

A Brief History of the Kuaotunu Domain Board

summarised from notes compiled by Ian Goodall, 2018

The Kuaotunu Domain Board held its first meeting in 1904 and was concerned with the management of the block of land opposite Garrick Simpson's woolshed on the west side of SH25, approximately 700m south of Kuaotunu village. This consisted of 11 acres, 3 roods and 30 perches (4.83 hectares) which had been leased out as grazing perhaps as far back as 1881.

The "Kuaotunu Recreation Reserves Board" operated under the Public Domains Act of 1904 and the minutes from the start until the 1970s are dominated by the calling of tenders for either grazing or for work to be done on the Domain. The meetings weren't regular but were called when there was a need; much like now. It has been a requirement from day one that Board Members be vetted by the government department.

A lot of effort was put into getting this plot of land ready for recreation by way of scrub and weed clearing, tree felling, draining, ploughing, fencing, fertilizing, grassing, bridge building etc.

The main income has been the grazing lease which still continues today as well as bonds interest, bank interest, occasional Government and Council grants and tree sales.

In 1906 'a Public Battery' started in a corner of the Domain with two conditions '(a) that it be fenced off and (b) that provision be made for fluming the tailings into the main creek so that the remaining portion of the Domain may not be injured'. There are further mentions of the Public Battery in 1912 and 1917 then in 1923 there was concern at 'the disgraceful state of the battery'. Water for the battery came by way of a water race running east along the (now paper) Midas Road for a 'long distance'.

In 1907 2.5 acres were put aside from grazing for recreation and the first mention of cricket is in 1910 when 'the cricket club offered to erect a shed if the Board provided the materials' and in 1911 the shed was built and in 1913 a tennis court established. Then in 1915 there was maintenance on the courts and in 1915 up to £7 was allocated for laying a second tennis court.

The first mention of a sports field was in 1928 when 'Repairs to football ground' appears in the minutes. However, in the Kuaotunu

Hall is the banner of the Kuaotunu Football club dating back to 1891; football being rugby. With so much mining activity going on late in the 1800s and the large population including fit young men we should assume that sports, maybe once a week, would have been popular.

In 1954 there was more work done on the courts and either another shed built, repairs to the old one, or more likely the old shed replaced by a new one and this was probably the one used by TCDC in the 1980s for equipment storage for their local maintenance staff. 1955-56 saw tree stumps bulldozed and field tile drains laid for drainage.

In 1971 an additional block of land which forms much of the present reserve on the foreshore down past the shop came under Domain Board management. This Kuaotunu Foreshore Reserve (the Blackjack Reserve today) was vested with the Coromandel County Council 'subject to the appointment to the Board or its Committee of Management' and the Domain Board administered it.

A Land & Survey grant of \$1080 along with the same amount from the Coromandel County Council was received for the construction of the toilet block.

Around that time the Board was about to embark on the development of a boat ramp at the north end of this reserve which had been granted an official Marine Department number. The topic received plenty of discussion in the community and at Board meetings but eventually the boat ramp was developed at Quarry Point where it is now.

Through the 80s the old tennis court had long been abandoned and the shed slowly fell down. The Board started talking about a new tennis court on the new foreshore reserve and began receiving donations. Coincidentally the Government was having a major reshuffle and the Land & Survey Department was to become obsolete. A block of land near Davis Road (where the tennis courts are now) could go to either Landcorp (in which case it would be houses now) or to DOC (in which case Kuaotunu may have been able to get it for another reserve). After lots of meetings and letters and frustration DOC got the land and the Domain Board got to administer it. The Board decided that this area would be better for the tennis court.

At this stage Davis Road was formed as it is now but it also continued across to the south side of SH25 as a paper road. To gain an even

bigger reserve the Board commenced negotiations with TCDC to get the road closed. Again after many meetings, letters and more frustration the Board was successful.

Another happy coincidence was that a local contractor was planning the Goldfields subdivision to the south and west of the new acquisition. They were able to organise their reserves contribution so that the Domain Board's boundary got extended even further. The Board then embarked on a serious fundraising mission and received funds from several official sources as well as the local public. It was so successful that 'court' could be changed to 'courts including fencing', and in 1991 Board members laid and fenced the 'Recreational Slab'. It was concrete so as to cater for tennis, netball, skateboard, roller skates, kid's bikes, etc.

About the same time the district was calling out for more public toilets in the area and TCDC was offering funding, so in 1992 the toilets and change rooms were built with water coming from the campground 500 metres to the west before TCDC installed a bore, pump and power. The water proved unsuitable so a pipe was mole-ploughed across the field to a satisfactory supply to the south.

On through the 1990s Board members rotary hoed, levelled and grassed the playing field and got a cricket pitch established in the middle. From Whitianga the Board acquired a wooden skateboard frame which was being replaced and had it delivered. However, it sat idle for lack of enthusiasm from locals, became an eyesore and was shifted away. More recently the playground and a covered barbeque have been installed with the petanque court being established in 2018. The changing rooms at the toilet block have not been used as planned and at present the Board is planning alterations so that the local library can move there from the Hall.

In 2000 the Board met with a Maori Elder and it seems the real ownership of this land is under question and is an ongoing issue.

As at 2018 the leased area is still being grazed while other Reserve Groups look after the Foreshore Reserve and the Domain Board is wondering what may happen with the ownership of the sports ground area.

TCDC handles the day to day running of it all.