



Wharehuia Church.

WHAREHUIA (STANLEY ROAD) STILL IN USE

This church today is the only remaining example of a typical Methodist country church in the circuit. It proudly claims to be the first Union church in NZ. In mid 1910, with Methodist Union still two and a half years away, residents resolved to build a United Methodist church. A site was secured on Peter Wellington's land and a canvass of the district raised half the money needed.

So, Wharehuia led NZ, opening its Union Church on April 11th 1911. On April 17th, Easter Monday, a Tea and Public Meeting was held in true Methodist tradition. A pink ticket which survives says adults; 1/-, children 6d.

Three babies were christened by Rev. Charles Harrison at the opening of the church. They were Mildred Aldridge, Olive Susanna Slater and Len Jago, who became a member in 1920, and was later a circuit steward. (Rev. Charlie Bell was named Charles Harrison in honour of this minister). Since 1895 services had been held in the local school.

Sankey hymn books were used until 1920 when they changed to Methodist books. The vestry door, originally at the front, was moved to the east side. A 1936 photo shows a ponga fence on the right side of the path. Ten years after it opened, the church had to be enlarged. Electric power was connected in 1925. Its worshippers fiercely defended it against all moves to close it down when the new Stratford church was built. To mark the 70th celebrations, a historical booklet was written by Shirley Hosking and two local teachers, Derek Wenmoth and Graham Walls (now with YWAM).

Len Jago said recently: "My parents John and Charlotte Jago came from Bodmin in Cornwall and so did several of their relations. They all settled in Tuna for a start. Dad's sister Bessie Jago married John Wellington. Mum and Dad came out separately and were married in Stratford on June 3, 1896." (Their child was christened by the Waitara Wesleyan minister in 1897). "Willie Hosking, (Reg's father) married Kate Wellington and took over my Dad's Tuna farm and later all of the relations except Fred Wellington moved down to Wharehuia.

My father died when I was only four so we had to move. We went to Stratford for six years, then to New Plymouth for three years. Mother leased the farm to Tom Bell for five years. (Tom had worked for Dad and I'm told they were the first in the area to have the farm cleared).

Tom Bell married the Stanley Road school teacher, Laura Riley who boarded with my mother, and they went to Raetihi for a few years, and Jim Phillips leased our farm for four years. Then Bells came back and leased our place for five years before buying Shacklock's place about a mile up the road. When the depression came I was 14 and we were forced to go back to the Jago farm for financial reasons."

Gwen Jago (nee Bell) says: "Around the 1920s we all walked to the 1.30 pm Sunday school (Mum and Dad were teaching). The young children were let out for a brief run before church began at 2.30 pm. We walked home and milked and Dad and Charlie and I walked back for the 7.30 pm service often without our tea. Later on Sunday school was in the morning.

One of the Stanley Road teachers once remarked on the high standards at the school where the pupils were unusually honest and trustworthy. This was a tribute to the influence of the pioneer family of Cornish John and Bessie Wellington, ancestors of many of the local families. My father took over the Sunday school from Peter Wellington. I was two and a half when I came from Raetihi, and seven when Dad bought his own farm. I was fourteen years there, then at twenty-one moved down the road to 'Merleswood' as the John Jago farm was called. (Willie Wellington's farm was called 'Rosewood' and Willie Hosking's was called 'Lynwood')."

Roy Wellington says: "Back in Cornwall, my grandfather had four boys on the farm so my Dad had to go out to work in the white clay mines.

The women made Cornish pasties to pass down the mine for the workmen's midday meal. The genuine article fits in your hand and goes up to your elbow. They were made the full length of the oven slide and were full of sustaining nourishment, and round and hot. The essential ingredient of real Cornish pastie is turnip (with carrot and potato)."

Denis Wicksteed says he worked at Wharehuia before he went to the war assisting three Hosking brothers who had three farms in a row. He says, "I helped the single brother milk. We had breakfast with another brother and I washed up his cans, and I was boarded with the third brother Reg and Ivy. They named their son Denis after me. During the day I helped whichever one needed me. Then I went to the war."



YWBC CAMP, WHAREHUIA 1939

Front: (three not known), Bertha Widmer, Francie Hosking, Deaconess Madeline Holland, Ella Wellington, Dulcie Holland, Mrs Hailwood, (three not known), Miss Archibold, Hawera, (possibly Mrs Yearbury, Hawera), (two not known).

Middle: (not known), Rita Russ, Myrtle Sorensen, Marion Bilkey, Gen Bilkey, (not known), Freda Widmer, (six not named).

Back: (Mostly North Taranaki Maori contingent who won the competition), 10th Elaine Hughson, (not known), Lois Hughson, (four not known). (They slept in the school and cooked on an electric stove installed in the vestry).

WESLEYAN MEMBERS 1912

John and Charlotte Jago, Beaconsfield Rd
John and Anna Christiansen, Cross Rd.
Mrs Clara Saywell, Beaconsfield Rd. and four single
Saywells. Mr and Mrs Fenwick,

The members' list after the Union is given previously.

1921 MEMBERS

Thomas and Laura Bell, Beaconsfield Rd.
John and Anna Christiansen, Cross Rd.
Mrs Kate Hosking, Beaconsfield Rd.
William and Annie Wellington, Beaconsfield Rd.
Reginald and Evangeline, Wellington, Beaconsfield Rd.
Murray and Mary Jackson and William (S) Kupe.

AUNTY KATE'S YEAST CAKE

Ivy Hosking says: "We used to have church here every Sunday afternoon, and when I look back, I think we missed out on making friends because it was Church day and we all went down at half past two. We had quite a good congregation. When Nana was here we used to always go to church from here. And then a lot of them would come over here, because Nana -Reg's Mother - always made yeast cakes. Aunty Kate's yeast cakes were VERY well known! It's a bit like a currant bread but more like a cake. She used to have a great BIG pan. (holding her arms WIDE). Two feet by three feet? Three by three? It was huge."

Reg: "You're not exaggerating at all."

Those who wrote at the time of the 1981 celebrations referred to its possible demolition, but today it is still there opposite the school, with its plain wooden interior and its piano with the squeaky pedal, on which Roy Wellington's mother gave music lessons. Since the early days, rhododendrons have grown at the gate. Around seven to ten attend services these days and the offering probably covers the power supply charge.

In 1910 Stratford Wesleyans had a weekly Stanley Rd service at 2.30 and the following year it was alternately 7pm and 2.30. 1912 services were taken by either the Minister or Mr Abrahams, Mr Lilley, Mr Schofield, Mr Burley, Mr Downey, Mr Fenwick, J, Boon, W. Wickham, or D. Everiss. Q.M. rep and steward Mr John Jago.

TRUSTEES: 1911-1990 P.H. Wellington, W.J. Wellington, A.G. Fischer, R.H. Witt, R. Guppy, (all original trustees), John Jago, W.V. Hosking, A.G. Fenwick, Tom Bell, W.J. Jackson, L. Vivian, J. Christiansen, Reg Wellington, Roy Wellington, Lloyd Hosking, G.L. Vivian, Len Jago, Ron Bird, R.S. Hosking, F.V. Hosking, W. Hosking. M. Jago, and B.F. Hosking.

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS: 1911- 1990

(In the old school) Mr F. Vosper, Mr F. Keightley, Miss Sergeant, Miss Keightley. (In the Church) Mr and Mrs Peter Wellington, Mr A. Fenwick, Miss P. Fenwick, Miss L. Fenwick (Mrs Bennett), Miss J. Fenwick, Miss Ella Guppy (Mrs Jackson), Mr and Mrs Tom Bell, Miss Gwen Bell (Mrs Jago), Mr Charles Bell (later Rev), Miss Frances Hosking, Miss Edith James, Mrs M. Hosking, Miss C.C. Belsey, Mrs Ivy E. Hosking, Mrs N. Hosking, Mrs Audrey Johnson, (Presbyterian 1951-73) (In recess 1973-78) Mrs Shirley Hosking (Superintendent) Miss J.F. Hosking. By 1981 there was a fortnightly Sunday school with a roll of 12, but it no longer operates.

Rev Tom Skuse had a humorous introduction to the young people of Wharehuia. Charlie Bell remembers that the Sunday school boys stayed on for the service and sat in the back. George Wellington slipped out after Sunday school and told everybody that the new minister was "young and handsome with curly black hair." Their surprise when the new minister arrived and they saw that he wasn't gave them all the giggles.

25th ANNIVERSARY

When Wharehuia celebrated its 25th anniversary many messages arrived. Rev L.B. Neale wrote, "You have a magnificent record both as a district and a church. I remember marrying Reg Wellington, and the wonderful hospitality to a young man of Grandma Wellington. Nor do I forget the smiling choir most of whom I suppose are now married and helping to pay the taxation of the country." Rev Tom Skuse telegraphed, "Long live Wharehuia." The Golden Jubilee in 1951 drew a huge crowd and 142 signed their autographs. [Reunions were also held in 1981 and 1986].

Harry Moore wrote: "I remember the consistent attendance and loyalty of the Jago, Vivian, Hosking, Wellington, and so many other families. When I think of Wharehuia I think of the Harvest services and sales which were so popular and so necessary in those days. We still think of our busy Stratford years and the untimely nature of our departure for Nelson."

Sister Edith James, New Plymouth wrote, "I was a Presbyterian and it was the influence of the Bible Class that led to my becoming a Methodist, to my everlasting gratitude. Rev Hailwood travelled via Midhirst and gathered us up for Wharehuia Bible Class. Later it was an easy bike ride down to help with the Sunday school at Wharehuia, but a hard push back."

Rev Chas Bell wrote: "It would be impossible to say what that church has meant to me. Without it I guess my life would have been totally different. The influence of devoted Christian parents cannot be sorted out from the influence of the church, and at the same time, they were in no small part, the kind of parents they were because of the impact of the church on their lives. We will miss the celebrations because we will be in England, near the spots where the founders of the Wharehuia church first heard the good news and caught the vision they took with them across the seas."

Rev Don Sherson wrote: "It was in the early 30s that I first met Wharehuia Bible Class. The War years brought challenges and turmoil for all of us, but the faith and fellowship of the church held together many of differing outlook and persuasions."

BIBLE CLASS

The famous Wharehuia Bible Class began modestly enough and had its hey day in the time of Rev Skuse and Rev Hailwood. Of the 35 members of that group, 27 were present at the 50th celebrations. Rev Hailwood coped with the marriages which arose from the group, and they were obviously good ones. (Agnes Lash remembers some feeling in Stratford congregation that Rev Skuse was far too wrapped up in Wharehuia and its big Bible Class.)

Gwen Jago, says: "Our great Wharehuia Bible Class just grew like a mushroom. And if anything came up on a Thursday night Rev Skuse just would NOT go to it. "That's my Wharehuia night," he'd say. And we did win the shield. There were 35 of us. I wonder what my life would have been like if Mr Skuse hadn't come and gathered in all those teenagers. We couldn't both go to Bible Class camps. One of us had to stay home and help milk. The boys had preference every time because Mr Skuse had to win that shield.

Dad was Salvation Army and Mum was Anglican, but we went to the Wharehuia Church because that was the only church there. And Widmers came because there was no Presbyterian. Mum and Dad had the Sunday School in Wharehuia. There was no sense in going in to town week, by week, by week. You'd just serve the church in the district.

When we had socials, and entertainments we'd pull all the church to bits and put all the seats at the back of the church and leave one or two seats for the mothers to sit round. Mrs Widmer came to every social with her four daughters. (Marie, (called Mary), Bertha, Martha and Freda.) They walked of course. We walked everywhere. We'd have all these games and then we'd have supper. But we could never wash up because there was no hot water. The next day we'd have to go over to Reg Hoskings parents' place and get the hot water from their cow shed, to wash up. Cowsheds often had power before the houses in those days. We travelled to Lepperton, Midhirst, and Cardiff, to socials. We put them on too. There was nothing else on in the district. There was a hall but the dances there were tough and got such a bad name. The townspeople would bring their drink out into the country. (We were never allowed to dance of course. We would like to have, but we couldn't.) As soon as a new chap got a job on a farm we'd be after him to come along. Mrs Skuse started the Wharehuia Guild. But I dropped out of things with four children under three and a half, (including the twins.) Len Jago says: "I remember one night Rev Skuse was a bit late arriving and we thought that was strange. Then we heard a clack clack noise. He'd had a puncture and didn't have time to fix it do he'd taken the tire off and driven out on the rim!"

Martha Hosking, (nee Widmer), says: "My parents were Swiss and Dad was the blacksmith at Mokoia. We shifted to Wharehuia when I was 10, (about 1926). We hadn't been at Wharehuia long and Dad had borrowed another hundred pounds and he said we'd be all right if butterfat stayed at 1/- a pound but it went down to 6d. We were about ready to walk off down there, when someone helped. There were three mortgages on that farm and the person with the third mortgage of three hundred pounds never knew it was the third. He thought it was the second. We don't understand now what three hundred pounds meant in those days."

Mary Downs (nee Widmer) had to learn English when she started school and taught her sisters. When she got her birth certificate, she found her name was 'Marie'. She and Alton met at Rev. Skuse's Bible Class.

Roy Wellington says: "I was born March 16 1906 in primitive conditions in a farm house. I was a seven month baby and not expected to live. Mother prayed that if God saw fit to spare my life, I would be trained for

full service in the church. But my eye-sight was not good enough for me to study. As a layman in later years I was richly blessed. At nine years of age I contracted polio, and was left with an incurably withered leg. I had to have special footwear made. When I was seventeen I decided to go to a healing mission on in Wellington. For weeks before the mission I started to prepare and work for my faith; a simple faith of believing that I COULD be cured enough to wear home a pair of ordinary shoes which I took with me. Just after the laying on of hands, I felt awkward as I walked out of the cathedral. I was walking uphill on one foot. So I put my shoes on. I received exactly what I believed I would. Soon after I became a fully - accredited lay preacher and I was richly blessed of a simple faith and blessed over the years with increased congregations and a deep sense of God's Holy Spirit using me. The joy of service had to be experienced to be understood. Any sacrifice made was rewarded a hundred per cent. I have to say, without contradiction, I was grossly unworthy as I think most of us are.

"Our family had two farms. When I was 16, and my sister Pearl 15, she and I went to run one of them leaving my father to run the other one with the younger ones, Kath and Ella at home. We didn't go to town very often. You didn't loiter around the place then. People today wouldn't realise. I remember one week, we'd been haymaking all week of fine weather and I was due to preach at Cardiff at 11. I remember working on my sermon till around midnight. We got up early and milked (we had machines by then) and I went to the factory with the horse and cart. The creamery was just round the farm. I came home, changed shaved washed, saddled the horse and rode the 10-12 miles to Cardiff. I don't excuse people for being late. I always made a point of being on time. There was a Mrs Dymond, a widow who used to walk from round the Ronald Rd after the mornings farm work with her three daughters and two sons and she'd teach the ten am Sunday school. She invited me home to dinner a couple of times. Another time in February and it was pouring wet after haymaking weather, I thought it would be too wet for anyone to come after a busy week. I rode the horse that day with a rug around her neck and over my knees. I tied her up and then waited half an hour in the church then went out and rode the horse home. I'd kept my appointment and I never mentioned the fact that I'd been - to the Cardiff people or anybody else.

When I was a local preacher on probation, Rev G.P. Hunt was the first minister I went out with. He had the first car, (not a circuit car), and it was a Chev 4 with a hood. He was a very sincere, serious sort of a man, and everybody knew he lived up to his beliefs. In those days the Methodist parson carried a lot of weight in the district.

Rev C.C. Harrison had one of the first motor bikes that you had to push and run alongside and then hop on when it started. He wore a boater hat on his motor bike, but of course he only used to do about ten miles an hour on it. He was tall and Wesleyan and Rev Metson was short and Primitive. (He used to boast he was a quarter of an inch taller than King George the fifth.)

YOUNG DAYS

At the night service, there were quite a few girls and we boys sat behind them. One wise joker would always think of something he could whisper loud enough to make the girls laugh.

I was a Sunday school boy when I first heard Bob Wickham preach. After putting in an hour at Sunday school then hearing him I thought, next time he comes he won't have anything left to say, because he'd go from one end of the bible to another. But he DID find something else to say. We boys had to sit through an hour of Sunday school, and then church on hard seats with crossed legs at the ends and just a rail along the back.

THE CATTLE AUCTION

We replaced those hard seats and built on a vestry with the money raised at an auction. It was when pedigree cows first came in and of course every cocky had the best pedigree cow. It was decided that every farmer would bring a cow down to the church and we'd have an auction sale. Most of the farmers had quiet cows and only perhaps one or two pedigrees in the herd, and they bid up the best price to take their own cows home again.

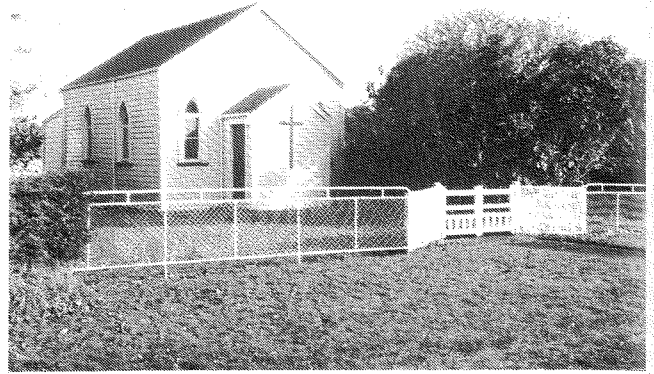
But there was an old Dane, John Christiansen, who lived away up at Cross Rd. He used to drive a white horse and gig to church with his wife, an older son and daughters called Violet and Elizabeth I think who were still at school. He donated a cow but it would have to be collected. Reg Hosking and I were sent to collect it, on horseback with a whip each. Of course ONE cow did not want to leave the farm she'd been born on! We were only teenagers and had a lot of trouble. Mr Christiansen's language got stronger and stronger as he objected to our rough handling of that cow. He was watching every move and we had to be very gentle. One firm decision might have made a big difference. We only frightened the cow. If we had used our whips most likely she'd have gone sooner. By the time we left he was getting very red in the face. I think he bought his own cow back too and she wouldn't want much taking home.

Winnie Mackey says: "In 1925 our family moved out to share-milk a rough hilly farm at Te Popo (beyond Wharehuia.) There was a monthly Presbyterian service in the little school and most of the settlers went along. There were a great number of young folk and when a Sunday school was suggested I offered to start one up having more enthusiasm than knowledge, (I'd had a class of small boys at Midhirst.) We had no musical instrument for the singing and some of the young folk were my age and older. It lifted much responsibility from my shoulders when another Methodist offered to help. I had a class of under tens. Somebody knew a Wharehuia settler with an heirloom organ for sale, and a house to house collection was quite successful. Then an elderly lady, a little impatient, went a step further, and approached a few Stratford Stock agents, saying the stock firms did pretty well out of their district. The result enabled us to get an organ, a Sankey music book and several dozen word books, and we progressed well. We had to leave that farm after two years because both my parents suffered bad health, and my father died shortly after that."

Most Wharehuia families are related or related by marriage. The Cornish connection is strong. (Jago, Wellington, Hosking etc).

Mrs Ivy Hosking has kept scrapbooks, photos and historical records of the church. When Reg Hosking's father arrived around 1902 he bought his farm from Fred Vosper, (Ina Fankhauser's Uncle.) A lovely white came-

lia which still flowers there was probably planted by Vospers. (See also Don McDowall's story earlier).



Wharehuia (Stanley Road) Church 1990.



Wharehuia's 70th celebrations.

KAHOURI BRIDGE CHURCH

In 1888 the road out East was formed as a dray road as far as a wooden bridge over the Kahouri stream. At this time Capt Chas Finnerty and Mr C.L. Sladden were leading survey parties out east of Stratford.

Kahouri is pronounced 'Kauri' by the locals. The little Wesleyan church which appears on the cover of this book, stood on the left just over the bridge from the present Stratford cemetery. It was built because of the enthusiasm of the Wilmshurst family. A granddaughter is Mrs Adams, formerly Matron of Marire. She says, "My Grandfather Charles Wilmshurst had two families and my father was from the first marriage. He had five step-sisters.

Miss Flossie Thomas of New Plymouth, says: " My Wilmshurst grandparents lived on the hill above the Kahouri stream bridge. Grandmother Caroline, sent her children round the district asking who'd be interested in a Church and Sunday school, and Grandfather gave the piece of land between the road and the stream for the little church, which was built by voluntary labour. If they found any families who didn't want the children to come because they had nothing suitable to wear, the sisters would sew something for the children. I learned recently that the name was originally Whilmshurst with an H, and they were of German origin. Three brother's left U.K. and two settled in Australia, and the other came on to N.Z and settled in the Wairarapa. Grandfather had a brother John in Wellington. Grandmother Caroline