

1839

Te Papa, n.d. [a]

Kao, kao, e hoki! No, no, go back!

E noho, noho mai, Kawana! Stay, remain here, Governor!

The making of the Treaty

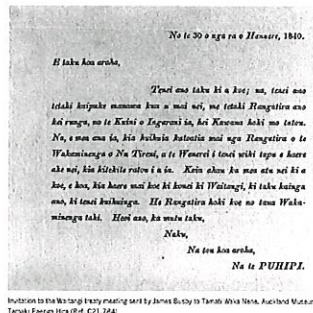
A treaty in the making

The British government appointed William Hobson as consul to an independent New Zealand. It sent him here with one goal – to get Māori to sign over sovereignty of all or part of New Zealand to Britain. Hobson would then become lieutenant governor over those areas.

Hobson sailed into the Bay of Islands on Wednesday, 29 January 1840. **James Busby, British Resident, met him, and the two began planning a treaty that would carry out their government's intentions.**



William Hobson, Watercolour by Mary Ann Vaughan, 1839. Rex Kool Collection. National Library of Australia (Ref. 0045055555)



Invitation to the Waitangi Treaty meeting sent by James Busby to Tamati Waka Ngata, Auckland Museum. Tamati Waka Ngata Collection. C21.724

Invitation translation

30 January 1840

My dear friend, I have contact with you again. A war ship has arrived with a child on board sent by the Queen of England to be a Governor for us here. Now, he suggests that all the chiefs of the Confederation of New Zealand, on Wednesday of the 30th week coming should gather to meet him. So I ask you my friend to come to this meeting here at Waitangi, at my home. You are a child of this Confederation. And so, to conclude.
From your dear friend, Busby

Working fast

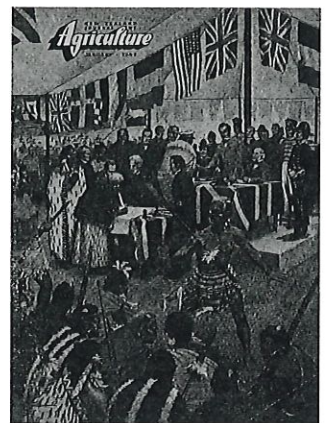
Busby sent these invitations to local rangatira (chiefs) to come to his house at Waitangi on 5 February. Meanwhile, Hobson, with no legal training, struggled to write the treaty he wanted the rangatira to sign.

Unimpressed with Hobson's efforts, Busby redrafted the treaty, adding an all-important promise – that Māori would retain possession of their lands, forests, fisheries, and other property.

Finally, the missionary Henry Williams translated the treaty into Māori. However, it wasn't an exact translation.

The first meeting, 5 February 1840

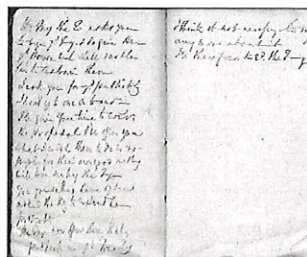
Early on Wednesday 5 February, waka (canoes) streamed across the bay to Waitangi. Settler vessels joined them, flags flying. A marquee was set up on Busby's lawn, while stalls sold refreshments – pork, bread, pies, ale, and spirits – to the gathering crowds.



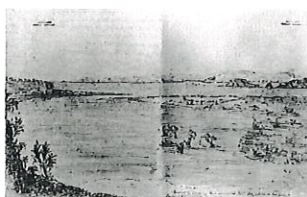
Photolithograph by Leon and Cornwell Mitchell, 1945. National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Māhinga o Aotearoa, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (Ref. A242-002)

The scene in the marquee. 'In front of the platform ... were the principal ... chiefs ... some clothed with dog-skin mats made of ... stripes of black and white hairy others ... in ... new woollen cloaks ... of crimson, blue, brown, and plaid, and, indeed, of every shade of striking colour ... while some were dressed in plain European and some in common Native dresses ... here and there a ... talaha ... was seen erected, adorned with the long flowing white hair of the tails of the New Zealand dog and crimson cloth and red feathers.'

William Colenso, The Authentic and Genuine History of the Signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Government of New Zealand, 1890 (reprinted Cassell, 1971)



William Colenso's notebook, in which Colenso took shorthand notes of Hobson's opening words at Waitangi. Courtesy of Heke's Bay Museum & Art Gallery



Te Tū, Waiāinga, where all 46 camped after the first Treaty meeting to discuss the pros and cons of signing the Treaty. Sketch by Sarah Mathew, 1840. Auckland City Libraries Tamaki. Pūkaha Aotearoa (Ref. A1203)

Talks begin

Hobson explained the Treaty and urged the rangatira to sign it. He stressed that it would give the British Queen the authority to control British subjects and protect Māori and their lands.

Throughout the day, the rangatira debated. Some saw the Treaty as the best way forward. Others said the Treaty was unnecessary. Still others thought it was dangerous. By nightfall no one had signed. The meeting was adjourned for two days.

The words of the rangatira

'Let the Governor return to his own country ... We are not whites, nor foreigners ... This country is ours ... we are the Governor – we, the chiefs of this our fathers' land.'

Reka of Ngā Tāwhiri from Kaitiaki

'We are free, We will not have a Governor ... go back, return, walk away.'

Hakiri of Ngā Tāwhiri

'O Governor! Remain for us – a father, a judge, a peacemaker.'

Tamati Waka Ngata of Ngā Tāwhiri



Hakiri, Waka Ngata, and Reka – three of the rangatira who debated at Waitangi. W. B. Barrow, 1840. W. B. Barrow Collection. National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Māhinga o Aotearoa, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (Ref. A242-002)

The signing – 6 February 1840

Māori groups camped nearby and continued talking into the night. No one knows just what was said, but by morning most rangatira had decided they should sign the Treaty after all. And they didn't want to wait until the meeting was reconvened in a day's time.

Caught by surprise, Hobson said he could not discuss the Treaty that day, but would accept signatures. Over forty rangatira signed with their names, mark, or moko (facial tattoo). But this was just the beginning.

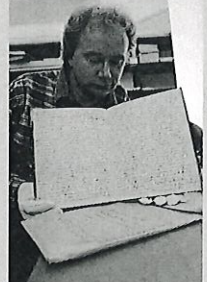


Rangatira Erua Mahe Pihema (right) and Hone Whaka Hone Pihema, who was first to sign the Treaty. Pihema presented Hobson with a gear-shaped moko for Queen Victoria. Lithograph by Heke's Bay Museum & Art Gallery. London 1847 (Te Papa Ngā. B.035051)

Felton Mathew, Acting Surveyor-General, described the Waitangi meetings in his journal, shown here by Eamon Bolger. Mathew noted that among the chiefs were 'many female chiefs of importance, who were distinguished by white feathers in their hair and ears, sometimes by the entire wing of a bird suspended from the ear.'

(Entry of Felton Mathew, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa)

National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Māhinga o Aotearoa, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, Dominion Print Collection (Ref. D91396/222/9/29)



3rd

