

Turi's Canoe vandalism angers Patea residents

PATEA folk are incensed at an act of vandalism in the town during the weekend.

Local constable Steve Hart said vandals attacked the Turi's Canoe memorial in the early hours of Saturday morning.

They climbed into the canoe and wrenched some of the figures from their mountings, replacing them the wrong way round. In an attempt to lift one, the figure's head was broken.

Mr Hart said it was the first act of vandalism on the memorial he was aware of and he was sure several people must have been involved.

"It has obviously upset a lot of the locals around here," he said. "That canoe is very important to Patea. It's amazing the number

of tourists who stop and photograph it."

Mr Hart said the community was working hard trying to raise \$20,000 to restore the canoe, which had deteriorated through time. He added that the South Taranaki District Council was attempting to repair the vandalism as soon as possible.

South Taranaki District Council operations manager George Bird (formerly a Patea District engineer) said the old council had initiated a fund to carry out the restoration work and various groups had got behind it.

Patea Community Board chairman Norm Mackay said "The project has been on the books for a couple of years. It has got to get off this year and will undoubtedly be on the ward

estimates. "It's not a 1990 project, but it could have been. It is a focal point here."

He said the problem was the steel reinforcing in the legs and mount, which through deterioration was pushing the concrete out. The restoration fund had built up to \$15,000 but, unfortunately, precious little from other South Taranaki communities.

Mr Mackay was also angry at the weekend vandalism. "When people start desecrating monuments to a race and to a community, it shows there are some really sick people out there."

He appealed to the civic-mindedness of possible witnesses to come forward with information, adding that it was many years since any damage at all had been inflicted on the canoe.



Before the vandalism . . . Turi's Canoe at Patea

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