

Slush lamps, Indian Hawkers and homing pigeons  
are some of the more unusual memories, of a Marewa woman,  
of early days on the Taupo Road.

Lookin g back, octagenarian, Mrs D.F. Christie,  
Latham Street, mother of Napier's MP Mr Gordon Christie,  
remembers the hardships imposed by isolation, but she also  
remembers the wonderful neighbourliness of the settlers  
along the road.

"As the road made history these people "made"  
the road," Mrs Christie said.

[BURNT TO GROUND]

[MRS Christie]

The former Miss Bodley, daughter of the proprietor of the long-forgotten Mohaka Hotel, saw the weary travellers arrive; dust covered in summer and mud-strewn in winter.

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The Mohaka Hotel, burnt to the ground about 80 years ago, was half-way house on the tortuous road. It was also a mecca for swaggies and remittance men.

"If a man turned up alone wearing anything but bowyangs and moleskin trousers he was automatically called "A dude".

"These men, mostly remittance men, were a nuisance. They couldn't swing an axe or wield a hammer so they had no place in our pioneering world.

Their cheques were highly suspect at all times yet they wrote them out with such gay abandon"

[FROM NOBILITY]

"Of course we did see members of the English nobility. Letters addressed 'The Honourable' or 'Lord' were not infrequently posted on the noticeboard pending collection". said Mrs Christie.

When the Mohaka Hotel was gutted by fire, shortly before the turn of the century, the Bodley family moved to Te Pohue. Again their hotel became a staging post. Their livery stables always contained a change of horses for the traveller.

Ingenuity and improvisation were important attributes in the early days of travel on "the road". One example of this was the use of carrier pigeons.

"Coach drivers often used birds to take messages along the line," Mrs Christie said. [ "The messages told of breakdown, holdups and mishaps and often meant travellers got help early enough to prevent a cold, sleepless night in the coach." ]

BIK Post

Pigeons were also sent ahead to the coaching houses to warn the proprietor of the number wanting a meal and a bed for the night.

### [INDIAN HAWKERS]

As a growing girl Mrs Christie saw the early beginnings of commerce, education and recreation reach the area.

"My first recollection of shops is the sight of turbaned Indians and Assyrian hawkers arriving, unheralded, with their brightly painted and decorated caravans.

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The interiors of their ~~vans~~ were stocked like a miniature chainstore. Everything was beautifully packed or rolled and stacked away with precision. With Petane the nearest store the trading was always brisk," Mrs Christie said.

"Times certainly changed. I remember the first school at Te Pohue. Its main purpose was to teach maori children at the pa to speak English.

Today it seems it is the other way round".



## [BUSH TRACK]

Most of the landowners at that time had governesses for their children and it was not uncommon for amori children to "live-in" so they could learn English.

Life for both maoris and pakehas living on the road was hard but there was time for play.

One of the highlights of the year was the annual New Year's Day race meeting, near Te Pohue.

Run on a track cut out of scrub the call of the course brought sawmillers out of the bush; caused scrub cutters to lay down their slashers and roadmen their shovels.

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Out came the top hats, the horse drawn carriages ←  
and the bookies.

Although a far cry from Ascot the scene was nevertheless colourful - and noisy. The cry of toting bookies is still a part of Mrs Christie's memories.

With development on the road came the motorcars.  
Halfway "House" at Te Pohue became an easy jaunt from Napier.  
But modernisation did not help trade and the Te Pohue Hotel  
had to bow to progress and close its doors - because of the  
lack of patronage....

ends...

