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Profile of the District

HISTORY OF SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Little is known of the history of pre-European life in the District. It appears that inter tribal conflict was common and still underway at the time of the arrival of the first European. This evolved to include conflict between Maori and Pakeha as the European steadily encroached on Maori territory. In 1833 missionaries established the first mission at Puriri, and then Matamata. Traders then arrived during the 1850's via the Waihou River.

The first permanent European settlement was in 1865 when JC Firth established an estate of approximately 22,700 hectares in size. He broke the land in for agriculture, built a

number of roads and cleared the Waihou River for steam navigation to serve his estate. The Waihou and Piako rivers provided the major routes for freight and passenger traffic at this time. In 1874 Thomas and Samuel Morrin purchased a large tract of land on condition that he construct 25 miles of road connecting the Waikato, Piako and Thames districts. This required reclamation of large areas of swamp. It was found that effective reclamation resulted in land suitable for farming.

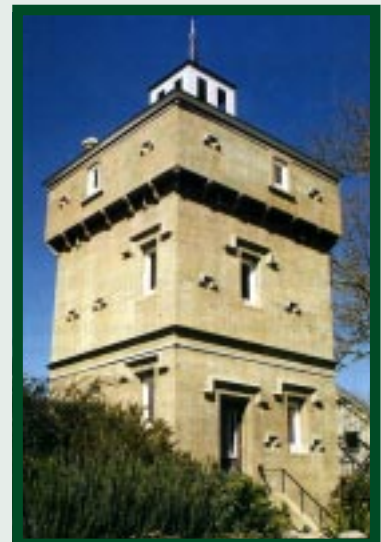
Meanwhile, Firth established the first cheese and butter factory at Waharoa, and laid the foundation of the family dairy industry by selling blocks (20 hectares in size) of his land near the factory. Before long most freight travelled up the Waihou and Piako Rivers.

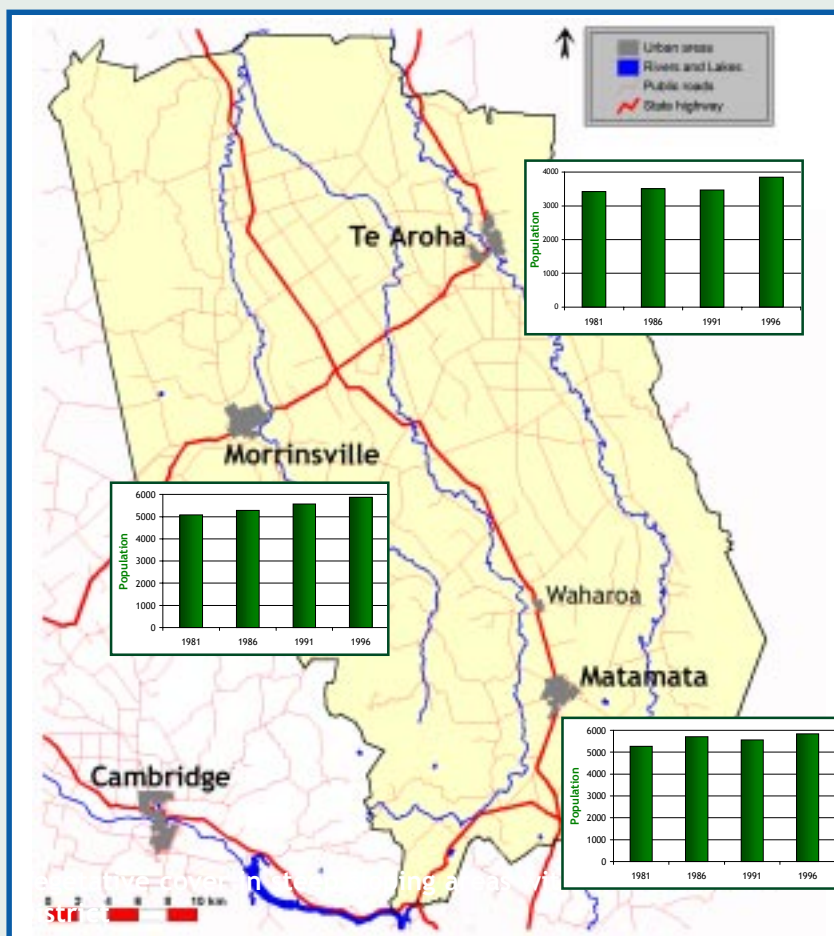
In 1880 Te Aroha became the centre of a short-lived gold

rush initiated by Hone Werahiko. In 1881 when the prospectors started to leave, the hot springs were developed. A regular boat service and permanent bath houses were provided, and in 1886 a rail link with Hamilton completed the link to Auckland. In the year ending 31 March 1887, 28,553 baths were taken in Te Aroha compared with 4,878 in Rotorua.

By 1900 there were 22 springs discovered and the Hot Springs Domain passed into the control of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts in 1903¹. The Department later handed over control of the area to a joint Piako County/Te Aroha Borough administrative body which today continues to be administered by the Council.

¹ Te Aroha Spa, Famous Health Resort, no date: New Zealand Government Tourist Department.





Urban areas and populations within Matamata-Piako District

THE LAND

Matamata-Piako District is bounded in the east by the Kaimai Ranges and in the west by older ranges. In between lies the valley of the Hauraki Plains. Over time the Waihou, Waitoa and Piako Rivers have moved back and forth across the Plains, depositing shingle and silt and creating swamps and wetland areas, and helping to create the present landscape of flat alluvial plains and peat swamp.

The Piako-Waitoa River catchment occupies a significant proportion of the District. The catchment has medium rainfall, negligible summer flow, and downstream of Morrinsville the catchment was swamp before it was drained. The Piako River Scheme provides river widening, deepening, straightening and stop-banking. Much of the catchment is now used for dairying whilst the adjacent Waihou catchment has a

significant proportion of indigenous bush along the Kaimai-Mamaku Ranges. The middle reaches of the Waihou catchment are developed for bloodstock and dairying, with sheep and dry stock on the western hills. Much of the agricultural development and the lower areas of Te Aroha are dependent on the river drainage schemes. Springs are notable in the Waihou catchment. The Waihou River has major flood protection structures.

The District is 182,150ha in area of which 3,560ha are held in Maori title. The four tribal groups with Mana Whenua in the District are Paoa, Tainui, Raukawa and Hauraki. Te Whenua, the land, is to the Maori one of the most important aspects of their culture providing economic opportunities and societal identity, spiritual strength and a symbol of social stability.

The District has a well-established dairy industry with 82% of the total land area being modified for farming and in grassland, lucerne and tussock. Dairy cattle are by far the most numerous of the livestock (368,237 cattle September 1996) with sheep being the next highest productive group at 108,730 animals. The District supplies approximately 12% of total New Zealand milk fat (by

weight). Beef, deer, pigs and goats are also notable productive groups. In February 1996 there were 1,184 people working full-time or part-time on 2,762 full time properties. Overall, thirty five percent of the labour force of the District is employed in the primary sector (i.e. agriculture, hunting and forestry).

Prospecting and mining activity in the district has been concentrated along the Kaimai-Mamuku Ranges, especially in the vicinity of Mt Te Aroha. A significant peat resource exists on the plains and peat has in the past been extracted by Waikato Peat Products NZ Ltd from an 80ha site near to the north-west of the District boundary. The western ranges of the District have also attracted recent investigations for precious and semi precious metals. A number of quarries have been established within the District extracting roading materials and aggregate for construction. Commercial sandpits are operated on the plains utilising sediments previously deposited by rivers.

Along the Kaimai Ranges and in the vicinity of Mt Te Aroha there is a long mining history, particularly for precious metals (gold and silver). The District contains the legacy of New Zealand's only significant



base metal mine, the Tui mine at Te Aroha. The Tui mine was operated by the Norpac Mining Company between 1966 and 1973, and produced copper, lead and zinc concentrates in addition to silver and gold. The mine closed suddenly in 1973 without adequate rehabilitation or environmental protection measures in place. The Tui mine tailings sit high on the slopes of Mt Te Aroha. Discharges from the mine and tailings have permanently polluted the northern branch of the Tunakohoia Stream (which was previously used as a major source of water supply for the Te Aroha township), as well as the Tui Stream itself. The tailings require regular maintenance and there have been problems identifying who should bear the cost of this work. At present the Council is involved

in regular inspections and maintenance at its cost.

The District also has a number of significant areas of native flora and fauna. The Kopuatai Peat Dome is the largest and most significant remaining peat dome in New Zealand and contains at least six threatened plants, the locally threatened North Island fernbird, a number of important fish species and has international significance as a waterfowl habitat wetland.

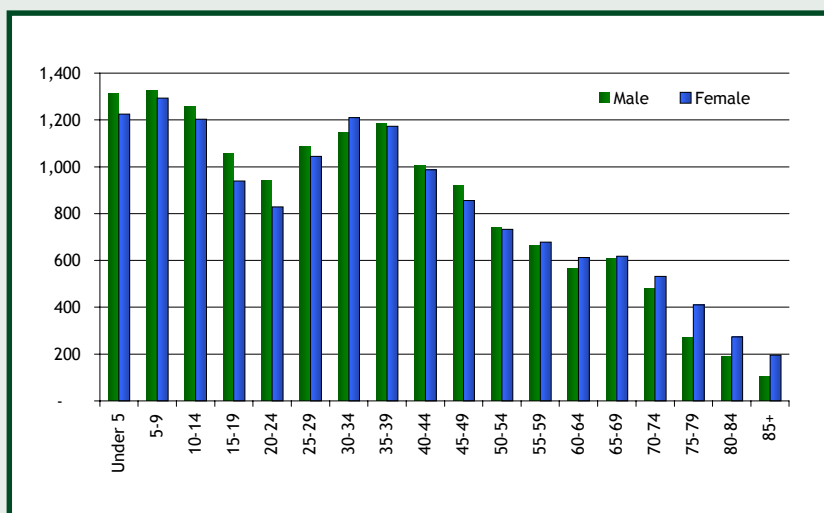
THE PEOPLE

There are three main settlements within the District, Matamata, Morrinsville and Te Aroha.

Matamata is situated on the broad valley floor known as the Matamata Plain, between the Kaimai Range to the east, and the Peria hills on the west. Matamata is the centre of a large dairying, cattle fattening and horse breeding area. The township is the main service and distribution centre for this area, and its industries include; engineering, concrete products, stock-feed manufacture, fibrous plaster, joinery and furniture, wrought-iron work, and popular decorative building stone which is quarried 8km to the south, at Hinuera.

Te Aroha is sited at the base of Mt Te Aroha and serves the surrounding farming district. It features a landscaped Domain with Hot Mineral Spa Baths. Famous for the Hot Springs Domain, Te Aroha attracts many visitors to the hot mineral spas. The domain, in the centre of the town, covers an area of 44 hectares and includes lawns, formal gardens, and barbecue and picnic areas. Many mountain and bush walks and mountain biking trails start at the hot pool's complex.

Morrinsville is situated approximately 26km from Hamilton on flat dairy farming land. The town has established itself around the dairying industry. Other local industry that has established within the vicinity of Morrinsville includes the De Gussa peroxide chemical plant and a fertiliser factory.



Usually resident population 1996

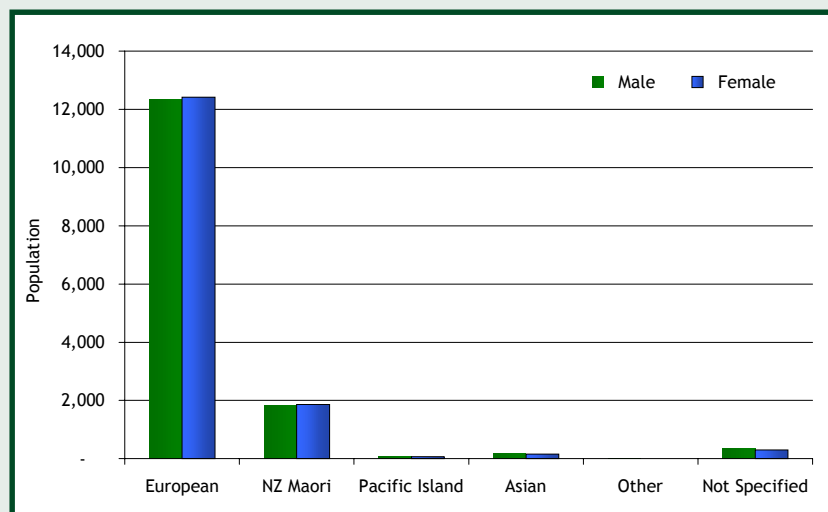
Figures from the 1996 census indicate that the population of the district is declining. In 1991 the population of the district was 29,847 which declined to 29,661 in 1996. However, the three main centres of Te Aroha, Matamata and Morrinsville all experienced population growth ranging from 0.31% for Te Aroha to 1.5% and 1.51% for Morrinsville and Matamata, respectively. The areas within the district that experienced

significant population decline were Waitoa (-17.98%) and Waharoa (-13.95%). A significant reduction in the number of dwellings in Waitoa due to industry expansion (industry purchase of housing) would have contributed to a decline in population. The significant decline in Waharoa would be attributed to the closure of large industry and redundancy and unemployment forcing residents to move out of the area for alternative employment opportunities.

As the figure opposite shows, the population of the district is predominantly European (84%), with a small proportion of Maori (14%). The Maori population within the district is consistent with the national average of 15%, but significantly lower than the regional representation which is 21%.

Most of the population is either under 14 years old or between 25 and 40. The decrease in the number of 15 - 25 year olds is thought to be due to many leaving the area for education and employment opportunities, then returning to the District later on.

Of the 29,661 residents in 1996, 15% had some form of vocational training or university degree. This is significantly lower than the regional rate of 24% and the national rate of 26%.



Ethnicity of population 1996



THE ECONOMY

Matamata-Piako is one of 10 full and 2 part districts that comprise the Waikato Region. The Waikato Region currently contributes about 10% of the NZ economy¹.

Depending upon the economic measure used (refer Table opposite), the Matamata-Piako District makes up between 8 and 10.8% of the region's economy.

The five most valuable sectors for the district are

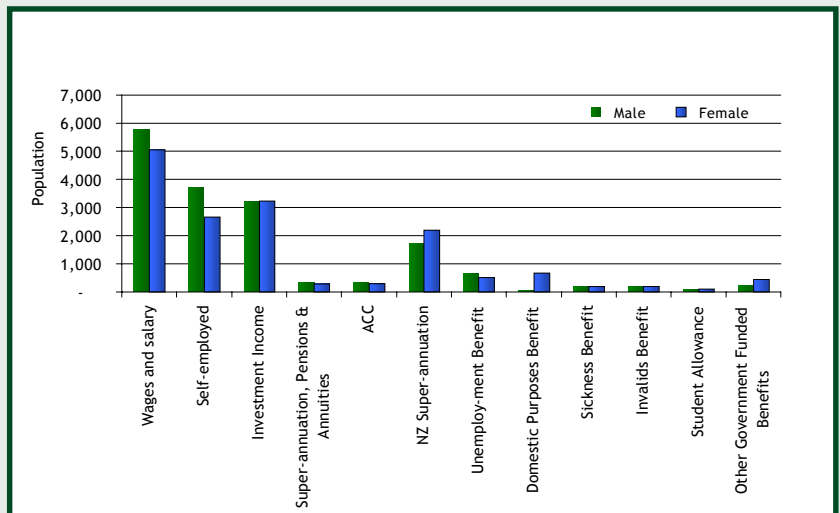
- Dairy Farming
- Wholesale and Retail Trade
- Dairy Manufacturing
- Meat Processing
- Ham and Poultry Processing

These sectors highlight importance of primary production and processing for the District's economy. Farming, agricultural contracting, dairy manufacturing and meat processing collectively account for just under half of all economic activity in the district. This makes the economy vulnerable to changes in the primary farming sectors.

High skilled sectors such as health and business services in Hamilton capture much of the district demand for these services. Accordingly, the

Economic Measure	Waikato	MPDC	District Contribution
Gross Regional Product in \$M	9883.8	789.9	8.0 %
Gross Sales or Output in \$M	21063.8	2269.4	10.8 %
Employment in FTE (full time equivalent) persons	135,871	13,814	10.2 %

Economic significance of Matamata-Piako for the Waikato Region



Income Source 1996

district typically *imports* high valued services such as these from outside its area. This is a common problem for rural districts, such as Matamata-Piako District, located on the periphery of larger cities.

The Waikato Region is well placed to grow with a significant presence in the primary production and processing sectors as well as the forestry and tourism-related sectors. These sectors are considered to be among the main drivers of the country's future economic growth. This growth may help extend and diversify the

economy of the district in the future.

The main sources of income in the district in 1996 were wages and salaries, self-employment and investment income. In addition, a high percentage of the district's residents are superannuitants. The unemployment rate in the district is 3.3%, comparing favorably with the regional rate of 5.2% and a national rate of 4.9%.²

¹ Hughes, W.R., 1999: Matamata-Piako DC District Economy Analysis for 1999, University of Waikato

² Statistics New Zealand, Census 1996, published by Statistics New Zealand