

"A Hundred Years in Herne Bay" - Marjory FE Adams

2001

from Argyle St. One friend who grew up in Salisbury St in the years between the two wars recalls that the site was previously a tip. He remembers seeing horse-drawn drays going fully laden past his home to the end of street, tipping out their load and returning empty. Levelled, covered with soil, rolled, planted with grass, and provided with a clubhouse, this became the Women's Bowling Club, which after nearly fifty years has ceased to function independently. The women now use the lower greens of the Ponsonby Bowling Club in Jervois Rd. They are not alone in making such a move. Their original site at Herne Bay is now used for petanque, which, I am told, is an old game though new to us here in Auckland. The West End Bridge Club has now gone into recess after 40 years of sharing the clubhouse with the Bowling Club women. This leaves the Petanque Club as the sole tenant.

Croquet was played in Herne Bay well before 1900, not in a club but on private lawns belonging to some of the earlier homes with spacious grounds. Outdoor entertainment was popular for a while in the form of croquet parties, mainly for women, tennis parties for both men and women, and amateur theatricals. That era was almost over by my pre-school years. Women, especially the newly married and the young mothers, found it simpler to substitute the AT HOME days as a way of meeting friends and neighbours. So, though I passed a croquet lawn every time I went for a swim, I did not see any sign of a game being played there. Nor did I see ladies with their mallets as I saw men with their bowls. I first saw croquet played in Clevedon on my Grandmother's lawn in front of the homestead during a long summer holiday just before the First World War. Some of her

neighbouring friends came for an afternoon's play; and I can understand, looking back, how much it meant to farmers' wives whose children had grown up and left home, whose nearest neighbours were some miles away, who had long lonely days when their husbands were out on the farm from early morning. I can see, too, why for such gatherings croquet was an ideal game with its mixture of skills and strategies, its alternating periods of activity and rest, its opportunities for casual conversation, all in an outdoor setting. My grandmother developed such an enthusiasm for the game that when she returned to Auckland to live in Northcote in 1914 she joined the Northcote Croquet Club. She had tried to teach me the rules of the game but, not yet nine years old, I was either too young or too impatient and preferred to join my brothers under the pine trees making imaginary forts out of pine needles.

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Though it had private croquet lawns a hundred years ago, I do not think Herne Bay, a small suburb, has had its own club.

Herne Bay has had a tennis club for threequarters of a century; and, before that, many homes had their own private courts. I can remember at least eight and played on four of them but not the nearest, which was just over the side fence of our backyard. It was a grass court, regularly cut and well maintained; but I do not think I ever saw any one playing on it or heard the unmistakable sound of racquet meeting ball. Both daughters were grown up when I first caught a glimpse of them and not long afterwards the home was sold and the lawn, with fruit trees planted down both sides and a vegetable patch dug in the middle, ceased to be a tennis court. The other grass court in the grounds of "The Oaks" was

* would be Waitanata Bece
changed name to Northcote
1951