



Press Release

Release date: 5 October 2026

Pitt Rivers Museum transfers Māori feather cloak to the Ngāti Rārua o Te Wairau Society in Aotearoa New Zealand

A collaborative effort across generations and continents will enable the return of a hugely significant taonga (treasure) to Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Kahu Kiwi (Māori kiwi feather cloak) was originally gifted in 1900 to Dr George Cleghorn, a medical doctor working in the Wairau Pā region of the South Island, by Hapareta Rore Pukekohatu and Mere te Hiko, two members of the local iwi (community). The cloak was loaned to the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, by Cleghorn's widow, Helen, in 1913.

The Pitt Rivers Museum and local iwi Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Toa Rangatira, together with the descendants of Hapareta Rore Pukekohatu, Mere te Hiko and Dr George Cleghorn, are pleased to announce the return of the cloak to the community at Wairau Pā and the transfer of ownership to the hapū (sub-tribe) as represented by the Ngāti Rārua o Te Wairau Society.

The cloak will be temporarily cared for at The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa until the completion of a new Wharehau (Meeting House) at Hauhunga Marae, the traditional gathering place and cultural centre for the hapū (sub-tribe) of Paretona and Te Arawaere.

Dr Lorraine Eade, Chair of Ngāti Rārua o Te Wairau Society said: "To have this taonga returned after 126 years, to bring it home to the Pa, to acknowledge why it was given to Dr Cleghorn and the work he did for our people, and our opportunity to extend our knowledge in terms of traditional weaving techniques, is beyond measure." In addition, Lorraine also identified that the journey is not over: "Through this process we also found out that a greenstone mere that was given to Dr Cleghorn was publicly auctioned off in the mid- to late 1970s/early 1980s. One of the Cleghorn family remembers its photograph being in an auction brochure. So, if anyone has any further information that would be deeply appreciated as this greenstone mere came directly from our chief."

Professor Laura Van Broekhoven, Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum said: "We are very pleased that the day has come for the Kahu Kiwi to return home — the cloak generously gifted to Dr Cleghorn for his important medical work in the Blenheim region. It has been our privilege to have cared for it on loan here in Oxford, and we know how deeply it will be cherished at Wairau Pā. We are grateful for all the work Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Toa Rangatira have done to ensure its safe return."

Dr Cleghorn's descendants, based in England, are happy that the Kahu Kiwi will be returned to the Wairau Pā: "As the direct descendants of Dr George Cleghorn, we have always been proud of our ancestor and his work and we are delighted this day has come about. The Kahu Kiwi is a symbol of good relations between Māori and Pakeha and it belongs back home."

Shane Graham, Chief Executive of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Rārua, said that the return of a taonga of this nature is a momentous occasion: "We acknowledge the whānau (family) of Dr Cleghorn — returning this item is more than symbolic; it restores mana and honours the deep emotional and cultural significance of our living connection to this taonga. We are also immensely grateful to Laura and her



team at Pitt Rivers Museum – their willingness to work collaboratively, and their commitment to this process brings hope to indigenous communities like ours all over the world.”

Ngāti Toa Rangatira elders are also pleased. Taku Parai, a descendant of Te Hiko, said that “Words cannot express what it means to have a visible, tangible manifestation of whakapapa, whenua, wairua, oranga and mana all encompassed in a taonga tuku iho such as this Kakahu Tupuna. A physical yet spiritual connection to our tupuna, who now can sleep in their long sleep in the arms of uri kaitiaki, moe nga roa e Kui.”

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Additional Information and Quotes

Dr George Cleghorn was highly respected by Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Toa Rangatira for his advocacy for Māori living at the Wairau Pā at the turn of the 20th century. The reserve at Wairau Pā was prone to flooding which destroyed crops, reduced income for families, and had a severe impact on health. Prominent illnesses affecting Māori at the Pā included typhoid, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, rheumatism, influenza, measles and diphtheria. Although they lived near to Wairau hospital, local Māori were required to travel further afield to Picton hospital for medical treatment. This policy was challenged by Dr Cleghorn, who also spent time educating families at their homes on the importance of taking public health measures. Such was the esteem in which Dr Cleghorn was held, that at his official farewell in 1900, Hapareta Rore Pukekohatu and Mere te Hiko presented him with taonga, including the Kahu Kiwi, in recognition of his service.

Ann Anderson, a relative of Dr Cleghorn, recalls how Māori at the Wairau Pā showed their appreciation of his medical care: “Māori would make very fine flax thread for suturing wounds, provided sphagnum moss for dressings, and supplied kai in the form of fresh fruit and vegetables and kete of seafood for Dr Cleghorn, in reciprocation for his medical services”.

Moana and Tina Grey are great-great granddaughters of Hapareta Rore Pukekohatu and Mere te Hiko. Moana said the return sets an example for others to follow: “Since I’ve been aware of this amazing project, it’s made me personally reflect that this Taonga Kahu Kiwi is a beautiful enduring example of our tupuna acknowledging the respect they had for each other. All these years later, to come full circle and return back home to the Pā reminds me that mutual respect and co-operation despite cultural differences is the only way forward. What a beautiful legacy”.

Tina agreed: “Our whānau, now extending six generations, are elated to have one of our Tupuna Taonga returned to the Wairau Pā - especially one from Hapareta & Mere Te Hiko. This gift presented by Hapareta & Mere Te Hiko was a special acknowledgement and shows profound respect for Dr Cleghorn as a compassionate physician who treated many from the Wairau Pā Community, often arranging free medical treatment for those afflicted by typhoid and tuberculosis. Such garments of Kahu kiwi were traditionally reserved for chiefs, denoting the gratitude and



esteem in which Dr Cleghorn was held. We look forward to this return and spiritual tie to our Ancestors”.

About the Pitt Rivers Museum

The Pitt Rivers Museum is the University of Oxford’s Museum of Anthropology and World Archaeology. It was founded in 1884 when General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers, a pioneer archaeologist and keen collector, donated his collection of over 26,000 archaeological and ethnographic objects to the University. The Museum is now home to more than 700,000 objects and archival artefacts. These collections of historical, social and ritual significance are of an extraordinary range and depth, including great works of art, invention and design from around the world. Today, the Museum is a dynamic, forward-looking institution with connections to stakeholders around the world, carrying out world-leading conservation and research and welcoming half a million visitors each year.

About Ngāti Rārua o Te Wairau Society

Ngāti Rārua o Te Wairau Society works on behalf of the hapū (sub-tribe) of Paretona and Te Arawaere in the Wairau region. It is a community-focussed organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting the cultural, social, educational and economic wellbeing of the hapū. The Society supports the learning and revitalisation of the Māori language and cultural traditions and works alongside related organisations to strengthen connections to ancestral lands and community spaces and encourage initiatives that preserve heritage, build community capacity, and support the aspirations of present and future generations.

The Homebound Project

This return has been made possible by the generous support of The Homebound Project. The Homebound Project is a charitable organisation that supports the return of ancestral remains and belongings from institutions in the United Kingdom to communities around the world.