# WHANGAPOUA BASIN

## Matarangi to New Chum Bay
## [ Wainuiototo ]

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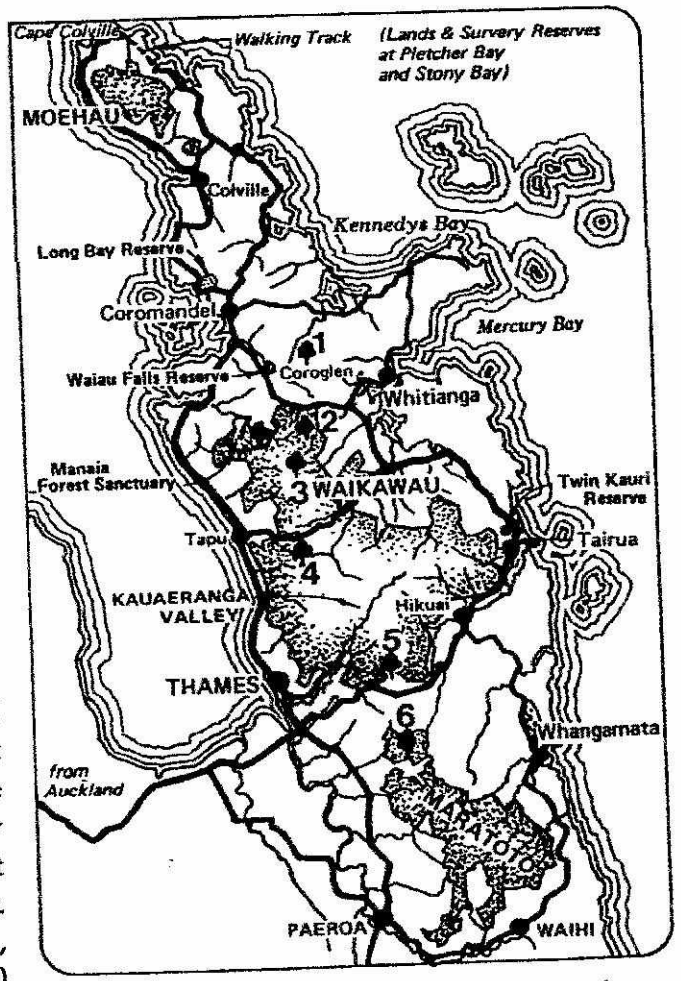
For several years it has been suggested to me that I write an article on the Whangapoua Basin and its environs, its people and its way of life.

I have slowly become so obsessed with this idea that it has become almost compulsory that I put into print something of my ideas, especially as I am one of the last of the Pakehas who is familiar with most of what happened in this century. Having gone to school with the Maoris living in the area and heard many of their stories and learned a good deal of the way they lived, it is probable that I will have quite a lot to say about them later.

I will start from just where I have been lying for about two years; on my back looking through a window from the top storey of our home in Mercury Bay. Needless to say by now my crutches and my dear wife who attends to my needs are my best friends, not forgetting of course the many kind friends who come in and have a chat and give me the local gossip and news about who won at bowls and how many fish Bill or Alf or Colin caught, what, if any, skulduggery is going on at the Town and Country Board Meetings. The birds are always a constant source of entertainment and I have counted at least twenty different species at times through the year. The view is interrupted by far too many power lines and telephone poles - but we could not do without them either. Immediately in front is a 25 foot lawn, 20 feet of sealed road, and another 30 feet of grass verge on which are planted phoenix palms right along the Esplanade - thanks to the effort of the Women's Division many years ago -




*Legend:*

1 *Opitonui Kauri*
2 *McIsaacs Kauri*
3 *Hamon Kauri*
4 *Square Kauri*
5 *Devcich Kauri*
6 *Otamakite*
7 *Tanenui*

and then down on to about two miles of safe sandy beach. Across the estuary, about 300 yards, wide and rearing above the lower residential area, are grim sandstone hills which remind one that thousands of years ago this was deep under the ocean. A little further along is the famous Whitianga pa with the deep fortification trenches reminding one too clearly that the Maoris lived there on the brink of disaster.

Centuries later with all our high civilisation and education we are not a scrap better, probably worse, but let us leave these gruesome thoughts and watch the fishing boats ploughing their way home against a fresh south-west breeze, all well netted down and glad to be home for a few handles at the local and a hot meal. As it is my intention to write a short story on the fishing history of Mercury Bay, I will pass on from here along the Buffalo Beach esplanade with its many well built homes and flats that help to accommodate the extra eight or nine thousand tourists who come here every Christmas and Easter, to swim, fish, browse on the beach, and to water-ski with plenty of dancing and pictures etc. for the younger folk.

Since I came here, quite accidentally, 20 years ago after 15 years of farming through the depression, this place has gone ahead with a real boom - town sections selling at £30 to £50 are now worth £1500 to £2000 and there is hardly a section to be bought along the entire waterfront, unless you are prepared to pay a fabulous price; but now let us pass on to my real objective.

On to Whangapoua through Kuaotunu about which Mr Alf Simpson has written a splendid historical book "This is Kuaotunu", so we will pass by Kuaotunu and travel along the picturesque sea shore with its sandy beaches and rocky promontories to a last high rocky point at the eastern of Matarangi beach. This view, with 3 miles of white sandy beaches and the feathery-topped waves rolling in everlastingly from the Pacific - maybe from the coast of South America. Tomorrow night brings a howling gale with great waves rolling in from half a mile out. This is why the sea to me is such good company, it is never exactly the same, beautiful today, and cruel tomorrow.

At this point, just cast your mind back 250 years, before the white man invaded these territories, with hundreds of Maoris around the Coromandel Peninsula, all apparently living a carefree and happy life with food in abundance and each area divided into the care or charge of its own chief or head man.

I am told that the Peninsula Maoris were a peaceful lot and did not hunt for trouble. If these circumstances could only have continued what a wonderful life these brave explorers could have lived with almost unlimited supplies of fish, shellfish, and game, moas, pigeons etc as well as what they grew from the land by their own ingenuity, and with unlimited supplies of timber to build their pallisaded pas, canoes, whares and many other working tools and implements of war.

The Maori was a clever engineer. This was shown especially in the way he felled large kauri or totara trees with the crudest of implements for his large war canoes and dragged them out of the bush with manpower only and plaited home-made flax ropes. Then there was the ingenious manner in which he selected his fortresses or pas on headlands or sites hard to attack, surrounded where necessary with high palisades and deep trenches, but always having access to water either by storage or natural flow as well as stores of food sufficient for a siege by the enemy.

From the last few sentences you will note that the peaceful and happy life of the Maori did not last long and that the centuries old "man's inhumanity to man" did not take long to come into being, and raiding parties of warriors would arrive - perhaps twenty large canoe loads - who would attach in stealth either by day or night. Usually scouts would forewarn of a coming attack and the attacker would get badly mauled, on other occasions the attacker would get the upper hand, and slaughter the locals to the last man. In most of these battles there was little mercy shown and it was a fight to the death.

It is seldom you get the old Maoris talking but there is one occasion which is most vivid in my mind. I was working deep in the bush with such a Maori. We had finished our evening meal and were sitting in front of the dying embers of our fire having a last cigarette, preparing to go to bed, when suddenly Sam started to talk. From this point he really got up a full head of steam and told me of the many cruel and bloodthirsty battles that occurred from Cape Colville, Mercury Island, Kennedy's Bay, Whangapoua, and on to Mercury Bay. We kept adding to our fire and I kept listening. If my ears could have flapped or my hair stood on end, I guess it would have happened.

We turned into our bunks at daylight. I could not sleep, and as I tried to, there were in my imagination hordes of maoris bashing my brains out with clubs; I was glad when I got up to cook breakfast and got my mind off the horrible gruesome business. Later in these writings I shall try to describe to you one of these battles and just how it finished - because I later became very familiar with the exact location, which I discovered Sam had described in perfect detail without ever having been near the site.

Let us leave the Maoris for a while and walk along the Matarangi beach for about half a mile, turn our backs to the sea, and walk inland over the fifty yards of sand dunes (covered in light growth) for about 300 yards and there before our eyes is a feast for a farmer. Flat black Aberdeen Angus cattle and freshly-shorn clean white sheep and lambs on beautiful green pastures thoroughly well fenced into paddocks with all concrete posts and taut wires. All this work can be credited to the persistence and hard work of Charlie and George Simpson, first in the purchase of the block and later in the hard work they put into it, assisted to a degree by the Government. Lately this block of 1,100 acres has been sold to a syndicate for a price very suitable to the sellers and the local Land Agent - with the intention of cutting the frontage into seaside sections and perhaps farming the back part - what a transformation this could with the inner harbour at high water an almost perfect landing place for Alan Ladd and his sea planes with three miles of good hard beach if the sea is quiet.

A point worth mentioning here is the good fortune and ingenious manner that the Simpson boys discovered to supply their stock and homesteads with a good supply of water. While inspecting an old drive driven into a high hill immediately east and up from the end of Matarangi and about 400 feet high, they found that a slip had almost blocked the mouth of the drive - To those who do not know what a drive is, it is a tunnel of a width and height to suit the position, usually almost 5 to 6 feet wide and 7 or 8 feet high. These drives occurred all over the coromandel Peninsula during the mad or sometimes not mad rush to find gold - and on further inspection they discovered the quite long drive was full of fresh water. From here they led a ¾ polythene pipe down to the houses and got a full and good flow of water without lowering the water level in the drive. "A spring in a mountain", and now this water supplies the whole farm with

a concrete water trough in each paddock, and for house needs as well, summer and winter.

At present George Simpson is managing the Matarangi farm assisted by his very able wife, Joy, who drives the school bus through Kuaotunu to the Mercury Bay school. She then spends the rest of the day doing clerical work and returns home after school. Joy is the perfect farmer's wife, when time permits she can help docking the lambs, help as fleeco during the shearing, shift stock, drive a tractor, help with fencing and other farm jobs. She doesn't quite look the part either, as she is a slim good-looking girl with three nice daughters. The Government certainly picked winners when they helped those two boys.

From where we now are on the Matarangi flat and looking west at low water, there is a vast area of mud flats probably many thousands of acres in extent with streams from the various branches of the Whangapoua watershed meandering slowly towards the narrow entrance to the Whangapoua harbour and out over the Whangapoua bar. At high water this is rather a different scene - one flat sheet of water with a few sand banks protruding on which curlews rest until their feeding grounds are uncovered when the tide recedes. From the various tidal streams many millions of feet of kauri timber have been rafted, which I will describe later. Another point of considerable interest is a projecting area of flat land between the Otongaru and Owera streams known as the Klondyke owing to its great richness in kauri gum. It would be safe to say that practically every inch of it had been dug up to a depth of from 4 to 7 feet, and that thousands of tons of gum had been shipped to Auckland, first by punt or barge to the whangapoua wharf and then by Northern Steamship Company to Auckland.

This dense covering of gum extended out onto and under the mud flats and, in my opinion, there is still more there. This dense quantity of gum is to me something of a mystery and I feel that an early forest of kauri timber may have been destroyed by eruption and earthquake with a sudden sinking of the land in this and probably other areas in ages long gone past. Another point of interest is the rather unusual white chalky formation just above gum level which some of the Dalmatian diggers told me was just as or more valuable than the gum to them in their own country. Then again in one particular area there was a light blue clay, similar to thin plastercine and very elastic and pliable. When I say it I immediately thought it would be very suitable for pottery. I am probably the only one who knows the locality of this clay as I discovered it while digging for gum at low water. The area containing this clay could be fairly extensive.

It would be safe to say that this rich gum field supplied hundreds of diggers for many years with quite profitable work, over an area of several hundred acres. Many of these diggers were Austrians or Dalmatians and were left there in peace so long as they stayed put and dug gum. They were lucky.

On one occasion I went up there on Christmas morning in 1914 or 1915 to get a punt load of gum and we were invited to their camp to have a glass of wine. They were roasting sheep on poles extending through their bodies and supported on forked sticks over a trench of glowing red coals (perhaps charcoal). The fat that dripped from the roasting sheep appeared to keep the fire going.

One thing I certainly did notice was that practically every man wore a button (which

were commonly sold in those days) of the Kaiser and his flowing moustache. Little did they think then that the Kaiser's moustache would within a few years droop the other way! I always though that these men kept themselves well drilled from a military point of view. Many of these men, after the First World War became good citizens and real Kiwis. I remember one, Mati Vanovich, sturdy thick-set man who later became Master of one Auckland's trawlers the "Cobra", and perhaps of others too. I saw him a few years ago in Sandford's Fish Smoking Dept., with red eyes and tears streaming down his face. The whole show looked very antiquated with smoke everywhere and I thought as I shook hands with him "poor Mati, what a horrible job to finish out his life with".

A character whom I cannot overlook in this narrative is Mr Roberts, a nicely spoken, well-educated old gentleman, quite obviously from a good English family. Some said he was brother of Lord Roberts of Boer War fame - that may or may not be so. The poor old chap lived and died on the Klondyke gum field in a shack or tin hut - a humble hermit's life. When he did not turn up to get his stores in the usual way, the police investigated and found his dead body in the hut. The whole story of Mr Roberts could easily have been a very sad human drama.

After all this was over and it was several years later, Tony and Lubo Bonkovich bought the Klondyke as a farming proposition and both worked together for several years. Then Tony got married and Lubo retired to Coromandel and a quiet life, much of it spent on the bowling green; he was a very keen and good bowler. Tony stayed on in the Klondyke and put great effort into making a good farm and I am told his hard work has produced splendid results. He now has a grown up family and still makes a good brew of wine.

Now let us leave the Klondyke and have an imaginary look at the 35,000 acres (being the approximate area of the Whangapoua Basin) before the white man arrived, with his greed for money, and bartered with the Maoris for a mere pittance most of the beautiful kauri forest which grew in one vast deep green belt completely around the uplands of the Whangapoua Basin - not forgetting the lower flats including the Klondyke which contained the gum of a previous generation of kauri forest.

This beautiful forest appeared to be bought and worked out by the well-established milling companies of the day, principally the Kauri Timber Company. From the best information I can gather the first timber bought in this area was by Thomas Craig in the Opitonui Valley in 1862. His claim to the purchase was disputed by one Mohi Mangakahia (this could have been an earlier generation Mohi Mangakahia) this claim was apparently not upheld by the Government or else was settled privately. The next reference to a purchase of timber was in the Wai te Kuri by a C.A. Harris and J.S. Macfarlane in 1873. These two appear to have quarrelled, necessitating Court action and mention of this is in the N.Z. Herald of August 21st 1873. I am not clear about the methods used in the working of this timber or whether dams were used at this stage, but would suggest that many of the ways of working were by chute, bullocks, rolling roads and trams (timber skids). I think the Waingaro and Awaroa would probably be part of these workings or worked out about the same period.

I remember about 70 years ago my Dad lifting and removing the remnants of an old tram line with heavy steel rails up to the right from where Fullers and Littles lived in

the Awaroa Valley. Long before the Opitonui gold mine came into being with its 6 miles of railway from the Whangapoua wharf to Te Rerenga and on to Opitonui, this line must have taken the timber to a point where logs would float just above Peter Johnston's original paling hut, or a point roughly half way between the Whangapoua wharf and Martin Heenans. All the skids and piles etc. were found there later to confirm this and down at the wharf were the remnants of a mill and lats of timber lying about. From hearsay Harris was the original instigator of this timber and milling venture, though much of the timber that went through the mill was probably used for his own building purposes and the business as a milling venture appears to have petered out fairly early.

About this time or a little later the Kauri Timber Company built a fairly modern mill at Whangapoua on what could be described as a fairly extensive built up sand flat about 15 feet above high water and of 5 or 6 acres in extent, around this mill were built 6 or 10 houses, a barracks and cook house for the single men, as well as a hall for entertainment purposes and dancing. Most of the houses were tucked in under the south west corner of that high promontory and pa known as Summer House Hill (quite obviously it was not known by its correct Maori name). The reason for this was that it left plenty of room on which to stack the sawn timber which was shipped out by scow to Auckland. I am not quite certain where the main supply of timber came from to this mill, but from hearsay it came from Opitonui to the Wai Te Kuri. The tidal waters in front of these streams were very shallow and caused considerable difficulty when floating it out - at Spence's a mill and booms were built at the outlet of the Opitonui stream.

I was told that the mill was only equipped with a break down saw to halve or quarter the big logs so that they would float out over the shallows. This appears to be a reasonable scheme. When the Kauri Timber Company came into the picture, the procedure of working the timber followed a pretty set pattern. They had plenty of capital and could do things in the most modern way of the day. I will explain this in more detail later when we come to the last branch worked out by the Kauri Timber Company.

Now that I have made an effort to describe some of the very early timber workings of the Whangapoua we will come back to Matarangi and describe what I am familiar with.

Mauporiki was the first eastern branch of the Whangapoua Basin and was worked out by the Kauri Timber Company in the usual way - bullocks and chutes, then driven into strongly-built receiving booms by trams, hauled out by steam roller onto skids, loaded on to trucks and taken further downstream to where the timber would conveniently float, and delivered into securely-fastened floating booms (piles driven deep in to the mud).

It was from this point that I got my first lesson in rafting logs when I was only about 12 or 13 years old; but more of this later. Otongaru was the next branch after Mauporiki was worked out several years later, probably by many of the same bushmen, most of whom lived in Mercury Bay and about the local area. I am told that Sonny Boy - obviously a nick name passed on from school days - was in charge of these two workings, Mauporiki and Otongaru, and a small branch to the right of the latter, known as Siberia, a name given by the bushmen, probably because it was a wet cold winter while it was being worked. In Siberia one dam was all that was necessary and as it was so unorthodox

I must mention it.

It was a single sill, single stringer, swinging rafter dam, with only two main gate raters. The balance instead of pit-sawn (9 x 2½) flanks on more rafters, were large kauri rickers pit-sawn down the centre and stood on end. Of all the dozens of dams I have seen this is the only one I have seen built in this way.

Otongaru was worked in the same set pattern of the times. Bullocks where the country was too flat to chute and in the steeper country the timber was shot directly into the creek, and dams drove from there into the strongly-made receiving booms. From there it was hauled out by steam hauler (wood fuelled) onto skids and loaded on to trucks to be taken to the nearest deep water..... From this point Dad and I took over, but I will tell more of that later in a special chapter on rafting.

I must not let pass a sad happening which occurred towards the end of the working of Otongaru - the death of Billy White, a well-liked and trustworthy man from Mercury Bay. As was usually the case in the kauri bush, one man was selected to take charge of the dam or dams, both when closing and later as they fill up. One job concerned special earth or bukow (small growth round the stump of kauri trees), this when tipped into the dam blocks up any leaks. the story as it was told to me, was that it was raining and blowing an easterly gale and after most of the men had gone to bed, Billy got up, lit a lantern, went quietly out to look at the main dam. He was never seen alive again. When the cook arose to prepare breakfast and found Billy's bed empty and cold he immediately roused the camp and all hands went to search for him. His mutilated body was found amongst the logs at the booms, it was surmised that the dam was overflowing, and that the trip-safe, as was often the case, was fastened under the wing of the dam, which meant that he would have to go under the wing of the dam, which meant that he would have to go under the over flow to reach the trip-safe. He was probably washed away into the creek while in the act of tripping the dam. Being the well-liked man he was, Billy's fatal accident cast a cloud of gloom over the whole bush camp. A very sad end to the Otongaru workings.

Owera was the next branch worked on the same pattern with probably the same gear-winch, rails, engine, bullocks etc. Ned Irvine from the North was in charge of this job and strangely but sadly enough met his end in almost exactly the same way as Billy White. Although it was a sunny after, Ned was waiting for an upstream dam to enter into the back-waters of the main dam, but he waited too long and the over flow washed him away as he was tripping the dam. In this case the trip-safe was also concealed under the wing of the dam, to prevent any passing inquisitive strangers or children to be tempted to give the safe a pull and by doing so to trip the dam.

I have been told by some of the old hands that the front and handy timber of Owera was worked out many years earlier, possibly in the 1870/1880 period while the Kauri Timber Company mill at Whangapoua was working, but I cannot vouch for this information as factual.

I think the last timber worked out in the Whangapoua Basin was done by Casey. It was a sort of clean-up of what other companies had left in Opitonui and Awaroa, but during this operation he got some very good timber which was floated out and taken by scow to Auckland. This, I think, was the only timber worked out in the Whangapoua

area by the more modern method of long-hauler rope (perhaps a mile or more) and heavy caterpillar tractor and the last stages was by heavy petrol trucks instead of rail and engine.

I cannot let pass a laughable incident which occurred on the job where I was employed as a cross-cutter and sacked "bango" the next week. I had been warned that the boss Owen was a very lively type and would sack a man without the slightest compunction ..... He did, and it was me. He took my mate, Fred Anderson, and myself to show us a tall and beautiful Kauri and told us he wanted the tree in one length for a very special order then walked off and left us. After Fred and I had carefully examined the ground we decided the only possible solution was to fell it straight down the hill where the country was flat and clear ....., up hill the country was bumpy and the tree would never have left the stump and we reckoned it would break for sure. It was about 80 or 90 feet to the first limb and almost 5'9" through at the cut or butt. We started to scarf it in the front when the old boy came and really hit the roof, telling us we were meant to fell it up hill. After considerable argument and hot words I insisted that the tree would break if felled up hill, but he insisted, so I handed him the axe, saying "scarf it where you want it felled". This he reluctantly did and went off mumbling and swearing to himself. We felled it and it broke in three pieces. As you can imagine we were both pretty peeved over this then the old boy came out of his hiding place to look at the result. Things got hot. I was at the time turning down a small gummy limb in preparation to knocking it off with the back of the axe. By this time the old boy was in a really stinking temper and screamed to me to get stuck into the job and not to fiddle around. I handed him the axe and said to show me how. He promptly took three half-crowns out of the axe that had taken four hours to grind up.

This was too much for me, so I blew my top and really told him what I thought of him. I was sacked then and there in real "Kiwi" talk. I probably deserved it as I told him a lot of things he never knew before, but I picked up my cross-cut saw, which was my own property, and marched off to the camp with Ned who had decided to come with me. The old boy followed us at a safe distance and had time to think about his own stupidity and that what he had done was going to cost him a lot of money, so when he saw me with my swag ready to leave he immediately offered to buy the saw at almost any price. In the meantime he had offered Fred an extra £2 a week so I talked him into staying, but made it clear that my saw was going with me, and in two days I had a contract ploughing and making good money.

However a week later I had a visitor. It was the old man (my previous boss) and he shook hands apologising profusely, then tried his best to coax me and my saw back to work at double the original wage. He admitted he couldn't get another saw anywhere in the country and was properly in a jam but I said I was happy working on contract and was an unsuitable person to work under a boss. He accepted that, then turned on his heel and walked off. I was told later that the job was held up two months before they could procure another cross-cut saw. It sounds a bit silly but such was the case. I felt a bit of a stinker for not selling the old man my saw, but it was the first (and last) time I'd ever been sacked off a job and I was pretty peeved about it.

Shortly after this Billy Dick took charge and later Tom Simpson, who in my opinion was the best Casey could have got in the country, took over and finished all Casey's work.

As we proceed around the harbour in a Northerly direction the next small branch was Borells, immediately up the valley from what is now known as Heenan's Bridge. This was worked almost entirely by bullocks from end to end. You may say why Borells? It so happened that two families of Maoris lived up where the original bush camp was, one family strangely enough named Borells, the other Rau. I went to school with Billy Borell, a fine looking clever boy, and also Joe Borell. You may again ask, why Heenan's Bridge? Martin Heenan along with his two sisters kept a sly-grog shop known as the "Pig and Whistle" just on this corner, (yes, Gaelic whisky at 7/6 a bottle), hence the name Heenan's Bridge will probably stick for ever.

The next branch northward was the "little Punga", a large sub-branch of the mani Punga. This again was worked almost entirely by bullocks but the last 2 or 3 miles by wagon. I think Welton Brown from the Kura in the Mangawai area was the man in charge of these workings, an expert with bullocks, but I was a pretty small boy then and remember only the logs rolling down the bank and splashing into the water at Karaka Bay quite close to where I lived and went to school.

The next timber worked out in any quantity was New Chum, the last branch in the northern part of the Whangapoua watershed just south of Kennedy's Bay. The Maori name for this area was Wainuiototo (big water of blood). This having such a horrible translation, the name New Chum Bay finally stuck. A lot of people have asked me how come the name New Chum Bay, my guess is this, that bushmen were scarce at this stage and that a gang were rounded up perhaps in Auckland, supposedly as bushmen but turned out be new chums. This job was worked by Joe McIsaac and Pulham, local residents at the time, for the Kauri Timber Company. There were two separate branches with a dam in each. Bullocks were used where necessary and the timber was driven right out on to the open beach probably while there was an easterly gale, so that it would not go out to see but would be washed back on to the beach. I presume that from here the timber was jacked and bullocked off the beach and scowed to Auckland when the weather was suitable. This, of course, was a very cheap method of working the timber as long as none was lost at sea. There is just the chance that this timber may have been sawn up in the Kauri Timber Company mill at Whangapoua, as it was probably worked at this time, but I cannot vouch that this is correct.

New Chum, I am told, at this time was a very small settlement with five or six houses and a large cook house. I can quite believe this is correct, for half an hour's good walking would take you to most of the workings, though back to the Punga boundary would be further.

Worked in conjunction with New Chum was a small gully about ¾ of a mile deep and known to us as "Orchard Gully", because in later years when we bought this property Dad planted a fair-sized orchard int hat locality. This branch was worked entirely by bullocks and the timber was tipped into the Pungapunga River about 150 yards from its mouth.

Probably one of the best stands of kauri in New Zealand was the Pungapunga. From 3,000 acres came 33,000,000 lineal (12 x 12 x 1) superficial feet of beautiful kauri timber worked by Jim Dykes for the Kauri Timber Company. This was a dense forest of kauri and in many places you could ride a horse, the under growth was so sparse. I think the price for this job was around 3/6 per hundred lineal feet from stump to salt water. No

wonder the K.T. Coy. paid big divvies! Strangely enough, Dad and I were the first in and the last out of the Punga. As first in concerns the workings I will mention it here. When Dad got the contract to build the main camp in the No 1 branch, we went in with a pack load of gear, selected a nice flat position centrally situated, and built a small nikau whare. That night we were almost eaten by rats, or at least I imagined so. The next night was a little worse, they fought and squealed and ran all over our beds. That next morning I was despatched off to the store for more food and three boxes of "rough on rats" (about 6 miles return). We spread this rat poison in a 20 yard area of the whare and low, the miracle had happened! The following morning, dead rates lay everywhere and we had built our camp before they started to return. The camp was built in the orthodox manner of the day, of palings about 3 or 4 feet long, and the building about 35 x 15 feet with double-decker bunks. Kauri poles or saplings about as thick as your forearm took the place of sawn timber, with the bark peeled off they would last for years not touching the ground (in the ground 2 to 3 years). After this first job was finished, the pit-sawers and dam-builders were probably the next to commence work. the strong receiving booms would then be carried on with and the construction of the trams and the unloading skids or chute. All this work had to be supervised so that no delay would occur once the real felling of timber started. A good boss would organise the work to run smoothly and well; dam builders were specialists at their jobs and Davy Cassels and Jim Dyer were the two champions of the Punga, where they and their gangs built three main five-sill flume dams and 19 smaller single sill swinging rafter dams. (On the side streams, built in the simplest and cheapest way).

The building of these mani dams is a real engineering craft, and requires the knowledge of experts. I have heard that little Davy Cassels was the daddy of dam building. Most of the work was sub-let or contracted. A lot of the pit-sawing was done at so much to the 100 square foot, by Scott Brothers who were real experts. The timber required for a main dam was very considerable, mostly 9 x 4, 9 x 3, and the 16 or 18 gate planks 12 x 9, 16 feet long bevelled on the inside to accept the 2" rope caulking. The felling was also sub-let, often in gangs of four. The two men felling and cross-cutting the trees into suitable lengths and other two breaking put, that is sniping the logs in to the creek. when a big log is barked it is as slippery as an eel and takes a power of stopping when it gets going on a wet day. Often if the country is not too steep the chute work has to be done on a wet day, dams do the rest, and it really is a terrific sight watching a good timber drive. Sometimes as many as 3 or 4 dams will be tripped so as to co-ordinate arrival at the main dam; as soon as the heaving mass of logs arrive in the backwaters of the main dam, it was tripped and away would go a sea of water and logs by the hundred, crashing and thundering down to the receiving booms. the spray from this really thrilling sight would often rise 150 feet in the air, and often the front logs would be rolled and buffeted along over dry creek beds and boulders by the sheer weight of hundreds of logs and gallons of water. From the receiving booms the logs were hauled put by steam winch onto skids and trucked by train to salt water, in this case the Whangapoua Harbour near Karaka Bay.

A point I have not mentioned previously is the problem of food and supplies etc., supplies including meat were packed in by pack-horse into the bush often under considerable difficulties and poor roads. Good cooks were sometimes a problem and their word was law inside the camp door. Their long hours often made them pretty grumpy, so to be a good cook you also had to get on well with the men, which meant

being a fairly versatile sort of man. I know this end of the story only too well as I was once in charge of 100 men in a P.W.D. Camp during the depression. (They, along with the long hours nearly drove me batty).

Many of the names of the old bushmen come back to me as I write, especially those who worked in the Punga, as I went to school with their children, at least some of them. As I have previously mentioned Jim Dyke and Davy Cassels were in charge of the dam building, but George Ridings, who was the clerk in charge of measuring, branding and numbering. His job was a pretty tough one, as he had to keep a check on all purchases of food, sign contract agreements and get sawn timber. Every log is forementioned was measured (length and girth); the girth squared, multiplied by the length gives you the superficial feet in a log and that was what the bushmen were paid on. the logs were branded consecutively, starting at one, and continuing until the end of the workings. This was done with removable steel figures, which fitted into a heavy steel hammer, then the Company's brand K.T.C., for Kauri timber Company, completed the job.

One of the boy's best friends was a cook called McCrooker, he would always call us for a cuppy of tea and cakes, as well as take on our odd trips to get kauri vaulting jobs, out of the bush. some of the men built their own camps and lived there with their wives and maybe one or two small children. McPike Brothers, I think, come under this category, and quite a number of others.

Among a few of the names I can remember of those who worked in the Punga were the Pollock Brothers who lived at the mill at Whangapoua, Brunter Brothers from Mercury Bay, three Creed Brothers, George, I think, being their chief bullock driver, and the White Brothers, all being from Mercury Bay. Scott Brothers were pit-sawers and very important men in the dam-building business. Long Bob Cleaver, McMillan who lived at Karaka Bay, Bill Gooder, Pilkington, Lui Remoldy, a cheerful good-natured Italian, who was chief blacksmith, and a lot of work he had too.

Jim Howard was chief engine driver and his mate was Billy McIsaac; we, as children, remember these two very well, as we often got a ride home after school on the empty timber trucks. Our teacher, on several occasions, made special arrangements to take us on the timber trucks up to the receiving booms to witness the arrival of the timber drive, what a thrilling sight and great gala day it was for us. These receiving booms were very strongly made, by driving three rows of piles down steam, all heavily braced with 9 x 4 timbers bolted on to the piles. Each set of piles were about 8 or 10 feet apart, heavily timbered across the front with logs 12 to 18 2 through. Bolted, and assisted, in some cases with heavy chains and ship cables, deeply secured in to the earth at each end. It is a regulation that when you get a permit to build a receiving boom, when your requirements are finished with, you completely remove the obstruction and leave the course of the stream clear.

After the Punga had been worked and all the bushmen had gone off to new pastures, the place seemed to be dead with just the local residents left. It so happened that one very hot and dry summer, the remainder of the bush workings were swept by fire, leaving a lot of good timber still standing. At this stage Mr William Denize bought the whole of the Punga land and sowed it in grass, perhaps int he long run to no great avail. I have never known country from which kauri has been worked to yield it's owner any great financial profit. The kauri appears to impoverish the land and it is

only fit, in most cases, for reafforestation and second growth, e.g. titree and fern.

Also, at this stage, my father, Arthur Smith, got it into his head that there would be good money in working through the Punga a second time, so after much talk with Mr Denize, he was told he could have all the timber for nothing and just to help himself.

Mr Denize must have thought as much of our timber venture as we thought of his land venture. during this time Mr Albert Wharf enters the scene and offers us the very poor price of 5/- a 100 foot sawn measurement delivered at his mill. I had more or less by now become involved and tried to persuade Dad to chuck the whole idea, but little did Mr Wharf know that he was going to wring the neck of the goose that may have laid him a golden egg.

Dad's word was final and we went on with the work, this, as you may have guessed, involved an awful lot of work and expense over the years 1913 to 1916. The making of a strong stock yard, purchase of bullocks and the breaking in of some, making of yokes, coupling chains, jacks and saws, repairing of dams, pit-sawing, squaring timber, driving bullocks and manoeuvring logs out of all sorts of places with wire ropes, blocks and bullocks. It appeared to me that I was everybody's donkey and I would, in many cases, go home four miles after tea and be back with a pack load of food by breakfast time, ready for another day's work.

A job I didn't like but one that somebody had to do was splicing heavy wire rope, for a main dam alone I had to put in 40 splices. When this job was finally done there was no phase of bush work I couldn't do, even to building a dam. Dad's timber venture I'm afraid had rather an unlucky and bad ending for us – we had piled logs into the creek for months, probably 500 or more, and were waiting for a big flood and a big drive, when, on a hot summer's day a spark set the main dam alight and burnt it to a shamble of charred wood. Dad and I went into the bush to have a pretty serious conference and decided to cut our losses and walk out ..... but, providence has a curious way of putting things right. In 1923 I was working in the bush at Mangawai for Jim Howard, our former engine driver, when I received a telegram from Dad saying a cloud burst had driven most of the timber out onto the beach and onto the paddocks and to come home at once if possible. I showed the telegram to my boss and he said to go home by all means and help my Dad, so off I went.

At this stage we were just a little worried as to the attitude Sam Mangakahia would take about the logs being strewn about his paddocks and his fences being broken down. I am more than pleased to say that Sam, when approached, said "Take the logs off, Arthur", no thought of charges or damages, just "Please put the fences up and good luck". This was really a good offer from one of the best and most good-natured Maoris we ever knew. We went to work in earnest, and in no time we had all the logs afloat in a strong boom in the Punga creek. I had not long bought my first engine, a 2½ outboard Ferro motor, so spent many weeks day and night towing logs to booms in the Whangapoua Harbour. On occasions I had some very frightening nights, but luckily enough survived the hazards. These logs, I remember, were taken to Auckland by the scow "Caed Mil Fail". the remainder were taken direct from the beach after booming and toggling by the tug Akaroa, and I was allowed the privilege of going to Auckland to collect a cheque for £1,700 for the purchase of the timber from a firm called "Lamb and Parker" if I remember correctly. The money was split to me and to Dad. All but

a few incidents which I will relate, ends our fairly vast experience of the Punga Punga. To Mr Denize, afterwards known as Punga Bill, I must extend our thanks for his great co-operation and help. I also extend these remarks to Jack Clothier who purchased the Punga from Mr Denize while we were still working it.

Before closing the Punga Punga venture completely I feel I should mention the names of our principal workers .... Pat Kooney and I did most of the cross-cutting, also Tisei Brown, Sam Mangakahia, Ben Simpson, Dick Williams, Waipapa Mangakahia, Tim Carey, Rangi Mangakahia (Cook), Alfred Smith, Bill Scott of the famous pitsawing family and one or two others who helped out occasionally like Mohi Mangakahia and Buzz Denize.

I feel I cannot pass these few years of hard work off too easily and should relate a few of our experiences before I close down on the kauri bush side of my story. On one particular night I was enjoying listening to the rain pelting down on our tin roof at home, the roar of the sea on the beach, and the howling of the wind outside, obviously a filthy north-easterly blowing up. How soothing listening to hell let loose outside when you are snugly tucked in bed, but things have a habit of getting out of hand, someone gave me a shake on the shoulder and still my subconscious brain ..... The hell extending itself. Another shake followed, this time a little more severe, with Dad's words, "Come on Rowley out you get, there is a flood blowing up and we will have to go out and trip the main dam". In a flash I was up and dressed. Mother and Dad were packing our two pikau bags with dry clothing, food, and all the bits and pieces necessary for such occasions; we also carried with us two lanterns, in case one went out, or in case one of us should fall in crossing a flooded creek. We kissed Mother goodnight and disappeared out of the back door, even the large pohutukawa we passed under seemed to groan under the stress of the gale. Already trickles of water were rushing everywhere so we hurried, sometimes at a jog, as things were getting serious and urgent. The first crossing was only up to our knees but still there were three miles to go and each crossing became more dangerous. Finally the last crossing 250 yards below the dam and about 400 logs piled up between us and the dam. This was really dangerous, but we listened carefully and decided that Dad would cross first and with Dad safely on the other side I dashed smartly after him. Another two hundred yards and we reached our objective. The dam was like a large lake and water had started to flow over the top, we had learned of the danger of not loading the trip side well clear of the dam, especially after the two tragedies if Billy White and Ned Irvine both being drowned while tripping dams. The end of our trip wire was attached to a foot high post clear of the wing of the dam. All that had to be done was to reach up, get hold of the trip wire, heave down hard and up would come the 10 or 15 lb block of wood, hit the end of the trigger and away would go the lot in a thundering roar. Our job completed, we watched the terrific power of the pent up water as it plunged amongst and submerged the big heap of logs with a rumbling noise created as logs, boulders and water went on their way to the receiving booms two miles away. At this stage we would retire about midnight, well-soaked, but happy to be in our little shanty which was 100 yards further on. We'd light a fire to brew up a good cup of tea, change into dry clothes then into bed. This was just one of the many such trips we made both in the dark and in daylight.

On another occasion, I must mention, which nearly spelt death for me; four of us went up close to the dam while the creek was in flood about 10 a.m. This was no easy job, but we eventually got all the 16 feet long, 9 x 12 planks, trip and tomb into place

and I was left to put the key plank into position, by then I was up to my shoulders in water and just managed to shove the key plank into position, or at least I thought I had. Dad stayed to watch me while the others went back to camp to light the fire. Dad told me to tip a couple of sacks of burow in to block the leaks in the gate and then to come up to the camp. I had just tipped int he second sack when the water rose above the top of the gate planks, so I quickly retired up three steps on to the top foot plank, four seconds at most, when bag went the gate. I looked up as three men rushed out of the camp fully expecting me to have gone through the dam. If I had I would have been taken over a 30 foot rock waterfall, right into a heap of logs and my chances of survival would have been mighty remote. The cause was probably due to the key plank not being forced right home against the trip and as the pressure increased, it went in perhaps only an inch with sufficient shock to set the trigger off. My end evidently had not arrived as I survived with a severe fright and a little more knowledge.

On another occasion we had just bought a roan shorthorn steer. He had broken in easily and looked rather a good one, but for some silly reason as we were hauling a log out he decided to jump over the bank and stick his head behind a tall nikau. Result, a broken neck and 700 or 800 lbs of good meat, so I climbed up the nikau and rigged a block and winchrope, and after an adjustment to the team they hauled him up clear of the ground. We skinned and dressed him, then took the team down to the yards and called it a day; this meant free meat for all our workers, neighbours, and a good pack load for ourselves, but Dad lost a finger and nearly his left hand while cutting the beef up the next day. A small prick on the tip of his third finger caused poisoning and two trips to the Coromandel Hospital; the finger was cut off at the first and then the second joint and finally, as a last effort, deep in the back of the hand, this was successful and the hand was saved.

Just to let you know of the strange things that can happen in a day's work, and just remotely possible why I am flat on my back for the rest of my days, as I now lie here and scribble away. Spot, our near side leader was a well proportioned and beautifully marked bullock and was only good for what he finally finished up as, a show bullock that incidentally won many first prizes at the local shows. This, I guess, suited Spot completely with plenty of food, grooming and petting. When Dad sold him I was told he fetched the highest price for any bullock sold in the coromandel sale yards to date, over £27. But the lazy wretch and I were not good cobbers but he managed only once to plant me a real knock out kick on the side of the jaw and I disappeared backwards over a steep bank into the thick form. How long I was there I don't know, but when I finally crawled up on to the road there was not one bullock to be seen. Spot evidently expected trouble so he took off with the whole team in tow. I felt as if I had a broken neck and after much looking around I spotted the team about 400 yards away coiled in a bunch in a corner of the creek. I had better not comment further on this episode but spot had good reason to regret his first and last kick; he was de-rated into the body of the team on the off side where I could reach him at any time with the whip and he could not reach me. I was in good terms with all our bullocks an seldom used the whip but Spot was an absolute waster as a working bullock.

At one stage we employed a big strong looking Irishman, Tim, supposedly as an experienced bushman. I tried and tried to show him how to lift a jack on to his shoulders (I at the time was about 10 stone 6 and he was about 6 ft. 2" and 14 stone) but still he would'nt or couldn't other than carry the jack in his arms and one thing he did manage

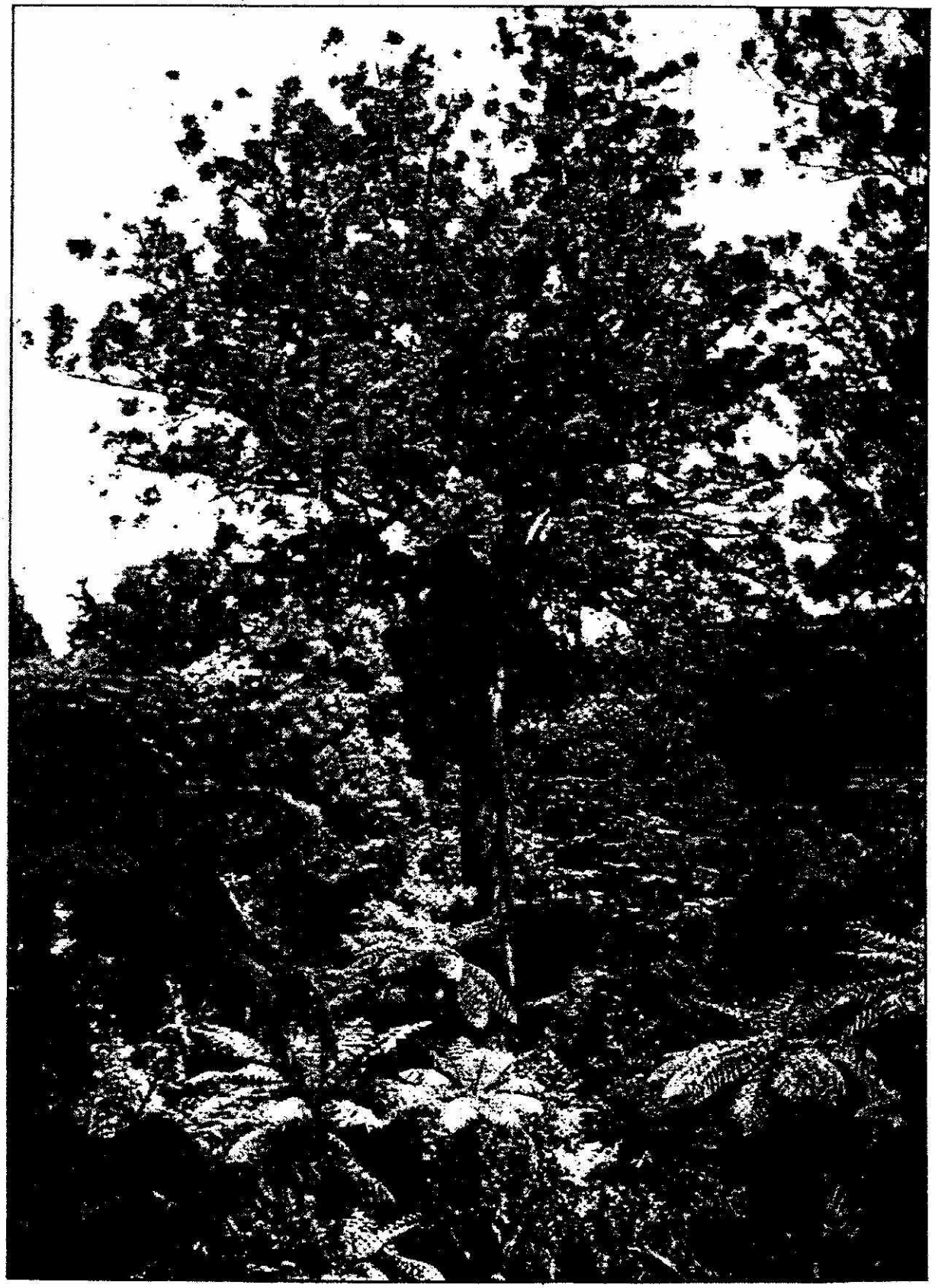
to do was to cut a new pair of size 10 boots from toe to heel in one swipe, blood just ran out of the cut foot, and he yelled blue murder, but when he got his boot off he had just, luckily for him, cut the skin clean across his instep. So much for old Tim, but I'm afraid he didn't last long.

On another occasion, two Maoris were jacking a log out of an awkward steep-sided gut, one man was almost under the log when his set, on which the toes of the jack were resting, started to give way. He had no way of escape and would have been crushed to death but his mate, thinking quickly, picked up his jack and threw it into the exact position to stop the log rolling back. A mighty lucky throw and a life saved, they looked at each other, pretty pale I guess, and walked straight off the job and home. It took us over a month to coax them back again.

As rafting comes under the category of working timber I had better include it here. When I entered the picture I had just passed out of the 5th standard at school and within a radius of 300 yards of our school were hundreds of logs, so half our play hours were spent on the logs either afloat or aground, consequently most of us were experts at running vaulting over the logs. I was 12 years old and could row a boat with the next etc..., so Dad, who was then rafting logs from the Mauporiki decided, school or no school, I was strong enough to handle a 12 foot oar. Bill McMahon from Tapu was with us at this stage but as soon as I got a little stronger he left and Dad and I carried on rafting all the timber from the Mauporiki, Otongaru, and Owera for the large sum of 20% of £1. We worked all hours of the day and night and seldom made between us up to £40 in a month, but what I didn't know about ropes, boats, anchors, chains, and poling logs about after hundreds of miles of rowing on a 12 foot oar (no engines then) was'nt worth learning. All this work stood me in good stead for my later years on the sea. These days were fairly hungry days as a family of eight had to be clothed and fed, so often when we had finished our log work, we would go out on to the mud banks of the creek, just handy to the smokers old hut and catch 10 or 20 eels up to 2 or 3 feet long. Dad was an expert at skinning them, then into the chimney they would go and next morning we had smoked eels with potatoes or kumeras for breakfast. Spare eels would be taken home and made a good meal for the family.

Many people ask, what is rafting? Rafting is conveying a convenient number of logs from one point to another, made up or fastened together in such a manner to suit the circumstances. During the later years of our work we used a long wire rope, say 50 yards or more, onto which every log was dogged in the centre and strongly shackled around each end log. All this work was tidal and the flow of the out-going tide completely governed the means of transit. It mostly fell to my lot to run anchors on heavy coir rope 50 to 100 yards long, right or left, to keep the raft clear of the river banks. Most of this rowing was done standing up and no mistakes were allowed. the majority of our trips ended at the mouth of the Whangapoua bar and during these years we did not lose a single log over the bar. Our journey was completed a few hundred yards up the Whangapoua stream on the incoming tides and into the booms where there were hundreds more logs. If the tide and weather suited we would strip the gear off the logs and row back three or four miles, make up another raft and drop it out on the outgoing tide. often this was done in the dark until it struck on the mudbank and next morning after a well deserved night's rest the same process would be repeated day after day while the tide and weather suited. When the weather was too boisterous we would often go and sink a hole five to six feet deep while the tide was out and

recover 20 to 50 lbs of dark gum. There would still be tons hidden in the round for anyone who wanted it, but few know of it's existence so far below high water mark and nobody seems to be interested these days as synthetics appear to have taken it's place.



# GUM INDUSTRY

As kauri gum is a by-product from the kauri forests; both the forests of the last century, which have in many cases been purchased from the Maoris for just a song and worked out almost ruthlessly by the companies with sufficient capital to do so, and the forests of perhaps 2,000 years ago over which the present forests in many cases have grown. Most of the Range and swamp gum dug in recent years has been deposited from trees growing perhaps 2,000 years ago, assuming that a kauri forest can grow to maturity in about 1,000 years. It is quite possible and probably that severe earthquake is responsible for the destruction of earlier kauri forests. One factor which points to this belief is the large quantities of dark gum found under the mud flats 8 to 10 feet below high water level. Another theory could be the slow sinking of land over a long period. I have dug gum on great Mercury Island when just a youth, and it was quite noticeable that many of the mounds where once stood a kauri tree, which was for some reason, either by wind, a quake, or old age, up-rooted and fell over, there were good qualities of gum that had been burned to such an extent that it was useless. This, of course, indicated fire either by lightening or a quake, as, to the best of my knowledge New Zealand was not populated 2,000 years ago. Kauri gum could be termed the sap which exudes from a wound or scar and when exposed to air hardens into a form of resin. During heavy winds or for other reasons the limbs of the kauri got bruised or snap off and here the gum forms in many cases into lumps several pounds in weight. some of this falls to the ground and in due course, being covered in debris and undergrowth gets hidden. It is here that the observant tree climber, if his spotting looks sufficiently lucrative, takes to the tree tops either by rope or spiked boots and specially made hooks.

These men made climbing look so simple that almost any young man thought he could do it, but this is far from correct. You must have tons of nerve, no fear of height, and you are not allowed to make even one mistake as it could mean death or a badly broken body. Needless to say these men always worked in pairs and divided the spoil ....., one working below, while the other worked in the limbs. Then there were what is known as bleeders. These men acquired the right (usually on a royalty basis to bleed the base of the tree, say six feet from the ground, by chopping or using a bread chisel 4 to 5 inches wide and sufficiently deep enough to penetrate the bark. This was generally done two years or more before the companies owning the forest started felling the timber, so as to give the bleeders sufficient time to remove the bled gum. It was thought later that this trunk bleeding allowed a borer into the timber so it was only allowed in the upper limbs, a very hazardous job but some did it.

Nearly all this type of gum was known in the trade as "green gum" and was not as valuable as Range or white, swamp gum. As I have only witnessed bleeding done by

the McFarlane Bros. in the last branch of the Punga Punga, and helped jack it out by horse myself, I am not prepared to say to what extent it was done in other Kauri forests, but can only presume that this was not an isolated case. These two brothers had a well built gum store surrounded by bush about 20 by 20 with a tongue and groove floor. As you can imagine the sieved and graded heaps of gum clean and almost white looked very attractive.

I often wondered when looking back, why small tin cups were not inserted just under the cut to catch the bleeding gum. This would of course, have meant many hundreds and thousands of cups but much less labour in the removal of gum and larger lumps of gum, so consequently a higher price. But this an idea that may not have even been thought of.

Before I finish with the climbing part of the gum industry I feel I should tell this true story about one Ben Simpson, a half-caste Maori who had asked our permission to climb a large kauri tree in a deep gully on our property. Dad was not even a little interested in climbing so he said "Climb the tree and get all the gum you want". Ben climbed the tree in the usual manner by casting a lead sinker on a light fishing line over a suitable limb and then hauling the climbing rope (about 1¼ inches manila) over the same limb.

This done, he climbed in to the tree and started collecting gum, about 80 feet from the ground. He had worked to the far side of the branches in his eagerness to get several large lumps when it started to blow, and on looking around saw his rope slowly sliding over the limb and drop onto the ground. Now Maoris do not like being in the dark alone, especially high up in the top of a kauri in a black gully, and poor Ben must nearly have had a heart attack in anticipation of the night ahead, but his heart lightened when he spotted a tall rewarewa tree about eight feet from one of the kauri branches, and about three inches thick. Could he jump that far and would the tip of the tree hold his weight? As it would soon start to get dark he just must give it a try, and also the tapus and bad spirits would be around him in no time. After cleaning the twigs and small branches off the limb he ran along its length and jumped for his life, desperately clutching the top of the rewarewa tree. It bent nearly double and poor old Ben thought all his days had come at once, but luckily this particular timber is very tough and it slowly came back to the perpendicular.

Ben wasted no time in the descent and bolted for home leaving all his gum and gear to look after itself until the next day. That was the last time Ben ever climbed and I hardly blame him, as he told me later he intended keeping his feet on the ground.

As I have previously mentioned a good deal about the Klondyke gum field there is little else to say, except that many tons of gum, or hundreds of tons, were shifted to Auckland by the H.S.S. Coy. steamers from the Whangapoua wharf. Two of the main local gum purchasing stores were run by Mr Miller at Klondyke and Mr Denize at Whangapoua. I have heard that many an unscrupulous digger would sew a bar of iron wrapped in a sugar bag into the bottom of the gum sack.

Gum digging in the earlier part of this century provided a quite lucrative living for many hundreds of men in the northern part of the north Island, especially the type who preferred a more independent way of life. There was a certain element of gambling (as

in prospecting for gold) which gave the work quite a fascination. One could go out and get sack full or only a few pounds, but an expert digger seldom got less than 30 to 60 pounds a day. You acquire what one may term the hunting knowledge, by observing the contour and the general lie of the country and where trees may have grown or where the gum may have been deposited and rolled to. Swampy areas often contain large quantities of gum to wet to dig, so experts in this particular department use long spears 8 to 12 feet long, with a right angle hook on the end, and after locating a fair sized lump of gum it is worked to the surface. These pieces of gum are often 6 to 15 lbs. in weight and it does not take much to make a good days pay.

It may be briefly stated that to a greater or lesser extent the whole of the Whangapoua basin contained kauri gum from the mud flats (in some cases) to the top of the hills, indicating the great extent of the kauri forests growing here in the days gone by. While ploughing on the Otongaru flats for crops and pastures I have recovered sacks of first class gum. Our old rafting shanty which was previously a gum diggers hut had several inches of gum dust all around it, indicating that a large quantity of gum had been dug and scraped in this area.

Now in green pastures, who could have dreamed that at one time it was a dense kauri forest. These green pastures only apply to the low lands where it can be cultivated and manure applied. In my opinion the hills from an agricultural point of view are useless and my guess is they have proved a poor investment for anyone trying to farm them. It is quite apparent from my observation down the years, that country on which kauri has grown, is so impoverished that it is a bad bet as far as farming is concerned, as I have already inferred, and few of those who have made the attempt would deny these remarks.

This kauri hill country appears only useful for one purpose, re-afforestation.

# AGRICULTURE

It is quite reasonable that I should have something to say about all or some of these people who tried to farm the highlands of the Whangapoua basin, especially as my father was about the first to make this blunder.

He purchased 1,000 acres from Hams for £1 and acre, of this I would say 300 acres was farmable. The balance was Kauri Country hills and in my opinion, valueless. (This area being known as New Chum Bay).

Many is the week and month I have cut scrub and pulled young ti-tree just to see it grow again in the next year, and this routine would continue year after year. All the land would grow was Danthonia and if you adopted the burning off habit in the summer, you could destroy miles and miles of fencing and your neighbours would not be over happy about this. The job that I detested most was pulling young ti-tree on newly-grassed land. Ti-tree seed would blow from a ridge top at least half a mile and every seed seemed to germinate. I would invent any excuse to dodge this back-breaking job, however I soon discovered there was a knack even in pulling ti-tree. This was to bend your knees, take a good grip, and straighten your legs. This would give you another 30 or 40% lifting power and was easier on your back.

The first stock was bought from Mr Darsen of Great Mercury Island - Southdown ewes - as well as hawks, and they were brought across the 12 miles of sea by Captain Harry Chapman in the Cutter "Kathleen Maud". We had, of course, the usual few cows and new stock. At one stage I packed cream over to the Coromandel Butter Factory, but this didn't last long as it was already butter when it got there and rather unacceptable to the Factory Manager. To keep the pot boiling much of the ti-tree was made into charcoal and sold to Winstone Ltd. for some fabulously low price. This, of course, helped to clean up the burns and make more room for grass etc., the etc. consisted mainly of young ti-tree.

After many years of hard work this land was sold to Mrs Alberta McLean about which I will tell you more later. The property is now owned by Mr Bert Denize who is no doubt enjoying the low price of land and the high price of wool and stock.

If my memory serves me correctly, Martin Hawkeswood was the next European to buy land and his selection was certainly a good one. Nearly all the flat land in the Tereringa and Opitonui area, and with capital (which was hard to come by those days) could have been made into model farms.

In later years when his three sons, Pat, Bert and Jack grew up, the land was divided

and they each carried on dairying. Pat is still there, Jack has retired to Thames and Bert to Port Charles. I feel I must mention before passing on that Martin Hawkeswood was a man held in high esteem by all that knew him. A small man with plenty of lush blood in his veins, but, the most important, thoroughly straight and reliable.

The next important land purchase was, I think, by Mr William Denize, known by his more immediate friends as "Punga Bill". After the Punga Blocks had been worked by the K.T. Coy., a hot summer arrived and a raging fire swept the lot. As Punga Bill was a man of swift decision and quick action, he bought the lot, over 3,000 acres and within quick time the seed was on and growing. I would guess predominantly Danthonia and Brown Top.

How Punga Bill did all this and got it all stocked and fenced I do not know, but I have always had the greatest respect for his financial brain and capacity to do things. At all events he fought a good battle for quite a few years and finally sold to Jack Clothier. Jack, a fine chap, who had already fought his best battle of over four years in the Artillery in World War I, and came back for what one might venture to call "green" (and with a very generous father's help) went into, in my opinion, a very tough block of land. This venture was a sad show for such a fine chap and I feel it would be best to leave it at that. I am told that it has, to a great extent, gone back into second growth, and is now owned by Mr Bert Denize.

The final solution will, I feel, be afforestation (pine, etc.). About this stage the biggest land deal that ever happened in the Whangapoua took place, and it's quite a story. It came about in a strange way.

Dad had occasion to go to Auckland on business and always stayed in the Waitemata Hotel. At the booking Office he was told that there was only one vacant bed left in the whole Hotel and this was a room in which another farmer had occupied the first bed. On learning that the other man was a farmer of high repute, one Samuel Walter Perry Peddle, Dad said, "We won't quarrel, I'll take the other bed".

After these two had introduced themselves and done a fair bit of chatting, it appeared to Dad that Peddle was hunting for large blocks of land that he could buy cheaply, did Dad know of any? During the night Dad must have done a lot of thinking, for he went straight to the Offices of the Kauri Freehold Gold Estate and asked the Manager if they wanted to sell their complete holdings at Whangapoua, some 52,000 acres, and what their lowest price would be. After a bit of a huddle by the Directors they said they would accept 7/6 (7 shillings and 6 pence) an acre to a sound buyer. After a second short huddle they said we will give you a cheque for £250

Quite suddenly Arthur Henry Smith had gone into the black market land agency business. He wasted no time in getting back to his potential buyer. When Peddle heard the price he was equally excited and a quick introduction was arranged an everybody appeared very happy as his finances were found to be in a very sound condition.

The upshot was that Peddle came home with dad, stayed a week, had a good look over the property, sent back to Auckland and bought for cash (I was later told) 6 miles of tram rails, two engines, and a hundred and one bits and pieces which were the remnants of a quarter of a million gold mining venture.

In due course the promised cheque for £250 arrived and milk and honey flowed in the Smith home for many a day.

When providence works with you it's easy. Peddle was a big powerful man, clean living and a non-drinker and non-smoker. Black coffee seemed to be his pet drink and I am told he always carried a silver flask of best rum in his pocket, but seldom touched it. Peddle told me that as young man in England he had been a stone mason and that on one occasion he had carried an 800 lb. block of granite 20 feet in his arms. Peddle made his home alone in the Mansion House of Whangapoua, built originally by Harris and was in later years occupied by the business heads of the district, Hudsons, Airies, Churtons, Harold Bulls, Philip Denize, and probably a dozen others down through the years.

Miss Georgina Troughear looked after the store and Post Office which was included in Peddle's purchase, for a year or so, then came Peddle's sad end. He had bought a launch, the engine of which was out of order, so he got a mechanic named Brown, to repair and overhaul it. Not it transpired that Brown liked his "wee drop" and the case containing this stimulant was put off at Kuaotunu, as the Whangapoua Bar was considered to rough to enter, but Brown and Peddle, after being strongly advised by my sister, Sybil, who was then Post Mistress, not to go as it was blowing hard from the East and the Bar would be rough, persisted, and went. She was the last person to see them alive, as their launch was capsized on the Bar and they were both drowned and were buried later when found, in the old cemetery on top of the Karaka Bay hill. Either before or about this time the property was divided, Harold Bull buying the Waitokurii-Opitonui portion and John Schishka, the Eastern side, Owera, Otongaru, Haupiriki. Tom Marshall was manager for Bull for most of the time of his occupation of the property. Apparently when Bull purchased the land it included all the remnants of the Kauri Freehold Gold estate mining venture previously mentioned, which would run into many hundreds of tons of steel rails and other scrap iron.

Rails at the time were worth about £7 (7 pounds) a ton, scrap iron about the same. The First World War was fast approaching and it is quite probable that the scrap found its way to Japan and was later (to their sorrow) fired back at the Americans. Harold Bull later sold the property to the crown for re-afforestation and bought an island at Mangere. I dare to suggest that he was glad to be rid of his Kauri-impoverished hills. A few days ago Stan Davis visited me and told me that his brother (Dump) Henry and Hew davis put up miles of fencing for Bull, dismantled and removed the remaining buildings at Opitonui and pulled up all the train rails on the property. Later Henry went off to the First World War and he was one of those unlucky ones who left a small white cross in the field of Flanders to his memory.

I will not attempt to suggest how Harold Bull enjoyed this farming venture as I simply don't know, and do not intend to make any guesses. John Schishka was the next to try himself out on the kauri hungry hills at Owera, Otongaru and Kaupiriki, but he was fortunate int hat he had a fair proportion of low lands which were quite good and farmable. I ploughed a lot of this land with a double furrow Reid and Grey with four horses in block and tackle gear for Mr Abe Lincoln, Schishka's manager. At this stage several years before Lincoln took over, Robbie and John Craig were in charge, but Abe Lincoln and his two sons, Harold and Les stayed on with Schishka until the latter end of Schishka's occupation - Pat Hawkeswood took charge for some time.

One of the last land owners in this area at this stage was Jack Mendamin, and the hill over which the present road comes, still retains his name as Mendamin's Hill. This was a small area on the left side of the M..... stream and was not farmed to any extent.

One of the best blocks of farming land in my opinion was the Materangi Flats which I have previously mentioned, not only as a framing venture but for its great potential value for beach sections.

This property of 11,000 acres was, after considerable effort by Charlie Simpson, purchased from Mr Wall of Gisborne. His brother, George, then joined him and they worked it jointly with considerable enthusiasm and success.

When the Crown finally purchased the area originally occupied by Bill and Schishka they wisely cut the low lands off from the hills and cut it into blocks suitable for dairying and these areas are now occupied and producing a large amount of butterfat.

At this stage the Crown did what appeared to be the perfectly obvious thing - re-afforestation of the hill country. Fore years this has been going on at a good pace and I have it on good authority that approximately 600 acres are being planted a year at present, and there is a strong chance that within the next ten years a large modern mill is to be erected at Owera. All this work, of course, creates a real boom to the Whangapoua district and employs many men and will employ many more when and if the mill is built - felling, trucking, with mill workers etc. If all this eventuates it is quite probable that Tereranga and Owera will become small townships.

If the East Coast road now being built by the Public Works through from Hikuai and Tairua and on to Whangapoua is completed as promised, the Owera Mill could be only 15 minutes rung by loaded truck to the Whitianga wharf. If the timber is to be shipped out, Whitianga appears to me to be the best for small ships around 1,000 tons. The alternative would be direct by truck to a better wharf. It is hard to forecast what wealth this could bring to the district if it eventuates.

Of course, this is all my own surmise on fairly sound information, but it seems possible that my guess is possibly not far from correct. We will probably know within the next 10 - 20 years.