

At the beach

Heritage Matters
Then and Now



Another instalment in a series of occasional features on the history and development of Waihi, provided by Waihi Heritage Vision.

Anzac Day and Anzac Bay

We are all used to seeing war memorials in towns and regions throughout the country. Most often they list the names of locals who have served in conflicts overseas. But what about geographic features and places? Do we think of them as memorials too?

Anzac Bay at Bowentown is always a popular spot with families at Easter. Easy parking, lots of grass, some great views and walks, a boat ramp, fishing off the rocks, and of course a fantastic safe beach.

This year, as Easter Monday and Anzac Day coincide and people head for the beach on the last public holiday before winter, few will realise the history behind the naming of the bay, or realise it was one of the first places in New Zealand to be named in honour of Australian and New Zealand troops who lost their lives at Gallipoli.

The bay wasn't always 'Anzac'. Its first European name was a very patriotic 'St George's Bay'.

George Vesey Stewart founded the Katikati settlement in 1875. In 1882 he was elected the first Mayor of Tauranga. In 1915, at age 82, he was chairman of the Tauranga Harbour Board. Under his chairmanship it was this board that wrote to Tauranga MP William Herries in November 1915 requesting a name change.

The Tauranga Harbour Board

resolved: "That the Hon Mr Herries be requested to make arrangements with the department having charge of such matters to have St George's Bay at Katikati Heads officially named Anzac Bay in commemoration of our heroic boys and their fellow soldiers who so gallantly effected a landing at Anzac Bay at Gallipoli".

The request was duly granted. St George's Bay became Anzac Bay, and in doing so it became one of the first memorials to events at Gallipoli.

There is one other Anzac Bay in New Zealand. It is on Waiheke Island, which also

has a 'Mount Maunganui'. It's part of the much larger Putiki Bay on the southern coast of the island.

As far as we are able to tell, Anzac Bay at Bowentown is the only mainland geographical feature named to honour war dead from Gallipoli. That makes it rather special. And as we head towards the centennial of the landing — just a few years away — that makes it even more special.

If you are with your family at Anzac Bay this Easter Monday — Anzac Day — take a minute to reflect on the story behind the name, and the many sacrifices at home and overseas that contributed to the day we observe each April 25.



ANZAC BAY: Beach, boat ramp, kayaking, fishing . . . and it's a 96-year-old World War I memorial too.

PICTURE: KIT WILSON



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