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Fire and Loathing in Howick

The tale of the little whare once called Torere.

Was it really arson? Some people in Howick are more comfortable believing the fire was sparked by an electrical fault. And they might have been able to console themselves that nothing so Ku Klux Klan-like had happened in their sleepy suburb, had the police not found traces of an accelerant that had been poured around the front verandah.

A week before the fire, a neighbour had caught three Pakeha teenagers "from Manurewa" tearing up newspaper and throwing it inside the whare. She'd told them the house belonged to "the Maoris" and they shouldn't be there. They slinked off down the hill to the beach. About the same time it was discovered the carvings had been vandalised — the last in a long list of acts of vandalism against the whare.

The fire took hold in the middle of a peaceful Labour weekend Sunday in 2004 — an unusual time to commit arson. A teenager cycling past raised the alarm. Someone yelled at the neighbours to move their cars. When the fire engines roared up, the front of the whare was already consumed in the savage orange flames. There was still time to save most of the building, but not the front porch and its precious carvings.

Rumours circulated through Howick that it was the work of a local white supremacist gang. A youth aid officer heard talk on the street and gave the police a suspect, but the boy's legal guardian gave him an alibi and he volunteered a DNA sample that didn't match anything found at the scene.

There had already been a decade of considerable racial tension over this particular whare, but with no evidence of threats to the people associated with it, the police thought the fire was more an act of vandalism than political activism.

When it became clear the police weren't going to charge anyone, Maori thought it was because detectives hadn't investigated thoroughly enough. Desecrations of Jewish graves or synagogues get more police attention, they felt. But Detective Senior Sergeant Dave Pizzini, who came under pressure from Manukau City councillors to keep the heat on the inquiry team, says they basically ran out of leads.

Swiftly — a little too swiftly, according to some Pakeha — the council announced plans to rebuild the whare with a few additions to bring it up to modern building standards and to provide facilities it thought necessary for a centre that employs staff and volunteers and hosts classes of schoolchildren — an office, kitchen, toilets and shower, all contained in a basement to be built underneath the whare, ensuring it doesn't increase its current footprint. Plus, as the law requires, the council wanted ramps for wheelchair access.

That set off three years of bitter dispute between the 212-member Howick Ratepayers and Residents Association, the council and the small group of Maori and Pakeha who had run Maori culture classes for schoolchildren, new immigrants and community groups in the whare.

Keith Morris, treasurer of Te Roopu Awhina o Wairoa charitable trust that's behind the whare, says he feels like he's living in Mississippi: "They're carrying out an agenda on the back of a criminal act."

That agenda, in the trust's eyes, is racist.

In the three years since the whare was torched, there hasn't been a single meeting of the Howick Community Board where debate on the whare hasn't erupted. The vote finally went 4-3 in favour of rebuilding it. The local paper, The Howick and Pakuranga Times, got so tired of this festering sore that the editor put a ban on further articles that kept raking over the old grievances and did not advance the story. That's common news judgement, but it fed suspicion among Maori that the issue was being suppressed.

There are Maori in Howick? Who knew? At the 2006 Census 38,541 people lived in Howick; 25,566 called themselves European, 9207 Asian and a mere 1503 claimed Maori ethnicity. That's about 4 per cent. That there's a whare in Howick is equally surprising, and hard to find unless you know where to look — back from the road, just past the library and the Uxbridge Creative Centre and before the housing begins. Of course, it's harder to find under the tarpaulins it's been shrouded in for the past three years.

Yet the whare was never really a whare in the way we imagine but at first a miniature, playhouse-size whare, and before the fire it was a whare-shaped building with the miniature as a façade. And it never operated as a traditional marae — although the exact meaning of marae is now part of the argument — and it was never built by Maori. It was built by a Pakeha woman in 1936. Even the carvings and rafter paintings were done by Pakeha. And some of the group pushing for it to be rebuilt are Pakeha, as are all of the people opposing it.

So determined are they in their opposition that they are taking the council to the Environment Court, a move likely to delay rebuilding for another year to 18 months and further fuel the image of Howick as a racial hotbed in the South Pacific.

Howick by the sea, as it was known, is redolent of a genteel English seaside village — a nice place to raise kids, or retire. It boasts the second-oldest wooden church in New Zealand, which is popular for weddings. Yes, it's a significantly middle-class Pakeha suburb, but Asian and South African accents are increasingly common on the streets. So rapid was the growth of the Asian population in this and nearby suburbs that the name "Chowick" gained informal (and, to some, offensive) currency.

Howick's original raison d'être was to fight the Maori, but not initially its local ones.

By 1846, six years after the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, Governor George Grey was becoming in-creasingly nervous that tensions between Maori and the rapidly increasing number of settlers was going to culminate in a Maori attack on the fledgling settlement of Auckland. The Ngapuhi in the North, led by Hone Heke, were rattling their taiaha. The Tainui in the Waikato were also looking aggressive.

Grey appealed to England for a defence force and was rewarded with retired soldiers who had fought in various parts of the empire. In a scheme devised by Lord Howick, Secretary for the Colonies in the British Parliament, the men had to be younger than 48 (later dropped to 41, so great was the interest) with a minimum of 15 years' military service, be of good character, taller than 5ft 5in — 1.65m — and be medically fit for active duty, should the Maori attack. They were known as the Royal New Zealand Fencible Corps, and the term Fencible remains prominent in Howick in its recreation areas and soccer club.

Today there's an international Fencibles Society dedicated to researching and preserving the history of this particular class of settler in New Zealand and other Commonwealth countries where they were sent to defend the empire. The president of the

New Zealand arm, Don Gallagher, says their role in settling Auckland has been curiously ignored. He doesn't know why, wondering if maybe soldiers were considered of lower class than other settlers and therefore forgettable.
Or maybe we really do feel guilty about our colonial past.
In exchange for their services the Fencibles were given a two-room cottage and an acre (4000 sq m) of land, which would be theirs to keep after seven years. As many as 721 men and their families arrived on 10 ships between 1847 and 1852, settling in Otahuhu, Panmure and Howick — outposts from which Auckland could be defended.
The local iwi, Ngai Tai, were also concerned about an attack from Ngapuhi or the Waikato, so they en-thusiastically welcomed the arrival of the Fencibles, helped build their cottages, traded food and did land deals with the local missionary, William Fairburn, to avert attacks by the other tribes. But according
to Howick historian Alan La Roche there weren't large numbers of Ngai Tai in the area at the time — possibly 150.
Come the land wars of the 1860s, Howick was bolstered by the arrival of the 70th Regiment. Some say Ngai Tai were driven off by Pakeha, others that they were simply outnumbered.

Born in the Waikato in 1870, the closing years of the land wars, Emilia Maud Nixon taught school in Hamilton for 33 years before moving to Howick in 1925 to live out her retirement years. She bought 2673 sq m of land in Uxbridge Rd (about the size of five regular house sections in today's terms), half of it dropping into valley and swamp.
Miss Nixon always had a deep interest in history, particularly Maori history. Princess Te Puea, the legendary Waikato leader, was said to be a friend and she also formed a close friendship with local Maori woman Rachael Ngeungeu Zister, the great-great-granddaughter of the famous Ngai Tai paramount chief Tara-te-Irirangi. She set about turning her property into a living folk museum of New Zealand history and a vehicle to foster understanding between Maori and Pakeha. She called her bungalow-style house Whare Ora and her property the Tainui Memorial Garden and Folk Museum, remembering that in the 1920s, Maori, decimated by war, disease and dis-possession, were thought to be a dying race.
The Garden of Memories, as she later called it, was something of a child's wonderland and its contents changed during her life and after her death. There were at various times model Fencible cottages, wells, bridges, a statue of Old Father Time and one com-memorating pioneer women. There was an old council gas lamp, and the stone from Partington's Mill, the central Auckland landmark that used to stand on the Symonds St land now occupied by the Langham Hotel. There was even a model courthouse. In a separate building behind that, the Retreat, she developed a museum.
She turned swamp into garden, planting native trees and traditional Maori food sources to experiment, she said, with how the countryside might be reforested.
There were Maori canoes and of course the model whare that she called Torere, after the daughter of Hoturoa, the chief of the Tainui canoe. Maori kuia and kaumatua came to its dedication in 1936, as did students from Queen Victoria School for Maori Girls.
Miss Nixon's garden was much admired by dignitaries of the day, particularly Governor-General Lord Bledisloe, and reportedly inspired the Historic Places Act drafted in 1952 by Duncan Rae MP.
Miss Nixon, who died in 1962, bequeathed the Garden of Memories to the mayor, councillors and citizens of Howick "for the benefit of the public".
"I believe," her will says, "that it could be of some use and benefit to the community as an aid to its recreational, cultural and educational interest and development and also as an aid to an appreciation of the historical development of New Zealand." Miss Nixon wanted it to be used as "a museum and cultural, educational and historical centre". And she didn't want any of the buildings added to or removed.
Controversially, soon after her death, Howick senior citizens were allowed to take over her house for their clubrooms — where they remain. Those who complain the plans for the new whare contravene her will never mention that the senior citizens' use of her house for clubrooms doesn't fit with her will either.
Nevertheless, for the next several decades the garden was maintained by the Howick Borough Council and the model cottages and Torere by the Howick and District Historical Society. They moved new historic buildings on to the property, but later moved them to the Howick Historical Village, along with other fixtures from the garden that hadn't decayed or disappeared.
That largely left Torere, abandoned and alone in the valley where Miss Nixon had built it, the bush now grown tall around it, occasionally struck by vandalism and quietly rotting away.
In the early 1980s a local councillor, Vic Lonsdale, went exploring in the gardens and rediscovered Torere. He asked his neighbour Taini Drummond, who stood out in Howick as one of its few Maori residents (she is actually Tainui from near Kawhia)

and who ran a Maori culture group at the Uxbridge Hall, to come with him and look over the artefacts he'd found there. She put together a group of volunteers from her culture group who spent part of every Sunday cleaning up the whare. Drummond began classes in Maoritanga there, much as Miss Nixon had done for the local children in her lifetime. All this she did as a volunteer.

All remained peaceful until the seismic shift that came with local government amalgamation in 1989. Howick never took to amalgamation — certainly not in the early days. A white, affluent suburb, it felt it had little in common with its browner, poorer cousins making up Manukau City — the largest Polynesian city in the world. Suddenly there was a council based a half-hour drive away taking control of their village.

When that council took a look over this reserve it had inherited in Uxbridge Rd, it decided to make a few changes. Mindful of Torere's decaying state, the council made a controversial decision to shift the whare out of the valley to higher ground in the garden and essentially use it as the façade of a newer, larger building, shaped like a whare but looking otherwise like a gable-roofed garage.

Miss Nixon's old friend Rachael Ngeungeu Zister objected to this move, but the council prevailed. This odd-looking whare was at least now large enough to host groups of people inside. And because the council felt it had a role in helping to integrate new migrants into the country, it decided to lend more practical support to the cultural programmes Taini Drummond was running. It put her on its payroll.

At the same time a group of Drummond's supporters, some of whom are Pakeha but none of whom are Ngai Tai, came together to form Te Roopu Awhina o Wairoa charitable trust to support the cultural programmes by using funds raised from koha given by the students to keep the whare running. In the early days it paid things like the power bill. Once the council took that over, the trust bought things like tea, coffee and sandwiches and the occasional piece of furniture. Now it pays the salary of Drummond's daughter Te Aroha, who works with her on the programmes. The koha they collect, says Te Aroha, are only small amounts. There is also some Ministry of Education funding. The trust will raise funds for new carvings — which the council will not pay for — in the proposed new whare.

This increasing Maori activity in the gardens from the early 90s might not have been noticed by the local Pakeha had not a sign gone up labelling the gardens the "Owairoa Marae". Round one in Howick's own land wars was about to begin. One story has it that an elderly Howick gentleman went up and sawed the word "marae" off the sign. Pakeha were now feeling excluded from the gardens, which are after all a public reserve where they had previously gathered for wedding photographs or to sprinkle the ashes of their dead. They felt particularly alienated because at the time Maori nationally were becoming vocal about how ignorant Pakeha were of how to behave on a marae.

After a period of considerable agitation, the Manukau City Council passed a resolution that it wasn't a marae and wasn't to be called one. Which only upset the trust members, who insist it is a marae because it was named after a Ngai Tai ancestor and blessed by Tainui. But they stress that anyone can come and go there. They say it's the only marae in the country that belongs to both sides.

One of the trust members, Graham Harris, descends from the pacifists of Parihaka whose peaceful resistance to land confiscation after the land wars led to one of the most shameful episodes in New Zealand history when in 1881 their Taranaki village was destroyed, their livestock slaughtered and their leaders imprisoned by the colonial government.

Peaceful resistance became the trustees' modus operandi in Howick too. They say they've had to absorb a lot of abuse, such as attacks on the financial management of the trust and accusations trustees are lining their own pockets. Their strategy has been to sit quietly in the community board meetings and hope that their presence might at least inhibit what they believe is rampant racism.

They sat, too, through the four-day consent hearing in front of the commissioner, former High Court judge Peter Salmon. One elderly woman objector tells me later that she told the hearing Howick people no longer felt comfortable strolling through or picnicking in the gardens as they used to. When Justice Salmon asked her why not, she said she couldn't say in front of "all those Maoris".

One evening Metro arranges to meet three rep-resentatives of the trust in a council-owned property near the whare, from where Taini and Te Aroha Drummond have been continuing to run their Maori culture programmes. Rather than school groups coming to them, in the meantime they've been going into schools.

The three trustees are Graham Harris, Keith Morris and Te Aroha Drummond and with them is Devonport-based Robyn McIvor,

who was asked by kaumatua to use her legal expertise to help. “These are amazingly supportive people,” McIvor tells me. “They do an incredible amount of things in the community. They’ve taken consistent abuse and been humble and proud. It’s unbelievable what they’ve had to put up with.”

Together they paint me a picture of Howick as a once-isolated Pakeha community that’s determined to maintain its colonial past. “The old Fencible people are still here,” they’ll tell you, “people who maintain English society.”

“On Anzac Day here they play God Save the Queen,” laughs Morris.

The trustees say the objections to rebuilding the whare have been couched around the technicalities of design and funding. But they say that’s all a smokescreen. At the root is bigotry, intolerance and racism.

On the coffee table of his brick-and-tile Howick unit, 83-year-old Russell Wylie has a copy of the Resource Management Act alongside PJ Ryan’s Maori dictionary. To prove to me he isn’t racist, he says, he takes me into the hallway to show me a Maori carving he has on display — a gift when he retired in 1983 as principal of Rongomai Primary School in Otara, where the roll was predominantly Maori and Pacific Island. Prior to 1972, when he went to work in Otara, Wylie had been principal of a primary school in Taumarunui and served as chairman of the Taumarunui and Districts Maori Education Advancement Society. He says that came about because the three iwi that converge on Taumarunui couldn’t acknowledge leadership from one another “so I had to be the great white father”. It’s easy to imagine contemporary Maori bridling at the overt paternalism his remark suggests.

Wylie makes it sound like an accusation when he says, “I believe Manukau has a policy of a marae in every ward”. He is quick to complain to me that under Manukau City Council’s employment policy, “priority is given to Maori”. And he tells me of an engineer he knew who applied for a job with the council and was required to write an essay on the Treaty of Waitangi. “It’s bloody wrong,” he thunders.

Wylie laughs while telling me his version of some local Maori history. And he says “the Maori”, in a way that might call to mind a Victorian anthropologist.

A former chairman of the Howick Residents and Ratepayers Association, he says he never took any interest in the whare until after the fire. He blames long-time mayor Sir Barry Curtis, who retired this year, for offering to rebuild it so quickly. “It’s the fault of the council officers who were too enthusiastic — that could have been Sir Barry’s influence.”

Although Wylie’s health is poor, he’s made opposing the rebuilding of the whare something of a crusade. He chuckles as he tells me he got his “legal training” from “half a dozen lectures” when he was part of the post-war force occupying Japan and acted as defence counsel in military hearings. You can’t help feeling he’s looking forward to demonstrating his prowess in the Environment Court.

He’s done a lot of homework. The original whare, he says, was a whare whakairo, or chief’s house, not a wharenui, or meeting house. He cites research suggesting there were no wharenui in pre-European days, the point being that if there were no wharenui then, one shouldn’t be built there now.

He also takes issue with what he’s heard Taini Drummond is teaching in her education programmes. When she tells stories of the local history, he says, “she puts an adverse aspect on it in respect of Pakeha. There was a case where Maori had crossed by canoe from the Coromandel, the boat overturned and they drowned. The story Taini puts around is that they were shot by the Fencibles. She has told this story apparently.” (As a council employee, Drummond was forbidden to speak to Metro for this story.)

Wylie confirms the troubles in the gardens started around the time of amalgamation.

The name Owairoa Marae began being used for the Garden of Memories, he says. “I never thought it had any official backing but the Manukau City Council put up signs and a lock was put on the gate to keep Pakeha out. That stayed on for only three days.”

From there on, he says, rows erupted over what he calls “bottle parties” in the gardens. “The senior citizens assumed — whether

correctly or not — that Ngai Tai were involved. They claimed they were having to clean up when it was the caretaker's job." He believes Taini Drummond is that caretaker.
"There were cases of them staying in the whare overnight," Wylie continues. "People said to me they'd been up there and seen young Maori up there smoking pot. There was some difficulty with neighbours over noise at night — haka practice, that sort of thing." He offers the name of a neighbour I might ask about that. When I do, she denies there has been noise from haka practice, but she's terribly worried that there will be.
"This created some resentment," Wylie goes on. "The fact is it's too small for a marae."
He suggests that as all three local high schools supported rebuilding the whare, they should instead build it on their own grounds, or on one of the larger local parks. Maori interpret these suggestions as tantamount to telling them to go away.
"Things were going along reasonably serenely until the fire," Wylie continues, "which the Maori claimed was arson. There's a possibility it was an electrical fault. They made a great song and dance about arson, with the implication some Howick person had been the perpetrator. It was certainly Ngai Tai themselves who sought to gain from it. This is where things start to look crooked, in our view."
He says the whare should have been repaired using the money from the insurance and therefore at no cost to ratepayers. He suggests the cost of the rebuild is more than $1 million. The council, however, puts it at $302,000.
Wylie disparagingly describes the plans as "Maori on the ground floor, with a basement with European toilets, kitchen and shower". It sounds like racism, I tell him. "What we object to," he replies, "is the design."

At the Manukau City Council staff say rebuilding the whare with a kitchen, toilets and shower was their idea. The council had the choice of repairing or replacing the whare. Its director of community, Ian Maxwell (who is responsible for parks, libraries and community development), says they chose replacement because they needed to meet modern building requirements and provide basic services to a staff member (Taini Drummond) and her volunteers, like an office and kitchen.
As well, with around 1600 people, mostly school-children, visiting the whare each year, they felt it prudent to provide toilets and a shower — in case of little accidents. Says Maxwell: "We have to make sure the environment is suitable." He stresses it is not a marae and that "our intention is that no one stays there overnight".
It turns out the council didn't even need to go through the formal consent hearing process. "But because it was controversial we went beyond the minimum requirements of the law," Maxwell says. Those worried about cost might note that the consent hearings added $25,000 to the cost of the process — a figure that could treble once it's been through the Environment Court.
When the council appointed Justice Salmon to hear the consent application more than 300 submissions were received — 178 in support, 125 opposed. The opponents, though, will tell you many of the supporters don't live in Howick; some of their submissions came from as far away as Australia. The hearing ran for four days; 70 people asked to be heard. The commissioner agreed to grant the rebuilding application, with the proviso the whare isn't to be used after 10pm.
Not only are the opponents appealing against this to the Environment Court — arguing among other things that it contravenes the management plan prepared for the gardens in 2001 which said there were to be no new buildings — they've also sent a two-page letter to the council demanding an inquiry into what they allege is unethical behaviour by council officers who "have been allowed to pursue their own agenda… against the expressed wishes of most of the citizens of Howick".

Maxwell says he never heard anyone opposing the Maori culture programmes that are run in the whare and he doesn't believe the opponents are racist. "Any community that has anything going for it has people who argue strongly."
He sees the objectors as people who want Miss Nixon's will followed to its letter, rather than those who recognise that things change and evolve. "You're bound to hear accusations that the council has fudged things and didn't inform the community board," he adds. "In actual fact the whole planning stage involved a degree of consultation that has never happened before." All over a building, Maxwell shrugs, that's the size of a single garage with a basement.

Where is Ngai Tai in all this? Ngai Tai is a strangely fragmented subtribe of Tainui. Legend has it that when the Tainui canoe swept along the coast on its arrival from Hawaiiki, various crew jumped ship and established pa, meaning its people ranged widely around Auckland and the Bay of Plenty.
There are two branches of Ngai Tai that have a relationship with Howick: Ngai Tai Ki Tamaki and Ngai Tai Umupuia, based near Clevedon. The council used to deal with Ngai Tai Ki Tamaki but since 2005 has dealt with Ngai Tai Umupuia. Some in Ngai Tai Ki Tamaki charge the council has acted as kingmaker by recognising Umupuia and putting that marae's former chairman James Brown on council committees. (The council has now stopped dealing with Brown after what it described as "threats of physical

assault" against council staff. Brown has since resigned as chairman of Ngai Tai Umupuia).
Head office, as Pakeha say, for Ngai Tai is actually at Torere, east of Opotiki in the Bay of Plenty. The only action Ngai Tai has taken over the brouhaha in the garden was to withdraw, on the eve of the consent hearings, the name Torere from the whare — the subtribe said the controversy was damaging the reputation of its tipuna (ancestor) Torere.

One Sunday morning in October a group of around 30 — a mixture of Maori and Pakeha — gather in the valley of the Garden of Memories at the site of the original miniature whare. They do this every year, to com-memorate the dedication of Torere in 1936.
Slender and gently spoken, kaumatua Pita Turei speaks eloquently in Maori, then gives the English translation. He acknowledges the pain and suffering they have been through because of "the hatred of a few". He reiterates that peaceful resistance remains the most effective response. And he commends the visionary white woman who built the whare to begin with. There are readings from the Bible and Taini Drummond leads the Maori version of How Great Thou Art, followed by further korero and singing.
While all this is going on, up in front of the canvas-covered remains of the whare a group of Asians practise tai chi. For this moment at least, Miss Nixon's wish for her garden to be a venue for cultural education and exchange seems fulfilled.
Pita Turei doesn't much like being called a kaumatua, he tells me when we meet the following week at a cafe not far from his Kingsland home. It makes him sound too old, he complains. He's 52. It's really only at the whare in the gardens that he's regarded as a kaumatua, he explains.
Turei's mother was Ngai Tai. But he didn't know that until about 20 years ago when he went looking for his biological parents. He was adopted as a child by a Pakeha family and raised as a Pakeha. When he discovered his Ngai Tai lineage (his father was Pakeha) he was drawn to Torere and Taini Drummond in his search for his cultural heritage. When his Pakeha half-sister discovered she had a Maori half-brother she refused to meet him, he says. You could say he's had close and painful experience of racism.
He is now an iwi representative at resource consent hearings for both Ngai Tai and another Auckland iwi, Ngati Paoa.
Turei can be both amusing and insightful talking about how other Maori piss him off, and perhaps he them. He blames James Brown for stirring up bitterness over housing developments in Whitford that led to the torching of Torere.
But suggest to him that part of the problem in Howick has been that Pakeha there feel a marae excludes them from what is a public reserve and it feels as though you're well on the way to being labelled racist.
Argue that maybe this particular reserve is not the right place in Howick for a marae and he'll accuse you of just wanting Maori to disappear.
Ask him if the public will indeed be allowed to wander around into the whare at any time and it takes a very long time and a frustrating discussion about marae protocol for him to agree that they will.
Ask whether Maori object to Pakeha sprinkling the ashes of their dead on the nearby rose garden, as has been the practice, and you get a long answer about how that is disrespectful to the dead and Maori are required to respect the dead. But he finally concludes with, "Well if that's their thing". But it would be better if they didn't do it when it was windy, he adds.
Raise the point that the whare never belonged to Maori and I sense we're well down the track to this-is-all-Maori-land.
He's just plain wrong when he says the neighbouring Uxbridge Creative Centre and the creche are also in the Garden of Memories and no one objects to them being used by exclusive groups. They never were part of Miss Nixon's property. But he's on his way to a valid point, maybe even the crux of this whole argument.
Miss Nixon's garden of miniatures, as she built it, represented the history of the two races in New Zealand and she wanted to foster understanding between them, which still clearly has a way to go in Howick. The buildings that represented Pakeha New Zealand have either decayed, been lost or been carted off to the Howick Historical Village in Lloyd Elsmore Park, with little protest. There, volunteers dress up as 19th-century settlers every third Sunday and re-create Fencible life in Howick in the 1850s. You might say they're openly commemorating a group of settlers brought here specifically to suppress a Maori uprising.
There's nowhere in Howick that tells the story of the tangata whenua before the Fencibles arrived and there's nowhere else that Maori tell it their way. As Graham Harris says, without the whare in the garden there would be little evidence Maori ever lived around Howick at all.
Is it racist to oppose its rebuilding? Pita Turei has no doubt: "Racism is when you use your power to deny someone something. It won't just evaporate when a few old pensioners die off. You have to dismantle it."

COMMENTS