

## *Campbell's Beach Recollections – Steve Watt*

My mother, Mildred Roke (b 2.4.1910) was raised in Matakana, firstly at the Roke Brothers Timber Mill adjacent to the Glen Eden River just downstream from the existing bridge and then on the Roke family farm in Wright Road.

The Campbell family, were also farmers in Matakana. The Campbell farm was on the eastern side of the corner of Greens Road and the Warkworth- Matakana Rd. The Campbells also owned a small run-off along the Takatu Rd, the boundaries of which contained an area including the existing Campbell's Beach development to a line running at right angles to the beach approximately through Carley's property and Kookaburra Drive. The adjoining properties, in the mid 1950s, were owned by Mrs. Baddeley (northern boundary), Buster Armitage (eastern boundary) and Mr. and Mrs. Webber (southern boundary). I have seen the bay that includes Campbell's Beach and Baddeleys Beach variously described as Mellons or Millons Bay.

At the end of the Second World War, my mother's father, Ted Roke, purchased the cookhouse from an American Army camp located at the foot of the ranges, between Warkworth and Matakana somewhere across the road from the sharp corner just beyond the Ascension Winery. Presumably, Ted negotiated with Stuart Campbell for permission to erect the cookhouse at Campbell's Beach. Ted dismantled the cookhouse and transported it in sections by lorry to Campbell's Beach. He re erected the structure on our current property 48 Campbell Rd, a tongue of land surrounded by the mangrove swamp on three sides.

I believe this was the first structure erected at the beach and it became the Roke family bach. This structure remained on the property until I demolished it to build our existing dwelling in 2000.

My recollections date from around 1954.

At this time the road to Campbell's and Baddeleys forked at the existing farm gate approximately 200m down the existing road. The road to Campbell's was essentially the central race through Armitages' dairy farm, a modestly shingled two strip track with grass growing down the middle. There were short strips of concrete on the steepest part but this was a problem if you slid off these. There were five gates on the race and we children bribed, debate and fought over who was going to open the gates. The track emerged to cross a basic bridge at the northern end of Campbell Rd and then ran along the foot of the hill at the back of the properties at the base of the hill on Campbell Rd. The road swung to the left as it approached the beach, following much the same route as the current road. There was a farm track through the bush that linked Campbell's and Baddeleys, but this was only passable by tractor.

Both Campbell's and Baddeleys were sub divided in the mid to late 1960s and the existing roads constructed.

By the mid 1950s, there were a number of baches at Campbell's. The Campbell's themselves had two (one Topsy Campbell, the other Stuart Campbell) and the Stehrs had baches along the bank of the river to the north of where Cowie's currently live. In fact, the old bach on the Cowie property was one of these. Another of the Campbell relations had the last bach, on the slightly elevated site, at the western end of the beach. This is still there also. Bells (who had a *real launch* they moored behind Cowies) had a beachfront bach toward the western end of the beach. Sellars (an electrician from Wellsford) had a bach just behind where John McKitrick's garage currently is located and Grants (farmers from Wellsford) had a bach about where Gary and Heather, (nee Grant) Ringrose's dwelling is located. Sellars eventually built the house up the hill on the property which is now owned by Andy Dell.

Two significant features of the community were the tennis court and the bowling green. The bowling green (complete with pavilion) was located adjacent to the turn around area at the end of Campbell Rd. The Campbell's were great bowlers and, I believe, Stuart's father was the inspiration behind this project. Stuart's two sons, Neil and Logan were highly successful at national level in lawn bowls in the 1980s and 1990s. Stuart and Mr. Stehr maintained the green and a number of tournaments were held each the summer. This was a real social occasion for Matakana and I can recall counting in excess of fifty cars passing our place on the way to one such tournament.

The concrete paved tennis court with an effective perimeter fence was located on the reserve in front of Cowie's place. The only issue was clearing the sheep droppings off the court as Stuart ran sheep on the entire property throughout the year.

### *Baching memories*

- The two hour plus trip from Papatoetoe through Onehunga, Henderson, Riverhead, Dairy Flat, Silverdale, Orewa
- The metaled road from Warkworth onwards
- The million plus corners on the trek north
- No power, no phones
- Long drops and watch out for the sheep droppings and cattle pats at night
- Possums on the roof (and in the bach) frequently at night
- Meat safe hanging from the puriri tree
- Fresh snapper, smoked snapper, flounder as the staple diet
- The daily hike for the kids up the hill to get the milk from Armitage's cowshed and then trying to get the billy back to the bach with at least some milk in it
- Wood stoves, limited tank water, no showers or baths (YES!!), primus, tilly lamps
- The first water supply was from a spring above the bridge at the northern end of Campbell Rd
- Having to get the car to the road (if not up the hill) when it started raining in the night, to avoid getting stuck
- Sausages and damper BBQs on the beach
- Roaming cattle and sheep having full access to all the properties

### ***Fishing tales***

- Rowing the clinker dinghy to the point just beyond Steven Tindall's mooring or off the point between Baddeleys and Buckletons and catch all the snapper you would want
- THEN the wonders of a Seagull outboard (Stuart Campbell had the first fizz boat in the bay)

### ***Entertainment for the Kids***

- The Campbell boys built a diving board over the channel on the seaward side of the pohutukawa that the kids currently swing from
- We used to dive and jump off the branches of that pohutukawa as well as use the swing
- Eel fishing in the pond under the bridge at the end of Campbell Rd
- Possum hunting – the Grants had Mac a black lab crossed with something (poodle?) who as well as being an outstanding retriever of sticks thrown into the creek, could fossick out possums in the day time
- Turkey hunting
- Checking the Bowling Club kitchen to see if the grog cupboard had been left unlocked
- The nikau slide in the bush adjacent to where the existing road comes down the hill – we used to start above where the footbridge runs currently on the bush walk. Hours were spent hunting for the best and preparing the nikau fronds. We would wax the bole for extra speed. And the serious competitions (when the Roke cousins came). Walking and hitching to Saturday night dances in the halls at Matakana and Leigh

### ***A bit further afield...***

- Relatives of Dad's (Frasers) owned the farm fronting Pink Beach and Omaha Beach. We had an annual picnic at Omaha where we were the only ones on the beach.
- We also knew the Georgettis who owned what is now the Tawharanui Regional Park - access to Anchor Bay whenever we wished.

***ALL IN ALL – PARADISE!!!!***

**Steve Watt  
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