

# Submission to NZ Geographic Board

## National Park Railway Station

**We oppose renaming the National Park Station to Waimarino Railway Station.**

The name was changed in 1926 for sound reasons which have only strengthened over time. National Park Station is an important and iconic stop for rail passengers and identifies strongly with travellers visiting the area. We are proud of our station and its role in the history of the NIMT and development here.

The station site was named Waimarino by NZ Railways around 1900 and the actual station was opened in 1908 for passenger traffic. With an expanding number of visitors travelling to visit the Tongariro National Park (TNP) NZ Railways renamed the station as National Park for practical purposes as that was the destination for travellers. Waimana Lodge was available for accommodation in the embryonic village and the Whakapapa huts for those prepared to walk the 12 miles to Whakapapa village. The Chateau Tongariro followed later in 1929. While people said they were going to National Park it was really the TNP rather than just the railway station. However, the railway station name was essential to be clear of their destination. It is important for travellers that a railway station name is symbiotic with their itinerary. Changing the name after 98 years to Waimarino would not be helpful and cause unnecessary confusion.

- **Historical Account** [see Appendix 1]
- **Rail Historian Report – Paul Mahoney** [see Appendix 2]
- **National Park Station photos** [see Appendix 3]
- **New Zealand Geographic Board**

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In 1926 the Railways Department agreed to a local request to alter the railway station name to National Park.

In 1926 newspapers appear to immediately switch to use 'National Park Station' although some use of National Park Station (Waimarino), 17 'formerly Waimarino', etc continues at National Park, as Waimarino is now called...'

06a. Page 3

the Board's longstanding consideration that railway stations should typically be named for the populated places they service, for consistency and to prevent confusion for travellers and tourists.

## Great Journeys of New Zealand – Kiwi Rail



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### **National Park Railway Station**

Placed centrally in the village, National Park Railway station connects you with Tongariro, Whakapapa, and Ruapehu.



### **Our Proposal**

**That the name National Park Station be retained or be named National Park Railway Station.**

## Appendix 1

### National Park Station Historical Account

#### The National Park Railway Station

The railway station was opened in 1908 with a stationmaster and his assistant. NZ Railways staff were housed in the first cottages that were built by NZR. They would have been the first inhabitants in the area as there is no evidence or reason for any other occupation in such a desolate location.

Originally the station was called Waimarino (calm waters) named after the survey area known as the Waimarino Block through which the NIMT was traversing. On 2 May 1926, the New Zealand Railways renamed the railway station as National Park. This name had come into common usage, due to the station's proximity to Tongariro National Park where passengers were travelling to. It also served to avoid confusion with other places called Waimarino.

Plans for the station were approved in 1901 and a 4th class station was built by March 1908, with rooms for a stationmaster, luggage, urinals and ladies.

A turning triangle was installed to turn banker locos that assisted trains on their climb from Taumarunui at 171 metres and of course the Raurimu Spiral to National Park Station at 807 meters.

The opening of the Main Trunk Line in 1908 created a vast opportunity to log and mill the large trees in the native forests with 30 sawmills and associated bush tramways established in the National Park area alone. With the arrival of caterpillar tractors in the 1930s, the extraction process was accelerated with National Park station having one of the greatest throughputs of timber in New Zealand.

From 1910 to 1940 there was a Post Office at the station, including a telephone from 1914. There was also a 40 ft (12 m) by 30 ft (9.1 m) goods shed with a veranda, a loading bank, cattle and sheep yards, two 4,000 imp gal (18,000 L) water tanks and a cart approach. There was a tablet and fixed signals. Houses for railway staff and a stationmaster were built between 1908 and 1954. A crossing loop could take 80 wagons and a snowplough was kept at the station.

In the 1960s, National Park became the railhead for the heavy equipment and machinery for the Tongariro Power Scheme Development, with the pumice roads substantially upgraded to take the heavy traffic. The station was also upgraded in 1965, with a 20-ton gantry crane, 40-ton weighbridge, 5 cement silos and a 30 m by 15 m goods shed, built on 4.5 ha of newly drained wetland.

Local initiatives in the 1970s saw the station saved from potential demolition by NZR and being replaced by a bus-stop type shelter.

A new use was found by people running a woodwork business. This was followed by Go for It Tours in 1988 running quad bike rides in the area. And then substantially re-established as the Station Café in 2012

Passenger services over the years have included a daily timetable between Wellington and Auckland with night and daytime express trains. Also, the Silver Fern Railcar, Overland Express, the Northerner Express and now the. Private excursion trains are also a regular feature.

Following local representations, the platform was resurfaced and new safety markings were installed in 2022.

Last year Kiwi Rail drafted new platform signage which was factually incorrect. Despite numerous correspondence by phone and email the Kiwi Rail corporate style signage was erected. Travellers arriving to visit the Tongariro National Park were confronted with the incorrect signage stating Waimarino National Park. The altitude was incorrect as well.

Today National Park Railway Station is an important destination stop for the train for the many travellers visiting the Tongariro National Park on the Northern Explorer and heritage rail tours.

## Wanganui Chronicle

LOCAL AND GENERAL WANGANUI CHRONICLE, VOLUME LXXXIII, ISSUE 19545, 6 APRIL 1926, PAGE 6

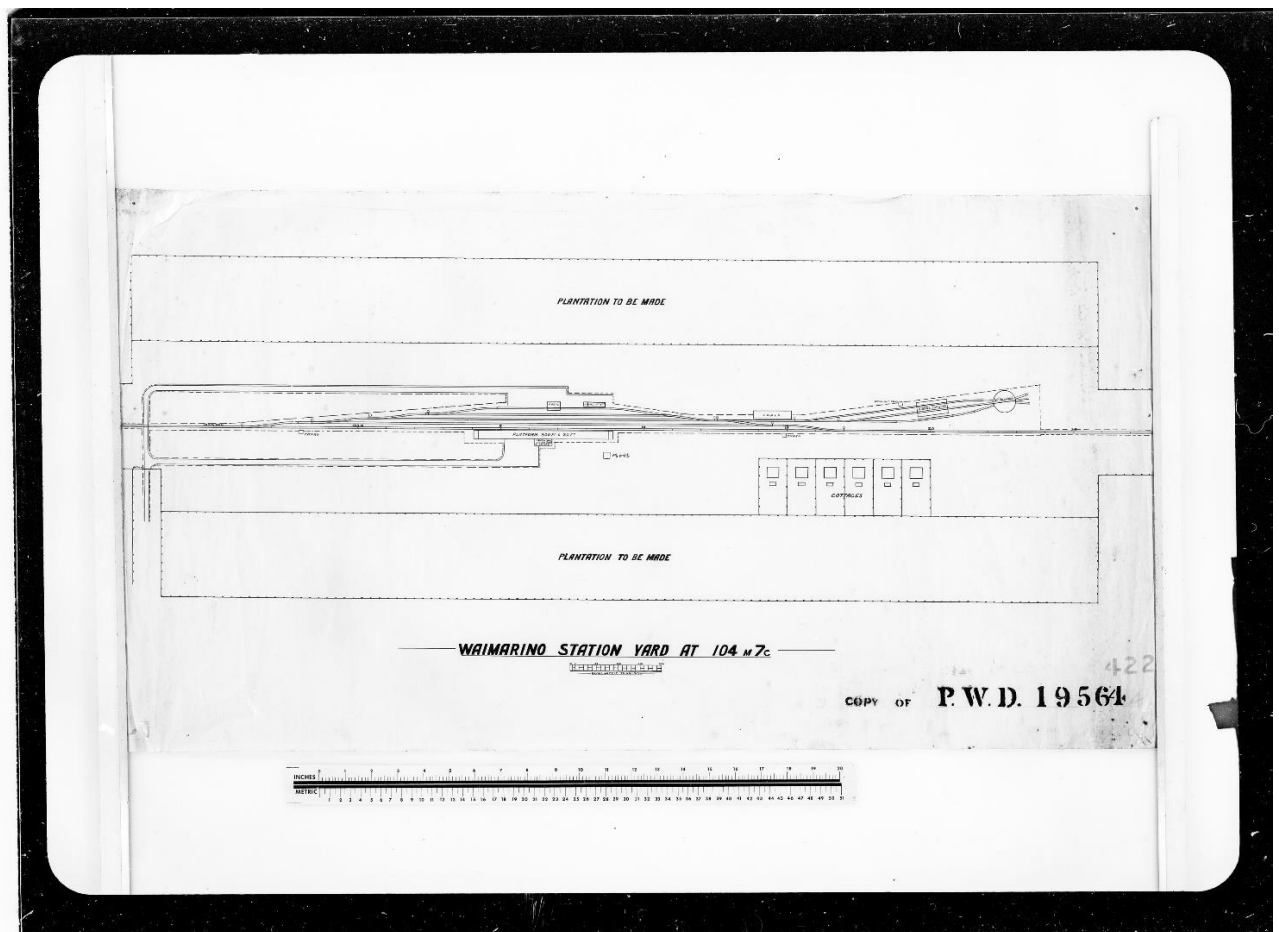
Waimarino has been the name of the railway station at the top of the Spiral ever since the Main Trunk line has been in existence. It is the getting off place for visitors to the Tongariro National Park as well as for tourists who wish to go to Taupo, Wairakei and Napier by that route. Some time ago an agitation was set up to have the name altered to National Park, and this has been the subject of much discussion and correspondence between those concerned and the Government. The Auckland office of the Railway Department has announced that it has been decided to change the name of the station from Waimarino to National Park on May 1.

**Good things take time:**

POVERTY BAY HERALD, VOLUME XXXVI, ISSUE 11865, 1 JUNE 1909, PAGE 6

One of the mistakes of the Main Trunk Line is the magnificent railway station at **Waimarino**, where a **stationmaster** and clerk manage. The monthly turnover seldom exceeds £20 !

**Public Works Department survey 1900 - Waimarino Station Yard at 104m 7ch**



## Appendix 2

### Paul Mahoney - Historian

#### Railway stations and Māori names - Paul Mahoney, historian, 8 Dec 2023

*This report is based on research of original NZR files I did in the 1990s – thirty years ago. So ideally, I would do some additional checking, but I have a deadline to meet.*

By the early 1900s the railways had a national policy of giving exclusive preference to Māori names to railway stations unless there was an established village with an English settler name. To select the best name, they would consult with local kaumatua and adopt their recommendation. The railways remained committed to this policy in the 1920s and 1930s as important new lines opened. In 1937 railways published 32-page guidebook that explained the meaning of the Māori station names, again using kaumatua. This guidebook could be purchased at railway station bookstalls. I have a copy. It was so popular that it soon sold out and a second improved edition was published in 1938. The War got in the way of further editions. I could not work out who it was in the railways was the champion of this policy that flourished into the 1950s and the last new railway built, the Murupara Branch, that opened in 1955. All seven stations had Māori names, contributed by the dominant local Māori workforce.

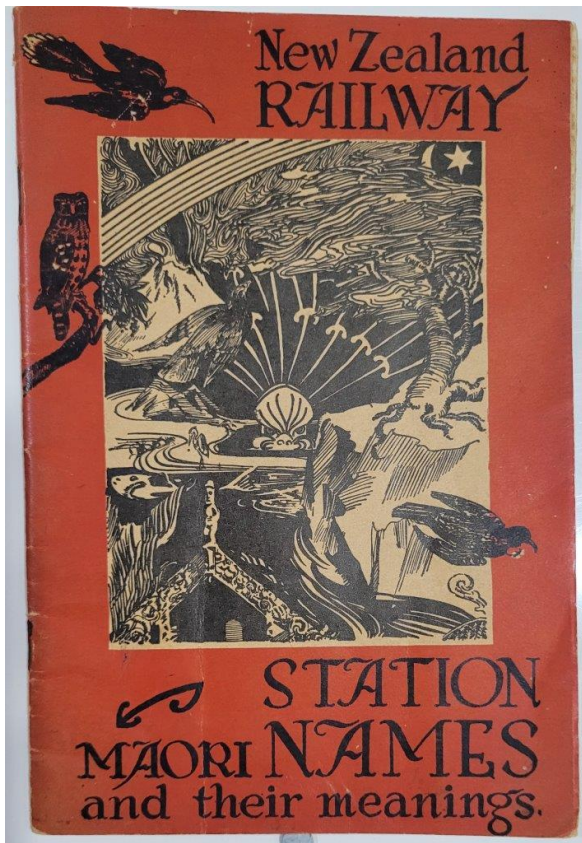
Consider this policy as applied to the classic 'Main Trunk Railway' that extends from Frankton Junction to Marton Junction. There were 59 railway stations and all but five (54) had Māori names, that is 92%. This includes National Park that was called Waimarino until 1926.

On the Main Trunk Railway, only one name, Hunterville reflects an existing town in 1900. Of the other four English names, National Park has by far the most meaning, history, and relevance to people and place. So, if you were going to keep one settler name, then National Park would be the one to keep. In terms of a Treaty Partnership, (potentially 50-50) it seems an extremely reasonable ratio (4-96) to keep at least two settler names within a group of 59 places. (Hunterville + National Park)

There was no settlement at this exact site prior to the railway. It was an exposed infertile treeless swampy area specifically chosen simply because it was the first flat area reached at the top of the Raurimu Spiral. A railway station site anywhere in NZ always required a flat area so that trains and wagons could be parked without running away. Extensive drain digging was required here to make the ground sufficiently firm. Then thousands of cubic meters of stone ballast was brought in, dumped and spread, to provide a base. The station was a place where trains could cross one another, and their locos take on water, and signalmen worked around the clock to ensure that trains ran safely and couldn't collide. None ever did.

The railway was initially the only business in town and by the 1920s there were six railway houses. Gardening was impossible. It was such an exposed location to live that it was used as a 'punishment posting' for railway staff who otherwise faced being sacked. Tourism in Tongariro National Park developed after WW1 and this created additional jobs. A major boost was the Marton Sash & Door sawmill that opened in 1925, with 20 or more jobs. The memoirs of the lokey driver on the MSD bush tramway make it clear his wife was keen to get out. However, with the growth of trees and hedges, and better houses, National Park became a better place to live with its great views and outdoor sports opportunities.

I have not done specific research into the name change for National Park station. My impression from research spanning many years was that with the coming of tourism and sawmilling the place was now more than just a railway settlement. A village was growing, and the locals looked to foster further growth. They wanted to become “the main entry point to Tongariro National Park” ahead of Horopito or Ohakune. So, they branded their town with a name that clearly expressed those aspirations, after consulting on options. History shows that this tactic was successful. Consequently, the name National Park is strongly linked to the first 100 years of history of the town and to its purpose into the future.

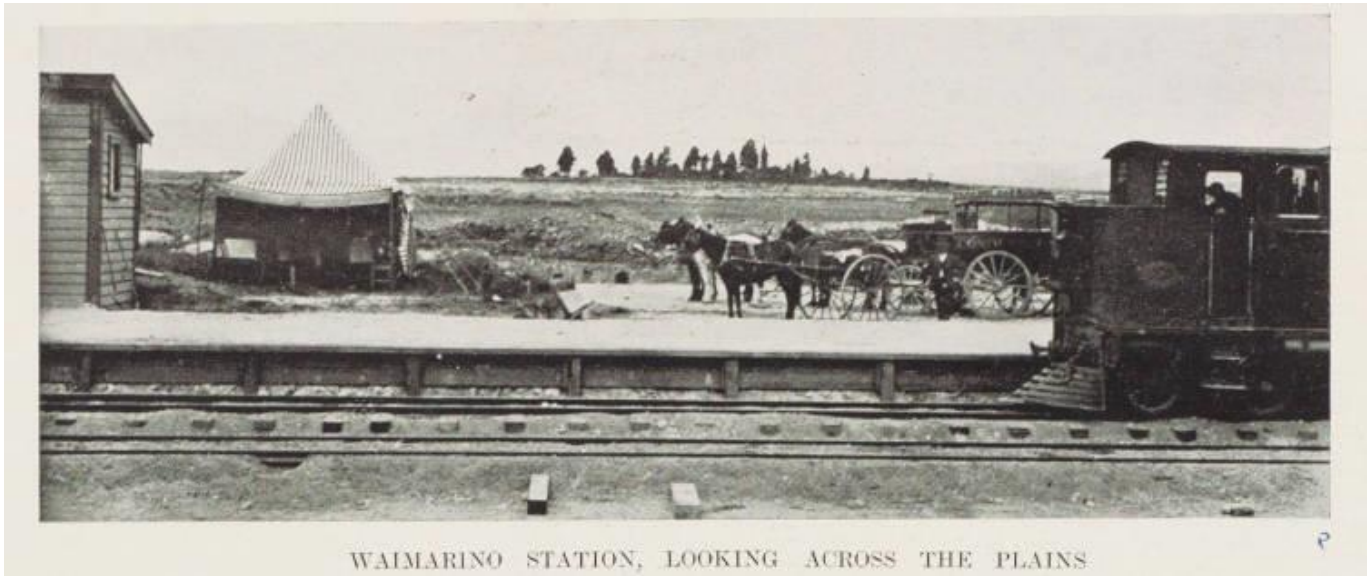


Appendix: Railway station names on the North Island Main Trunk.

- |                   |                     |                 |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Rukuhia        | 22. Te Koura        | 44. Ngaurukehu  |
| 2. Ohaupo         | 23. Okahukura [Jct] | 45. Mataroa     |
| 3. Lake Road      | 24. Taringamotu     | 46. Taihape     |
| 4. Ngaroto        | 25. Taumarunui      | 47. Winiata     |
| 5. Te Awamutu     | 26. Matapuna        | 48. Ohutu       |
| 6. Te Mawhai      | 27. Manunui         | 49. Utiku       |
| 7. Te Kawa        | 28. Piriaka         | 50. Mangaweka   |
| 8. Kiokio         | 29. Kakahi          | 51. Ohingaiti   |
| 9. Otorohanga     | 30. Owhango         | 52. Mangaonoho  |
| 10. Hangatiki     | 31. Oio             | 53. Kaikarangi  |
| 11. Te Kumi       | 32. Raurimu         | 54. Hunterville |
| 12. Te Kuiti      | 33. National Park   | 55. Silverhope  |
| 13. Waiteti       | 34. Erua            | 56. Rata        |
| 14. Puketutu      | 35. Pokaka          | 57. Porewa      |
| 15. Kopaki        | 36. Horopito        | 58. Overton     |
| 16. Kopaki        | 37. Ohakune [Jct]   | 59. Cliff Road  |
| 17. Mangapeehi    | 38. Rangataua       | Marton          |
| 18. Porootarao    | 39. Karioi          |                 |
| 19. Waimiha       | 40. Tangiwai*       |                 |
| 20. Waione Siding | 41. Waiouru         |                 |
| 21. Ongarue       | 42. Hihitahi*       |                 |
|                   | 43. Turangarere     |                 |

## Appendix 3

### National Park Station photos



Early days. The trees now form part of the DOC reserve on Findlay Street



(Photo., A. N. Larkin)  
A winter scene at National Park station, on the North Island Main Trunk Line.

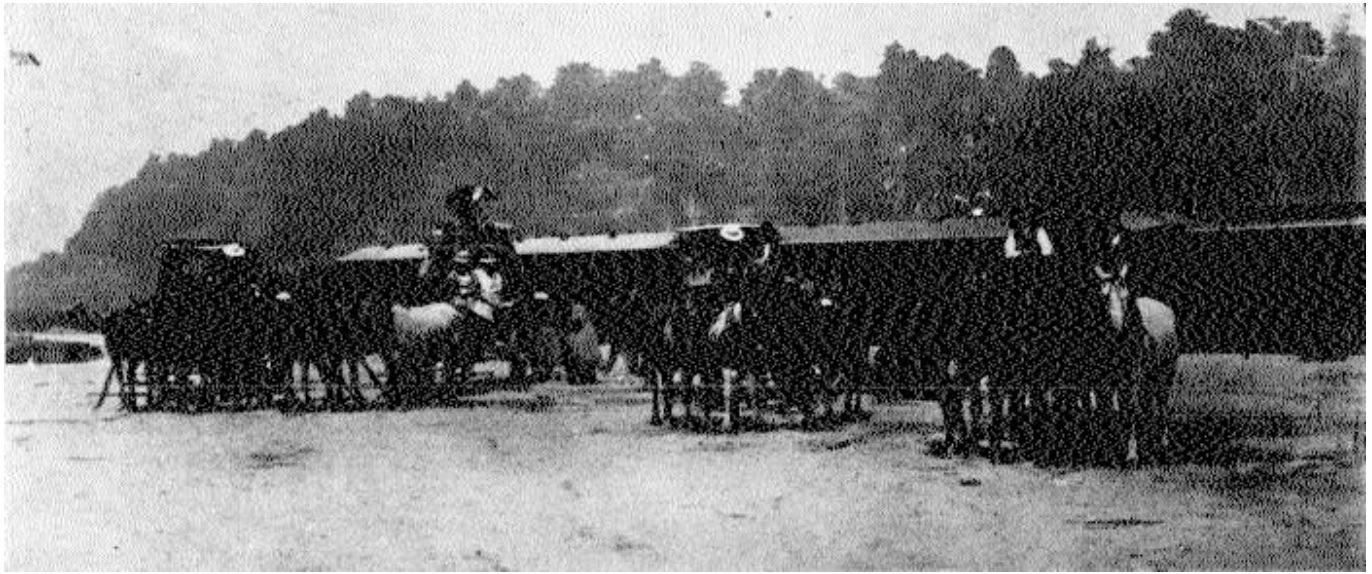
National Park Railway Station had the largest throughput of timber in the 1940's



Waimarino Station in the beginning.



Cement silos & good shed for the Tongariro Power Scheme



Coaches linking to Ohakune in 1908 before the NIMT was completed



Northern Explorer





**Historic ski tours**



**Old Railway Dam**



**National Park Station and the National Park Village Park & Ride**