



THE DANISH SOCIETY (INC), AUCKLAND

P.O. Box 12-279, Penrose, Auckland, New Zealand

This material on the history of Leigh came from the late J. C. Wyatt of Leigh.

Sometime during the nineteen seventies my wife Lise Elowsson was permitted to copy the following pages from Mr. Wyatt's library files.

At the time we where almost neighbours to the elderly Wyatt's by having a half share in what was then known as the "Jolly Fisherman" property situated at the bottom of the Leigh cove.

The "Jolly Fisherman" property had been a run as a fishing lodge sometimes from the nineteen thirties and until the early fifties. When purchased by us and our partner it consisted of some derelict buildings situated on two half acre lots the foreshore together with a seven acre paddock with some native bush on the hill overlooking the Leigh Harbour.

In the five year period we where involved in the property we became acquainted with the Wyatt's. Over numerous cups of tea many hours where spent listening to the "old man Wyatt" talk about his family who where among the first settlers of the Leigh area.

We where told about the first settlers and how they had lived under canvas on the flat land at the end of Leigh harbour (the land we at the time where part owner of). The Wyatt family had been having summer picnic on that piece land every year for generations afterwards.

Due to the long association and hard work the Wyatt family had created a strong foundation in the Leigh area. For instance they owned the Leigh sawmill including a considerable area of native forest, the Leigh fisheries and a lot of farmland in the area.

Once while negotiating about some land with J. C. Wyatt we where looking for a survey mark in the overgrown paddock. He exclaimed "It was about here when I last saw it" when asked when that may have been the answer was "around 1947".

Mr. Wyatt and his wife was a delightful and very friendly elderly couple. Our acquaintance with them came to a halt in 1977 when we sold out and lost touch.

Later Lise and I got involved in "Valhalla" and we hope that the following pages will give some pleasure to visitors by reading and get a little more insight in the local history.

Auckland - Sunday, 10 April 2005.

Bjame Elowsson (Valhalla Convenor for The Danish Society, Auckland)

Some Material
on the

History of Leigh

from the papers of
C. S. CLARKE

The Omaha District is 40 miles north of Auckland on the East Coast. It commences at Ti Point at the northern entrance of Whangateau Harbour, it follows the coast past Omaha Harbour to Cape Rodney, the Little Barrier island being 13 miles distant, this forming the N entrance to the Hauraki Gulf. The boundary then passes the Pakiri river and extends to near the Te Arai lakes, it then strikes inland taking in Tamhunga mountain (1200 ft.) it includes part of Big Omaha and Dacre's Claim to its starting point.

The district is of a hilly and broken nature intersected by many gullies. There are some small flats here and there, but of no great extent, but fairly level in the Leigh village. A range of hills starts at Cape Rodney keeping near the coast till it attains 900 feet in altitude, where a trig station once stood, it then branches out, one branch extends to Tamahunga, and the other to Pakiri river. The natural growth was generally mixed bush, rimu, puriri, tawa, traire, rata, riwariwa, manuka, etc. - with an undergrowth of ferns, nikau and supplejacks. Pakiri valley was a Kauri forest, and there were some nice patches of Kauri on the ranges but only odd trees on the lower land. On Ti Point and Point Rodney ranges only manuka scrub grew. The soil is generally of sandstone formation in some parts of clay.

The whole district originally belonged to the chief Te Kiri and family, a branch of the Ngapui tribe, who at one time were numerous, but were nearly wiped out in 1820 by a murderous raid of Hongi a Bay of Islands chief who while in England had been presented with a number of muskets and gun powder by King George IV. To show there had been severe fighting in the olden days rifle pits and deep trenches may be seen near Koroa creek and Dacre's Claim which must have been made over 100 years ago as large pohutokawa trees are growing in some of these pits.

Pipi shells may be seen on the highest hills where natives had retreated for safety.

Omaha harbour is a snug little cove sheltered from the northerly gales, by the Maori point and island, but exposed to the SE winds, the water is deep so that vessels can remain at anchor in safety at any state of the tide. The land around the harbour at one time beautiful bush, pohutokawa trees growing right down to the water's edge, the latter were cut down in the early days for knees of vessels.

The first survey of land for settlement was made by Messrs. Heaphy & Baber in about the year 1858. (Mr. Heaphy afterwards Major Heaphy distinguished himself during the Maori war by carrying a wounded soldier to shelter while under fire, for this brave act he was the first one in NZ to receive the VC medal.) The land immediately round Omaha Harbour was surveyed into acre sections to form the Village of Leigh, the upset price of these sections being £5 per acre. Outside the village, sections of about 20 acres called suburban land the upset price being £1 per acre. Larger sections further distant classed as country land, the upset price being 10/- per acre. The Auckland Provincial Government considered that the Pah was included in the land purchased, and it was also surveyed into village sections and were shown on the map issued, these sections were all taken up at the first sale but the natives disputed this, saying that the Maori creek was the boundary, so this land was given back to them. Many years later the natives said that Goat Island was not included in the purchase this also was given up to them. The name Leigh given to the village is supposed to be named after Revd. Samuel Leigh the first Methodist missionary who came to NZ, he was stationed at Hokianga, and was a friend of Marsden. The first settlers to come to Omaha were from Nova Scotia. Many families left Nova Scotia in the early 50s in search of a more salubrious climate than the one they had left to settle in. On the 1st October 1850 the Margaret left St Anns Nova Scotia with several families accompanied by their Minister (Revd Norman McLeod) bound for Australia and Auckland, she was followed by the "Highland Lass" which left Cape Breton on 17th May 1852, she would have left the previous Jany but was frozen up at that time, she proceeded to Symond's Town South Africa where she stayed 3 weeks on account of sickness on board, she then proceeded to Adelaide, South

Australia coming eventually to Auckland. The names of the other vessels bringing emigrants from Nova Scotia were the "Gertrude", "Spray" which arrived in Auckland in 1857, the "Ellen Lewis" and the "Bredalbane". Most of these families settled at Waipu - some at Whangarei and the following families settled at Omaha, Duncan Matheson and Angus Matheson in 1859, Kenneth McKenzie, Kenneth McKenzie (Red Kenneth), Duncan Kempt, John Kempt, Alexr. Kempt Senr and Jar, Gregor Kempt and Angus Stewart from Prince Edward Island all came to Omaha on 1860.

The late Mrs. Duncan Matheson Senr, then Miss Finlayson, came out in the "Highland Lass", the Matheson and the McKenzie families in the "Spray", and the Kempt families in the "Ellen Lewis".

To encourage settlers to come to Auckland the Provincial Government passed an Act commonly known as "The 40 Acre System" i.e. a free grant of 40 acres of land was given to all adults over 18 years, and 20 acres to children over 5 years. Under this system many hundreds I might say thousands were induced to come, a man with a wife and a few children could acquire a nice little farm, many prosperous special settlements were formed, notably Puhoi, Port Albert and others in the Kaipara and Whangarei, and Waipu, and these at very little expense to the Government as all these settlers had paid their passages out, and the land only cost the Govnt. a few pence per acre. Under this 40 acre system the land at Omaha was settled. Before the land near Goat Island was surveyed, two families squatted on the land, namely Messrs Alec Kempt Senr and Gregor Kempt, one erected a small weather board house near the beach and started a cultivation, the other erected a whare further inland they thought the same law existed here as in America, namely if a person squatted on Govt land before it was surveyed or thrown open for selection, that person had a Preemptive Right to that land by paying the upset price. Mr. Tole was the surveyor and he had his eye on these sections, he and several others besides the Kempts applied for them, so there was a great competition, so they were knocked down to Mr. Tole for 35/s an acre being 25/s above upset price.

So these poor Kempts lost their labour and improvements through ignorance. Alex Kempt Senr afterwards acquired 240 acres on the hill at the upset price, now occupied by Mr Dan Kempt. Gregor

Kempt and some of his family after this lost their lives by drowning in the "William Pope" which will now be recorded.

Loss of the "William Pope"

The topsail Schooner named the "William Pope" anchored off Pakiri to take a load of ^{sawn} timber from Messrs McLiver and McMillan's mill, the timber was rafted out to her, when she was loaded in hold and deck she left on her way to Auckland on the evening of Jan 9th 1861 and she was never heard of afterwards, she could not have foundered being loaded with timber, but may have been blown out to sea. She had 18 persons on board among them were Gregor Kempt, a daughter, and a son in law - Donald and Duncan Kempt sons of Alex Kempt Senr, several Pakiri residents besides the Captain and crew of the vessel. This cast a gloom over the settlement. The beaches were searched for weeks for any bodies that might be cast up, but none were found.

In 1861 McGeorge Porter and family came to settle on one of the suburban sections now owned by the Harper family. Mr. Porter was a compositor by profession and several times went to Auckland to work on the Auckland newspapers to provide necessaries for the family, he was the first one to plant an orchard or make a flower garden, he also introduced water cress into the creeks. The family left the district in 1866 having sold the place to Capt McKenzie his next neighbour for £70.

In 1863 there was an influx of settlers from England, attracted to Auckland by the land grants. Namely Andersons, Kirkbridges, Greenwoods, Monkhouse, Wyatts and myself (C. S. Clarke.)

The Anderson family came in the "Eastfield", they took up their land grants at Omaha 200 acres which they never settled in and eventually sold to Mr W Neeley for £200. Mr. Anderson as the result of music teaching bought several sections in Leigh village at the first sale at £5 per section being then the upset price, they did not settle on this land immediately as Mr. Anderson was carrying on a grocery business at Parnell, but in 1865 the eldest son (Jim) and a younger one Herbert made a start on the land, making a nice garden, living in a tent and afterwards a slab shanty thatched with rushes; the family did not come up until a larger house was built. Soon after the family came Herbert took sick and died, August 24th 1867, aged 14, he was

the first boy buried in the cemetery at the point, 3 infants only had been buried there before. Jim went to Auckland to seek employment as there was no work to be had in the district, he got work at a wine and spirit merchant in Queen St and his work was mostly in an underground cellar where he contracted consumption, he came home and died Nov 3rd 1870 and was the first man buried in the cemetery, aged 25 years, he had been the bread winner of the family and therefore a great loss to the family, he also was much respected by the neighbours.

The Kirkbridge family, from Yorkshire came out in the ship "Portland" they took up their land grants 120 acres on the hill, but as a first residence and to be near the harbour they bought out Mr. Angus Stewart's place for £120 it was a suburban section of about 20 acres, it was all fenced and in grass ring fenced with house of 4 rooms unlined. Mr. Stewart and family removed to Kaiwaka where he had land. The Kirkbride family consisted of a widowed mother, 3 sons, Middlewood, Matthew and Edmund and one daughter Frances who married Captn Picken, the sons cleared most of the 120 acres, sowed it in grass, and built a small 2 roomed house. The family did not remain at Omaha long. Mr. Jas Greenwood bought the top place. Middlewood bought a farm at Mangarie, from being a Lay Reader of the Anglican Church he was ordained Deacon and Priest, and appointed Vicar of Mangarie, two churches, St James' and St Saviours, also Woodside, and he sold his farm and came to live at Onehunga, where he died. Matthew also bought a farm at Mangarie and at a general election for Manakau he was a candidate, beating Sir Maurice O'Rorke who had represented the district for many years and was Speaker of the House, he died during one session of Parliament of paralysis from the bursting of a blood vessel on the brain.

The Greenwood family came from Burnley Lancashire, they came to Auckland in the ship "Blue Jacket" in about the year 1861 the family consisted of Mr & Mrs William Greenwood 3 sons and 3 daughters, also his elder brother John (a widower) the latter soon after arrival went to the Otago diggings where he remained several years, eventually coming to Omaha and settling on 40 acres of land. Mr. W Greenwood leased land on the Lake Road North Shore (now called Devonport) from

Mr. Henry Walton of Whangarei, where he engaged in farming. Having taken up his land grant of 113 acres at Omaha next Mr. Kirkbrides section it was covered with bush the family could not be brought to it until a home was made, so to make a start Mr. G and one of his sons used to come to fall the bush, and when burnt off and in grass, a small house was built. I find in my Diary 1866 August 30th the "Cutter Stag" came into harbour from Auckland bringing Mr. Greenwood and two sons (Jim and Willie) also 12 head of cattle to be put on to this clearing. Mr. Greenwood and family did not come to reside until a year after this.

With the help of his sons he soon had all the section in grass and fenced and stocked with sheep and cattle.

Mr. Greenwood took a leading part in public affairs, in getting a weekly steamer service, a School, a Road Board, and the Annual Show. He was Omaha's first representative on the Rodney County Council, and held the position for several years.

Mrs. Greenwood died on the 5th December 1891, and was buried in Leigh Cemetery on the 7th. I conducted the service at the grave. Mr. Greenwood's youngest daughter Sarah having married William Wright he thus lost his housekeeper, so he went to live with daughter Martha (Mr. Arthur Wright of Kamo Road, Whangarei) where he died on the 2nd of May 1906, the body was brought to Leigh in a launch and buried in the cemetery alongside his wife - I read the service at the grave.

The Wyatt family came from Portsmouth England in the ship "Queen of Beauty" arriving in Auckland on the 9th August 1863. The family consisted of Mr and Mrs John Wyatt Senr, 3 sons - John, Thomas and Joseph, and one daughter Mary Anne the eldest son John was married and a little son was born just before they left England, the present J. C. Wyatt (Charlie). The daughter (Mary Anne) was married to Charles Septimus Clarke (a fellow passenger) in 1869.

Mr. Wyatt bought 4 sections in Leigh Village @ £3 an acre - and the family came to settle on it in Nov 1863. He took up his land grant 120 acres on the hill, a clearing was made but the family never settled on it.

The Monkhouse family came from Manchester England in the ship "War Spirit" in the latter part of 1863. Mr. T. S. Monkhouse, Mrs

Monkhouse and 2 or 3 children and an old man servant Joe Battersby. Mr. M. took up his land grant on the hill next Kempts 80 acres, but settled on a nice flat near the beach where he erected a house and made a nice vegetable garden. Being a Scenic Artist he used to go to Auckland for employment, but not finding much in his line, after a few years residence the family returned to England leaving Joe Battersby in possession, the old man maintained himself by selling tea tree firewood and articles of furniture and eventually died in the Auckland Hospital.

Charles Septimus Clarke. I was born at New Parks, Leicester, England, on the 15th August 1843, being the 7th son and the youngest and 12th child of John and Sarah Clarke ne Coltman. I lost both my parents when I was 3 years old. I was educated at the Collegiate School Leicester 5 years and 1 year in France with Monsr Lebon a Professor of Language - while there I learned the French language, at Neuville N Dieppe.

On returning to England in 1860 - In December of that year I went as a cadet on a 400 acre farm of Mr. Edward Wortley a noted breeder of Shorthorn Cattle and Shropshire Down Sheep where I spent a very happy two years. Leaving in December 1862. On reading a letter from an Albertland settler to a friend in Leicester I got the idea of coming to NZ so I said good bye to 4 brothers and 5 sisters and embarked on board the ship "Queen of Beauty" Captain Chapman on the 5th May 1863. The Wyatt family were fellow passengers. This was during the time of the American Civil War. One afternoon we sighted a vessel on the horizon on our port bow. After tea in the saloon we were playing cards, we heard three shots fired across our bow, so the captain gave the order to heave too, so we ran on deck and saw a boat approaching us, so the sailors let down a ladder and an officer climbed on board, he was the Second Lieutenant of the notorious Confederate cruiser "Alabama" lying wait to sink Federal Merchant Vessels. The officer asked to see our ships papers, so he was asked down in the saloon, and he satisfied himself that we were a British ship. The Captain ordered the Steward to put grap on the table, so we sat round the table chatting. The Officer told us they had not been in any port for several months, so could we give

him any newspapers, so we went to our cabins and gave him what we had, after shaking hands with all of us he went back to his ship. Note. The "Alabama" was sunk by the Federal vessel "Merrimack" after a desperate fight in harbour. The "Queen of Beauty" arrived in Auckland harbour on Sunday August 15th. Mr. Wyatt and I visited the Land Office and heard that a block of land in the Omaha District was being surveyed into sections and would be open for selection early next year (1864), we took a trip to Omaha and being favourably impressed with the district we decided to wait until the land was available. The price of the sections in Leigh village had been reduced to £3 per acre - so Mr W and I bought several sections - we could have had the sections that the Hotel and Store now stand on, also Albert Wyatts land, but there was not a stick of timber on these, so we chose the sections the other side of the harbour which were covered with bush suitable for building, fencing and firewood. We came to make a start in the latter part of October 1863, the cutter "Flora McDonald" Capt D H McKenzie (Wee Donald) put us and our belongings on the way to Waipu. We camped on the flat where Mr Gregor now owns, Mr W had bought a large marquee from England which we erected on his land on the hill, he then went to Auckland and brought up the family, furniture and goods, it was a job getting all these things up that steep hill especially 4 chests of drawers and heavy boxes.

I started to cut down the bush on my section sleeping at night in Mr Wyatt's marquee until I had put up a shanty. Later on I built a small house of split slabs, with a small window each side of the door, a large open chimney and 2 bunks at one end. I made a garden, grew maize, pumpkins and all kinds of vegetables. On 27th April 1866 I purchased the 80 acre farm of Kenneth McKenzie (Red Kenneth) as a going concern for the sum of £240 cash. There was on the property a 2 roomed house and cow shed, a garden and several pieces ploughed. It included a pair of working bullocks, yokes, bows and chains, plough, harrows and sleighs, several cows and young stock, and a horse which was the first introduced into the district.

In 1868 I purchased 3, 40 acre sections joining my first purchase for £120 cash, these sections belonged to Mrs Margaret

Matheson, Miss Hannah Matheson and Neil Matheson. On Campbell's section a small clearing had been made, and on this clearing I built a good sized house, the timber was pit sawn on the place. George Hanby, a settler at Pakiri had the contract of building the house and erecting a double brick chimney for the sum of £50. The first Horticultural Show was held in one of the bedrooms before the house was finished, Mr T. W. Knaggs was Secretary and Mr John Brown of Te Arai acted as Judge, his son Henry then a boy of about 14 years of age accompanied him. The second Show was also held at my house, Mr C. Matheson being Judge, but as the school was built in 1871 the Show was held there that year, and continued to be held there until the Public Hall in Leigh was built.

The early settlers had a very hard time as there was no regular trader here, no store, no school and no Post Office. Our first Post Office was at Mr Dyer's at Pakiri 7 miles distant. Andersons, Kirkbrides, Wyatts and I took it in turns to go for the mail once a week. Mr Dyer was very hospitable when one of us arrived, he told the cook to get us a cup of tea and a snack which was very acceptable after that walk. After a few years a Post Office was opened at Mr W Greenwood's house on the hill, eventually it was closed and a P.O. was opened in Mr Miller's store at Leigh.

Flour in those early days was very dear, 32/6 per 100 lb bag so several of the settlers commenced to grow wheat. After the bush was burned off and logged up, the ground was brokwn up with strong hoes and wheat sown on the surface and chipped in, being new ground good crops were obtained - it was cut with a reap hook, winnowed in the wind, and ground into flour in a steel mill turned by hand and rubbed through a sieve before a loaf could be made, the bread was very wholesome but like the bread made from silk dressed flour, Mr. Wyatt being of an ingenious nature made a windmill to turn the steel mill, the mill house was mounted on 4 wooden wheels running on a smooth circular track, so that the sails could be turned to face the wind. This was an object of interest as many young people came to gaze at it with wonder - not having seen anything like it before.

Pigeons were very plentiful in those early days as a lot of the bush was then standing, they were feeding on the tawn and

trairie berries, and it was no uncommon thing for a person to go out and shoot 20 in a morning, they were very plump and fat, and the fat had often to do for butter on our bread. Mr Wyatt had a large seine fishing net which was put across the creek at high water and large quantities of small fish were caught, so that the neighbours were told to come and help themselves. The Natives brought round fish for sale 4 large snapper for 1/-. While on the subject of fish I will relate an incident, Mr Wyatt, his son Joe and I were on a boat fishing at the Maori Point, the old Maori chief Kiri came in a boat to us in a great rage saying "you no fish here, from here to Takatu Point is the Maori fishing ground this was reserved to them by the Treaty of Waitangi. Very good fish the other side of Point Rodney." This law was in operation for some time but after Kiri's death we fished anywhere. When Tenetohi and Rahui first married they lived in a small weather-boarded house on the flat where Mr Duncan Matheson now lives, their first child (a boy) died so the house and contents were brought out and burned, or broken up, and the house deserted, the occupiers going up to live at the Pa early in 1864 with Kiri and his wife. Their second child Rebecca was born at the Pa early in 1864 and brought to show Mrs Wyatt who dressed it in long clothes English fashion. In 1864 this tapu house was bought by Messrs McQuarrie and McInnes and was floated round on launch ways and erected on the flat where they were building a vessel ("The Banshee").

When we came to Omaha in 1863 (it was called Little Omaha at that time) now called Leigh, there lived at the Pa Kiri and his wife, Tenetohi and Rahui, Miriam and several hangers on. On rising ground where some willow trees now grow there lived 3 brothers and their wives namely Tiki, Hava and Victoria where they had some cultivations, Hava was drowned by the upsetting of a boat, Tiki went out of his mind and got burned to death in his whare and Victoria left. The Pa at that time from the point right up to Kiri's whare was under cultivation, growing maize, potatoes, kumeras, pumpkins, melons, gourds for making calabashes, and peach trees, the wimen folk doing a good share of the work.

The McKenzie Family

Kenneth KcKenzie (Red Kenneth) came from Nova Scotia, and with

his family settled at Omaha on 80 acres of land in 1860, he had the first pair of bullocks which he used for hauling out firewood, the Kauri planking for the first vessel built on the flat "Banshee" was sawn on his land he hauling it out. He sold the farm to me in 1866 and went to live in Waipu.

Captn Kenneth McKenzie cousin of the above, came from the same place and settled in the district at the same time. He first chartered an old schooner named the "Industry" belonging to the chief Kiri, for taking firewood & to Auckland, his boat was the chief one we depended on for going Auckland or getting goods up. Capt Seymour of the cutter "Alarm" who traded to Mangawai would frequently call in to put us and our goods ashore. In 1864 McKenzie purchased 2½ acres in the Leigh village at £3 an acre now occupied by the Cumberland Hotel. He went with his vessel to a saw mill on the Colville Peninsula and picked out house timber for 7/- per 100 ft this he brought to Leigh and the house was erected by Colin McDonald of Waipu, McKenzie afterwards owned and commanded the schooners "Isabella" and "Helen", going into partnership with Hugh Ferguarson they engaged in the Island trade. He had a schooner built on the beach beyond Goat Island named the "Borealis" in which he traded to the Islands. The family removed to Auckland in the 1870's. When in Sydney once there was no room for the "Borealis" alongside the wharf, she berthed outside another vessel, one night when returning to his vessel, he had to cross the one at the wharf, one of her hatches was off being covered with a tarpaulin, McKenzie was shortsighted, he stepped on this and fell into the hold and broke his back, he was taken to the hospital where he died.

The Matheson Family

The brothers Duncan and Angus Matheson came to Omaha in 1859 settled and built houses each side of the Koeroa creek. In partnership they commenced ship building on the beach just below their houses. I came to Omaha in October 1863 and they had a schooner on the stocks, her ribs or frames were all up and the brothers were away at Pakiri pit sawing the planks, she was launched in 1864 and christened by Miss Lizzie Anderson and named the "Saucy Lass" she was built to the order of Captn D. H. McKenzie, father of the present Chairman of the Auckland Harbour Board.

Afterwards Capt Duncan on his own account he built the following schooners at the same shipyard, "Coquette", "Rhine" & "Three Cheers" when the latter was being rigged in Auckland something slipped or gave way and a yard fell from a height crushing Capt Duncan to the deck he was taken to the hospital but he was so smashed or crushed that the Drs could do nothing but inject morphia to deaden the pain, we were living in Auckland at the time and he was boarding with us, and when he did not come home for dinner that night we were shocked when we heard of the terrible accident, he died in hospital and was buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery, Symonds Street.

Captn Angus Matheson came to Omaha in 1859, his eldest son Alexr was born at sea on the voyage from Nova Scotia he was a highly educated man, understood navigation, was a great reader, and was one of the first subscribers to the Omaha Public Library in 1870. He chartered a large schooner named the "Herald" and ran to the Bay of Islands bringing coal from the Kawa Kawa coal mine which had just been opened, afterwards he commanded a vessel running to the South Island. In 1879 he built a Cutter for Tenetohi named the "Rangatira" she won several prizes at the Auckland regatta, she was ultimately wrecked at The Great Barrier Island, Tenetohi would have lost his life, but his wife Rahui dived for him and brought him ashore. Captn Angus died at his residence, Omaha and was buried in the Leigh Cemetery. He was highly respected.

Dacre's Claim

This block of land of 2,000 acres was purchased by Capt Dacre from the Maoris in the early 1860's he was the grandfather of the celebrated cricketer C. C. Dacre who made a name for himself in England & This block of land has a large frontage to Whangateau harbour one of the survey pegs was near the Koeroa creek, one line started from here through the ti tree scrub towards Ti Point taking in Fig Point and a little flat next to it (The flat and point are now owned by Mr H Ashton). The other line near Koeroa creek ran through the bush to the top of the range, following the range till near Tamahunga and then descending the range to meet Whangateau harbour, the boundary can now be seen, being a fence near Mr J.B. Birdsall's entrance gate, this would include the site of Mr. Whitaker'

and Mr. Darroch's homesteads. There were some nice little snug bays and flats near the salt water, but the land at the back was hilly and broken. Nearly the whole of it was covered with bush, ti tree fit for firewood, puriri, rimu and a few scattered Kauris. This surveyed line from Koeroa to Ti Point had not long been cut when I came to the district in 1863, we used it as a road to Ti Point, and as no Maoris were living there at that time the fruit was very acceptable to us new settlers.

In 1864 or 1865 this block was leased by Messrs Kirk & Blandford for getting out timber. The flat we call Lew Meiklejohn's was their camping ground, whares were put up, a team of bullocks purchased, and bushmen employed, firewood, rails and posts were cut and shipped away. After a while the Maoris disputed Dacres right to the land, they said the vendor was not the real owner of the land, so the Maoris drove Kirk and the men off. I might here state that Mr Kirk was appointed Professor of Botony in the Otago University, and his son who was then a boy of about 16 and was working in the bush with the men, was afterwards known as Mr. T. W. Kirk Government Biologist in the Agricultural Department and used to write the "Leaflets" for Farmers. Capt Dacre appealed to the Govt to intervene, but it was at the time of the Maori war, the northern natives were friendly and the Govt did not want any disturbances in the North, so they told Capt Dacre to select crown lands of equal extent or value. After the Kirks were driven off the Natives commenced to sell bushes/sic/ to different people, one to Wm Young Sen the place afterwards known as Young's Creek, another piece to Coxhead known afterwards as Coxheads Creek, another piece to Campbell Bros of Waipu, the hill where Tom Ashtons homestead is, a small bush to a Portuguese named Frank Gomez. A negro named Black Peter with a Maori wife and family squatted on the flat where Harry Ashton's orchard now is. A native named Mo Klark enclosed the flat now the Domain, Willie Smith ploughed it up for him and nearly the whole was in cultivation, the Maori Hall and a cottage built. A flagstaff erected and the Howhow flag flown. This was a peculiar and repulsive religion of the Maoris. When the most accessible timber had been cut out the occupants left and the Claim was almost deserted.

In 1865 three young men named McCullum built a schooner which

was named "Cora" in the bay next Fig Tree Point, she made her trip to Auckland on 2nd April 1866 loaded with firewood. About this time the Chief Tawhiti who formerly lived at Mangatawhiri (now Jim Young's) came to live at Dacres on the flat now known as Lew Meiklejohns, a whare was first put up and afterwards a small weatherboard house. He died there and the place was deserted for a long time.

In 1886 Mr Ballance was then Prime Minister, there was a good deal of unemployment at that time and it was thought the settling of these people on small sections in village Settlements would be a cure and Dacre's Claim was thought one of the places suitable for that purpose, so Mr H. Vickerman, Surveyor, was sent to survey the block into 50 acre sections and a Mr Lundius was appointed his assistant. Ti Point was not a part of the Claim but being unoccupied it was also surveyed into sections, and I don't think the Natives got any compensation. The land was valued at £1 an acre the occupant could pay cash or get a 99 year lease. All the sections were taken up, £20 was granted towards building a house, and an advance for clearing, and a certain number of orchard trees given. After a while some of the settlers complained that the sections were not equal value as others, so a revaluation was made and some of the sections were reduced to 10/- an acre.

When the block was thrown open for settlement a road was surveyed round Whangateau harbour so as to get an outlet to Leigh and Big Omaha this road was let in several sections, a man named Brunton of the Wade, now known as Silverdale had the section now known by his name Brunton's Cutting. Joe Vipand of Matakana had the contract from Jim Dunnings gate to the bridge below Darrock's. The total cost of the road was only £1200. The Government and the Rodney County Council contributing £600 each. I do not know the length of the road, but there are over 25 chains of fillings which must have taken many thousands yards of earth and allowance for subsidence. These fillings in were faced with large stones on the outside, the large trestle bridge over Birdsalls and Youngs creeks, and 4 smaller bridges, and the huge side cuttings. Mr. Joe Vipand who had one contract says he only made 5/- a day wages. This road was a great convenience to the Leigh settlers, as before this was made, the only outlet they had

was to climb the range (900 ft) follow it along the top of Dacres claim and come down a spur at the back of where Mr Schollums homestead is. Jan 19th 1889 the first vehicle (a sulky) was driven by Mr. Legge, a Traveller from Warkworth on this road to Leigh, and soon after a Post Office was opened in Mr Millers store. Before this the Post Office was at Mr Greenwoods on the hill. When the Claim was surveyed sites were reserved for a Cemetery, a Domain (15 acres) a Public Hall and School.

Soon after the arrival of the village settlers Mr Brookman who lived in Young's creek was asked to conduct services in the Maori hall these were held every Sunday morning and were well attended 10 from Birdsalls, 10 from Ashtons, 3 from Hadwicks, 3 from Brookmans, and a Mr Hall, J. C. Wyatt, A Haskell and I rode over to it, and Mr Walter (Teacher at Leigh) and 1 or 2 of his boys walked over.

1888 October 19th there was an entertainment in the Maori hall in the evening to raise funds to purchase a harmonium for the Anglican services conducted by Mr. Brookman. With the proceeds of this entertainment and subscriptions a harmonium has been purchased for £5 it having previously been used in Mangere church. It was played by Miss Emma Ashton which greatly improved the services. Mr & Mrs Brookman and their son Willie left the district in 1890 to return to England, they left Leigh in the "Rose Casey" for Auckland on 15th Jan 1890 - Sunday Jan 26 Mr Sadler commenced to hold services in the Maori hall, which were continued every Sunday, when he was absent I took the service.

1892 26th October. The steamer "Rose Casey" which has been running to Leigh for a number of years called into Whangateau to see if she could pick up a trade there, there was on board besides Capt Bazeley, Capt McGregor and Capt Worsp. Soon after this wharves were erected at Ti Point and near Mr Meiklejohns old ship yard.

1902 September 17th. A new Public Hall was built on the Domain to replace the old Maori hall which had been removed, and the new hall was opened on the above date, an excellent tea was provided at 5 pm followed by a concert of local talent of which I was chairman, followed by a dance and supper. The sum of £15. 15. 0 was taken at the door for admission which represented from 170 to 180 at 2/-. Revd F. Latter the newly appointed Anglican Missionary was present and introduced.

1863 July 1st: A large cutter named the "Glimpse" came into this harbour (Omaha) early this morning, she left Auckland bound for Whangarei yesterday, she got as far as the Hen & Chickens where she met a strong head wind, so she came in here for shelter. She has on board about 70 Government Immigrants which are to be employed on the settlers farms at Whangarei, they have only recently arrived in the Colony from Glasgow in the ship "Resolute" most of them are Scotch people, there are 16 women and several children among them, they are all stowed away in the hold of the cutter with their luggage, besides these immigrants there are four guwdiggers in the fokesail, and 6 passengers in the cabin, among them being a French gentleman a Monsieur Caffler who keeps the Whangarei Hotel. A great many of the immigrants came ashore today, 3 of the men had dinner here, and in the afternoon 13 men and women came here to look at my shanty. In the evening the "Glimpse" went out of the harbour again to try to get to Whangarei again, but again experienced the same head wind and had to return here again.

July 2nd: A showery day, many of the immigrants came ashore, they lighted fires to keep themselves warm. Six of them 3 men and 3 women were here for dinner. They told me they were so crowded in the hold so the single men had to sleep on deck, not very nice this cold showery weather. Besides the "Glimpse" there are 4 other vessels sheltering here the cutter "Henry Havelock" with immigrants aboard, the schooners "Dot" owned by Mr Dyer of Pakiri "Industry" and "Isabella". The number of persons on these 3 vessels was 150. All these vessels went out this evening, the 2 cutters to Whangarei, the "Dot" to load shingles at Pakiri, the "Industry" and "Isabella" to Big Omaha to load firewood.

Records of events in the early days in Omaha District

The first vessel built at Leigh

1863 Messrs Hector McQuarrie and Roderick McGuinnis came up to build a top-sail Schooner at the flat at the head of Leigh harbour at the end of 1863.

Active work was not commenced until the beginning 1864.

She was launched on Thursday 14th February 1865 and was christened

by Miss McKenzie of Waipu "The Banshee". The first road was cut through the bush from McQuarrie's flat to Solomans creek Pakiri in 1865. March 1865 finished 23rd July 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles. The bush was felled half a chain wide and cleared and stumped 16 ft wide Mr. Wilson of Warkworth was the contractor, Tom Wyatt and Alec Kempt were working on the road and did not get all the wages that was coming to them. 1865 25th August. A Cutter clincker built called the "Elfin Queen" came into Leigh harbour for shelter, there were three men on board the Captains name was Dickson, the name of one of the young men was Archer, the name of the other not known, she was bound for the Hokitika diggings which had just broken out having heard that provisions were a fabulous price there, these young men had loaded the cutter with flour and potatoes expecting to make a good profit out of the cargo, the wind proving unfavourable for proceeding on their voyage round the North Cape they were compelled to remain in harbour for many days, so to help pass the time they used to go up to Mr Wyatt's house on the hill to spend the evenings where they were made welcome, they were jolly fellows could sing a song and tell a good yarn, some of the young Wyatts would have liked to have gone with them, but not being room on the boat, these young men promised to write when they had reached their destination and report on the prospects, when the weather proved favourable the cutter went out, but she was never heard of again, she never reached her destination, a few months later her stern was carried by the tide into the Manukau harbour, on which was carved "Elfin Queen", strange to say Captain Dickson's wife was living at Onehunga, it was supposed that meeting tempestuous weather on the west coast, she endeavoured to get into Manukau harbour and got on the rocks.

1865 The latter part of this year Hector McQuarrie came up to build a large vessel for Mr Quartier a Wine and Spirit Merchant of Queen St Auckland, the largest vessel before this time was built by Mr Henry Nichol at Mechanics bay in 1862 for Messrs Henderson & Macfarlane of the Circular Saw Line, she was barque rigged and named The "Novelty" she traded between Auckland and Sydney, but the vessel that McQuarrie built although only brig rigged was of greater tonnage, the pohutokawa for ribs were got round the coast and the sawn timber was obtained

from Mercury bay, and brought here principally by the cutter "Stag" Capt Charlie Moller. The building of this vessel gave employment to a good many hands and the flat was a hive of industry.

1866 May 15th. Alec McKenzie and Miss Catherine Kempt went to Auckland in Capt McKenzie's yacht "Ida Zeigler" to get married.

1866 17th April. The first horse owned by a settler at Omaha was imported Red Kenneth McKenzie, from Auckland and brought here by the cutter "Stag".

1866 27th April. I purchased the farm of 80 acres, with stock and implements of Red Kenneth McKenzie for £260 cash and paid him in Mr Henry Hill's (Solicitors) office, so that this house came into my possession.

1866 August 30th. The cutter "Stag" arrived in harbour from Auckland bringing Mr Greenwood and his two sons and 12 head of cattle for Mr G. Hector McQuarrie also came by her bringing his bride formerly Miss McLeod. Heard that Capt McKenzie bought Porters (?) place for £70.

1866 June 4th. Revd R McKinney (Presbyterian) of Warkworth held his first service in this district at Capt McKenzie's house in the evening, there was a large congregation.

1866 April 2nd. The schooner "Cora" built by three young men at Ti Point Big Omaha harbour made her first trip to Auckland loaded with firewood.

1867 Feb 22nd. The vessel that McQuarrie is building was launched and was christened the "Flying Cloud", it was a red letter day for Omaha, settlers from all round came to witness the event, and were hospitably entertained. Capt Frank (a Frenchman) immediately took command and superintended the rigging of the vessel.

1867 March 2nd. Bishop Augustus George Selwin held his first and only service in Omaha at Mrs Kirkbrides house in evening.

1867 March 8th. Revd David Bruce (Presbyterian) of St Andrews Auckland held service in Capt McKenzie's house in the evening.

1867 March 17th Sunday. The Brig "Flying Cloud" left this morning on her first trip to Auckland, a free passage had been offered, and 30 persons availed themselves so that the settlement was nearly deserted.

Revd J. S. Hudson (Methodist) of Warkworth held service in Mrs Kirk-
bride's house in the evening, he was accompanied by Mr Alex Meikle-
john (Sandy) the congregation was very small on account of so many
leaving in the "Flying Cloud". After the "Flying Cloud" arrived in
Auckland her owner Mr Quartier decided that her first trip should be
to San Francisco as that State was being boomed as a favourite place
for emigration. Times were very bad in Auckland, the Maori war
was just ended causing great depression and the Thames gold rush had
not arrived, wages were low, and employment scarce, the Government
opened soup Kitchens to Alleviate want, many families lived in tents
pitched on vacant allotments to save rent. All agricultural produce
was a low price, and fat sheep were boiled down for the tallow and
legs of mutton could be bought for 1/- each. Many who had lost faith
in New Zealand and had any little property either house or farms,
sold at a ruinous sacrifice to pay their passage to California, the
hold of the "Flying Cloud" was fitted with cabins for the use of
passengers, and there were as many applications for passages as there
was room for - the vessel lying out in the stream, provisioned and
ready to sail, and the passengers went on board with belongings,
but at the last moment Quartier's creditors put a baliff on board
to stop the vessel leaving as perhaps they would not see or hear
anything of the vessel again, the passengers waited anxiously day
after day hoping that some arrangement might be made so as the vessel
might proceed on her voyage, one night the Captain was caught trying
to cut the anchor chain, so as to sail and be off - he was arrested
and put in Mt Eden Jail, and strict watch was kept, the passengers
remained on board week after week until all the provisions that were
put on board for the voyage had been consumed and as no more were
forthcoming, they had to leave the vessel very downhearted. I never
heard that they got their passage money refunded or any compensation.
The vessel was ultimately allowed to proceed to Sydney where she was
sold, Tom Anderson went with her as ships carpenter.
1867 May, date not known - the first steamer to come into this harbour
was the "Enterprise No 2" Captain Butt - she was on her way to
Whangarei, she called in here to land Mr Wm Greenwood, his son Joe,
Captn McKenzie and myself, the night was dark and Capt Butt had not

been in before so Captn McKenzie piloted him in. After this we made arrangements for this steamer to land passengers here on her way to Whangarei, we erected a flagstaff at the cemetery point and hoisted a flag in day time and a lantern at night when we wanted the steamer to call in on her way to Auckland. In August of the same year the "Enterprise" discontinued running to Whangarei, gold had been discovered at the Thames and there was a rush to the diggings from all parts of New Zealand, every steamer available was put on the trade taking passengers, goods and building materials down, so the "Enterprise" found a more profitable trade, she would take nearly 100 passengers down every day at 10/- per head.

COLOPHON

The previous pages have been copied from a couple of manuscripts of C S Clarke. Both manuscripts were written on sheets of quarto writing pad. The sheets have been well fingered, but they are in good condition and the writing quite legible. Some of this material was published in a Warkworth paper a few years ago.

I have attempted to copy the work as it appeared in manuscript reproducing its spelling and punctuation, except for a few obvious slips of the pen, which have been rectified.

Alvin Smith

12 February 1959