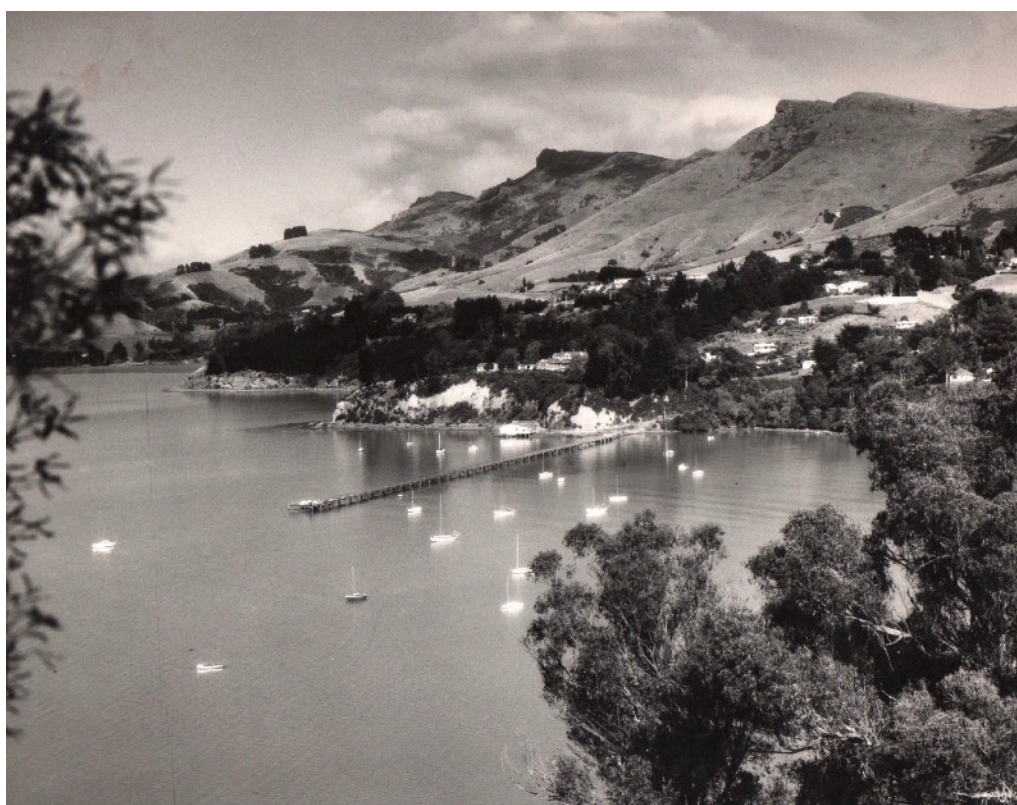


**From Jane Robertson's new book *Living Between Land and Sea; The Bays of Whakaraupō*
*Lyttelton Harbour***

Ōtoromiro Governors Bay, Pukekaroro Sandy Bay

According to current topographical maps, 'Governors Bay' refers to that large scoop which extends from Sandy Bay Point to the tip of Mansons Peninsula and includes Ōhinetahi and Allandale. However, with Ōhinetahi and Allandale included in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on the smaller area extending from Sandy Bay Point to Potts Point – originally known as Dyers Bay. Although this is a small stretch of coastline it has, at various stages over the past 160 years, been home to four different jetties. The one damaged and decaying (but about to be rebuilt) jetty that remains is remarkable for its 296 metre length. Its continued presence is a graphic reminder of the battle with the harbour mudflats and the determination of Governors Bay residents to retain sea access to their settlement at all costs in the early twentieth century.



Governors Bay was a favoured place for Waitaha in the fifteenth century and then for Ngāti Māmoe who settled in the bay in significant numbers in the late sixteenth century. The inexorable southward path of Ngāi Tahu culminated in the iwi's defeat of the Ngāti Māmoe pā

at Ōhinetahi. The fortified pā was then rebuilt by chief Manuwhiri on a site just to the east of the present fire station (see chapter 10 for further detail). Names for the waterfront within Dyers Bay tell us much about the particular resources of the area for Māori. In Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) names provided 'oral maps of the landscape' enabling transmission of knowledge between communities and generations¹. Around the long Governors Bay jetty was Ōtoromiro (the place where miro was cut and shaped with an adze). Further northwards, present-day Sandy Bay was known as Pukekaroro (the gathering place of seabirds). The valley running down from Dyers Pass towards the harbour was Parakiraki (the very dry place). Sadly the miro no longer grows in Ōtoromiro.

By the time the first Canterbury Association settlers arrived in Whakaraupō/Port Cooper in 1850, there were no longer any Māori kāinga in Governors Bay. Our first description of the bay comes from Henry Sewell, who was in the province to sort out the affairs of the Canterbury Association. On 16 February 1853 Sewell had arranged to go to the head of the harbour to follow up on rumours of coal in the vicinity. A boatman had been hired for an 8.30am departure from Lyttelton, in order to take advantage of the high tide. However the boatman failed to turn up. Sewell and his wife Elizabeth, Captain Simeon with his wife and children, along with Bishop Jackson's secretary Christopher Calvert, decided to make the day one of 'pleasure' instead and visit another, more accessible part of the head of the harbour.

They 'landed on a little sandy and shelly beach near a cottage and a holding of a Mr Dyer and his sister ... the two with a young man of the name of Parsons constitute the settlement'.² John Dyer and his sister Mary Ann had arrived in Lyttelton in June 1851 and, together with Charles Parsons, built a small cottage at the foot of what is now Dyers Pass Road. The three had come out on the *Canterbury* with Captain Simeon who was a member of the management committee of the Canterbury Association and had taken up John Godley's vacated position as Resident Magistrate.

Sewell was an astute observer of early colonial settlement. He noted that the young men had built a neat wooden one-roomed cottage with a loft above. A small shed behind served as a

¹ Atholl Anderson. *The Welcome of Strangers: An Ethnohistory of Southern Māori A.D. 1650–1850*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press in association with Dunedin City Council, 1998, p. 16.

² David McIntyre (ed.). *The Journal of Henry Sewell 1853–7: Vol 1*. Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1980, p. 147.

kitchen and dairy and a tent served as a cheese room. Here John, Mary Ann and Charles made between two and three pounds worth of cheese a week and butter for the Lyttelton market. They also had calves, pigs and poultry. Mary Ann ran a small school. The greatest need, Sewell considered, was for a road or at least a horsepath to Lyttelton.

By the end of the decade Joseph Munnings was working for Dyer and Parsons. In a diary entry for 14 November 1859 Munnings recorded that he was 'up early and helped to load the boat with potatoes, wood and peas etc. and started about nine for port in the whale boat and rowing the punt behind us with oars...' ³ By 21 December he was carrying new and old potatoes, peas, black and red currants, raspberries and strawberries to Lyttelton. Given that sea access from the beach would only be possible at near high tide, it was clear that a jetty would be a big advantage. When we do not know, but at some point John Dyer and/or Charles Parsons built a private stone and wood jetty on the foreshore below the cottage. In January 1875 the Lyttelton Times reported that the ballast lighter *Annie* had 'parted her chain' during a heavy easterly sea and drifted up to the head of the bay 'to within a chain of Mr Parson's wharf.' ⁴ Parson's jetty features clearly in an undated photo which also records the first public jetty in the bay.



³ Joseph Munnings, *Diaries*. Box 1, Folder 1, 23 July 1859–3 May, 1862, p. 20. Canterbury Museum.

⁴ *Lyttelton Times*, 15 January 1875.

With its sheltered microclimate Governors Bay attracted a number of early settlers wanting to take advantage of the burgeoning populations in Lyttelton and Christchurch by establishing farms, orchards and market gardens. They then sought to transport their produce out of the bay with more ease than the poorly maintained bridle path allowed. In December 1858, Thomas Potts and the Provincial Engineer Edward Dobson inspected the Dyers Bay waterfront to determine the site for a public jetty. They settled on 'that portion of the beach almost contiguous to Mr Perceval's [sic] garden' – what we now know as Sandy Bay beach. The following year the Canterbury Provincial Council voted £100 for the construction of what became known as the 'Government Jetty', and a further £100 was spent during 1862 to secure road access.



Seeing a commercial opportunity, Westby Percival, well known as a somewhat litigious character, put 23 acres of adjacent land on the market at £10 pounds an acre cash, even before the jetty was built. The land was freehold 'with a frontage to the Beach and Governor's Bay Roads of more than half a mile and adjoining the jetty at Dyer's Bay lately erected.'⁵ Percival considered that the situation of his land, with the additional benefit of the proposed jetty, and the advantages of bathing, fishing and boating, would lend itself to the 'lucrative establishment of a first class Boarding House and Sanatorium.'

⁵ Ibid., 2 April, 1862.

The Small family, newly arrived in Dyers Bay, would have welcomed the presence of a jetty. Fleeing Australia and an abusive marriage, Mary Small (who assumed the surname 'Phipps' to lessen the chances of being followed by her husband) leased a cob cottage near the Dyers Bay foreshore. There she made a new life for her children, William, John, Archibald, James and Emma. Oldest daughter Mary Ann joined the family sometime later. The soil was good, there was a stream nearby and there was a ready market for the vegetables and fruit carried around the Bridle Path to the port by the boys. The family traded eggs and fowls with Māori at Rāpaki and grazed cattle on the tussock slopes. The purchase of a boat made transporting produce to Lyttelton and around the harbour much easier. The presence of the jetty also meant they could sell direct to visitors arriving off the steam launches. Later John (Jack) Small worked as a boatman for some years and at one time had the contract for running stores to the leper colony at Quail Island.

However the Government Jetty soon proved unsatisfactory. Thomas Potts pointed out in 1863 that a small sum of money spent on the jetty could prevent its destruction from high tides. At low tide boats could be stuck in the mudflats. Such problems meant there was much local lobbying for a better-sited jetty since requests that the existing jetty be repaired and lengthened fell on deaf ears. A determining factor was depth of water - but self-interest meant that vocal locals also agitated for a jetty proximate to *their* property. At a meeting in March 1874, three sites were considered: the location of the present-day long jetty; on the beach in Sandy Bay, location of the Government Jetty; and where the remains of the Sandy Bay Point jetty can still be seen.

William Forster, proprietor of the Traveller's Rest Hotel at the junction of the old Dyers Pass Road and the present road to Lyttelton, proposed two jetties, one at the present location and one at Sandy Bay Point (also known as Percival's Point) or at Hodgson's Bay (present-day Allandale). He claimed that there was a mine of undeveloped wealth in the stone quarries on Hodgson's property but that this resource could be exploited only if the stone could be transported by sea. Hodgson agreed and also argued that the farmers at that end of the bay could not compete because the cost of transit by road negated any profit margin. Charles Parsons spoke in favour of Dyers Point, the site of the current long jetty, which, he claimed, had the greatest depth of water (not so) and had already been surveyed. The meeting

concluded with a decision to locate the jetty at Dyers Point and inform the secretary for public works of the resolution.⁶

In March 1874 tenders were called for construction of the jetty and in April the *Press* reported that, when the jetty was finished, a steamer would run daily between the bay and Lyttelton. By November the paper was advertising land for sale 'situated close to the New Jetty'.⁷ In January 1877 Agar and Roberts were advertising a twice-daily steam launch run between Lyttelton and Governors Bay at a fare of 4s return. The new jetty was convenient in terms of its central location. For example, it brought visitors to within easy reach of the Whitecliffs Hotel, the local store and the Ocean View Hotel. When the Ocean View was up for sale (again) in 1875, the auctioneer stressed that it was 'opposite the new jetty'.⁸ In 1876 the new proprietor of Whitecliffs Hotel advertised comfortable board and residence to which access could be gained via a steam launch running daily from Lyttelton following the arrival of the 9.30am and 4.30pm trains. Construction of the jetty prompted the metalling of the Foreshore Road.



⁶ Governors Bay jetty, CAAR, CH287, CP 297/, R8420896, ANZCRO.

⁷ *Press*, 21 November 1874.

⁸ *Lyttelton Times*, 17 June 1875.

Even before the construction of the second public jetty, Governors Bay was a popular location and destination for fund-raising bazaars. When the newly built St Cuthbert's Church required a parsonage, the community swung into action. At the end of December 1865 a large marquee was set up in a paddock belonging to Charles Parsons. Stalls sold crafts and refreshments. Approximately 300 visitors arrived via Dyers Pass in the new Cobb & Co. coach and from Lyttelton in the steamer *Betsy Douglas* which berthed at the Government Jetty in Sandy Bay. The size of events and the amounts they raised increased over the years. In December 1873 the steamers *Halcyon* and *Mullogh* made three trips each from Lyttelton, and many visitors came over Dyers Pass, to enjoy a bazaar and picnic fund-raiser for St Cuthbert's and St Peter's Churches. Six hundred people enjoyed George Oram's sit-down dinner.

Despite the construction of the jetty at Dyers Point, access at low tide remained a challenge for the steam launches that plied the harbour. Locals asked for a channel to be dredged to provide better access. Lyttelton Harbour Board engineer C. Napier-Bell reported that for 2000ft from the pier the water shoaled from 1ft 4in to 3ft at low water spring tides. The dredge would therefore be stranded except at the top of high water and the Harbour Board dredge simply could not undertake the work. Only five years after its construction, Napier-Bell could say that the jetty was just very badly sited as far as access to deep water was concerned.⁹ As if to reinforce the point, on a beautiful summer day in February 1880, ninety Christchurch Hotel employees left port on the steam launch *Lyttelton* bound for a picnic in Governors Bay. The tide was out when the launch arrived at the head of the harbour and the passengers had to clamber ashore on rocks - about a mile from the jetty and an hour's slipping and rock-clambering from the Ocean View Hotel.¹⁰

Napier-Bell proposed a jetty at what he named Raupaki Point, otherwise known as Percival's Point, the site considered - and rejected - at the 1874 residents' meetings. Here a depth of three feet at low water spring tides could be reached 150 feet from the rocks, sufficient depth for the steam launch presently in use. A road would need to be cut for about 30 chains around the rocks and a connection made with the main road. So in March 1883 the Lyttelton Harbour Board invited tenders for the construction of an alternative jetty, this time at Percivals Point, Governors Bay.

⁹ *Lyttelton Times*, 3 September 1879.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14 February 1880.

The new structure was commonly known as 'Small's Jetty'. Percivals Point later came to be known as Sandy Bay Point. The narrow track that now runs from Sandy Bay round to the remaining jetty piles was once a busy official road providing access to the bay for cargo and visitors. When the house originally built for Mary Small by her family, and now known as Rowan House, became home to the Gilpin family in 1914, they turned it into a tearoom and guesthouse. Visitors arriving by launch at Sandy Bay Point would walk up the path from the beach, under the arched whale bones at the entrance to the garden and enjoy scones, meat loaves, sandwiches and soft drinks.



The success of boarding houses such as 'Ellerslie' was a direct consequence of regular jetty access to the head of the harbour. For example, Ellerslie was 'within but a few miles of Lyttelton with which it is in regular communication by coach and steamer ... an ideal spot for tourists, and for city residents desiring a quiet rest in the bracing atmosphere of the sea coast.'¹¹ Some families supplemented their income by offering a room or two in their homes to holiday-makers. Visitors who couldn't afford a hotel or boarding house holiday, or who merely preferred camping out, pitched their tents along the foreshore between the two main jetties. This popularity caused problems. In 1909 the Mount Herbert county clerk asked for a constable to be stationed at Governors Bay.

¹¹ The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Canterbury Provincial District], 1903. NZETC, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc03Cycl-t1-body1-d5-d17.html>, accessed 22 March 2020.

I would point out that during the last few years, Governors Bay has become a favourite resort for holiday makers and campers. On holiday occasions the Lyttelton launches take up as many as 1000 to 1500 people while quite a large number walk or cycle over the hill from Christchurch, and it must be admitted that among such a large crowd there are always some who are ready to despoil the property of others...¹²

In the 1920s Stanley Radcliffe would put his bike on the train at Heathcote, transfer it onto the *John Anderson* at Lyttelton, disembark at the Sandy Bay jetty and bike around to see his Harris relatives in Allandale.¹³ For school picnics in the 1930s John Allan and his fellow Governors Bay pupils caught a boat to Quail Island from the Sandy Bay jetty. 'You'd get in there when you couldn't get into the big one [Governors Bay jetty].'¹⁴

The two jetties were popular fishing spots. Frank Brown and Bill Hall favoured the smaller jetty on the point at Sandy Bay where the water was deeper and they could go garfishing. 'The tide would have to be right too, anywhere from a little before high tide, to half way out.'¹⁵ Sometimes, 'when the fish were running and the tide was not right until after midnight', the boys would 'rise at perhaps 1am, load up and go off down to the jetty. On one occasion we took a frying pan down with us, caught our fish, and at daybreak lit a fire and fried them. We wouldn't have exchanged this breakfast for the grandest meal in Christchurch.'¹⁶

In November 1935 two lads - James McFaul and James Kevin - walked over the hill from Christchurch to fish at Governors Bay. They fished from the long jetty and then tried their luck at the deeper water jetty at Sandy Bay. James McFaul was walking backwards, unwinding his lines, when he fell off the edge of the jetty. Kevin threw a life-buoy and then jumped in to try and save his friend who was foundering in the rough sea. Despite all efforts, including help from local resident Angus Small, James McFaul died, the coroner returning a verdict of accidental drowning. McFaul's family attempted to sue the Lyttelton Harbour Board because

¹² Letter from County Clerk, Mr Field, Mount Herbert County Council Letter Book, 1909, p. 336. Courtesy of Murray Radcliffe.

¹³ Coyla Radcliffe-Oliver, interviewed by Lyn Wright 2 June 2001. GBHT archives.

¹⁴ John Allan, interviewed by Jane Robertson, 8 August 2011.

¹⁵ *Bay News*, June 1993, pp. 4–5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, quoting from 17 January 1937 diary entry.

the jetty had been constructed without railings at the end so that cargo could be loaded. As a result of this accident the Sandy Bay jetty was dismantled in 1938. Only the piles remain today.

Meanwhile access to the 'upper jetty' continued to be hampered by the accumulation of silt. In February 1908 Lyttelton Harbour Board engineer Cyrus Williams prepared a memorandum on the dredging of a channel 'from the lower to the upper wharf in Governors Bay'. He concluded that the quantity of material to be removed in order to make a channel 50ft wide with side slopes of 6 to 1 and a depth of 5ft at low water would be about 17,306 cubic yards. The Harbour Board's Priestman dredge could do the job with the help of a small tugboat and two barges to carry away the spoil. However the dredging work would not be permanent and 'by the time the work was finished at one end the other end would require to be gone over again. It seems to me that the cost would be out of all proportion to the benefits'.¹⁷



A petition signed by most bay residents shortly after the appearance of the William's memorandum argued that the upper wharf's accessibility by road made it much handier for visitors and less expensive for commerce than the 'lower [Sandy Bay] jetty'. The petitioners sought an extension to their upper jetty, the dredging of a channel, clearing of the foreshore and improved bathing facilities. A deputation of head of the harbour residents met with

¹⁷ Memorandum, Cyrus Williams to Chairman of Lyttelton Harbour Board, 3 February 1908. XBAA, CH518, RC89C-0148/7, R24981701, ANZCRO/ECan.

representatives of the Lyttelton Harbour Board. They pointed to the increase in produce coming out of the head of the harbour, in particular flax and wool. Several spoke in favour of closing the newer, Percival's Point Jetty rather than the 'upper' jetty. Costs could be covered by a toll levied on visitors using the jetty.

The deputation was asked to calculate the quantity of goods, number of passengers and 'probable amount of contributions toward the work by settlers in the district' and come back to the Harbour Board with 'something definite'. In a speedy response, Governors Bay resident Dr Pairman indicated that there would be wharfage on anything between 800 and 1000 tons and that the number of visitors to the bay annually was around 30,000. With the jetty extended and a channel dredged, farmers could dispatch all their wool in a single day rather than over a week or more; more grain would be grown in the district, given the current prohibitive cost of cartage; and a great stimulus would be given to fruit and vegetable growing, dairying, poultry and egg farming, beekeeping and other industries suitable for small holdings. The levying of a small charge on the up to 30,000 visitors to the bay each year would defray costs and provide a sinking fund for ongoing maintenance.¹⁸

Despite such energetic soliciting, the Harbour Improvement Committee advised the Harbour Board not to consider extending the jetty or dredging a channel. Repair of the short, upper jetty could be undertaken at a cost of £250 as long as the Mount Herbert County Council would agree to pay 6% per annum for 20 years on the cost of the repairs. The Council must have been reluctant as in 1910 the Harbour Board decided to close the 'upper wharf' at Governors Bay as an economy measure.¹⁹ It was declared unsafe for traffic of any kind.

Towards the end of 1911, interesting reports appeared in local papers suggesting that the upper jetty might be extended to connect with the lower jetty at a cost of £6000. A year later the Harbour Improvement Committee changed its mind and recommended that the upper Governors Bay jetty be extended so that launches could use it, regardless of the state of the tide and at an estimated cost of £1500 - £2000. Construction began, using Australian hardwood timber, but progressed haltingly. A visitor to Governors Bay complained to the *Press* in March 1913 that work on the jetty was at a standstill.²⁰ Finally, by August, the jetty had

¹⁸ Letter, T.W Pairman to Lyttelton Harbour Board, 27 March 1908. Ibid.

¹⁹ *Press*, 9 November 1910.

²⁰ *Press*, 12 March 1913.



been completed to its full 950ft length. At the time of the extension, Eddie Radcliffe was going to school in Governors Bay. After class the children would rush down the jetty, where there was a trolley on railway lines that transported materials to the construction end. The workmen would allow the children to get into the trolley and push themselves up and down.²¹

Not everyone was happy with the 1913 extension. A disgruntled reader pointed out in a letter to the editor of the *Press*, just before the official opening of the Rāpaki jetty, that the newly extended Governors Bay wharf had never been graced by an official visit. It was however

extremely unlikely that they [officials] would be able to get down by water, as it is only at high tide that anything beyond small motor boats can approach it, and at low water it stands out high and dry in the mud. I feel sure, however, that the chairman [of the harbour Board] would place his motor-car at the service of the members and drive them over, and if low water, of walking it and viewing the most shameful waste of public money that it has ever been my lot to witness.²²

²¹ Murray Radcliffe, interviewed by Jane Robertson, 14 August 2014.

²² *Press*, 21 September 1916.

When a Christchurch resident took a walk over the hill to Governors Bay in June 1918, 'one of the first things that came into my view (completely spoiling the beauty of the bay) was a hideous, snake-like structure, standing out in the mud'. Later in the day he strolled down to the wharf and watched as the *Purau* steamed up and 'gracefully settled in the mud some two chains from the wharf, and there she stuck for about two hours, the passengers subsequently being taken on board in the dinghy'.²³

The idea of connecting the two jetties resurfaced. In September 1913, the Christchurch Star reported that 'the eighteen-hundred-foot jetty which it is intended to run out at Governors Bay will be the longest in Canterbury and one of the longest in New Zealand.'²⁴ This extension 'which will end quite close to the old jetty' would allow 4ft depth at low water. The use of old timber would mean a cost of £800 as against £2500 with new timber. This proposed extension to the extension seems to have sunk without trace.

Despite being by far the longest jetty or wharf structure in the harbour, the upper Governors Bay jetty was still inadequate at and around low tide. In 1927 residents petitioned the Lyttelton Harbour Board to provide better water access, primarily by dredging a channel. The board remained reluctant to dredge and thereby commit itself to ongoing channel maintenance. Acting engineer Percy Fryer pointed out that a depth of 3ft 9in at ordinary low water seemed reasonable to him, especially given that there was a regular motor service by road and a very small amount of water-borne traffic. The argument as to whether the upper harbour was silting up as a result of currents carrying dredged and dumped spoil from the lower harbour continued, with the Harbour Board asserting no change in sediment depth and local residents arguing that the silting up of the foreshore was obvious to any casual observer. Ex-resident John Hadfield, following a visit to Governors Bay in 1930, wrote to the Press that 'the jetty would appear to be of more use now as a promenade than for the purpose for which it was built.'²⁵

Regardless of the tidal difficulties, access by sea continued to be hugely popular with visitors. A regular steamer service ran from Lyttelton to Governors Bay on Sundays and public holidays, carrying picnickers and visitors to the Pleasure Gardens at the Ocean View Hotel.

²³ *Press*, 8 June 1918.

²⁴ *Star*, 13 September 1913.

²⁵ *Press*, 14 June 1930.

Vessels on the run included *Canterbury*, *Waiwera*, *John Anderson*, *Purau* and *Monica*. The popular 35-ton steel *John Anderson*, built in Lyttelton and launched in November 1891, was registered to take 250 passengers on harbour excursions. *Purau* and *Monica* were still carrying passengers to the bay in the 1920s, but only at high tide.



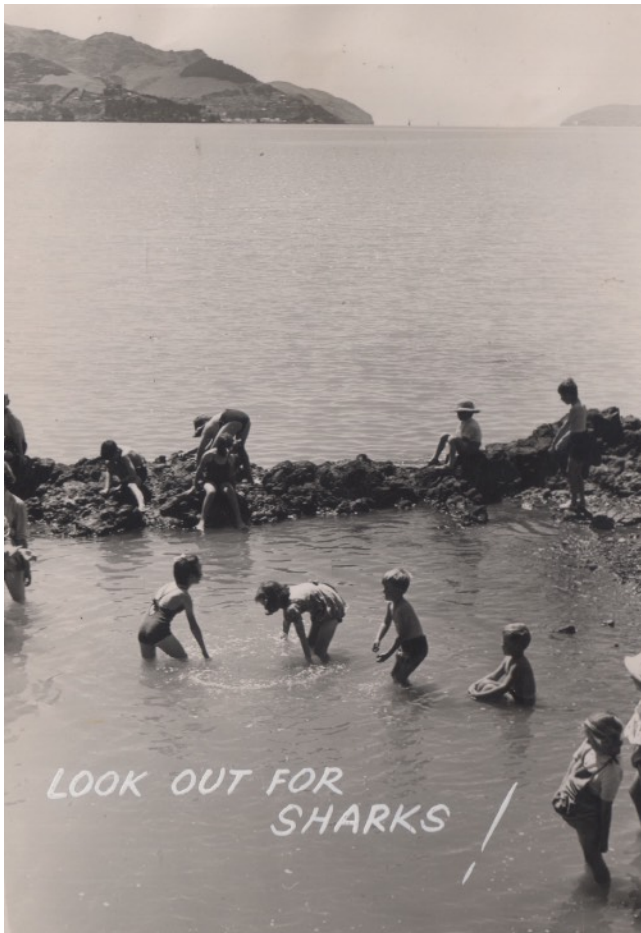
For local children the Governors Bay foreshore was an enormous playground. Angus Small remembered picnics at Small's Beach, swimming, hut building, flying kites, tussock sledging and a precious model yacht. His son Graeme remembered 'whizzing down' on foot from the old Governors Bay School to Sandy Bay to go swimming, juniors at one end of the beach, seniors at the other, with a changing shed for the girls. Every Guy Fawkes the Scouts organised a big bonfire on the beach at Sandy Bay. People came from all around the head of the harbour to enjoy the fire, a 'couple of big dixies of savs' and a sing-along with Angus Small playing the accordion.²⁶

When the nor-westers funnelled down the valley from the Sign of the Kiwi, the wind would hit the water in a line between the remaining piles of the Sandy Bay Jetty and the long jetty. The children made trimarans about 2 ft long out of flax stalks with a flax stalk mast tied back with string and a lug sail. These were serious racing vessels. 'When put in the water the strong wind

²⁶ Graeme Small, interviewed by Jane Robertson, 22 January 2015.

caught it, and it would just rocket across the harbour to Manson's Point.'²⁷ Simon Agar remembered childhood holidays at Sandy Bay. 'At low tide, my brother and I used to mud slide on our bellies half way to the main jetty on small sheets of plywood. After we were done, we would climb the private track up to Rowan house totally covered in mud head to foot.'²⁸

At Cholmondeley Children's Home in the 1940s, Neil Withell recalled.



We were allowed to play on the rocky beach below [Cholmondeley] but we were told to stay together and not wander away. Under no circumstances we were [*sic*] to venture onto the jetty unaccompanied.

We were then told that, at an earlier 'camp', a little boy had walked out onto it and a BIG OCTOPUS came up over the side and dragged him into the sea. After some time on the beach, we all formed a line and walked down the centre of the jetty to the very end and back, petrified at every step.²⁹

Local residents built a den for the Sea Scouts on the foreshore between the long jetty and Sandy Bay. In December 1960 more than 100

Sea Scouts gathered to celebrate the launching of their new training boat and the opening of the new den. The 18-foot boat, which had a centreboard for sailing, was built in the bay by Lionel Jefcoate and was named the *Vigilant*. At the launching ceremony the six-member Governors Bay junior crew manned the boat with lofted oars then rowed to the site of the new den.

²⁷ Graeme Small quoted in Katharina Small. *The Smalls of Governors Bay: The Descendants of Stephen and Mary Elizabeth Small*. Christchurch 2018.

²⁸ Simon Agar, personal communication, 25 August 2020.

²⁹ Neil Withell, resident at Cholmondeley in the 1940s, quoted in Colin Amodeo, *A Beautiful Haven: Celebrating 80 years of Cholmondeley Children's Home 1925–2005*. Christchurch: Cholmondeley Children's Home Inc., 2005, p. 65.

In the mid 1950s Mt Herbert County Council and the Lyttelton Harbour Board discussed the possibility of dredging a large basin to accommodate moored boats on the Sandy Bay side of the Governors Bay Jetty, with a dredged channel leading out to deeper water. The Harbour Board wanted the moored boats out of its inner harbour at Lyttelton Port. Mt Herbert County Council agreed to upgrade Jetty Road, replace the timber bridge and form a large parking area down near the base of the jetty. In the end the project was stymied by the estimated cost (approximately £2000 annually) of constantly having to keep the access channel open and deep enough for launches and yachts.³⁰

In the meantime, boatbuilder Lionel Jefcoate approached the Mount Herbert County Council chairman in 1958 about setting up a boat-building shed and slipway by the long jetty. Jefcoate had already been building boats entirely without power tools on a little, flat promontory to the north of the jetty. Go-ahead was signalled with a handshake – no consents and no surveying fee. The rental to the council was £10 per annum, as was the slipway fee to the Lyttelton Harbour Board. Lionel built a 40' x 30' boatshed and a slipway just to the east of the jetty. The boatshed was extended a further 50' x 40' and a second slipway built in 1962. From there Lionel singlehandedly built a range of yachts, launches, fishing boats and cabin cruisers. He also overhauled and maintained boats in the harbour area.



³⁰ Murray Radcliffe, personal communication, 19 February 2018.

It was a big event in the bay whenever a boat was launched. But eventually, in January 1988, Lionel launched his fiftieth, and last, boat. 'The day was chosen because it was one of the few tides high enough during the year to launch on – a far cry from the days [in the 1950s] when Lionel could see almost 1.75 metres of water outside his shed at high water.'³¹ A drop in demand for wooden boats, a government tax and the arrival of the sewerage treatment plant not far around the corner from the boatshed, encouraged him to sell the shed to marine broker Steve Cunard and move to Havelock in the Marlborough Sounds. A 'spectacular blaze' destroyed the Cunard boat-building business on 4 May 2000 and removed a landmark from the foreshore.³² Steve Cunard was subsequently charged with arson and later made bankrupt.

With his business right on the foreshore, Lionel Jefcoate was more exposed than most harbour dwellers to an unpredictable ocean. In 1960 he experienced the full force of the tsunami rolling across the Pacific.

An unexpected drama unfolded as the first wave swept through the boatshed about 11.20pm to a depth of five feet, bursting the slipway doors aside and taking everything buoyant out into the harbour – timber, paint etc. Some was salvageable later from the beach. Electric motors were ruined by mud and salt water. A fishing boat on the slip floated away and returned almost to the same spot two tides later! A new yacht building needed a section of bottom planking removed to prevent her from also floating away!³³

At Sandy Bay Graeme Small saw the harbour empty out.

I was about 11 or 12 ... I looked out – hmmm, it's a low tide, there's no water. And it was right out as far as the end of Quail Island. Quail Island was high and dry... I rushed inside and said, 'Oh, there's no water.' 'What d'you mean?' I said, 'There's no water in the harbour, it's all gone.' They said, 'Rubbish.' They came out and, 'Oh, where's it gone?'... Woooof, back up it came. I took the day off school – I bunked it. My parents

³¹ 'Yachting Notes', *Bay News*, Vol. 46, 1998, p. 39. The Bay News piece has Lionel seeing '1.75 metres of water outside his shed at low water' – surely an error. I have taken the liberty of amending.

³² *Press*, 5 May 2000.

³³ Lionel Jefcoate, *57 Boats later...* Havelock: Lionel Jefcoate, 2013, p. 111.

didn't know until late in the day. I took a sugar bag ... down to Māori Gardens. There were fish stranded on the beach. I took the sugar bag and got flounders and sole...³⁴

In June 1988 the Governors Bay Community Association wrote to the Lyttelton Harbour Board expressing community concern about the deteriorating condition and consequent future of the jetty. The change in the use of the jetty was evident in the Community Association's argument for its retention. The Association pointed out that the jetty was of key importance as a recreational facility in the upper harbour. 'A walk to the end of the jetty is a very popular activity for visitors and allows non boaties to experience the harbour from out in the bay.'³⁵ The Association also pointed to the historical significance of the jetty – the only remaining jetty of its type in the area.

The Harbour Board commissioned a report on the jetty which indicated that around \$15,000 would be needed in the next year to carry out necessary repairs and that such expenditure would have to be repeated at regular intervals. The Harbour Board therefore offered the Mount Herbert County Council the 'opportunity' to accept the future responsibility for the jetty. Should the Council decline, the Board would have to consider restricting public access or demolishing the jetty completely since it was no longer used for commercial purposes but was essentially a public recreation facility.

Inspections in 1993 and 1994 confirmed community concern about the condition of the long jetty. Twenty new piles were driven under the jetty in 1997, the pile driver being mounted on a flat barge made from mussel buoys. At the sea end of the jetty the 10-metre long piles went 4 metres into the silt. Typically, about a third of the work was done by local volunteers in order to keep costs down. By May 1999 a total of \$68,814 had been spent to bring the jetty up to scratch.³⁶

Despite this work the Governors Bay Jetty was closed in 2011, when a post-earthquake inspection declared it unsafe. By June 2014, 63 piles were found to need replacing. The following year the Christchurch City Council announced it had no plans to repair the jetty. The

³⁴ Graeme Small, interviewed by Jane Robertson, 2 December 2014.

³⁵ Lyttelton Harbour Board, General Correspondence 1989, Governors Bay and Corsair Bay, XBAA, CH518, 669/A002-409, R25017220, ANZCRO/ECan.

³⁶ J. Nicol, *Harbour Link*, Issue 20, May 1999.



local community responded with the formation of a 'save the jetty' committee and five months later the Governors Bay Jetty Restoration Trust registered as a charity. The City Council agreed to support the community initiative and in September 2016 approved transfer of the ownership of the jetty to the Trust for \$1. Since

then the Trust has worked tirelessly to secure concept drawings, cost estimates, funding, resource consent and, importantly, ongoing community support, since voluntary efforts from local residents are critical to the financial viability of the project. The start of the jetty rebuild is scheduled to begin in August 2022.

In a recent development, the Jetty Restoration Trust has also secured an historic Lyttelton building that will complement the new jetty. Following the formation of the Canterbury Yacht and Motor Boat Club in 1921, its members applied to the Lyttelton Harbour Board for a site on which to build a new clubhouse. The Harbour Board made land available in Dampiers Bay (now Te Ana Marina) and the clubhouse, built by volunteers, was completed by mid-1923. A ramp, built by the Harbour Board at the western end of the building, was added in 1928 to facilitate launchings.

With the construction of a new club facility at Erskine Point in 1957, the Canterbury Yacht and Motor Boat Club sold the old clubhouse to the Lyttelton Sea Scouts who used it as their Scout Den from the late 1960s until the 1990s. Since then, surplus to Lyttelton Port Company requirements, it has faced an uncertain future. In the early 2000s four local supporters purchased the building, thereby ensuring its survival. But in 2019 it faced demolition unless a new home could be found. The Governors Bay Jetty Restoration Trust saw an opportunity to relocate the old clubhouse to Governors Bay and position it on the foreshore where Lionel Jefcoate's boatshed once stood for use as a community facility. Planning is currently underway to secure this new future for the small blue boat house.