



# Parihaka:

Parihaka's people still preserve its tradition of hospitality, writes Pamela Wade

**N**OW here's a good bit of information for you," Maata says with a wry smile. "ChristChurch Cathedral was consecrated on the first of November, 1881. On the fifth of November, they had 1000 children in the cathedral and gave them sticky buns and ginger beer; whilst here in Parihaka, our children were feeding bread to 1500 armed constabulary."

We're sitting in the meeting house at Parihaka in Taranaki near Pungarehu. Maata and two other kuia have welcomed our group with a powhiri, then a whaikorero from her son, and we've responded with an unimpressive rendition of *Pokarekara Ana* that has us all making notes to self: learn the words properly.

Maata's welcome party, comprising a selection of her many children and foster-children, all neatly dressed in red and black, have sung beautifully before disappearing into the kitchen where, with a great deal of cheerful clatter and chatter, they're preparing our four-course lunch.

In the meantime, we sit and listen to Maata — "I'm the matriarch" — who is filling in the many shameful gaps in my knowledge of Parihaka. "Passive resistance to government land seizure" is as far as that goes; but there's so much more to the story. I'm surprised to learn that this village, a small cluster of houses surrounded by farmland, beyond which Mt Taranaki sulks behind a veil of cloud, was in the 1860s home to 2500

## » CHECKLIST

### PARIHAKA

#### ■ WHERE TO STAY

Stay on the side of the mountain at Stratford Mountain House ([www.stratfordmountainhouse.co.nz](http://www.stratfordmountainhouse.co.nz)), or far from traffic, but not civilisation, at Caniwi Lodge ([www.caniwilodge.co.nz](http://www.caniwilodge.co.nz)), or in a comfortable cabin right on the beach ([www.oakurabeach.com](http://www.oakurabeach.com)).

#### ■ WHAT TO DO

Visit Parihaka for one of a variety of tours which all include refreshments or a meal, entertainment and the story of Parihaka: [www.maata.co.nz](http://www.maata.co.nz)

#### ■ FURTHER INFORMATION

See [www.taranaki.info](http://www.taranaki.info)

people, with its own bakery and bank, and not only self-sufficient, but growing cash crops in its gardens. Trouble was coming, however: government surveyors had reached this remote area and were marking out the land.

In the Waikato, this had initiated some of New Zealand's fiercest fighting; but in Parihaka chiefs Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi had chosen a different approach: a campaign of civil disobedience and passive resistance, 50 years before Gandhi made headlines around the world with the same ideas. Survey pegs were removed, land was ploughed, but the strangers were treated with courtesy. It wasn't returned; the

MATRIARCH: Maata Wharehoka has a family connection with Parihaka dating back to the time of the invasion.

PICTURES / PAMELA WADE

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