



Contents:		
Digest of Society News and Events	p2	HerStory: Daphne Shaw—Wendy Deeming p4
Artefact of the month—Wendy Deeming	p3	George Gould Walter—Edna Carson p5
		Flooding on the Otūwairoa—Rob Finlay p11

Greetings to all our readers

What a time to be writing or reading history, with a war threatening the very existence of the order that has given security and prosperity for most of us during our lifetime. These are tense times for everybody, and the price of petrol and therefore everything else, is just part of the story. All that burning oil and gas (and inflammable buildings) are not going to help reverse the trajectory of climate change either.

Meanwhile our busy little Society and Museum continue to explore the history of our town and district and of New Zealand. Past wars and the Services are in mind as we remember Anzac. Both Artefact and HerStory have a military focus. There is a new Museum display on the 'Boer Woer', more accurately the Second South African War, and the special exhibition, Whakaahua, is a photographic essay on the experience of recruits in today's army. The Museum will be open on Anzac Day (10am-1pm).

The Navy features too: Edna Carson's article on George Gould Walter is a reminder of the role of the Navy in charting the coastline in the 1850s. Walter was a civilian on HMS *Pandora* before establishing himself in business in Papakura and further. The final article is a rather belated response to the stories of flooding in our district, with reference to one stream, the Ōtuwairoa, and how Kirikiri and today's Papakura have been affected by our past of rainfall excess.

There's a lot happening in the PDHS and Museum and volunteers are always welcomed: to help in the Museum, to meet the public, organise events, find sponsors, write articles or suggest topics for the *Sentinel*. Just talk to someone, and we'll happily find something for you to do. Or you can just enjoy the meetings, exhibitions or articles. That's what we're there for.

Rob (Ed.)

PAPAKURA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Website: <https://papakurahistoricalsociety.org.nz>
 Monthly Members' Meetings: 4th Thurs, 1pm – 3pm
 Regular heritage Trips to places of interest

PAPAKURA MUSEUM

Open: Mon, Tues, Thurs, Friday, 10am—4.30pm,
 Wed 10am—6pm, Sat 10am—3pm
 Accent Point Building, 209 Great South Road; 09 2982003
 Ph.: (09) 298 2003 www.papakuramuseum.org.nz

Digest of Society News and Events.

Recent talks:

Thurs 26 February: Rob Finlay, Kirikiri: twice loved, twice lost. The forgotten lives and dramas of a district of Papakura.

Thurs 26 March: Tracey Gayner— Digitising your photos: before disaster strikes.

Forthcoming PDHS meetings:

(Held in Library Meeting Room at 1 pm, followed by afternoon tea—anyone welcome.
\$2 towards afternoon tea)

Thurs 23 April: Karena Sew Hoy—The Ranfurly Veterans' Trust. The Ranfurly Veterans' Trust is based in Three Kings, Auckland. It offers both direct and indirect support services to veterans, serving personnel and their families/whanau.

Thurs 28 May: Tom Brownlee—The Historical Town Supply Milk Industry. Once upon a time, the town supply milk was two separate industries. Now it is just one – Fonterra.

Recent Trips:

Thursday 5 March: Awhitu Peninsula, meeting Awhitu HS.

Forthcoming Trips:

Thurs 16 April: Holy Trinity Cathedral, Parnell. Contact person Wendy Deeming

Thurs 21 May: Toroa Preservation Society in Selwood Road, Henderson. (Public transport available)

Museum: Exhibitions

Museum will be open on Anzac Day 10am-1pm

Pedal Power! - featuring the pedal machines and story of Papakura identity Tony Wood-roofe.

Whakaahua - Craig Madsen, official Army photographer—follows class of new recruits through their 12 weeks of basic training. Opens 22 April in time for ANZAC day.

New Zealand's Forgotten War—the Boer War/South Africa War and local links

For more detailed and current information on events, please check:

***Staying in touch* monthly newsletter**

PDHS Website: www.papakurahistoricalsociety.org.nz

The screen outside the Papakura Museum

Object of the month

Wendy Deeming

The “Lemon Squeezer” Hat

The New Zealand Army felt hat or “Lemon Squeezer” is now an item of head-dress of the past. In the Volunteer days of the 1900’s, “A” Battery New Zealand Field Artillery wore a felt hat similar to that of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The New Zealand contingents in the Boer War wore felt hats turned up at the left side with a fore to aft dent in the crown. When the Territorials superseded to Volunteers in 1910, they also wore the felt hat with the brim turned up.



Accession #5347

Donated 2005

During annual camp at Takapau (a rural town in Central Hawkes Bay) in 1911, there was a spell of very wet weather and the hats collected water in the dents. Lieutenant Colonel W. G. Malone, later of Gallipoli fame, at that time commanding the 11th Taranaki Rifles, whose badge was a facsimile of Mount Egmont, had the idea of eliminating the fore and aft dent in the crown and pinching it with four dents so that the crown resembled the mountain badge and so shed the water. When the General Officer Commanding, Major General Sir Alexander Godley, visited the camp he noticed the change in hat style and requested Lieutenant Colonel Malone to explain. The Colonel drew attention to the fact that the 11th Taranakis, as the only rifle regiment in the New Zealand Army, did not conform to arms drill, as practiced by the other fifteen regiments of New Zealand Infantry. As a rifle regiment does not slope arms there was no need to pin the brim of the hat up. As His Excellency The Governor General, Lord Liverpool, was Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, and he came from the Rifle Brigade of the British Army, he would be approached to approve the regimental dress distinction if the General would not accede to it. Permission was granted and the hat, later to be dubbed the “Lemon Squeezer” was introduced. When the New Zealand Expeditionary Force was raised for World War One, Lieutenant Colonel Malone was appointed to command the 1st Battalion 5th Wellington Regiment. As his Adjutant and Regimental Sergeant Major were also ex-11th Taranakis, the Wellingtons’ hats were promptly changed to the Taranaki style. Photographs of the early New Zealand Expeditionary Force show them mainly in slouch hats but they gradually came into line, perhaps to distinguish them from the Australians. The “Lemon Squeezer” went on and became the distinguishing symbol of all New Zealand troops in war and peace until 1962 when, it was discarded and replaced by another form of head dress. Used throughout WWI and WWII, it was replaced by berets in 1960, but was brought back in 1977 for ceremonial purposes, specifically worn by ceremonial guards and the New Zealand Army Band.

Source: This account is reproduced from an article by Major W. S. Furby, a New Zealand infantry officer of the 11th Taranaki Rifles and the First World War, published in the New Zealand Returned Service Association publication, “Review”.

HERSTORY

Papakura and district has had many women, who over time have contributed to the society and structure of the town, the district, or the nation. Their involvement ranges from politics, to sport, to education, to the arts and to the social fabric. Over the coming months we will be featuring different women who have made life in Papakura more interesting, from its beginning to the present.

Daphne Shaw, Lt Col (Retd)



Daphne Shaw (RNZNC Service No. 215491) was born in 1943 and trained at Middleton Hospital as a nurse. She joined the New Zealand Army in 1969, having had prior military experience in the Territorials.

Daphne served in the New Zealand Force Hospital in Singapore and notably in 1971 for a year in Vietnam as a Lieutenant in the 1st Australian Field Hospital, Vung Tau.

She nursed soldiers direct from the field, treating serious gunshot wounds and mine injuries through to sprained ankles and malaria. As she recalled, the hardest thing being part of such a small military contingent was that 'you always knew the soldiers'.

Daphne was also involved in the evacuation of New Zealand nationals from Tehran in the 1980s, and a period of two weeks in the then Gilbert and Ellice Islands (now Kiribati and Tuvalu) assisting during a cholera epidemic in 1977.

It was Daphne's kiwi 'get on and make-do' attitude that served her well during her military nursing career.

'There was always something you could do with a piece

of string when in a situation with few resources!'

Daphne spent over 26 years in the military. Much of her time was tri-service – serving the army, air force and navy simultaneously.

In 1976 she assumed the appointment of Matron of the RNZAF Base Hospital, Auckland and 1992 she became the Director of Nursing for the New Zealand Defence Force.

In the 1980s she was awarded the Associate Royal Red Cross (ARRC). In 1996 she was awarded the Royal Red Cross (RRC). She was awarded the New Zealand Operational Service Medal and the Vietnam Medal.

Daphne Shaw died on 2 December 2023 and is buried in St Andrews Presbyterian Cemetery, Clevedon.

GEORGE GOULD WALTER:

from Pit Boy to Country Gentleman (Part 1)

Edna Carson

Very little is known about George Gould Walter's early life in Devon, England. He was born on 16 March 1824, the eldest son of John and Grace (nee Gould) Walter. His birth year of 1824 seems to be at variance with all records that we have of him after his arrival in New Zealand, as it was presumed by certificates obtainable here that he was born about 1828. Such a discrepancy makes you wonder whether he was trying to appear younger than he really was, especially at the time of his first marriage, or whether he simply could not recall the year he had been born after he came to New Zealand! He is also referred to incorrectly as George Walters in many reports, which means he often gets confused with the William Walters family who also settled near Papakura.

At the time of George's birth, his father was working as a labourer on a farm in Tinhay, a small hamlet in the village of Lifton, near where both his parents had been born and resided for all their lives. Although his parents were illiterate, as both signed their marriage certificate with an X, George evidently received a basic education either in the parish school at Lifton or the national school at Bridestowe, which was 9 miles (14.5km) north-east from his home. This was confirmed by the fact that when he



Map showing Lifton and Bridestowe in S W Devon

took up a later career, he had to pass an examination 'as to his ability to read, write and keep accounts'. At the time of the UK 1841 Census, he was not living at home with his parents and younger siblings and was registered as an apprentice in 'animal husbandry' in the household of John Palmer of Great Close in Bridestowe.

When he joined the Royal Navy in 1845, he gave his trade as 'pit boy', though whether this was when he first left home or just prior to his enrolment is not clear. The fact that he had been employed in a mine earlier is not surprising, as there were a number of manganese, tin, lead and other mines in south-west Devon and the neighbouring county of Cornwall close to his home town that provided employment for many of the local people. However, if he had worked in a mine, it is more likely that it was the Sourton limestone quarry at Bridestowe, which was owned then by the Palmers, who had been lime merchants as well as farmers for several generations.

His next occupation as a steward in the Royal Navy could not have been more different. In Victorian times, a steward was one of the civilians or non-seamen employed on a ship and the position could entail among other tasks: ensuring the cleanliness of the captain's and officers' cabins, assisting the cook with the preparation and serving of meals, arranging for the victualling or provisioning of the ship, and helping the paymaster if required. His apprenticeship as a steward with the Royal Navy saw him serving time on three of the smaller vessels, *Active*, *Arab* and *Hercules*. Then three months after he left the *Hercules*, he signed on as steward for the HMS *Pandora* on 10 January 1851. As this was a

small 319 ton brigantine, which only had a total crew of officers and seamen numbering between 57 and 61, his duties on board would have been many and varied. The ship's Muster List gives his correct age *at the time* as 27 and the only description we have of him – 5ft 8in (1.73m) tall, sallow complexion, hazel eyes and dark brown hair.



HMS *Pandora* (Painting by Thomas Hornbrook, Feb 1851). [Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki]

The *Pandora* (Captain Byron Drury) had been commissioned two months earlier on 7 November 1850 under orders from the Admiralty to sail to New Zealand. On arrival there, the ship was to relieve the paddle wheel sloop *Acheron* (Captain John Lort Stokes) and continue the maritime survey of the coastline, which the *Acheron* had started in 1848. Once formalities were completed, the *Pandora* left Plymouth on 20 February 1851 and sailed southwards, calling into Sydney

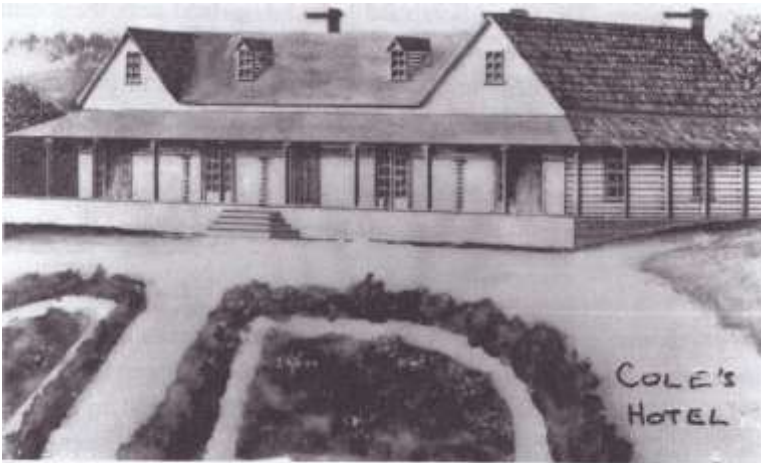
on the way to take over the charts and data already compiled by the *Acheron* before continuing to Auckland. It took the crew of the *Pandora* over four and a half years to complete this hydrographic survey and the survey provided the first comprehensive charts of New Zealand waters since Captain Cook's voyages, as well as accurate information for mariners in the *New Zealand Pilot* for the following century. Although, when on a voyage to Sydney in August 1852 to replace sails and other equipment, ten of the crew deserted to join the gold rush at Bathurst, the *Pandora* was regarded by both officers and crew as 'a happy ship' which 'has not lost one man during an absence of five years and a half. She has gone over a course of 70,000 [66,000 to be more accurate] miles during that time'. Such a feat would have been amazing for any sailing vessel covering so many miles at sea and often under extremely hazardous and life threatening conditions. Another legacy from this expedition was that the district in the Parish of Opaheke, where Byron Drury had purchased 225 acres of land (Lot 21) on 28 September 1852 - and sold on leaving the country - was named Drury after him.

George Walter evidently decided that when his term of duty around New Zealand had finished on 14 February 1856, he would not return with the ship to England. He would sign off in Auckland (his conduct throughout the survey expedition was noted as 'very good') and his next occupation would be on dry land where he could use the skills and experience he had gained while at sea. His intending marriage may also have influenced his decision to stay in New Zealand.

During the winter months when the *Pandora* was anchored in Auckland between surveys, it would have been one of his responsibilities to ensure that food and other provisions were replenished. It is

possible that while carrying out this role, he would have met the Munro family, who were living in Stanley Street, Mechanics Bay at this time. This was one of the bays, where Māori arrived in their canoes to sell or barter their produce to the local settlers. Then again when on shore, he could well have met the family, and especially their daughter Margaret, in the grounds of Government House at one of the performances given by the band of the 58th Regiment, as Ellen, the eldest Munro daughter, was married to William Donald, who had a long association with this regiment.

Just six weeks after signing off, he married his first wife, Margaret Munro, at St Barnabas Church in Parnell on 31 March 1856. She was the second daughter of Daniel and Elizabeth (nee Connell) Munro, who had been some of the first settlers in Auckland, arriving on the *Duchess of Argyle* in 1842. She had worked as a milliner for several years in Auckland and was not quite 18 years old at the time, as her father had to give consent to the marriage. William Donald was a witness at the wedding.



Artistic impression of Cole's Inn. Photograph reproduced with permission (Cole Family).

From Elsdon Craig, *Breakwater against the tide*, PDHS

The marriage certificate gives George Walter's age as 28 (when in fact he was 32) and his occupation as inn keeper, which meant that he had already embarked on his other goal of making a new start in New Zealand. An advertisement appeared the following day, 1 April 1856, in the *Daily Southern Cross* to inform readers that he had taken over Cole's Inn in Papakura, which was to be his first venture as a hotel owner or hotelier.

PAPAKURA HOTEL Late Cole's Inn, Papakura

GEORGE G. WALTERS (late Government Steward, of H.M.S. Pandora) having taken the above well known and old established House, hopes that by strict attention to visitors and travellers, and by keeping good accommodation for Man and Horse, to meet a continuation of the support before so liberally conferred on this establishment

In this advertisement, he also mentioned the availability of a boat in which parties could take pleasure trips to Onehunga, or possibly amuse themselves fishing or shooting in the country nearby, while a 'handsome' car would be at the service of those who preferred to drive further inland. With the promise of such activities and the assurance that he personally would see to the choice of wines, spirits, etc for the 'good table that would be kept', what more could any traveller or visitor want? During his tenure of the inn, it was either referred to as Walter's Inn or the Papakura Hotel. That year he also applied for a grant of 160 acres under the Special Occupation Land scheme in the southern portion of the Waiuku Block but was not successful in this ballot. In December 1857 he had the distinction of being appointed Papakura's first postmaster, a position he held until it was transferred to Robert Willis at his store in January 1860. He was also the agent for the *New Zealand-er* newspaper for a few years. Like many of the early settlers, he contributed to the building of the

first Anglican Church in Papakura and continued to support its upkeep while he remained in the district.

Despite expectations, business in Papakura did not turn out to be as rewarding as he had hoped, nor was he able to achieve the high standards of hospitality that he had promised. In 1858, Eliza Jones (later wife of Reverend James Stack) had stayed the night there at what she considered was 'a pretty looking roadside inn' with a party of friends on a journey south. She had found this a very disappointing experience, as she had not been impressed by either the slatternly appearance of Margaret and Kitty (Margaret's youngest sister Catherine, who would have been helping her after the birth of her first child), or the standard of the food provided, as the turkey was tough, or the comfort and safety of their rooms, where they had been unable to sleep because of fleas in their beds and the noise emanating from a drunken singer nearby. This 'singer' could well have been one of the boarders who gave Cole's Inn as his address, when the first Jury List was compiled in 1857. This did not omen well for the long term existence of the inn and it appears to have become unlicensed. In March 1858, George Walter advertised for sale at the Papakura Hotel, all the household furniture, bar fittings, supplies of liquor and three of his horses. Later that year, he also advertised for sale his 117 acres of land in Hunua, which was adjoining that of his brother-in-law, William Donald. Another contributing factor to the loss of patronage for this hotel would have been the opening of another inn in Papakura by Seymour Wells on a property on the Great South Road, which he and his father-in-law had bought from George Cole in October 1858. Well's Inn from then onwards became the preferred venue for all the local meetings, entertainments, court sessions and inquests.

Meanwhile George Walter had already bought at least three allotments in Papakura before January 1858 (section 7 lots 5 and 6 and section 6 lot 19) near the corner of present day Don Street, from William Barron, who was a carpenter and had moved on to Onehunga. On this property he had erected a house in which his family lived while he continued to explore other opportunities. The publication of the 1860 Jury List saw him no longer described as an 'inn keeper' but as a 'farmer' and he turned his attention to the district where he had first hoped to get a land grant. In October 1859, he announced that he was planning to build a hotel in the Mauku district and had bought a piece of land from Major Speedy near what was then the main road to Waiuku, on which to build the first hotel in the district. His application for a bush license on 7 July 1860 was made on the recommendation of the Resident Magistrates of both Waiuku, Major Speedy (who happened to be his neighbour) and of Drury, Charles Mellsop, as well as 32 settlers in the district, who were feeling unequal to meeting the increased hospitality needs of travellers on their way to one of those destinations. Before the license was finally granted in 1861, he had already advertised this small hotel for sale (*NZer* 14 November 1860), presumably because he felt that he could not give his full attention to managing this as well as the other properties he had bought.

The "Mauku Bridge" Hotel

This house is situated at the Mauku, half-way between Drury and Waiuku: it has very recently been built at a considerable outlay. There is 10 acres of land attached, a 4-stall stable, cow-shed, and other necessary offices. There is a good navigable creek from Onehunga, which flows within two chains of the door. To a new-comer with a small capital this would be a first rate opportunity. Immediate possession can be given. Apply to the owner, on the premises.

GEO G WALTER



Map of Mauku Patumahoe district showing location of Mauku Bridge Hotel, 1860 (From Heaphy, Charles, Sketch of country between Auckland and Waikato - military tracks...) Department of Survey and Land information, Map A67 R2282257. Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kawanatanga, Wellington

There was no buyer for the hotel then and he retained the publican's licence himself. Until the start of the Waikato War it proved to be a great boon not only for the local settlers but also for those travelling between Drury and Waiuku. Its situation was ideal, as it was near the head of the Mauku salt water creek, which provided access across the Manukau Harbour to and from Onehunga through the Tahiki inlet and continued to do so until the roads improved in the district. It was near the Mauku Bridge and a short distance from St Brides Church, which also opened in 1861 and where a number of the local settlers and Pitt's militia later sheltered during the Waikato War. During the war, the hotel was used as a depot for the commissariat stores, closely guarded by local volunteers. Many well-known people found food and accommodation at the hotel, including some of Sir George Grey's party when he had visited the Waiuku district in December 1861 and Gustavus von Tempsky and his band of Forest Rangers when the war was at its height.

To provide himself with other sources of income during the early 1860s, George Walter also tendered for work on the roads being upgraded in the area, namely the Great South Road from Drury to Mangatawhiri and the road to Waiuku, both of which were in an unsatisfactory state especially during the wet winter months. In September 1861, his tender of £25 was accepted for some work on the Waiuku Road and he was awarded the contract for completing the military or Great South

Road from near Selby's farm at Pokeno to the landing on the Waikato River near the junction of the Mangatawhiri Creek. Progress was slow on this section, because the kahikatea swamp

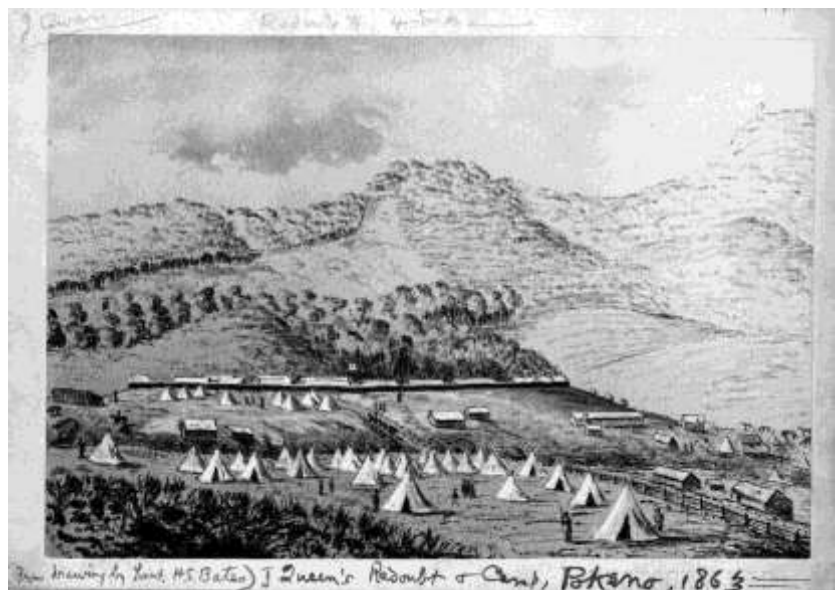


Map of Pokeno showing Queen's Redoubt, Selby's farm and South Road, 1863 (From Heaphy, Charles. Sketch of country between Auckland and Waikato - military tracks ...) [NB. North and South are reversed. Queens Redoubt is the rectangle north of the Mangatawhiri River.]

Below: Queen's Redoubt and 18th regiment camp, Pokeno, 1863. (Drawing by Henry Stratton Bates. Alexander Turnbull Library PUBL-0054-1-241)

through which the road had to be built was over 8ft deep in places and had to be continually filled with earth, which after being left to settle was then refilled until a permanent level was reached. There was also the problem of having a regular supply of labourers, as the civilians he employed came and went as they pleased (NZer 29 March 1862). However, the road was finished in time for the invasion of the Waikato by the 12th and 14th Regiments on 12 July 1863.

While he was based at Mangatawhiri working on this contract, he also advertised that he had started a van (conveyance) running from Queen's Redoubt to Drury over the portion of the road that had already been metalled by the military. When troops were stationed at Queen's Redoubt in Pokeno after its completion in 1863, he established a store and canteen there, which were managed by Thaddeus Fitzpatrick and still operating until at



least 1865. Then later, when the troops moved further south, another store at Ngaruawahia. This store was put up for sale in 1868, his reason being that 'he had too many businesses to attend to and he had to curtail some of them'. He also had the contract to supply stores to the military hos-

pital at Queen's Redoubt and another to supply potatoes to the Commissariat at Drury. The latter contract, which he had assigned to William John Young of the Farmers Hotel, did not have a successful outcome as it resulted in his becoming the defendant in a court case with Young, because the potatoes, which he had ordered, were found to be rotten on delivery to Drury (*DSC* 8 April 1864).

It is evident that while carrying out these contracts during the early 1860s, he would have been away from home for much of this period, either travelling or overseeing these projects. Meanwhile he had moved his wife and two daughters to the small hotel at Mauku, where he had already established a good garden (*NZer* Mar 23 1863), and rented their Papakura house to Henry Greenacre.

(to be continued in the next issue)

Special thanks to Anne Megget, who provided details of George Walter's birth in Devon, to Neville Johnson for his knowledge of Papakura allotments, and to Hazel Petrie for her account of the Munro family.

Sources

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National Library of NZ. Papers Past.

Flooding on the Otūwairoa

Rob Finlay



A few trickles of water from the West-facing slopes of the Hunuas and Pukekooiwiriki/Red Hill gather into a small stream which crosses a small reserve behind the shop at the intersection of Settlement and Dominion Roads.

It reappears on the other side of Dominion Road between grassy banks and, reinforced by other tributaries, shapes property boundaries occupied by warehouses, a church and youth centres (Cadets, Youthtown), crossing under Croskery Road before changing direction behind the Papakura Club and flowing under Hunua Road. Now crowded by low bush and the chainlink fences of factories, it reappears under road and rail bridges at the junction of Bound-



ary Road and the rail tracks, skirting a low ridge to link up with a larger stream, Hays Creek or Waipokapu, which has spilled out from the Hunua Gorge. Commonly known as Slippery Creek, the enlarged Otūwairoa skirts the new Opaheke Park on its way to Drury, other tributaries joining it on the way. Then, as the Hingaia or Drury Creek, it feeds into the Pahurehure Inlet, a tidal creek of the Manukau Harbour.



Otūwairoa is the stream of Kirikiri, the valley of East Papakura. As is the way of streams it has both drained and built up the Kirikiri valley over time. Today it is bridged, culverted, straightened, channelled, neglected and polluted by urban growth. Until the great assault on the Kirikiri valley following 1865, it was a free stream flowing through fernland, scrub, bush and swamp. It was probably traversed by small waka, harvested for eels, cress, and other resources and, as Alan Knowles, our Curator, suggested in his article on paths (*Sentinel* #81, p6-13), it influenced the course of the walking tracks that are now followed by roads.



A few issues ago, (*Sentinel* #79, p7-16) Alan wrote about local flooding to coincide with the Museum exhibition on the subject, and recently our Local Board former chairman gave a Museum talk

Photos on previous page and above (in order): source stream, crossing Croskery Rd, at Boundary Rd; Ōpaheke Park. Rob Finlay.

about the new Ōpaheke Park as an engineered spillover flood control area. Historically, flooding is a major local issue.

The name Otūwairoa means ‘the place where the long water stands’ (Auckland Council Watercourse Assessment Report), and this name attests to the issue of inundation. Kirikiri and Ōpaheke (which encompasses the northern part of this valley), and also Ramarama, are broad, low-lying valleys into which, periodically, heavy rain pours off the Hunua Ranges. High tides can hinder drainage out of the catchment. Hays Creek has flooded seriously in recent years. This was not a problem for Māori, for whom a good swamp was a resource-rich asset, and it also aided waka transport. Old maps show widespread swamps round Drury and Ramarama, and even in the bush areas of Kirikiri, water would persist seasonally under the trees.

For Pākehā settlers, swamps, like bush, were seen as a foe to be overcome. What the axe, saw and fire achieved in replacing forest with grassland, the shovel achieved in swampy areas. Aotearoa has lost most of its wetlands as well as its forest. The problem is that both forest and wetland performed at least three noble functions: they acted as a sponge absorbing and controlling rainfall, they acted as a carbon sink, and they provided an environment for a rich variety of plants and animals.

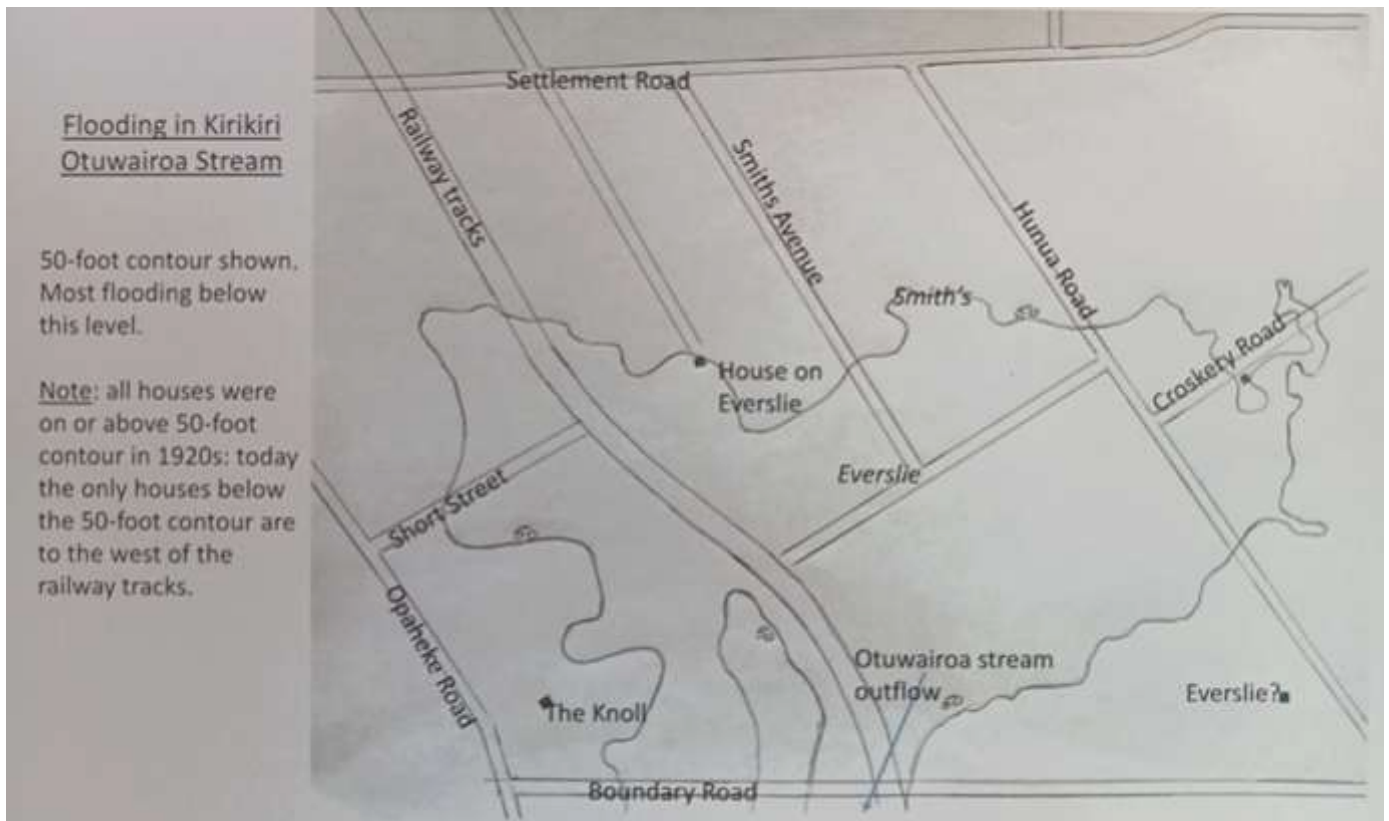
When the Kirikiri settlers arrived in 1865, the challenge they faced was to create arable land and pasture out of forest, scrub, fernland and swamp. The incentive would be a farmlet which could be cultivated or sold as an asset. From the beginning they faced seasonal fires in late summer with choking smoke, or floods which could take place at any time of the year. Draining swamp also contributed to the fire problem because as the peat dried out it burned with an acrid intensity. (This was also happening in the Papakura Valley to the north, now known as Takaanini.)

Drainage was necessary for the establishment of pasture. George Clarkson, poor immigrant miner had become laird of 185 acres in 1870: he stated that 140 acres had been ‘at great expense’ drained and laid down with good grass over the previous five years. That suggests that there were 40-odd acres still to develop. In June 1872 he was inviting tenders for ‘about 90 chains [1810 m] of Ditching, more or less 3 ft. wide x 2½ ft. deep’. With the Otūwairoa stream flowing through his low-lying land, further drainage was clearly needed. Clarkson would already have had experience of flooding. The farm later called Everslie was developed for sheep, and remained a sheep farm into the 1920s.



The problem persisted. It comes to our attention early in the twentieth century. Jack Wright, growing up at the Knoll (on today's Rembrandt Place), overlooking the valley, bears witness to the flooding potential of the Kirikiri valley. In the particularly high floods of 1907, he described ‘Blacks Creek’ (one of the succession of names the Otūwairoa stream has had; another is Croskery's Drain) as

an 'inland sea' with Everslie homestead an island. That suggests floodwaters had risen above the 50-foot contour, meaning that at least half of Everslie farm – the central part, part of Smith's Oaks farm, most of the Croskery land and a good stretch of Hunua Road was under water, while a good stretch of railway track might have appeared as a causeway. (As late as the 1920s there were no houses built below the 50-foot contour, and today all this area is industrial or part of Koiwi Park, with high earthworks.)



The flood of January 1907 brought devastation over a wide area of South Auckland. (One of my Bregmen families were marooned at Aka Aka near Waiuku because the house was the only one above flood level, but they had to cope with the stench of rotting eels when the water subsided; a brother farming at Churchill near Rangiriri lost his horses, and then his farm, in mud.) The flood cut transport by destroying bridges, washing out sections of railway track. It took some time for transport to be reestablished, the railway two miles south of Papakura round the Hunua station (later the Opaheke station) had been washed out in several places, and covered by a metre and a half of water and debris, but with the lavish use of ballast, the track was quickly restored. Slash was piled against bridges.

One farmer, H McCormick, had an orchard of 28½ acres off Opaheke Road towards the Hunua station by the confluence of the Hays and Otūwairoa creeks (a tree nursery today). It was 'covered by 4 feet of water, and the rushing water damaged a number of the trees, while the wind and rain stripped a large proportion of the fruit ready for picking and carried it into the Manukau Harbour'. We will meet McCormick again.

'Three small traffic bridges were washed away'. One of these might have been William and Ellen

'Clarkson's bridge' on Settlement Road just before Dominion Road. Another might have been 'Walker's bridge' on Hunua Road.

Elsie K Morton describes walking to school with her friends in heavy rain on such a day in the 1890s when Clarkson's bridge was flooded. A group of little children, the oldest of whom is 10, are splashing down Red Hill through rain, with streamlets that have formed along the side of the road, and Peter announces 'that he can see the little bridge at the bottom of Clarkson's fields being washed away!', so of course that becomes the goal.

Sure enough, the little bridge is under water. Can we get over it? There is great excitement as young Peter, who is ten, and acknowledged leader of our little party, tucks his breeches far up above his sturdy knees, and looking very important and brave, steps boldly into the flood.

"Look out, Pete!" we all scream with one voice as he steps on a weak plank and flounders up to his knees. "He'll be drowned!" wails Tim, but we take no notice of him. "Go on, Pete," we cry, and thrilling with excitement, prepare to follow him.

"Here, you kids go back," orders Pete, looking back for a moment. "It's awful deep just here!"

It is. Pete, turning with a little incautious swagger, steps suddenly into a hole in the old bridge, loses his footing, and sprawls face downward in the yellow flood! To a chorus of shrieks the fallen hero picks himself up, and looking rather frightened, makes his way back to safety, wet and dripping as a water rat.

"My word!" he exclaims through chattering teeth, "that was a norful narrow escape! Good thing I went first, or you might all 'a got drowned." Pete tries to wring the tail of his coat, then announces with a gloom that we all know quite well is assumed, that he supposes he had better go back home. Off he goes at a run, while we make our way back to the road.

(Elsie K Morton, *Joy of the road*, p 240)

In 1907, crops were destroyed, and hopefully sheep and cattle moved to pockets of higher land.

The *Herald* article (NZH 17/1/1907) that described the aftermath of the flood referred to events in neighbouring areas as well. Eight gumdiggers camped in Papakura Valley (Takaanini) went to bed in their tents but were forced to 'ascend a tree for safety' There they remained all night and were rescued early next day 'when their plight was ascertained'. And somewhere in the vicinity of Papakura two young English ladies 'were to be married on Tuesday', but despite all preparations being completed, no minister arrived.

One contributing factor in the Otūwairoa catchment was willows growing by the stream. Willows readily grow by streams, self-propagate and have the ability to obstruct the flow of the stream, effectively creating dams. In heavy rainfall seasons, this banks water up, causing upstream flooding. Even if removed, they readily repopulate. This had become a problem by the early nineteenth century if not earlier. It could well have been a factor in the 1907 flood.

In late 1913, it occasioned a case against H McCormick, the orchard owner. WW Carpenter, owner of Everslie Grove farm in Kirikiri at the time, had asked McCormick to clear the willows on Hays Creek under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1908. Drury Road Board deliberated on the matter, and it was discussed by the Papakura Road Board. McCormick's solicitors argued that

indeed this had been done in February. McCormick had ring-barked the willows, and he and an employer had spent seven weeks clearing the stream to a greater width than asked for. He argued that the flooding was caused by obstruction below the concrete bridge (on Ōpaheke Road), and flooded up the smaller of the two streams, ie Otūwairoa.

When representatives of the Papakura Town Board visited, they were not convinced. They felt that the ring-barking had not been effective, there was little evidence of seven weeks of work and the situation was worse than before, though two neighbouring properties looked clean. The Drury Road Board also agreed to investigate the situation, and recommended that all the parties, Carpenter, McCormick and the two Boards, get together.

Whatever resolution was made at the time, the situation was not permanently resolved. By 1926 the remnant part of Everslie owned by Patrick Joseph Parker was being leased to the Everslie Golf Club, which appreciated the gently rolling sheep-cropped land. But the old problem of flooding again made itself felt. As early as 1922 and at periods thereafter, Parker was one of those who had approached the Town Board and the Franklin County Council about this issue. It was agreed that the County would clear willows which obstructed the creek. In May of 1926 the Council was approached on behalf of the Club to clear the creek as it was overflowing.

In his talk in February, Brent Catchpole spoke about the flooding problem faced Tagg Park, occupying a small tributary between Great South Road and Opaheke Road, which was intended by the original donor as a permanent golf course because it frequently became a lake following heavy rain, a proviso the old Papakura Council wished to honour. It was transferred by Auckland Council to a developer for the Bellfield housing project. Neighbours shook their heads in disbelief. The project necessitated Ōpaheke Park being developed as a flood amelioration project. Certainly, a lot of work has been done to clear the stream, remove willows, and create overflow channels and swales in the housing development. But as I walked round Ōpaheke Park, I noticed there are still willows downstream. (Photo right, Rob Finlay)



The family that retained the longest acquaintance of over 90 years with the flooding propensity of the Otūwairoa would have been the Croskerys. The stream flowed through their 20-acre home farm, which was mainly below the 50-foot contour. Elaine Croskery remembered a discussion between her father and brother when Cadbury's bought part of what had been Everslie and built a factory on it. Her father predicted flooding problems, her brother felt all would be right. In its first year the entire ground floor was flooded. Elaine's father was vindicated: after all he had spent his life on the farm.

Robyn Yousef (Papakura: the years of progress, 1938-1996, p74) describes the:

flood that hit the factory on February 28, 1996. It had been raining that day and although everything looked fine when the factory closed at 8pm, within two hours the gentle little creek had become a raging torrent sweeping across Hunua Road and into the factory. Damage would probably have been

quite slight if the railway bridge had been adequate but it failed to take the flow and ponding occurred. Water rose to 30 to 40 cm inside the factory. By 2am the water was gone, but the mud and many thousand soggy Girl Guide biscuits remained. A week of intense work cleaning the factory and stripping the machinery saw it all running again well enough to remake all those Girl Guide biscuits.

Disposing of those damaged biscuits was a bit of a problem. The packaging was of a high standard, but with mud and water everywhere the Company dumped the biscuits under supervision. Rumour has it that the supervision was not quite good enough with many Girl Guide biscuits being eaten early in Papakura that year!

The old problem of ponding had resurfaced. It might be a good question whether the problem was the railway bridge and debris washed against it or blockage downstream caused by willows. In any case, the old tendency to flood explains the large-scale landscaping around the factories and the water features in Koiwi Park which have a drainage function.

Sources:

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Yousef, Robyn, Papakura: the years of progress 1938-1996. PDHS, 1997.

Rob Finlay, Kirikiri research

Various newspapers sourced through Papers Past, National Library of New Zealand.

The Papakura Sentinel is a bimonthly magazine of the Papakura & District Historical Society. Your contributions of research or memories (by word or image) are welcome. Please send Word document directly to editor Rob Finlay by email: sentinel@papakuramuseum.org.nz. Any opinions expressed are those of the authors, not of the PDHS. All written material, unless otherwise stated, is the copyright of PDHS Inc.

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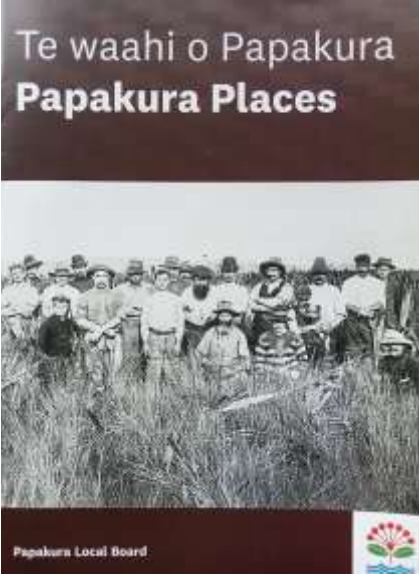
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