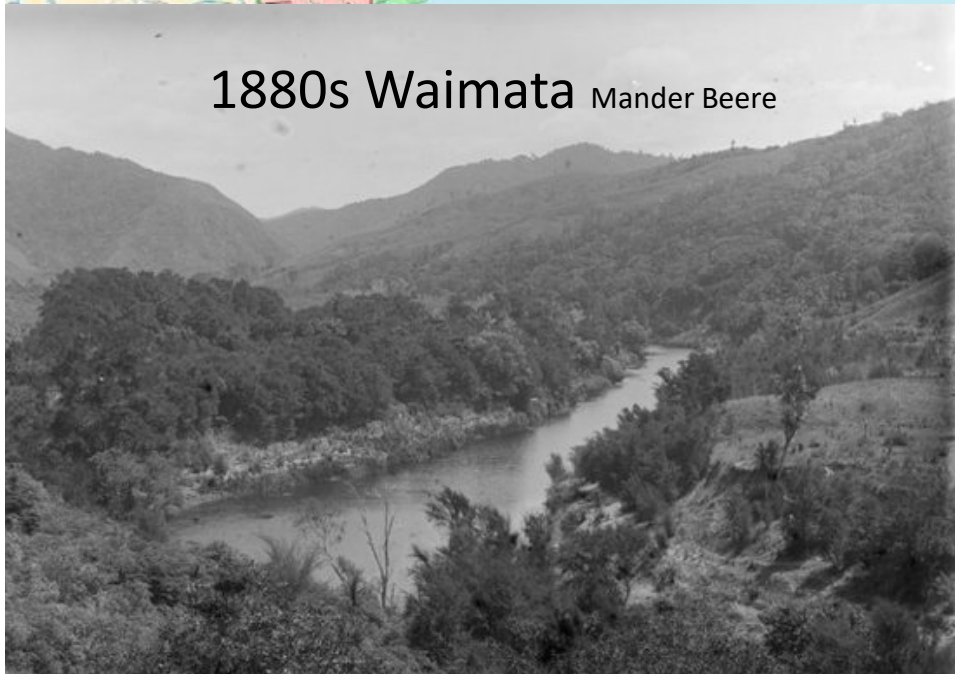
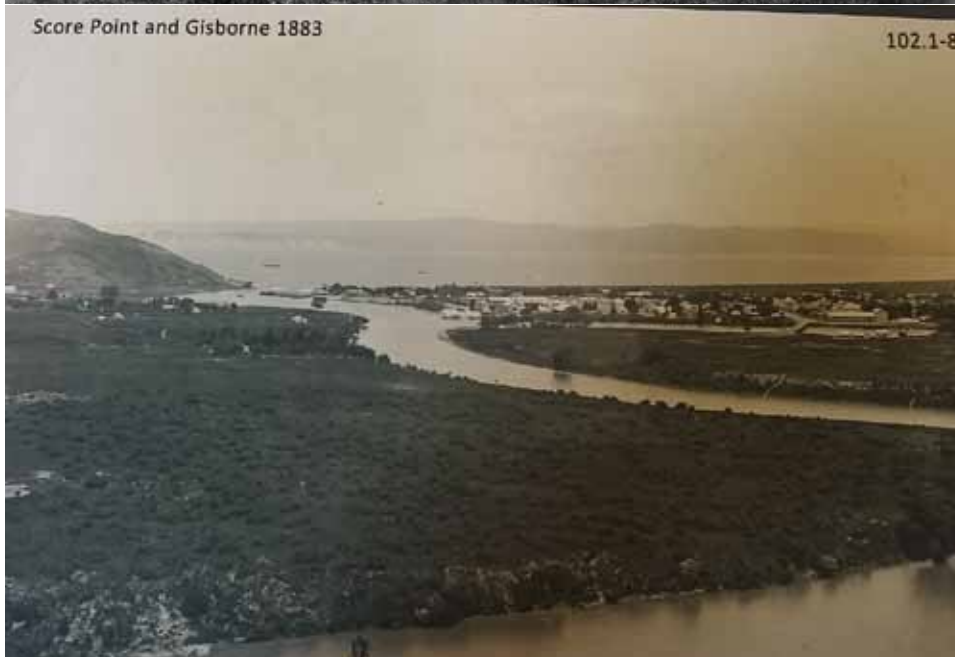


Initially, Europeans leased land within the Waimata catchment. Then, with the Native Lands Act 1865, land was surveyed, Crown title issued and land sold. The lower reaches were the first to go into European ownership from around 1880 --Holdens at Rimuroa; Hansens at Maka and Weka. In 1881, the Kenway brothers bought 3000 acres further upriver, which they called Te Pahi, meaning The End, because it was the end of the road. The NZ Native Land Settlement Company offered 20,000 acres for sale --South, East, North -- the following year.

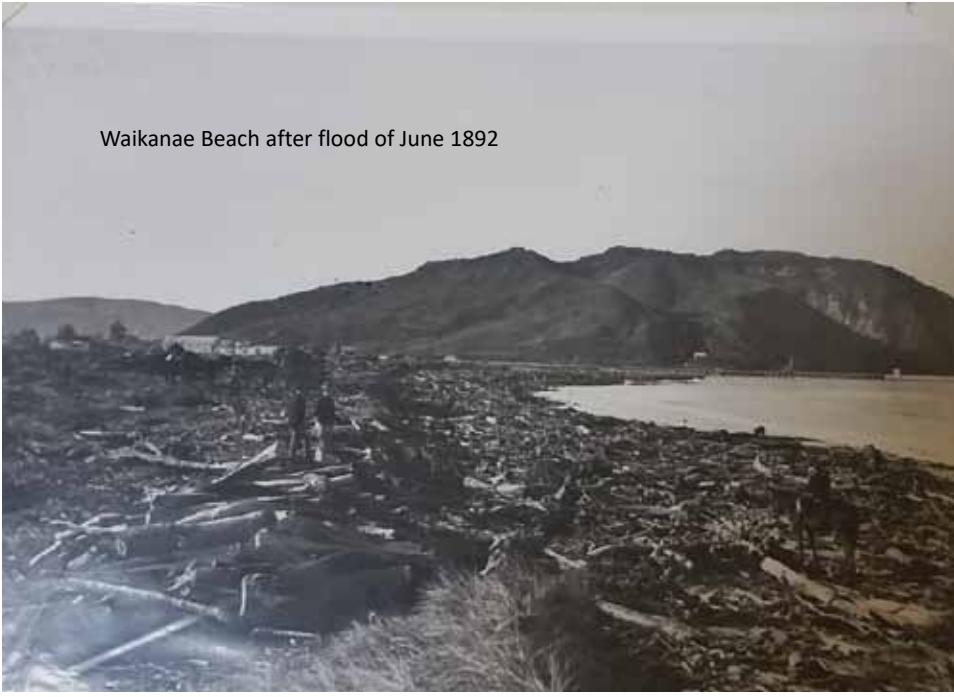


New owners cleared bush to create pasture for sheep, cattle, horses. In 1886, the Kenways called for tenders to fell 500 acres. So it continued, Hundreds of acres at a time. In the year 1901 alone, 3000 acres of bush went down.. It was hard work. Philip Kenway said ...*a man must be in his prime and keep pretty fit to "stick it" for long, and he must be well fed. A good contractor will stoke up his men, every two hours or so, with as much bread and potatoes, fresh mutton and beef as they'll hold, with jam, butter and tea ad lib.*



Felling was followed by fires, ash providing quick fertility to new pastures. The sight and smell of great volumes of smoke clouding the sky symbolised progress. In 1895, local doctor Alfred Heale died in a bush burn at the Wakaroa property he part-owned. Was this an accident or one of Gisborne's first murders? Such was the smoke that day, a ship coming down the coast thought there'd been a volcanic eruption. Smoke frequently obscured the coastline and caused businesspeople to turn on the lights at on a summer afternoon.

Waikanae Beach after flood of June 1892



It didn't take long before problems increased downstream – flooded land and homes, slumped riverbanks, damaged or destroyed bridges, harbour siltation and driftwood clogging the river, bridges and beaches.

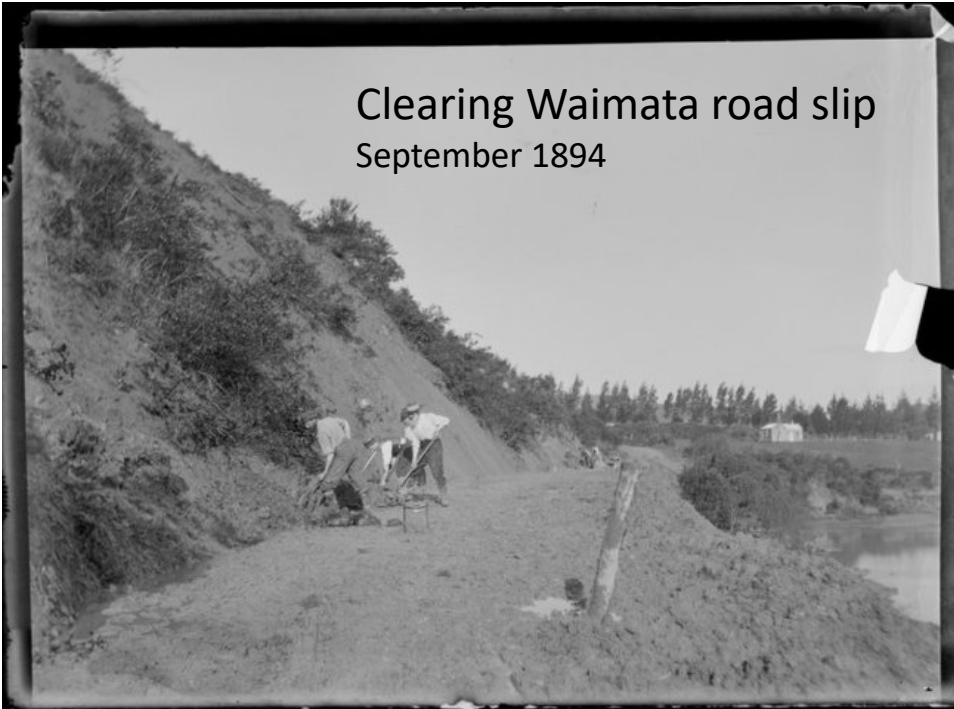
Some of this occurred even before bush was cleared, but problems worsened from the 1880s.

Clearing bush reduced land stability and led to greater sedimentation of river and streams.

A March 1880 flood brought down driftwood, heavy logs of totara and other woods.

Waikanae beach was regularly littered with woody debris

Clearing Waimata road slip  
September 1894



Early roads to the Waimata grew out of constantly used tracks, just four feet wide.

The river's left bank provided the main access to early blocks.

Past Waikereru, the road connected through to Maka and Weka stations then via what became Mander road to the Cabstand and higher up Slips were frequent. Access difficult. Roads, a boggy mess in winter.

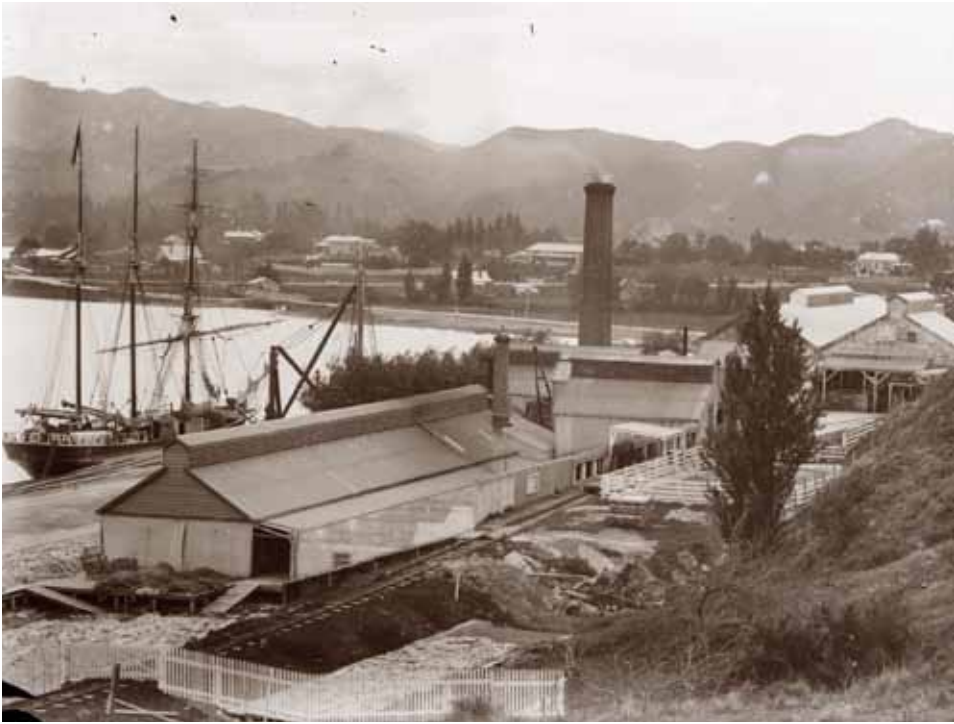
In about 1894, a separate road was built to the Waimata Valley through land gifted by Gray of Waiohika. This became the preferred route to Tolaga Bay until a new road was built inland away from the coast.

1897



As bush was cut and burned, and more silt headed down river – other factors were occurring at the rivermouth. The cultural boundary rock Te Toka a Taiau was blasted in 1877. A freezing works set up in 1896. A flood in 1894 caused “previously unseen destruction”, water descending like a tidal wave on low-lying Kahui. A slip on Linburn gave way, flooding two houses. In 1902, the river rose suddenly, floodwaters descended in “a great bank of boiling, bubbling turmoil, five feet high”.





Six days of floods in May 1916 and others later in the year filled the harbour with silt and brought the river harbour to an end. The channel depth went from 5 metres to just over 1 metre.

The port was closed for lengthy periods as dredges emptied the harbour of tonnes of silt only to see it silt up again in the next flood.



Since the 1890s, the Harbour Board had been advised to separate the harbour from the river. The public was asked for ideas. One suggestion in 1917 was to divert the River and its silt from above the Hole-in-the-Wall across Kaiti to Wainui beach. Another in 1920 was to take it through to Hamanatua Stream, Okitu. By 1931, the river was finally separated from the harbour with a diversion wall, and a new river mouth created.

Watties set up in the early 50s opposite the freezing works. Both remained until the 90s.

Sometimes Watties corn and peas travelled kilometres to The Island. That wasn't as bad as fat from the freezing works.



Slips and flooding continued regularly throughout the decades. In 1927, the steel superstructure of Kenway's Bridge -- the largest on the Waimata Road -- was swept off its piles. In May 1929, a huge slip completely blocked the river near Rimuroa on Riverside Road and carried away chains of road and 7 acres of land.

In 1944, trees jammed piers of the William Pettie Bridge, and Pushed one pier out of alignment

In 1948 the Hegartys were shut in at Waikereru, for a month. Dozens of people were shut in when part of Riverside Road, three miles from Gisborne, was completely destroyed in 1955.



792

## RIVERSIDE ROAD



In 1958, a Waimiro Station hillside, “collapsed with an ominous roar” into the bed of the Waimata, entirely blocking the upper reaches of the river. And so it has gone on. July 1968 a massive slip covering 22 acres blocked the Mangaorangi Stream 26 miles north of Gisborne. A lake of three and a half miles wide formed behind it,



1977, 1985, 1988 Bola More  
Up and down the river, residents became used to their gardens going under water. But they're concerned about the loss of their properties to bank erosion; and the lack of trees holding the banks. Willows are great at holding the soil. But they need to be managed. They can't be allowed to get too big, fall over and block the river and bridges.



Kenways Bridge

10 March 1988

Floods damage and sometimes destroy bridges – the lifeline to access.

A new low-level bridge at Linburn built in the 1950s was a better than fording the river, Greta Watson said, but it was beneath the river almost as often as it was above. One winter they were flooded in 13 times. A high-level bridge was built in 1986, which made a huge difference to their lives.

*Heavy rain no longer alarmed us. We could forget about leaving a car on the town side of the river in the middle of the night. We were at last in the 20th century.*





Forestry may have cut down erosion up the top but it raises the ire of residents

Opposition ranges from slash coming down the river to battered banks, fences, trees, wildlife; ruined roads; an influx of wild pigs and deer, health problems AND community decline –

Up the top end, farm numbers reduced from 42 to eight in a few decades.

Riparian planting is not the answer on all sites. Some land is simply too difficult to fence.

Hiwiroa's Mat Bailie has 12 miles of river on his property. He says It's impossible to fence.

We'd walk away from the farm if we had to do that. The land is so unstable, especially around the river. How can we plant it when we have forestry smashing everything along the way down?

September 2015 – Marian Drive

The same flood toppled three 60 year old oaks from Michael Chrisp's Owen Road property. They're still lying there

The river has filled up from Anzac Park to what was The Island, which together with the second island disappeared in the 80s. The Hole in the Wall went long before.

The river has got narrower and shallower by Anzac Park, Alan Thompson said.

The banks are steeper. What was once a four foot drop to the mud is now 1 foot.

From the straight by Anzac Park up to Grant Road, you can now walk across at low tide



Then there's the clean-up

In the lower reaches, the river has been home to eel, kahawai, whitebait, mullet, kakahi (freshwater mussels). Even sharks, seals and a notorious dolphin, Moko, made their way at least to Anzac park Today, people are still catching kahawai, mullet, flounder and eels in the lower reaches– and at times snapper, trevally and bream. The number of fish now may not be worse but they're not better either.

In 1980s, artist John Walsh fed his family on mullet from the river. His Neighbour talked about walking across the river on the backs of mullet; Thomas Corson walked across mussels near Owen Road.





Kids speared mullet around the Barker's Bend. Or blasted them out of the river

They filled jam jars with powder, covered it with a layer of wax, put in a fuse and detonator all bought from Common Shelton. Then dropped it over the side of the canoe before paddling away furiously.

Michael Chrisp: *You felt a big thump and ended up with stunned mullet floating on the surface.*

They tried introducing trout. In 1903, an expert blamed the failure on all the sheep dip poured into the river. River health improved when this practice ended.



For 140 years, the Waimata has been central to people's lives and the fun they made for themselves – a place to swim and picnic; ply up and down on canoes, kayaks, waka, yachts, home-made rafts and stand-up paddle boards; or to play in the slithery mud.

Described as a great cultural mixing ground, the river was a place where young people became adults, where they had their first date, first kiss, first cigarette.

The town end was, and in some cases still is, home to Sea Scouts, Scouts, canoe and kayak clubs, Boys' and Girls' Brigades and waka ama. Public and private reserves were created -- Hole-in-the-Wall (1886 pic), Anzac Park, Longbush. Up the top -- dog trials and tennis.



Tragically, the lack of swimming ability in early years saw dozens drown over the decades

Not far from here, 12 black Tasmanian possums were introduced in 1891. Within a few decades, they were a major problem,

In the 50s, Dave Hughes cashed in on the catchment board bounty of 2/6 per pair of hind feet. He and a mate would bike to Rimunui –with a tent fly, a 22 and a club each .

One time they killed 119 possums. They could earn as much if not more hunting possums at the weekend than they could working all week as apprentices.





For decades, rowing was Gisborne's most popular pastime for spectators and participants.

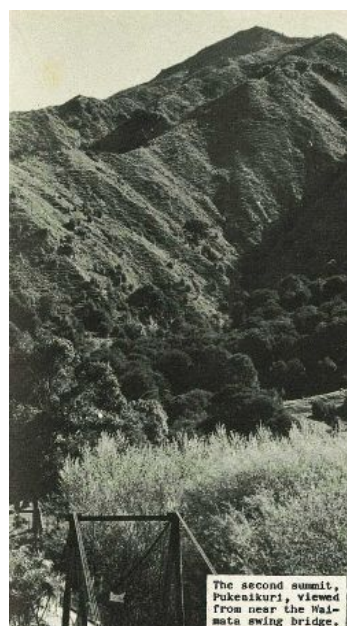
From 1885, rowing seasons formally opened with a lively procession of craft at high tide. An array of vessels sporting bunting travelled up the Waimata to Harris's Bend (Anzac Park) then back down to the lower wharf in the Turanganui.

At the 1891 opening, three rowing clubs -- Gisborne, Poverty Bay and Turanganui -- between them had 20 boats on the water. Many other vessels joined the procession.



Ted Otway built ocean-going yacht Cecilene on undeveloped riverside land, now Grant Road. He'd laid the keel and started the hull when the 48 flood took it away. He carried on and launched the boat in the river in 52. A decade later, Otway raced the Cecilene in the last Auckland to Sydney yacht race to boast an all-Gisborne crew.

In 77, Gisborne yacht club launched Optimists off Rod McCulloch's Score Road lawn. McCulloch grew up beside the river. He said they didn't need to go away for holidays, not with Anzac park, the bush and the river. Slingshot, playing with shanghai, and BB guns were part of the rites of passage



Gisborne Canoe and Tramping Club ran the Creswell Cup from 1960 until 1977. Starting and finishing on the road at the swing-bridge at LongBush, the race followed a course up Motukeo, back down again, across the bridge, up Pukeaikuri, and back to the road. Each hill is about 1400 feet and the horizontal distance run, about two and a half miles.

Harrier Dave Hughes was inaugural winner of the Cup, donated by Bob Creswell as Moutekeo was his land. Hughes won numerous times and occasionally probably let others pip him to the post.

Creswell Cup 1961





Great training ground – surf life savers, waka ama paddlers and Olympic gold medal-winning kayakers Alan Thompson and Grant Bramwell, For about a decade, this pair trained on Waimata's lower 5km and the Turanganui for at least two hours before and after work – twice a day, every day. In the late 1970s, Bramwell and friend Julie Watson launched a dinghy from Watson's Linburn bridge and navigated downriver to Marian Drive . *It took about five hours as the old dinghy crashed and bashed its way over logs and through willows crossing the river.*



Whatever the era, the 1800s, the 1970s or 2018 --- being beside or in the Waimata holds a special place in most residents' hearts.