

MEDDLESOME MANGAOTUKU STILL UNTAMED

WHEN the tortuous Mangaotuku Stream was dubbed the "Meddlesome Mangaotuku" it was given a name that generations of New Plymouth citizens would agree with.

It has been meddling in the affairs of the town with remarkable persistency. And it has gone on doing this despite recurrent and unanimous opinions that it would have to be tamed by piping most of its above-normal flow to the sea before it reached its highest potential of damage—under the business heart of the city.

But even more remarkable is the fact that while intentions have been diverted the stream has not.

The Mangaotuku is something of a physical phenomenon. It drains a large slice of West New Plymouth between the main Western ridge and the higher land towards the port and its source lies to the south of Lake Rotokare (Barrett's Lagoon). If it took its direct course to the sea it would do so not far east of Brough Road. But it is turned by the low ridge of land between it and the sea.

So the Mangaotuku wanders almost due east and pursues a snake-like course until it empties into the Huatoki. It is in this journey, during which it has become the storm-water drain for a large part of built-up New Plymouth, that it does most damage.

Boy's recollection

Count upon a time it flowed more swift, not so low in dry weather and not so suddenly high in heavy rain. One citizen in 1935 recalled that as a boy he could swim anywhere in it from the brewery to Bell Road. Another with a memory going back 60 years said the flooding had grown as business structures encroached on its banks.

An early borough council however took notice. In 1882 the first New Plymouth building to be encased in brick walls (it was directly opposite the Criterion hotel) caused a controversy. The owners were indignant when they were not allowed to extend over the water on pillars and rock-works the idea of "toss and bays coming down what is little more than a drain."

And even at this stage there was a suggestion that the stream should be diverted to the sea.

Burst dam

But nothing was done and 21 years later the Mangaotuku struck hard. The circumstances were unusual. To raise the level of Lake Rotokare a dam several chains long and 25 feet wide at the top had been constructed. There was heavy rain over a period late in January, 1921, and on January 26 the dam, weakened by rising waters, gave way.

At the Omaha Road a gap was torn in the road by the surging water and all along the course of the stream flooding was severe. Three feet of water in the brewery caused havoc, and basements were flooded.

The report of the damage in the *Wharfedale Herald* concluded:



AT THE HEIGHT OF THE 1935 FLOOD. Water surges across Devon Street in this view looking towards the Brougham Street intersection.

"It again draws attention to the desirability which has been urged on several occasions of diverting this stream to the sea at a point before it touches the business area of the town."

Remember—this was 28 years ago.

Much worse was to follow 12 years later. On February 22, 1935, after 7 1/2 inches of rain in the 24 hours to 7.30 a.m. the Huatoki and the Mangaotuku joined forces to ravage the centre of New Plymouth while homes along the banks of the Mangaotuku were invaded.

A spring tide coinciding with the peak of the flood added to the chaos and not until midday did the waters begin to recede.

Businessmen had no warning. Little stock could be rescued in time from water that deluged central Devon Street and lower Brougham Street. But help came quickly and willingly and no helpers were more enthusiastic than the surf teams in the centre of New Plymouth, the national championships at Pitrooy.

Building lifted

What happened yesterday was history repeating itself—but it was worse in 1935 with a higher level of flood water as the accompanying pictures show. In Newton King's Building the water poured in at the rear and swept out of the doors into Devon Street. Wooden floors everywhere were forced up by the pressure of the water. The wooden law office of Weston, Ball and Grayling at the corner of Brougham Street and King Street were in the full flow from two directions. The entire building was lifted two feet.

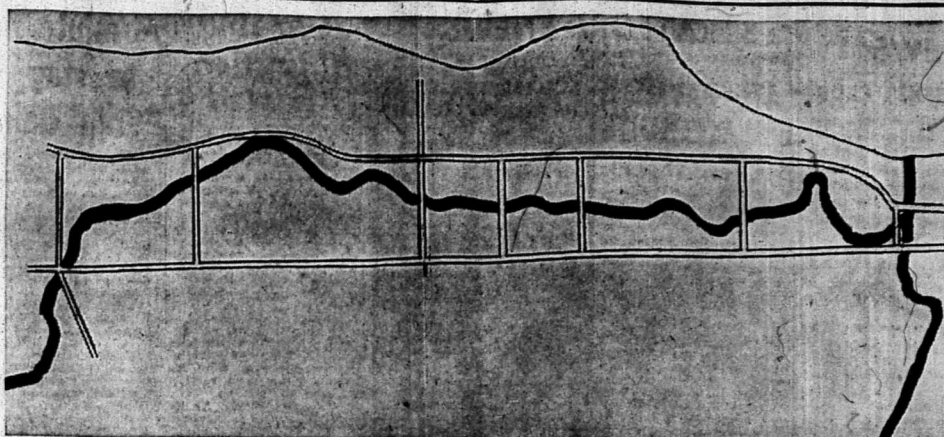
Businessmen were irate: a flood then was an "act of God," not covered by ordinary insurance as today. The same week 48 of them met and passed resolutions condemning the obstructions to the outlets and course of the two streams and urging the diversion of the Mangaotuku. The situation was described as "simply scandalous."

The Herald editorially commented: "It was proposed at one time to carry this stream direct to the sea from the brewery but the cost and difficulties . . . of carrying it under the railway prevented this project being carried out. Had the work been done it would have lessened the flood damage."

And so to July 11, 1961.

Will the Mangaotuku be tamed, or will it again go on the rampage?

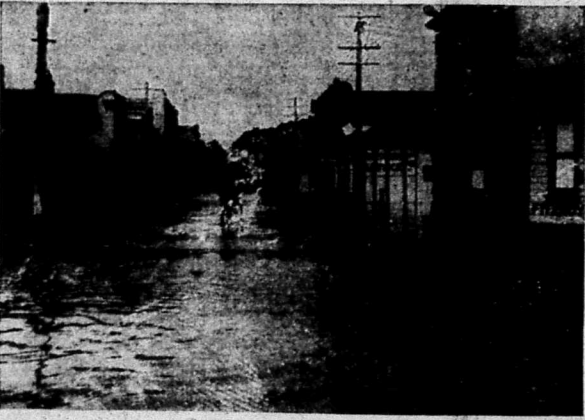
(City council discussion on flood problem: Page 11).



NEW PLYMOUTH'S PROBLEM of its meandering stream. In heavy black the Mangaotuku is shown flowing almost parallel with the coast until it reaches the Huatoki almost under Brougham Street on the right. On the sea side of the Mangaotuku runs South Road and St Aubyn Street and on the south side Devon Street. It almost reaches St Aubyn Street near the brewery and then sweeps back practically to Devon Street before flowing into the Huatoki.



ANOTHER 1935 aspect of Devon Street. This is the view from near the National Bank corner.



LOWER BROUGHAM STREET was like a river in 1935. The old Royal Hotel is on the left.

Action on residues praised

WELLINGTON, This Day (PA).—The prompt action taken by the New Zealand Government on the recent residue problem with exports of New

ARTS ADVISORY COUNCIL AWARDS

WELLINGTON, This Day.—The Arts Advisory Council has set up music, professional committees in the visual arts—music, drama and ballet—said the Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr Gotz, chairman of the council in a statement today.

Want to dance in Hungary

Nora Kovach and Istan Baborky, the Hungarian guest stars with the New Zealand Ballet, now visiting New Plymouth, want to dance in their homeland again—but only if the situation there improves.

"If we returned at present, we would probably be thrown into jail," said Miss Kovach today, "or shipped to Siberia," added her husband.

Married in 1952, the year before they escaped from Hungary, the dancers have formed their own company in the U.S. which bears their name. They will tour the United States with this company on their return home after their New Zealand tour ends.

On the way back to the United States, they will have a well-earned holiday in Hawaii.

Their New Zealand tour of 70 performances in 11 weeks have given them almost no time to see young dancers. They were lucky enough to see Maori songs and dances in Roturua and found them "most delightful."

The New Zealand Ballet would develop into a very good company, Miss Kovach predicted. "Audiences throughout New Zealand have been wonderful; they are most appreciative," she added.

WOMEN BATTLE AT SALE

MELBOURNE, This Day.—Two women, fighting over a fur stole priced at £200/19/-, at a city sale yesterday, tore the lining and had to be separated by a shop assistant.

Incredible scenes followed when more than 2000 women crowded into the fur department of a leading Melbourne store within 10 minutes of opening time.

The women:

- Snatched coats from the assistants and from one another.
 - Trampled expensive coats underfoot.
 - Littered the floor with price placards and coat hangers.
 - Mobbed assistants bringing more coats up the escalators.
- More than 700 stoles and coats were sold within the first 15 minutes—some of them priced as high as 800 guineas, and many at 500, 300 and 100 guineas.

Fairground wheel blown

No letter mail lost

WELLINGTON, This Day. (F A).—No letter mail was among the losses in the Apesca Quay fire on Friday morning, chief postmaster in Wellington, Mr P. H. Lewis, said today. Mostly parcels were affected, plus a small amount of second-class mail such as newspapers.

The description given by Mr Lewis of the burnt mails is:

Outward overseas: Auckland posting to United Kingdom and Europe, 21 bags of parcels; Wellington to United Kingdom and Europe, 20 of second-class and 25 of parcels.

These comprised only a small amount of mail that had not been loaded into the Roadline. They were probably postings made around July 12-13.

Wellington to Australia, South Africa, Hong Kong, India and Mombasa, second-class mail.

FOR TARANAKI

Inward overseas: About 500 bags of second-class mail from the United Kingdom and Europe, Parcel mails from Dublin, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom and Karachi. This mail was probably for the Wellington area. These mails arrived by the Port Adelaide, except that from Karachi.

Island parcels from the Tofua.

Inland parcels: Postings in Wellington from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. on July 13 (the night before the fire) for Christchurch and offices south of Christchurch. For Nelson, postings from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. For Blenheim, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Manawatu, Wanganui and the Wairarapa, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Second class mail posted between July 6 and 13 for Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Manawatu, Nelson and Blenheim.

The inland parcels lost totalled something like 1300, including about 100 posted in Wellington for local delivery.

Gina makes up for lost time

SYDNEY, This Day.—Gina, the first German Shepherd dog imported to Australia for 40 years, is making up for lost time. Almost as soon as she arrived in Sydney from New Zealand recently she gave birth to a litter of six.

She left New Zealand on a special permit. She was consigned for Adelaide as a gift from the New Zealand Commissioner of Police to the Com-