

Wayside Tearooms now the Greenstone Shop

Once known as the Wayside Tearooms, and for being the NZ Railways Road Service bus stop for Te Kauwhata, this premises started out as a fruit shop. Mr Harry (Henry) Waterhouse from Manutahi was one of the 10 successful ballotors for the first Fruit Farms offered in Te Kauwhata by the Dept of Agriculture in 1911. He was a carpenter and built a house for his family, which still stands at 12 Travers Road where their orchard farm was. They had several sons; Ivan, John and Leslie, who was a pilot killed in action during WWII, are remembered. The only daughter was Hilda, for whom her father built a shop to sell their fruit, also drinks and sweets c1929. There must have been a need as two women; Wyn Borman and Jean Nuttall later Giles, were soon also employed providing sandwiches and other refreshments and it became the "Luncheon Rooms." The road was then the Great South Road not Wayside Road, as it has become since 1976 due to Highway and Expressway changes.

By 1935 Hilda Waterhouse had married John Walker. One of her brothers is remembered to have married one of her waitresses. Harry Waterhouse also built the Te Kauwhata Post Office, now the House of Treasures, and a house, now 1 Roto Street, for Hilda and John Walker on John's land. Extending a shop into Luncheon or Tea Rooms would have posed no problem. According to initial research done by the late Gordon Anderson: Hilda and John Walker continued to run the Luncheon or Tearooms until 1947. However, it seems that they leased, or had it under management from the mid-1930s. Hazel Bryce (nee Symes) was there, both before and after her marriage, with Germaine Cattin, later Beckett, as staff. Rolland and Hilda Crouch (nee Wilkins from Taniwha), who was an excellent cook, ran it in 1936 advertising it as the O.K. Tearooms. Mrs Laws is another name remembered from that era.

After the war, the new owner is said to have set up the accounts in the name of Wayside Tearooms, which was likely when that name became fixed. The Lysart family are recalled, from around this time and installed louvre windows in the kitchen. In 1953 the Tearooms were purchased by William and Ruby McKay, who had been working for Markets Ltd out in the Waipuna Valley. In 1955 the McKay's sold and went to a property at Man O War Bay on Waiheke Island. The new Tearoom owners were ex-naval man Allan Leslie and his wife Pat. Mrs Leslie's children Hugh and Sue Lancaster attended Te Kauwhata Primary School. The family owned the business for three years before selling to Allan and Doris Stevenson in 1958. The long hours and seven day weeks saw another change of ownership in 1960 to Joseph and Wyn Hart. They sold in 1963 to Tim and Doris Powell, whose pies are still remembered and perhaps contributed to their ownership lasting until 1967.

From 1967 the owner was Tom Gibbs, who employed a number of locals, and school girls to serve ice-creams during the school holidays. In 1970 he sold to Eddie van Mil who had been farming at Taniwha. The van Mil children went to schools in the district before, and during, their ownership, which lasted until 1984. Eddie van Mil altered the premises and changed the name to Wayside Restaurant and Tearooms. More tasty pies, bread, baking and banana fritters are recalled from the van Mil era. The Wayside Tearooms was always a well-known bus stop for daily services to and from Auckland, and served tourist bus tours morning and afternoon teas. Tom Gibbs and then Eddie van Mil catered for ski tours on Friday evenings. At times there were reputed to have been up to 16 buses there. They also catered for local socials and private events as the Powells had done, and possibly other earlier owners also.

The frequent changing of hands resumed when a Mr Kajita purchased it from the van Mils in 1984. Local by-laws prevented him from also being licensed to sell souvenirs and other items. Consequently, he had the "Restaurant" managed by Mr Yashia Watanabe for several months and

then rented it as “Tearooms” to Mr A Gosselink for two years. The business was then sold to Vern and Delia O’Dwyer, who may have returned to Ireland when they sold to a Mr Miller in 1987. After a year he sold to Gary and Nyree Anderson in December 1988. Mr & Mrs Ray Murphy, of Huntly, were the next owners, buying the business from the Andersons in 1991. In late 1995 they sold to caterer Gerald Baptist, from Pukekohe, who ran the business until 1999. Mr Kajita still owned the building and rented it out as accommodation, from the year 2000.

Fortunately, Lindsay and Dave Simons, with her son Peter Simpson, saw the potential of the historic premises for their greenstone business. After a complex paper trail to locate Mr Kajita, he finally accepted their offer to purchase the property in 2004. They later had contact with Rose Waterhouse, a niece of Hilda Walker in Auckland, who sent them the early photo. During its 12 years in the premises the Greenstone Shop has thrived, and the rest is history - still in the making.

Jenny Kelly.

