

## Some memories of Koitiata Turakina Beach.

My father and mother retired from their dairy farm at Putorino and bought a cottage at Turakina Beach. This was during World War 2 probably about 1944. At that time the metalled road finished probably about 2 miles from the beach. So you entered through the farmer's gate past the woolshed etc. and up a hill thus far it was a reasonable farm track but after that you had to negotiate quite a large sand hill which was ok if there had been rain to bind the sand together a bit but if things were dry you were in difficulty unless you had several strong shoulders to help push you up the incline. After this there was a reasonable flat tussock flax lined track roughly grassed except for a few soft sand patch. After this you reach the outskirts of the village proper. Here there were several batches made from car packing cases and covered in tarred malthoid. Pastor Maurice Heidrich and Alex Kelly owned one of these. On the hill was a weatherboard house owned by Scotty Cameron, then came a substantial concrete rendered home owned by Bert Wainwright the self proclaimed Mayor of "Koitiata," If you wanted to know anything about the beach you asked Bert. He owned a large multiple-oared sea boat, which he would launch for a day's fishing if there were enough willing and strong oarsmen to man it. I was lucky to help row and man this boat on a couple of occasions. We would row out some miles off shore where Bert reckoned there would be fish, but I tended to be a Jonah on both occasions not catching one snapper when lines on both sides of me pulled up lovely large fish all day! Coming back in could be exciting depending on the surf running. Bert usually stood at the rear or stern with a sweep oar trying to keep the boat straight as you came through the surf, but if you swung sideways you got a drenching in the surf.

Bert also owned a very long net which if again there were enough hands available would be used to sweep out into the surf, along the beach and the pulled in by many hands on both ends of the net. Because I was 6 feet tall I got the job of pulling the net out into the surf on several occasions, this could be exciting as you could step on a sting ray or into a hole when on minute you were waist deep and the next you were trying to plant the 6 foot end pole on the ground and struggling to get you head back above the surf. The catch could be poor or good depending the time of the year, but you could get small shark gurnet, kawhai, snapper even a sting ray or two and jelly fish. Bert also had flounder nets which Maurice Heidrich junior and I used to check whenever we were down there. The river had changed course and burst out to sea a couple of hundred yards north of the village, leaving a lagoon of several hundred yards long between the cottages and the beach. This was replenished by king tides when the sea would spill over the small dune. The cottage my parents bought and eventually sold to Edwin & Sofia Nitschke was just past Wainwrights plus there were about 4 others. No electricity unless you had a wind-charger, some cottages has these which usually charged 2 x12 volt batteries, which fed to bulbs in the rooms required. Otherwise it was candles, kerosene lamps or pressure lamps. A pit toilet or take placed behind flax or some secluded scrub?? If you wanted fresh milk you had to make a trip out to the farm gate where the farmer would sell you some or go into the township of Turakina for your supplies. During the war the RNZAF. Operated a bombing range just over a couple of sand hills from the cottages, as adventurous teenagers, young Heidrich and myself used to trespass on these lands, quite dangerous when I now think about it, but we never experienced being strafed by a bomber or a fighter or encountered any un exploded bombs!

During the duck-shooting season I would join my dad on opening day and sit in a Maimai "hide," nursing cold gun barrels waiting for sunrise and the arrival of some unwary ducks or black swans. I think I have a photo somewhere of the final day's bag. The was usually a good community spirit amongst the residents, but like most areas there are exceptions and at one time I remember my Dad complaining to the local constabulary about a bloke who used to stalk my Dad through the lupins with a loaded gun a bit mental or loopy I would say. Most residents took part in trying to catch the elusive whitebait during the season, I remember a few kerosene tins full of bait, which was either shared out with locals or taken to the fish shop and sold.

It is hard for me to imagine that some 60 years later there is electricity a sealed road and even sewerage supplied!! I trust this will give you some idea of the happy times we shared all those years ago and of my Dad who carried yards of clay on the back of his old Bedford Ute to place over the loose sand patches this he did for several years. He also lobbied the County Council for help in maintaining the road but this largely fell on deaf ears. I well remember some great Christmas and New Year's parties when fun was had by one and all. Maybe you could send me your final draft of the history.

Regards, *Charles Haar*