



# Weddel's World

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
ISSUED BY  
W. & R. FLETCHER (N.Z.) LTD

★ WESTFIELD  
★ TOMOANA  
★ PATEA  
★ KAITI - in conjunction with  
Gisborne Sheepfarmers  
Freezing Co. Ltd.

APRIL 75

# N.Z. Needs Less Onerous Hygiene Laws

Lord Vestey, the joint head of the international meat group, Union International, has called on New Zealand to fight against some of the proposed measures of the nearly completed international hygiene standards for meat.

Lord Vestey, who recently toured New Zealand, spoke out strongly on the proposals to replace all wood in cold stores.

"The costs for such a changeover would be prohibitive and would have to be passed on, thus leading to a further erosion in the prices the farmer receives."

"And where will these changes end? Must all wood in carriers vehicles and ships also be replaced - if so, this would drive the cost of meat up out of all proportion. We should try to phase the changes over a longer period of years."

Lord Vestey said that the changeover would cost his company's New Zealand group, W. & R. Fletcher, millions of dollars.

"New Zealand must take a determined stand on the issue and approach its buyer countries to bargain less severe clauses in the international standard."

"After all, at present the hygiene standards at the New Zealand freezing works are as high as, if not higher than those in most of her buyer countries and other world markets."

Lord Vestey also referred to what he called the necessary and important role of the international company in New Zealand's primary industry.

The international companies were not in business to take advantage of the producer, but to help them and the country grow.

"For example, our company is the largest meat trader in the world and because of this we can genuinely help your producers. We have high level business and government contacts around the world and can successfully lobby the case for New Zealand meat.

"Before coming here, I saw the British Agriculture Minister, Mr Peart, for discussions on the importing of New Zealand lamb.

"With import restrictions in force in certain parts of the world, the lobbying side of the business is a most important one."



Eyes up during a quick break from one of Lord Vestey's meeting with W. and R. Fletcher (N.Z.) Ltd head office staff in Wellington. Standing (from left) Mr R.M. Scott, Mr J.N. Lord, Mr O.W. Knight, Mr M. Sanders, assistant to the general manager and Mr E.G. Williams; seated, Mr M. Hinchliff, general manager and Lord Vestey.

## NEW LAMB WRAP TRIAL POINTS WAY TO FUTURE

A successful trial shipment of lamb carcasses from the Tomoana works of Nelson's (N.Z.) Ltd., to London proved a pointer to the acceptance of polythene shrink wrapping as a standard packing method of New Zealand lamb exports.

The container load of 600 carcasses was arranged by Tomoana in conjunction with UEB Industries Ltd.

London reported that the shipment travelled well and the carcasses were in excellent condition when unpacked at Smithfield market.

The shrink wrap method prevents any weight loss as compared to the traditional porous film and/or stockinette methods which have resulted in a weight loss of about a pound per carcass.

This could add an additional \$5 million a season to lamb export returns even taken at today's prices.

UEB began development of the shrink-wrapping technique earlier this year and to date has been involved in trial shipments of more than 1000 lamb carcasses. The company organised shrink wrapping demonstrations with a number of freezing companies before embarking on full-scale experiments with the Tomoana works.

The London consignment involved bagging the carcasses in polythene on the rail and using a hand heat gun to shrink the film. The overall acceptance of the method could lead to the inclusion of a heat tunnel on the processing chain.

With the reduction of weight loss the prime advantage of the shrink wrapping method, it also has a number of other benefits including an improvement in the appearance of the meat, which under the old method has tended to allow some discolouration of the meat and the fat.



## VESTHEY VISIT (CONTD.)

At a time when New Zealand needs more and more export sales, it also needs to put more faith in the ability of the international companies. It was stated in the Press by the New Zealand Meat Producers Board that they shared his views on overseas companies.

## British Shops

Another important aspect of the Union International's role in the sale of New Zealand meat was its Dewhurst chain of 1500 butchers shops in Britain – the largest independent chain in the country. These shops annually market millions of dollars of New Zealand meat.

Lord Vestey warned that with an improvement in the price situation, New Zealand must be careful not to price itself out of the market. This situation had occurred three years ago when it sold beef at high prices to Japan and the United States, and those countries which couldn't afford the prices were cut out of the market.

The smaller markets were an important part of New Zealand's export trade as they provided a constant valuable outlet for the country's meat and it was interesting to note that these avenues were again being opened.

## M.E.Markets

An important newcomer was the Middle East, which was part of the indication that the depressed demand and prices for meat were starting to swing upward.

The vast and wealthy markets of Iran and Iraq had good potential, and valuable sales might also be arranged with other oil-rich Arab states.

Lord Vestey pointed out that not only will the Middle East countries buy more and more, other markets which have closed in the past two years would also be easing their restrictions.

With the return to market "normality", which must happen according to Lord Vestey, New Zealand will have to make certain of securing footholds in as many markets as possible – not just the big ones.

Still on marketing, Lord Vestey said he would like to see the opportunity of selling New Zealand lamb in the United States open out to commercial competition.

While not criticising the work of Devco (the government's sole selling agency in the U.S.), Lord Vestey felt his company could help expand sales to what is the biggest market in the Western world.

"The American form of supermarket buying is such a competitive one with low profit items giving way to the higher profit sellers."

"I think that we could present lamb as good trading value to the supermarket operators and so get a valuable entry into this large market."

"And of course our size, experience in the meat business, and established selling units could be combined to ably present lamb to the American people, who up to now by tradition have been basically beef eaters."

## Farmers Attitudes

Whilst on this trip to New Zealand, Lord Vestey also played polo with his team, Stowell Park, England's champion polo team. He said his appearances with the team had allowed him greater personal contact with many farmers at grass roots level than at any time since he lived in New Zealand in 1964 for one year.



**Lord Vestey reminiscing over old times with a former workmate, Hori Wairama, on the beef floor of the Tomoana Works. During his tour of New Zealand Lord Vestey met several of the men he worked with while he got down to the "grass roots" side of the meat export trade during his stay here eleven years ago.**

"These casual meetings allowed me a great insight into the farmers' current attitudes."

"The farmers hardline thinking was reflected in their questions about the present prices of meat. With soaring costs, they are going through a very bad time just now and they need prices to rise."

"And that's our role as a company, to help the farmers get the best prices available, because let's face it, if we can help them to do well, New Zealand through foreign exchange earnings will also be doing well, and it obviously means that we as a company will benefit."

Before leaving New Zealand Lord Vestey had a final meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Mr Moyle.

He said that his company would substantially upgrade its four freezing works in New Zealand.

Lord Vestey described his visit as a courtesy call at which he told Mr Moyle that he would like to expand his company's New Zealand holdings, but that this was impossible under present Government regulations.

Meat marketing and ways and means of cutting costs in the meat industry were among other topics of discussion at the half hour meeting.

## Retirement

A popular member of the Head Office Wool Department (Shipping), Mr Jack West has retired. Jack joined W. & R. Fletcher's in 1968 and has now gone to the sands of Foxton where he will keep himself busy doing odd jobs and collecting pipis, but only in Regulation bags of course!

## Lamb Is Airfreighted To Italy

**W. and R. Fletcher (N.Z.) Ltd. recently secured a unique order to airfreight chilled lamb to Italy to cater for the country's pre-Easter demand.**

The original order, for one tonne or about 1,000 carcasses from the Westfield works, was sent on approval to the Italian buyers in a container on board a British Airways flight from Auckland.

Because of the complexities of the flight routes the container was flown direct to London where it was transferred to another flight to re-route it back to Milan.

The lamb arrived in perfect condition and as a result the Italian firm placed a follow-up order for a further three tonnes of chilled lamb.

The deal, which was arranged by Weddells in London is believed to be one of the first for air freighted chilled lamb from New Zealand to Italy. It gave the Westfield works the opportunity of competing on a direct level against the local European product.

Under an anomaly of the Italian meat selling regulations frozen meat can not be sold in the same shop as fresh or chilled meat, therefore the New Zealand product was on display in the prime market area.

Fletcher's views the Italian deal as a possible inroad into the tight European Community market, even though the overall value of the sale was relatively small.

The company hopes that it could provide a trade opening for sea freighted meat to Italy as the high cost involved in air-freighting lamb would rule out this form of delivery on a regular basis.

## VISIT BY HAWAII AGENT

**W. and R. Fletcher's (N.Z.) Ltd. Head Office staff had the pleasure recently of entertaining two "old" friends from Hawaii – Art and Jennie Hansen.**

Art is President of A.H. Hansen Sales Ltd. who have been the Weddel agents in Hawaii for the past 25 years.

His company has built up its meat trade to such an extent that it now handles the major share of New Zealand meat imports in the islands.

The company's new warehouse which was opened last July, is the most up-to-date complex in Honolulu and reflects Hansen Ltd's optimism of the potential of New Zealand meat imports.

Another overseas visitor who paid a brief call to New Zealand in January was John Wood, the manager of the Weddel (International) Ltd's office in Osaka.

Although John was officially on home leave to Australia at the time he managed to fit in a few days at the Westfield and Tomoana plants and then flew to Wellington for talks with Head Office staff.

John has been in Osaka for three years. Apart from the considerable business negotiated in this area, Weddel (International) Ltd. also sees the importance of having an office in close proximity to Korea, where increased quantities of New Zealand mutton are boned out for the Japanese trade.



# Small Steam Engine Is Tomoana's Unsung Heroine

Nelson's freezing works at Tomoana has a grand old hard-working lady on its staff — one of the few remaining working steam driven small locomotives in New Zealand.

This little engine drew the strong interest of journalist D. B. Leitch, who visited the works on the invitation of the general manager, Mr Gordon Taylor and wrote a glowing report in the magazine "Rails".

Mr Leitch wrote of Mr Taylor's obvious surprise that someone would drive 400 miles in a day just to watch the little loco "Tomoana" going through its paces under the capable hands of Tom Steele, an ex-Canadian Pacific fireman.

A Bagnell 0-6-OT, "Tomoana" was built in 1932 and has been converted to a system powered by Carbonettes in a 7.2 square foot firebox, which looks ridiculously small in comparison with larger engines, but generates a surprising amount of power.

The power change was made because the locomotive steamed poorly on coal and clinkered badly in its early life and the conversion has proved successful with Mr Leitch assuring steam enthusiasts that Tomoana can outperform equivalent diesel power in every facet.

She has a 24 hour availability and is only out of steam at Christmas and Easter and during her annual Marine Department Survey. Using carefully supervised chemically treated water, the boiler needs washing out only three times a year, and a fill and blowdown is done weekly.

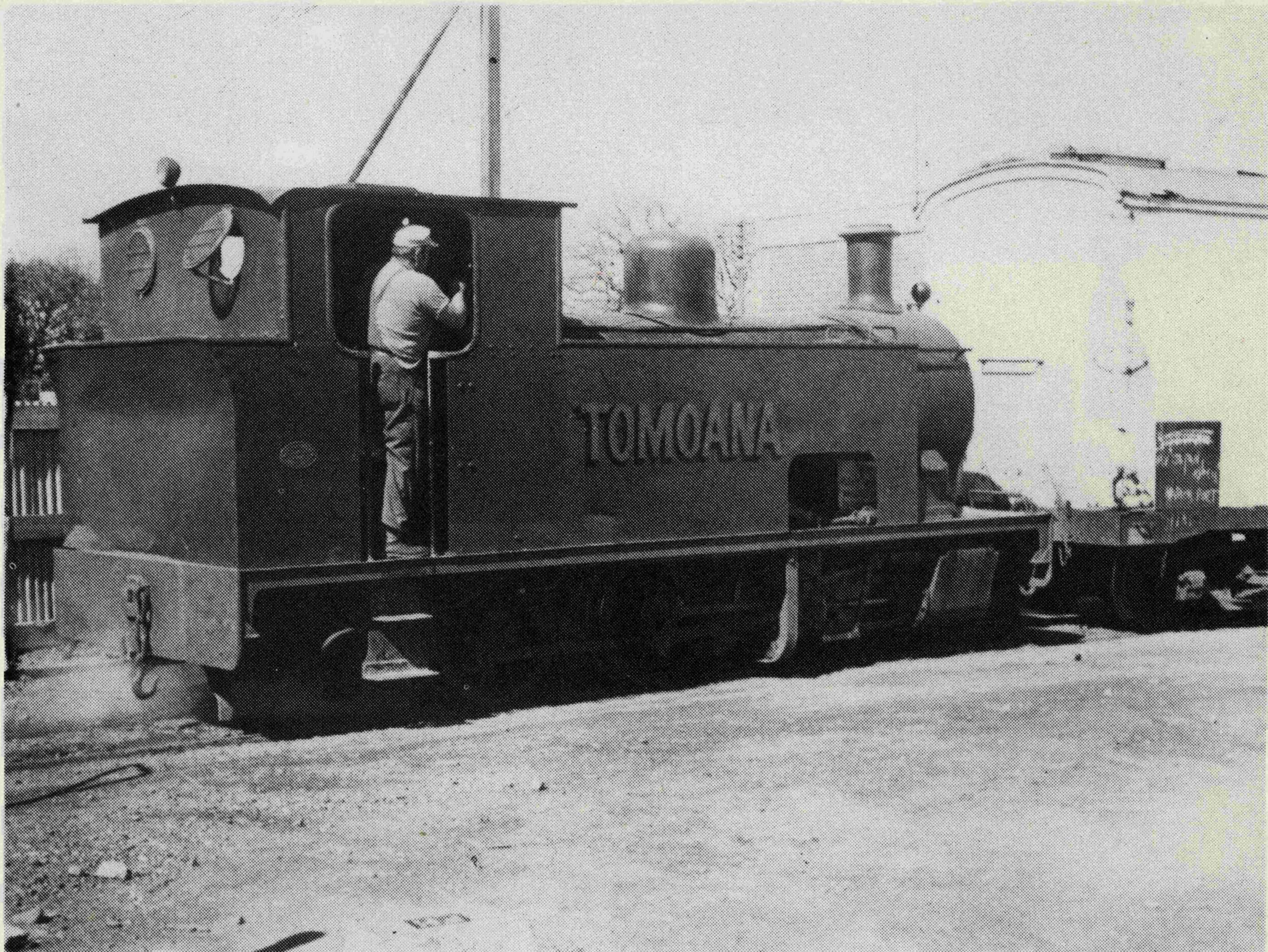
Mr Leitch wrote that the Nelson management was so impressed with their little iron lady that in 1972 they spent many thousands of dollars giving her a complete overhaul. This followed a difficult decision on whether to scrap her or go to the expense of the refit.

"But management have no doubts their decision was the right one.

"While Tomoana was being overhauled, the NZR supplied Ds type diesel shunters on hire. These Tom Steele reported delightedly were an abysmal failure. One 'blew up' after two weeks, the work was too tough for it. Tally clerks recording weights of cartons being loaded complained they couldn't hear above the idling motor. 'Tomoana' of course is almost silent at rest. Generally everyone was pleased to see the diesels go."

Mr Leitch says one feature that takes a little getting used to is the absence of billowing smoke that bespoke of a hard working steam engine. The carbonettes produce virtually no smoke and all one sees for all the noise as the tiny engine takes the strain on as many as nine fully loaded waggons is the clouds of exhausting steam.

He concluded: "Largely unnoticed and unphotographed, industrial locomotives (unlike their bush tramway sisters) have been the Cinderellas of steam in New Zealand. Unlike other countries, industrial steam here in large part faded with or even before mainline steam



**Simmering quietly the little engine awaits the word to move off as soon as the freezer hands are finished loading.**

and was thus largely unremarked. But in Hawkes Bay, the quiet shuffling of a little industrial steamer still can be heard. It is a sound that happily will continue to echo around the environs of the Tomoana works for many years yet."

Extracts of D. B. Leitch's article and photographs were reprinted with the kind permission of "Rails" magazine.

## B.E.M. AWARDED FOR ACTION IN EXPLOSION

**The brave actions of a member of the Tomoana works Quality Control Department wounded during a territorial army exercise that killed two sergeants earned him an award for gallantry in the New Year honours list.**

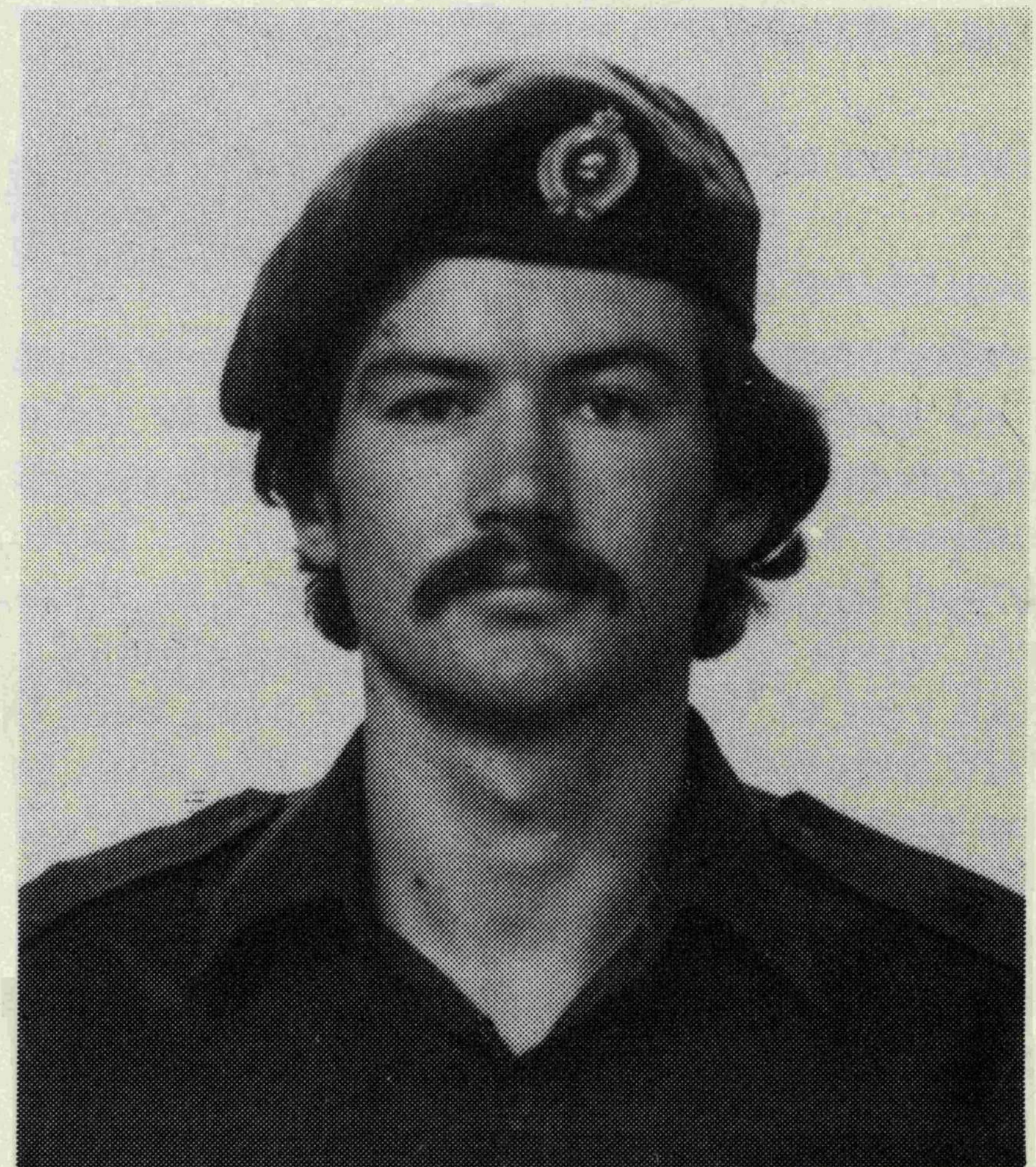
Maxwell Harry Lyver who is a corporal in the Territorials was helping in a live grenade practice at Waiouru military camp when a grenade accidentally exploded in an adjacent bay.

Corporal Lyver, who although protected from the full force of the blast, was hit by shrapnell in the face and arms. But regardless of his injuries picked up a medical satchel and ran to the centre of the blast area to give first aid to the two sergeants.

Even after he was relieved by the medical officer, Corporal Lyver continued to give assistance and only when everything possible had been done for the two sergeants did he allow himself to be treated.

The citation that came with his B.E.M. stated that: "With disregard to his own injuries in his desire to assist the victims of the explosion Corporal Lyver displayed selflessness and fortitude of the highest order."

Corporal Lyver joined the army in 1962 and saw active service in Vietnam before his discharge in 1972 when he joined the Tomoana works.



**CORPORAL LYVER**



# A LONG-SERVING GROUP

## Weddel Rugby



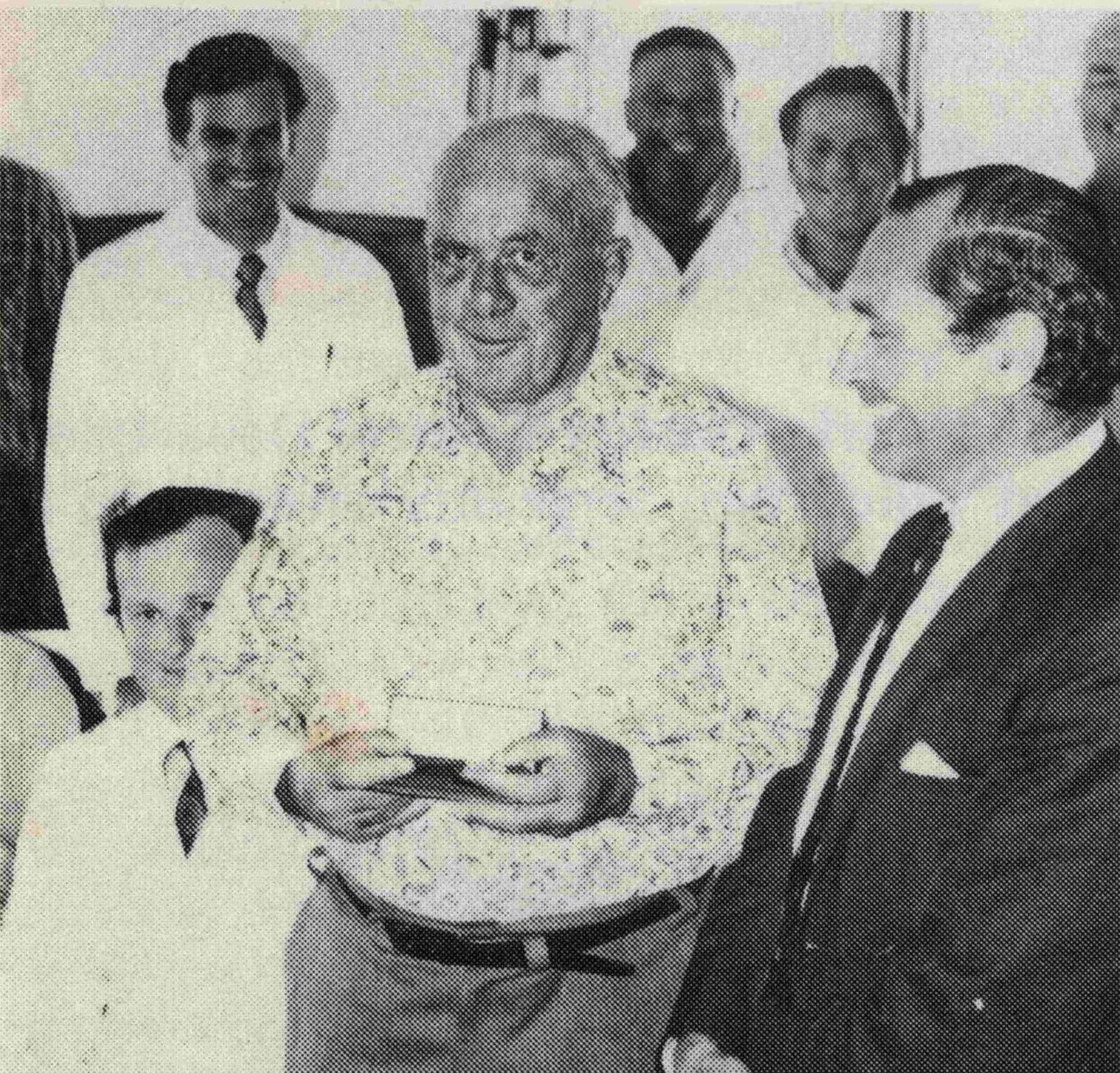
An impressive service record totalling nearly 210 years was recognised by the presentation of gold watches to five of the stalwarts at the Tomoana Freezing Works to mark their forty years' of service with the company. They are (back row from left) Mr Lindsay Jackson, slaughter floor clerk, who joined the company in 1928, Mr Jack Anderson, yard foreman, 1933, and Mr Lawrie Clothier, slaughter floor superintendent, 1932; front left, Mr George Lobban, casings superintendent who joined in 1933, and Mr Alan Ross, cooperage foreman, 1934.



Ian "Spooky" Smith was one of New Zealand's top rugby football wing three-quarters, during a period when New Zealand Rugby carried all before it. Known as the "Gimmerburn Ghost" (he was playing for a small Central Otago country area of that name when he first became an All Black) Spooky played 24 matches in all for New Zealand including nine test matches. He toured the United Kingdom in 1963, Australia in 1964 and played in the home series against South Africa in 1965 and the British Lions in 1966. During his career he represented Otago, North and Southland and he also played for the Island on four occasions.

A bit burlier now than in his sporting heyday, Spooky is today a popular Livestock Buyer for Fletcher's in Southland. No doubt many of Fletcher's clients throughout New Zealand will remember the "Gimmerburn Ghost" and they will be interested to know that he is still haunting about Southland – but only for prime live stock!

## 50 Years At Tomoana

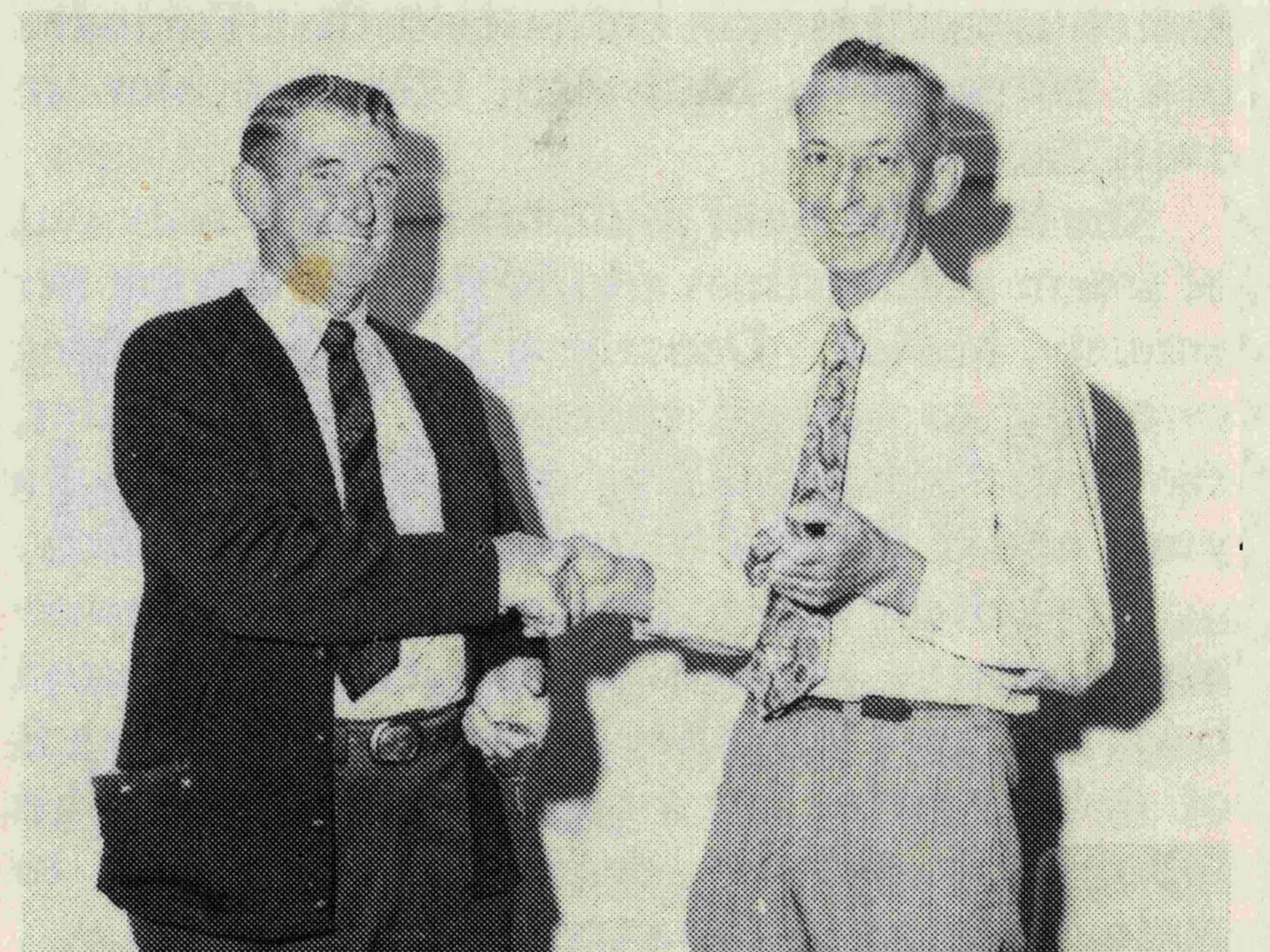


One of the Tomoana yard staff, Jack Currie, is all smiles despite having apparently missed out on a 40 years' service award. However the company's general manager, Mr G. T. Taylor, atoned for the error in presenting a handsome gold watch to Jack upon the completion of his 50th year at Tomoana. Jack has been with the Yard Department for virtually all that time, and was also actively involved in the company's fire brigade for 25 years reaching the position of deputy chief officer at the time of his resignation from the brigade in 1957.

## RETIREMENT

The foreman in charge of casing operations at Westfield, Mr Norman Sinclair, retired at the end of last year after 49 years' service with the company. The high regard with which Norman was held was expressed by many of his colleagues during his retirement presentation.

Gordon De Baugh (left) and George Cosford share mutual congratulations after both were presented with gold watches for having completed 40 years' of service with the Westfield Freezing company. The presentations were made at the company's Christmas party. Mr De Baugh works in the boning room, and Mr Cosford is a foreman carpenter.



## COMPANY PROFILE

Mr R.L. Stewart, the general manager of the Patea Freezing Company, joined W. and R. Fletcher (N.Z.) Ltd, in 1951 as a junior clerk at Nelsons (N.Z.) Ltd. There he gained experience in many departments of the industry both on the administrative and production sides before being appointed assistant works manager in 1968. In 1970 Mr Stewart was appointed works manager at Nelsons and in 1973 he moved to Patea, where he was appointed general manager. Mr Stewart, who is married with four children aged between 12 years and 20, follows all sports, particularly rugby. Most of his spare time is taken up by tramping and keeping his well laid out garden in order.

