

AND PEOPLE OF THE OLD DAYS

Why Hawke's Bay Should Erect A Memorial To The Romney

(Written for the "Daily Mail")

TUNANUI STATION, half a century ago, included the Sherenden Small Farms Settlement and Percivals. It was then owned by the two Russell brothers and was managed by Fred Russell.

Later, the new road from Mangawhare practically divided it. Captain W. R. Russell took all the country to the black bridge, calling it Sherenden. His son Harold farmed it until he sold to the Government for the small farms settlement.

The homestead block ultimately came to Captain Andrew Russell, now Sir Andrew Russell, K.C.B.

It was useful country and even in those days was well grassed and carried Lincolns and Herefords cattle.

Later, when I was at Mangawhare only a few miles away, Hawke's Bay experienced one of those long dry spells. No rain fell till late in March, and then heavy rain came with the ground like a board. There was a rush of watery feed and, with most of the big stations stocked with Lincolns, the loss that year in hoggets was appalling. Tunanui lost half theirs—some thousands. At Mangawhare, with somewhat mixed flocks closer to the Merino crossed with Lincolns and then Romney, the loss was nothing.

This run was being broken in from fern and, in a dry season, scored, as that blessed fern thrived. The result was a clean, fresh bite. That season hit the big men right down the coast. In fact, all who had Lincoln sheep suffered.

John Grigg and the Sheep

I remember seeing a wonderful line of Lincoln two-tooth Rams bred by Mr Alex. McHardy. To my then inexperienced eye, they looked far too pretty. The finest of wool on a too-fine frame.

About that time, at the annual Hawke's Bay Show, the judge for Lincolns put a bomb into those fine sheep. Slightly lame, the judge walked several times up and down the pens, and did not want the accompanying stewards to turn up a single sheep.

With his stick he tapped the pens for 1, 2, 3. To say that the owners, committee, etc., were indignant, at such judging, is expressing it lightly.

The judge was Mr John Grigg, the man who broke in from a swamp, the wonderful Longbeach property in Canterbury, and one of the pioneers of the freezing industry. He said he judged constitution first, second and third. Get that, and then build or hang the wool on it. In a nutshell, that was the trouble; breeding for the finer wool and losing constitution

I remember once riding over Matapiro with the owner (I have described that property). Later than usual his wet ewes were still unshorn. I remarked on the lateness.

"Yes," he said, "you're quite right. Directly those ewes are shorn, they go to fat and there is no milk for the lambs."

Those lambs were so-so, and no doubt those splendid heavy wool-growing sheep were bad mothers.

All sorts of nostrums were used to kill the lung and other worms. One of the Chamberlains of Te Mata, I believe, rigged a sort of lethal chamber (no pun intended) with fumes of some concoction for the sheep to inhale.

I did not hear that it was a success, and perhaps it was a case of "the dog it was that died."

How sick one got of the discussions, and the old story is told of a well known man who was farming some of the best land on the plain—green oats galore. Yet this terrible mortality hit him. Coming into his club one day he was met with the usual, "How are your hoggets?" He replied: "Well, I'm thanking my Maker the last brute died yesterday."

Everyone Went to Romney

What happened? Though very much against their will, everyone made it a case of follow-my-leader and went over to Romney.

One can realise how practical farmers (to give only two, Mr McHardy and Mr Shrimpton) with their splendid Lincolns regretted having to cross out with the Romney, and the Romney then was not the Romney of to-day. It was bareheaded, bare on points and with a light fleece. But the result was direct and no fine sheep were ever seen in Hawke's Bay than those first cross hoggets.

The change to the improved Romney came later and I, for one, will always think the breeders of the improved sheep used sometimes a Lincoln. Perhaps it looked through the fence, and fences weren't so well battened in those days.

To-day, how many remember those worrying days of rearing Lincoln hoggets? I remember one manager saying "Is it not said that Queen Mary (the 'Bloody' one) when she died, had 'Calais' engraved on her heart? Well, I'm sure if I died to-day and a post mortem was

Wanted

Is there not a life sized effigy in memory of some famous animal

somewhere? I have often thought, looking back, what the Romney sheep has meant to the prosperity of the sheep industry in Hawke's Bay. The Romney ewe is the backbone of the fat lamb industry. The unkind remarks made on that animal nearly 50 years ago are forgotten and, as a matter of course, every-one farms on that breed.

Now, Mr President, and you vice-presidents, with your lovely Showgrounds, could not some memorial be raised to that noble sheep? Why not call the grounds Romney Park and have a sheep in say, bronze, over the main entrance? I am a member and I will subscribe something. What about it?

Well, that's a weight off my chest and we are still at Tunanui.

It is a hospitable station, and if readers are as dry as this article, the genial General will, I am sure, lay the dust.

By the by, before I leave that station, does anyone remember the way they used to mark their cattle? A slit of skin was left hanging at the dewlap—would you call it an earmark? Hardly so, perhaps, but I have a precedent. A farmer's wife once told me she "earmarked" her turkeys by cutting out the middle toe. Years after when on that station, no one on it remembered that mark.

Well, away again past Okawa, on a bridle track then, for Hastings. There was a big block of Native land from the old Matapiro boundary to Fernhill.

At Ngapuki, Willy Broughton lived. He loved a good horse. Alongside the main road a season or so ago was the grave of his Patriarch with a wooden headmark.

Ancestor of the "Tote"

I remember that at the Maori Oat Meeting (I think it was at Moteo), William ran a totalisator—a board with the horses' names and a piece of chalk. The "machine" was not closed till the horses passed the post and there were no big "divvies" that day.

Crossing the big bridge you came to the hotel kept by Ramsay. His sons were great workers.

On again to Colonel Kenrick Hill's Fernhill run. The Colonel was a fine stamp of the old-time British officer. His run ran on both sides of the road, one side by the other riverbed, the other including some of the best land in Hawke's Bay.

Then came "Flaxmere," Sir William Russell's fine property, famous for its ryegrass seed and the thoroughbred horses that he bred and raced.

Then Ormond's "Karamu," likewise the home of the thoroughbred and of many winners.

"Frimly" was in the distance with its miles of peaches. It was the home of Mr J. N. Williams, who did a great deal for Hastings and the district. I wonder how many lame dogs that fine man helped over stiles? He gave me a great help once and I hope later, to relate it.

LOOKING BACK: FURTHER MEMORIES OF THE EARLY DAYS OF HAWKE'S BAY PROVINCE

Written by Charles Ford

(Written for the "Daily Mail")

Here is the second instalment of a series of articles dealing with the early stations of Hawke's Bay and the men who worked on them.

The third article of the series will appear on this page next Saturday.

Leaving the Waikōhiri Block we must cross the Tutaekuri to the Mungatutu Station held at one time by Sam Bolton. Adjoining is the Hawstone. M. E. Groome had it but Yates Bolton held it. At the back of Hawstone is The Peaks under the Kaweka Range. This was an out station of Mangawhare Station to be mentioned later.

When we lived in that district, although over 20 miles away, a muster of some sheep—the number was never really known—took place at the Peak yards. The station had mustered the Merino wethers from this country and the Kaweka Range that Mangawhare Station shared with Hallett Brothers. The mob was mustered to pick fats for the then North British Freezing Co at the Spit.

The yards were on a small flat surrounded by steep gulleys.

The gate of the yard for the rejected sheep was left open so that the sheep could drift away after crossing a small bridge to their country. Someone noticed that the

sheep were not showing across the creek. A dog had headed the mob crossing the bridge, and the mob following had piled up in the gully. Men were sent to Hawstone to get help to skin the carcasses. It was March and sheep shorn in November had good pelts, but comparatively few were skinned as the heat of the carcasses and noxious fumes soon stopped men from working. One man—unluckily the worst skinner—stuck at it. He had no sense of smell and very little sense of humour.

Wild pigs that year were very fat in that country, but out of our bounds.

Across the Tutaekuri from Mungatutu was Waterhouse and Fitzherbert at Mangawhare Station—fine men to work for. They gave me my first job after the fern-brushing.

This station is now divided to its original name and Waiwhare. The latter is a happy name, a memory of one of two original partners.

AND PLACES WHEN HAWKE'S BAY PROVINCE WAS YOUNG. *Charlie Fonda*

This is the third of a series of articles dealing with the early days in Hawke's Bay and the neighbouring areas.

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From Glenross station we take a long trail following the inland Patea road from Mangawhare to Kuripapanga. In those days the road from Mangawhare to Hastings was not opened and all the wool from Glenross, Mangawhare and Waikonui went down the river road to Puketapu, crossing the Tutaekuri. Often the wool from inland Patea and also from Karioi came down this road to Napier.

It was a sight to see these teams as they came down Gentle Annie—the hill of over 2000ft.—to Kuripapanga. McDonald had the hotel at Kuripapanga, and his wife and daughters gave great accommodation. Many Napier people in summer stayed there for the blackberries and trout fishing in the Ngaururoro.

Up we go, over Gentle Annie hill. In the distance is Bonnie Mary. I include this country as it was then in Hawke's Bay, but that long, long road is deserted, all traffic on the Owahaoko Plateau going Taihape way.

Johnny Boyd held a big piece of steep sheep country near Kuripapanga. Inland Patea in the time I am writing of was little known to lower Hawke's Bay, although Hawke's Bay County ran to the Rangitikei River and to-day it is but little better known. It was a country of immense runs; a man would starve on anything under 2000 to 3000 acres. Owahaoko Station ran some 7000 Merinos on some 200,000 acres including the Kaimanawa Range held by John Studholme, of Canterbury.

Dick Warren, who was manager for many years, was a sterling man much respected by the Maoris, who held two big leases. G. P. Donnelly held Mangowhare, another huge block of country. Jimmy Lyon managed another large block. Here one saw good tussock country similar to that of the South Island and very different from the grass on the Taupo country. All this area I have mentioned is bounded by the Ran-

This same man put up a record when with his horse and dray he went over a bank on the Gentle Annie hill. It was expected that he would be found dead, but he luckily had struck a shingle slide. He was badly bruised, but had no bones broken. He was taken to Napier Hospital and several days later Annie his wife followed him and sat on his bed. Together they weighed over 35 stone, and the bed collapsed.

We cross the Rangitikei near Birch's wool wash. All the wool from these inland farms was scoured. I remember Willy Birch telling me that wool from his Merino wethers on those high, stony hills lost 68 per cent in scouring. It was no good hauling sand and dirt to Napier, he said. Erewhon Station in those days sheared over 80,000 sheep.

Captain Azina and Willy Birch had little or no trouble with Maori lease-owners, and in many ways they helped the Natives. They gave them millstones to grind their wheat at Moawhango. The only trouble was to get these huge stones of over 150lb. from Kuripapanga, but the Maoris managed it. Each stone was lashed on a sledge and then another sledge was fastened on top upside down, and by this means they were safely hauled.

Across the Hautapu River one came to Waipuna on the outskirts of Karioi. This station was owned by John Studholme, as was Owahaoko. At Waipuna there lived about this time a brother-in-law of John Studholme named Moorhouse who married Miss Rhodes and went to England. It was his son in the Great War who won a V.C. for flying. He died from wounds after returning from a bombing flight. His grandson was recently killed in a flying accident.