

## **Recollections by Stephanie Allison about the Abbott Family of Mahurangi.**

Here is some info about our family's time at Mahurangi Heads.

In 1981 my husband Tim and I decided to move from Warkworth out to Mahurangi Heads. We bought the section at 1 Point Street from Graeme Anderson, the local farmer. At that time it was part of a 20 acre paddock grazed by Graeme's sheep, with only three houses past the corner of Point Street and the old derelict homestead Roseneath still standing (just!) down on the TeKapa.

Our house was designed by Swan Railley Paterson, and built by local builders Bruce McKenzie and Neville Noyer with Tim working alongside them. We moved in with our children Ashley and Julian in 1982 and lived there for ten years.

In those years Tim was General Manager local marine firm High Modulus in Warkworth and I was burser at Mahurangi College. Both the children were pupils at Mahurangi College.

At the time there were about a dozen children on the peninsula and Graeme Anderson put up a bus shelter on the corner of Charles Street - a converted corrugated iron water tank with a door and wooden bench inside - for the kids waiting for the school bus.

Our horse grazed the paddock until too many more houses were built, we had a couple of pet lambs, and we kept an aluminium dinghy at the bottom of the garden to explore the estuary and harbour. We also built a big shed at the front of the section where Tim built several boats.

One year the kids dressed up for Hallowe'en and went trick or treating around the neighbourhood with Ashley on the horse and the other kids on foot - much to the delight of John and Cathy Male who as Americans had missed the custom.

In the summer we would go to services at the little church on the hill, with most of the congregation sitting on blankets on the grass outside, and our daughter's horse tethered under the trees on the fence line. It was really sad when in 1988 Cyclone Bola knocked the church off its foundations and the church who owned it decided to demolish rather than repair, in spite of strong community support for restoration.

The ten years we lived at the Heads were wonderful years. It was a great community and a great lifestyle. I don't think we ever would have left, but in 1992 Tim became very ill and we made the hard decision to move closer to town and family. Tim died in the March while we were still living at the house, and his funeral was the last gathering we had there. He is buried up at the cemetery on the hill.

Back then the sheep grazed the cemetery and kept it looking beautiful, although they made short work of any flowers we left on the grave. Luckily they didn't like snowdrops, or the belladonna lilies that come out on the anniversary of his death.

After Graeme Anderson died and the sheep stopped grazing the cemetery, it did tend to get overgrown at times. I had a contractor to mow around Tim's grave and the ones either side of it which at least kept that area tidy. It was so good to see recently that the church is now maintaining it more regularly and partnering with the local community in enhancing the area. I think the Seats Project is a great initiative and I'm so pleased to be able to support it.

This year my daughter and her family have bought a section at the Heads, not too far from our old house. It really feels good to have the family back in the area again.

29<sup>th</sup> September, 2020

**MERRA gratefully acknowledges Stephanie's donation towards the Presbyterian Cemetery seat which is a place of interest on the MERRA Historical Walking Trail.**