

Memories

My first session as volunteer for the Hawkes Bay Knowledge Bank 23 October 2013

Sailed from UK in *RSM Rangitoto and landed at Auckland on 3rd September 1959 with all our possessions in 12 tea boxes and 2 sea chests. 3 adults and 3 children. Cecil Ewart Carding senior, Cecil Ewart Carding junior - my husband and Christine Elizabeth 7 years, Christopher Ewart 3 years Michael David 1 year old. We were met by business acquaintances of Cecil Snr but had a wait in Auckland because with the import regulations, one of our cars was less than a year old. We travelled in this car to Hawke's Bay.

In their wisdom, our friends decided we needed to take in Rotorua - then Taupo and then, instead of taking the Taupo to Hastings road which was not very good at that time, we followed them down to Palmerston North and up through the Gorge. By this time it was dark and all we could see were the poles holding up the railway line and at intervals, a large light loomed from the darkness which frightened us all and turned out to be a train...

The two men folk sat in the front and I occupied the rear seat with 3 boisterous children - we arrived in Hastings in the early hours of the next morning at the home of my husband's cousin and her husband who lived in Akina Street. A lovely re-union for him but a first "getting to know you" from me and the children. We stayed with them for 5 weeks meanwhile searching Hastings for a home to purchase. We had our first experience of the Blossom Festival - which we thought was lovely - and the weather was magnificent. We had freesias in our room and the other thing we ooh, and arred at were how well other plants grew. Geraniums of all types, sizes and colours were fascinating, the more so because we had only known them growing in our glasshouses at 'home' in pots and not outside in all weathers.

Our first experience of Real Estate Agents was a steep learning curve. We had been used to buying and selling our own property and to have someone take us round and show us EVERY house there was for sale in the district, some for sale, and others that 'might be'. At first husband went out on his own but after a few weeks Marjory, cousin, looked after the children while we both went to look. We were taken out by Mr Farrell of Farrell and Beacham and he showed us this house which was being built by Freddie Geor - the last house in Maitland Crescent. We were able to make a few changes to the layout and to build an extension to the garage as there was only a single one planned.

This became our home for just over a year. Christine was enrolled at Mayfair School and we had brought with us her report from Newgate school. We found that she was by far ahead of the children of her age and we asked if she could be put up a class as she was getting very bored doing the same things she had already done. After much persuading, the Headmaster decided to give the whole class a test and as a result she and another girl - daughter of Colin and Penny Waddell were put up into the next class. Colin had a joinery factory off Karamu Road at that time and Penny was an authority on all things botanical - I think they lived in Mayfair Avenue. I believe their son Peter went on to become a well-known artist who now lives in USA.

Mayfair School is on Willowpark Road and my husband was elected to the committee and spent many weekends on bottle drives and collecting paper. He was instrumental in persuading the HDC to put in a pedestrian crossing on Karamu Road so that children in the Mayfair catchment area could get to school safely. On hearing that I was experienced in the art of Maypole dancing the PhysEd teacher asked if I could have a copy of the steps and history of this village craft sent to him for the school which I did and derived much pleasure in seeing children perform on special occasions.

Through business connections we joined the Hastings Chamber of Commerce and were delighted to find among the members our local vicar, Canon Ken Button. We became the best of friends and it

was a sad time for the parish when he died suddenly, followed six weeks later by the death of the Vicar's Warden, Mr. Norton. A double blow for St. Matthew's.

Christine joined the Sunday School at St. Martin's which was along from her school on Willowpark Road. Her attendance there was short-lived as she came home quite unhappy one day to say that she didn't like this Sunday School as when the service was finished "they locked God up into a cupboard". I realised then of course that this was a hall which was used for other things for the rest of the week and we became members of St. Matthew's after about a month in the country. Also for our time in the Mayfair district I belonged to the Mayfair Kindergarten Mothers' Club and we had many weekends fund raising for this as it was not yet opened. I was secretary of this group when the Kindy finally was opened in 1962. I made many lasting friends from this connection.

As ours was the last house to be built in Maitland Crescent, the corner section had been used as a dumping ground for all manner of rubbish. In the garden we found a wooden and wire fence which had just been knocked over and buried under piles of household and garden rubbish. We spent a few weekends digging this over and were eternally grateful for the St. Matthew's Scout group who came during 'Bob a Job' week - a whole army of young, willing boys and their leaders who worked at digging over this section - it not being suitable for any machinery of any kind. Of course, we paid much more than a "bob" - one shilling - for this service, I think I was nearly bankrupt providing drinks and doughnuts, scones and pikelets for this happy band. We sowed the grass at the beginning of December and were told by many that it wouldn't grow - but of course, it did and became quite a respectable lawn. We had a fine view of Te Mata Peak in those days and were interested in the hockey which was played at weekends. We could see the old house which I believe used to be a cafe/caterers at that time.

We made lasting friends of our neighbours and one in particular, Mrs Brimmer, used to have our children over to her place after school for afternoon tea, complete with china and linen as befits 'proper' afternoon tea. Some of the school children did give our daughter a hard time and she was bullied a lot. We were often the victims of children on bikes riding round our place on the corner shouting "Pommie, Pommie Pommie" - this went on until one day I was out watering the garden and somehow, I don't know how, some of the children got quite wet. The harassment stopped from that day on. The other vexing thing was that pedestrians used to walk up our path, across our back yard and out to the street on purpose to save walking round the corner - a saving of a minute or two - but we put up a fence and this irritation ceased too.

*RMS Rangitoto. Life on board was very different from anything we had experienced previously. I was put in a cabin with our 3 children and Cecil and his father, Cecil Snr, shared another next door. The children, because of their varying ages were in different dining rooms so father took Christine to her meals and I had the two young ones in another. Adults ate at a later time and so most of the afternoon and early evening seemed to be spent supervising eating, cleaning up and nursery. But the evening meals were out of this world. Each day the menu provided has a drawing of a significant church, cathedral or building from the United Kingdom. These menus are taking up space in my house somewhere but I don't think I have the whole set. There was a disturbance a few weeks into the journey when one of the stewards took umbrage and emptied all the cutlery out of the porthole in a fit of pique. I don't know what happened to him but it caused quite a stir among the passengers who wondered why their meal wasn't served at the prompt time designated. This wasn't the only time when things disappeared out of the porthole. I returned to our cabin to find 3-year-old Christopher "posting" everything he could lay his hands on through the opening. Luckily we were not at sea level, and lucky too that nothing of importance landed on the deck outside, but we weren't very popular when I had to ask for replacement towels, soap, toothbrushes, combs etc. I have an idea they thought I was taking souvenirs, as they all had the NZ line crest on them. Christine was an

inquisitive and intelligent little lady and made friends with several grownups returning from their overseas trip. One was a farmer's wife, (Helen Baird, who farmed in Ngatarawa Road, Hastings, and it was she who introduced me to the *BWOC) who was returning from a trip 'home' to Scotland to visit relatives. She had a very broad Scottish accent and was a darling friend to all the family. She was delighted that 5 years later we added to the people count by adding another Carding son.

Entertainment on board consisted of the usual board and card games; dominoes, chess, 500, whist, etc. Church services on Sunday were taken by the Captain and most denominations had their special time. On several occasions we went to the races and had mini betting shops. There was appropriate entertainment for the children. I can't remember what was used for horses but there were prizes for the most elegantly turned-out people. We designed our own jockey colours and named our horses according to our fancy. Some innovative names evolved but people for whom this wasn't their first trip came prepared for this and for the fancy dress parade and had the advantage of us novices but it was all great fun. We entertained Neptune and his helpers as we crossed the date line and we were each given a certificate to say we had done so. Several sailors were dumped overboard for perceived inappropriate behaviour (all swam round the boat and were suitably rewarded by some liquid refreshment for being such good sports). Michael learned to walk on the ship and when we docked in Auckland, he walked with a roll - until he got his land legs. He caused much amusement. He played up to his audience like a pro and just when we thought he was over it, he stood stock still, bent down, and grinned at us through between his legs. He had beautiful golden curls and looked like Shirley Temple. He didn't like his hair washed, especially when we had to use sea water which didn't lather. One couple on board alerted the Captain that a child was being abused in the toilet block and our hair washing session was rudely interrupted by the appearance of three men at arms, who marched in to break up this very serious occurrence, to find me on my knees and Michael in the shower box having his hair washed.....

We were not many days out to sea when the crew put up covers round the ships rails so that little ones could not fall through the gaps and there were trained kindly teachers to keep them amused, and doctors to make sure they were well. The ship's doctor was quite a character, my friend from the cabin opposite, herself a trained nurse, travelling alone with her 3 small girls to join their father in New Plymouth attended his clinic with one of the children who had a little fall. This was all very satisfactory until the next day when she said "good morning" to him in the corridor and she was sent a bill.....the end to a perfect friendship. However, he redeemed himself as there was an urgent message for help from another ship who had a case of appendicitis on board and so our ship was turned around to rendezvous. The doctor was put overboard in a very tiny boat, with a couple of sailors, performed the surgery successfully and was returned a few hours later to the sound of three cheers and grateful thanks.

Carding and Sons - established 1919 Motor Accessory Factors opened a new business, Carding & Co NZ Ltd in 1959 and rented buildings in Karamu Road North just along from Nelson Park. It was hard work establishing a new business in a new country. We had been used to being able to order goods from the wholesalers and they would arrive within a few days, or by return. Not so in New Zealand as import licences had to be applied for even if successful, took at least 6 weeks to arrive. Also paying rent for business premises didn't suit and so the search for another building resulted in the purchase of an old house on the corner of St. Aubyn Street East and Karamu Road. This was a large house and very sound. We were told later that it had been a nursing home originally and several people mentioned this landmark building. It had servants' quarters to the rear and was mostly kauri. It also came with a very large section. Hulena Bros built a large shed for the business and the back of the house was made into a lovely flat while one of the large front rooms was made into a shop with office to the rear. The woodwork was all taken back to its original and the kauri floor glowed and was magnificent. We lived with our little family on the premises while father-in-law purchased a house for himself on Heretaunga Street West. Things began to improve

as our work ethic became known. Kawan Motorbodies purchased the original shed and Cecil Snr had a new building put on the corner section which was then rented by Bob Little and his two sons, Noel and Eric. Garden Equipment had been established in smaller premises quite close in Karamu Road. This was the start of a good relationship with the Little family but eventually both the boys left to do other work. Garden Equipment was bought out and ran alongside our brake and steering and motor supplies businesses.

* BWOC - British Women's Overseas Club was founded 17 April 1946 - the brainchild of Mrs M Mason of Havelock North who was traveling into Hastings by bus and noticed a family whose accent and manner indicated she was newly arrived from the 'Old Country.' Mrs Mason was a kindly woman who befriended this family and it gave her the idea that it would be good to start a club to enable support to be given to newly arrived people. Her idea took off and as a consequence a group of her friends gathered together to form the club to promote friendliness and companionship to British-born women on their arrival in the Hastings district. A small committee was elected to act as an interim body until the club was running smoothly, when a larger representative committee would be elected. All the women who attended the meeting had come from Britain and showed great enthusiasm in the founding of this club.

Membership number 60 - Noel Sunley, born in Cardiff, Wales, was a war bride I was privileged to know - she worked for the BBC in London and met John, her husband - a New Zealander, and came over by *Rimutaka* to join him, landing in Auckland on 13 March 1946. They set up an orchard in St. Georges Road, Hastings. Noel was a cricket enthusiast and 'followed' any cricket team and was a familiar figure complete with her cushion, chair, sustenance and umbrella - she was known to team players as a regular supporter.

296 *Helen Baird, Dunfermline, Fyfehire, arrived Auckland 11 February 1924 via "Suffolk", Auckland

Four surviving members at 2013

287 Annette Mason Mullingar, Eire West Meath 13 Sep 1955 Strathmore Wellington

302 Joan M Taylor Helsby, Cheshire 25 May 1962 Canberra Auckland

304 Betty Carding Teversall, Nottinghamshire 3 Sep 1959 Auckland

339 Freda Cheshire Harrow, Middlesex 25 Oct 1969 BOAC Auckland