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Log chute site was elusive ............................ 875
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Long association with logging ....................... 944
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GENERAL INTEREST

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**Houseboat completed and ready to launch**

The *Wanganui Herald* reported on 31 October 1904 that Captain Allan Marshall was in Taumarunui arranging for the lowering down stream of the Houseboat to the mouth of the Ohura River where she will be permanently stationed.

This was followed by a news report in the *NZ Herald* on 10 November 1904 advising readers that the Houseboat had left Taumarunui at 2:00pm on 4 November in charge of Captain Marshall and seven men.

“She should reach her destination in about one month from date. Great care is being taken to safely guide the boat down stream by means of ropes from the banks of the river.”

Robert Campbell, in his 1990 book *Rapids and Riverboats on the Wanganui River*, claims that Capt Marshall was assisted by only three crew members and the 46 kilometre journey taking just two weeks to achieve this amazing feat.

*This important looking group of well dressed people take the opportunity of having their picture taken on the Houseboat before its departure from Taumarunui. Although no positive identification has been made of any of the people present it is thought the man sitting on the gang plank was Joshua Harris, the Taumarunui manager of Hatrick’s River Service and the man next to him leaning against the post could be William Olsen. Mrs Elsie McWha, a pioneer of the district, recalls that her parents, Mr & Mrs William Olsen had often talked about attending the Ball held on the Houseboat before it was floated downstream. However, she is not “absolutely sure” of her father’s identification—perhaps other readers can help?*
driver to check his brakes as they have in other parts of the book.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

Another piece of friendly advice “pre-informs”. “The turn is on the ascent and should be taken slowly with a good reserve of power as if taken quickly when the pumice is dry the car is apt to slide to the bank”.

After rounding several “devil’s elbows” the driver eventually reached Runanga Bridge where “visions of fourth or third gear begin to become apparent”.

A further warning is given at the Rangitaiki Hotel where the motorist is asked to “look at the water in the radiator” because no water is available until Taupo although the editors do mention “a watering trough at Opepe opposite the 11 mile post but in dry weather it is empty.”

During the Maori war Opepe was an armed Constabulary Station.

On the road from Napier are some intriguing place names: Whiskey Creek, Maori Gully, Rock Station, Double Crossing, Stoney Creek and a roadman’s hut sometimes called “The Dewdrop Inn”.

Hints to Motorists

WHAT TO TAKE WHEN TOURING.

One set non-skid chains.
One piece spring 18 inches long with raised centre to fit over spring clips.
One piece spring about 15 inches long cambered with eye at one end.
Six spring clips and yokes, assorted lengths, two each 1½in., 2½in., 2½in., well screwed.
Roll of insulated tape.
Piece of insulated wire.
Spare bolts and nuts.
Cotter pins.
Two spark plugs.
One round file, one flat file.
One gallon lubricating oil.
Few copper and asbestos washers, also spring washers.
Hack saw and blades; small vice.
Piece copper binding wire.
Twenty feet of ½in. flexible wire rope.
Spare for Magneto.
Spade, axe.
Spare tyres and tubes.
Repair outfit.

Use Redio. Green for Brass, etc. Yellow for Electro-plate.

Even the trusty Model T Ford found it impossible to get through the King Country mud without calling on the horses for help and it took four horses to pull the car through this quagmire of papa mud near Niho Niho in 1912. Mud proved to be the main obstacle encountered by Arthur Chorlton and his crew during their pioneering journey from Wellington to Auckland and, as described in the booklet which covered their experiences, this was their “first taste of real mud.”

- photo courtesy Brian Manning collection (ref: 10035)
Long before tarseal roads and concrete footpaths came to country areas, travellers had to overcome all sorts of seemingly impossible conditions and weather. The original photographer of this delightful 1912 scene was H G Talbot of Matiere and graphically shows Tom Moore and his coach passing through Matiere. Although recent rain has turned the surface to slushy mud, this portion of road was probably in good condition when the photo was taken. Earlier scenes in the same spot would have told a different story—a closer inspection of the formation shows improvement with previous corduroying of manuka branches and other scrubby material. Corduroying formed a semi-floating pontoon type of bridge and was a common method of improving roads across swamp and muddy sections. Matiere people obviously cared for their pedestrian traffic as the boardwalk on the right indicates—apparently a local sawmill provided the timber so the women could walk to the Post Office without getting their feet wet.
Bulltown - a typical sawmill village

While Youthaven is situated on the outskirts of the Kakahi “suburb” locally known as Bulltown, it is interesting to first reflect on how this area got its unusual name. RON COOKE found from discussions among locals and others who lived at Bulltown in past years revealed three different versions and while that is not surprising it is going to be almost impossible to give readers the correct meaning . . .

The most accepted explanation seems to be the one used in the 1959 Kakahi School Jubilee booklet where they said “two wild bulls met there almost every evening in trial of strength when blood and noise seemed the chief result”.

Another source says the bullock teams which were used to haul the timber from the surrounding bush were always left in this area for the night, as it was the only clear piece of land amongst the standing bush. Because the bullocks were left there overnight they used to “bellow all night” hence the name Bulltown.

The final version has to be carefully worded as many believe the name arose because a lot of single bushmen and timber workers lived there and when fueled with sly grog or home-brew there were naturally plenty of fights and other nocturnal activities.

Our informants claimed it was “a pretty wild place” but by the time State Sawmill No 2 was opened in January 1911 and a few married couples took up residence, it was quite possible that Bulltown quietened down a little.

A TYPICAL MILL VILLAGE

Bulltown was in fact a typical mill village, firstly as a bush camp then as the mill geared up to its cutting capacity of 15,000 feet per day, it became a very busy and close knit community of mill workers and their families.

The sawmill at Bulltown was owned and built by the Railways Department as a
This fantastic 1906 photograph of a log chute at Kakahi started a search for the old site which ended up giving everyone a pleasant surprise...
Because of the nature of the country, the 12 mile drag either side of the Waituhi Saddle was steep, windy and paved with unforgiving greywacke metal.

Today the “Punga” road is completely sealed and in places it passes through some of the most scenic and picturesque native bush in New Zealand.

The final patch of seal was laid near the Ngapuke junction in December 1973, around 13 years after reconstruction work had begun at the bottom of the Waihi Hill near Tokaanu.

The Ministry of Works then worked their way slowly back over the 30-odd miles of State Highway 41 to Manunui in a job described as “anything but monotonous.”

Numerous problems were encountered in the vicinity of the Quarry Road bluffs and in the Ngapuke-Hohotaka section where

There would hardly be a single professional truck driver who did not treat the hazardous Pungapunga Road between Manunui and Tokaanu with the utmost respect— it did not matter which way one travelled it was a “hard grind” . . .