

GREENWICH GARDENS

A Place to Call Home

Greenwich Gardens is nestled against the western side of the Alexandra Stream, for the most part, it runs parallel with Bush Road. The stream was named, presumably by a monarchist settler after Edward, Prince of Wales, married Princess Alexandra of Denmark in 1863 and she became Queen Consort. There were other streams, some have dwindled and ceased to flow, others have been confined to culverts and pipes.

The land was once part of Kingfisher Farm and sits close to Albany, once a major fruit and strawberry growing area.



From Albany Highway to the east coast.

Between Bush Road and the Water Treatment Plant is the Alexander Stream

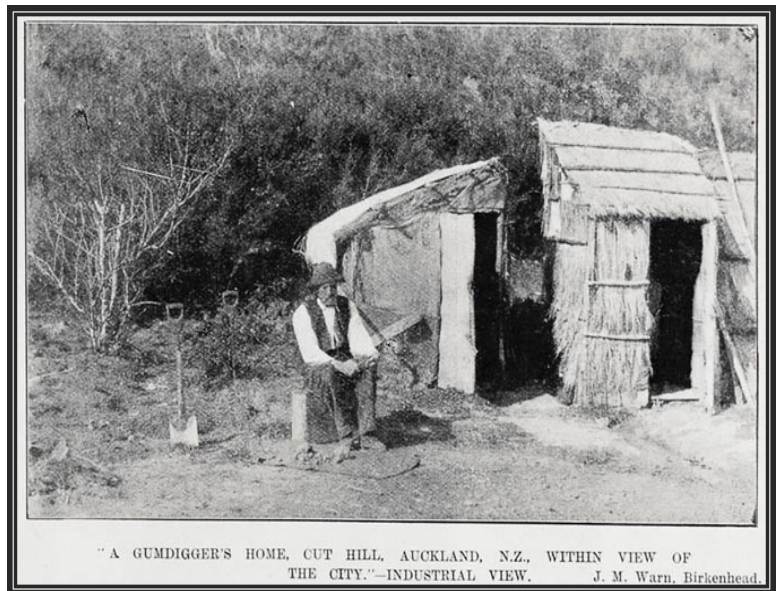
THE EARLY YEARS

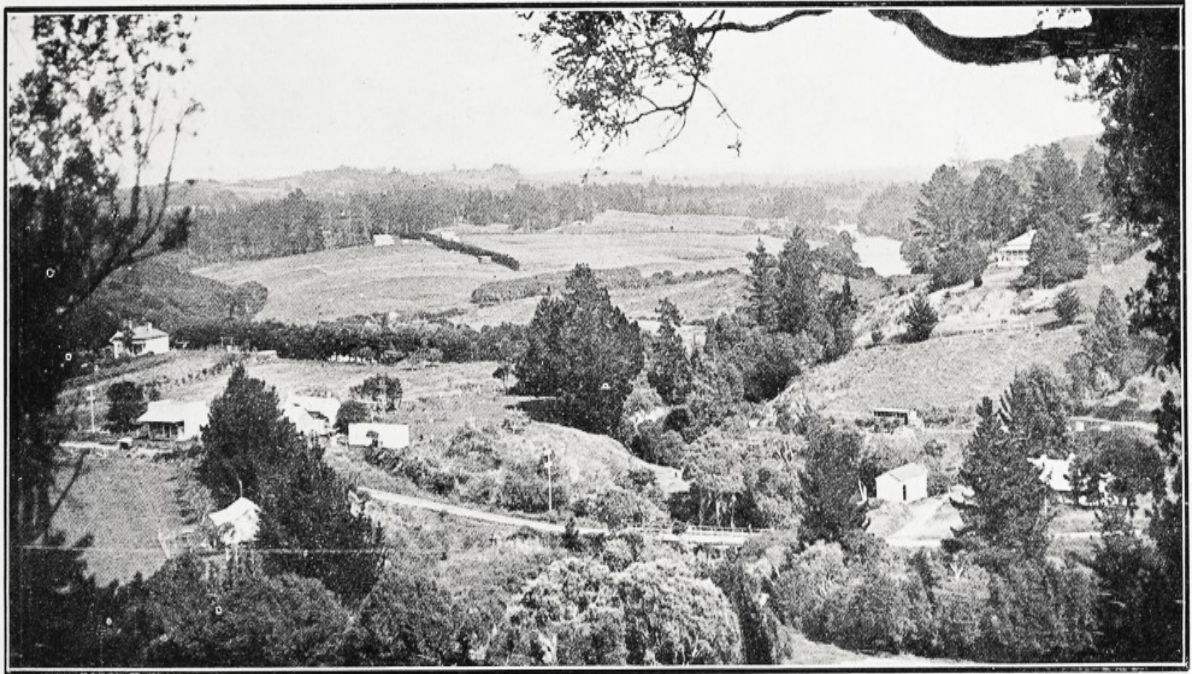
Situated in the Parishes of Paremoremo & Takapuna; the Albany basin is rimmed by Greenhithe, Cuthill, Glenfield, the east coast beaches, Dairy Flat and Coatesville.

The first Europeans to arrive, set out on foot to explore the area, after them came the timber workers who felled the large trees, turning them into timber to build houses, shops, boats, wagons etc for the local market and for export to Sydney and Melbourne. The tall, strong wickers were renowned for their strength and durability as masts and spars on sailing ships being noted by James Cook as early as 1794 when a consignment went back to the English navy.

The early pioneers were not exactly penniless, some of them bought surprisingly large acreages and they seemed to be able to add land when it was needed. But it was hard work; the ground had to be broken in, cleared of scrub, ploughed and harrowed (usually by bullock teams) fenced and planted.

Most of the giant kauri had gone from Lucas Creek (now called Albany) by the time the gum diggers arrived. Much of the regenerating scrub land was slashed and burned off to more easily reach the lucrative deposits left by the ancient kauri forests. The North Shore flourished as it provided good supplies from these long-gone forests; gum digger's camps were numerous and in the immediate area there were two gum stores one at Cut Hill and another at the junction of Sunset and Glenfield Roads. The day of the gum digger was mostly over by the 1920s.





CENTRE OF EXTENSIVE FRUITGROWING DISTRICT: VIEW OF ALBANY, NORTH AUCKLAND.

1927

—C. C. Roberts.

Next to arrive were the settlers who were either people of independent means or tradesmen. Experienced farmers quickly realised that the kauri gum land was quite useless for English type farming and sold their allotments, probably to the tradesmen. The trades-people had a big advantage over the farmer in that they could earn a living at their trade while learning to farm so they stayed and learned to farm the land.

The land was poorly drained and of very low fertility and it was not until much later when it was discovered that lime and phosphate were needed to make the soil productive. However, the would-be farmers persisted raising cattle and sheep and planted grain, grass, crops and fruit trees. By 1892 their efforts were producing large quantities of apples, pears and grapes and some peaches and plums from land which previously was considered useless by farmers.



Travel was difficult, tracks for roads which challenged even horse and buggy; supplies to and from Auckland was via boat from the closest jetty. As there was no dairy industry, every household had a cow or two which supplied their dairy needs i.e. milk and butter. The sale of surplus butter and eggs was the prerogative of the women, some of whom pushed wheelbarrows all the way to Birkenhead with their produce, returning with household supplies.

However, the main agricultural development was in orcharding. The cultivation of fruit trees began as far back as 1847 on Herald Island and later around the 1880s in the Albany area when Alex McArthur, George Pannill and Ernest Frost, all related by marriage, established their orchards along the east side of Bush Road and both sides of Rosedale Road. Alex McArthur lists in his diary that he had planted apples, pears, peaches, plums, greengages, loquats, cherries, quince and almonds.

The district eventually became a very large growing area supplying Auckland with large quantities of fresh fruit and vegetables; the north shore being the major supplier of strawberries to a rapidly growing Auckland.

However with modernisation of the area things began to change. WW1 was over, electricity had arrived and improvements to the roads and bridges made vehicle travel less difficult. Not all was good - codling moth and fireblight had hit the fruit crops, possums were becoming a pest and the depression of 1929 - all played a part. A steady progression towards dairying was happening, orchards were being cut out and the land ploughed and converted to dairy farms. Orchards in the Rosedale-Bush Road area survived by growing mainly apples.

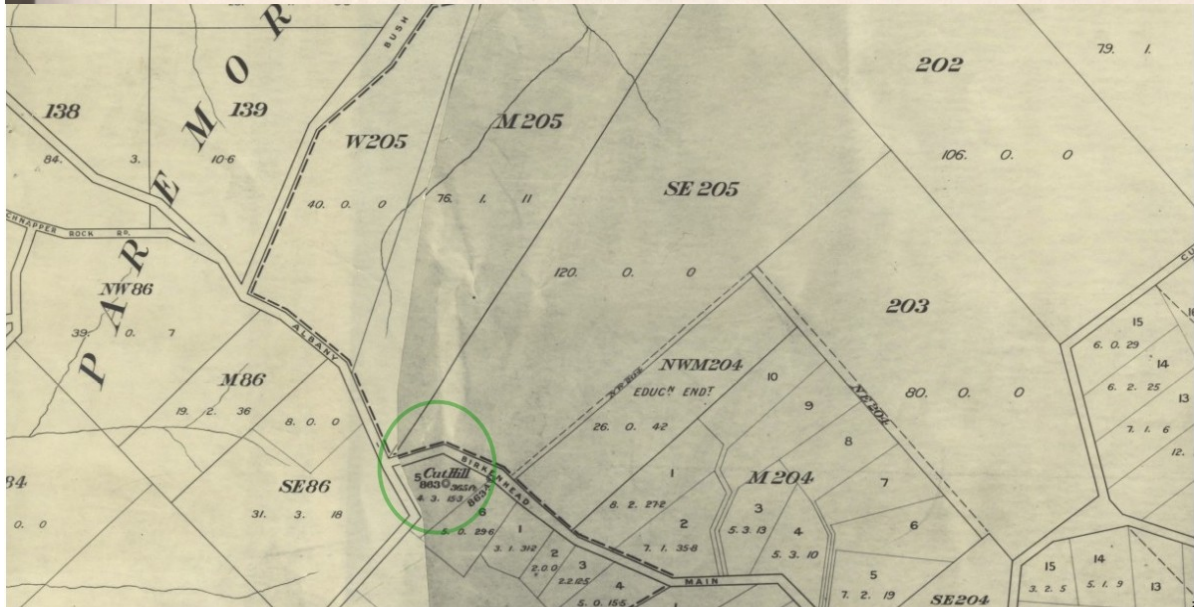


GATHERING THE LEMON CROP IN AN ORCHARD AT GREENHITHE.



AUCKLAND'S STRAWBERRY SUPPLY: CHILDREN PICKING THE FRUIT AT NORTHCOTE, FOR DESPATCH TO THE CITY MARKET.

Price Photo. Co., Photo.



In this 1932 map, Sunset Road was named Cut Hill Road and Albany Highway is Birkenhead Road

Doug Barwell, a young engineer from Auckland, married Dorothy Dennis in 1928 and in 1933 they bought 65 acres of land from Barney Pannill with a plan to grow strawberries and run a few dairy cows.

The land was covered in scrub which Doug broke in with a horse and plough. At first they grew strawberries while the land was being sown in grass for pasture, then they built a cowshed and milked cows for cream supply. A metal deposit was discovered and a quarry was established, this was where Unsworth Drive and Westminster Road meet.



Entrance to Kingfisher Farm

The Barwells sold the bulk of their land in 1966 to the Unsworth family who continued to farm the land and named it Kingfisher Farm, this land is now Unsworth Heights. Kingfisher Farm entrance is where Unsworth Road begins.

In 1985 the Unsworths were granted consent to subdivide, Stage I as marked on the map.

Stage I - 1985

Unsworth Heights with the stage one development delineated by the dotted line by the Albany Highway.

Housing development takes shape in Albany

A multi-million dollar residential development is slowly taking shape in Albany basin.

The Unsworth Family Trust is developing 25 hectares now farmed by Mr Doug Unsworth on the Albany Highway.

The Takapuna City Council has approved preliminary earthworks and stage one goes ahead this year and the rest of the area will be generally developed over seven to 10 years.

Mr Keith Barnes, project manager with the TSE Group Consultants Ltd, says the overall development is for 25 sections which will be developed according to demand.

By this winter, stage one will be completed. The 55 lots in this area will be priced at a par with better quality North Shore sections.

The land until recently was leased for grazing. It has been owned by Mr Unsworth for some 15 years. Now retired, he is taking an active role in the new development.

Earthworks are underway at the moment. 500 m of road will be named Unsworth Heights.

As development continues, the road pattern will be restricted to within the subdivision, says Mr Barnes.

There will also be a network of neighbourhood reserves.

One section, adjacent to the development, has been set aside for an intermediate and primary school.

The Auckland Education Board will determine when that section will be developed.

Help for disabled

GLENFIELD FURNISHINGS SPECIALS

CHILDREN'S PRINTS \$4.99
 120cm wide from **metre**

SHOWER CURTAINING \$3.99
 Plain and PRINTED **metre**

UPHOLSTERY VELVET

You may have noticed that many roads in the area are named after birds. It is often Council policy to name new roads around the activities or people who owned the land so, in this case as the farm was named Kingfisher Farm the new roads were given bird names



HORTICULTURE IN THE DISTRICT

1893 - A Fruit Growers Association was established, foundation members were Geo Battersby; Mark Phillips; Geo Pannill; Geo Ryan; Jacob Cowley; Thos Holden Captain Alex McArthur

The Association petitioned the Government to establish an experimental farm, but to no effect. Eventually in 1911 after much hard work and lobbying of government ministers and officials, an experimental farm was established at the south east end of the Albany Domain where testing took place on various aspects of flora and fauna culture, like strawberry culture, possums, tobacco, spraying etc. The experimental farm introduced paspalum, kikuyu, granny Smith apples, strawberries and it is believed that their work made it possible to farm the northern kauri gumlands.

1895 - the Albany Surprise Grape, a sport of Isabella was discovered by G. Pannill on the bank of the Alexandra Stream

1896 Albany Beauty Apple, a sport of Gravenstein was discovered at Hillcrest (allots. 154 and 155) Minnie Phillips, later Mrs Roly Stevenson

Another notable first was the Monarch strawberry.

An article from the 1942 Auckland Star, 5 March 1942

LUSCIOUS GRAPES

ALBANY SURPRISE - HOW THEY ORIGINATED

How many Aucklanders who, in the next few weeks, will be enjoying luscious outdoor grapes from sunny slopes in the Auckland and Te Kauwhata districts know the history of the delectable variety and how the name Albany Surprise originated?

One has to go back nearly 50 years when Mr. G. Pannill, of Albany, found that his American Isabella vines, obtained from plants which had been growing since the earliest days of European settlement, had thrown up three particularly strong canes. On these the grapes were much larger and finer than any hitherto grown. Another season's experience convinced Mr. Pannill that he had struck something of exceptional value. He set to work to propagate a quantity of the fruit, but had no intention of marketing it at that stage.

In 1897 Mr. Pannill offered a few cases to the public. The grapes sold well and their fame spread far and wide.' He was besieged with requests for cuttings and plants, but turned a deaf ear to them all. In 1898, however, the

plants were distributed over a wide area, the largest grower being Mr. A. T. Potter, of Whangarei, then Government entomologist. At this time the Government was taking some interest in fostering grape culture, but Albany Surprise was not known officially, and the fact that its parent was the Isabella sufficed to condemn it untested as a table and wine grape. But the grape was being tested by a large number of growers, all of whom proved its cropping qualities. This, together with the high prices obtained by Mr. Pannill for the fruit, stimulated planting among settlers. By 1900 the grapes were appearing on the Auckland and Wellington markets in quantity. On March 24 of that year an Auckland daily wrote: "Yesterday there were on exhibition in Queen Street a quantity of remark-able-looking grapes. Inquiry showed that the new variety were Albany Surprise grown by Mr. G. Pannill and exhibited by Messrs. Bennett and Green."

In the next six or seven years, despite opposition, the grapes continued to win their way in popular favour. They survived the removal of the ban on imported grapes, and actually sold here at 50 per cent higher than Australian varieties. As a result the Australian growers retired from the Auckland market, leaving Albany-Surprise in almost undisputed possession of the field.

Previous to the above newspaper article, at his 80rd birthday party, Mr Pannill he said he did not claim to have started the fruit-growing industry at Albany, but he thought he could be called one of the pioneers. With the late Captain A. McArthur, who for years ran a steamer service from Albany to Auckland, he took up the growing of apples, peaches and plums, later grapes were planted.

Mr. Pannill's father was the late Mr. Alexander Pannill, who came from Australia and settled at Lucas' Creek, as Albany was then known, in 1854. As a young man, said Mr. Pannill, he and his father carted all the timber required for the first State school built in the district. The timber was landed at the old Government landing on Lucas' Creek and taken from there to the site on bullock wagons.

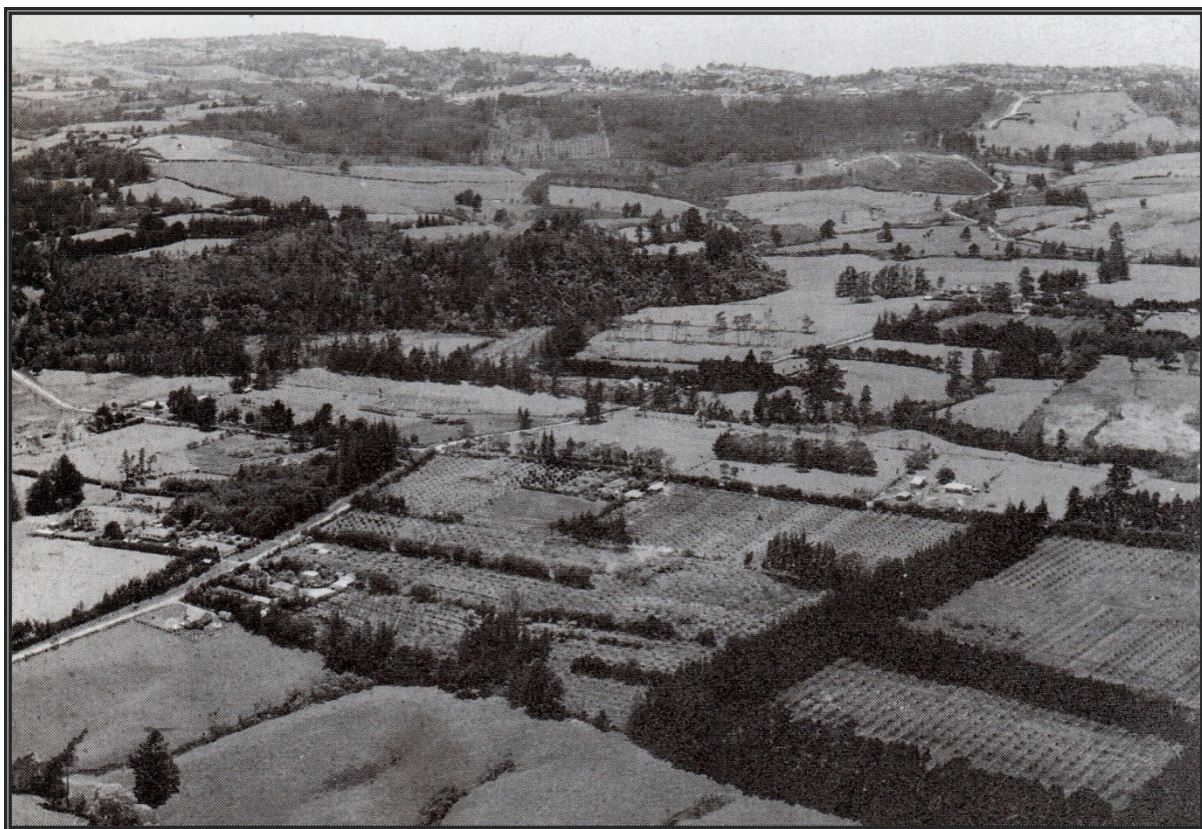
After his parents died, Mr. Pannill took over their property, which was then in the Bush and Rosedale Roads area. He lived there from 1869 to 1909, when he moved to Cut Hill, purchasing what is now the Pinehill Park estate. About 10 years ago he built his present home on the Greenhithe Road at Cut Hill and has lived there in retirement ever since.

Mr. Pannill said that his discovery of the famous "Albany Surprise" variety, generally conceded to be the best outdoor grape in New Zealand, and since its development cultivated in many other parts of the world.

Another memory of Mr. Pannill's was the finding of alluvial gold in the waters of Lucas' Creek. He said that many years ago a small quantity was taken out of the stream, although not sufficient was found to result in a rush.



Bush Road from escarpment, Pannill's house and orchards



Orchards bordered by Rosedale & Bush Roads 1950s

References:

The Story of Rural Glenfield
Once there were green fields
Papers Past
NZ Herald

Glenfield People
Albany 100 Inc
Auckland Libraries
Auckland Star

SOME EXTRA PHOTOS



Strawberry Picker 2 Nov 1911 - Northcote



Spraying the Orchard



Orchard Spraying



Albany Hotel



1957

Albany area 1973



Rosedale, 1991