

# A Short History of Rēkohu

Rēkohu is the Moriori name for the main island in the Chatham Islands group, which is part of New Zealand. The name Rēkohu means "misty skies" or "the sun as seen through the mist". The people of the land, or tchakat henu, are the Moriori. This issue of the School Journal is dedicated to them.

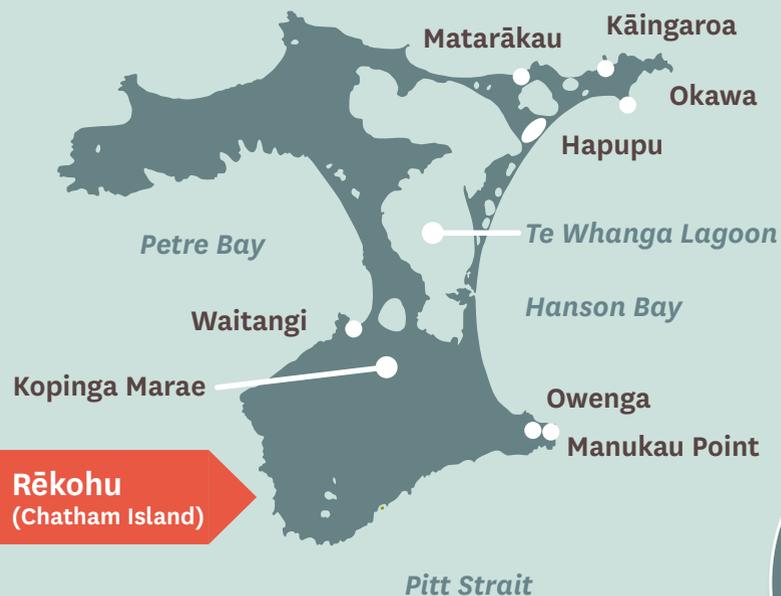


Traditional stories told by the Moriori say that the descendants of Rongomaiwhenua (peace on the land) and Rongomaitere (peace on the sea) are already living on Rēkohu when Kahu, the Polynesian explorer, arrives by canoe. Kahu travels around the island before returning to Hawaiki.

His visit is followed by the arrival of the Wheteina people from Hawaiki, who are escaping war with the Rauru. Later, the Rauru themselves migrate to Rēkohu. The problems between the two tribes begin again. Nunuku-whenua, a high-ranking chief who is tired of the fighting, says:

**"From now and forever, never again let there be war."**

The people agree never to kill when they fight. This agreement becomes known as the Law of Nunuku. From that day, the people of Rēkohu live together in peace ...



Rēkohu  
(Chatham Island)

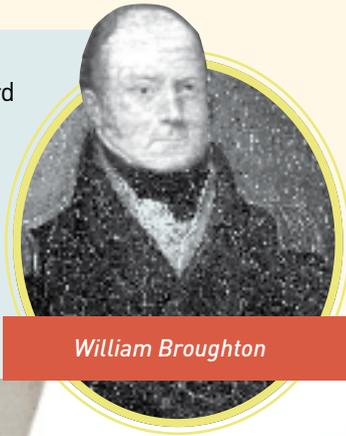
Rangiaurii  
(Pitt Island)



1790

1791

The first Europeans visit Rēkohu on board the HMS *Chatham*. The ship's captain, Lieutenant William Broughton, says the island now belongs to King George III and names it Chatham Island. Just as the visit ends, a young Moriori, Tamakaroro, is shot and killed.



William Broughton

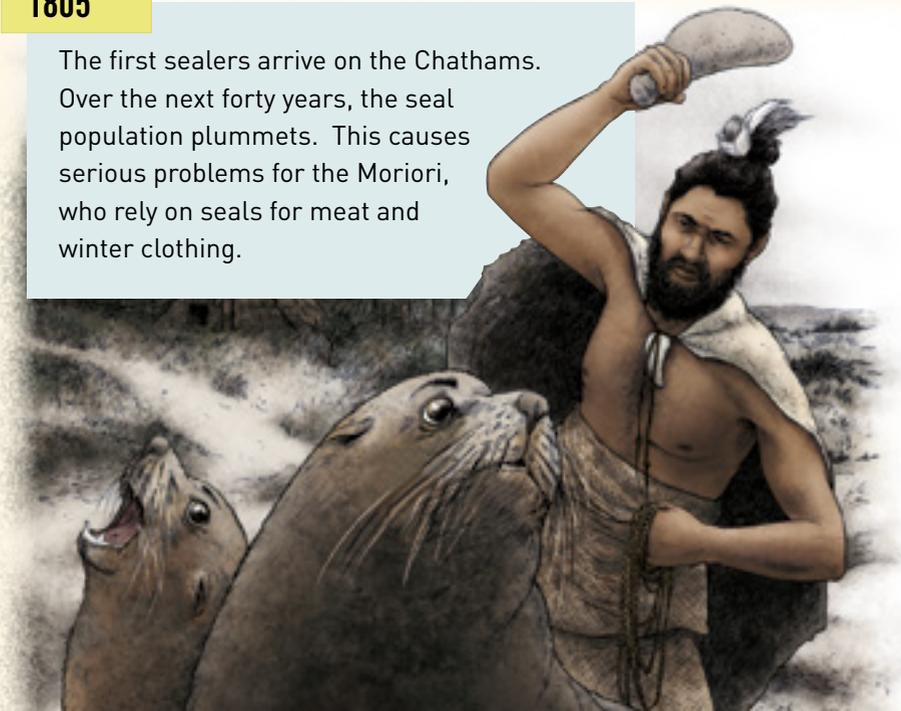
1800



Plaque at Kāingaroa commemorating the arrival of HMS Chatham in 1791

1805

The first sealers arrive on the Chathams. Over the next forty years, the seal population plummets. This causes serious problems for the Moriori, who rely on seals for meat and winter clothing.



1810

1820

1828-1832

Around four hundred Moriori (about a fifth of their population) die from European diseases such as the flu and measles.

Early 1830s

News of Rēkohu spreads among Ngāti Mutunga and Ngāti Tama, who have been driven from their land in Taranaki. They are especially interested to learn that although people already live on the island, they do not fight to kill.

1835

Ngāti Mutunga and Ngāti Tama arrive on Rēkohu, seasick after a long trip. The Moriori nurse them back to health, and then the Māori "walk the land", taking possession and killing as they go. The Moriori decide against breaking their ancient law of peace and do not fight back. Around 226 are killed. The rest are taken as slaves, and many die in the following years.

1830

1840

Whaling stations are established at Okawa and Owenga on the eastern coast of Rēkohu.

Waitangi harbour, Rēkohu, 1840

1840

1842

The British government says the Chatham Islands are now part of New Zealand.



1850

1855

Archibald Shand, the island's first government official, arrives on Rēkohu. His job is to impose New Zealand laws and collect taxes.



Archibald Shand and his wife, Elizabeth

1862

Only 101 Moriori now live on Rēkohu. Elders write an account of the invasion, listing those Moriori who were killed in 1835 or who died afterwards as slaves. This is sent to New Zealand's governor, George Grey, along with a letter asking for his help.

1863

The slavery of Moriori is abolished.



Waitangi around the time of the first Native Land Court hearings

1866

All of Ngāti Tama and most of Ngāti Mutunga return to Taranaki. Moriori once again are the majority people on Rēkohu.

1870

The Native Land Court investigates land claims on Rēkohu. The court awards most of the island to Ngāti Mutunga by applying the Māori custom of conquest even though Moriori did not fight back. Moriori are given the remaining 2.7 percent of the land.

1880



1885

Te One School opens (the island's first school).

1890

1900



1900

The population of Rēkohu is now four hundred, but only twelve people identify as being Moriori.

1860

1870

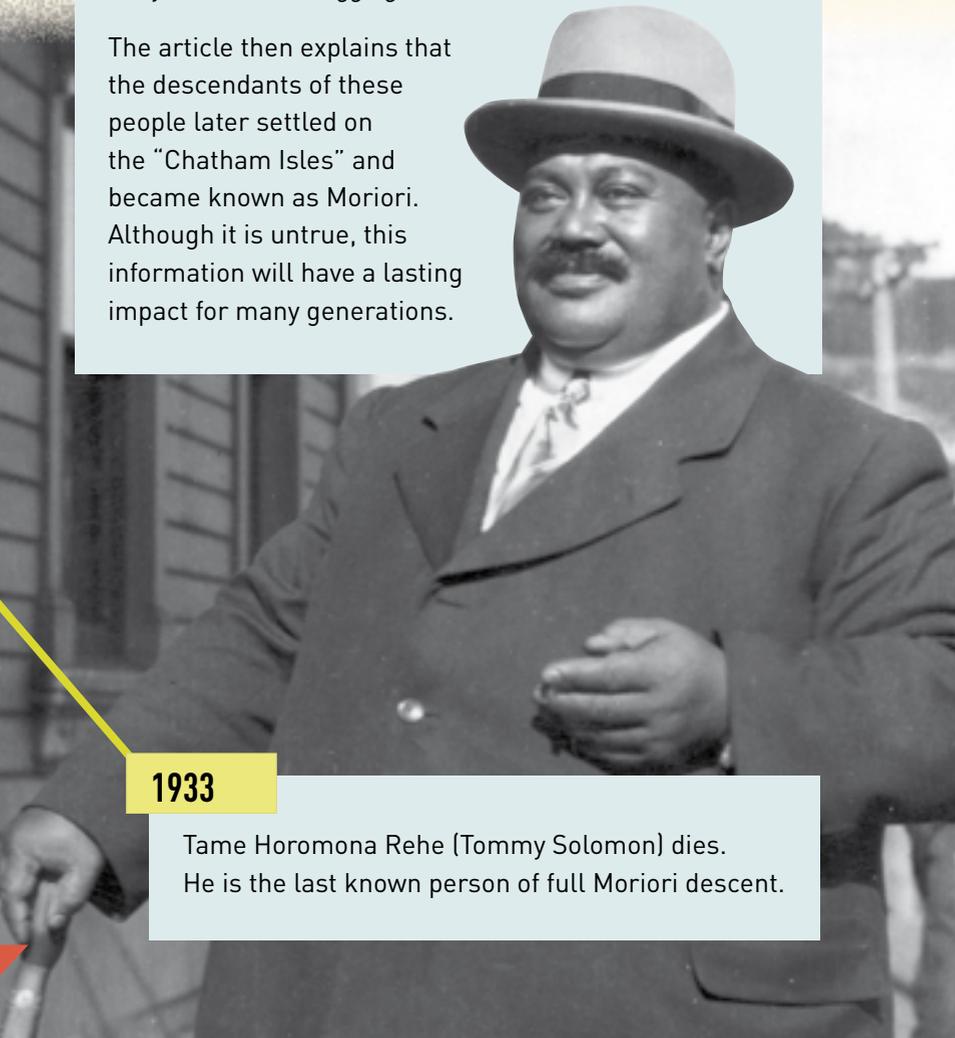
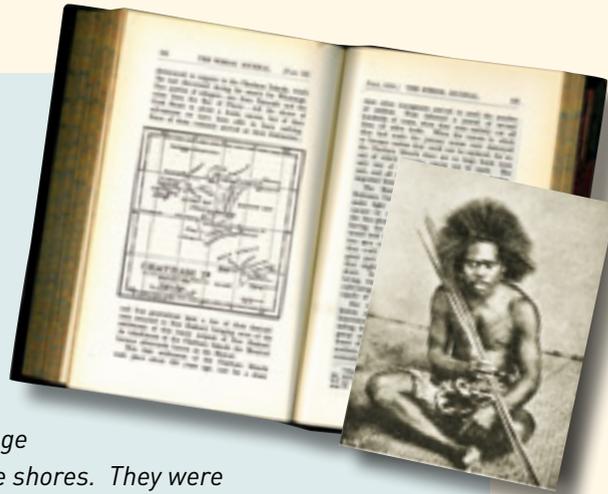
1910

1916

The *School Journal* publishes a series of articles, "How the Maoris Came to New Zealand". Students are told:

*... at a date that cannot be ascertained, a strange folk arrived on these shores. They were ocean waifs occupying three canoes that had been carried away by a storm ... They had a habit of looking sideways out of the corners of their eyes, and were an indolent and chilly folk, fond of hugging the fireside.*

The article then explains that the descendants of these people later settled on the "Chatham Isles" and became known as Moriori. Although it is untrue, this information will have a lasting impact for many generations.



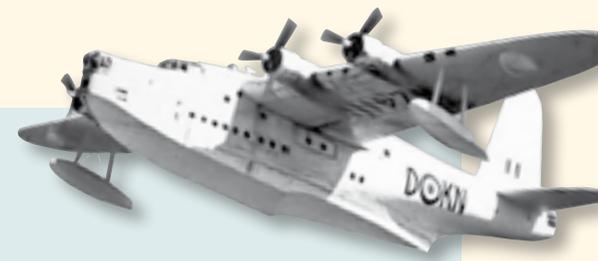
1933

Tame Horomona Rehe (Tommy Solomon) dies. He is the last known person of full Moriori descent.

1940

1942

A Sunderland flying boat lands on Te Whanga lagoon. This is the start of a regular air service to Rēkohu.



1950

1963

The first attempt is made to preserve the Moriori dendroglyphs (tree carvings) at Hapupu.

1965

A four-year crayfish boom begins on Rēkohu.



During the late 1960s, around 20 000 tonnes of crayfish were exported from Rēkohu.

1970

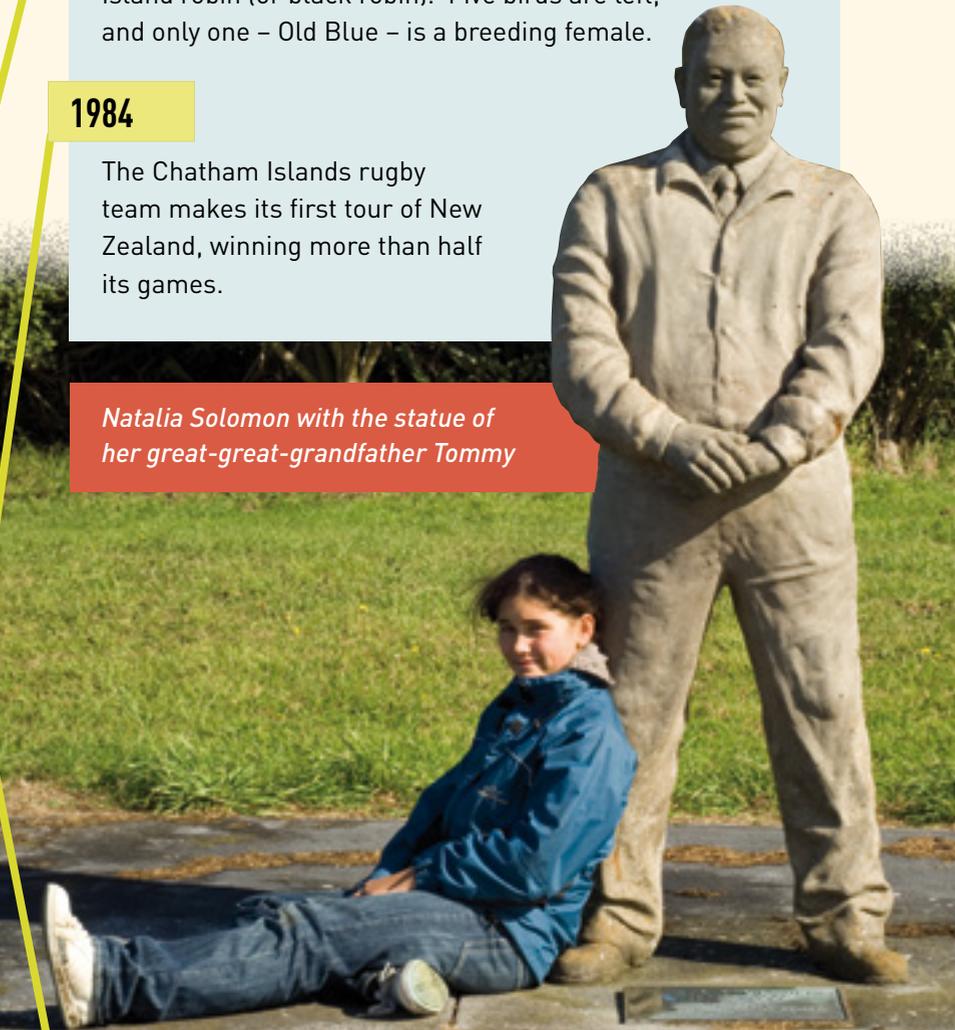
1976

The New Zealand Wildlife Service (now the Department of Conservation) begins its programme to save the Chatham Island robin (or black robin). Five birds are left, and only one – Old Blue – is a breeding female.

1984

The Chatham Islands rugby team makes its first tour of New Zealand, winning more than half its games.

*Natalia Solomon with the statue of her great-great-grandfather Tommy*



1986

A statue of Tame Horomona Rehe is unveiled by the Prime Minister, David Lange, at Manukau Point.

1994

Hearings begin on Rēkohu for the Moriori claim to the Waitangi Tribunal. In the claim, Moriori wish to be officially known as tchakat henu of the land.

1980

1990

2000

2001

Almost six hundred people identify as Moriori in the New Zealand census. The Hokotehi Moriori Trust is established to represent all Moriori people and to negotiate fisheries and Treaty settlement claims.

2005

Kopinga Marae is officially opened. It is the first Moriori marae to be built on Rēkohu in over 160 years.



2008

The government gives \$6 million to Moriori to help them save their culture.



2010

# A Short History of Rēkohu

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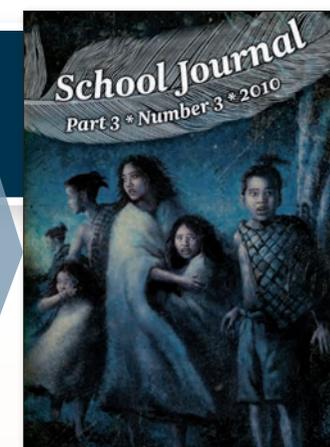
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