

FROM NEW ZEALAND TO MOIRA TO BUY A TENT!!

By Ken Patterson

My wife and I live in Moira and back in July/August 2015, I advertised a small tent for sale on Gumtree. I got a phone call from a guy named Shannon (Shan) Mako, a New Zealander (Maori) who was coming here to see the Ulster Grand Prix motorcycle race at Dundrod. He needed a tent so he could stay at the spectator 'village' area at Dundrod. We arranged to meet him at the airport and handed over the tent and then gave him a lift to Dundrod. As Shan had my phone number, I said to him that if he needed help with anything, to ring me.

Early the next morning, my phone rang, and Shan said he really needed to get some healthy food, so I went to Dundrod, picked him up and took him to Lisburn Tesco and back before the racing practices began! As there is normally a free day in between race practices and the actual race day, I asked him if he would like to go out somewhere with us, which he gladly accepted. I collected him early in the morning, brought him back to our home in Moira where he was so grateful to have a shower and some breakfast, after which we headed off to Belfast on a visit to 'The Titanic' centre and then for lunch at 'The Dirty Duck' at Holywood.

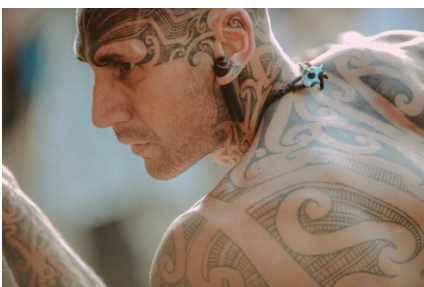
Before leaving our home, we took the obligatory photos and Shan made us a lovely 'thank you gift' from string with small stones and a colourful shell, which we treasure. We then dropped him off at Dundrod and he told us that he intended to visit relatives in Ireland after the racing had finished. He also said that if Bruce Anstey won a race, he would perform the Haka for him (which he did). This can be viewed on YouTube:

<https://bit.ly/ShanMako>



Photo, courtesy of Press Eye Ltd

Shan liked to travel as well as working at repairing (farmers) fences and carving and selling Maori flutes. We did not hear from him again and always wondered how he was. Out of the blue one day, we received a little box of cookies in the post from Shan's mother. She said she had found our address in his room and said she missed him so much. We initially thought that he was off on his travels, but quickly discounted that, and concluded (sadly to be confirmed) that he had passed away.



Shan displaying his Maori tattoo markings, called Ta Moko. Ta Moko is the visual depiction of the wearer's heritage and lineage, and so is unique to each individual and their genealogy.

The circumstances were tragic - Shan was a very experienced recreational climber and was very comfortable in the bush environment. He had a deep appreciation of nature and liked nothing more than to climb up a hill and to sit alone in thought/meditation. He was, we presume, climbing in the Castle Rock area of Coromandel and sadly fell into thick bush vegetation in steep and dangerous terrain.

Shan was reported missing on 9 June 2018, his vehicle was found on 12 June and, after a prolonged and difficult search by several Land Search and Rescue teams, specialist rope teams and a dog team, his body was found at the base of a large cliff on 23 June 2018. We also heard that the team extracting his body sang a Maori song whilst carrying him out of the bush.

The full story can be viewed here: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/104992267/body-found-in-coromandel-bush-was-missing-man-police>

We feel really privileged to have met Shan, to have shown him some 'Northern Ireland hospitality' and to now have a friendship with his mother, who is a nurse in Christchurch. We also treasure some gifts that his mother sent to us, including one of Shan's flutes, which has pride of place in our living room!



Whilst we have lived in Moira for 39 years, we had (to our shame) never visited The Ballance House before our recent visit. We will certainly return, and our only regret is that we did not bring Shan to The Ballance House before he left to continue his travels.



*From left, Shan pictured with Ken and family. Many thanks to Ken for sharing his story and memories of **Shannon Earle Makowharemahihi, 'Shan'**.*