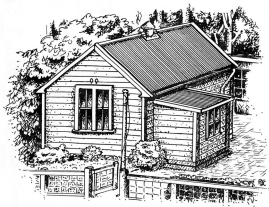


# RISSINGTON



**A PLACE TO REMEMBER**

PLEASE RETURN TO:

B. FARQUHARSON,

1232 GLENGARRY Rd,

RISSINGTON

R.O 2,

Napier.

(06) 8395817



**RISSINGTON**  
**A PLACE TO REMEMBER**

(A LIMITED EDITION OF 400 COPIES)

*No. 153.*

PUBLISHED BY  
THE RISSINGTON SCHOOL  
AND  
CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

## FOREWORD

"Whoever thinks a faultless thing to see  
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be."

This booklet has been written with the object of assembling the main features of the District's past hundred years. It is readily conceded that the task of collecting, collating, and recording information about the School and District may have been both time-consuming and at times frustrating, but despite this, it has been extremely interesting and rewarding.

It is not to be regarded as a definitive history of the School and District. Time, space, and budget has prohibited that. It is hoped however, that some of the incidents and events referred to, will act as a trigger to open the flood of memories of readers and perhaps cause a flow of memories, happy and maybe sad, of a more personal nature.

For all of its shortcomings, errors of omission, understatement or exaggerations, my apologies. For these I ask your tolerance and forgiveness. I have attempted to keep the booklet as general as possible, trying to avoid featuring any particular families. Everyone who has lived in the Rissington District, and/or attended its School over the years has contributed to its pleasant, happy atmosphere which makes it such a memorable and highly regarded district in the minds of those who have been fortunate to live there.

To those who have assisted me in the search for copy, I offer my warm and heartfelt thanks. Those who have contributed copy have been acknowledged over their recollections. Other are too numerous to mention individually. I hope they will excuse me for this but accept this as a token of my gratitude for their assistance.

The Hawke's Bay Education Board made their Minutes and Records readily available — a great assistance with the School's early history. At a time like this, the value of the old School Committee's Minutes Books is immeasurable. One now appreciates the value of the minutes of meetings kept so carefully and regularly by successive Secretaries since the School was founded. The School Log, kept since 1930, has also been a valuable document recording events in the life of the School. A great shame that the earlier Logbook went missing.

Miss C. Davidson, Napier, deserves mention as the person who deciphered my writing and turned it into readable typescript in such a short space of time. To those who have proof read the copy, Mr T.R.D. Sanders, Mr Chris Absalom and my wife, Sue, I extend my grateful thanks for the time they gave to correct my errors in fact and punctuation. Thank goodness few spelling errors were found.

Those who have provided photographs deserve special thanks. They have added greatly to the final presentation. I hope the search for photographs has given them hours of pleasure as they re-discovered photographic records of the history of the District and School.

My thanks also to Richard who with the assistance of his Mother Mrs Robyn Carthew (nee Davy) designed the cover from her memory of the old building. Unfortunately no photo of the old Schoolroom has been located.

To all, I can only hope that the Jubilee of February, 1987 will be one of the events of your life which will give you great happiness as you meet up with old friends and re-live with them those happy events of the past. And may this booklet act as a reminder of the past when you pick it up in an idle moment in the future.

Good luck, good health and happiness to you all. May you be able to attend the next Rissington School & District Reunion.

J.R. Jeromson

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It gives me great pleasure as Chairman of the present School Committee and as an ex-pupil to welcome everybody young and old, from near and far who have made a special effort to attend this historic occasion — the Rissington School and District Centennial. I hope you all have a very pleasant and enjoyable time at our Centenary renewing acquaintances of friends and ex-pupils, some of whom you may not have seen since your school days at Rissington.

The Rissington District is rich in history with a colonial type settlement starting in the 1840's. We are very fortunate to be able to display some very old photographs starting in 1861, some of which show the many Rissington bridges which were washed away. The Rissington School has grown from very small beginnings of a "household school" through various stages of prelabs and odd buildings to a modern two classroom school. Through the very kind support and hardwork of residents and parents the amenities for the children and district have grown. For these amenities we are today very grateful. The Rissington School like many other rural schools is now suffering from falling rolls in these difficult times and the next one hundred years for the school might not be as clear as we would all like.

I would like to extend a very special thanks to the Centenary Committee, ex-pupils and residents, who, along with our present teachers and pupils, have banded together with a tremendous amount of effort to make this occasion such a successful event.

Mark Ebbett  
Soldiers Settlement Road  
Rissington

## RISSINGTON SCHOOL CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Mr I.S. (Buddy) McGregor (Chairman), Mr Chris Absolom (Secretary), Mrs C. Pask (nee Carney), Mrs H. Smith (nee Davery), Mrs J. Wooster (nee McLean), Mrs P. Young (nee Davery), Mrs G. Absolom, Messrs John Absolom, John Bull, Mark Ebbett, Brian Farquharson, Jerry Jeromson, Bob Peddle, Gary Peddle, and John Sanders.

## SOLE AND HEAD TEACHERS OF THE SCHOOL

Miss L.A. Harding 1887 - ?  
Miss E. Hutchinson ?

### Permanent Appointees

Mrs E. Bradley 1904-07  
Miss Robinson 1908-  
Miss Marton 1909-  
Miss A. Symes 1909-10  
Mrs D.E. Mathieson 1911-15  
Miss C. Fuchy 1916-17  
Mrs C. deGreenlaw 1918-20  
Mrs I.B. Filmrose 1921-22  
Miss M. Shanahan 1923-  
T.S. Holmes 1924-  
L.D. Blomfield 1925-27  
Miss R. Speight 1928-  
J.C. Goodall 1928-30  
Miss E.M. Baird 1930-32  
A. Mines 1933-42  
Miss J. Cushing 1942-43  
(Mrs J. Howell)  
L.A. Broening 1945-49  
D.A. Malcolm 1949-53  
J.R. Jeromson 1953-60  
R.W. Aitcheson 1961-67  
R.C. Kitto 1968-73  
R. Marcon 1973-77  
R.D. Galbraith 1977-81  
K.W. Silva 1982-83  
B. Morrell 1984-85  
M. Heath 1986-

### Relieving Appointees

Miss J.A. Morrison 1907  
M. McBratney 1907  
Mrs L.G. Edwards 1915  
L. Monaghan 1915  
Miss I. McIntyre 1920  
D.C. Webber 1922  
Miss M. Corrigan 1923  
W.L. Herton 1927  
E.M. Ridgway 1930  
S. Clayton 1942  
A.H. Rathie 1944  
L. Rickard 1944  
A.H.W. Thompson 1944  
R.R. Christenson 1949  
P. Parsons 1967  
A.C. Eyles 1973  
D.G. Harris 1973  
A.W. Chittenden 1983  
Mrs Hurworth 1985

## ASSISTANT TEACHERS OF THE SCHOOL

### Permanent Appointees

Mrs F.G.L. Davey 1949-60  
Miss J. Wiles 1961-  
Mrs A. Aitcheson 1962-67  
Mrs P.L. Burrowes 1968-82  
I. Gempton 1983-84  
Mrs R. Usher 1985-

### Relieving Appointees

A. Stafford 1960  
Mrs J. Wooster 1962  
1963  
Mrs Galbraith 1981  
Mrs S. McDonald  
Mrs J. Wedd

# SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## School Committee Chairmen

1904-07	Mr W. Moore	1931-33	Mr H. Hughes
1907-11	Mr W.F.H. Berkahn	1933	Mr Jas Morrison
1911-12	Mr H. Hughes	1933-37	Mr H. Howell
1912-16	Mr E.J. Howell	1938-44	Mr W.H. Hughes
1916-20	Commissioners - Mr E.J. Howell, Mr W. Simpson	1944-57	Mr G.N. Ebbett
1920	Mr E.J. Howell	1957-65	Mr T.R.D. Sanders
1921-22	Mr W.A. Simpson	1965-69	Mr R.C. Lindsay
1922	Mr J.C. Hale	1969-73	Mr J.A. Kiltow
1923	Mr W.A. Simpson	1973-77	Mr F.J. Bull
1924	Mr N.G. Moore	1977-79	Mr D. Greene
1925-26	Miss A.J. Spencer	1979-81	Mr C. Absolom
1927-30	Mr E.A. Algar	1981-85	Mr D. Thomson
		1985-	Mr. M. Ebbett

Essential to the existence of any school is participation of the parents and community. Rissington has been ably served over the years by interested parents who have given service as members of the School Committee. Few indeed would be the families who have not at one time or other had a parent who has served for at least one term on the Committee. To 1934, Committee elections were held each year but from that date Committees have been elected to serve for two year terms.

In its earliest years the School Committee obviously spent much of its time considering the improvement of conditions within the teaching spaces provided by the Education Board. Cleaning of the school was also of prime importance in its considerations — the problem of payment, standard of work done — and how often it was done, appears to have been the centre of many discussions. Grounds maintenance was then even more of a problem than it has been in recent years. But the early School Committees had one further matter to discuss which has not been a part of recent Committees' agenda. The early Committees had a definite power in the appointment of a teacher. In the minutes of one meeting it states quite clearly that they did not want one particular teacher but insisted that Miss \_\_\_\_\_ be appointed to the position.

That famous N.Z. institution, the "Working Bee", has been well used about Rissington School over its history. It would be impossible to calculate the thousands of man hours that have been given to the school and its environs so willingly by the versatile country residents over the years. Whatever the skill required there always seems to be someone able to do the job, or prepared to have a go!

Worthy of particular mention as a loyal and hardworking Committee man is the late Mr W.A. Simpson. Bill Simpson served Rissington School as Committeeman, Chairman, and for a few years during World War I, as its Commissioner, for 25 years — surely a local record, and one which when he finally retired in 1938 was also considered to be an Education Board record. The presentation to him in 1938 of a Loewe pipe and leather tobacco pouch as a token of the district's gratitude was certainly well-deserved.

Mr G.N. Ebbett elected to fill a vacancy on the Committee in 1941, served on the Committee for 13 years as its Chairman until 1957, when on his election as Ward Member of the H.B. Education Board he resigned from local involvement. His election to higher office gave the school district cause for a certain degree of pride in having produced such a worthy worker for the broader community's educational needs.

## PRE-RECORDED HISTORY

The district was known to the Maori as Peka Peka — the name of the small stream crossing the Soldiers' Settlement Road at the second low-level bridge before flowing into the Mangaone River.

In the valley there was much raupo swamp, wild duck and pukeko being plentiful while throughout the whole district the weka was very much in evidence in the fern and manuka cover.

There are signs still evident on Mt. McNeill of one-time Maori habitation, although it is thought that any habitation of the Mount by the people of the Ngatiwerewere people was only used as they moved through the district on hunting expeditions. Pits were also evident on the two hills on Mt. Temple but bulldozer work removed evidence of these some years ago.

## RECORDED HISTORY

In 1861 authorised settlement began with the granting of land here to a Captain Anderson, though evidence exists that Colonel Sir George Whitmore occupied some, at least, of his later holding, presumably without title, some years earlier than this. Captain Anderson immediately built his homestead — the central portion of the old "Omataua". The kauri timber used in this construction was still found to be in sound condition when the old home was dismantled 120 years after being erected.



*Omataua in its heyday.*

1862 saw a land grant on the opposite side of the Mangaone to a Mr Gray. The towering gum trees planted by him still stand in the vicinity of the Station Cottage and Hall.

1863 a severe earthquake occurred, sufficiently severe to cause lasting damage to the Omataua Homestead. A major flood also occurred at this time, so that the residents new to the district, and even perhaps, to New Zealand must have wondered if their settlement in the area was a wise decision.

1865, in this year the first grant of land to Colonel Whitmore was recorded. Colonel Whitmore was an English Army Officer who came out with the Imperial Forces at the time of the Maori Land Wars. His home in England was in the village of Slaughter near Greater Risington in the Cotswold Hills area of Gloucestershire. His adoption of "Risington" for his

holding instead of that of his family home itself, appears to have been a compromise dictated by considerations of his military activities at the time.

The original waterless site selected for the homestead, still known locally as Whitmore's Folly, was some distance from the Peka Peka - Mangaone Junction eventually chosen.

The name "Whitmore's Folly" is also given to an area of land above the cliff on the East side of the river opposite the Hall where eight or ten acres of easy ground was prepared and sown in oats. This was then fenced with green poplar posts. It was found when the crop was ready no gap had been left wide enough to take the reaper and binder in to harvest the crop. The fence posts grew into trees over the years and have been an easily distinguished rectangle in the Rissington landscape ever since when viewed from the top of Mt. McNeillor from the top of Newstead Hill.

Local Maori unrest at the time was reflected in methods adopted in the construction of the original homestead. The space between the outer and inner walls was packed with shingle.



The original "Rissington" homestead — circa 1920.

It is recalled that in the 30's when the old two-storeyed homestead caught fire, the alarm was given at about 4am on a perfectly still morning. The column of fire rose straight up for about a thousand feet at the height of the conflagration. When the station hands returned to their quarters for breakfast after attempting to save the old homestead but in vain, they found all waterpipes frozen solid after the severe frost. Nothing of the old home was left except for the lines of shingle which had been between the outer and inner walls — and a very badly scorched lawn.

This building had been the first of several erected on the site of Mr J.A. Absolom's present home, there being, before long, several cottages and farm buildings there. The present Rissington Wool shed was built fairly early in the settlement's history.

Whitmore is credited with introducing rabbits — for game, and a thousand gorse plants for use as fences. Hereford cattle, Merino and Lincoln sheep and a flock of turkeys were introductions by him on the credit side of the ledger.

Military activity was at its height during the early years of settlement, and the camps established throughout the district left their mark — the introduction of blackberry being one thing attributed to them. The definite locality of one camp — about 100 metres north of the School, is undisputed. Troops sent out on patrol were no doubt sent out with dual orders — to watch for marauding groups but more importantly to check on, or move, stock.

There is evidence that Sir George bought up many of the surrounding holdings until at one time he held a total of 110,000 acres — though this figure is questionable. It has also been said over his period of service in Hawke's Bay with the Army his different postings in the Bay area, would have enabled his biographer to claim that at some stage or other he had "farmed" land from the coastline to the Taupo plains.

Mounts Cameron, St. John and McNeill perpetuate the names of officers on Colonel Whitmore's staff — the last after a Major McNeill who was either a partner or manager for some years — Land Records reveal that a grant of land was made to Major McNeill at the same time that Colonel Whitmore received his.



Rissington Valley from top of "The Cutting" — circa 1920

Access to the district was somewhat indirect — and slow. Supplies crossed the Napier Inner harbour from Ahuriri to Porirua by boat or barge. From there they were taken to Puketapu by bullock dray or wagon. The river valleys of the Tutaeuri and Mangaone were then followed by the bullock teams. Traces of the Mangaone track are still discernible and there can still be found near it, in an area known as the "Glen", or the "Rockery", the brickwork of a house occupied by a Major Green who must have been a contemporary of Colonel Whitmore.

1874, Rissington Station passed into the hands of Robert Rhodes of the well-known Canterbury farming family. It is unknown if the transaction was by sale — but it is thought that it was more likely to have been by exchange for Rhodes' Clive Grange property. During the eight years of Rhodes' occupation of the property many of the trees now standing so large in the area were planted.

1882, 35,225 acres of the property were subdivided off in this year — the 13,000 acre homestead block which carried the station name going to Mr Francis Hutchinson Senior.



while William Nelson — of later Tomoana connection took over the land on the seaward side of the Mangaone — the Ōmatua block.

In 1884 the first Romney sheep were introduced into the district although the well-known stud flock was not established for another eight years.

In 1897, F. Hutchinson Senior purchased the Ōmatua block from Mr Nelson — extending the Rissington holding over the Mangaone and along the road back to the Napier settlement. Mrs J.H. Absalom took over control of the "Awataha" block while her husband, Mr J.H. Absalom took over personal control of the "Pukia" block, taking over in 1906 the management of the total block for the partnership formed by the family.

About 1919-20 five farms were subdivided from the Rissington Station area and made available to the Government for Returned Servicemen who had previous to their service in the forces, worked in Rissington. Thus did the Soldiers' Settlement Road come into being with the farms being allotted to J.R.H. Cooksey, Arthur Williams, George Kay — serviced by the Soldiers' Settlement Road, — and Bright Williams and Bert Hughes, in the Dartmoor area.

The sons of Mr and Mrs J.H. Absalom, in the mid 30's each bought a section from the estate — "Peka Peka" being taken over by Mr J. Archer Absalom and "Awataha" by Mr A.R. (Dick) H. Absalom who following his father's death also took over management of the estate.

Towards the end of World War II a block was sold on the seaward side of the Mangaone in the Glenagary Road area for Rehab farm settlement and run as three farms — two by returned servicemen Messrs A. Simon and C. Farquharson. The third, Hohepa — was, and is run to support homes for the disabled in Poraita and Clive.

## THE SCHOOL

On Friday 24 June 1887 at the regular monthly meeting of the Hawke's Bay Education Board a letter was received from Mr F. Hutchinson of Rissington applying on behalf of several neighbours for a front-in-aid towards a small school needed in the district.

The Board decided to recognise the school as an aided one under Section 88 of the Education Act and to inform Mr Hutchinson accordingly.

And so the first school in Rissington was established. It was a recognised school but cost the Education Board very little. The teacher's salary would have been met by the local residents. The school was established in a room provided by the local district — in this case, at "Ōmatua". The Education Board would pay a capitation allowance for each child outside Mr Hutchinson's own family who attended the school.

The first record of Rissington School held by the Education Board is an Inspector's Report signed by Mr Henry Hill on 29.9.87 when he examined the pupils and made recommendations on their promotion, after the school had been opened for 140 half days.

The teacher — Miss Lydia A. Harding

Pupils —	Std 3	Daniel Feame	Aged 14y 5m
		Lily Williams	13y
		Minnie Jephson	
	Std 1	Gerakline Hutchinson	8y 1m
		Annie Feame	10y 9m
		Mabel Feame	8y 3m
	P3	Arthur Williams	8y 6m
	P2	Louis Feame	11y 11m
	P1	Clara Williams	6y 6m

No records are held by the Hawke's Bay Education Board for years after this initial school report, but in the knowledge that Mr Henry Hill was one of the most enthusiastic Education officers and travellers in the district, it must be assumed that he paid at least bi-ennial visits

to the small aided school. The school continued to operate until 1889 when the Hutchinson family left temporarily for a visit to England.

Subsequently, on the return of the Hutchinson family the school was reopened privately and without State subsidy and capitation allowances, to cater for all local children, with Miss Eleanor Hutchinson as teacher.

The January 1904 meeting of the Hawke's Bay Education Board considered a letter from Mr Hutchinson of Rissington, who had once again decided to approach the Board on behalf of local residents — for improved and state-operated educational facilities. The letter also recommended that Mrs Emma Bradley should be appointed as teacher in any approved school. The Board received the letter and approved both — that a school should be established under full control of the Education Board and that Mrs E. Bradley be appointed as teacher.

The school was duly established as a "Household" school in a room of the home of Mr and Mrs Bradley and family, during 1904 — a house where Mrs Bradley also operated the Post Office as Post Mistress. Conditions were cramped and not very suitable for teaching, a point referred to in the annual Inspector's Reports.

The roll in 1905 — of 7 children — was:

Cyril Lloyd	— 7 yrs	Stanley Williams	— eldest
Gough Williams	— 7 yrs	Ruth Simpson	— 5 yrs
Bright Williams	— 6 yrs	Coral Williams	— 4 yrs
Lantie Williams	— 5 yrs		



*The pupils of Rissington School — about 1912*

*Back: Carol Williams, Ida Simpson, Ruth Simpson, Harry Simpson, Ernie Williams, Vic Simpson, John Welch, Fred Howell.*

*Middle: Muriel Williams, Hilda Mitchell, Alma Welch, Ivy Howell, Coe Williams, Eric Williams, Dot Mathieson, Lorna Mathieson*

*Front: Molly Simpson, — Ray Williams, Leslie Mathieson.*

Inspector H. Hill was most impressed by Mrs Bradley's efficiency and dedication to her work as a teacher and the results she achieved in such conditions. She must have been a very busy lady, — with a family to look after, a school to run, a Post Office, and then a Telephone Exchange to operate. However, the Post Office and Telephone Exchange were shifted back to the Cookhouse site leaving Mrs Bradley to give full attention to her school

charges, in what was obviously a growing community as by 1907 the roll had reached 18, still in the same small room at the back of the house.

The Inspector's Report of 1907 was written in such terms that the Education Board was forced to act. After representations by School Committee members, Messrs Bennett and Berkahn, the Education Board purchased 'The House at present used for school and residence at the price offered by the owner, the offer to include all out buildings, tank, and range. Price not to exceed seventy-five pounds (£75.00)'. This action was also mentioned by the School Committee at its meeting on 27 July 1907.

On the land bought from Mr Moore, the Education Board eventually approved the building of a school — and so in 1908 the Rissington School Room was opened to serve as School for so many children until its demolition in 1966, — the scene of so many "happiest day of our lives" — and no doubt some days "not quite so happy".

Every school was/is required to keep a Log — a book in which the Head Teacher enters items of interest concerning the school — and often in rural communities — items of interest concerning the district. Such books can be full of interest to those permitted to read them, and are, of course invaluable sources of information when Jubilee Booklets are written.

Unfortunately the only Logbook available for Rissington School was begun in 1930. The book for the early years cannot be located. When enquiries were made of it as early as the late 40's — early 50's — no one knew then what had happened to it. It was variously reported as — having been stolen, having been burnt, — having even 'walked' off the property.

And so items of interest from the early days of the school are sadly limited. Some points can be gleaned from the Minutes books of the School Committee so please bear with the Editor and forgive if certain happenings are overlooked.

- 1907** A person employed to clean out the school room — £3 per annum and to clean the "Rear" at 1 shilling a time.
- 1908** Subscription list to all residents to pay for school site and other school matters.
- 1910** Letter sent to teacher by School Committee requesting that children must stop digging holes in the horse paddock!!



The Mathieson family photographed in Rissington — circa 1915  
Mrs Mathieson was Sole Teacher of the School 1911-15

Blackberry problems appeared with the Inspector requesting that the Committee take some action to cut the pest back in the school grounds.

Stone carrying was instituted by the teacher as a punishment for misbehaviour.

Complaints from parents to Committee saw the practice stopped.

Concert and Dance held in aid of Piano and School Funds.

1911 1st Arbor Day — 100 trees obtained.

1912 Picnic, District Concert, Children's Concert.

Piano purchased for school.

1913 Sports equipment provided for school's use — A Cricket set and a Tennis "Outfit". Books purchased for a School Library.

1914 After a long period of negotiations with the Education Board, alterations were completed on the schoolhouse but — the Committee was totally dissatisfied with the standard of workmanship and with what had been done and so entered into a further lengthy period of correspondence to try to improve the conditions under which the teacher lived.

1917 At the Biennial Meeting of Householders only 5 parents were present and no one was prepared to accept nomination for School Committee. Finally, a School Commissioner was appointed — Mr W. Simpson — who took over the responsibility of managing the affairs of the school, a situation which lasted until 1920.

A recurring problem in the early days of school management was the problem of cleaners and cleaning. This was contracted out to local people on an annual contract basis. The standard of cleaning, the amount of cleaning done, and the claims for additional payments were the basis for much discussion at Committee meetings, and often, no doubt, the cause of much ill-feeling in the community.

1922 The Committee were very dissatisfied with the old school residence but despite constant negotiations with the Board were unsuccessful in the plans for a replacement — the economic recession of the period being the final closure to the argument. However the Committee decided on a different attack and began to look for a more central site for the school.

This action proved to be long drawn out and it wasn't until August 5, 1925, with a block of land being made available at £18 per acre from Rissington Station and the costs of transferring the school building to that site were obtained, the question was put to a public meeting of residents. No doubt it was a very vocal meeting with argument for and against but when the vote was finally taken the proposal to move the school was solidly defeated. The Education Board would, I am sure, have been grateful for the decision to retain the status quo.

1924 The school children were taken to Napier to view the Fleet — a grand occasion. This with the annual school picnic, held anywhere from Bulls Clearing, to Dartmoor, to Westshore, to local sites on the Mangaone Riverbank over the years gave the pupils many happy days outings and also involved parents and community.



Rissington School with Teacher Mr L.D. Blomfield, December 1925.

Regular Dances were held in aid of school funds — often with costumed themes to test the imaginations of those attending and also no doubt providing great amusement for those attending.

This also was the year of the great flood — with a major effect on the lives of the community.

- 1925** An Infantile Paralysis Epidemic closed schools for March and April. Lessons were set by the teacher to keep the pupils working at home, and children came in threes on different days to have their work corrected by the teacher, Mr Blomfield — and have the new set of lessons explained and set for them.



*Roxington School, Teacher, pupils and mothers, 1926.*

Little can be gained of school happenings for the next few years but it can be expected that Florids, Fancy Dress Balls, Prize-giving events, added variety to the normal daily school life of pupils and teachers.

- 1931** 3 February — the first day of another school year was an exciting occasion for all. The school building gleamed, the desks were all polished, the teacher, Miss Baird, keen to get the new years programmes under way and although not prepared to admit it, the children equally as keen as their teacher. After morning play when



*School in February 1931. An essential experiment in "Outdoor Education"  
Mrs Alec Todd, Miss Baird (Teacher), Joyce McLean, Jessie McLean, Mr Alec Todd, Rita Gilmore,  
Douglas McLean, John McLeary*

everyone had talked themselves hoarse detailing their holiday experiences to one another and a few games had been played with everyone happy to be together again — at 10.47 am the first earthquake shock was felt. And so began a period of great uncertainty for all — school and community alike. The school was closed for days, the chimney, declared unsafe was eventually removed and school, when resumed, was conducted outside, for some time. No wonder! Earthquakes continued for days — another severe shake occurring on the 13th February and again on 22 April, the latter being so severe that with upset children the Chairman closed the school for the remainder of the day.

Patoka School was closed for a period following the earthquake and the children from Patoka travelled by the mail bus, each day to attend the Rissington School causing an accommodation problem at Rissington.

Special Holidays in 1931 were granted for the Patoka Dog Trials, held at Rissington, and a special occasion on the death of the N.Z. Premier Sir Joseph Ward. This is a very liberal approach to school days. The authorities would not permit such generosity in these days.

**1933** Unemployed Relief workers worked on ground improvements at the school. Fences were straightened and tightened, grass cut, and as ever, those blackberries were given some attention.

**1933-34** Influenza Epidemics affected the operations of the school for some periods, with the school only open for half days — at one stage over a period of 6 weeks. Special visits at this time were — to see Captain Ulm's Fokker Monoplanes "Faith of Australia" when he visited Napier and in '34 to be able to show the flag when HRH The Duke of Gloucester visited Napier.

**1935** Excitement! During the holidays a fire lit in the gully to burn out some of the blackberry, got out of hand. The schoolhouse was very much at risk, fences were damaged, as was the boys' 1oo, while some trees in the playground were very badly scorched. After the fire was beaten out, the battle of words began, with the Education Board ultimately demanding that the person who had lit the match being responsible for repairing any damage caused to the property. The boys' 1oo was eventually repaired, as were fences, with life returning once again to normal. Winter school days for the pupils were improved by the introduction of hot cocoa at lunchtime with thanks to Mrs Mines — wife of the teacher.

**1936** The school purchased a new 10 inch lawnmower, with needle bearings — for the grand sum of £3.00. I wonder how this compares with today's prices. School was closed with almost indecent haste for the school year on 11 December with the outbreak of Infantile Paralysis in Dunedin. Pupils were permitted to come to school one at a time on 14 December to collect their books and their prizes, and went home until 1 March 1937. The extended holiday period must have been long and lonely for country children that year as the fear of Infantile Paralysis was very great and it was recommended that children in particular should be prevented from gathering together at all times.

**1938** With the introduction of the Education Department's Outdoor Education regulations it was permitted to teach swimming in school time as part of the curriculum. And so - began those long walks to the nearest swimming hole in the Mangaone. Usually in the river off "Rhenbank's" Peninsular paddock, the long walk downhill was done at a fast pace with the expectations of fresh cool water to enjoy but — the long hot walk back to school, uphill, left everyone, hot, bothered and uncomfortable wondering if, after all, it had been worth the effort. In a normal Hawke's Bay summer it was sometimes difficult to find a hole deep enough to even float in, let alone swim!

Heavy rainfall fell between 23-26 April when 20.28 inches of rain were recorded before the rain gauge overflowed. The rainfall recorded for one of the 24 hour periods of this downpour, was noted as a national record for rainfall until recent years.

**1939** In July — snow fell and settled to a depth of 4 inches — an unusual occurrence for Rissington, but one which was no doubt enjoyed by all of the pupils. To counter such pleasures however, it was in this year that Rissington School, at long last and after many years of delays was entered into the Napier Dental Clinic roll. And so began those 6 monthly journeys into the "Chamber of Horrors" in Clive Square.

**1940** Mr and Mrs Mines would surely have been very excited when, on completion on 15 August, they were able to move from the old — very old by then, school residence and take up residence in the new school house, sited behind the school

playground. The children benefitted too when the old residence was demolished and the playground was consequently extended.

- 1941 "A bequest of 100 pounds (£100) was left to Rissington School in the will of the late Francis Hutchinson of Omatus, Rissington, one special condition being that the amount to be received in interest from the invested money be expended on an award for Science and Nature Study only." This advice was received in a letter from the Hawke's Bay Education Board who were authorised to administer the bequest and so began an annual School Competition — the Hutchinson Award — to honour the memory of a man, loved and respected by all who knew him.
- 1943 The War years presented many and varied problems. With the shortage of teachers, the school had to be closed for two weeks as no relieving teachers were available. The closure of Patoka School in 1944 for the same reason saw Rissington School roll jump from 16 in February to 31 in June of that year. This situation existed until February 1947 when Patoka School was re-staffed, and so, re-opened.
- 1946 The first time the Loquat Tree was mentioned in the school records! Someone was punished for the theft of Loquats from The Tree. Who was it? I hope it didn't spoil his/her enjoyment of the Christmas Tree function held in the Rissington Hall as an end-of-year function. This also a first.
- 1947 Infantile Paralysis Epidemic again closed the school. The children collected their books on 1 December for an extended holiday, not to return to school until 1 March 1948 although during February 1948 they were sent correspondence — type lessons set by the teacher, Mr L. Browning, to remind them that school still did exist and that school work must still play an important part in their lives.
- 1948 Wonder of Wonders! In this year, it came to pass that by saying "Let there be light" and depressing a switch on the wall, a magical force of energy caused a glass bulb to lighten up the night. No more candles, hurricane lanterns, hissing kerosene lamps — and mothers could cook on clean, ash-free stoves. The excitement must have been great in those first days. But — the joy only could be experienced by the residents inside "Kanuka" and "Wa-Hi" at this stage as that is where the power line reticulation stopped. How frustrating it must have been to live beyond that last power pole for the next few years!
- 1949 The school roll having shown that it would maintain a steady figure above that magical 35, an assistant teacher position was advertised by the Education Board. Mrs F.G.L. Davey was appointed — and so began an 11 year association with the school. Living as she did on Apley Road she also provided transport for several children each day in her own car. Over the years six households benefitted by the car service provided by their teacher — until eventually a school bus service was instituted in 1959.
- The first classroom for the infant teacher was established in the playshed — the front was closed in and provided with windows, the concrete floor covered with pinex board and malthoid. Here for close on a year, the second classroom was conducted in conditions that would not be accepted today. Efforts had been made by the School Committee and Head Teacher to have the Education Board move a pre-fab relocatable classroom out to Rissington but, as always, the needs of the city schools were given a higher priority.
- 1950 At long last the second classroom was put on site, to serve as the infant room for many years. It was small, dark and for years not wired for power but it was an improvement on the old shelter shed. A lot of argument was required before a porch was added to the building and an interior wall removed to give more space, more light and better ventilation in 1964.
- 1951 N.B. — This room is still on the school site — used as a Hobby and Library Room. A memorable and enjoyable afternoon was spent at the school when Mrs G. Absolon, Mrs F. Hutchinson, Miss Spencer and Mr R. Cocksey told the assembled children and parents about the early history of Rissington and reminisced on their lives in the early days of the community. A cyclostyled booklet was produced by the Head Teacher, Mr D.A. (Sandy) Malcolm, as a follow up to this afternoon, copies

being given to every pupil. In writing copy for this history, the material compiled by Mr Malcolm has proved invaluable. 5 November — saw the first of the District Bonfires sponsored by the school and held over the years at different sites, usually where bonfire material was most readily available. Guys were made and judged, the fire always burnt brightly, and with every family providing fireworks the combined display was all the more enjoyable and spectacular.

**1952** The Senior Room pupils were given concentrated swimming instruction at the Napier Municipal Baths each afternoon for one week in February. Under the tutelage of Mr T. Turbitt and Mr B. Cotterill, considerable progress was made in the still waters of the Baths, certificates and their seals being obtained by many. This system continued for the next 10 years, the children concerned always being grateful to the parents who provided transport. This was also the year of the Movie Projector. A Danson 16mm Projector was purchased by the School Committee after a major fundraising effort.

**1953** September saw the start of many working bees which ultimately, in December 1954, produced the concrete playing area across the gully. The concrete work was carried out by a contractor but all of the other work was done by local residents — many hours, days and weekends being given to providing this facility for the school.



Form II, 1953

Dale Younes, Barbara Hebley, Pam Dawes, Elaine Wright, George Millar, Peter Carey

**1956** The Inaugural Demonstration and Activity Day (D & A Day) was held at Patoka School, the four schools in the area participating, with all pupils divided in the four Houses — Kowhai, Rimu, Totara and Matai. The local teachers had been working towards this type of schools involvement and were delighted to co-operate with the Board's Physical Education staff — Messrs Tom Turbitt and Eric Hogge. In the first year, three different programmes were produced, one for each term but after three years it was decided that only one D & A Day would be held each year. These programmes were quickly adopted by groups of schools, rural and urban, throughout the whole Education Board area, once they were proved in our area. All children over the years enjoyed the participation, friendly competition, and opportunities to meet with children of the other schools, but it would seem that parents who have attended each day in great numbers have enjoyed the days as much as the children. It quickly became a great social gathering for everyone.

**1957** After years of vehicles clattering past the school over the corrugations of the metal road, leaving behind a cloud of dust to drift over the buildings and preventing the





Rissington School, March 1958.

opening of windows — in the summer heat this made life very unpleasant in both rooms but particularly in the low-ceilinged and crowded Junior Room — the County Council finally agreed to seal a 400 yard stretch of road through the Dip and in front of the school grounds. Much correspondence and pressure had been necessary before this action was approved. School Committee wrote letters and made personal representations to the Riding Member, the Education Board entered the battle, and finally the Health Department's support for the need for tar-seal was enlisted. Thus the battle was won and the school could at last breathe air in comfort. As a sideline, the County Council really let itself in for something once it started on the 400 yard sealing project. Once the road-making machinery had arrived on the site, Mr R.J. Bull of "Riverbank" and Mr A.P.H. Absolom of "Rissington" with properties on the straights above and below the school respectively, made representations to the County with the result that the sealing work was extended to



Rissington School — An aerial view, 1958

cover the road from the northern end of the school straight to the top of the Water Trough hill at the southern end. The 400 yard seal really grew.

1959

The first school bus run was established with Mr J. McKain as driver. The run picked up children from Soldiers' Settlement, Apley and Glengarry Roads. Mrs Davey's car after years of service became her own personal vehicle at last — and the number of horses in the school horse paddock was greatly reduced.

After much pressure, electricity was finally put into the Junior Room to the benefit of all, while the single bulb in the Senior Room was replaced by two sets of fluorescent tubes. Again the assistance of the Health Department had to be obtained before the Education Board would react to the requests for improved conditions in a rural school.

In July a party of 54-FII pupils from the four schools in the area made a five day visit to Wellington with Northland School acting as hosts. The theme for the visit was "Transport and its related industries" — so that visits were made to Ford Motor Factory, Railway Control, to Wharves, but probably the highlights were the visits made to a Sweets Factory, and to Parliament where the group was hosted by the Members of Parliament for Hawke's Bay and Karori Messrs G. Harker and J. Marshall respectively. The afternoon tea provided by Bellamy's was quite a highlight. Wellington is a much maligned city. It does have good weather as was proved on this visit. Even though it was July — the days were gloriously fine — clear blue and cloudless skies with hardly a breeze to stir the dust. It proved a great week for all — but I recall that the only exhausted people on the return of the party were the teacher in charge and the mother helper — Mrs L. Youren.

1960

Another visit to Wellington was made, this time with Miramar North School as hosts. The weather on this visit was not as kind as on the 1959 visit, but this did not prevent the party from thoroughly enjoying their visit to the capital. Miramar North made a reciprocal visit later in the year — the city children being hosted throughout the 4 school districts and being shown what life on farms was like. I believe that they missed street lighting and found rural nights very long and dark. Unfortunately Hawke's Bay did not turn on its normal fine weather for the city children's visit.

A spring of water found in the Dip gully adjacent to the school by Mr T.R.D. Sanders, was offered to, and after testing accepted by the Education Board as a source of water for the school. What great possibilities and changes of attitude this offered to the school and the occupants of the school house. Restricted water supply during the regular annual drought periods of the previous years made life very difficult at times.



Risingstar School — circa 1962.

**1962** As a consequence of the new water supply the Fiji Pit closets were sealed and water closets provided for the school.

A major fund-raising scheme run over a two year period resulted in a great achievement for the school district. School Baths with Filtration Plant were opened much to the delight of pupils and local community. In the hot days of summer, school days were a much more attractive proposition for the pupils — a swimming period in school time plus a lunch hour dip to cool off. For the local residents the Baths were available for family groups outside school hours and have proved a boon to all since their opening.

**1963** Inter-school Swimming Sports were inaugurated with all Kaweka Schools participating. These have become an Annual event, held each year in the Rissington School Baths with races always fiercely swum, and well supported by parents.

With the continuation of Activity Days as well as Swimming Sports the four communities through their schools, have maintained close links to the benefit of all residents.

A Fancy Dress Ball was held this year — the first for many years and so a new and novel experience for the children.



Fancy Dress Ball, 1964.

**1964** Rissington School participated in the Hawke's Bay Primary Schools Gymnastic Festival for the first time and to celebrate the occasion was successful in winning the Country Schools grade — a just reward for the team members who had worked so hard for so long to hone up their gymnastic skills.

**1965** On 16 December, the end of year function usually held in the Rissington Hall was held at the school — for a very special reason. The new school was officially opened by Mr J.F. Harrison M.P. What a wonderful Christmas present for the school it was. Large, spacious, shiny and well appointed rooms, a Staffroom and vestibule cloakrooms linking the two rooms, and wonder of wonders an adjacent toilet block under the same roof. The old Junior Room was retained on the school grounds but resited to be used as a Hobbies Room. Local residents who had attended Rissington School in its earlier days must have saddened to see the old schoolroom abandoned and finally demolished. While it stood it had been a reminder of happy days spent in its high-roofed, often cold and sometimes smoky, oil-floored atmosphere and with its disappearance, it was harder to feel the same association with and for the school. But at long last our children had been provided with a learning environment comparable with those found in most urban schools, as was their right.



The new Rissington School complex.

- 1968** A school group joined with its neighbours to spend a 5 day week at Camp Kaitawa in the Lake Waikaremoana region and sample the activities offered in Outdoor Education. Although not such a marked change of environment as it was for children from urban schools, the experience gained of tramping and climbing over different trails, sharing each days living experiences with 30 other children away from home and the normal comforts home offers, proved to be a great learning experience for all involved — pupils, teachers and parent helpers alike.
- 1970** An outstanding concert was presented in the Rissington Hall by the school. The Senior Pupils presented as a major production — "H.M.S. Pinalore" the children acting like young professionals to the satisfaction of their teacher producer, and to the joy of their proud parents. The success of the production encouraged the school to repeat the performance in 1971, but with "Trial By Jury" as its major production — equally as well received by that year's audience.
- 1972** The school benefited this year when the Napier Lions Club held a Dance in the local hall in aid of School Funds. Members of the Lions Club, with local residents, enjoyed this occasion so that it became the first of many similar dances — to support the school and to link the two — rural and urban communities even closer.
- 1973** The Senior classes travelled to Auckland for a week's Educational Visit. After a flurry of visits to centres of interest, and coping with the public transport system and the large population, everyone returned to the peace and tranquility of the countryside — exhausted by the demands made upon them.
- 1974** After years of water problems with pump faults, power supply, heavy rainfall causing blocking of the water source, etc. — the owner of "Riverbank" Mr F.J. Bull — offered to allow the school to draw its water supply from the farm's source, the water being piped across the paddocks to the school. And so the water supply problems of the school were at last overcome. No longer was there a need for the Head Teacher and/or the School Committee to spend hours locating and correcting faults.
- 1976** A Pet Show was held at the school, and was so successful, both in support and interest, that no doubt all concerned wondered why it had not been done before. Over 40 entries were received ranging from large to small 4 legged animals, from fur, to hair, to feathers.
- 1978** The Kaweka Schools — the schools on the Puketitiri Road — combined to hold the Inaugural Kaweka Music Festival with the programme being presented in the three district halls — Puketitiri on 7 August, Patoka on 10 August, and Rissington on 14 August. A lot of effort and time spent by the teachers and pupils, time and patrol by parents, was well rewarded by the children's performance and reception by the respective audiences.
- With the schools combining as much as they did to participate together in Sport and Cultural activities — Activity Days, Swimming Sports, Inter-school Sports, and now

a Music Festival, the pupils had come to know each other well and to form associations similar to those formed in larger urban schools even though they did not share the same classroom learning activities and were normally removed from each other by several miles of country roading. Gone now, is the isolation of the country school pupil of the former years.

- 1979** A strange year. The school Admission Register and Log Book shows that during the year 46 pupils were enrolled at the school but, instead of the Education Board being faced with an emergency building programme to cater for a much larger school, the roll only increased over the year by the addition of 6 pupils.
- 1981** On 2 June — the Kaweka Schools combined again in another link in support of Telethon. Children, with parent and teacher supervision walked, ran, or cycled from Patoka to Rissington, their sponsored efforts raising the grand sum of \$2,700. How many sore feet and aching limbs had to be treated that night is not reported.
- 1982** That famous "Horse Paddock Gully" was given the treatment during this year. The blackberries, which years ago provided great cover for ground animals like ferrets and stoats, and colonies of quail which attacked the school residence gardens, — had been beaten by the persistence of successive School Committees through the use of the malignant 245T followed by controlled fires. But the gully remained an eyesore and of little use to the school, so a bulldozer spent some hours working in the area so that with the gully bottom levelled and the sides tidied the whole area looked much better.



## FROM "DAILY TELEGRAPH" 13 MAY, 1903

"To the family of Mr W. Williams, of Rissington, probably belongs the record for Hawke's Bay for continuous school attendances by members of the one family. Mr Williams, who is still hale and hearty, is the father of 20 children, of whom 15 are now living. He has had children going to school from the year 1868 to the present date, two little ones being in regular attendance now. For parents to be represented by children at school for a period of 37 years without intermission, is a record which will take some beating."



## DO YOU REMEMBER?

The old school room with its high ceiling and open fire replaced after the 1931 earthquake by a freestanding stove in the corner. That concrete pad beneath the blackboard was the old hearth. It was such a dark room, shaded as it was from the morning sun by the gum trees which grew along the fences of the Horse Paddock and of course, by the leaves of the evergreen, precious Logquat tree which grew so close to and, in the last years of the old schools life, probably held it up on the northern wall. That room was like an ice chamber in the winter, as was the old Infant Room, in the early hours of the day until the stove really started to roar. And, — what about the rose which grew up through the west wall, came out at the window, and bloomed!

Thank goodness the Logquat tree still stands despite the proposal in recent years that it should be cut down. How we watched the tree and its fruit. No one, — just no one — sampled the fruit until the teacher announced the day. On that day pupils brought bags, senior boys were detailed to climb, pick and not to bruise the fruit which was then equally divided among all the pupils — to eat, and if possible take home for the family.

The Horse Paddock — holding at times up to 11 horses. There wasn't much for them to eat in that gully and they often looked very dejected and disconsolate standing there especially in the rain. Tracks through the blackberries made great circuits for athletic pupils running time trials. I think it was Neil Cooper who in 1953 held the record time for the circuit — and bare footed at that!

Those horrible Fiji Pit toilets. To many new entrants a primitive toilet system was a new experience and for many, one with which they could not cope. That dark hole (it was 12' deep), the smell, and the everpresent but necessary blowflies offered a very uninviting prospect for any child who came from a home where different systems were used. The Infant Room teacher or an older pupil had to act as escort and comforter until the tears were conquered.

### Cleaning Chores

In the early days of the school and in more recent times, since the new school was built, cleaning of the school rooms and out buildings was, and is carried out by contract cleaners. In the very early days of the school this caused the School Committee a lot of concern. When a break was made to cleaning being done by the pupils, a duty roster was made out at the beginning of each term, each pupil of the Senior Room taking a week at a time on sweeping one room, or cleaning and scrubbing toilets, or in Term II being responsible for the firewood. The payment was agreed upon — so much to the pupil for the duty, with an agreed amount paid back to the Committee for purchases from the Special Fund. All done very democratically and generously.

The second to last day of each term was one of stress and strain for the teachers. On that day, hopefully a fine one, the pupils of the Senior Room had the task of cleaning up! Desks were removed from rooms to be polished, while the floors were scrubbed and then re-oiled. A time for fun for some, ulcers for others!! But oh — that clean and hygienic smell once the job was done — the smell of "Shell Antiseptic Floor Oil".

### The Cocoa Tin

Pupils brought milk from home, in bottles and jars. A 4 gallon tin — long since obsolete and now only to be seen in Museums — was filled with water to supplement the milk supply and it was heated on top of the stove in the Senior room every day of the middle term. Mugs were produced at 12 noon, the queue formed, and the ration of cocoa doled out to mostly eager and grateful pupils. That warm drink was very necessary on cold wintry days.

### Wasps

They came in their hundreds. With so much blackberry cover wasp nests were plentiful. When eating lunch during the warm days of summer children had to be ever watchful as they ate their sandwiches that they didn't take a wasp with a bite. They were persistent brutes even inside the classroom and so a bottle of vinegar was always readily available for first aid.

### **Trees**

The Elm, the Ash, the Plane, and the Sycamore — those huge trees, now dominating the playground — how they have grown. The Weeping Elm planted by Mr Sandy Malcolm in the middle of the then "Sacred Lawn" between the two rooms. How well that lawn looked and was respected by all as a part of the school grounds not to be used as a playground. The Elm was shifted when the new school was built and is still flourishing.

The Coronation Oak — planted in 1953 behind the old Infant Room — had a chequered early life. It was, in its infancy, attacked by a mower when a Working Bee was cleaning up a rough area of the grounds, a spade came near to completely beheading it on another occasion, and yet it is still growing and looking none the worse for its earlier mishandling.

### **The Bloodstains on the Road**

One day before the road was sealed — children from the area near the store who walked to school, arrived to tell of a huge blood-red stain on the road metal close to Mr Bill Simpson's home. What was it?

A dear little Std 2 girl whose home was adjacent to the area of the stain ably, and with a straight face was able to tell that there had been a road accident during the night, that a man had been killed, and that the stain was his blood. As pupils arrived the story was retold until by 9am the whole school was agog with horror and wonder. If there had been a telephone in the school it would certainly have been buzzing.

The Std 2 girl managed to maintain her straight faced efforts for some time, but eventually admitted to the hoax. A shame it wasn't the 1st April. Never before was a tin of red paint spilt on the road from the back of a truck the centre of so much concern and conjecture.

### **Dust**

Every vehicle that travelled past the school on the loose metal road in summer created a dustcloud that drifted over school rooms and playground. On the hot days of Summer — and they could be very hot, it was impossible to have windows open on the road side wall of the buildings otherwise the dustcloud covered all with fine gritty dust.

### **Hutchinson Award**

The home gardens of yesteryear naturally have not survived the years but hopefully the pupils who in school days took their first steps into making garden plots have increased their skill, knowledge, and enthusiasm for such a pursuit. The Nature Diaries may still be found in top cupboards and perhaps too collections of dried and pressed weeds, and leaves may be there too. I wonder too if Book Prizes suitably inscribed won in this annual competition can still be located.

### **D & A Days**

Did you belong to Kowhai (Gold), Rimu (Red), Totara (Blue) or Matai (Green)? And did you insist on always having your House colour for your own drinking glass at home? Some kids did. And some even made every endeavour when they went off to Secondary School to get into the House which had the same House Colours as their old Primary School House. Such was the loyalty and enthusiasm that the House System initiated.

Do you remember the very first D & A Day held at Patoka School with its original small playground which would only permit a "squashed pear" shaped running track about 60 yards around. But how grand it all looked from the sloping banks which allowed easy viewing of the events. Graeme Davy was the fastest runner of the day and Linda Wright the best high jumper — and they were in the same House Team!

### **Equipment in the Playground**

The long rope from high up in the Elm tree in the playground provided great climbing experience and made a wonderful swing. Best of all was when a Jungle Gym, Taranaki Climbing Frame, and Giant Stride were provided by the School Committee from their Special Account. When they appeared the old ball games and chasing games were forgotten and pupils elected their favourite equipment and developed new skills, and bigger muscles. Then from the earliest D & A Days a new game entered the scene — Four Square Ball. Played strictly according to the rules, this game developed new skills and quicker

reactions. Great was the joy when the teacher was put out and sent down to the end of the line again.

**Marbles** — what arguments and what a lot of holes appeared in the playground. Wonder who scored the marbles confiscated by the teacher from me when I played with them in the school room during lessons?

#### **Bull Rush — Keenie Seenie**

A favourite at all times required no equipment, but sturdy clothes and caused many a hassle at home when mothers had to face the dirt and the rips in clothes — of boys and girls.

#### **The Mail Bus**

Some of the drivers were Harold Perkins, Max Hughes, Bruce McConnell, Dudley Hawthorn — and many and varied were the vehicles they drove. It brought children from as far as the Mill near the Waihau Road Junction to arrive about 8.50am and picked them up after dropping off the mail and papers at about 3.10pm. Always felt sorry for those kids as they never had a chance to play before or after school. Of course, if they had mistakes to correct "after school" they had this bus connection to their credit.

On very wet days Peter, Christine and Paul Camey from "Rawhit" could only get back as far as "Kanuka". If the river had risen to a defined mark they turned their horses and rode back to spend the night at "Kanuka".

#### **The Old School Text Books**

Before the Education Department provided the Arithmetic and English Text Books for Standard Classes, pupils had to buy their own each year they progressed to a higher class.

These were:-

Progressive Readers

Whitcombe Readers

Pacific Readers

Southern Cross Readers

Our Nations Story

Pacific Geography

Arithmetic Texts — with answers in the back

English Texts

New Zealand Civics

All produced by Whitcombe and Tombs — they must have had a great income from these compulsory sales to a large and captive market. Of course, parents sensibly used the hand-me-down technique with family members, and many were the books sold on the second-hand market.

And what about the later "Janet and John" Readers with the "stories" developing through the use of repetition of phrases and words.

## REMINISCENCES OF MRS F.G.L. DAVEY 1st Assistant Teacher, 1949-60

"This happened in Sandy Malcolm's time. Never being much good at figures, the end of term balancing of rolls was always a nightmare. Anyway, at the end of 2nd term 1950 my numbers, according to Sandy, were one out. Did them again — same answer. Sandy did them then — same answer — he did his — same answer. Finally he got out the admission register and compared new admissions for the term. Guess what — Robin had been hanging around the school for so long — since 1st April 1949 to be exact — Sandy just hadn't put her in the admission register on her 5th birthday (4th August) although everyone knew Robin was 5 and had "started" school.

"Malcolm Bowling was a big boy at 5 when he started school and I didn't have any other new 5 year olds for weeks so he joined which-ever class took his fancy and what's more absorbed it all. Anyway, his mother was making routine inquiries as to his progress — Mother "I hope you are trying hard Malcy." Malcolm "Oh no. Mrs Davey doesn't like us trying hard".



Mother "What a lot of nonsense, Why ever not?" Malcy "Well, because it breaks the points off our pencils".

"David Youren asking me why does Donald McEwan say Birnd instead of Bird.

"The reading class had been learning their new word for the day — 'are', I went through my usual procedure — mostly original and at the end, as each kiddie read the sentences, he or she made up a sentence for me to print — adding some very amusing tidbits. In this lesson one little girl lisped out "And Mrs Davey, there's the 'are' we say at the end of our prayers — you know — Are Men".

I wonder how many children in my room in the late 50's remember when Doug Tollison presented us with an old type record player. Louise Bowling brought a long playing record which never failed to bring tears to all our eyes. "The Little Prince and the Swallow who stayed to see what winter was". On the other side was a very stirring rendition of "Peter and the Wolf", but it was always "The Little Prince" kiddies wanted — tender hearted little souls that they were. The record went home at the end of term and Malcy sat on it (Much grief).

I started teaching at Rissington on 1st April 1949 and finished at end of October 1980 and I would like to say here what wonderful years they were and what delightful children I taught in those almost 11 years and how well they coped as they grew into adulthood. Most of them went on to High School — many to University and it has given me great pleasure to know that in my small way I have helped towards their future — but mainly I think it was something in the children themselves — they had a real sense of responsibility, they were always ready to try anything, to help, and to join in. Of course parents also played a great part in the harmony of school life. We teachers knew them all well and I guess "co-operation" was the key word here."

## RECOLLECTIONS OF MR BRIGHT WILLIAMS

"I was born in 1898 when my parents operated the Patoka Accommodation House. The family moved down to Rissington soon after my birth and lived in the house just south of the "Dip between the road and the Gully where my father established himself as a blacksmith. There was plenty of work for him in the district, as well as for my grandfather who had previously run a blacksmith forge beside the Accommodation House. Wagon teams often camped for the night between our house and the "Dip", and they always had shoes needing to be replaced.

When the school opened in the house bought from Mr Moore in 1904 I was one of the 7 first day pupils. To start a school 7 pupils were needed, so my sister Coral, although only 4 and not quite 5 years of age was enrolled to make up the required numbers. Most of us lived within easy walking distance of the school but Cyril Lloyd who lived at "Kanuka" rode to school on a pony. Mrs Bradley, our teacher, lived in the house from the front room of which she operated the district's first telephone exchange, and the Post Office. She was an English woman and her husband, also English, worked as a shoemaker from one of the out buildings.

Our school was held in one of the rooms at the back of the house itself — a not very large room and one with not very good light. With seven children it was just big enough for us but as children were enrolled over the next 2-3 years and the roll increased to about 15 we were very cramped for space. Mrs Bradley was a very fine woman and a very good teacher who worked us hard at our lessons, with the normal school day being 9am-3pm. Lessons were interrupted, of course, when Mrs Bradley was called away to wear her other caps as Postmistress or Telephone operator. Stanley Williams was the only one of the seven original pupils older than 8 years and he would, at the times Mrs Bradley was called away, be left in charge of the schoolroom. I remember one day when at lunchtime Stanley took us off on a birdnesting expedition. Being children, unaware of time, we became carried away with our search and didn't return to school until close to 2-30pm. After a firm dressing down we were

punished by being kept in past 3pm to make up the time lost. We had no cleaning duties apart from having to keep the room tidy, and there was little to do to the grounds as in those days there were no such things in school equipment as lawnmowers. In fact although the school grounds were officially the size they are today we only used a small area about the house for our playground.

We did wander of course. A popular fossicking place for us was an area to the north of the school which in early days had been used as a troop encampment. We found many interesting things there in what had been their rubbish dump. One, I remember in particular was an earthenware ink bottle which had a tube coming from the base with a small stopper in it. I couldn't use it with my pens, and so eventually threw it away — again. I have never seen such a thing since and wish now that I had kept what would today be a valuable and interesting object of our early days.

Our school days were kept full, working in the early years on slates and blackboards, at the 3 R's. It wasn't until our later years at school that we were allowed to work with pen and ink on paper. I can still remember part of one of our reading exercises. This was a large cardboard sheet on which pictures of the story had been drawn to tell the story written alongside —

"The man chased the pig

The man and his dog chased the pig... etc"

and so the story was built up by repetition of words used. Nature Study as a school subject was not introduced until later years.

Discipline and control of pupils was very strict in those days and the teachers from Mrs Bradley on, coped very well with the wide range of ages of the children in the school. Children were supposed to stay at school until they were 15 years of age or had passed the Proficiency exam at Std VI. There was a lot of delegation in the school with the older pupils being given the task of helping the younger ones with their lessons. It was very much a family group. Very few of the children, and they would have been girls, went on to Secondary School after Std VI. Actually, I left school before I was 15 years. I had been working with the harvest, bagging the grain from the harvester, and so, after working with men, I couldn't face the situation where I was required to work with children again.

The Std VI Proficiency exam was set by the Education Department and as an external exam, had to be set under strict conditions. The Chairman of the School Committee usually came and supervised the examination of the children — a written exam — at the time set. Mr Henry Hill was the Inspector of Schools in my day. On his annual visit, he would ride, or drive a horse and trap to Puketitiri at the beginning of the week and then work his way down the road inspecting the schools as he passed through each district. He usually reached us on the Wednesday morning and would spend about 2½ hours in the school inspecting every pupil's work, asking questions of them, before writing his report and recommending at what level our "standard" of work had reached. That was why classes have been called Standards.

With the roll having reached 18, the conditions in the old house school room were very bad for the teacher and pupils and so in 1908 the new school room was built and opened. This provided a totally new atmosphere for learning. I remember well the night that the new school building was opened as it was the cause of great celebration for the whole district. At the time the old school house was unoccupied as the single teacher, Miss Robinson, was boarding at "Kanuka". The back rooms were used as Ladies' Dressing Rooms, and the front rooms were designated as Men's Smoking Rooms and a well attended dance took place in the new school. It was one of the few dances I recall from the early days in Rissington when liquid refreshments were provided.

Until the Hall was opened — about 1910-11, the school room was cleared of its desks many times to be used for dances, concerts, Church services and the like. Of course, in those days too, it also was the district library.

In the early years of this century the district was a very closely-knit community. I well recall the horse-drawn wagons hauling wool and timber down from up-country through to Napier. The roads were difficult and often nearly impassable. For the coach driver in particular, who had to run to a schedule, it must have been a particularly hard day when in Winter he had to drive his team from Napier to Puketitiri or return, over roads when at times his horses would

be near belly deep in mud, I can remember at one stage when the road was impassable because of heavy rains, with mud and slips, when Charlie Kemp carried the mail through on 3 pack horses as even to the coach the road was closed and impassable. The "Change" on the straight above the school was a well built building in the coach days. The coach would drive into a roofed area where the passengers would alight and stretch their often cramped limbs while the horse team was changed.

The Accommodation House was built for just that purpose for the convenience of casual travellers and visitors to the district. One regular visitor was the Rabbit Inspector — as the rabbit was a major pest in the district in those days. When I left school I worked on Rissington Station — and lived on the station in the quarters provided behind the Accommodation House which had by then become the Station's Cookhouse. Quite a large staff was employed by the station at this time. There were 3 shepherds, 2 ploughmen, a fencer, 2 married couples — one at the Cookhouse and the other couple at 'Omaha'. On leaving school, I milked the cow, helped with stock and did odd jobs about the farm. At shearing time I was offsider to the Shearers' Cook. I was offered double pay by Mr Absolom if I would remain in that job during the season, a proposition which I accepted. I must say that I didn't mind if it rained during the shearing as it meant I was getting 30 shillings a week, as much as a 'fisco' in the shed, irrespective of the weather.

*The Bachelors of Rissington*  
*request the pleasure of*  
*M<sup>r</sup>. F. Simpson*  
*off*  
*Social and Dance*  
*To be held in the Rissington Hall,*  
*on Thursday, July 25th, 1907.*

C. W. WILLIAMS,  
Hon. Secretary.

*Everything was done very properly in those days.*

Ernie Kennett who worked for Mr Ballantyne, the Puketapu Storekeeper and delivered stores from there into Rissington, established his own store in Rissington about 1912. This was on one of the sections sold by Apley on the flat below the Cutting between the road and the riverbank. This was a big innovation for the district and soon became a popular meeting place for the local residents. I remember too that Ernie Kennett brought in a full size billiard table and set it up in one of the back rooms of the store. This became a popular meeting place for the men of the district after working hours and was well used by them, and by the drivers of Holtz horse wagon teams and the traction engine drivers who often camped overnight on the banks of the river by the Store.

When I worked on Rissington Station I remember that the woolshed then was operated as a 6 stand shed, but while it was only 6 stand you could still see the old shearing ports from

when, on that side it had been 12 stands. Originally it had been twice as large, — a 24 stand shed but it had been halved, with the other half I believe, removed to and re-erected at Dartmoor. The machines in my day were operated by a very cantankerous Blackstone kerosene stationary engine. It was probably because of the dirty unfiltered kerosene but we had no end of trouble with that engine. It was scrapped and everyone was relieved when the reliable Lyster engine was brought in to provide energy for the machines. Altogether I worked on Rissington for 5-6 years. I changed my age and went to World War I, and was fortunately able to return to New Zealand and the district. I worked again on Rissington for about 8 months before I was fortunate in being granted a farm in the block which "Rissington" sold to the government for the rehabilitation of Returned Servicemen. My 400 acre block and that of Bert Hughes were on the far end of the Soldiers Block separated from the others by the Wai-iti Gorge and so our main road access was through Dartmoor and not Rissington. I remember those early days well. I had a surveyed block of farmland so with



"Let us forget"

what little money I had, I bought a mob of sheep from the sale. These had to be marked for identification, and THEN, I had to erect my boundary fences. My neighbour followed the same routine.

But the Rissington Hall once erected and used also as a Library, became a great social centre for the district. At that time of course, each community had to make its own entertainment — using its own resources. You didn't drive off to the town theatre in 30 minutes for your amusement — you had to make it yourself. I well remember the dances held in the Hall in my younger days — always dry! Music was provided by local residents. Mrs G. Absalom played the piano for waltzes — she played a lovely waltz, and Freddy Hughes played the accordion and would play for any dance that was wanted — and he would play all night if the dancers wanted it — for £1 a night. The date for a dance in those days was set by the moon. Organisers always set a date close to the full moon for the benefit of those travelling by horseback or by horse and trap. People thought nothing of coming from Ngaroto, Rawhiti, Dartmoor, Patoka and even Puketitiri and occasionally Napier, if the occasion had been widely advertised and of course, if the weather was right. Sometimes the dances went on until daylight, or at times those who had travelled those long distances would stay overnight with friends and travel back home on the next day.

As I ended up farming on the Waihou Road I lost contact with the social life of Rissington, though not full contact because my private telephone was to Rissington, but to this day I remember with great affection the people who lived and worked in that lovely area, the great times we enjoyed together — at work and at play. Now when I drive through the district I get the feeling from the sad looking Hall that little happens there where once it was a thriving busy place and now "Should a dog bark you would hear its echo. 'Tis a sad thing."



*My first "Chariot". Robin Coodey with the reins, 1924.*

## RECOLLECTIONS OF MRS A. TOLLISON NEE CISSIE WILLIAMS

"I was born in Napier in 1902 when my father was working in Rissington. We lived in a small cottage, tucked under the Cutting, which had been used as an outpost of Apley. When my father bought his traction engine to become self-employed as a transport operator carrying wool and timber from farms and mills to Napier he bought one of the acre sections which Apley subdivided on the flat between the road and the river south of the bridge. Another section was bought by Mr Kennett who built on it the Rissington Store. While our home was being built we moved from the small outpost cottage and lived in the cottage just up from and opposite the present school site. Our home on the flat, after being moved from its foundations by the 1924 flood and being restored, was the one which in later years was bought by the County Council and used as a residence for the Roadman and later the grader driver.

In 1908 I was enrolled at the Rissington School — in what was then the new school room. I remember my school days as times when we worked hard at our lessons, kept very much to the task by our teacher who had to teach a wide range of ages and all subjects. In those days, it was quite common for children to be kept at school until the age of 15 years — although often boys left before they reached that age. We were taught the 3 R's — Reading, Writing and Arithmetic and we had History, Geography, Art, Sewing, and Gardening and Nature Study. I can remember how hard I worked on my tables and Arithmetic and hoped for a prize in that subject but remember how disappointed I was to receive my prize "for sewing" at the end-of-year prize giving function. The prizes given were locally donated prizes, usually a book, many of which had gilt-edged pages.

We sat at 4 seater benches, using in our early years slates and slate pencils or blackboards and chalk. At the top of the benches were slots to take our slates and blackboards, grooves to hold our writing materials and inkwells when we were later allowed to use pen and ink. We didn't move far from our desk seat during lessons, and the teacher did not stand for any nonsense.

A concert presented by the school was held every year and before this happened we spent a lot of time practising the items. The girls in their sewing period made many of the costumes that were required for the concert.

A lot of emphasis was placed on loyalty to the crown in those days — we honoured the flag at regular intervals and the portraits of the King and Queen were always on the wall in front of us.



Children dancing on the lawn of "Omatus" at a Garden Party held to raise I.W.W. Red Cross funds.

At the times of General Election, we children were sent to school wearing the ribbons of the political party our parents favoured. This would at times lead to stinging matches, and occasionally to bad feelings among the boys in particular and acted as the trigger to fights. The wearing of these favours made fun of what was intended as a secret ballot.

I have many happy memories of two wonderful ladies who took a great interest in the young people of Rissington and who, through their interest and help gave us a good start in life. Mrs Frank Hutchinson and Miss Jerome Spencer did much for the children of the district. They took us for Sunday School at "Omatus" — inside if the weather was not good but if fine, we would often be told our Bible stories on the riverbank in the gardens of "Omatus". They also offered us craft classes in Basket Weaving, Spinning and Cloth Weaving. I later took over the teaching of Sunday School to the children and carried on with this duty until my marriage in 1925.

After World War I my father moved to one of the farms at the end of Soldiers' Settlement road. I left school during that war when my father who was in the army in France wrote back and said I had to leave school and look after my mother. Once we had settled on the farm I worked at home and on the farm with my parents until my marriage after which my husband, Alf and I settled in Patoka.

During those war years it was a time of great social activity as many dances and concerts were held — to farewell men of the district going overseas, and to raise funds for patriotic purposes.

I can remember the first time I was allowed to go to a dance on my own, unescorted by my mother. In the family horse and trap with my cousin Lantie driving and with some of my younger cousins we were allowed to go to a dance in Patoka. It took about 1½ hours to drive to Patoka and such was the freedom I felt that I told Lantie to let the horse have her head so that we would have made that journey in record time."



Sunday School children at play on the lawn of "Ornatia".

## REMINISCENCES OF MRS JOYCE WOOSTER NEE McLEAN

From the early school days which began for me in 1926 I can still recall-

The open fireplace with lovely warm fires in winter time and the smell of sandwiches being toasted over the embers at lunch time.

The scent of lavender from the bushes which lined the paths. When in flower they would be cut, tied in bunches, dried, and sold at end-of-year Break-up Day.

The smell of dust as it floated through the open windows from the metal road as the timber trucks and other traffic passed by.

ANZAC Days when the residents of the district and school children would gather at the school. The flag would be raised and a Remembrance Service would be held.

Fancy Dress Dances were held each year. Many costumes were made from crepe paper, held together sometimes by machine sewing or even pins. How hard we worked on those costumes and on the movements for the Grand March.

Some children walked long distances to school, no matter what the weather was like. Others rode horses while a few travelled on the mailcar. How they were envied.

School desks were long benches providing work space for three to four pupils who sat on a long form. The inkwell! Blue and red ink was used on paper by the more senior classes. The ink lights — were fun at the time but tragic for our clothes.

Slates were used by the Junior classes — to write or draw on. One side of each slate was ruled with lines for printing and the other side left clear for sums or drawing. We had special slate pencils, usually with a paper wrapper around them. These marked the surface of the slate, usually quite clearly and once the work was marked it could be wiped clean with a damp cloth (or if an error was made, that could be erased with a bit of lick on a finger). One thing about slates that remains in the memory of any one who had to use them would be that dreadful sound of a slate being ruled, and often the sound of slate pencil on slate was enough to last with one for a lifetime.

Discipline. Boys who erred were strapped, while Girls were made to stand in a corner of the classroom. It sure worked in our schooldays.

Games played according to the season or the fashion of the time were: Marbles, Hop Scotch, Cricket, Football, Rounders, Skipping, Hide and Seek. Boys and Girls joined together in whatever game was in season.

The Annual School Picnic was always an exciting event as was "Break-up Day" at the end of the school year. Sometimes the picnics were held at a local picnic spot, occasionally they were held outside our school district. The journey to "away" picnics was always a cause of great excitement as it wasn't every family who had a motorcar. We would always be able to swim at picnics, while running races, sack races, egg and spoon races, and a lolly scramble kept us entertained.

Swimming time meant a long trek down to the river and back but in our hot summers it was well worth it. What a joy it was to school children and local residents when the school baths were built in 1962.

Disaster struck on February 3rd, 1931. In a few seconds the earthquake had demolished the chimney to a pile of bricks and the water tanks were shaken from their stands. Miss Baird had to cope with children in tears, all suffering from shock especially as the ground continued to shake from the after shocks. School was closed immediately and the children sent to their homes. There would have been no loitering on the way home that day. No school was held in the school room for quite a while although an open air school was held at "Riverbank" while the school room was closed, but only a few of the pupils attended these classes. When we returned to the school room the old fireplace was gone, boarded up



We are off to the School Picnic. Truck owned by Mr Walter Hughes, Mr A. Mines (Teacher), in front of cab.

forever and a chip heater had been installed to replace it. It was never the same although it was very effective. There was another very severe shake later in February. I was standing outside my Grandmother's cottage over the road from, and just above the school when it happened and I remember the huge cloud of dust that arose when a large section of cliff fell into the river opposite where I stood.

Kerosene lamps hung from the ceiling in the old school room but were only used when the room was used at night. No matter how dull or dark the day was, we had no help from artificial lights — and the room was well shaded by trees. What a wonderful difference electricity makes to one's life.

The Loquat Tree in 1934 was only the height of the room's window sill and was never a planned planting. There are many people who have sentimental memories of this tree, having tasted its tasty golden fruits and climbed among its branches. It is so good to see it still standing in all its glory, with all its memories of generations of happy and noisy children. If it was able to talk I'm sure it could tell some great tales of the happenings inside the old school room seen by its branches which covered the two high windows."



## THE DISTRICT

The history of the Rissington district is closely woven to the history of the road. In the 1850's a road was opened through to Puketitiri where a sawmill was established. All of the early traffic on the road naturally was associated with the people of the farms, the sawmills, and the products from their endeavours. It is believed that in the early days of Hawke's Bay it was proposed that the Napier-Puketitiri Road would be the first section of the road—to be built through to Taupo and the North. This scheme as we know was not followed through. A pity as the road through to the Mohaka could have been an easier road than the one we know as Route 5 to that same point, but if it had been followed up, the life of residents of the Rissington District could have been altered from what they have known through the years.



Rissington Station Cook House. Lester Masters and ARH (DCA) Absolom view the 20000.

In the early days the one day coach journey from Napier to Puketitiri was not one for the chicken-hearted or the person in a hurry. An Accommodation House was built in Rissington — on the site of the present and well known Rissington "Cook House". Run, about 1810 by Mrs Stanley Howell, meals and accommodation could be obtained by visitors to the district and travellers — while Mrs Howell also acted as Postmistress later and also ran the telephone exchange when that service entered the district. The coaches ran the service



*The Royal Mail Coach on Napier — Puketitiri Road — circa 1914.*

through Rissington until 1921 when the era of the motor vehicle began. Of interest is an area known until 1921 as "The Change". This was a site, nearly opposite the gate into "Riverbank", Mr F.J. Bull's property. Here the horses were changed on the journey in and out from Napier, rested and fed until the next passing coach required another change of horse power — while the passengers had their first chance of a stretch and rest from the jolting they received since they boarded the coach in Napier.

Apart from the passenger-carrying coaches of the early days, the heavy materials from farms and sawmills were transported to Napier and Hastings by wagons, drawn by bullocks



*Dr. Hodgkin leaving Rissington in his buggy and pair. Frank Hutchinson facing camera.*

or by horse teams. The teams and their drivers — characters all, were all well known to local residents. Steam traction engines also became a common form of transport on the road. These large machines — “Puffing Biliys” — a great sight in the memories of those who saw them, were not welcomed by all, as in dry weather the sparks they often belched forth constituted a fire risk to the fern pastures. A staging post was established in the early days for horse drawn wagons and the traction trains between the store and the river bridge. Here the teams rested overnight while the traction engine driver also was able to replenish his boiler water supply from the river.



Traction Engine used on Napier—Puketitiri Road, and owned by Mr Art. Williams. Bert Hughes in hat — stoker, Art Williams in cap — driver, Grandad Will Williams — Passenger

The crossing of the Mangaone would have presented problems in the early days. Originally the river was crossed by ford — about 100 metres south of the present bridge. Then a wooden truss structure was built on the present site, approximately 32 feet above the river. In the 1924 storm however the river rose rapidly, so rapidly that in the memory of residents of that time, it was only about 1½ — 2 hours from the storm beginning to the



One method used for crossing the river after the 1924 flood. Passenger unknown.

disappearance of the bridge. The events leading to a restoration of communication are dealt with later in the recollections of Mr AH Tollison but sufficient to record now that after three years of using temporary crossings the present steel bridge was eventually erected on its present site in 1927. Of interest is the fact that this bridge was manufactured in Middlesborough, NE England by the firm of Dorman Longs who also were responsible for the manufacture of the famous Zambezi and Sydney Harbour Bridges.

The big 1924 storm was responsible for a lot of damage in the settlement around the Store. One house was lost from under the Cutting, while another was moved from its foundations but did not float away and was eventually restored on its previous site. The beautiful gardens and grounds of "Omatus" in front of the old house down to the bridge, were also lost, inundated by several feet of river silt.

The early roads were of course merely tracks but as the years passed they were more clearly defined with their loose metal cover. In stagecoach days, often the coach was pulled through deep mud areas and early residents remember horses at "The Change" being caked, belly deep in mud. At least in the early days the speed of traffic would not have created the dust storms of later years created by the fast moving motor transport. From 1920 the stagecoach was replaced by motor bus. The early drivers of these must have been weary by the end of their regular daily return trips in Napier as the roads in the 20's and 30's would have been far from easy driving. Tar seal cover gradually made the road faster and easier driving. An early seal was laid in front of the Store, as required by Health Department regulations. 1957 saw a strip laid outside the school which through the efforts and pressure of Messrs A.R.H. Absalom and R.J. Bull was extended to cover the road from the top end of Bulls Straight to the top of Watertrough Hill. This to residents who lived up the road must have been a great joy — and the stretch quickly became a "Mad Mile or More" as the lost increased pressure on the accelerator over such a smooth uncorrugated section of road.

The Store, moved from the Accommodation House to its site just south of the Bridge about 1912, taking with it the Telephone Exchange and Post Office service. As supply and communication centre for the district, the Store was always a great meeting place for the residents. Life for the storekeeper may have been relatively quiet during the morning but from 2.30pm, when the mailcar arrived, the Store came very much alive as residents arrived for mail, paper and stores, and a gossip!

On Saturday 3 July 1954 in mid afternoon fire razed the old store. The Fire Brigade arrived from Napier after a 20 minute trip but were unable to save the old building. A temporary store opened in a shed which escaped the fire on the following Monday morning and continued there until the replacement building was completed with the usual smiling service from proprietors Dave and Mavis Bevan, and assistant Nita Hughes.

The Store continued to service the community until 1976 when with the roads to Napier and Hastings fully sealed and the opposition provided by Supermarket chains, it was forced to close, with the loss to the community of a great meeting place.

#### Storekeepers of Rissington:-

E. Kennett (Ernie)	A. Pilkington (Alan)
B. Algar (Bonnie)	N. Marr (Nail)
W. Hughes (Walter)	D. Howel (Doug)
D.T. Bevan (Dave)	P. Hewitson (Peter)

While the Store was the Commercial centre of the district and the School the Educational centre, the Hall was definitely the Social and Cultural centre before the days of TV and sealed roads. Built about 1910-11 as a Library Hall, it has been the scene of much activity over the years — many are the happy events that have taken place there.

In the early days of settlement, Dances were a regular occurrence, attended by people throughout the whole Rissington district — and at times even by people from Patoka and Puketitiri. Horse back, or horse and trap journeys over metal roads were no hindrance to the early residents when an evenings (nights) dancing and entertainment was offered.

Readers of this booklet might like to think back on the many activities and entertainments that have been offered in the Hall — and here is a list of those that can be recalled.



"Risington Hall", as it is today.

**Church Services** — conducted usually monthly. Who can recall the morning service when a large cattle beast entered the Hall and joined the congregation.

**Sunday School** — conducted fortnightly — a chance for the children to dress up in their best.

**Concerts** — offered by the School, or by the local C.W.I. with a wide ranging local talent available.

**Dances** — in the aid of School, or Hall Funds — or just dances for a night out. The Dances hosted by Returned Servicemen of the District with the whole community as their guests, and the reciprocal Dance hosted by the community. What nights they were — and the clean up the next morning of Hall, its floor, its toilets, such as they were, — and the unfinished refreshments.

**Small-bore Rifle Club** — a large log used to back the targets.

**Square Dance Nights** — sponsored by the local branch of the C.W.I., — how energetic, but how enjoyable they were.

**Table Tennis Club** — 4 tables.

**Five Hundred Card nights** — some expert players here.

**Films** — every 2nd Friday night when selected feature films were shown. That problem projector — of French make which could not cope with the volume of sound required to combat the bad acoustics of the Hall. The operators — Head teachers, sweated over that machine and the problems it presented.

Two memories to recall — The night a join in the film on a large reel separated un-noticed on leaving the machine and left at the end of the reel a pile of tangled 16mm on the Hall floor. It was after midnight when that was untangled.

The night a lamp blew — with a loud bang and showered the lady sitting below the projector with a covering of broken glass, as she "fitted" from her seat with the shock of the exploding bulb. Do you remember that Noel?

**Meetings** — of Hall Committee, of C.W.I. Federation, of Federated Farmers. Older local C.W.I. members would no doubt recall the problems faced by the Hostesses with the inadequate primitive toilets being used by a large gathering of visitors for a full day's meeting.

### **Sporting Activities.**

Apart from the indoor activities run in the Hall, many and varied are the sports which have been played or have brought the residents of the district together.

At the turn of the century, Country Race Meetings were held in Risington. Mr Bright Williams recalls two meetings being held on a track situated at the top end of the straight past the school, and later a further two meetings being held on the flat adjacent to "Awataha". No bookmakers attended these meetings, and horses were from local farms.

Apparently, imported thoroughbreds were banned from participating.

In the paddock by the river and adjacent to the Cemetery a concrete cricket pitch was laid and used for social matches against teams from neighbouring districts and from Napier. The remains of the pitch are still there, but by now well and truly overgrown by grass.

The large paddock on "Riverbank" behind the school is known as the Sports Paddock. This was the site where during the 30's and 40's many successful Country Sports Days were held. The usual horse events were held with competitors coming from all around the area. Running races were held for the children, but the atmosphere was generally that of a picnic outing for all. It is recalled that one year the fire under the hotwater copper was not properly dampened down — and this being under the trees at the river end of the paddock it caused some problems for the men of the district during the night following the sports programme.

This paddock also became the scene for a small, interesting 9 hole golf course during the 1960's. Purely local and unofficial, it allowed local residents to test their skill at another sport.

The concrete area, built over many weekends of interminable working bees behind the school grounds and as an extension of the school playing area, provided the community with another sporting area. During the 50's the two tennis courts provided the scene for some hard battles and were well used by the 30 odd members who regularly attended Club Days. A pity that this form of community contact also came to an end, as residents became more mobile and the road improved. Exchange visits with Puketitiri, and with Hawke's Bay Lawn Tennis Club were always highlights of the "Tennis Years".

The same concrete area was the scene for some years of vigorous and often humorous matches of Netball played between Mothers and Daughters. Played in serious vein, the daughters' team usually won the trophy. Does anyone know what happened to the "Jerry Rosebow?"

For a few years in the 50's — and again recently, Singles v Married Rugby matches were played in the Sports Paddock. These became very serious encounters, and the writer can recall one match when the final whistle ended a very bruising encounter and the list of injuries resembled those of a wartime battle field.

## DO YOU REMEMBER?

What it was like to live without electricity. Candles, Hurricane lanterns, those hissing kerosene lamps, then to generator-produced electricity — the old and very comfortable black coal and wood ranges — kerosene refrigerators.

Rain storage water supply tanks — so inadequate in the regular summer droughts experienced in Risington. The 1931 earthquake caused many springs to cease their flow with consequent alterations to water supplies on farms and to homes.

Trips to the river during dry spells, with a cake of soap an essential item.

Soldiers' Settlement Road being cut off in heavy rains when the Inanga and Peka Peka Streams were in flood. The culvert crossing of the Inanga built by Mr J. McKain with local labour assistance, and the low level bridge over the Peka Peka, helped to keep these crossings open provided the rainfall was not too heavy.

Working Bees. That great Kiwi use of manpower. Felling trees, fencing, road building, water crossings, concreting, plumbing, painting, building — no matter what was needing to be done, there was always someone able to lead the team into finishing the job satisfactorily. The man hours spent working for the community wherever needed, — the Hall or the School usually — would be incalculable. The cups of tea and scones provided by the ladies of the district to keep the working gangs happy too — would likewise be uncountable.

The day that Jack D assisted Bert B in putting down the old horse! How the district buzzed with the story of the regret they felt at losing an old and faithful animal and how they had to overcome the remorse they felt.

When the district had such prominence in the Scouting and Guiding movements.

We had-

"Little John"  
"Robin Hood"  
"Friar Tuck"

Mr J.R.H. Cooksey —  
Mr J.A. Absalom —  
Mr A.R.H. Absalom —  
Mrs E. Absalom —  
Mrs R. Absalom —

N.Z. Training Commissioner  
H.B. Provincial Commissioner  
Scoutmaster Eskdale & Puketapu  
H.B. Camp Adviser  
Dominion Executive & local H.B.  
Involvement

Private telephone lines. Surprisingly introduced as early as 1904, these gave those residents able to finance, erect and maintain their own lines, a link through the local exchange, first sited in the old school house, then the Accommodation House, and finally the Store, to the out-side world. These single lines, working through earth conduction could be seen strung on all sorts of poles, often at all sorts of angles and spanning at times great distances. Sometimes the connections were not very good, — the reasons for the poor connection being many, and when the trouble was explored often led to long walks and much scratching of heads, before the problem was rectified. When the automatic exchange was provided by N.Z. Post Office, the problems were over, and if faults did occur the P.O. Technical experts would quickly return services to normal. What was even more wonderful was the 24 hour service. No complaint could be laid to the early operators though. Although hours of opening the old exchange needed to be restricted, often it happened that if a family was known to be having problems, health or otherwise, their telephone jack plug would have been left plugged into Napier so that should the emergency worsen, they could contact the emergency service required at any hour of the day or night.

The watertrough on the side of the road above the Hall, in the days of the horse only one of many such necessities on the roadside. In later days, a place of some pranks for children on the way to or from school. A pity it was demolished and lost with road improvements in recent years. It gave a reason for calling this area "Watertrough Hill".

When aerial topdressing was introduced, the sound of a plane overhead inevitably had heads turned skywards, and brought those indoors out to watch. The old Tiger Moth used had a small load capacity and so provided frequent and regular entertainment as they flew over the pastures. The later planes, Cessna, Air Truck, Fletcher and even Dakota provided less frequent flights but much noisier. Besides when they arrived, everyone was quite blasé about aeroplanes — they were common. The skill of those pilots continued to fill ground dwellers with awe at their apparent lack of nerves. The loader drivers who worked as part of the topdressing team must have had uncomfortable rides home each night when they climbed into the hopper.

## SOME MEMORIES OF MR ALF TOLLISON WHO WORKED ON RISSINGTON STATION IN EARLY DAYS

I was born in 1902 and spent my early years on Te Ahihi Station near Kairakau. From there I moved to Patoka and worked in the Saw Mills, coming to Rissington in my teens. Here I worked on Rissington Station doing various jobs, and in the area, working usually with horses.

I recall working as a 'fleeco' in the Rissington Woolshed for many of the different seasonal shearing jobs — when Mr Bill Simpson, even then not a young man, was occupying one of the stands. We were doing a main shear at the time of the 1918-19 Influenza Epidemic when the whole gang took ill with the flu. At the time there was a house in the paddock adjacent to the cemetery, standing empty and this was turned into a temporary hospital for the many station staff who had been afflicted with the bug. I remember Mrs Frank Hutchinson — a trained nurse, moved over to care for the ill men, and stayed in the house giving them 24 hour care until all had recovered. I think one man died as a result of the 'flu. I will remember that I was the last to recover sufficiently to be able to be moved into normal living quarters once again. Only 17 years, I was told by Mr Hutchinson to take myself away from the district in order to make full recovery — but that when fully recovered I should return and there would be a job on Rissington for me.

In the early 20's I was given the job to dress the road from Rissington to the Seafield Road corner. A dray with a horse between the shafts and three leaders in front was used to carry the river metal used to dress the road surface. I shoveled the metal from the side of the Mangaone close to the store — about 1½ cubic yards per load before making the slow haul up the Cutting and out to the dropping point for that load. As the dropping point came closer to Rissington I can recall shifting up to 10 loads in a working day. For this I was paid £2 a week, from the contractor — Jack Howell, a local cartage contractor.



"Storm" — The dog which made the first crossing after the 1924 flood.

The 1924 flood caused a great deal of consternation to the settlers on the road above the river with the loss of the river bridge. Contact had to be made, so with Fred Howell, I tried first to heave a line across the river once it had dropped from its full flood height. This failed. We then tied a light line to the collar of Fred's white heading dog, "Storm", a well-known swimmer. The dog was twice beaten back by the strength of the current but on the third



attempt made it to the other side. We gradually increased the size of line to rope and finally a thick hawser which was anchored on both sides and enabled a dinghy to be used as a ferry. Later, Holts who desperately needed to re-open their line from the Mills in the Patoka and Puketiri districts, erected a wire hawser and provided a large cage deck which hung on pulleys and could be pulled from side to side. In this way the sawn timber was transported across the river and re-loaded onto road transport to continue through to Napier. This cage was also used for wool bales, and any other bulky and heavy materials needed further up the road.



*One method used for crossing the Mangaone after the flood.*

This was during the time of Hawke's Bay's great Ranfurly Shield days. The Brownlies lived at this time in Puketiri and apart from matches had also to make the journey to Napier for practices. They travelled by car — one of the early large and heavy models. With no bridge the river could only be crossed at the ford — about 100 metres down river from the bridge site. Metal in the river was deep and soft, and although the crossing place was marked by timber, it was not uncommon for a car to lose traction or to be swept off line into softer metal areas. Supporters from the Puketiri and Patoka areas in this period of Rugby madness were many and the cars attempting the river crossing were numerous. On rugby days, I often did very well for myself as I always stood by with a team of horses, available to offer my services as a recovery team at 10 shillings a time.



*Another method for crossing the Mangaone after the flood.*

Wekas were very common in Rissington until after the years of World War I. They were a great nuisance as they would take away anything which attracted them. Often a nuisance when you were working out on a fence line. The weka disappeared once the district was plagued with rabbits, probably killed out by their own inquisitiveness once the Rabbit poisoning extermination programmes were set in operation.

Rabbits were a real scourge when at their peak of plaguing the area. If a loud noise was made, what looked like a dry-ish hillside would suddenly come alive as hundreds, thousands of rabbits moved as a reaction to the noise. And how quickly grass disappeared as their numbers grew. Traps, poison, rifles and dogs gradually won the battle against the rabbit, or perhaps they shifted to trouble another area."



400 Rabbits killed on one poison live. A regular haul at the height of Rabbit plague.

## COUNTRY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE Recollections of Mrs J. Wooster

"In February 1921 a wonderful and cultural woman, resident in the district, Miss A.E. Jerome Spencer with her friend Mrs Frances Hutchinson formed the N.Z. Country Women's Institute. Miss Spencer had observed a similar group working in Great Britain and felt that there was a great need for the women of the country areas to meet regularly away from the home and share their ideas for the betterment of their families and the community at large. That historic meeting was held on the wide verandah at "Omataua" and was attended by 8 local ladies:- Miss Spencer, Mrs F. Hutchinson Jr., Mrs J. Howell, Mrs Kay, Mrs Arthur Williams, Mrs Welch, Mrs Muirqueenie, and Mrs Woodward.

In early days many attended meetings under pioneer conditions. Distance was no object and many and varied were the forms of transport used by local women to attend those monthly meetings. Buggies, gigs, drays, horseback — early tractors, and even dinghies were needed when the 1924 flood washed away the road bridge. Others were known to don gumboots and oilskins and trudge miles over muddy roads and paddocks to attend meetings. Only the very worst weather or sickness would keep them from regular attendance. How different it is today when members can attend after travelling quickly over sealed roads in a comfortable car.

The CWI motto — "For Home and Country" explains the objectives of the movement which from 1921 quickly spread throughout the whole country. The major aim was to



Miss A.E. Jerome Spencer C.B.E.

provide an organisation which would enable rural women to take an effective part in community life and its development, and broaden their own horizons as homemakers.

When one thinks of C.W.I. from those early days of the movement it is impossible not to think of that wonderful lady, Miss Spencer, who, by her tireless efforts founded a movement and worked so hard to encourage its growth, as a result of which country women could come together once a month and meet with others. Perhaps at times this was the only chance in a month to meet with others than their own family. While the meetings were a blessing, the competitions run each month gave the ladies a chance to show their culinary or floral skills, and the demonstrations of sewing, needlework, spinning and weaving, etc, broadened their view of life. The cakes, scones, jams, bread, pikelets, butter and the like presented for the



The Wasington C.W.I. Music Group, 1954.

Back: May Wooster, Judy Sull, Rosemary Absalom, Joyce Wooster, Peg Bowling, Sue Jeromson, Mita Hughes, Barbara Absalom.

Front: Colleen Sloane, Dorothy Lang, Alma McKain, Leila Young.



Rissington C.W.I. Christmas Party, 1960. Held at "Aplay". 'Bodgies and Woogie's' was the theme.

scrutiny of the judges at local CWI meetings alone, since 1921, would if put together feed multitudes. As transport improved later monthly meetings saw speakers on all sorts of topics being introduced to share their knowledge and experiences with members.

Many amusing things would happen. I recall one year when after many hours were spent icing the CWI Birthday cake by two members who felt justifiably proud of their efforts, the cake was collected from a back room of the local Hall and brought forward, only to find that the young son of the president had had a wonderful time with the icing.

Again during the 50's — when the Branch met each month in the homes of its members, a competition for one month was a cake baked by the member's husband. First prize was awarded to a magnificent sponge of huge proportions but the entry which received the greatest response was the one offered by one husband who, in the mixing had lost track of the recipe and forgotten the baking powder. It was submitted along with a bicycle pump adaptor and a card which said — "Please blow me up".

Meetings in homes were fun and very congenial. At one stage a Music Group, and a Choir was formed. Practices were held regularly and gave members a great deal of pleasure especially when their skills were able to be demonstrated to families at concerts held in the Hall, or to Federation Meetings, or to Napier Groups who were always grateful to welcome visitors to their afternoon meetings. The Band of Hearing League was one such group.

Play reading was another activity involving local women — the acting skills learnt being presented at local Concerts or at CWI Provincial competitions.

During World War II years CWI members knitted socks, scarves, pullovers, mittens and gloves for members of the Armed Forces — and also held sewing bees — producing quantities of pyjamas for use in the Forces hospitals at home and abroad.

All of these activities are some which have taken place in Rissington — the cradle of the Institute in New Zealand, and the many happy and often merry moments shared by local women were made possible by the foresight and dedication of a wonderful lady. Miss Spencer was recognised in 1937 in the Kings Awards with the award of the O.B.E. in recognition of her work in the interest of the women of the country's rural communities. An honour justly deserved.



In 1960 a large natural limestone block was mounted at the gates of "Omatua" with a bronze plaque recognising the foundation of the New Zealand Country Women's Institute".

The Rissington CWI continued contact with Miss Spencer in her declining years in a Napier Rest Home. Fortunately, not long before she died the members gave a concert at the Rest Home to the joy of Miss Spencer as well as the other residents. After her death, each member of the Rissington CWI received a small memento from her possessions — many of which are treasured to this day.

Miss Spencer died in Napier on October 23, 1965."

## MEMORIES OF MRS N.I. BRADLEY NEE HUGHES

"On the occasion of the Rissington School Jubilee it would seem appropriate to pay tribute to the late Mr Francis and Mrs Amy Hutchinson for their kind and caring interest in the residents of Rissington in past years, particularly the children.

Mr Hutchinson was a dedicated naturalist and had an excellent museum built up over the years and periodically the school children were invited to visit the museum which brought great pleasure.

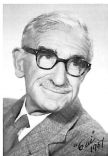
The very gracious and unique home of Mr and Mrs Hutchinson was on many occasions thrown open as were their lovely grounds of "Omatua" for fund raising, garden parties, for Christmas celebrations and many other enjoyable functions.

Sharing their home was Miss Jerome Spencer who taught Sunday School and Art and Craft to the local children and Miss Corrigan who drove the car for Mr and Mrs Hutchinson and also taught music.

Mrs Hutchinson will be remembered for the number of times she arranged for Miss Corrigan to call with the car to take sick members of the community to a doctor or to hospital and in her concern she kept in touch with the family and quite often Mrs Hutchinson would arrange for them to be called for and brought home again when ready for discharge from the hospital. In the days of few cars it was a great blessing and very comforting for the families concerned to have such a grand "Fairy Godmother" in the Community."

## REMINISCENCES OF T.R.D. SANDERS

"John Robin Harris Cooksey M.B.E. was born and educated in England and after a period working in his father's office came to New Zealand. After a short time here he became Robin to his friends and neighbours, and "Little John" to his many contacts in the Scouting movement.



J.R.H. Cooksey M.B.E. (Little John)

Soldier, Farmer, Teacher and something of a Jack of all trades his main interest over the years was beyond question Scouting. After his arrival in 1910 Rissington became his base for the many years of his long life. Later he was to build two houses with his own hands — the first on the farm which he occupied when the First World War ended, and later a second on the main road before its descent down the "Watertrough Hill". Both are still standing and it is doubly true to say "He made his home in Rissington".

In 1911 the first troop of Scouts were formed composed of ten of the local lads and named "The Wekas". At first they had no DEN so they made one beneath a pinetree on a peninsula beside the Mangaone River composed quite simply of scrub for walls and ceiling. This area has now been bequeathed to the Boy Scouts Association — and comprises an area of about 12 acres known as Weka Camp.

When war broke out in 1914 Robin Cooksey joined up with the Main Body as a member of the Ninth Wellington Mounted Rifles to serve in Gallipoli and France. He left his "Weka" scout troop in the care of the then Patrol leader, with his cousin Mr J.H. Absolom promising "To keep an eye on things". Little did anyone think at the time that this would be for nearly 5 years. When he returned at the end of hostilities he was granted a farm on the Returned Soldiers road, originally part of Rissington Station, which he occupied for 20 years or so. During this period as well as farming he continued working with the Scouts rising to the position of Commissioner for Hawke's Bay, at the same time to become a member of the Dominion Training team. After giving up farming it was through his influence that "Tatum Park" near Levin was secured as National Training Centre and opened in 1942. During this year he was appointed Training Commissioner for New Zealand and was awarded "The Silver Wolf", Scouting's highest honour.

There must be many men in New Zealand today whose minds go back at times to some of the golden days of youth which they shared with "Little John".

My own first real contact with Mr Cooksey, as I knew him then, was in early 1932, a lad of seventeen or so recently arrived from school in England. My job at the time was first assistant to Mr Bill Simpson in the blackberry spraying in the Peka Peka Gorge at Rissington Station. In answer to a request for help we went up to the Cooksey house in order that the Cooksey Tom Cat could receive the benefit of the Simpson Veterinary skills.

At that time Robin was about the same generation as my father and the "Vat" my grandfather. Bill took control of proceedings in no uncertain manner and in no time Robin and I became as it were members of the same age group. In reality it was my first experience of Robin's great gift of being able to get on the same level with youth. This almost timeless quality of shared interest with younger people remained with him almost to the end. I must add that the participants in this drama have either gone or are going, but the blackberries appear to be doing well.

Robin was most helpful and interested in district affairs. Many will remember the School break-ups in December with the Christmas tree with gifts and the prize giving, in all of which he took a leading part for many years. He was a wonderful asset with his store of patter and his way with the youngsters. All this was often done in conditions of great discomfort and quite appalling heat. If ever a man deserved a special district medal struck for him he did for this job alone. Many who knew him will carry their own memories and impressions but it is hoped that this rather short and far from complete insight will serve to convey something of some of the qualities that went towards the makeup of a quite remarkable person.

When he was 86 years old Robin left us on Queens Birthday weekend 1975 and his remains were buried in our own village cemetery on the banks of the Mangaoone river.

At the time a man fairly new to the district observed with some feeling, "He was a nice old bloke".

After that remark there isn't really much more we can add except perhaps to say, "One of the nicest".

## SCOUTING IN RISSINGTON

Mr J.R.H. Cooksey in 1911 formed the first troop of scouts — The Waka Troop — in the district, which could well have been one of the first in New Zealand. He had known B-P, the founder of the movement, before he left England and was very impressed by what he knew it could do for boys as a preparation for life in general. The meeting place for this first local scout patrol was in the outdoors — beneath a pine tree on the banks of the Mangaoone — with boys building their own shelter, when bivvies were required, from the natural materials available on site.

Active Scout Patrols were formed as the numbers of interested boys were available and, of course, as the economic climate permitted. If numbers did not permit a full patrol to be formed "Little John" was always prepared to encourage interested boys to enrol as "Lone Scouts".

An area of land across the river, just below the school was given to the Boy Scout movement, to become a permanent site for Camps, to be available to any Scout Troop in the Hawke's Bay area. The first permanent hut was built there under "Little John's" supervision, but sadly was destroyed by fire, thought to have been started by illegal visitors. With later building in more permanent materials, the camp — "Waka Camp" has been well used by Scouts over the past three decades. Improved access down the cliff, with the cartage of camp stores was a project dear to "Little John's" heart in his later years. He spent hours cutting and improving the walk track down the steep cliff face, while the movement strung a steel rope from the roadside to the camp and installed a winch in the shed built at the top, to facilitate the movement of stores. While this camp exists, the Scouting movement will be firmly associated with Rissington.

## GUIDING IN RISSINGTON

During past years, girls interested in Guides who lived in Rissington were encouraged to join as Lone Guides, there never having been sufficient numbers at any one time to form a Patrol. Lone Guides from Rissington during the 40's, along with Lone Guides from Patoka and Puketitiri, met for weekend camps at "Omataua" at intervals under the control of Mrs R. Absalom who at that time held a position in Hawke's Bay Guiding movement with responsibility for the training of Lone Guides.



*The new "Omataua"*

Rissington, from 1953, became a very important centre for the Hawke's Bay Guiding movement, when with the approval of the Absalom family, a Patrol Leaders training camp was held at Queens Birthday weekend in "Omataua" which at that time was unoccupied. Later in that year "Omataua" was leased for two years to the Hawke's Bay Guide Province as a training home. Ultimately, in 1961 "Omataua" homestead and five acres of land adjoining the old home were gifted to the Hawke's Bay Guiding movement.

Since then the site has been well used as a training area for Guides from all over the Province, for many of whom the happy and purposeful experience they enjoyed, in such a lovely setting would have been a highlight of their youthful years.

In 1979 a new building, Riddell Lodge, was opened to supplement the old Homestead, by then reduced in size with the earlier demolition of the right-hand wing and rear out-buildings. By this time the upper storey was unusable for sleeping accommodation because it did not meet with Health and Fire regulations. It was decided at this time that the old home could not be used for any purpose much longer. On demolition — a sad time for all who had known "Omataua" in its earlier days and in all its glory — a replacement building was built including a kitchen, open plan dining area, and to include a sun room to replace the well remembered Garden Room with its large open fireplace. The character of old "Omataua" was retained as much as possible — dormer windows being used in the plan, one of the old lead light windows being re-used to look down the drive, and even two of the original veranda posts being incorporated in the new porch structure of "Mary von Dadelszen House". A further building was opened in 1984 when a Dormitory Block to sleep 32 was opened and





The "Ormatua" Guide Complex, 1986.

dedicated as the "Absalom Wing". Thus a large and valuable training complex has been built in Rissington which as "Ormatua", will see in the years ahead the district closely associated with the Hawke's Bay Guiding Province.



