

FAMOUS HAWKES BAY HIGH COUNTRY STATIONS.

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MUNGAWHARE.

Mungawhare is situated at the foot of the Blowhard range, about 30 miles west of Hastings, on the Inland Patea road that connects Hawkes Bay with the Taihape area. Back in the picturesque days of bullock and horse waggons, stage coaches and swagger men, Mungawhare was one of the best known stations in the Bay.

In those times it took in about 30,000 acres of foothill and range country extending back to the Kaweka tops, and was bordered to the north by the Tutaekuri and Donald rivers, to the east by the Konini and Glenross Roads, and to the south by Glenross Station.

It would seem that the first pakeha occupiers of the Mungawhare country were Messrs J. and R. McDougall, and also of the neighbouring Glenross station, of which in 1872 Mr D.P. Balfour was manager. Mr Balfour's diaries are in the Hawkes Bay Museum. An entry dated 24th December 1875, states 616 sheep were mustered off the McIntosh. The McIntosh is an area of country lying between the Tutaekuri and Donald rivers, which was on Mungawhare, so maybe in those days the two stations were being run as one. Mr Balfour was a keen literary man. The library on old Mungawhare was called, and the 3,000 books it contained, marked "Glenross Library".

About 1889, Mr George Marsden Waterhouse, became the owner of Mungawhare. A few years later the property passed to his son, Mr F.S. Waterhouse. Mr F.S. Waterhouse took Mr William Fitzherbert into partnership, later again Mr Waterhouse bought his partner out and became sole owner of Mungawhare.

Many stories have come my way about the old days on Mungawhare. Here are a few. The second creek to be crossed after leaving Mungawhare on the road over the Blowhard, is known as Bottle Creek. Back in the days when the road first reached Bottle Creek, it was made the trans-shipping point for goods being taken up from Napier, and wool being brought down from the great inland stations on pack-horses, to the 6-horse waggons. One old timer, named Jack, then a boy of 14, did a trip up on one of the waggons, and witnessed what he considered to be the gamest bit of work he'd ever seen.

The waggoners and some shepherds discovered some cases of whiskey, or, as the Irish would say us-kiwbaw, or in their language water of life, among the stores. They opened up the bottles, and all but Jack soon became roaring drunk. Jack did what he could for them. The orgy lasted a day or two; then into their midst came a small man with a riding whip in his hand. "What's going on here?" he enquired. He soon found out, and had the waggons loaded and the shepherds away. The job completed, he turned to Jack and asked where the drink was. There wasn't much left, but what there was went into the creek, bottles and all. Later, a waggoner found one of those bottles, in the creek and still unopened; and that, according to the story, is how Bottle Creek came by its name.

Now here is an extract from a description given by a traveller, of a stage coach journey up the old Tutaekuri river road. He says, "From the top of the Konini cutting we looked down on a depth calculated to make the nervous dizzy, where we saw, awaiting us in the hollow below, a team of fresh horses.

The descent was a feat that made me realise what travelling in those parts meant. The gradient, until we reached the bottom, I was informed, was about 1 in 10, with several sharp turns and bends that took the greatest care to negotiate.

Young Alex Macdonald, son of Mr A. Macdonald owner of

the line and the Kuripapango hotel, was our driver. His cool skill in negotiating at high speed, the winding, steep and narrow road, was one of the most interesting features of the journey; and I consider him to be, without exception, the best whip in New Zealand. I have sat beside nearly every jean in the colony, and during the last 17 years, been over nearly every road, so speak from experience.

On reaching the hollow we get a change of horses, and go on again up the cutting on the far side, and on along a terrace through Waikonini and Mungawhare, and for several miles have this property on either side.

This part of the journey passes through home like downs, all in English grasses, carrying, I am informed, upwards of 20,000 sheep, all in excellent condition; and not withstanding this large number of mouths, it appeared to me the country was understocked.

About one and a half miles past Mungawhare homestead, we came to a prettily situated place called Willowford, where a family named Williams have an accommodation house, stables and blacksmith's shop. A short stop was made for lunch, after which we started up the 4 mile long Blowhard hill, on reaching the top of which one of the most desolate sights burst on to our view, most of the wild looking country on either side, having been stripped completely bare of vegetation by the wind.

After passing through several miles of this sort of country, a descent was made, and we suddenly came on to several hundred acres of well grassed land that had been under crop. This, we learned, had been a swamp, that had been drained by Mr Macdonald with very profitable results, as the standing stacks of oats testified, the value of which was considerable, as the cost of carting from town to Kuripapango, is £4 a ton.

Two miles further on we came to the beautifully situated village of Kuripapango, with its two hotels, one on either side of the river. We stayed at Macdonald's hotel, a two-storeyed building on the far side of the river, and an excellent hotel we found it to be.

During the night I was awakened by a gentle rocking of the house, this, I discovered to be the gentle playful zephyr breeze. Next morning I was informed it was nothing. It often blew in that hollow, to such an extent, as to make it dangerous to leave drays or traps outside without tying all the wheels together, and jamming them against a bank or building.

I was told that a few months earlier a building was being erected, and during the night, before the windows had been put in, the wind blew the building into about a thousand pieces, and most of the roof was found on the Gentle Annie hill, five or six hundred feet above.

Next morning, with young Alex again on the box, we started back for Napier. The road throughout, though in places very ugly, reflects to the credit of Mr C.D. Kennedy, the engineer who laid it off, he having accomplished a lot, with the very limited means at his disposal."

Mrs Ruth Clarkson of Gisborne, who was a Miss Waterhouse, in speaking of the old days at Mungawhare, said that she and her sisters each had their own special horse, and frequently went for rides in the ranges about. Sometimes riding picnics would be arranged. Neighbours from far and wide would come, and an old buggy and pair used for transporting the foodstuffs.

Near the top of the Blowhard is an area of native bush, and above it a strange rock formation, called the Devil's Pulpit. Blowhard Bush was the scene of most of our picnics.

Owing to a mistake at one such picnic, the buggy horses were tethered near some rangiora bushes, with the result that they became intoxicated through eating the leaves.

The seven mile journey home, almost all downhill, was something of a nightmare to the occupants of the buggy, and cause of much hilarity to us riders. The buggy horses wandered from side to side of the road in an erratic manner, stepping over, and shying at non-existent obstacles.

Suddenly, to the consternation of the driver and his companions, they would break into a fast trot, barge into each other, cross their legs, stumble, and almost, but never quite go for a sprawl, recover their feet in a silly looking way and go on again. Their antics, and the ever changing expressions on the faces of the buggy's occupants, had us riders clinging to our saddles in fits of uncontrollable laughter.

Drunken horses, it would seem, should be included in the adage about a kindly spirit looking after babies and drunken men. In any case, to the relief of us all, more especially those in the buggy, all arrived home little the worse for that hair-raising experience.

In those days of horse transport, there were lots of callers at the station. Tennis parties, theatricals, musical evenings and dances were frequently held. Hunts with a dance to follow used to be held at Mungahare, Glenross and other stations. Sometimes we girls would ride 14 or more miles with our dance frocks in valises to attend dances. It was all wonderful fun.

One of the biggest and most enjoyable events in the district was the annual race meeting, where local horses competed. It was held in the beautiful little Woodthorpe basin, across the Tautikuri river at Dartmoor.

On one occasion one of the Miss Waterhouse's, in company with a girl friend, rode up to Ngamatea to visit friends. On their arrival in the vicinity of his hut, near the Te Mangah turnoff, Mat Regan, the roadman, invited the girls in for a cup of tea, an invite they accepted.

Seeing who his guests were, instead of making tea in a billy as per usual, Mat came to light with a teapot and made the tea in it. The pot had a broken spout, and when it came to the pouring, things didn't go so good.

"Arr!" exclaimed Mat. "Bad cess to the wife." "Wife!" exclaimed the girls. "We didn't know you were married, where is she?" "Sure now it's in prison she is," said Mat. "And all on account of breaking that pot, sure and it is that temper she has. She trod on me corn, and I says to her, 'Sure now it's too much weight that you're putting on,' and then what did she do but knock me down; and her trying to be gouging me eye out with the spout of that pot, and sure enough it broke right off and the policeman from Taradale, he was passin', and saw what she was after doing, and arrested her in no time at all, and took her to Napier. And the judge, good man that he is, sentenced her to all of two weeks in jail."

On their arrival at Ngamatea, the girls learn that Mat was reckoned to be one of the best tall story tellers in the Inland and that he had never been married. On their return, just to test his story telling abilities, they asked Mat if his wife was home

again. "She is not," responded Mat, "and all on account of that temper she has. When it was the day for her to be coming out, that head man of the prison, he says to her, "Go home now to your hard working husband, the good man that he is, and be looking after him and not gouging the eyes out of him. And sure what did she get at but knocking him down, and battering the livin' daylights out of him. And other warden men came runnin' up then, an' arrested her all over again. And the Judge, furthermore, good man that he is, sentenced her to two more weeks; where she can't be gouging out me eyes, nor treadin' on me corns, and bad scran to her."

About 1915 Mr Waterhouse sold Mungawhare to Mr James Bell. Mr Bell cut the place in two, and sold the northern portion, which became Waiwhare, to Mr Ensor. Later he sold the other portion to Mr Frank Hildreth, who in turn sold it to Mr Tully, four of whose sons are now farming the property. The Waiwhare portion of old Mungawhare is now being farmed by the three Ward brothers.
