Groves Road – Some History

The Groves family purchased 12 acres of land north of Wharemauku Stream about 1920, for use as a holiday property. Their cottage was on top of the hill overlooking the beach. The land was in two paddocks, one planted with trees (of which only the shelter belt pines survived the salty wind), the other leased for grazing – through which the public gained access to the beach. A few years later the Groves paid for the formation of Kohutuhutu Road, and about 1930 they subdivided and sold the first set of sections from their land, along the top of the hill.

The stream turned northwards into a saltwater lagoon along the upper beach, about where Groves Road is positioned today. At high tide it was several feet deep. After several unsuccessful attempts by the family to dredge and consolidate a new stream channel (foiled by southerly storms pushing water back into the lagoon), one was finally established where the stream now runs. Marram grass was planted across the wide beach, and windblown sand gradually filled the lagoon and formed a long sandhill on the seaward side. After a period of consolidation, Groves Road was created, and a second set of sections, on either side of the road, was put up for sale in the late 1940s.

Wharemauku Stream lagoon, 1920s. This view is to the south, taken from approximately the present-day intersection of Kohutuhutu and Groves Roads. ("Kohutuhutu" is the native tree-fuchsia.)

From the 1940s onwards this section of the Raumati Beach shoreline has remained relatively stable. The beach level drops in winter as sand moves offshore and forms sandbars, and rebuilds its height in summer as gentler wave action moves the sand back up the beach again.

Aerial views of the area north of Wharemauku Stream. Left 1942, centre 1952, right 1973. Kohutuhutu Road winds over the hill to the beach, centre right in each. Groves Road is only present in the centre and right photos. The mouth of the stream, "the creek" to the locals, moves a short distance north and south in response to prevailing winds. The apparent beach width differs because of tidal state: mid-tide in left photo, low tide in centre, high tide in right.
Most purchasers of the second subdivision, like the Groves before them, used their sections as holiday properties, and over time a small settlement of tents, caravans, war surplus army huts, and small cottages became established. Most owners were Wellingtonians, with some from Wairarapa and Manawatu. The first permanent resident was Miss Gordon, a retired professional photographer, who had a small house built at No. 16. Some sections in the road remained unoccupied, or used only for summer camping, for many years.

View from the beach of Groves Road properties, some time in the 1950s, taken at very low spring tide. Photograph by Miss I. Gordon, whose house at No. 16 is shown in the centre.

Aerial view of Groves Road, 1954. No. 16 is the gable-roofed house just right of centre. Most properties during the 1950s were holiday homes, or used for summer camping.

Most of the original Kohutuhutu Road and Groves Road holiday homes have now been turned into permanent residences, either by gradual extension and upgrading of the cottages, or by their replacement with new and substantial houses. The "beach settlement" character remains, however, in this quiet cul-de-sac. There is easy beach access at each end of Groves Road, there are still green verges instead of footpaths, and neighbours soon become friends.