

Whakatane & District Historical Society Trip to the Mataatua Marae Experience

On Sunday 12th October a group of 13 members gathered at the Mataatua Meeting house on Muriwai Drive in Whakatane.

After more than 130 years away, Mataatua Whareniui - New Zealand's most travelled Māori meeting house – stands once again in Whakatāne.

After a very warm welcome from our host Harry, the tour began with a talk in the visitor centre. This focussed on the pre European history of Whakatane area and included the story of Wairaka and how Whakatane got its name. This was followed by a very informative video telling the story of the Whareniui's journeys around the world.

The next part of the experience was being welcomed on to the marae in the traditional manner after Harry had advised us on appropriate protocols.

On entering the Whareniui the sense of history and of time immemorial was overwhelming as we acknowledged the ancestors represented by beautiful carvings done in the late 19th century.

Then the stories of some of the ancestors were told with an extraordinary light show. We were enthralled as the carvings and legends of Ngati Awa were brought to life through world-class digital technology.

The whole experience was rounded off with food and refreshment. This gave us the opportunity to talk with Harry and share our own stories about the evolution of things Maori in our community.

All in all an excellent event thoroughly enjoyed by all who went. Thanks to the team at Mataatua for the wonderful experience.

