

The story of German Hill

Near the northern perimeter of Egmont National Park is a sizeable lump of earth—a well-known and distinctive landmark with a name that vividly captures the imagination. It is German Hill.

This symmetrical dome juts out abruptly 200ft above the surrounding highly developed farms and is the highest conical hill around Mt Egmont. On top and seen as a tiny speck is a trig station marking the 1281ft height above sea level.

The huge farmland hill which spreads itself over 100 acres has many fascinating characteristics besides its individual profile dominating the surrounding rolling pastures and yet numbed by the towering mountain backdrop.

Much speculation has gone into puzzling the origin of its alien title. The most probable story dates back to New Plymouth's hardy pioneering days.

Two German sailors came ashore in the surf boats from their sailing ship and made a cross-country trek through the rugged, virgin bush. They climbed to the top of the jutting heavily bush-clad hill, lit a fire and camped the night, returning to their vessel the next day.

And so the name "German Hill" has clung in memory of the two energetic sailors, according to the tale.

Two other interesting but less-likely theories attribute the name to the hill's suggestion of a shape like a rounded German military helmet; and that it was named after German settlers who took up land near Kaimiro close by in about 1879-1880.

Family farm

German Hill was part of a once thickly-bushed block of land taken over by Mr D. Jordan in the early 1890's. The hill has stayed with the

family and now Mr A. A. Jordan, the third generation, has it as half of his 200-acre property.

After being a family property for just over 70 years, German Hill is likely to remain with the Jordans for at least a century.

The fourth generation, Mr Jordan's 20-year-old son, Neville, is also a keen farmer and is adept at driving the tractor over the slopes of the hill.

Farming the hill

Having half of his farm virtually like an inverted pudding basin doesn't present any real problems to Mr Jordan. A tractor road has been carved up one of the fairly steep faces. Most of the hill is in grass while aircraft simplify the top-dressing problem once a year. A landing strip on the Maude Road farm of Mr Jordan's brother is used.

Snow occasionally falls on the hill—some lay there for about a week some 27 years ago, the coldest period Mr Jordan has known.

The bush growth on the hill must have been prolific. Several years ago Mr Jordan dug out a tree stump of a giant rata. It provided him with five cords of first class firewood. He said the huge roots ran for many yards from the stump.

Five springs flow continually from the hillsides

with sparkling clear water. Two of them are tapped for drinking. Another small spring is actually near the trig station at the top and that too has never been known to run dry. Water is pumped to troughs on the hill.

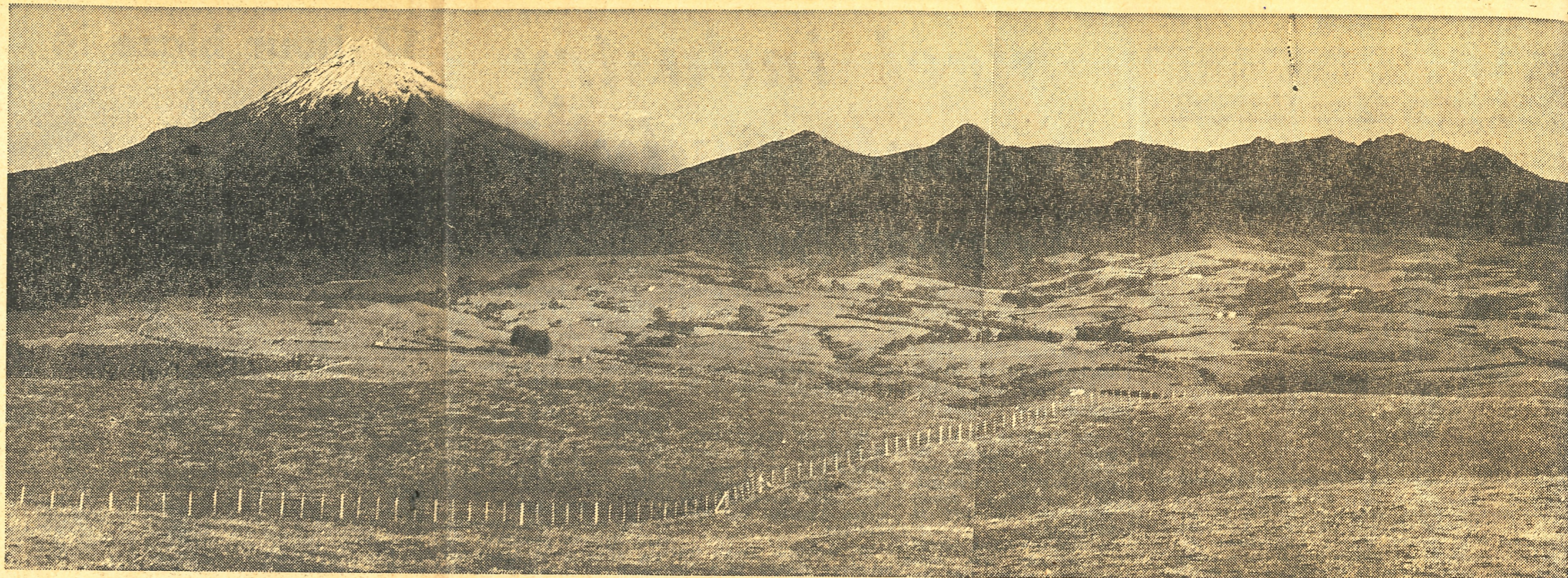
One of the springs to the south of the hill can almost be called a mineral spring. On analysis the water proved to have the following parts per 100,000: sodium chloride 10.18, potassium chloride 5.54, sodium sulphate 18.17, magnesium bicarbonate 54.44, calcium bicarbonate 73.93, sulphur-retted hydrogen 3.

Limestone cave

Near here there is a small limestone cave, the stream going underground for a short distance and forming miniature stalactites and stalagmites.

Because the grass on the hill is exposed to the full force of wintry conditions it does not grow very early in the spring. But it is interesting to note that Mr Jordan has never had any cases of bloat, although he has no reason for this. Even in

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A WIDE PANORAMA in every direction is obtained from the top of German Hill. This photograph taken last June gives an unusual view of Egmont and the Pouakai Ranges. The fence in the foreground runs across part of the top of the 100-acre hill.

strong winds the cows find shelter in the undulations of the top of the hill.

Rock for building

German Hill is formed of volcanic tuffs and breccias; tuff is a porous rock formed from springs or streams and breccia is a rock composed of angular fragments larger than sand grains, cemented together, and often presenting a variety of colours.

Although there is little suitable building stone in Taranaki, the tuffaceous German Hill rock, it is said, could be used to make walls and rough buildings. Mr Jordan showed us a typical piece of rock. It can be worked, sawn or cut, like Oamaru

stone but is darker in colour.

The Government geologist, Mr T. L. Grant-Taylor, says in the new Egmont handbook that the geologists Morgan and Gibson in 1927 (The Geology of the Egmont Subdivision) believed German Hill to be the remains of a small separate volcano but recent observations have shown that it is composed of laharic agglomerate and had been isolated by erosion.

Lahar is the name given to the rounded or conical remains of a vast volcanic mudflow. Large blocks of volcanic rock would drop down through the mud when the flow lost its velocity.

Subsequently the mud would eddy round and over

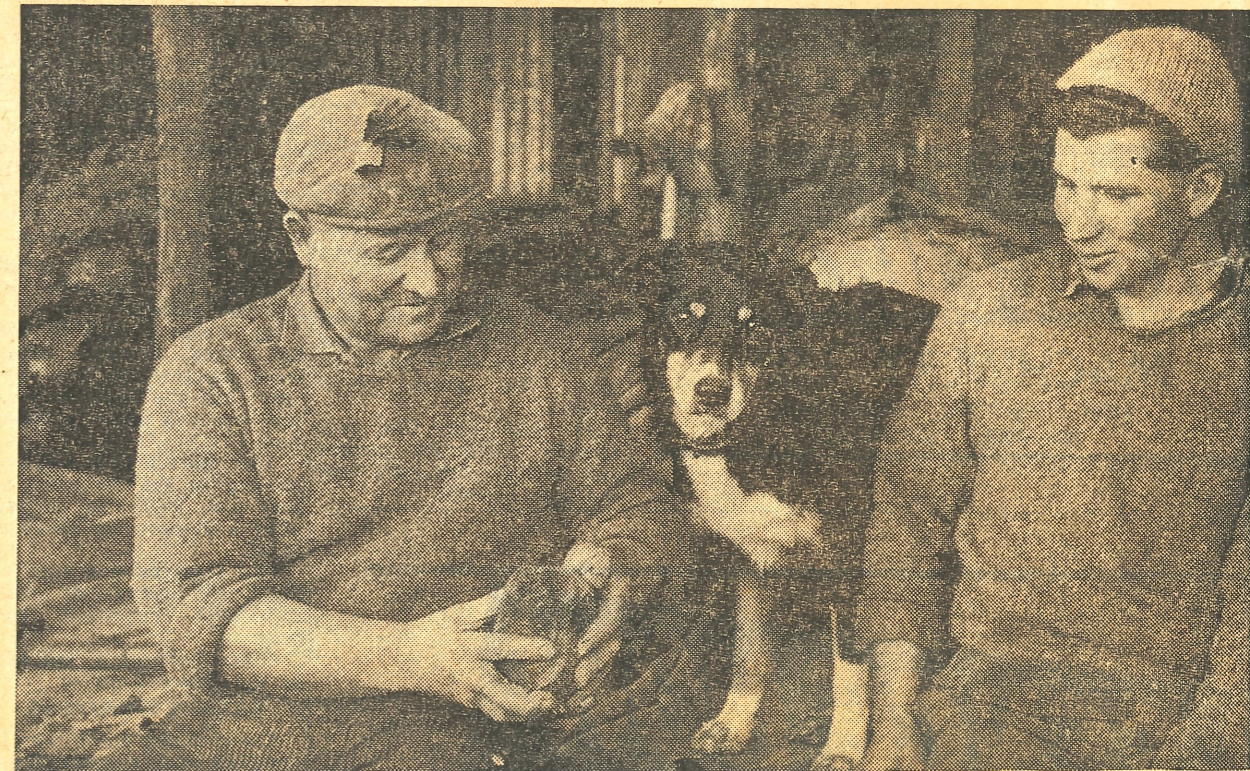
the blocks, leaving a piled up heap. This would later be smoothed down and rounded by rain erosion and deposits of volcanic ash from Egmont.

View from the top

German Hill, reached via Albert and Hill Roads, is far from being flooded with visitors yet a small but regular number of trampers, sightseers and groups take trips to its summit. Most of them courteously obtain permission before trespassing on the private property.

The view from the top of the hill on a clear day is magnificent, taking in the whole of North Taranaki, with excellent close views of Egmont and the ranges.

The Taranaki Region of the Youth Hostels Association have planned a trip to German Hill tomorrow and if the weather is kind, they will undoubtedly enjoy the brief climb and the sweeping and impressive view from on top of one of Taranaki's curiously absorbing geographical phenomena tinged with a little of the province's history.



MR A. A. JORDAN, the third generation to farm German Hill, and his son, Neville (20), examine a piece of the soft rock peculiar to the hill. This rock can be sawn and used for the walls of buildings.



LOOKING ACROSS the rolling hills and fields surrounding German Hill, the conical landmark situated near the northern perimeter of Egmont National Park is seen in the distance.