, motels, eating houses, coffee shops, museums, speciality shops.

Visitors were asked on a random basis to complete the questionnaire. The survey was carried out from Easter to Queen's Birthday Weekend 1990. A total of 140 completed the survey.

The results in number and percentage form are attached.

### **Origins.**

Of those surveyed, 80% were from New Zealand and 20% overseas visitors. We are catering for local visitors mainly from Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Wellington. Overseas visitors are mainly Australian and American.

### **Destination.**

The biggest numbers of those surveyed were passing through. A significant percentage - 21% were staying in the area for 2 days or longer, and 80% of those surveyed were on holiday.

### **Age Groups.**

The significant age groups of those surveyed were 26 - 40 years, 41 - 50 years, and 51 - 65 years.

### **Reasons for Stopping.**

These were predominantly for refreshment, sightseeing and shopping.

### **Accommodation.**

Of those surveyed who were staying in the area, 31% were in motels and 50% were in other types of accommodation. Many who replied to this question stated that they were staying with family relations or friends. Some were in a home hosting situation.

SURVEY OF VISITORS TO THE SOUTH WAIKATO AREA

Dear Visitor,

I am conducting a study of tourism in the South Waikato Area. Could you please help me by giving me a few minutes of your time, and fill out this questionnaire ?

1. Where are you from ?

New Zealand	111	80%	Overseas	29	20%
Auckland	40	36%	Japan	0	0%
Bay of Plenty	16	14%	USA	6	21%
Waikato	24	22%	Canada	2	7%
Northland	2	2%	Australia	7	24%
East Cape	0	0%	Europe	5	17%
Taranaki	6	5%	Other	9	31%
Hawkes Bay	2	2%			
Wellington	15	14%			
South Island	6	5%			

2. How long are you in the area ?

- passing through	88	63%
- a day trip	22	16%
- 2 days or longer	30	21%

3. Are you - on holiday ?

- on holiday ?	112	80%
- working?	25	18%
- resident	3	2%

4. Which age group are you in ?

0 - 15 years	11	7%	16 - 25 years	17	11%	26 - 40 years	41	25%
41 - 50 years	34	22%	51 - 65 years	37	23%	66 plus years	17	11%

5. What is your reason for stopping here ?

Refreshments	57	32%
Shopping	36	20%
Sightseeing	45	26%
Rest Rooms	11	6%
Accommodation	18	10%
Other	11	6%

6. If you are staying for more than one day, is your accommodation

motel	20	31%
hotel	9	14%
campervan / camping ground	3	5%
other	32	50%

7. What type of transport are you using?

private car	<input type="text" value="119"/>	85%	hitch-hiking	<input type="text" value="3"/>	2%
rental car	<input type="text" value="8"/>	6%	tour coach	<input type="text" value="1"/>	1%
cycling tour	<input type="text" value="1"/>	0.5%	mini bus	<input type="text" value="7"/>	5%
walking	1	0.5%			

8. Would you be interested in visiting, using or doing any of the following things, if you had time - please tick as many as you like

the Kinleith Pulp and Paper mill	<input type="text" value="56"/>	7%
antique shop(s)	<input type="text" value="71"/>	9%
farm visits e.g. dairy, deer etc.	<input type="text" value="44"/>	6%
The Putaruru Timber Museum	<input type="text" value="66"/>	9%
a game of golf	<input type="text" value="26"/>	3%
home spun wool craft shop	<input type="text" value="67"/>	9%
pottery shop	<input type="text" value="75"/>	10%
conference facilities	<input type="text" value="3"/>	1%
a swim in a warm thermal pool	<input type="text" value="67"/>	9%
visit country gardens	<input type="text" value="63"/>	8%
go trout fishing (guided or not)	<input type="text" value="44"/>	6%
art and craft shop(s)	<input type="text" value="76"/>	10%
pony trekking	<input type="text" value="30"/>	4%
forest / bush walks	<input type="text" value="62"/>	9%
others - suggestions please <u>running, mountain bikes, rafting,</u> <u>lawn bowls, picnics &amp; picnic areas, hairdressers, Ernest's</u> Museum & honey shop.		

9. Which type of accomodation would you prefer if you could stay longer than a day?

motel	<input type="text" value="72"/>	51%
hotel	<input type="text" value="14"/>	10%
camping ground	<input type="text" value="11"/>	8%
farm stay / home stay	<input type="text" value="43"/>	31%
other	_____	

Thank you very much for giving me your time.

I hope that you enjoy the time that you spend in the South Waikato area.

*S.L. Goodwin*

Sandra L. Goodwin

Kellogg Rural New Zealand

Leadership Scholar.

### **Transportation.**

Transportation of those surveyed was commonly the private car, with some rentals and minibus.

### **Future Visits - What are you interested in?**

Respondents were asked to indicate which things they would be interested in visiting, doing, if they had time, or if they were on another visit to the area.

While some of the activities included on the list are already available in the district, questions arise as to how well advertised these places are. At the very least a brochure could be made available throughout the area which includes all those activities etc. which are currently available for visitors.

It was interesting to see the amount of interest shown in the warm thermal swim. At present there are hot springs at Okoroire, but the management of them leaves a lot to be desired. Hopefully the results of this survey may inspire those concerned, as there is surely plenty of potential.

At present there is no organised tour of gardens in the area, although there is a wealth of beautiful gardens. Also there could be some potential for guides for bush walks and for trout fishing.

We don't have a huge number of people operating art and craft shops etc. so there is perhaps scope for more in the area. More on this later in the report.

Some of the suggestions which were made could be followed up too. Some are already there but maybe not promoted enough at present.

In the accomodationpart of the questionnaire potential was indicated for farm stay / home stay promotion. An indication was also given that there could be motel accomodation needed in Tirau. However, Putaruru motel owners indicated that they were not doing so well. Also there seems to be a need for overnight parking / camping area for campervans.

### Problems with the Survey and other comments.

1. Poor response from the Tokoroa area, both the Timberlands Hotel, who said they were too busy, and the Information Centre, who only managed to get 6 questionnaires filled out. The researcher wonders just where their interest lies with regard to tourism promotion. This question needs to be raised with the South Waikato District Council, which provides quite a sum of money to fund public relations for the district.
2. Poor response from all the hotels within the district which were asked to help - Okoroire, Tirau, Timberlands. None seemed able to find the time to ask guests to fill out forms. The researcher can only speculate on what kind of effect there would have been on figures indicating length of stay in the area. Obviously the figure would have been much higher. It would also seem to indicate that hotels are very busy.
3. Excellent response from the businesses associated with visitors in the Tirau and Putaruru areas, with most returning 100% of the questionnaires distributed.
4. Survey was conducted over the late summer / early winter period. It would probably be worthwhile doing another survey over period from Labour Weekend to say the end of January. It would be interesting to see what, if any, differences there would be in the results.
5. Question 8 gave answers with a low range of difference, as respondents were not asked to rank places of interest. The wording of this question could be changed to ask Have you visited any of the following? or Do you know about any of these places? in order to determine what knowledge visitors have of the area and any gaps which need filling.
6. A future survey could provide an avenue for any businesses helping to carry it out to ask questions which they would like information from visitors on, to help them with their enterprises and planning.

What attractions do we have at present to offer visitors?

1. Tokoroa area.

The Tokoroa Information Centre is situated on the main road i.e. State Highway 1, which runs through Tokoroa. The Information Centre operates 6 days a week. It is open from 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday and from 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturday. This is a tourist and community information centre. It is also an agency for organised tours of the Kinleith mill site.

The Kinleith pulp and paper complex is located 8 km south of the Tokoroa township. The mill site has tours available to the public which leave from the Information Centre in Tokoroa. They run each week day at 10 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. and are of 2 - 2½ hours duration.

Elders NZ Forest Products have various forest reserves areas which are available to the public to use. The Company is very much committed to a policy which encourages the public to enjoy the refreshing and sometimes challenging environment. The public have in the past shown respect for this living resource so that others may also have the freedom to enjoy it too.

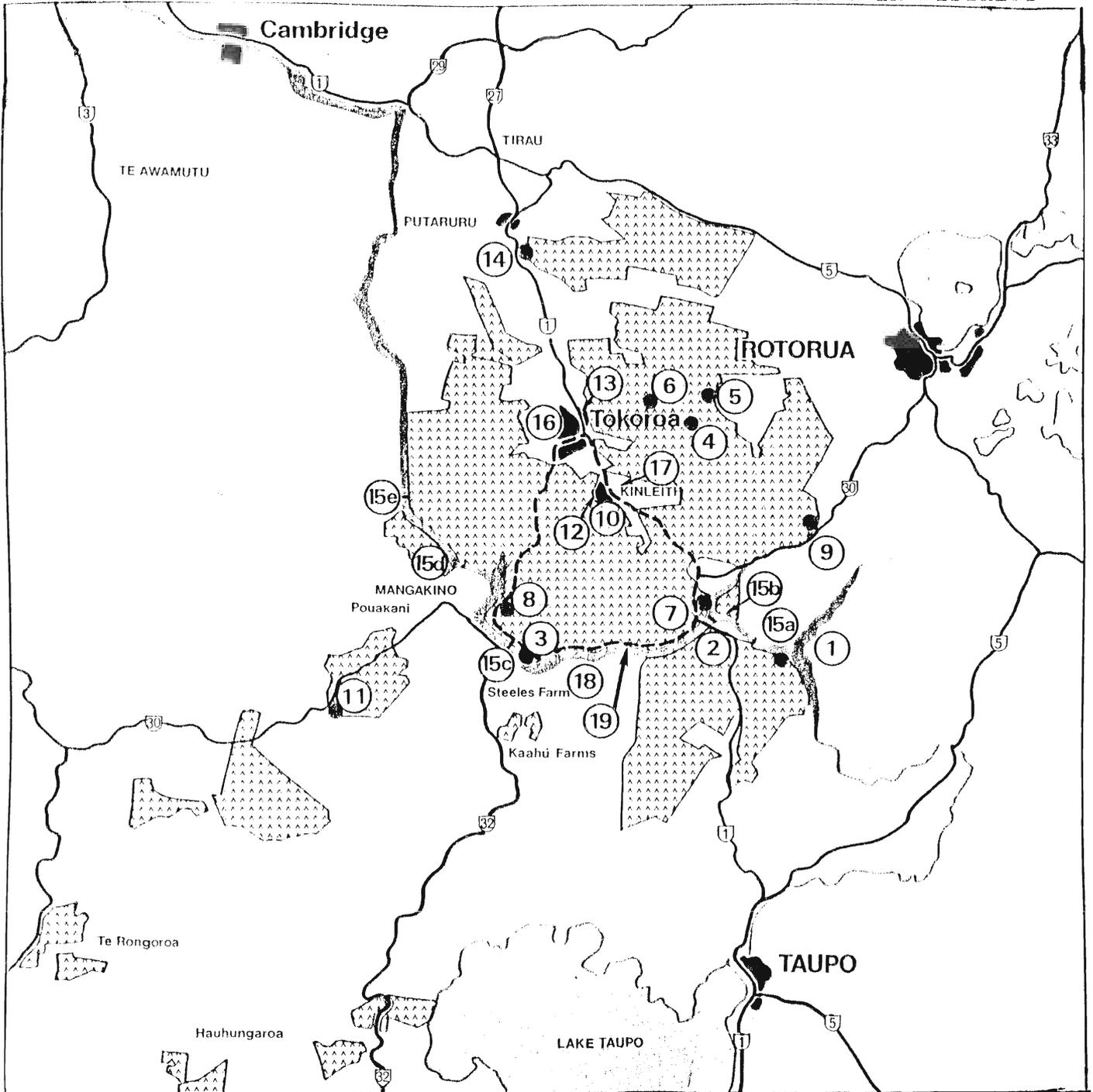
For the travelling public and those who just want to spend some of their leisure time in the exotic environment, Elders NZFP have established a number of recreation areas in the Tokoroa district, adjacent to public roads. A permit is not required to enter these signposted areas. The only requests that the company makes are that the public refrain from lighting fires except in the barbeques provided.

The recreation areas are :

- (1) in the vicinity of Mount Pohaturua, near Atiamuri
- (2) adjoining the Tokoroa Yacht Club's premises, at Lake Ohakuri
- (3) on the Atiamuri side of Whakamaru Dam, on the Waikato River
- (4) Pouakani, on the road between Mangakino and Bennydale. This small reserve has a totara tree which is thought to be the largest specimen in New Zealand.

Entry to the rest of Elders NZFP forests is by permit only.

ELDERS NZFP RECREATION RESERVES AND OTHER FACILITIES IN DISTRICT



**Recreation Areas**

- 1 Ohakuri — lake area, boating, sailing, fishing and swimming, barbecues
- 2 Pohūturoa — tramping, bush-walks
- 3 Whakamaru — lake area, camping, fishing, boating, barbecues
- 4 Pukerimu — circular walk, native forest reserve
- 5 Tikitiki — barbecues, small dammed lake, canoeing
- 6 Redwoods — small stand of Californian redwoods

**Roadside Areas**

- 7 Hatupatu's Rock — interest spot, refer text
- 8 Twin Lakes — picnic spot
- 9 Taahunaatara
- 10 Jim Currie Reserve — family picnic area
- 11 Totara Reserve, Pouakani South — 20 minute walk to giant totara

**Other Areas & Facilities**

- 12 Mill Site — commercial tours from Tokoroa, including the giant Kinleith Mill, are available

- 13 Information Office — in the township of Tokoroa, all information about the area and its attractions
- 14 Timber Museum — the museum at Putaruru records the beginnings of one of NZ's major industries - includes replica of old mill
- 15 Hydro Dams — (a) Ohakuri, (b) Atiamuri, (c) Whakamaru, (d) Maraetai, and (e) Waipapa - attractive picnic sites
- 16 Lake Moana-nui — a shallow, man-made lake ideal for swimming, sailing and picnicking
- 17 Golf Course — full 18-hole course, clubs for hire, and visitors welcome
- 18 Council Reserves — local County Council reserves in attractive settings along the shores of Lake Whakamaru
- 19 Scenic Drive — an enjoyable scenic drive over a triangular route marked with dotted line, bounded by Tokoroa, Atiamuri and Whakamaru

Permits are available at the company offices, Greyburn House, in Tokoroa or from the Information Centre. The company has some lovely reserve areas which require a permit and they are well worth visiting. These areas are Pukerimu, Endeans, Redwoods and Tikitiki reserves. (see Map 2.) Some of these reserves are remnants of native forests. All are well sign posted, with good all - weather vehicle access. Many have tracks which are well defined, and there are sign boards at the beginning of the tracks showing routes and estimated time it takes to walk them.

In the Tokoroa area there is a wealth of Maori history. Two important land marks with much history attached are within a few kilometres of each other. (see Map 2.)

1. Mount Pohaturua which is situated on Elders NZFP land near Atiamuri. It has been the scene of many sieges and played an important role as an observation post during inter-tribal conflicts.

2. Hatupatu's Rock which stands only a metre or two from SH 1 south of Kinleith. This is a roughly rounded volcanic rock, hollowed out. There is a legend about a young Maori warrior, Hatupatu, who after a fight with his two older brothers, wandered off badly injured deep into the forest, where he met the wild bird woman, Kurangaituku. She fell in love with Hatupatu and took him to her cave home where she kept him as a virtual prisoner. One day while the bird woman was out hunting Hatupatu escaped. When the bird woman heard of his escape she chased Hatupatu all over the country around Atiamuri. He prayed to the gods for help, and a large rock beside the track opened, and Hatupatu slipped inside. The rock closed again, and kept him safe from his pursuer.

In the Tokoroa township area there are all the usual amenities available to the travelling public, such as public toilets, camping ground, motels, hotels, fast food outlets, coffee shops, service stations, and so on. For those interested there is an outstanding view to be had from the top of Colson's Hill, where the water reservoir is located. It is possible to drive up the hill, and the view is well worth it. One can really appreciate the forestry influence on the area from this view point. It is also possible, on a clear day to see the mountains of National Park.

## 2. Putaruru area.

The Putaruru township, the place with the distinctive round Post Office on State Highway 1, has adopted the camelia as its emblem. There are many fine specimens of this tree in the gardens and parks around the town.

The town was surveyed in 1905 as a rail junction to serve the needs of the new, growing timber industry. The town's growth was boosted further in the 1920's with the building of the nearby Arapuni Hydro Electric Dam.

The township has all the usual ammenities for the travelling public, including hotels, motels, camping ground, parks,, golf course and so on. A distinctive feature that is not always obvious to travellers is the fact that Putaruru has a shopping area across the railway line, as well as the area which is on SH 1. Large signs have been erected on SH 1 which endeavour to point this out to travellers.

The town also has a very attractive river walkway system, which has many popular and scenic picnic and barbeque spots. It is also a river which has trout and can be fished at the correct time of the year, providing one has a licence. There are a number of trout fishing streams in the Putaruru area.

The Putaruru area's main attraction is the Timber Museum, located just south of the town, on SH 1. This museum provides a unique glimpse of New Zealand's past history. The museum has a complete timber mill, various early logging vehicles and equipment all incorporated into many interesting displays. There are displays by the local branch of the Fish and Game Council and another by the Wood Turners association, just to name a few. Putaruru actually hosts the annual national competition for wood turning, with sponsorship from Pinex.

There are many old buildings associated with Putaruru, which have been relocated to the museum site, such as the town's first hotel, a church from a small rural district, and an old sawmill company office, amongst others.

The Putaruru Timber Museum has received considerable support from the borough council, the former Matamata County Council and now the South Waikato District Council. The land which the museum occupies is a reserve.

The Timber Museum is open seven days a week, and has facilities available for hire, to hold functions such as meetings conferences, weddings and receptions, and exhibitions. The Cook House at the museum also serves light lunches, morning teas and afternoon teas to the travelling public. There are the usual toilet facilities available, including disabled. There is also ample provision here for picnics.

Between Putaruru and Tokoroa there is a district called Lichfield. This place must have been a town of some note in the pioneering days. Today you can see the remnants of the past in an old stone butchers shop and the railway water tower built from brick. For visitors today at Lichfield there is a delightful pottery shop.

Within the Putaruru area there are a number of reserves on the lakes of the Waikato River. These provide plenty of recreation opportunities for boating, sailing, rowing, wind surfing, water skiing and trout fishing. There are also many places suitable for picnics.

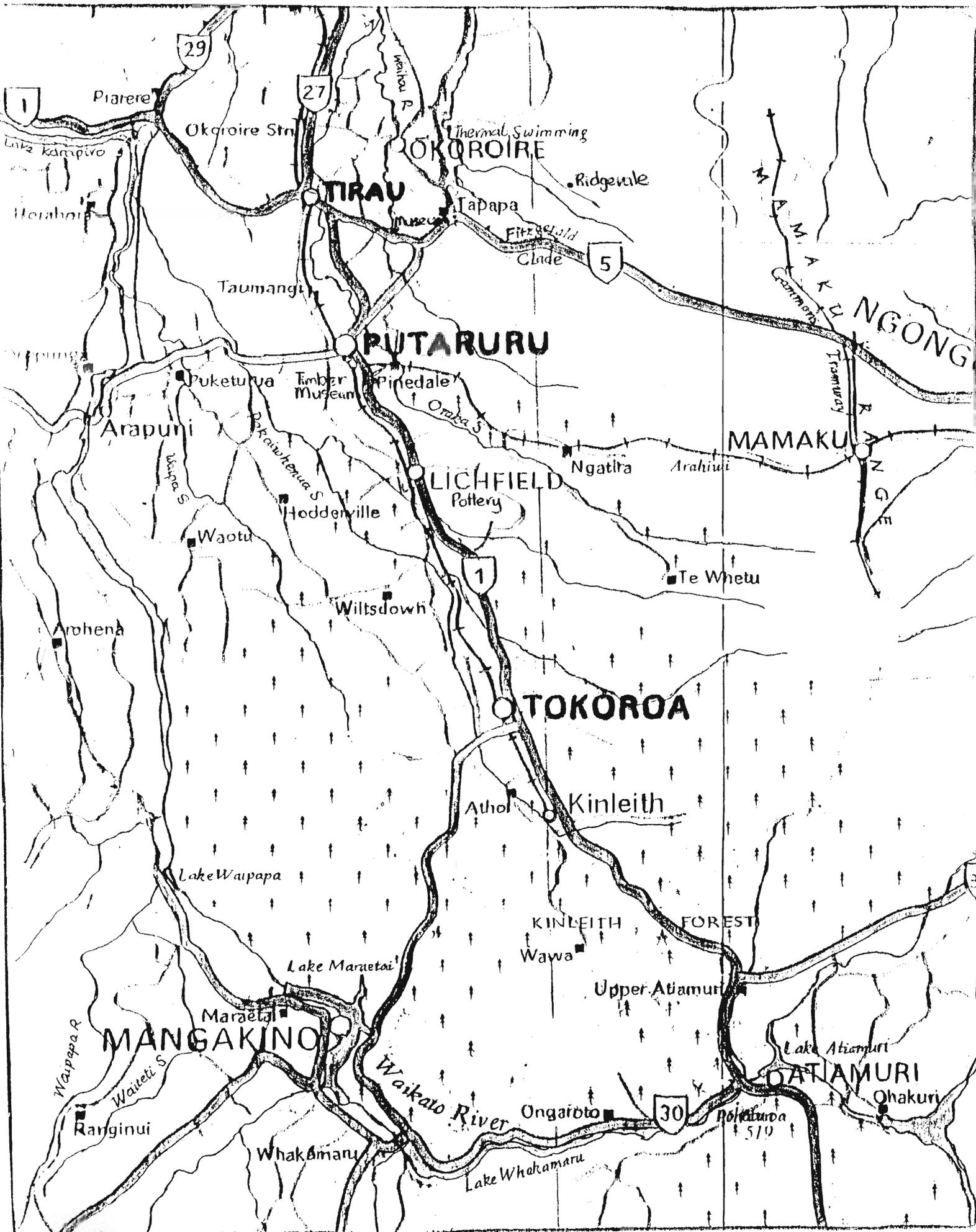
### 3. Tirau area.

Tirau township is located at the junction of SH 1 and 5 and SH 27. Tirau has a reputation of being ' Food town ', for the travelling public. There is certainly a number of fast food outlets in the town. There are also petrol stations, a hotel and public conveniences. The Matamata County Council also commissioned a dump outfall for campervans to empty there sewerage tanks. This will be operational for this summer.

In more recent times there has been a number of businesses open up catering for the sale of antiques and art and crafts, as an additional attraction for the travelling public to peruse. As evidenced by the results of the survey, and in speaking to the operators of these businesses, the public are very interested to visit such premises. It seems that the recently vacated BNZ building will also house a further antique shop. So Tirau township has seen a welcome renaissance of its business area.

The area surrounding Tirau also has a number of places of interest to the visitor. At Okoroire, (see Map 3) there is

# SOUTH WAIKATO DISTRICT ROAD MAP



Map showing location of attractions.

a country hotel, with accomodation and facilities suitable for conferences. There is also a golf course set among old English trees, and thermal pools. The pastowners of the hotel complex have tended to concentrate on the hotel and golf course to the detriment of the pools. There is much potential available here to develop the thermal pools further, but cost would have to be a limiting factor.

Also within the Okoroire district there is an enterprising family, trading in hand dyed wool crafts, and trading under the name Ridgevale Romneys. The Snodgrass family, and in particular, Nuki, has had a life long interest in wool craft. She originally began the business hand spinning wool from the family's own sheep flock. As the business has grown the wool is now factory spun, but still hand dyed by Nuki herself. Some is hand knitted into garments, other is knitted on machines, depending on the garments. The family runs a successful mail order business for wool and garments. They are also very involved with selling through the New Zealand Craft Show and have travelled the length and breadth of the country. Ridgevale also hosts numerous bus tours and groups , as the house is surrounded by a lovely garden.

About 6 km from Tirau on the Rotorua Road, is Geoff Ernest's Museum and Honey Factory. This is a most interesting stop for visitors. Geoff has a fine collection of agricultural equipment and also old bottles. The honey can also be recommended.

There is some excellent trout fishing to be had in this area, especially in the streams and tributaries of the Waihou River System, particularly above Okoroire. Licences are required, all legal fishing methods can be used, the minimum fish size is 22cm and the river is open all year. When the licence is purchased maps are also available detailing locations of the various rivers and streams.

The northern area also has growing within a reasonably easy walk the southern most kauris in New Zealand. There are some very interesting walks to be made into the Kaimai - Mamaku Forest Park.

### **Future directions and prospects - Where to from here?**

There are many positive activities, which are suited to the travelling public, happening within the South Waikato district. It would also seem from this initial survey that many visitors are taking the opportunity to stop and visit such places. Those receiving much attention were the Putaruru Timber Museum, Geoff Ernest's Museum, the Okoroire Hotel complex, Ridgevale and the antique and art and craft shops at Lichfield and Tirau.

### **How can we capitalise further on these attractions?**

1. Better use could be made of the Tokoroa Information Centre. As this report has previously intimated there appears to be some confusion by the staff who operate the Centre as to their role. This difficulty has its base in the history of the Centre. The Centre is controlled by the Tokoroa Business and Expansion Trust. Funding for public relations activities has come in the main from the old Tokoroa Borough Council, and is now from the South Waikato District Council. The Trust's motivation is apparent in its title, hence the people employed promoting Tokoroa have tended to focus on aspects of encouraging business development within the town, rather than promoting aspects of tourism. This attitude is definitely reflected in the way the Information Centre is run, and in how the locals view it as well. It carries agencies for courier post and so on. The District Council still has much to resolve with the Trust, but the problems should not be insurmountable. There is room for all the activities performed at present by the staff of the Information Centre, the job descriptions just need to be sorted so that everyone knows their responsibilities. The whole district would benefit as a result.

2. Co-ordinate the efforts in the district to do with tourism. Tirau Community Board hosted a town and district meeting soon after its election, to look at positively promoting the town and its surrounding area.

This resulted in a small co-ordinating committee being formed, to look at implementing some of the ideas suggested. The meeting strongly came out in favour of making the best use of the resources that there are available. So, instead of grumbling about the speed of the traffic through Tirau, which has happened a lot in the past, the emphasis has shifted. Let's do something about making the traffic slow down and better still stop and spend some time and money here.

The committee had to decide on some strategies, as to how you encourage traffic to do just that. The first requirement seemed to be to provide people with something that they would need to stop for e.g. service stations, fast food shops, toilets. The town was already providing these, and it is recognised that the standards of these businesses is very high, and needs to remain so in order that the travelling public will continue to stop. It was also recognised by the committee and also by the Community Board the important role that the District Council and the locals play in keeping the clean and tidy appearance of the town. People will not be wanting to stop in a town which has an untidy appearance.

Signs were also considered necessary to help stop traffic. The town is to get Welcome to Tirau signs erected, hopefully, with Transit New Zealand's blessing.

The committee also felt that the encouragement of other shops, which are interesting to travellers, such as arts and crafts and antiques, as secondary to the main needs types of businesses would add much to the town. That certainly appears to be the case. Certainly the town now has a positive appearance to the travellers, with no empty shops and plenty of interesting activity going on. Two house building operations are erecting show homes in the town as well.

There are also moves afoot for Tirau to have its own Information Centre located in one of the businesses on the main road in the town.

The Putaruru business community has been talking for a while about having an Information Office as well.

The District Council has provided \$10,000 funding for a brochure, which covers attractions of the whole district. This brochure will be made available for distribution to visitors to the area, from service stations, hotels, motels, Information Centres and so on throughout the district. This is a step in the direction of co-ordinating efforts over the area.

A suggestion has been made that there could be a district information centre located at the Putaruru Timber Museum. Another possibility would be to market tours, which incorporate various aspects of the whole district e.g. Tirau's art and crafts and antiques, Ridgevale woolcrafts and gardens, the Timber Museum and a tour of Kinleith pulp and paper mill.

3. Ensuring that the local people are well informed about what is available in the district for visitors to see. It was apparent from the survey that a number of locals are hosting visitors - be they family relations, friends or paying guests. The Putaruru and Tokoroa service groups annually publish booklets called 'Enquire Within'. These are excellent publications. They are distributed free, to all house holders within the area, and include all the information that locals require about attractions etc in the area. It is hoped that these worthy publications will continue to be produced. They provide old and new residents with a wealth of valuable information, at their finger tips.

Editorially, the local paper could do much to promote local attractions. The paper has done some good work in the past. Perhaps, with a district wide tourism organiser or committee, there could be more involvement with the paper.

4. Training some of the locals who have direct involvement with visitors would also help. e.g. Information Centre staff, hotel and motel reception staff, restaurant staff and shop assistants, home hosters and so on.

This training can now be provided by Tourism Waikato, who have organised the Kiwi Host Course, a pilot programme, for the rest of the country.

**What aspects could be promoted more?**

1. The quiet, relaxed rural setting with abundant recreational facilities such as golf, trout fishing, boating, bush and forest tramping, camping and picnicking spots.

2. There are a number of interesting places already available, which deserve to have more publicity. The district brochure should help. Many of the people operating such places e.g. Ridgevale Romneys and Ernest's Museum have tangled with local council bylaws governing roadside advertising signs. A review of these bylaws, which might relax some of the restrictions is likely in the near future. In the existing bylaws signs have to be located on the owner's property, and there have been strict controls on the size of the signs. In any case safety aspects such as driving speeds on the open road and the siting of signs in regard to this aspect and the location of the attraction has to be taken into account. Also some recognition must be made of the fact that not everyone operating such an enterprise can live on a main road with ideal visibility on each side.

3. The fact that the area is an ideal base for day trips.  
(see map 4)

- less than 1 hour travel time-

Matamata, with race course, hot springs, Tower Museum

- 1 hour travelling time-

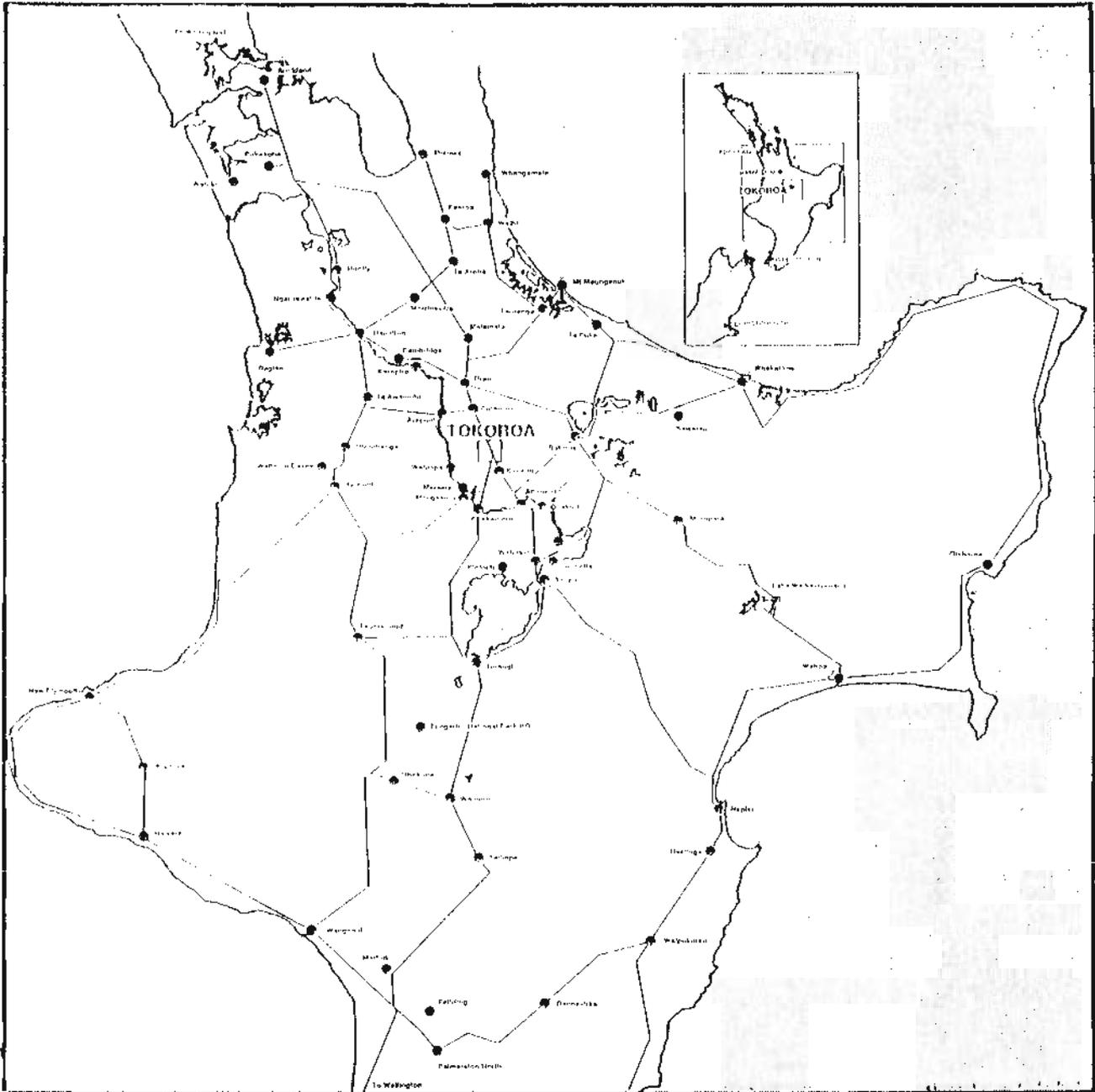
Hamilton, Rotorua, Tauranga & Mt. Maunganui, Orakei Korako.

- 1½ hour travelling time-

Te Puke and the Kiwifruit Coast, Lake Tarawera and the Buried Village, Waimangu Thermal area, Waitomo Caves and Otorohanga kiwi house, Paeroa and Waihi and the gold fields area, Aratiatia Rapids, Huka Falls, Wairakei thermal area & golf course and Taupo.

- 2 hours travelling time-

Tongariro National Park, Raglan & Kawhia, Auckland.



## Place Distances

From Tokoroa	Km				
Auckland	217	Napier	210	Iauanga	91
Cambridge	62	New Plymouth	283	Iaumarumui	140
Chateau	164	Ngaruawahia	105	Iaupo	67
Hamilton	86	Okoroire Springs	39	Te Aroha	92
Huntly	119	Paeroa	113	Te Awamutu	
Kawerau	115	Palmerston North	444	(via Tiraui & Cambridge)	88
Mangakino	38.5	Putaruru	22.5	(via Putaruru & Kihikihii)	74
Matamata	49	Rotorua		Te Kuiti	119
Mt Maunganui	108	(via Upper Ahiaruri)	60	Thames	145
		(via Putaruru)	75	Tiraui	32
				Turangi	
				(via Mangakino)	117
				(via Taupo)	118
				Tokaanu	
				(via Mangakino)	113
				(via Taupo)	124
				Waihi	134
				Wairakei	59
				Wellington	579
				Whakatane	173
				Waitomo	119
				Gisborne	
				(via Napier)	398
				(via Opotiki)	365
				Wairoa	
				(via Napier)	300
				(via Waikaremoana)	282
				Whangamata	156

Map 4. Source; Tokoroa Enquire Within.

**What possibilities are there to develop further?**

1. Home hosting, and in particular farm stay. This was apparent from survey results. There have been further encouraging developments in this area, with some approaches to host mini bus groups on a regular basis in the northern area.

These stays will incorporate visit to various local farming operations and other attractions in the area.

There is no reason why Information Centres could not be used to promote home hosting to travellers. This could be done by providing an information board with photographs and tariff information on the accommodation available.

2. Fishing, shooting and hunting, and tramping guides available for visitors, could be developed.

3. More could be made of the considerable talents which the locals have, particularly in the art and craft field - pottery, wood turning, weaving, patch working. The development of an art and craft co-operative could be a possibility, maybe at the Timber Museum or in Tirau.

4. Developing ideas and places which are unique to the area further e.g. Timber Museum, Axman's Carnival and the Wood Turners National Competition all promote the forestry aspects of the district. Probably all of these things could be promoted much further.

Another idea which has been pushed around a little, and may come to fruition in the future is to do with Tirau's historical name, Oxford. Many of the businesses in Tirau have incorporated Oxford into their names. Maybe we might see Tirau re-named Oxford for a week?

5. The possibility of developing a circuit of gardens to visit across the area. There are numerous gardens that would be suitable, both town and country. The survey showed that visitors would enjoy this very much. There are a number of well supported gardening groups in the area, who would provide excellent resource people for such a venture.

6. A camping ground for campervans, possibly in Tirau.

## **Conclusion.**

The exercise has been extremely interesting. There are pockets of people throughout the area who demonstrate great energy and enthusiasm for the work that they are doing. Many have invested large amounts of their talents, time and money in their ventures. They deserve to do well.

Basically, the one thing that this report sees as being lacking is an overall co-ordination role, either of a committee or an individual, to promote all the things which the area has going for it. Some of this lack will be covered at least to some extent by the district brochure. It is also apparent that something along the lines of a district public relations or promotions committee will also emerge in time.

The district does need to make some moves towards co-ordinating important events which occur into a calendar of events for the year. This should be able to be done through the district information office.

There would be no desire to restrict what people are doing, but rather to promote and encourage what they are doing or might want to do.

There is no doubt, in the writer's mind, having seen the what a few entrepreneurs have done for a place like Tirau, that success breeds success. When a town has got business premises that look attractive and interesting, with fresh coats of paint, interesting signs and so on, then people will stop and look, talk and maybe even shop. After all that's what this is all about.

**Bibliography and Acknowledgements.**

A History of Putaruru and Districts, Publisher The Putaruru Press

Enquire Within - Tokoroa Volume 26, 1989, Tokoroa Jaycee Inc.

Welcome to Our Forests, NZFP Forests Ltd, Kinleith Forest Region

Tokoroa New Zealand - Doing it better, Tokoroa Business and  
Commercial Expansion Trust

South Waikato District Council.

Putaruru - Town of Camelias brochure.

Tokoroa - Forestland New Zealand brochure.

Trout Fishing in the Waikato - Our best kept secret, Waikato  
Promotion Society.