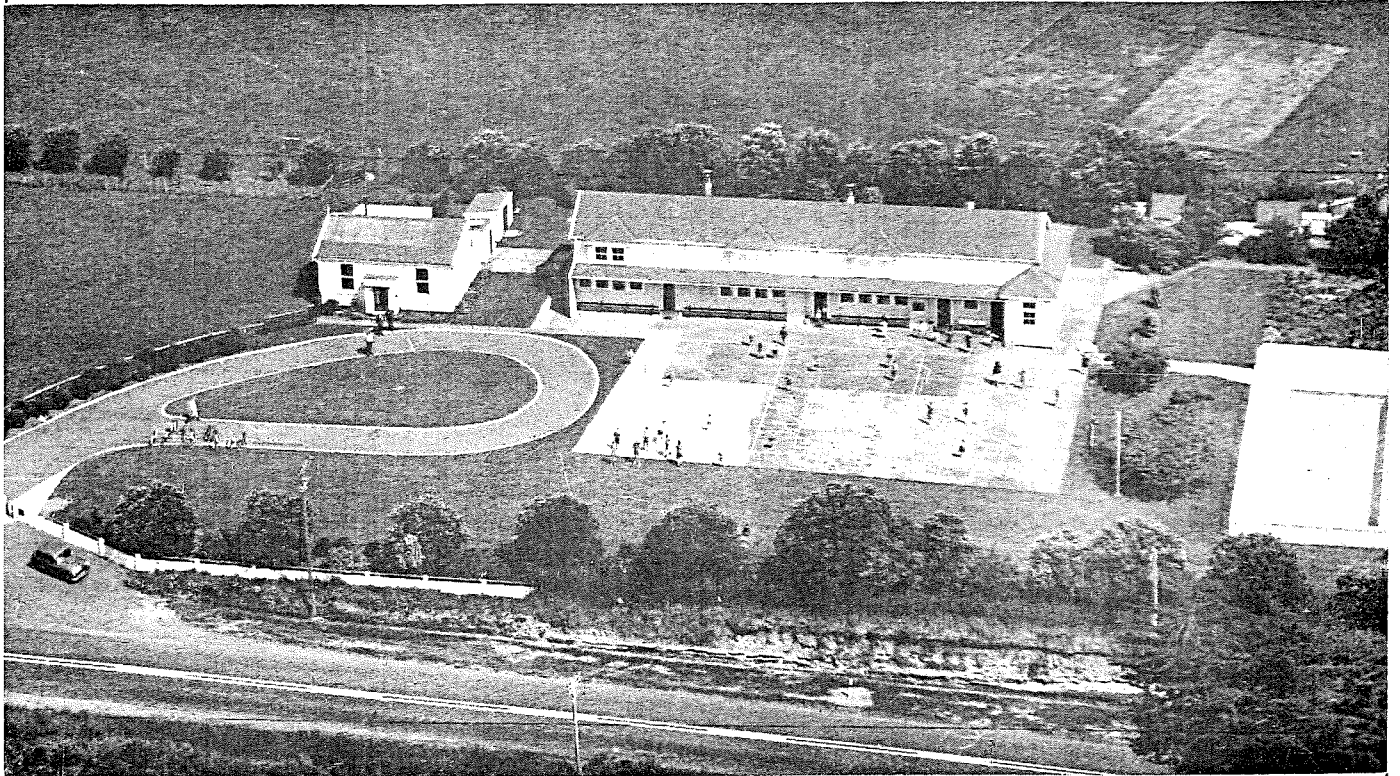


OTAKEHO DISTRICT and SCHOOL



80th JUBILEE

1884 - 1964

SOUVENIR BOOKLET

to give of their best at all times will make them all the better fitted to take up life's tasks, agreeable and less agreeable; both must be faced. Nothing worth while really comes easily. May our school always remember with gratitude the great work of the pioneers in this locality; men and women with vision who backed their ideas with persevering work.

In conclusion, I must pay a tribute to the 80th Jubilee Celebrations Committee. With one exception, none of the members is an ex-pupil of this school, but their community spirit allowed them to rise to the occasion and organise the celebrations never to be forgotten. Finally, thanks and congratulations to Arthur Bayliss and Murray McNeill-Adams, who have produced this Jubilee booklet in the form of an historical survey of the Otakeho district.

L. A. WALKER, Chairman,
Otakeho School Committee.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The Late Mr. L. S. Mackie

(By Mr. F. Schweiters)

A Unique Personality.

Mr. Leslie S. Mackie was one of Otakeho's most colourful and gifted personalities. His unaffected kindness and generosity endeared him to the whole community.

As a botanist and specialist in the knowledge and cultivation of New Zealand native ferns he was widely known, and his advice valued. Mr. Mackie's skill as a wood carver was equal to that of anyone in New Zealand, Maori or Pakeha. The carved totara panels of his bedstead, which represented 1200 hours of spare time work, was exhibited at the Wembly Exhibition held in England in 1924-25.

His skilful facsimile of the Maori war canoe, on which he spent 700 hours of microscopic work, is now on display at the Taranaki War Memorial Museum, as are also a number of Maori artifacts from his private collection.

One of Mr. Mackie's delights was to visit the sand dunes at Oeo after a southerly blow and search for stone age treasures uncovered by the drifting sand; other pastimes were trout fishing in the mountain streams and hunting wild pigs in Taranaki's forest country. On all these occasions he carried a Maori flax kit for the collection of rare ferns and other native plants. In this way, in addition to a fernery, he established an area of native bush, some trees of which are now 50 feet high.

As a lover of all aspects of nature, Mr. Mackie had a considerable knowledge of marine life along the Otakeho shore line as well as the wild life of the fields and bush; his tame eel would twine itself around his arm and feed out of his hand, and a shoal of native trout would follow him along the margin of the stream which flowed through the native tree plantation.

Mr. Mackie was perhaps best known as a horticulturist and his colourful gardens attracted many visitors. Many gardens round Otakeho owe their origin to plants given gratis from his propagating beds.

All too soon, at the zenith of his activities, this gifted citizen was called to rest. His last act before going on the long journey was to place at his gate trays of plants he had promised to friends and neighbours.

Leslie Mackie will be remembered with affection at Otakeho until the last of his generation has passed on.

In many of these activities he was greatly assisted by his wife, who will be remembered for her work for local organisations, her hospitality and as organist at the Otakeho Anglican Church.

Mr. Mackie was also secretary of the school committee, the cemetery board and the Anglican Church, a churchwarden, and a member of the Manaia Masonic Lodge.

Mrs. Sarah Symmans—

One early resident of Otakeho has described Mrs. Symmans as a V.I.P., because she is believed to have been one of Florence Nightingale's nurses, who went to the Crimea War. Her grandson still remembers sitting on her knee, hearing stories of the war she went to when she was young.

She lived many years in South Taranaki; part of the time on a bush farm on Rama Road, and was a nurse, taking the place of a modern district nurse under the pioneering ways of those days. Then many of the roads were only tracks, not metalled, and she was to be seen riding side-saddle, wearing a long encumbering riding habit and carrying her nursing equipment in a bag on her saddle—going in all weathers to her patients, men, women or children. Often no doctor available. In those days doctors were not called to maternity cases.

Her maiden name was Sarah Poole, and she came from Bath in Somerset, arriving in the sailing ship "British Empire" at Lyttelton in 1862. She died in July, 1930, aged 92.

For a time in her young days she was in the Isle of Wight when Queen Victoria spent much time at Osborne, and she was called upon to do fine needle work for Her Majesty.

Fine needle work and gardening evidently can go together, for her flower garden at Rama Road was known to be a place of rare beauty.

Five of her grandchildren attended the Jubilee.

Mr. Murray McNeill-Adams.

This is meant to be an acknowledgement of the debt we owe to Mr. Murray McNeill-Adams, who has served the school and district well for many years.

His public work started when he was elected secretary to the Hall Committee in 1930 at the age of 17. He has been an ardent worker for it ever since, and is its present chairman. For some years to follow he was also secretary for the Hockey Club, Badminton Club, Farmers' Union, Cemetery Board.

He attended the biennial householders' meeting in the school in 1945 and went home with the books as secretary; he carried them to every meeting of the committee for sixteen years, and was a committeeman for a year after that.