



# THE GIFT OF A LASTING LEGACY

*Decades after being gifted to PSEC, Arohiwi Station continues to be a reminder of the difference one family's generosity can make to an entire region.*

**R**ed gumboots are not the normal daily garb of Dr Sanja Sajatovic-Majstorovic, who is Chief Executive Officer of Presbyterian Support East Coast.

But at a certain time of the year she dons her colourful footwear and travels an hour inland from Napier and Hastings to an historic tract of land in a north-west valley in the Puketitiri district.

It's a rolling landscape which

resonates of its past – 120 years after its handsome stands of rimu, matai and kahikatea were first milled by Europeans.

If you look closely, there are still vestiges of the tram lines which were used to transport trolleys of timber out of the bush.

Adjacent to the winding road – not far from Sanja's destination of Arohiwi Station – there is a deposit of concrete blocks which once supported the

engine apparatus of a sawmill.

That Puketitiri sawmill operation was established by John Holt, son of Lancashire-born Robert Holt, an enterprising Napier timber merchant who reputedly arrived in Aotearoa with half a crown to his name.

Fable or fiction, Robert Holt's half-crown burgeoned and 157 years after the tall, bearded, cello-playing Englishman stepped ashore in Auckland, the aftermath of his, his son John, and grandson Gordon's success on the land at Puketitiri is being felt in unexpected places.

Tucked in a truck on an early summer day to tour Arohiwi Station, PSEC's CEO is talking about her organisation's gratefulness for a Holt family gift.

"The benefits of the Holt's generosity to those in our community who are in need of help and support is enormous and ongoing," says Sanja.

On the face of it, paddocks, sheep, cattle and pinus radiata in a panoramic



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Puketitiri setting are a world away from a large-scale care organisation based in Havelock North which encircles disadvantaged families and youth, the elderly and palliative care patients with support.

But 38 years ago Robert Holt's granddaughter established an incredible connection between her family and the Presbyterian Social Service Association Hawke's Bay and Poverty Bay (Inc.) as it was then known.

A woman of Presbyterian faith with a philanthropic spirit, Laura Mitchell (nee Holt) lost both her husband, Vincent and only child, John.

In 1978, following the restructuring of the Holt farming enterprise at Puketitiri, Laura gifted half her shares in the prime hill country property to PSEC in order to help the organisation respond to the community's needs.

Thirteen years later when Laura died at the age of 83, she bequeathed her remaining parcel of shares to PSEC – a gesture which gave the organisation a 50 percent shareholding in Arohiwi Station.

Over the years the generosity of the Holt family has allowed PSEC to purchase additional shares in the Puketitiri property, and in 2012 it took full ownership of the asset.

"Laura's original gift has been the largest ever made to Presbyterian Support in New Zealand – the heritage of the station and its stewardship is amazing. All those involved in Arohiwi Station, at every level, have put in extra effort because of what it means to PSEC and the people we help," says Sanja.

Putting in extra effort is a natural instinct for farm manager David Evans and his wife Margaret, who have been at the helm of Arohiwi Station since 1992.

"When you are up the top of the farm at our favourite place at the tank at

the top of Knob paddock 650 metres above sea level with 360 degree views of the whole farm and the valley and mountains, you reflect on what a great privilege it is to farm this property for PSEC. It's a beautiful place. We are working for a cause – the funds generated here go directly to helping people and there's huge satisfaction in knowing this," says David.

He says farming at the station is a seven day a week operation.

"When you are here you are totally switched onto it. I like things to be done properly. I'm passionate about what I'm doing and with PSEC involved it makes it that much better – it's all so worthwhile."

Opposite: Farm manager, David Evans, at his favourite view point on Arohiwi Station.

Below: Some of the original historical material and photographs of the farm.

## PSEC AND AROHIWI STATION

Robert Holt's granddaughter, Laura Mitchell (nee Holt), gifted half of Arohiwi Station to PSEC. PSEC was then able to buy further shares, and purchased the entire farm in 2012.

Arohiwi Station Limited (2013) is a \$10 million asset – PSEC is its sole shareholder.

It provides an annual dividend of around \$500,000 which is used to support all PSEC services: Enliven, Family Works, Cranford Hospice and Real People.

Arohiwi Station Limited is administered by four independent directors with a combined portfolio of farming and corporate governance skills.

