

The Papakura Sentinel



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Contents:

- Object of the month—Wendy Deeming..... p2	Ardmore Grand Prix—Alan Knowles p3
	Pahurehure Inlet postscript—Rob Finlay p10
	Happy Christmas..... p17

Happy Christmas/ Meri Kirihimete to all our readers,

I’m sure we are all appreciating warmer and drier weather, better for getting about and gardening, and lifting the spirits. And then there’s Christmas on the way. We wish you all a most pleasant Christmas Season, and thank our members and readers for their support, company and interest.

As usual a lot is happening, with the progress towards the Ring’s Redoubt exhibition—and the interesting talk given by Alan, our Curator, on 11 November. The Saturday Museum talks are proving to be a great success—they will all be on Saturdays next year. Dena’s exhibition on hats on well-dressed women, Kara’s shoes, the Divali and Art Group displays, and the Old School Technology are all drawing interest, the latter especially among young people. And they represent a great deal of work. I’d also like to thank the various contributors of articles, including regular features like Artefact de jour, and those who provide the information. Thanks to the staff and volunteers for their major efforts this year.

Thanks too to those, like Phil Sai-louie, who contribute by providing speakers for the Members’ Meetings. Our speaker for the last meeting was our departing Front of House person, Anna Part, who spoke on her research into nineteenth century advertising. Best wishes Anna, and thanks for all the work on Social Media and in every other way.

It is good to have greater contact with schools this year too—there’ve been a lot of end-of-year Teacher-only-Day meetings, showing a real interest in knowing more of our local history and responding to the new curriculum.

This issue: Artefact-de-Jour with Wendy Deeming, High octane grand prix from Alan Knowles, and I finish the Pahurehure water transport series without getting myself wet.

Relax, enjoy, celebrate, remember, refresh.

Rob, Ed.

**PAPAKURA & DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Monthly Members’ Meetings: 4th Thurs, 1pm – 3pm
Regular Saturday heritage Trips to places of interest

PAPAKURA MUSEUM

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Accent Point Building, 209 Great South Road
Ph.: (09) 298 2003 www.papakuramuseum.org.nz

Artefact de jour

Wendy Deeming

Art deco **manicure set** made in England circa 1920s

This set belonged to the Richardson family.



The case is made from celluloid, a natural plastic which can be heated and softened over and over again to return it to a mouldable state, and the handles of the tools are made from Bakelite, which once hardened, can never return to a mouldable state.

Accession Number 8868

Donated by Olive Slack, 22 February 2011

Ostrich feather and egg.

To show dominance, an ostrich holds its head up high and lifts its wings and tail feathers. Ostriches are the fastest running birds in the world and can run continuously at speeds of 30-37 mph and sprint up to 43 mph. With their long, strong legs ostriches can cover more than 10 feet in a single stride. Ostrich feathers are plucked and the feathers grow back. Under natural conditions, a female ostrich lays 12–18 eggs; under farm conditions, young females produce 10–20 eggs in the first year and from 40 to 60 eggs annually in subsequent years. Ostriches have a specific breeding season that starts in June/ July every year and the birds will lay one egg every second day. Once they have laid enough eggs to cover with their bodies and wings they will start incubating them.



For anyone who has not paid their subs, please ensure you continue to receive *Sentinel*. Details at end.

High Octane in Papakura

The New Zealand International Grand Prix at Ardmore (1954 - 1962)

Alan Knowles



Grand Prix, Ardmore, Auckland. Whites Aviation Ltd: Photographs. Ref: WA-40559-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/30112116](#)

Ardmore Airfield has a long and varied history. Established in 1943 as an operational base for the defence of Auckland during WWII, Ardmore became a crucial airfield for the training of New Zealand pilots and welcoming returning servicemen from posts overseas. When the RNZAF (Royal New Zealand Air Force) departed the base at the end of WWII, New Zealand's fifth teachers' training unit was established there, and also Auckland University's Engineering School. The facilities at Ardmore were also used to house competitors taking part in the Empire Games. A running track and swimming pool were built and subsequently remained in use for the public until the teacher's training college closed. In 1952 the Ministry of Transport enabled the operational areas of Ardmore to be used for general aviation activities, and this is still in effect: about half of the New Zealanders who earn pilot's licenses are trained at Ardmore. As well as powered flying, the Auckland Gliding Club conducted its operations out of Ardmore before they moved to their current base at Drury, and No 4 Squadron ATC had its headquarters there, having previously been at the Papakura Military Camp.

Another string to the bow of Ardmore's varied history was the hosting of the New Zealand International Grand Prix between 1954 and 1962. Memories still resonate for many people of high pitched screams of the turbo-charged 1.5 litre BRM at 8000 RPM's, Ron Frost and Syd Jensen driving magnificently in rear-engine Cooper 500s, Stan Jones winning the first race in the unlikely Maybach Special, the brilliant driving of Ross Jensen (Austin Healey 100) and Ray Archibald (Jaguar XK120), the victory in 1955 by Thailand's Prince Bira in a remarkable display of driving, and the moment in 1959 when Stirling Moss lapped current world champion Jack Brabham, much to the amazement of the crowd.

The first Grand Prix was held at Ardmore on Jan 9th, 1954; it was an ambitious undertaking even by today's

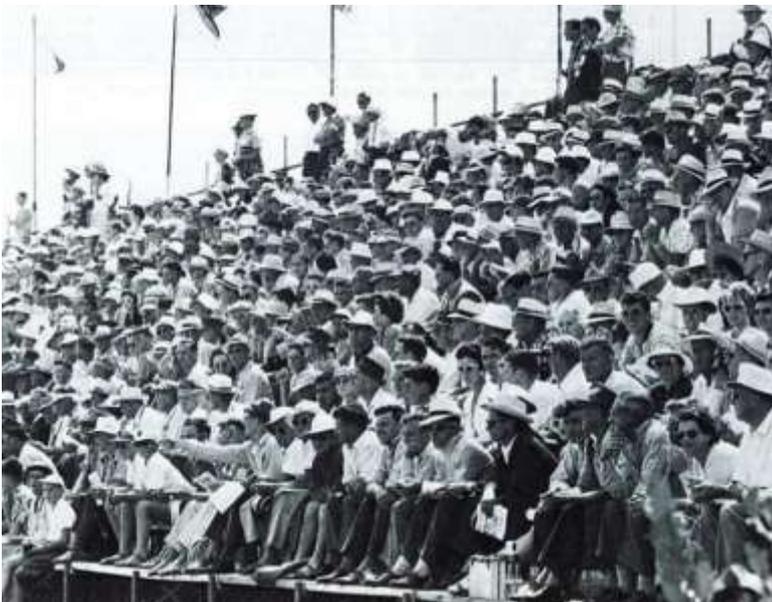
standards. This event laid the groundwork for today's motorsport events, attracted huge crowds and was the annual go-to event on the Auckland calendar. In the 1950s people went in search of their own entertainment, and as a result events such as the Grand Prix at Ardmore drew huge audiences. It was estimated that the event drew one in every 10 people living in Auckland and was the biggest annual sporting event held in New Zealand. Queues for the event would put today's queues to shame (a real statement I know!). Visitors had extremely early morning starts and would endure hours waiting in long lines of cars. The lines for the first race in 1954 are known to be the longest ever seen in New Zealand with near-on 20,000 cars descending on Ardmore Aerodrome. Those trying to beat the early morning starts and queues would set up camp a couple of days prior to try and guarantee a good spot in the queue. Wait times of four hours were the norm from Auckland Central to Ardmore. One car was caught in the queue, and it was not until the driver finally reached the main gate that he managed to explain that he was trying to drive to Wellington, not Ardmore! Getting home was equally as bad with cars waiting for hours to leave. In an attempt to mitigate this, event organisers encouraged visitors to stay and have a cup of tea first!

Prior to Grand Prix at Ardmore in 1954 postwar racing in New Zealand had consisted of vehicles racing on beaches and undertaking hill climbs. Seagrove (another former RNZAF base), located on the shores of the Manukau Harbour, was used for a few race meetings using the sealed runways and taxiways in the late 1940s and into the early 1950s. A new venue was sought when the gravel became loose, and Auckland University decided to establish a research station on the site. Ardmore Airfield was the most logical place for the event to be moved to, being within range of Seagrove and having most of the infrastructure installed. The Defence Minister, through the New Zealand CAA (Civil Aviation Authority), gave the Auckland Car Club the go-ahead to hold a race at Ardmore on one day each year. A committee was formed to oversee the event and was made up of representatives of various interested parties such as motoring organisations. The Auckland International Grand Prix was also established, and this group was made up of the Automobile Association, the Northern Sports Car Club, Auckland Car Club and Auckland Motorcycle Club.

In its first year the event was called the NZ Motor Cup Grand Prix, and the second event in 1955 was renamed the NZ International Grand Prix. There were big prizes, the leader in the main race of the day being awarded £10 per lap, and £100 going to the winner. The drivers who completed the first two laps within 10% of their qualifying time received a total of £30. A total of 24 cars took place in the race. The first event, on Saturday January 9th 1954, was hugely popular and attracted a crowd of 70,000 people, the numbers causing logistical issues, and many were able to get in for free. For the following year's event in 1955, attendance was 55,000 *which was to continue until 1959*. It was during this year that organisers were able to secure a world class international field of drivers, which saw visitor numbers climb to 60,000 people.

The view that the spectator got of the Ardmore track was magnificent as the land is very flat. The track laid out intersected the two aircraft runways. For the first and second years of the event, the race was undertaken in an anti-clockwise direction over a distance of 2.1 miles (3.38 km). After 1955 the *races were adjusted to being* driven clockwise and the distance shortened to 2 miles following recommendations.

The sights and sounds of imported racing cars that most would have seen only in print, and famous international racing drivers, were the biggest drawcards. Names such as Stirling Moss (Britain), Jack Brabham (Australia), Ken Wharton (Britain), Tony Gaze (Australia), Reg Parnell (Britain), Roy Salvadori (Britain), Harry Schell (USA) and Ron Flockhart (Scotland) mixed it with local drivers such as Ron Roycroft, Denny Hulme, Syd Jensen, Ross Jensen and a young driver by the name of Bruce McLaren. First entering the event in 1957, Bruce McLaren experienced gearbox difficulties the following year that prevented him from starting the race on time. He joined the field late and had remarkably worked his way to fifth when the gearbox gave out. In 1959 he finished third behind Moss and Brabham, 2nd in 1960 and 1961 and 3rd in 1962. He would win the race in 1964 at age 25, becoming the first New Zealander to win the New Zealand Grand Prix. Bruce McLaren went on to have one of the great careers in motorsport and branched into car design. The McLaren race team today is a major team in formula one. He was very much part of Ardmore where he spent his early years developing his craft. The crowd loved watching the Kiwi drivers taking on the international stars. In the 1957 event, Kiwi Ron Roycroft was leading in the Ferrari V12 but then was forced to retire due to exhaustion on the 63rd lap. In the same race Kiwi Ross Jensen put on an amazing drive in a Monza Ferrari for a fourth-place finish and in the following year he finished second behind Jack Brabham with third being claimed by Roycroft. It was a 2, 3 finish for the Kiwis and the crowd lapped it up! Stirling Moss set a lap record at Ardmore with a time of 1m 28s in a Maserati 250F at an average speed of 83mph. At a later event he drove a Cooper Climax with an even more impressive time of 1m 21.5s, averaging more than 88mph. Moss would win the event 3 times in total driving a Maserati 250F, a Lotus and a Cooper.



A packed section of the crowd at Ardmore watching from the grandstand.

Anderson (1983), p. 19.

Lap records fell during the 1961 meeting as Jack Brabham attained the fastest average race, averaging 119 kmh. Brabham has the fastest race average for Ardmore at a time of 1m 19s at 145 kmh. The best official lap time was set by Stirling Moss in a Cooper Climax during a preliminary race for the 1961 meet. That lap stands as the fastest ever recorded of the Ardmore circuit. The final ever race was conducted in horrendous wet conditions and was eventually won by Stirling Moss in a brilliant wet weather drive. Ardmore was unavailable for the 1963 event which caused considerable sadness, but the event was to find a new home in Pukekohe and a new era was to begin.



Above: Racing in the New Zealand Grand Prix at Ardmore. From right: No 18, David Piper (Lotus); No 7, Stirling Moss (Cooper); No 88, Ron Roycroft (Ferrari); Malcolm Gill (Lycoming Special); No 25, Stan Jones (Cooper Climax); Ted Gray (Tornado). Photograph taken on 9 January 1960, by an unidentified photographer for the Free Lance.

New Zealand Grand Prix, Ardmore. *New Zealand Free Lance* : Photographic prints and negatives. Ref: 1/2-132677-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/23183428](#)

Below: The New Zealand Grand Prix field at Ardmore, Auckland, 10th January 1959, shortly after the start. Leading (front, right) is Harry Schell (Maserati), then Joakim Bonnier (Maserati), Carroll Shelby (Maserati), Jack Brabham (Cooper, no 4), Stirling Moss (right, Cooper, no 7), Bruce McLaren (Cooper, no 47), Merv Neil (Cooper, no 37), Ross Jensen (right, Maserati), Bib Stillwell (centre, Maserati), Tom Clark (left, Ferrari, no 22), Syd Jensen (centre, Cooper, no 14), John Mansel (Maserati).

Approaching the corner are Pat Hoare (Ferrari), Len Gilbert (obscured, Cooper-Bristol), Ken Harris (Ferrari Monza, no 9), Allen Freeman (Lago-Talbot).

New Zealand Grand Prix, Ardmore, Manukau County, Auckland. *New Zealand Free Lance* : Photographic prints and negatives. Ref: 1/2-132152-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



RESULTS NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL GRAND PRIX AT ARDMORE**1954 (January 9th), Ardmore. 1st NZGP**

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1 Stan Jones (Australia). Maybach Special, 210 miles, 165m 20s | |
| 2 Ken Wharton (Britain), BRM 166m 13.3s | |
| 3 Tony Gaze (Australia), HWM 166m 22.3s | Fastest lap, Wharton. |
| 4 Horace Gould (Britain), Cooper – Bristol 174m 52.5s | 1m 30s (lap 3) |
| 5 Ron Roycroft (New Zealand). Alfa – Romeo 168m 49s | |
| 6 Jack Brabham (Australia), Cooper – Bristol 174m 52.5s | |

1955 (January 8), Ardmore, 2nd NZGP

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1 Bira (Thailand), Maserati 250F. 2010 miles, 160m 12s (78.75 mph) | |
| 2 Peter Whitehead (Britain), Ferrari 3 litre, 150m 35s (78.74 mph) | |
| 3 Tony Gaze (Australia), Ferrari, Ferrari 3 litre, 161m 38 s (77.94 mph) | Fastest lap shared by |
| 4 Jack Brabham (Australia), Redux Special, 98 laps | Bira and Whitehead, 1m |
| 5 Reg Hunt (Australia), Maserati, 97 laps | 28.57s (81.29 mph) |
| 6 Syd Jensen (New Zealand) Cooper 500, 91 laps | |

1956 (January 7), Ardmore, 3rd NZGP

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1 Stirling Moss (Britain), Maserati 250 F, 2010 miles, 152m 43.1s | |
| 2 Tony Gaze (Australia), Ferrari 153m 6s | |
| 3 Peter Whitehead (Britain), Ferrari, 99 laps | Fastest lap- Stirling |
| 4 Leslie Marr (Britain) Connaught 3500 | Moss, 1m 28s |
| 5 Reg Parnell (Britain) Cooper- Jaguar | |
| 6 Ron Roycroft (New Zealand) Bugatti- Jaguar | |

1957 (January 12), Ardmore, 4th NZGP

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1 Reg Parnell (Britain). Ferrari, 3hr 7m 55.7 s (76.63 mph) | |
| 2 Peter Whitehead (Britain), Ferrari, 76.61 mph | |
| 3 Stan Jones (Australia). Maserati 250 F, 74.41 mph | Fastest lap- Reg Parnell, |
| 4 Ross Jensen (New Zealand), Monza Ferrari, 72.29 mph | 1m 32s (82 mph) |
| 5 Bob Gibbons (New Zealand), Jaguar D type, 71.4mph | |
| 6 George Palmer (New Zealand), Cooper – Bristol, 69.45 mph | |

1958 (January 11), Ardmore, 5th NZGP

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1 Jack Brabham (Australia), Cooper 2000, 1hr 53 m 24.3s (79.3mph) | |
| 2 Ross Jensen (New Zealand), Maserati 250F | |
| 3 Ron Roycroft (New Zealand), Ferrari | Fastest lap- Jack Brab- |
| 4 Pat Hoare (New Zealand), Ferrari | ham. 1m 27.2s |
| 5 Roy Salvadori (Britain), Connaught | (82.4mph) |
| 6 Ron Frost (New Zealand), Cooper 500 | |

1959 (January 10), Ardmore, 6th NZGP

- 1 Stirling Moss (Britain), Cooper 2000, 1 hr 48m 24.4s (82.8mph)
- 2 Jack Brabham (Australia), Cooper 2200. 1 hr 49m 53.4s
- 3 Bruce McLaren (New Zealand), Cooper, 1966, 74 laps
- 4 Harry Schell (USA), Maserati, 250F, 73 laps
- 5 Ross Jensen (New Zealand), Maserati 250 F, 72 laps
- 6 Bib Stilwell (Australia), Maserati, 250 F

Fastest lap- Stirling Moss,
1m 24.8 s(85mph). record
lap

1960 (January 9), Ardmore, 7th NZGP

- 1 Jack Brabham (Australia), Cooper Climax, 75 laps, 1 hr 43m 49.2s
- 2 Bruce McLaren (New Zealand), Cooper Climax
- 3 Bib Stilwell (Australia), Cooper Climax
- 4 Stan Jones (Australia), Cooper Climax
- 5 John Mansel (New Zealand), Maserati
- 6 Arnold Glass (Australia), Maserati 250F

1961 (January 7), Ardmore, 8th NZGP

- 1 Jack Brabham (Australia), Cooper. 75 laps, 1 hr 42m 30s
- 2 Bruce McLaren (New Zealand), Cooper, 1 hr 42m 31.5s
- 3 Graham Hill (Britain), BRM, 74 laps
- 4 Ron Flockhart (Scotland). Cooper, 73 laps
- 5 Denny Hulme (New Zealand), Cooper, 73 laps
- 6 Jim Clark (Scotland), Lotus 18, 71 laps

1962 (January 6), Ardmore, 9th NZGP

- 1 Stirling Moss (Britain), Lotus, 1hr 23m 14.8s
- 2 John Surtees (Britain), Cooper, 75 laps
- 3 Bruce McLaren (New Zealand), Cooper, 74 laps
- 4 Roy Salvadori (Britain), Cooper
- 5 Lorenzo Bandini (Italy), Cooper Maserati
- 6 Pat Hoare (New Zealand), Ferrari, 3 litre

Wet weather caused short-
ening of trace from 75 to
50 laps)

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Anderson, D. (1983). *New Zealand International Grand Prix the first 30 years: Ardmore / Pukekohe 1954 – 1983*. D. Anderson (Ed.), The Scott Printing Co. Ltd.

'Maybach wins N.Z. Grand Prix'. (1954, January 9). *Auckland Star*.
'Bira, Whitehead star in duel'. (1955, January 8). *Auckland Star*.

Official programmes for each year from 1954 to 1962.

Pahurehure Inlet—Watercraft and Landings

Postscript

Rob Finlay

Excursions in the age of steam

In the last article (and in the talk to members) I said the only steamer to visit Papakura for excursions was the 127 ton *Weka*, dropping in between the mid-1890s and early 1910s. I have since found references to its predecessor, the 65 ton *Manukau*, taking people from Papakura out to the Heads from the 1880s. In 1891 one of these trips was organised by 'the (Coulthards') sawmill', and the visit to Paratutai near Whatipu was made 'even more agreeable' by the presence and performance of the Newton Brass Band.

Papakura people also had other options. In February 1888 Sunday Schools from the Papakura Anglican parochial district found their way to the Wairoa (Clevedon) wharf, only 6-8 miles from Papakura, for an early 6.30 am start on the steamer *Waitoa*. Beginning on the Wairoa River the steamer stopped frequently to pick up passengers, and it arrived at Man-o'-War Bay, Waiheke Island at 9.30 am for the annual picnic.

In April 1930, New Zealand Railways organised an Anzac weekend Rail and Steamer excursion from Auckland. For a combined return charge (for those who boarded at Papakura and Drury) of 4/6 First Class or 4/- Second Class, the train delivered the excursionists at Mercer in time to meet a steamer which left at 10.30 am for a 20 mile trip towards 'picnic grounds' between Tuakau and Te Kohanga, arriving back at Mercer to catch the homeward-bound train at 7.43 pm. Refreshments were offered at railway stations and on the steamer. It was steam all the way!

The age of the barge: Chalky Point, Bottle Top Bay and Weymouth

World War 1 marks a transition in Manukau shipping. Once the SS *Weka* was sold by Northern Steamship Co, in 1913, the age of steam on the waters of the Manukau was all but done, although coasters continued to come through the Heads to Onehunga: the remaining small local ships were fueled by oil, kerosine and increasingly diesel. The last of these, the 12-ton diesel-powered *Callie*, was wrecked on a sandbank off the South Manukau Head in May 1968. All served on the standard run between Onehunga and Waiuku.

A second change that affected water transport was the end of the scow trade on the Waitemata and to the north around 1912. For the Higham family it meant a return to the Manukau, where, in the Interwar years, barges towed by motor launches took the place of scows as the work horses of the Manukau.

George Higham (*Early Manukau: secrets of yesterday*) was engaged in water transport on the Manukau. His father and uncle bought launches which towed barges around the Manukau, and he became involved from the 1930s. The family moved from Huia to Weymouth in 1925, and shifted all their furniture, a cow and a horse in a barge, which they beached at the destination.

The usual loads for barges were sand, shingle or quarried gravel. In 1924, Councillor Walker of the Papakura Town Board authorised a 'scow'-load of McCallum's shingle to be delivered at Chalky Point. *FT* 25/6/24. But by the 1930s the Hunua Quarries of Papakura had become one of the sources of supply, and truck-loads used to be taken down to Wharf St at Chalky Point and loaded onto barges at the wharf. 'Trucks used to load the metal at low tide when the barges were grounded and then the tow launch returned to take them from Papakura at high tide – it was a matter of delivering empty barges on one tide and picking them

up on the next. All the metal for the road works at Awhitu and Pollock was transported by barge from there.’ The same source says that the launch *Alice* would call in two or three times a week. (Gosper)

The wharf at Chalky Point was constructed of stone either in the 1880s or during this time. Today remnants of the stone can be seen in the mud at low— most phases of—tide. The Auckland Harbour Board issued a licence in 1929 to build a roadway across the beach at Wharf Street for the cartage of sand and shell.

But ‘Hunua Quarries must have found the tide problem in the Pahurehure Inlet too troublesome because the (y) shifted their despatch to the Drury Creek where the launches and barges could navigate the channel at any time, there always being sufficient water in the channel. They constructed a large hopper at the end of Oakland Road and trucks backed up the ramp and filled the hopper. The barges were filled from there. I can remember the great roar that accompanied the loading of the barges.’ (Charles Gosper in Agnew)

Bottle Top Bay was originally known as Waikirihinau and then as the Hoppers until the current name was coined in the 1940s. It effectively became the Port of Papakura.

‘There were hoppers on the jetty at Bottletop Bay, Oakland Road, and Stevensons Quarry trucks would tip their loads into the hopper, and from there the barges were loaded. A launch called the ‘*Phyllis*’ would tow the barges to Awhitu where the metal would be used on the roads.’ (Lees, BHSP0J44)

Charles Gosper, who grew up on nearby Pararekau Island described the noisy semi-diesel launch *Alice* loading barges with hoppers until about 1940, with metal from Hunua Quarries.

Higham remembers: ‘The shutes would be opened up until one side of the barge was filled. It would then be turned around and the other side filled up. With two or three barges in tow we would leave an hour before high water and use the outgoing tide down the Papakura Channel, taking about two and a half hours to get to Graham’s Beach at Awhitu’ and then wait again till flood tide to get to Matakawau. The night-time approach to Bottletop Bay ‘necessitated a good lookout, as there are one or two outcrops of rock, like “Curly Jack” and “Rat island” which could easily foul up progress if they were struck in the dark.’

Gosper also names a powerful tow launch called *Regal* from Onehunga, which ‘could really travel when it had empty barges in tow.’

Other destinations were the Karaka shell banks, where the barges were loaded with shell destined for the Onehunga limeworks. The full power of the propellers would be used to flick shell and sand into a pile alongside which the barge would settle and the load shovelled or wheelbarrowed on. Other trips to Karaka entailed taking puriri posts to Glasson’s landing up the Papakura Channel. Drury was still a destination.

Another who was involved in the barge industry was Paul Morton (*Auckland Waikato Journal*, 29, 33-34). He was working ‘at the tail end’ of the trade between 1922 and 1930, carrying sand used in concrete roads (built in the 1920s) and the new dams built for water supply. He described how he had to buy a petrol launch and



hire barges (at a total cost of £600). He also described the life:

‘There was good money in the towing job when I began but it was very hard work, night and day, winter and summer, wet through half the time, though this did not seem to harm you much as it was salt water.’ You were always travelling with the
View of a towing barge in rough seas on the Manukau Harbour. 1920s Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections JTD-19M-03002

tides, leaving Onehunga wharf with an empty barge at high water, even in the middle of the night. Most deck hands were Māori who lived at Ihumatao or Pukaki. The 1920s were the heyday of the barge trade. 'At the onset of the Depression of 1930, you could not give the sand away' and the barge industry began its slow decline.

This decline, and its impact on the various wharves, is reflected in a discussion of the Papakura Town Board in 1943. Should they renew the licence of the roadway across Chalky Point? The foreman pointed out that 'only one scow had used this locality for a long period.' But, in view of the fact that the Auckland Harbour Board was happy for it to be renewed, Mayor Sam Evans argued that 'if there's no cost, it might be advisable to retain the road: another scow might come in the next few months.' Councillor Brownhill agreed that 'there would be no harm done to ask for an extension. The Council might as well have the facility.' On the strength of those arguments the license was retained. (FT 27/8/43)

Weymouth was the third Pahurehure port, after Drury and Papakura, at the mouth of the Inlet. Years after the Government ferry to Karaka was stopped in the 1880s, a deep water jetty, described as a 'somewhat rickety structure', was built there in 1911. A more substantial affair opened in 1926 and was in use till 1970, demolished and replaced in 1976. (B Ringer, *Naming Manurewa*,127)

Higham describes the involvement of barges in this construction. The rock was taken from Puketutu Island to Weymouth. The hard work was at Puketutu Island, while at Weymouth the rock was dropped off the side at 2 pm at night to work the tide, right where the Keith Park retaining wall was built.

Bottle Top Bay and Weymouth are the last remaining wharves in the Pahurehure Inlet. Virtually no trace remains of the two Drury wharves and the Chalky Point wharf at Papakura. Water transport is again served almost entirely by landings, nowadays in the form of concrete ramps, while boats are moved great distances by trailer, and occupy back yards when they would have swung at anchor or sat on the mud in the past.

Pararekau

One further change around the period of the First World War was the construction in 1916 of the two bridges over the Hingaia and the Whangamaire creeks that ended Karaka's land isolation from Papakura. In place of the ferry crossings, Karaka was now closely linked to the world by road. Not only that but, as related by Craig in *Breakwater against the tide*, 'At Karaka, Gus Urquhart was among the first farmers to use aircraft to travel quickly to a stock sale, make the necessary purchases and return within the day to attend to his farm. For this to be done, planes had to land and take off in one of the farmer's paddocks.' 165

But the Hingaia islands remained. Pararekau (or Paraurekau), at 50 acres/ 16.5 ha, was largest.

It was purchased in 1853 with the proviso that Te Akitai would retain customary fishing rights, (a proviso that was not enforced). When first offered for sale along with the neighbouring islets of Kopuahingahinga (28 acres) and Orona (Orewa) (0.4.6), in 1854, it was 'keenly contested at auction': all three were sold at well above reserve price. In the case of Pararekau it was offered at £25, and realised £110. I don't know who bought it, and it is unlikely it was the only sale before the next recorded advertisement of the island in 1920. (NZH 21/4/1920), but the various owners attempted to farm it or use it as a getaway home.

The next chapter in the story of the island comes to light in a report of the drowning of a fisherman and ex-serviceman, Robert Dunn, in May 1924. A year before he and a friend had bought the island they called Dunstanton from a Mr J. Bell of Birkenhead, and he had lived in a hut on it. A farmer had lent him some nets and he would take the fish over to Young's Beach where the friend would collect them. The oars were found

at Takanini Beach and the dinghy upside down at Wattle Farm.

Stories of Pararekau illustrate life in the Pahurehure inlet for island-dwellers (and of the northern Karaka shores) before the bridges to Papakura were built. The Bradys (Grace Medland and her husband) found refuge for themselves and their milking goats on the island during the hard years of the Great Depression. There was an old house on the island when they bought it. When they arrived their heavy gear came by barge from Onehunga, the ploughing contractor brought his tractor and gear by barge from Weymouth. They relied on a dinghy and a punt, rowing or sailing from Young's Beach (Takanini sometimes?), and 'the fishermen', possibly based in Bottle Top Bay were their supportive neighbours and postmen, leaving deliveries in a box on a pole. There was a potentially hazardous wading crossing to the adjacent mainland, if you knew the way, but excavated kauri logs from Takanini formed the basis of a causeway, (which has been further developed and roaded). Later when the milking was established, they took their cream once a week to Young's Beach, where they had a locked box by the roadside; the cream lorry collected the cream and the postman left their mail.

In 1932 they sold to the grandmother of Charles Gosper. The Bradys took their possessions to Young's Beach by barge, leaving the barge there for the Gospers. Mr Gosper went over first. When the family arrived at Young's Beach they stared at a great expanse of mud. They could see the dinghy on the beach at Pararekau, but it was not till the tide was in on the following day that their father was able to row over and pick them up. When they left in 1947, the furniture was sent by barge to Chalky Point but the carrier did not turn up. In the meantime the barge sprang a leak; by the time the load was picked up the next day everything was soaked.

Charles Gosper was 5, and his sister Dawn a toddler when they arrived. An article in *Memories*, recorded by Alison Brown, tells their stories.

The family tried to farm 21 dairy cows on the island's infertile soils. The Bradys had sown new grass just before they arrived, but a dry summer didn't help establish the pastures. Charles' father found work—with pick and shovel — at the Hunua Quarry for the three months when the cows were dry, and that involved first rowing across the harbour, usually towards Chalky Point, walking across the mud at low tide, or to Coles Crescent when the tide was high, then a three mile walk to the gorge, dropping the shopping list into the McIlraith store on East St on the way. Another walk and row home at the end of a 12 hour day did not mean the end of his working day, because the large and productive garden needed his attention. When the cows were producing—mother milked and Charles separated the milk by hand—the whey went to the pigs and the cream, kept cool in a tank overnight, needed to be rowed over to Young's Beach the next night, when it was cooler. This was father's job. It took 20 minutes or an hour if the weather was rough, and because of the tides, had to be an hour later each night.

Mrs Gosper was in one important respect unsuited for life on an island. "Mum hated boats. She was scared of the water and couldn't row. She tried hard but could never get the hang of it. She was very uncoordinated" but on occasion she had to, and the boat would zigzag and lurch on its way. Gosper describes one return trip with his mother when the wind got up, and his younger sister was praying on her knees.

The children had their education by correspondence, and eventually needed



Launch with two barges in Pahurehure inlet taken 1930s, provided by Charles Gosper. Strevens farm background right and Wattle Farm behind it left.

radio help. But the radios were powered by three huge dry batteries as well as a car battery, and the latter needed to be carried by boat and foot to Papakura for recharging. So the radio was not used much for education. They could receive a Manurewa station feebly. Power and light was by candle and kerosine. Dawn also wrote letters to the children's page in the *Herald* supplement, describing her pets—bantam, calves and piglets, and about some of the fish that landed on the beach.

The hoppers at Bottle Top Bay might have been 2 miles west of the island, but “on a clear night I'd be woken several times by the noise of the gravel being loaded into the hoppers from the trucks—and then loaded onto barges.’

When the family left in 1947, Pararekau and Kopuahingahinga were bought by an ex-Air Force serviceman, Bell, assisted by the Government. Gosper says the family was hoping for £2000 but ended up getting £1750 before the mortgage was paid off. It was then known for a while as Mitchell's Island, from its next owners. The Lees bought it in the 1960s. They formed the causeway to Lees Island. It was bought by the Ross Brothers in about 2003. In 2012 they went to the Environment Court to gain permission to set up a gated community there, arguing that it was not viable to run cattle. One of those who opposed the application, Lucie Rutherford, argued that Manukau's second island should remain an asset for the people as a public reserve, and wanted to see it planted in trees. A Māori authority also opposed the proposal. Needless to say, the Court came down on the side of developers over public interest.

Since then it has been sold, against protest, with permission from the Overseas Investment Office, to Rainbow Holdings developers for \$41.5 million, and scraped and landscaped. Currently it is being developed as a gated community, thus inaccessible to locals. Sections are being widely and extravagantly advertised. Advertisements describe it as being three minutes from the motorway.

Sources for Pararekau and Bottle Top Bay

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Letter of Charles Gosper with photos, 1999, Papakura Museum files

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Recreational

If World War 1 marked the end of steamers and of the end of isolation for Karaka, and the beginning of the barge trade, World War 2 saw the virtual end of commercial shipping (including barges) in this area. What remains of the boats and landings are stories that have not been told to this point, kai moana—food—and the recreational use of the Inlet.

Past generations of Papakura people enjoyed the harbour, and several of them related their memories to Jan Hawkins, who recorded them in *Big Hats, Stink Pots, and Old Joe*. They had fond memories of Chalky Point. 'Chalky Point was a lovely little beach, where you found little pools among the rocks, all sorts of things in the pool.' (p37) 'When I was a child my parents took us for picnics on the Manukau Harbour from Chalky Point. A large group of us would go out on a launch for a day's picnic. The launches were owned by the Slacks and the Walkers. I don't remember a launch there but we used to row out to the launch in a dinghy. We would walk through the paddocks full of cattle to get to Chalky Point... The Richardson brothers owned a boat there too. We'd perhaps fish and have a good day on the boat and then

tramp again through the paddocks. In those days there would perhaps be two or three launches with maybe 20 people. The launches were petrol driven and each would hold about ten people... At Chalky Point there was 9 feet of water at full tide. [That's the same depth that Nathaniel Reid cited in 1865.] There were changing sheds at the point and we would go down there after school... It was a beautiful white beach as was Youngs Beach. We used to get periwinkles from Youngs Beach.' (p39, Bob Burgess, George Kernot and friends).

Mrs Busing. ...'In the 1930s lots of people would go out into the Manukau fishing for sharks. I can well remember up to fifty at a time hanging up to dry at Chalky Point (behind Prince Edward Park down Wharf Street.) Many of these sharks were six or seven feet long hanging out there drying in the sun like a great big clothes line full of sharks.' The Bradys spoke warmly of their friends the fishermen.

(At the same time, whey from the dairy factory was being discharged into a drain to Roselands hence to the harbour 40, and the inlet also received Papakura's sewage. The writing was on the wall.)

For Papakura itself, the coming of the motorway in the 1960s cutting across the local arm of the inlet with a mere culvert meant cutting off the link with the wider world, and greatly speeded up the siltation and growth of mangroves. Attempts to revive the recreational use of the Papakura arm frequently involved war on the mangroves. From 2008, the Pahurehure Inlet Protection Society, in which the Purdys were leading lights, had annual canoe days at Young's Beach Reserve. Photographs in the PIP newsletter showed children, kayaks, face paint, runabouts, barbecues and the Coast Guard. In 2011 there were an estimated 500 people at the Canoe Day.



Weymouth Regatta 1938. Kura, Auckland Libraries m42508

Weymouth has had an active recreational life. Judging from newspapers, boating clubs and events came and went. Annual regattas run by the Manukau Yacht and Motorboat Club (not to be confused with the well-known Weymouth Regatta in England) were a feature from well before the 1920s. At Easter on March 1921, the Manurewa and Weymouth Regatta involved buses running from Manurewa. There were yachts, including a class over 20 feet, and launches, and in 1922 dinghies. Some of the boats were from Onehunga. Comments were made about the tide and the current. In 1922 the weather was foul, and there were capsizes and broken masts. In the 1930s, the Annual Regatta and Carnival at Weymouth ushered in the new year (*NZH* 4/1/38), while 1946 began with the 'Weymouth Sports Club Regatta and Sports' with 'Boat, Swimming, Yacht and Launch Races, Running, Jumping and Novelty Races'. *AS* 31/12/45

A Rowing Club was formed in 1962 and resurfaced in October 1976 — its building at Te Pua point—and was renamed the Counties Manukau Rowing Club when moved down to Mercer on the Waikato River in 2000. A Boating Club was set up when the Hazard Road boat ramp was built around 1957. A Yacht Club, formed in 1962, combined with the

Boating Club to build club rooms in 1983. There are also Weymouth Sea Scouts: a cutter called *Waimahia* was launched in Waimahia Creek in Dec 1965 (Ringer); and Sea Cadets, based on Browns Rd.

And there are waka again on the Pahurehure. A recent revival in a different form of waka has led to an active Te Pou Haerenga Waka Ama club at Deep Water Beach. It originated with staff and pupils of James Cook High School, and has a large and active membership. The waka, fibreglass or carbon with outriggers, are imported from Tahiti, and can be seen on the Waimahia inlet and out on the Manukau

night and day. Paddling against the tide in the Papakura Channel is challenging. (Information from Bruce Ringer and Robert Lines.)

Bottle Top Bay has been the other recreation venue. The relatively deep water accessible to Papakura by Beach and Oakland Roads drew fishermen, who still moor their boats in the stream, and two activities in particular, the Manukau Speedboat Club and the volunteer Coast Guard.

The Manukau Speedboat Club was formed in 1953 and based at Bottle Top Bay. In a spirit of mutual advantage, the Club obtained land while the volunteer Coast Guard found an old bach for removal: it was shifted to the Club site and became clubhouse and Coast Guard base. (DF Stewart). A launching ramp for all tides was also built. The Club organised races and regattas, which were very successful, but their very success and the arrival of powerboats, led to its demise. Locals became exasperated by the noise, crowds, traffic congestion, parking and trespass, the lack of facilities such as toilets, and erosion, and Club activities came to an end in 1985. The wharf meanwhile fell into disrepair and was replaced in 1900.

The Papakura Volunteer Coast Guard Service was established in 1968, and affiliated to NZ Coastguard Federation, with the aim of saving lives and property at sea. It was originally based at Bottle Top Bay, but by 1997 had shifted its base to Wellington Park north of Papakura centre. The Coast Guard are usually engaged in rescue and searches under police control, and work with Manukau (Titirangi) or Waiuku groups, and with the Auckland group on the Hauraki side. Their 'operating area extends down to the southern side of Raglan Harbour, go out to sea (West) for 12 (nautical miles), turn and head up (North) to the southern side of Kaipara Harbour. The majority of (their) activity is in the Manukau harbour and out across the Manukau Bar.'

'Their website also states: 'We are a full time mobile unit that can launch from any location in NZ. Their mobility and wide area of activity is enabled by powerful boats and trucks, so they can be launched at ramps anywhere. Our main launching ramp is Bottle Top Bay for the Manukau harbour, and we also use the Mangere Bridge all tide ramp and Waiau Pa ramp. We use Kawakawa Bay ramps for launching into the Firth of Thames and Hauraki Gulf.'

Today Bottle Top Bay is less busy than it used to be. In its heyday, 'Many boats were anchored in the Bay, and a half dozen launches and many dinghies of all shapes and sizes.' (Garland in Agnew)
The Pahurehure is truly a backwater today, but through the Coast Guard it retains a wide influence.



Sources:

In addition to newspapers and other sources referred to in earlier articles, and to those listed for Pararekau, the following were used:

Hawkins, Jan (comp), Big hats, scent pots and Old Joe, 1990 NZ Official Project

Ringer, J Bruce, Naming Manurewa: Place and Street Names in Manurewa, Weymouth and Wiri, 2021

Coastguard Papakura website, <https://www.coastguard.nz/areas/northern-area/units/papakura/>

Photos this page: Bottle Top Bay (above) and waka ama at Weymouth, taken by the author.



The Merrie Olde Christmas Tree



Those of us influenced by British Christmas traditions have often been told that the practice of putting up a decorated tree at Christmas originated with Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's German-born husband. However, it seems that the Christmas tree, or originally a decorated bough or branch, was bought into England by Queen Charlotte, who married George III in 1761.

Queen Charlotte was born in the Duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz where the decorating of a yew bough at Christmas had been a tradition for many years. She started the tradition at the English royal court and allegedly in 1800 first used a large tree rather than just a single branch. The idea soon caught on with members of the nobility but was largely unknown among commoners.

When Prince Albert came on the scene in 1840, he imported spruce trees from Germany and made it a popular custom within the royal family. Images of the royal family and their Christmas trees appeared in magazines seen by thousands of people, and the Christmas tree tradition was then enthusiastically taken up by everyone.

Early reports on the first European Christmases in New Zealand usually concentrate on detailing the food served, such as whole oxen being roasted on Petone Beach. But early reports do mention using ferns and greenery for decoration. Mrs Hobson, the first Governor's wife was greatly taken with what she called the beautiful 'red myrtle,' and it is likely that cut pohutukawa was used as indoor decoration on those early Christmas days.

Contributed by Terry Carson.

Meetings held on the fourth Thursday of each month in the Library Meeting Rooms opposite the Museum, the talk first at 1 pm, then business and afternoon tea provided by PDHS members (for \$2 gold coin). Phil Sai-Louie & PDHS arrange interesting speakers.

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