

July 2008

The Raumati South Resident's Group hold a number of stories, reminiscences and historical facts about the area dating back to the early 20th century. These **were** presented at several meetings at Valhalla, the most comprehensive of which was in June 2007. Now the information is being collated and will be presented in book form later in 2008.

What follows is for the wider Rainey and Flux families, and is no more than some of the writer's memories of the Rainey family's association with Raumati South, which started in 1935.

In the depression years of the early 1930s Norman McKenzie (after whom McKenzie Ave is named) farmed an area bounded by the Main Trunk railway line in the east, the coastline in the west, and extended from Paekakariki north to approximately a point where The Esplanade on the beach front angles away to the south east.

My father, W.B. Rainey, variously named Wilfred, John and Paul, a solicitor in the Wellington legal partnership of Leicester, Jowett and Rainey, acted for Norman McKenzie. My memory suggests that it was at this time that he sold some of the land which is now Queen Elizabeth Park, with a small area sold as residential sections at the south end of The Esplanade, with the easterly portion remaining as a dairy farm.

The legal bill was 100 pounds, way beyond the ability of a depression-strapped farmer to pay. Norman McKenzie suggested that he **would** give my father **two** acres of beach front land, (which extends from 64-78 The Esplanade.) With no other option he reluctantly accepted the compromise.

He decided to build on the highest point of the land, a house predictably named Hilltop. One of the problems however was road access. The photos, taken at the end of 1935, show the "driveway" formed along the sand dunes, cleared first by the builders of the house, and then subsequently by the Rainey young and their gullible friends who leapt at the idea of a Christmas beach holiday without realising that some work was attached. The next photo shows the extension of The Esplanade angling south as it was being formed over the summer of 1935-36.



The contract for the house was let to a Lower Hutt builder, W.E. Jones for 525 pounds. The family occupied it first over the 1935-36 holiday period, although some subcontracting work was still being done. During the construction the carpenters lived in the house during the working week.

This next series of photos show the house as it was when we first occupied it, and the more or less finished product at the end of the 1935/36 summer. The cell like structure in the second photo was an outside shower room, the hot water for which came from a chip heater in the kitchen. The people in this photo are front left to right Humphrey Rainey, Peter (Marguarita) Bunny, Peter (Frances Marjoie) Rainey and on the front steps Judy Fisher (now Barclay) and her mother Eleri.

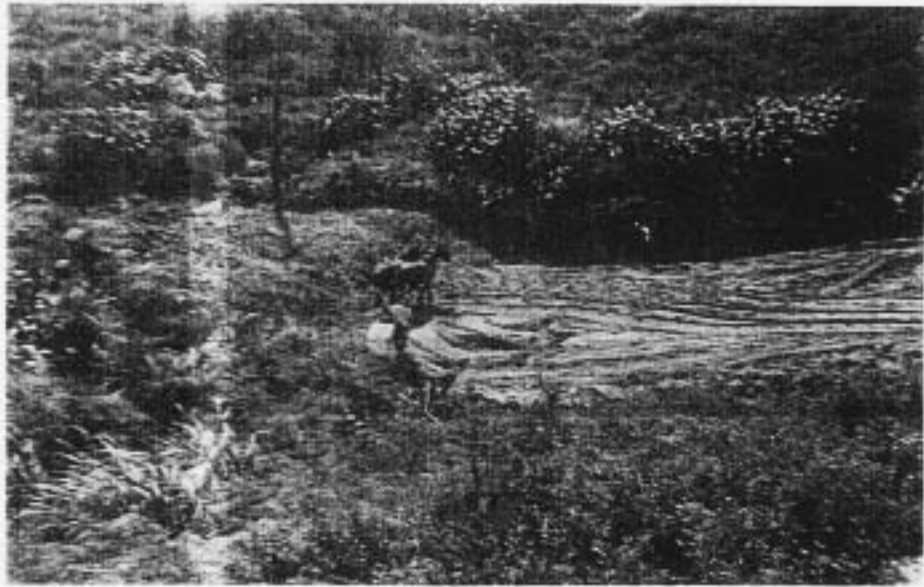


The house had a commanding view. This photo looks south from Hilltop, with the dunes occupied now by several dozen houses. The "legal fee" land extends to a dip in the dunes about 200 metres away to the south. This is now the site of a marina at the end of Jeep Road.



W.B.Rainey was a gregarious person, and the house was always full of friends and family. To help entertain all these folk he built a tennis court at the land beneath the house to the south. This picture shows the land being levelled prior to sealing--again after the flax lupin and toitoi had been cut down by the young invited holiday makers. The levelling was done by a horse drawn scoop the size of a large wheelbarrow, with two wooden handles for the operator.

This was the same method used in forming the Esplanade extension, which is hidden behind the flax in the upper part of this photo. The road formed ran from the end of The Esplanade to where it presently meets Jeep Road. It here gave access to a track inland to a camping ground approximately where Rainbow Court now stands.



The operator of the scoop is probably Harry Shaw, the local milkman, he along with his competitor Mr (?Jack) Cudby and several locals were involved in the construction. The extension further south was not made until after the end of World War 2, this time by machinery. The original cutting opposite about 72 The Esplanade was about 8 metres high and was protected by fencing the wall with locally cut manuka.

Hilltop still stands, now more than 70 years old. There have only been three owners. The Rainey's sold it in 1951 to Julia Wallace, headmistress of Palmerston North Girls High School, and it was subsequently bought by the present owner Marion Bruce. The last time I was in the house it was still in good condition, although a golf ball ran briskly across the front room.

During the Rainey's ownership there was a constant flow of family and friends. There were tennis parties most days in the summer holidays, and when the weather and tides were right dragging for flounder along the beach was a prelude for late morning drinks. There needed to be little excuse for these parties (John Rainey was a keen amateur movie buff and used an 8 mm Kodak camera. Many of these activities were initially captured on acetate film, subsequently transferred to video tapes and then on to DVDs. Several of these discs are held within the Rainey family)

Many of John Rainey's friends from Wellington came to Raumati for their Christmas holidays-- Tommy Rhind,a Wellington surgeon and his wife Vera,Bill Simpson,an ophthalmologist who enlivened parties with his piano accordion and his wife Bee,Gibson Stott and his wife Maud,Jack Bristed,a returned serviceman farming near Seddon and his wife Isabel,Geoff Colledge who had been in the Kiwi Concert Party during the war,Ken Mason and his wife Betty and Ted Aim from Hutt Valley High School. He subsequently became rector of Otago Boys'High School. And all with their families,all about the same age as the Rainey boys.

There were scores of family visitors too. This photo,taken in the driveway below Hilltop,was taken during the 1937/38 summer during a visit by my grandfather's older brother Harry from South Africa. Grouped round the family Ford,from the left are W.B.Rainey with Richard,Harry Rainey (with pipe) my grandmother Amy with her husband J.B.(with the everlasting cigarette), my mother Peter (Frances Marjorie) and Humphrey in front. Uncle Harry was fondly remembered for his generous Christmas and birthday presents of 5 pounds rising to 10 as we got older. We were led to believe he owned a gold mine in South Africa,although this probably meant he was associated with de Beers company.



James Barton died shortly after this photo was take.Harry died a year later and Amy died in 1940.(More about the life of these Raineys can be learned from material gathered by another grandson,John Rainey,oldest son of W.Bs.younger brother Henry James (Bill).)

I remember J.B.well in his retirement years in Taupo. He taught me to fish and gave me my first rod,a 7 ft 6 inch greenheart two-piece.Under his instruction I hooked my first fish in the Waitahanui River on the bend just below the main highway and suffered his considerable wrath when I lost it as it became entangled round a snag.

I can find no Raumati photos of the Bill Rainey family,his wife Iris and sons John Tony and Robert,but the DVD mentioned above has a clip of the family

My mother came from a larger family. She was one of 5 sisters and 3 brothers. Eleri and her daughter Judy appear in an earlier photo, and Dorrie eventually built a cottage in McKenzie Av., now owned by Judy. We saw less of the others; Arthur at that time was farming in the King Country and then in Northland, and the Mason family, sister Gwen and her husband Clem with their children Miles, Mary, Michael and Elizabeth lived in Nelson where they had an orchard. Miles was in the RAF during the war, in Coastal Command and was shot down and did not survive.

Her older sister Mary was married to Frank Symon at this time retired from the NZ Army. His oldest son Blair followed in his footsteps, and was in the NZ Army and died of wounds at Sidi Rizek (?spelling). The other two Symon boys David and Stephen both served in the NZ Army during the war.

Some of the family friends regularly stayed for holidays in the house. This photo shows, at the centre, Rona Moss who came with her husband Alan and children Michael and Terry. On the left is Peter Bunny, one of the three daughters of a former Lower Hutt mayor E.P. Bunny.



When first built the house had a septic tank, drinking water was rainwater from the roof into a tank, and all other water came from a bore into an aquifer in the area below the house near The Esplanade. Harry Shaw found the water, divining it with a forked willow branch, and indicating exactly where the water was nearest to the surface. The water was untainted by salt, and flowed about 12 feet below the surface. I was never sure whether divining was hocus. Trying it myself, I never got a response. Harry was very accurate with his estimate of the position water was nearest; curiously the near point was about half way up the slope towards the house.

In the first few years, up to the beginning of WW2 Raumati South was a quiet place, with unsealed roads, no footpaths, and very few houses, and fewer permanent residents. This picture, taken about 1938, looking down to the shopping centre, shows the unsealed road and the two general stores that made up the village centre. I can't remember the name of the owner of the store on the left. The first owner I recall, in the 1970s was Mr. Alan Loveridge. An early owner of the store on the corner was Mr. John Treyes (?Trayes). He was a returned serviceman, repatriated because of injury during the war, so he was not the owner when the picture was taken. He sold the business to L. T. (Gog) Mark, and then for a short time owned a store, still standing as a house, on the corner of Renown and Tiromoana Rds.



The village shop remained in the Mark family for many years. It was then unoccupied for some time, eventually becoming William Scolly's Valhalla. The original building on the site apparently was demolished; the 1938 photo indicates that if this was the new structure it has undergone further additions since.

Another prominent pre-war feature was the Kawatiri Guest House, a popular private hotel for Wellingtonians. It too has had many use changes, and survives now as the Rose Cottage Rest Home.



The writer's life in Raumati South has been divided into clearly defined periods. Summer holidays, sunshine, swimming, fishing up to the start of World War 11, and then a grayer time until the late 1940s. The war overshadowed the earlier sunshine, and as mentioned earlier, two cousins were killed. One of W.B. Rainey's flounder fishing friends, Dr. Plimmer was killed in the Middle East by a German soldier while working in a tent hospital clearly marked with a red cross. Several other cousins, including Bill Flux and Mary Mason joined the forces.

Soon after Pearl Harbour on December 6th 1941, American marines began to arrive in New Zealand to prepare for the eventual war against the Japanese-held territory in the Pacific. Many of them came into camps round Paekakariki - Camp Mackay at Mackay's Crossing and Camp Russell immediately north of Paekakariki township. A large notice was placed on the beach at the site of the present marina, closing off the whole area south to the north end of Paekakariki - what is now Queen Elizabeth Park - and forbidding any entry by the general public. There was sense in this because landings were carried from barges, with opposition from armoured vehicles (and allegedly with live ammunition!), so the area was a **dangerous** place to be. Frequent fires broke out, and there were often times when the sandhills were alive with hundreds of marines.

But when it seemed quiet, it was too great a temptation not to go and have a look. What a treasure trove! Communication between troops was by phone and land line, simply laid down as troops advanced and never used again. For years we had rolls of rubber coated wire hanging in our garage. And the pickings included revolvers, clips of ammunition (which we never knew were live or blank) army clothing tinned food and mess kits abounded. We were made to take the revolvers back to the camp, walking along the beach despite the warning notice. Even that had its reward as we were once invited to join "the chow line" in the camp mess tent.

My parents frequently invited marines to Hilltop for meals. It was sad to see the names of some of these men listed in published lists of those killed in action as the marines reoccupied Pacific Islands captured in the early months of the Pacific war.

Paraparaumu was for a time a training base for the RNZAF. Planes- mostly Hawker Hunter biplanes- flew along the coast, one dragging a drone behind it for another attack it from various angles. My brother and I both had Brownie box cameras and took many photos of these planes which passed Hilltop often at eye level. Not one photo was ever processed or returned from Kodak who did all the developing, no doubt part of the general censorship which pervaded our lives throughout the war.

One morning Richard and I were watching the drone plane turning down at Red River to come back to Paraparaumu, and saw the attacking plane get too close, wind its propellor round the tow rope and plunge into the sea 50 metres from the shore. When we got down there a farmer, possibly Norman McKenzie, had gone out with his tractor, returning to tell us that the pilot was dead.

Many basic items were rationed from 1940 onwards- 100grams of butter a week (there was no margarine that I remember) half a kilo of red meat, little sugar and a limit on clothing. Petrol was rationed, and gas burners became a standard feature on most cars. The black 1937 Ford in the earlier family photo had a cylinder installed early in the war, about a metre tall and 40 cms in diameter. It was placed on the driver's side running board in front of the driver's door. Standard cargo in the car boot was a sack of charcoal. After lighting the fuel you needed a small amount of petrol to get under way and then the gas took over. Most burners provided 35-40 kilometres running, so the sides of the road were dotted with little piles of spent ash which had to be removed before the next fill went in.

The present Centennial Highway was probably opened in 1940 (the year of the Centennial) so our early trips were made over the Paekakariki Hill which was then the main highway north. The Haywards Hill road was straightened out during the 1940s, the old round wound round the hill, making it unpleasant for poor travellers. The course of the road can still be seen in parts to the south of the present road on the long

straight up towards the summit.

From 1944 there was less time spent at Raumati. I was in Dunedin starting my medical course, and travel was difficult to arrange. To get to the ferry in Lyttleton from Dunedin, for instance you had to overcome the restriction of not being able to get a ticket for more than 50 miles on the train. This necessitated getting the Otago Daily Times bus to Oamaru then picking up the train, leaping off to buy new tickets at the brief stops every 50 miles. So a number of holidays were spent in Dunedin and Central Otago. Slowly normal life returned, rationing was relaxed and building materials became available again. New houses began to appear. Early photos show how much space there was.

Now in 2008 the land must be close to saturation point if the aim is to keep a "village" atmosphere in Raumati South. The efforts of the Resident's Association are to be admired as they try to prevent the introduction of the high rise skyscrapers so prevalent on Queensland's Gold Coast, particularly as the plague seems to be taking hold just to the north of us.

For me this period ended with the generous gift by our father, to Richard and me of a quarter acre section at the south end of the 100 legal fee land. Married in 1951, and by 1954 with our first two children, Pat and I, along with Richard who was soon to be married to Molly, agreed to build a small house right on the sea front. Built in 1955, we decided we could afford it if we used it for most of our holidays, foregoing many of the potentially more expensive trips travelling round the country.

It seems ~~to have been~~ a good decision. Pat and I bought Richard's share when he moved to Nelson, but our children, and then our grandchildren and more recently the first great grandchildren continue to use and enjoy it. Tim, who has lived in Australia for 20 years, always finds it an important place to visit on his frequent return trips.

The house needs no description to family members. It was constructed by West Coast Construction and originally clad in weatherboard which was painted, with a corrugated iron roof, also painted. Such were the ravages of strong salt laden gales and the constant repainting we replaced the roof with corrugated asbestos in the late 60s and covered the original board with cedar shingles in the 1990s. Both excellent decisions because the maintenance of these materials has been minimal.

It's got to be recognised though that the house would not be still standing if the Council had not taken steps to shore up the base of the sand dune after the 1976