

Avery Reserve

The Avery family had been keen supporters of the Scout movement in New Plymouth, since its beginning in 1908. They had allowed the Central Scout Troop to camp on their property, situated in Avenue Road, later to be renamed Coronation Avenue and bordering the Te Henui Stream, from the very beginning, when Mr. J. R. Sullivan was their Scoutmaster. Later other New Plymouth troops were to use this property for camping, as it was conveniently close to town. Mr. Avery had provided further material support to Scouting by stocking Scout stationery in his shop. Mr. T. Avery passed away during October of 1926 and Mrs. Avery (Senior) continued her interest in Scouting, giving her time to teach scouts the art of acting for their annual "parents and friends" entertainment evening.

In January, 1928 Major Sandford "Pathfinder" reported on the acquisition by the local Scout association of Avery Reserve, which had been given by Mrs. T. Avery. He described the state of the property and his vision for its future:- "Nearly all the legal formalities are completed and in a few weeks we shall enter into possession. The gift is a most valuable one to scouts and guides. Our work is to improve it so as to make it just a splendid camping ground. The fences need



The plaque at the entry to Avery Reserve recording Mrs Avery's gift

attention, a dressing shed has to be built, trees to be planted and tent sites levelled off and grassed; the small swamp to be drained, a gate made and hung. The blackberry requires constant attention, water must be laid on and fire places built. Last but not least a shed must be built in which to store our tents and carts, one end of which must be fitted up for a caretaker, until we are rich enough to build a small cottage."

An advisory committee for the Avery Camping Ground was formed, with the first meeting held in May 1928, comprising Messrs. White, Burgess, Darby, Roy, Commissioners of the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts of North Taranaki District, and Mr. T. M. Avery, representing Mrs. Avery. The meeting was held at Messrs. Moss and Spence's office, where the draft deed of dedication was read by Mr. Spence. Two minor suggestions proposed by Mr. White were adopted. Mr. Spence reported that the town clerk had given valuable assistance, and that Mr. Lysons was preparing a plan for the Land Transfer Office and that the sum of about 15 pounds was required as registration fees and stamp duty. Messrs. Moss and Spence, Mr. Lysons and Mr. Bellringer were not charging fees, only out of pocket costs. The deed provided for the election of a committee of management, which would comprise three members for the scouts, two for the Girl Guides, one for the council and one for the Avery family, a total of seven.

By July the transfer of the property had been completed and planning was well underway for its development. Pathfinder urged:- "We shall have to get busy because there is a little draining and tree planting to do, as well as a few blackberries to eradicate; also in the near future bathing sheds and store and caretakers rooms to be provided. The ground will also have to be planned out for tents, fireplaces, rubbish pit and latrines. This all means work, and with such a splendid ground we must get busy and make it the best campers' home in Taranaki."

Working bees at Avery Reserve became a regular occurrence, with members from all the Scout troops meeting at 2 p.m. on Saturdays. Each Scout



A fire-lighting competition held at Avery Reserve Circa. 1950's

bringing their own sharp spades, grubbers or slashers.

**From Roy Hopkins, as printed in Kudu
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"The property was covered in gorse up to 15 feet height, except for a small area of grass, some swamp and a small area of native bush. The gorse was cut down by a concerted effort by the Scouts, and 750 trees were planted. These trees were all eaten by cattle the next winter (put onto the property by unauthorised persons). More trees were planted and steps taken to keep the cattle out until the trees were big enough to be too big for cattle to reach the foliage. A hut had been built by Major Sandford and used for years as a "bunkhouse" until it was ruined by vandals. Numerous camps were held and enjoyed by many; the wood used for cooking being the gorse cut down originally.

Mr Monty Avery planted a variety of native trees along the narrow strip of land between the boundary of the reserve and the river. This area was "out of bounds" to all scouts, but gave a golden opportunity to study New Zealand native trees, as there must be about 30 different varieties planted there. We used to get our water from a

spring, but as the area above became more built on, it was thought better to get the water laid on from the Borough supply. An ablution block was built, thanks to the efforts of Mr Harris and the Master Carpenters of the area. After the war, native trees were planted to represent Boy Scouts who had lost their lives overseas. It was thought that this would be a nice memorial for each boy. Unfortunately, several of the trees have been cut down by budding "George Washingtons" who had little thought of the years it takes for a native tree to grow to any size. In times gone by trees have been blown down by gales, and Scouts and Guides have been able to use the trees to practise the use of axe and saw. Once a huge gum tree was blown over and it was caught up in another tree.

When a visit was proposed of a V.I.P. from Dominion H.Q., we used Avery Reserve for the chance to meet him. A demonstration was given of the use of block and tackle, axe and saw, and a spar to cut the tree into small pieces, up in the air, and swing them clear, and lower them to the ground. I think it has come to the stage now, that a lot of the trees that were planted 30 odd years ago, could be cut down and trimmed up and the trunks sold; but NOT with chain saws. How can a boy learn to use axe and saw if he is not given the



West End “Kiwi Patrol” Scouts, from left, John Bowers, Allan Meads and Simon Catchpole, camping at Avery Reserve, under the watchful eye of Roy Hopkins “Ruru” (sitting at rear)

opportunity to do so.”
‘RURU’

Geoff Bennett recalls Avery Reserve

A rather strange, difficult to get to yet fascinating bit of scouting country. Located at the end of Timandra St New Plymouth and bordered by the Te Henui stream, with its bosky swimming hole, it was part of every scout’s inheritance. The Reserve was used at odd times by the local troops and packs for all kinds of events and activities from cooking to campfires. Some really good District functions took place there as did some pretty ordinary ones as well. A great supporter of the place and sometime caretaker was Roy Hopkins who did his best to encourage its use.

Although ideally situated the Reserve suffered from poor access. Getting heavy camping gear down onto the flat was a pioneering project in itself. Despite this, many useful training days were held. Badge tests, preliminary courses for the Wood Badge, patrol camps, cooking sessions and countless skill related courses were held as well as an occasional District event, which was unique in its own way. Every group arriving, with the exception of a party coming by bike, was

faced with the daunting prospect of getting their bits and pieces down the track. The path was steep and not vehicle friendly and one remembers the heroic efforts of Tom Clow in arranging suitable transport to achieve this. It was, however, in the true spirit of scouting this was done and we all learned a lot from the effort that was required.

For many years a dilapidated iron shed was the only shelter available on the place but this succumbed to the attentions of the local lads. Much later an ablution block was built with concrete blocks and a poured roof. This Fort Knox like structure was destroyed in a remarkably short time. A spring, that trickled out from the southern bank, caused a lot of bother and many attempts were made to tame it. The resulting boggy area eliminated several good tent sites but the solution was beyond our resources and finances at that time for we had not heard of sponsorship in those days. Perhaps the best times at the Reserve were the special campfire nights. The acoustics in the dell were excellent and on a perfect evening could be magical. The singing, very traditional, was always hearty and the skits excruciating, but much talent was exhibited by those who were brave enough to have a go. The

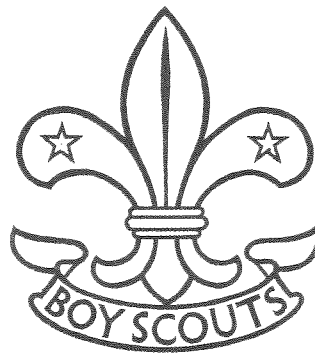


Cooking at Avery Reserve. A West End troop site with Geoff Bennett (Moa) at the rear

sight, and sound, of Paul Harris, George Bartlett and Allan George whipping up everybody into a frenzy was not easily forgotten. These were fun times of the highest quality.

The tragedy of Avery Reserve was that it never fully reached its potential, it was never exploited. It had great possibilities but was overwhelmed by

the problems that potential presented. There were many schemes to do something and the spirit was willing but the place really needed its own team to run it - a group that had its own finances and logistical support that operated independently of scout groups and, of course, its own resident caretaker.



Fred Coleman
1/10. 11/2.