

Tolaga Bay Wharf

Tolaga Bay is both a bay and a small town on the East Coast of the North Island. It was named by Lt. James Cook in 1769. Here he took on board fresh water, cut wood, fish and kumara.

The region around the bay is rugged and remote, and for many years the only access to the town was by boat. Because the bay is shallow, a long wharf was built in the 1920s to accommodate visiting vessels. The last cargo ship to use the wharf loaded a cargo of maize in 1967.

A drive around East Cape reveals three massive wharves quite close together; Tolaga, Tokomaru and Hick's Bay. Yet before modern sealed roads, road transport was impractical, and the huge wharves were vital lifelines. Out went the meat, wool and livestock and in came cased petrol, kegs of beer and general merchandise.

Previously farmers erected a small wharf in the mouth of the Uawa River to load cargo into lighters servicing ships anchored in the bay. By the end of the First World War, when moves to establish a freezing works, a Marine Engineer, Cyrus Williams drew plans for a 100 metre wharf connected to the shore by a 500 metre jetty.

Work started in January 1926. In Decem-

ber 1929 trade was loaded direct from Tolaga Bay. In 1936, 133 ships worked the port. In the 1930s there was also a thriving flax trade. The Tolaga Bay Co-operative Dairy Company was established in 1912 and a butter factory was built nearby. At its peak in the 1930s the factory had over 120 suppliers.

After the second World War only coasters called at Tolaga, with the last call in 1967. Now only pedestrians use the wharf, although they do it in such numbers that it has become one of the area's biggest attractions.

In 1999 locals formed the Tolaga Bay, 'Save the Wharf Charitable Trust', to preserve the wharf.

In 2018 heavy rains washed huge amounts of discarded forestry timber/slash down the Uawa River, which choked up the estuary, covered the beach, and caused extensive damage to farms and houses.

No longer is one of our favourite holiday beaches clean and inviting.

Visiting these historic wharves on an East Coast trip with friends, has been an enjoyable experience. We can only marvel at what living in these areas must have been like years ago. R H Excerpts from: *Tolaga Bay Wharf. N Z History.*



The view from Tolaga Bay Wharf showing the 'slash' piled on the beach.

Coach House Chronicle

Volume 11
Issue 18

December
2018

in association with

Feilding & Districts Community Archive

A collection of interesting items for friends and supporters of 'The Coach House'

War Relief and Patriotic Society

The above Society raised a large amount of money to assure comfort and relief for the people serving overseas in the forces; it provided satisfactorily for their dependents at home; it supported those wounded or suffering from ill health or mental health disorders caused by war service.

The Manawatu War Relief and Patriotic Society, of which Feilding was a subsidiary, raised funds to support people from the district serving in the forces. Every lawful means of raising money was called into play. Communities held copper trails, concerts, stalls, drama evenings and dances, to name a few occasions.

As Recruits left Feilding the Society arranged a send-off for them. Returning soldiers had a lunch provided for them on the station platform, followed by smaller community welcomes.

The men in the training camps at Rangiotu and Awapuni ran short of vegetables, and the Society asked farmers and townspeople for donations of cabbages, lettuce, carrots, parsnips, swedes and turnips. 480 plum puddings were made by ladies of the district and forwarded to Rangiotu camp. Five or six local patriotic citizens representing employers, workers and returned soldiers were asked to form a committee to assist returning soldiers with repatriation.





New Zealand Women fund raising towards their First World War efforts

There were plenty of positions offered for soldiers, including work in various trades, farm and dairy work and clerkships. Regimental funds were raised for forces in Egypt; a gratuity was paid to War Nurses and there was a Trench Comfort Fund providing cigarettes, tobacco and other welcome necessities for soldiers. Districts arranged welcome home parties for returning soldiers. Congratulatory telegrams were sent to soldiers who gained military awards for service. Citizens sub-

scribed to the purchase of a property for returned soldiers suffering from mental disorders. Money was donated to the Red Cross Society and Soldiers' Clubs. Regularly, donations were acknowledged in the newspaper. Our communities, led by wives, families and men at home, contributed an immeasurable amount of time, comfort and skills which drew districts together, in the support of those at war. R H

Feeding Stingrays.

Recently we traveled round the East Coast, and about 10 minutes north of Gisborne at Tatapouri Bay we could see a group of people standing in the surf in a line, all looking down into the water. Clad in chest high waders, holding onto long poles, I wondered what they could be doing. A tourism activity obviously enjoyed by many has been introduced here. With the long pole to use for balance, people head out over the shallow, rocky surface onto the reef at low tide and interact with stingrays. They come close and visitors can hand feed them. Sometimes they nestle on your feet, giving you a nudge if you don't pat them as well. While on the reef you may also see kingfish, trevally, kaha

wai, crayfish, octopus and other reef dwellers. Guides lead the group and are very knowledgeable, friendly and ready to answer questions. Visitors comments were: 'Awesome. Such an amazing experience. Easy to feed and pat. Rate this as a top 'Must Do', in New Zealand. Beautiful creatures. A great experience for all ages.' I had not witnessed this before. RH



They Used Their Whips to Keep the Sharks Away.

Until the 1940s the main access for many farms and settlements on the East Coast of the North Island was by small steamer. There were a few wharves, but many settlements were served by surf boats going to and from the steamers anchored off shore. These surf boats were originally powered by oar, but replaced by petrol engine boats at the turn of the century. They were capable of carrying two and a half tons. Many of the settlers lived in isolated districts served only by primitive tracks and their wool had to be carried by trains of packhorses to the surf boats landing points, returning laden with supplies the boats brought for the settlers. Care had to be taken to prevent damage to the wool by salt water, as well as in the handling of the bulky and weighty packages of machinery or other goods of half a ton or more. The package would be lowered by the ship's winches on to stout beams placed across the surfboat, from which it would be man-handled on to the beach. Sometimes two surfboats lashed together were used to land the more cumbersome packages. Timber for building homesteads was made up into rafts and towed by the surfboats into the breakers which washed it ashore, where the settler and his men stood to secure it. After every ram fair at the selling centres, there were stud rams to be delivered to station holders. The ships would leave Napier with full loads of stud stock in crates to be landed by surfboat at various coastal places. The handling of horses and cattle carried in horse boxes

was more difficult. In favourable weather surfing work went on from daylight to dark. The ship's shrill whistle warned those on shore to be ready. Working conditions varied at the seventy-six landing places. At some landings settlers provided a wagon drawn by horses or bullock teams which entered the sea to enable the surfboat to secure alongside while the cargo was being transhipped. Bullocks were preferable to horses for this work as they were more placid in temperament and took to the water more readily. Later horses were used as it became difficult to find 'bullockies'. A son of the owner of Flat Point station, north of Cape Palliser related that when shipping wool in the surf sharks sometimes appeared near the wagon alongside the surfboat. To scare them off from attacking the bullock team, he thrashed the water with his stockwhip. At other places there were small jetties for the surfboats to go alongside and holding sheds in which inward and outward cargoes could be stored until a settler or ship was ready for delivery. The improvements to roads, rail and motor transport in the 1930s and 40s led to the demise of the service, though rural travel could still be difficult. Even in the 1960s one farm still had to get all its supplies and ship out its stock by flying fox over the gorge of the Mohaka River. Life wasn't easy. RH Excerpts from: *Bibliography, 'Richardsons of Napier', by S D Waters, 1959*

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