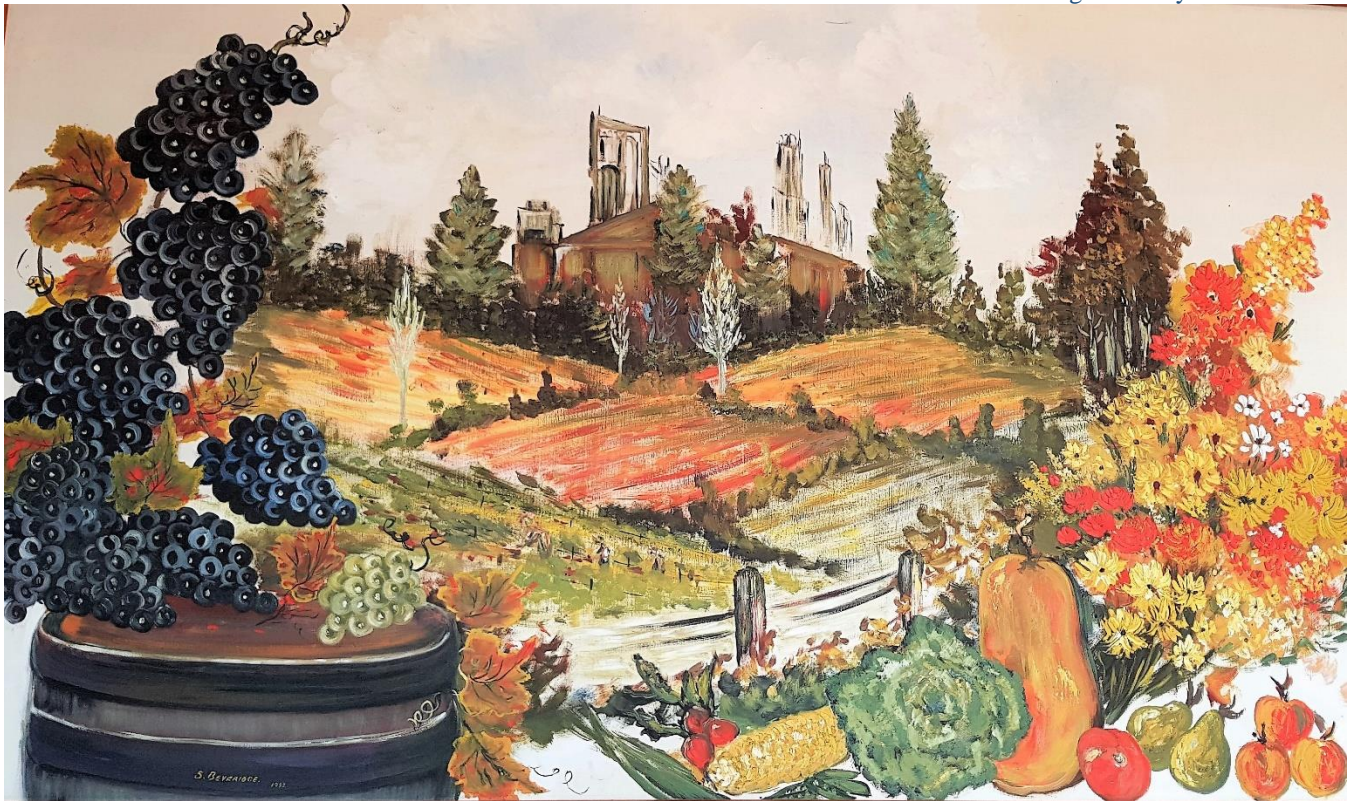


NorWest Heritage Society Inc.

Kumeu, Huapai, Waimauku, Riverhead, Taupaki Districts

Regd. Charity No. CC55278



“The Good Ol’ Days” Painting by Shirley Beveridge - 1980s

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Newsletter No. 1

Featuring: Kumeu Cricket Club’s 75th Anniversary and its interesting history since 1943.

With special thanks to Stephen Nobile for the use of the Kumeu Cricket Club for NorWest Heritage Society’s monthly meetings.

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“Memories Past”

Kumeu Cricket Club – Establishing a Home Ground 1943 to 1996

By Stephen Nobilo



The Kumeu Cricket Club celebrated its 75th anniversary making one of the oldest sporting clubs in the district. Based for the last fifty years at the “Domain.” The journey to get to its base was one of challenges and tragedy for the club and its founding members.

The Kumeu Cricket Club had its beginnings in 1943 at “Kinloch’s Paddock,” roughly where the Z petrol station & Craig Walker Removals are now located in Kumeu. At this time the paddock was the “Village Green” as it also doubled as the Kumeu A & H showgrounds and the Kumeu Rugby Club’s home ground. While serving a purpose to get things established the field was not ideal for cricket and an alternative was sort.

In 1945, a local farmer, Arthur Barnes, agreed to allow the use of his paddock across the railway line from the Kumeu Hall (near Shamrock drive.) Although it was a much flatter site than Kinloch’s Paddock, it had very light loam soil, great for growing potatoes, but not for making a cricket pitch to play on.

Members of the club set about digging clay from the roadside on Old North Road near the Riverhead forest transporting it to the paddock to make a wicket suitable to play on. The lack of a good water supply on site made the pitch preparation difficult and the absence of a guaranteed long-term tenancy prevented the club investing in a permanent water supply. While transporting water to the site was the solution again a more suitable venue was sort.

In 1949, the club approached the Kumeu A&H Society (KAHS) to put a wicket on their newly purchased property on Access Road. The society agreed and games were played in the centre of the A&H grounds on a concrete wicket covered with a coconut matting which was laid by local builder and keen cricketer Bob Stewart. At the end of 1952 the club moved to the top of the A & H grounds to where the main entrance is today on Access Road, as there were too many issues with other organisations also using the central part of the A&H ground.

In 1953, the club struggled to get the outfield into good order for the start of the new season. The major issue was the local Polo Club which used the field as well and the damage from the horses was quite bad at times. Similar issues arose again the following season, due to this, the club requested exclusive use of 4 acres as a cricket ground. The club had made numerous improvements to the two wickets and the outfields and wished to continue to do so. The land in question was already under lease to a share-milker who refused his consent to the club’s request. Kumeu Cricket Club asked for compensation for the loss of the two grass wickets which the A&H society declined.

In May 1955, a letter from the Department of Internal Affairs was received by the KAHS regarding a complaint that they had refused a local sports club permission to use their grounds. The KAHS replied with a list of all the sporting organisations that use the grounds and advised that the cricket club had left on their own accord, the matter ended there and Kumeu again was searching for a home.

While between grounds Kumeu played most games at Walker Park in Point Chevalier in the Auckland City and Suburban Cricket Association competition.

Club member, Arthur Pinder, had mentioned to fellow club member, Bill Neal, about a 16-acre parcel of public land in Huapai, across the railway line from the Huapai Station, that the club could possibly use. The parcel of land was dedicated in the original Northern Fruitland's district land survey as a recreational reserve.

Bill talked to Bob Stewart, who needed little motivation to get the ball rolling, contacting the Department of Internal Affairs in Auckland, who confirmed his inquiry that the parcel of crown land did exist. But he was also told there was no money available for development under the Government subsidy scheme. All funds the Kumeu district was entitled to had been paid ironically to the KAHS to provide sporting facilities.

The Dept of Internal Affairs suggested a public meeting should be called to elect a Domain Board to control the development of the ground, this was promptly organised. The meeting attracted several other sporting codes, who initially showed a lot of interest in the venture, until an onsite meeting where the undeveloped site was viewed containing gorse, wattle and scrub, which saw a withdrawal of all interested parties, but the cricket.

So, members began the slow process of toil Sunday after Sunday clearing the site. Tragedy struck on labour weekend 1956. Scott Fraser a logging contractor working in the area had been sympathetic to the Kumeu Cricket Clubs cause and lent the use of his bulldozer and himself for the weekend. While felling a massive old wattle tree, roots and all, Mr Fraser was struck on the head by a loose branch (referred to as a "sailor") and died on site instantly.

Members of the Domain Board found themselves having legal proceedings lodged against them by the lawyers of Mr Fraser's widow, Commission of Crown lands and the Minister of Lands, to see who was liable to pay compensation under the workers compensation act.

The insurance agent for South British Insurance for the area had happened to be a Domain Board member and he had accepted a verbal proposal to cover all workers against injury while working on the Domain. (ACC was not brought in till 1974 so insurance had to be sorted.) South British Insurance declined liability as no wage's declaration had been completed as it was volunteer work done in kind on a public asset, thus a legal storm was created.

As a result of the legal proceedings the Commissioner of State Insurance, who was acting for the Workers Compensation Board, requested a special hearing where the Domain board and witnesses of the accident were asked to give evidence. From this hearing the Commissioner ruled South British Insurance was, in fact, liable and ordered to pay the compensation.

As Kumeu Cricket Club wasn't incorporated, nor was the Domain Board, all members would have been liable to pay the compensation as individuals, which would have ended the club and most likely the Domain development. The Kumeu Cricket Club and Domain Board decided that a professional should be employed to finish and level the Domain site.

Neil Anderson of Anderson & O'Leary in Whenuapai was contracted to complete the job. Part of the terms of the contract was that Mr Anderson would take all the topsoil in lieu of payment. This short-sighted deal to reduce costs would lead to ongoing major drainage issues the Domain had for decades.

As the Domain development was being completed, Bruce Levy, a large Landowner in Huapai, was subdividing a piece of land between Tapu Road and the Domain, he gave a strip of land to add to the side of the domain as part of his subdivision. To make the land legal a Domain board had to be formally appointed.

KUMEU CRICKET CLUB

AUCKLAND CITY & SUBURBAN CRICKET ASSN. INC.

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS, SENIOR B COMPETITION 1959-60



Back Row: M. PARK, G. ANDREW, P. LONGVILLE.

Middle Row: J. RODGERS, J. SINCLAIR Jnr., J. BARROW, A. GYDE, J. SINCLAIR Senr., T. R. STALLWORTHY *Vice-President*

Front Row: W. W. NEIL *President*, C. MURRAY, R. LEVY, E. SAUNDERS *Capt.*, R. STEWART *Vice-Capt.*, D. STEWART, T. A. SPRAGGS *Club Capt.*

With the Master Control-Commissioner of Crown Lands, Mr Darcy O'Brien and Board Members, Ralph Stallworthy (chairman,) Bob Stewart (secretary,) Arthur Pinder, Bruce Levy, Graham Andrew, Gordon Clifton, Wally Hawkins, Tom Spraggs, Bill Neil and Chris Murray were appointed to guide the Domain into its final stages and ongoing governance. To gain better access to the Domain, a lease was made with NZ Railways to create a right of way from the top of Tapu Road, which is still used today.

The Domain now levelled and formed, the hours of volunteer work really began as the outfield and wicket were established. Bob Stewart almost lived at the Domain with the sheer number of hours he spent also travelling to Port Albert in the north to secure the special "Port Albert soil" used for wickets.

Local water bore drilling specialist Bob Paterson put in the bore which meant a secure reliable water supply a hindrance in former locations. A clubhouse with flush toilets, changing rooms and social areas were needed. Graham Andrew drew the plans and again keen club members led by Builder, Bob Stewart, ensured the new club house was built.

In 1958, the 2.58ha Domain was declared a recreational reserve by the Commissioner of Crown Lands and was vested in the Waitemata County Council. This created issues for the cricket club as the pump shed and clubhouse was deemed not up to Council standards. The upgrades required by the Council, who wished to use the Cricket Clubrooms as public facilities for the Domain, amounted to about 50 thousand pounds (about \$150,000 today) which the Domain Board agreed to, if the Council would pay the costs.



Huapai Domain circa 1963

In 1963, Mr Roy Walker offered 10 acres to the Domain Board, who in turn, proposed the purchase to the Waitemata County Council, who, to the Boards surprise, agreed to the purchase, bringing the Domain up to 6.1 hectares in area.

The ground was in great shape and games were played on it. A reputation as one of the best grounds in Auckland began which still holds through to today. A grove of Bentham Cypress was planted on the western boundary of the Domain to act as a windbreak / shelter and sun-glare filter.

Other specimen trees were planted by members of the cricket club to give the Domain an “English Village Green” feel with willows and an English oak planted by Red Henry which are still standing and growing today.

A single lane concrete practice net was built as the club continued to invest in its home along with a second grass wicket to the north-west of the original main wicket. In 1974, local Authority changes saw the administration of the Huapai Domain transfer to the Rodney District Council. In 1979, a 21-year lease of the land the clubrooms are located on, secured the long-term tenure of the Huapai Domain by the Kumeu Cricket club.

Over the last 40 years, the cricket club shared its Domain with other codes. The Kumeu Rugby Club played matches at the Domain for two seasons in the early 1960s, which didn't work well due to drainage issues and the Domain really suffered. Then in the 1980s, the Huapai Field Hockey Club leased the cricket clubrooms for 5 years. This was a great relationship as the hockey club needed flat level grounds to play on, so there were no issues within outfield damage in winter, unlike when the rugby club briefly used the grounds. The Huapai Athletics Club thrived as another summer sport at the Domain for a decade. Then the arrival of the current main winter tenants Norwest United Soccer Club in 1986.

In 1984, after recommendation from Brian Neal (KCC Chairman) and the Domain Board, the Rodney District Council purchased 2.4 hectares on the North boundary of the Domain to accommodate an increase in demand for sporting/recreational land in the Kumeu/Huapai district. This meant a new third wicket was put in, this time a concrete wicket to complement the two grass wickets. Also, the club further invested in the Domain by building a new three lane practice nets in the north west corner of the Domain.

After maintaining the Domain playing fields and wickets since they were established by the club, the Council took over the complete running of all maintenance of the Domain from the cricket club. In 1986, the club purchased a removal house from Browns Bay, which it added onto the existing clubrooms. This provided the club with a viewing deck/bar social area and storage for the ground keeping gear underneath the new clubhouse. In 1996, a further 6.2 ha was purchased by the Council to meet community needs. This saw the Domain increase to 5 wickets and become a real asset as a cricket venue, not just for the Kumeu Cricket Club, but the whole west Auckland cricket community.

In 1996, tragedy again struck the club at the Domain as the cricket club clubrooms were destroyed in an arson attack. New modern clubrooms were built again by club legend and life member Bob Stewart, 25 years after he built the first clubrooms.

Rodney District Council invested \$2.24 million in the Domain infrastructure in 1998 finally sorting the drainage problems and installing automatic sprinklers and additional wickets. The Domain, 17 hectares in area, is now officially named the Huapai Reserve by the new Auckland Council (the third authority to control the Domain) but is still referred to as "the Domain" by the locals.

Kumeu Cricket Club continues to grow as a club with the ever-expanding community it is a part of and looks forward to the challenges this will bring over the next 75 years.

