

Talk with Helen Arthur about early Waiwhare School, November 2001

Dick and Pat Ensor, Peter, Gwen and Helen Sheild. Miss Blake went around the families. Helen was eight when she went there in 1922 and was there until she was 10, when she went to Woodford for one term and then left because wool prices had dropped. After she came back the Sheilds had five governesses in 2 years. Cynthia Sheild came for lessons with them.

Her family was living at Mangawhare for part of this time in a cottage behind the big house. Her mother had married Norman Branson, who couldn't work because he had a wooden leg. When they went back to Waikonini the manager lived in Mary Sheild's old house.

School at the Ensors was in the cookhouse [the original Wrekin house], in a room off the verandah. Up to 16 men lived in the single men's quarters [now our cottage]. Helen and her family rode to school.

In the lunch hours they watched horses being broken in or watched the blacksmith's shop. Saw ploughing, oats grown for chaff, traction engine. Went to the killing house to catch rats (stinking). Mrs Ensor took them to Willowford for swimming.

They read school journals, nothing was official. Very strict, formal lessons though. Mrs Ensor held lots of parties eg tennis, cricket, golf [in Wrekin hay paddock and across the road to Mangawhare]. Played against Dalgetys later on.

There was a room at the back of the house with stores – got plug tobacco, cut pieces off and smoked it under the woolshed. Also got cooking chocolate.

Gwen had a Shetland that could open gates. Not popular when other horses were let out.

Quicker to go to Waiwhare than to Otamauri. Helen thinks her mother paid something towards the cost.

Bread twice a week – Tuesday and Friday. Ghastly sandwiches, especially on Mondays.

At playtime they would go into the bathroom, throw water out the window then slide on the mud.

Used to lie on the verandah and shoot at flies on the wall.

When the shearers were there they would go to the quarters to get bread and buns. These buns had currants in them, which came in big boxes and had been put out in the sun to kill the weevils.

Pat Ensor had a frightful temper. He chased Helen with a sheath knife once.

Perhaps closed when the Ensors went off to boarding school. Leila (pronounce Lee-lah) was a bit odd.