

TRANSCRIPT OF THE FOLK WHO LIVE AT THE BAY – A VISIT TO KENNEDY BAY ON THE COROMANDEL PENNINSULA. SPECTRUM DOCUMENTARY , RADIO NEW ZEALAND.

[recording starts here...]

Curly the enjoyment is still here and the memory is still here ...

Owen What do you mean by the memory is still here?

Curly Well, the memory of what it used to be ... see most of us were young when we came here and that's 53 years ago now, and well the memory is quite perfect here.

Owen A relaxing place?

Curly: Very, very relaxed.

Owen Time wouldn't mean much to you.

Curly: There is no time at all, there is no time.

.... SPECTRUM BRINGS YOU "THE FOLK WHO LIVE AT THE BAY" ELWIN OWEN VISITS THE SETTLEMENT OF KENNEDY BAY ON THE COROMANDEL PENNINSULA

Owen: There is no service station, no pub, no shops, no hall, just a scattering of houses alongside the level road. Across the river, a group of batches look out over the bay huddling together protectively as though they don't quite trust its' sheltered beauty, there is a few green paddocks and the inevitable pines, manuka on the hills and some good bush still but the kauri that once supported the settlement has gone, just as the gold has gone. Coromandel is 8 miles away, 8 winding miles over the hump of Tokatea hill. Physically Kennedy Bay has always been isolated, but there is another isolation as well, a

state of mind almost that sets the Bay apart. You will sense it perhaps in these conversations because this isn't a programme about the Bay itself but simply a meeting with some of the people who live there. I was told "We know our ancestors here" and the remark needs some amplification. Kennedy Bay is largely a Māori settlement, and surprisingly its people are Ngāti Porou from the East Coast. In the late 1840s when the Māoris were beginning to trade with the infant Pākehā settlements, two Ngāti Porou came to the Bay seeking permission to use it for shelter when necessary. Mrs Hale, one of the elders in the settlement, picks up the story

Riria: ... both of them came ashore, they went up there, and at that time they were in the wharepuni called ... made out of raupo and that sort of thing, it wasn't built out of timber.

Owen: This is a meeting house.

Riria: A meeting house, yes, and the thought that when they got up to the marae, at the meeting house door, they stood there until someone came out, out of the meeting house ... they ask for the chief, they want to see the chief, well he was Pāora te Putu, and he came out, so they both ask him if they can have this Bay for shelter. So Pāora te Putu said "Nō whea kōrua" because he wanted to know where do you come from, so they told him "we are Ngāti Porous, we come from the East Coast, we are Ngāti Porous". And he said, "Haere mai" ... so he took them inside and gave them some kai and all that and you know and be sitting around and then after they had a kōrero you know it was left to stand up and make a speech and all that sort of thing you know before they come out with the answer. After all that he said now "Ko wātea te huarahi" meaning to say "the road is clear now" you know I am translating these words myself ... I'll go down with you and for you to show me where, what part do you want for your boats. They wanted that pond, you know where ... you've been there haven't you dear ...

Owen: The lagoon ...?

Riria: The lagoon sort of yes that would be a very nice place for them to shelter when its rough, they ask him that they can have that piece and he said “yes, kei te pai”, he said very well, I make a gift of this for you .. so he picked up a big stone, about that big, you can just lift it up and he said ... now this is ... ko te mana tēnei o te Māori this is ... for I like to speak it in Māori you know ... te mana o te Māori ko enei kupu, meaning to say this is the Māori’s mana, the stone they throw into the pond and say te matua that’s our Father ... te tama that’s Christ and the holy spirit that’s wairua tapū ... three stones he threw ... te matua, tama me te wairua tapū ... father, the son and the holy ghost ... now he turned around and said to them now koa mana meaning to say that the mana is there well, by word of mouth, well to God it is law, it is law. Then he turned around and he said to these two Ngāti Porou men ... not only this pond I am going to give you ... and he pointed, he stood there, he turned around and he said all that ridge ... he pointed round, all around, right down to Whangapoua, he said ... I’ll make a gift of this to the Ngāti Porous. Now that’s how the Ngāti Porous came to get this piece of land.

Owen: And this is still largely a Māori community, is it Mrs Hale?

Riria; Oh yes, still, still today.

Owen; How many people would you say are here at the present time?

Riria: About, including children and all, would be about 120 altogether including the children, we have only got 15 children going to our school at present, the roll is going down and down and down

Owen: A close little community I suppose?

Riria Yes, very close we more or less all are relations and each one cutting the timber and they are building their own houses these days because

they can't afford to pay a carpenter, timber is so expensive without the carpenter, see?

Owen: And what do people do here now? What is the basis of the settlement now Mrs Hale?

Riria: Well, there are about six launches they go out crayfishing that's their living now, they pay \$2.75 a pound, a pound of crayfish and they come here pick it up, take it away say from August, September, October, November they starting to go off at the end of this month, shed their shell, well it's no good once they start to do that and they turn and bring all their pots home and then put them aside and get their nets to work and go out and catch fish and sell the fish, that's their living now.

Owen: How do you look on the Bay now, how do you feel about the Bay?

Riria: Well, as a matter of fact, I've often thought myself, now I like to see the Bay as it is, I don't like to see too many people around, come in and destroy the beauty of this little bay. Now this is what I've got against different ones, they think they can buy land here but that's one thing about the people living here we won't sell, we are dead against that, but there are different ones they have already sold further up the road there, you see old Johnny Sweeney he sold quite a few acres there and different people, they coming in and they are causing a lot of trouble to the place, they build their houses up and they stay there and they go away and they come back and they bring more and more people see - they are all type of people, it doesn't, they don't mix up with us because I mean we don't mix with them, they proper strangers to us.

Owen: Dick Hovell is about the same age as Mrs Hale. He has the distinction of being the youngest living soldier in the first world war which he managed by the simple expedient of putting his age up. He was 15 when he left NZ, a year later he was leading a machine gun

section in France. Sixty years later his aim is still devastating but his weapon today is a wicked sense of humour.

Dick: I just been to see the doctor, it was for my throat, and she gave me the prescription and she said take this over to the Chemist and the Chemist was brand new, he was only a young laddie you know, so I went over and said "may I have this" and he said "well come back in an hour and I'll have it ready for you" and I said "thank you" and I walked down to the pub of course and I had one or two noggins and then I came back and I said "are they ready" and he said "yes" and he gave me the two bottles, and I said "what are these?" and he said "they are for your prescription" and I said "but what are they about?" and he said "they are for your ear and your throat" and I said "well how am I to know" he said "its written on the bottle" and I said "well I can't read or write. So he went into a huddle and thought about it for a while and then he drew a glorious ear on one of the bottles you see and I picked it up and I said "O, this is for the ear aye?" and he said "yes that is for the ear" and I said "well what about this other one?" and he said "well that is for the throat" but I said "well how am I to know?" he said "its on ... O no" he said "of course not". So he drew a beautiful chin with a throat and so forth and I put it alongside my throat and said "so this is for the throat aye?" and he said "yes that is for the throat" so I said "O, thank you" and I walked out and I had no sooner walked out than a friend of my came in Les Eden came in and he said " Poor old Nev" he was there, he said "I had a funny experience just now" and Les said "What's the matter?" and he said "I met an old chap, he spoke beautifully but he couldn't read or write" and Les said "that's strange in Coromandel, there's very few here who can't read or write, well he said which, who is he?" and Nev said "that old chap" and Les said "O, I know him, yes he's matriculated and he's done two or three years past his study and he's been a school teacher for sixty or seventy years ..." "the bastard" said Nev.

Owen: Dick Hovell lives in an old home that has weathered more than 120 years, it was once a boarding house serving the kāuri loggers at the Bay. To reach it you row across in the dinghy if the tide is high or walk across the mudflats if its low water. This comparative disability doesn't worry Dick Hovell, in fact, it drew him to the place at the close of the second world war.

Dick: I did just on three and a half years four years with the army and then I came back and I got the bulldozer in to put a bulldozer road in and I brought my family over and my wife said "What are you doing?" and I said I'm putting a road in so we can have access" and the wife said "Why, why did we leave Whitianga?" and I said "O yes, that's right" and I sent the bulldozer away and she said "People that want to visit us will make the effort and those that we ask we go and get" and its been that way ever since. The most visitors we have had in any one day is 81 and by the time you make cups of tea for 81 you've had enough but right the Christmas and right through the holiday season and all we average 20-30 visitors a day.

Owen: But Dick a road is going in now, is that a gesture to increasing age.

Dick: O yes, true, but seeing that it was costing me too much to die I've transferred everything to my children and these are the younger generation that are putting the road in, I am not doing it, you will loose a certain amount of privacy with the road going in, this place, we have raised here since I've been here, must be 12-15 families, whenever anyone had young children and they had nowhere to go we've always had them on the place and we've raised these until the children became about 15-16 and then they'd go off, they had their own things to do but the children are coming back now you'll see them coming back at Christmas with their families now. I was thinking of calling this place Honeymoon Farm at one stage for the simple reason it had 18 honeymoon couples on it so when you're old if you're feeling that way you're welcome aye

- Owen: Dick, this seems to be pretty much the case with the whole community here. I believe that at Christmas time the families return
- Dick: O yes, the families do return and that is why we are so keen on having this marae, for the simple reason , there is no community centre where they can foregather, by having this marae we will have a central place where the whole family or we'll all get together again and they do come back by the dozens and dozens.
- Owen: Dick, what are the disadvantages of the Bay here?
- Dick: As far as I am concerned there are no disadvantages whatsoever. No I can't think of anything, we have our road over the hill to Coromandel, we have a daily mail service, we get out paper daily on the day, the herald we get about 10 oclock, so our mail daily, our stores daily, I can't see that we are losing anything can you?
- Owen: That's the way that Curly Hale feels too. His was the voice that introduced this programme. Curly is Mrs Hale's son and 10 years ago he made international news when he was picked up after 27 days adrift at sea.
- Curly: I wanted to catch fish and I took off. I was supposed to come back at quarter to four the next morning and suddenly the ... something went wrong ... and I found out the camshaft of the motor had broken.
- Owen: How far out were you?
- Curly: I was a mile and a quarter out to sea and the equinox came in and just blew me further out to sea. The mistake I made was to pull up the anchor as soon as I got the anchor off the bottom I realised straight away I realised straight away I had done wrong and when I went to drop the anchor back well the boat was drifting so fast in the equinox the anchor it didn't have a chance
- Owen: It didn't hold.

- Curly: No, it didn't have a chance to hit the bottom and I could see it flipping up there under the water and I thought to myself, crumbs, I better turn this boat into the sea
- Owen: What size boat?
- Curly: 24, 24 foot and I thought well there is only one way to turn it into the sea and that is to throw my mattress overboard to try and
- Owen: as a sea anchor
- Curly: as a sea anchor ... well that was my biggest mistake, the sea started pounding right over the bow and took the cabin and everything off, I was 19 days without cabin or shelter or anything
- Owen: What food did you have or water?
- Curly: O water is no problem, it was quite easy to make your own water, condensed.
- Owen: How did you do that?
- Curly: The sun, using the sun to condense it ... with plastic bags
- Owen: O, you knocked up a still
- Curly: yes ... all these things ... it is knowledge that has been hidden away ... when I was caught there then that knowledge was exposed
- Owen: What about food
- Curly: Ah food ... 9 days ... and I was really hungry but you can overcome that you can overcome the hunger, ah, water is the main thing ... another thing I was frightened of was dehydration because dehydration can kill you before hunger and the boat was leaking severely I used to lay in the water
- Owen: Did you have any fish on board with you

Curly: O yes, I did, when the boat tipped over, well it tipped over three times I was losing gear, you know, fish and everything, I thought to myself, you know, 3 or 4 days and someone will pick me up but next thing I lost the cabin and it was 19 days like that and I thought to myself, by crumbs, there must be ... you know the unforeseen hand must be able to do something here ... and another thing that marine life ... Ohhh its something terrific ... beautiful ... sharks used to come up and scratch under the boat, I had one chap there used to come up every morning and just scratch away there, if he wasn't 35 he was 40 feet and he had a dorsal on, it stuck out of the water about the gunner of the boat and I used to go along him, scratch the dorsal and he just lay there and they were scratching lice off, you could see the lice there, scratch the lice off themselves and I used to think to myself ... crumbs ... can I harness you up to drag me home ... one little fella, a blue pointer, came up and started scratching alongside the boat, he was about 2ft 6, 3ft long ... and I looked over, they rub up against the boat and it sounds like sandpaper and ... ah yeah ... I looked over and here he was and I thought you are just my size and before he knew what had happened I had him inside the boat well that was my first meal, it was 24 days, 24 days and that was my first meal, I ate him raw I was quite satisfied then. I used to sleep by day and stay awake by night, anyhow, I was asleep when the Mariaposa turned up, they saw me 23 miles away on the radar and your vision out at sea is only 2 miles, because on account of the oval you know they came up and I heard the noise and I flew out of my well this was quarter to 5 in the evening and the sun was as high as that ... I thought crumbs what the devil is going on here ... and I looked up and you know ... different things went through my mind ... well that morning, early hours that morning, there was a school of whales went by and I thought crumbs its blasted Moby Dick ... that was that ... and as he passed me I could see he was back on ... he had his motors reversing trying to pull up alongside and I've never seen so many cameras in my life ... when they came and picked me up ...

there was cameras everywhere . Ah ... its a story, its true, but its hard to believe.

Owen: How many days were you actually drifting?

Curly: 27. I had my first feed, that was the blue pointer shark, that was 24 days, I kept my own diary ... written it up on the door there, that was the only thing, well the cabin was blown off, I wrote it up on the door

Owen: And whereabouts were you picked up

Curly: 380 miles east north east of Great Barrier Island. The Mariaposa took the course, 200 miles off its course to ... um ... because they were ahead of schedule and they ran smack bang into me well that must be some help from the unforeseen hand ...

Owen: Did you ever feel yourself that you mightn't get out of that situation?

Curly: O no, no, no, no ... oh no, I didn't panic or anything ... I had the feeling that somebody you know ... I had enough constitution, I knew that somebody would come along ... I went out there at 15 stone 6 and returned here at 8 stone 2

Owen: 8 stone 2

Curly: 8 stone 2 and if anybody wants to loose weight they don't have to go to Weight Watchers

Owen: And how was the Bay here when you got back

Curly: Oh it was terrific, it was really terrific, they had everything going, there was cows getting killed and pigs getting killed, there was sheeps getting killed this community had everything going, there was a great big hangi going ... crumbs ... I woke up next morning and there was bottles of whiskey laying in the paddock and woke up again a couple of days later there was jokers laying and the grass had gone yellow under them ... it took a whole week for the people, the

local people to get over it but my sister Marie ... they heard me coming up the river on a Wednesday morning ...

Owen

They heard the sound of your boat

Curly

They heard the sound of the boat, well it was Wednesday afternoon when the Mariaposa picked me up and there was no sign of the boat and Marie said "I heard it, he's here somewhere" [inaudible part of the tape]

Owen

To reach the house where Ruth Small lives you have to pass a sentinel gander, he is a real footrot flats job a sort of a winged watchdog.

Ruth

He actually is a good watchdog the policeman couldn't get over the bridge once for that goose

Owen

Is that right?

Ruth

Yes, he's actually very bad around children he thinks he's part of the family and he can do what he likes but he can't we've had enough being chased by that goose is no goose.

Owen

Ruth Small joined forces with Dick Hovell's daughter Mary some 10 years ago to farm this land, now they have a nursery where they propagate native trees and a new house is nearing completion. It hasn't been easy but they thrive on the challenge of the work.

Ruth

I came to stay with various people and then we stayed in the cottage for a couple of years and then we fished and while we fished then we thought wouldn't it be nice to have a place, because I have four kids, and we came up here which was ... the cows had been using this and it was just a sort of swamp and we set to and we cut the tea tree off ourselves and we sort of sat up in the hills and sort of looked down at this terrible mess all rushes and thought o just imagine all pedigree cattle and green grass and we just didn't think it would ever happen ... we got a garden and slowly it started looking like it does .. we did

Mary and myself and the boys helped and we had a really good fella called Peter Bolton who worked very hard here and is now living up at the Harrisons, very kind, very nice person , really good ... starting to get ganders and starting to cut tea tree and coming home from fishing in this funny little house bringing bits of wood with you and making a cup o tea the moment you got in with a plank or a bit of boxing ... I don't know, just sort of a place to live and everyone came and everyone enjoyed it but the Hovell's I think have been kind to almost anyone in the Bay, you know they are the kind of folks you want to stay with and go and live in the cottage

Owen So how long does it take to become a native of the Bay then?

Ruth I don't know, I don't we've kept ourselves very much up here so you do get some folks who can come into the place and within a year, and they are doing this and doing that, I don't think I was ... I don't know how the folks feel now about me, probably ... we've just been here, I didn't go out a great deal, it was too far and too muddy and we didn't have a car and things like that – they were all very kind and very neighbourly but we didn't have enough interaction ... not really

Owen Tell me about the fishing Ruth it would be hard work for two women.

Ruth I don't think so ... yes, it would be hard work, you don't think of it, we were younger and it was exciting, it was like having two or three different ways of life you know we left here in the morning, you got the children out, place tidied because it was ghastly to come back if you didn't, you know that awful feeling of coming back in if it was a shambles, so we always tidied and then we went fishing and then we'd have a cup of tea with the Hovell's and then come back up here and we'd have the tea tree to cut and we also had a market garden that we were going to make money out of and we had just masses of vegetables and nowhere to put them and we had no-one to sell them

to it was too far away you see ... there was no road through you see, it has changed, without knowing it, it has become bigger and a more **moving** sort of place

Owen What about the isolation though

Ruth O, I like it, I love it, I like just ... you know I'm quite happy on my own, I quite like just living way up here ... I mean having folks coming every so often and having a cup of tea. I don't terribly want to go to Hamilton or Auckland specially, emergencies perhaps ...

Owen What sort of character has the Bay got? How would you describe it
Ruth?

Ruth You see you are asking the wrong person that I think ...

Owen Let's more it this way .. what sets the community here in the Bay aside from other communities?

Ruth I don't know ... I think its different, I think people are the same everywhere don't you ... to me they are all friendly, just getting on with life, just putting the school kids on the bus and you'll say hello to the school teacher and you'll turn to them or going past to look for cattle and you'll chat to Bob on his tractor or Victor on his tractor but as for knitting and having a cup of tea or going out for an evening you wouldn't do that, you'll have your little chat on the side of the road and you'll see Dunna while he's doing the road and you'll discuss maybe the horses testing man coming and who's having it first or last or things like that, or the roads and how they are or the flats ... its all village talk but its not going up to that door and knocking and finding out that way, its just passing and everyone is doing their own thing, occasionally at the Christmas party where everyone gets together with the kids and thats a really nice day.

Owen Tell me about your own feelings for the Bay, how you feel about it?

- Ruth Well I just think that its the Bay, I wouldn't like to be anywhere else, I think you ask most of the people in the Bay and thats exactly what how they would feel you don't think ... um ... until you really think of it I guess you don't think what you do think of the Bay, its just where you live, no, I don't think many people would swap the Bay.
- Owen John Sweeney would swap it quite happily. John' lean frame was hunched over a shovel when I met him, he was draining an access road he is putting in to the beach. At 60 odd he is facing retirement and it won't be in the Bay
- Piha I was born in Panmure and come down here in 1926 and I been here ever since and I'm not going to die here that's for bloody sure.
- Owen You're not going to?
- Piha No
- Owen Well you're the first person that's told me that John
- Piha Well I would be telling you the truth.
- Owen Whys that?
- Piha Well I have my reasons, I've been here too long
- Owen I thought this was a place you couldn't leave?
- Piha O don't worry ... o god dammit no .. a man, you're learning all the time, everyone learns, I mean there's room, there's room for it, Christ a man's learning every day, I'm still learning yet and I'm 60 and I get crayfish for my living every day like everybody else but there's still room for improvement and I'll go on till my retirement then I'll get the hell out of here.
- Owen And where will you go John
- Piha I got no idea you know I might pick up a old girl for me I might go over to Australia for a while and then come back and find

somewhere and settle in quietly, that's my younger, I'm gonna let my young people have my place, I'm not coming back to annoy them because its wrong, two women can't get on, inlaws living with their kids, when I got married I had my mother living with us, well she had to go or my wife would, my idea of life now, believe it or not, my idea of life now when I leave Kennedy Bay here I'm going right into the heart of Queen St I don't care if I gotta buy a toilet, thats where I'm going to go, I like Auckland and I'm going back there

Owen Is this a tight community would you say John?

Piha Well, all these small community are bad to live in. You fall out with one you can fall out with the lot and it happens, it happens here cause mostly we are all related and this is where it is bad, you can be talking to the cousins of the last cousins cousin and your in a mess, your in a mess and its not good, this is why I'd rather get in the city there and pick up people that I don't know and I don't care if I never see them again

Owen These small communities they seem to be full of individualists

Piha That is ... that is true ... and its all about yes dear, you want to hear the news, yes dear ... O darling ... you hear what she said the other day ... she actually said so and so and so and so and that could go around the whole blemin place

Owen John whats the farming sneaking in here today

Piha Well at present we have a mixture, we have beef and crayfish, I'm on beef and crayfish and then there's kiwifruit, this place is going into kiwifruit, this'll all be kiwifruit, the first people who brought this through has been these hippies, you know they bought pottery through, I'd join them to see what I could get on you know, I join them

Owen You joined a commune?

- Piha I join them when I want to you know, I pulled out, I do it when I feel like doing it, I say hooray to them but I treat them as people you know ... but they bought pottery and they bought trees ... always trying to sell something aye and that's what's built this place up, that's what I think myself, see people going around and trying to do their thing, make something and sell something, and I think that's good
- Owen You don't got anything in the way of a pub here do you?
- Piha Well, they've tried that out ... but I'll just tell you .. they've had more beer in this place here and at one party than they'll ever have over there in the men's club, I mean that's not very far and they all possess cars each and Coromandel's just over the hill
- Owen I was told you are a very keen Labour man and that you infact called your youngsters after Labour politicians
- Piha That's true ... and the reason for that is that .. I was born and I went through the slump and we lived in nothing but old houses and corn and the only thing we could buy was golden syrup and nothing but golden syrup and when you stuck it on bread you didn't ... well golden syrup on bread well the bread went hard aye and we didn't seen anything looked like clothes until the Labour Party took office back there in 35 of 36.
- Owen So, when your children were born
- Piha Yeah I named one Arthur or Walter after Howard so that's why I named my children Howard
- Owen John Sweeney isint alone in seeing a future for kiwifruit in the Bay and he is not alone in sub-dividing his land. George and May Thwaites have similar ideas. A future, you could say in produce and people. And a controversial future of course as far as development is concerned but its future aside the settlement today is rich in its people and if that sounds like cliché its true for all that. People like

Prince Potae, now confined to a wheel chair, his eyes kindle at the memory of the depression days when he and his father mined for gold in the hills, his brother Andrew who for 50 years has diarised the events of the settlement, George Hovell re-establishing the original vegetation on the offshore islands, his sister Mary breaking in a farm and never losing her delight in the things around her. To what extent do people shape their surroundings and how much do their surroundings mould them. In Kennedy Bay I suspect it is very much an interchange that works both ways.

THAT WAS 'THE FOLK WHO LIVE AT THE BAY' A VISIT TO THE SETTLEMENT OF KENNEDY BAY ON THE COROMANDEL PENNINSULA. THE PROGRAMME WAS RECORDED AND PRODUCED BY ELWIN OWEN FOR THE SPECIAL PROJECTS SECTION OF RADIO NEW ZEALAND, A SPECTRUM DOCUMENTARY.