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Historic event for Rawhitiroa

The relocated gates to Rawhitiroa School's Memorial Pool on Anzac Day was attended by a large crowd who came to witness the unveiling of a plaque recognising those who fought in various wars.

The project was generously funded by Patrick McLaughlin who passed away in 2021 and thus sadly did not get to see the opening of the new landmark. Two of his uncles perished in World War 1.

Among the various media in addition to local newspapers was Brian Vickery from Bryan Vickery Media. The official ceremony began with a prayer by Padre Lindsay Maindonald of the Eltham RSA, then the laying of wreaths, a playing of the moving Last Post and the raising of the New Zealand flag.

Those gathered were given a comprehensive history of the first McLaughlin in the district by Angela Kiser from the Rawhitiroa Women's Institute who was pivotal in instigating the project.

Hugh McLaughlin who left County Antrim Northern Ireland at the age of 18 initially settled in Australia where he spent three years goldmining before coming to New Zealand where took part in the famous gold rushes in Otago with some success.

He returned to Ireland for three years where he married in 1870 and came back to New Zealand in 1875 with his wife Mary first settling in Patea and later moving to Rawhitiroa around 1895. They lived on the same road as the memorial gates raising at least 9 children (possibly more) their children attending the first Rawhitiroa Primary School which opened

in 1898. The Rawhitiroa Hall opened in 1901.

When the First World War broke out four of the McLaughlin sons signed up for the army.

Two of the sons never returned home. Sadly Edmund and John were killed in action and were buried in France. Hugh (junior) was wounded but did return.

The fourth son Alexander stayed in New Zealand as a Reservist.

Hugh and Mary passed away in 1925 and 1926.

A grandson Patrick Leo McLaughlin who was born in 1938 and an only child, lived on the same road as his grandparents later moved to Eltham with his parents when they retired. He was bank manager at the TSB Savings Bank for many years.

Patrick was very much a community man. A Catholic,



From left, Padre Lindsay Maindonald and Angela Kiser from the Rawhitiroa Women's Institute, who gave a history of the McLaughlin family. Also pictured (right) is cadet Cody Mitchell from the Stratford ATC Air training Corp 48 Squadron

he devoted a lot of time to the church. He did not have children but was always

immensely proud of his uncles and his McLaughlin heritage. In the year of his passing

the Rawhitiroa Women's Institute initiated the Anz

Continued page



The gathering at Rawhitiroa.

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stern heads up given at Board meeting

Continued from page 8.

The board's deputy chair Marlee Mariekura said she was happy to support giving the entire amount asked for.

"There's a whole community doing this, and it provides for the whole community," she said. Andy Whitehead said he was impressed with what they

had done. "Although some things in Manaia have not been happening, other things have been happening very successfully," he said.

Deputy mayor Rob Northcott said more should be done to promote projects like this in smaller centres. He contrasted the situation in Manaia to that of Patea

where a piece of land had been set aside for a community garden but no group had taken it up. "The more we can get people enthused about growing

their own vegetables is better," he said. The board voted to grant the entire amount asked for.

An historic event in Rawhitiroa



photo of those who never came home including the two McLaughlin brothers hangs in the Rawhitiroa Hall nearby.

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Resurgence Project which is involved contouring the whole area where the memorial gates are located and were given assistance in the project by funds provided by the executors of Patrick McLaughlin's estate, a project which they felt Patrick would have supported and a fitting memorial to the pioneering McLaughlin family.

After a formal unveiling of the memorial plaques by Janice Hawkes, President of the Rawhitiroa Women's Institute, representatives of the McLaughlin family came forward to lay wreaths and were joined by others laying wreaths. There were various other speakers including Llew Eynon, President of the Eltham RSA whose

interesting address explained the protocol concerning the wearing of war medals. Relatives are entitled to wear medals on their right chest. Recipients of the medals however wear them on their left chest. "Most officers were righthanded and used their right hand to draw their sword," he said by way of explanation. The ceremony ended as it had

begun with a prayer from Padre Lindsay Maindonald and recognition of the significance of Anzac Day and those who served in the Great War whose names will be remembered in the plaques to the new impressive gates to all who visit and reside in the Rawhitiroa district. "It's an historic event," he said. Afterwards all who attended were treated to a lavish lunch in the nearby Rawhitiroa Hall.

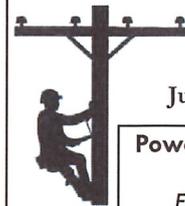


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