

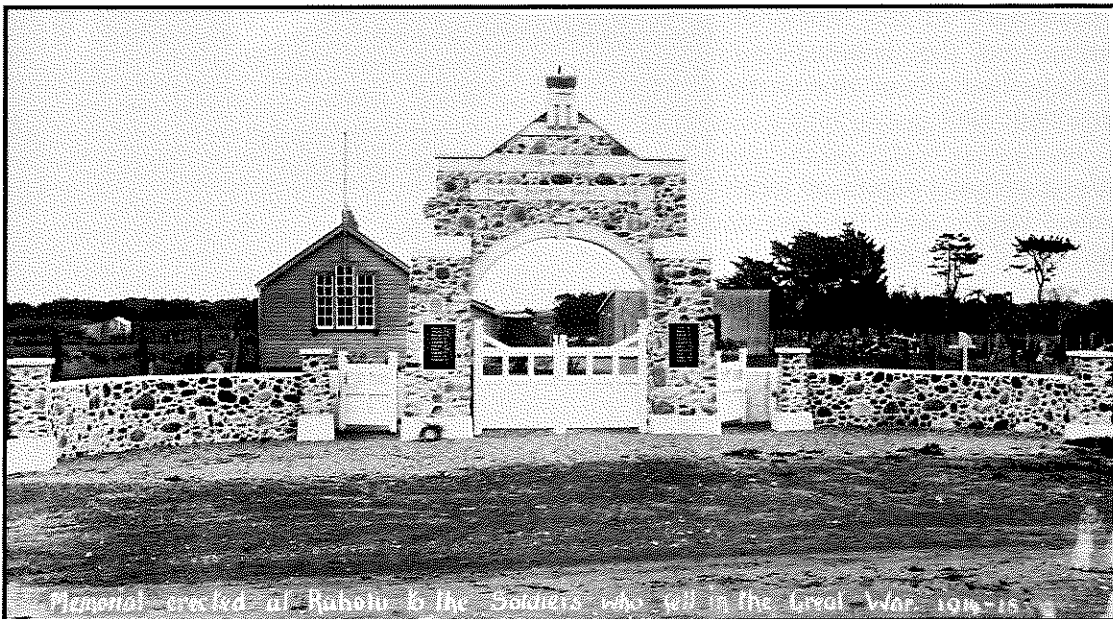
THE RAHOTU WAR MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

The original Minute Book of the Committee was inadvertently lost. In 1928, Mr. J.T. Linehan, headmaster at the time of the local school, was asked to make diligent research, and enter in the new book as near as he could ascertain the details of the founding of the Committee and its operations in its first year in office. He also transferred to the new book copies of the minutes of meetings entered in a notebook, from July 1923.

From enquiries, Mr. Linehan learned that a public meeting was held early in 1922, when the Rahotu Soldiers Memorial Committee was elected to organize the erection of a suitable Memorial to the men of the district who had laid down their lives for their country in the Great War of 1914-1918.

The members of the elected Committee were Messrs A.F. Chapman, L. Fischer, H.F. Annis, W.R. Wright & G.E.C. Prosser. Mr. Wright was elected Chairman & Mr. Fischer Secretary. Canvassers with subscription lists covered the district & functions were held to raise money. Various suggestions as to the type of memorial were studied, and several other memorials already erected in Taranaki were viewed. It was finally decided that an arch, similar to the one seen at Normanby, be erected over the School gates. As this would be on Education Board property, the Board's approval was first obtained, following which, tenders were called for the building of an arch as per plans prepared by a New Plymouth architect, Mr. W.N. Stephenson, and subject to the supervision of Mr. C.H. Moore, the Education Board's architect.

Three tenders were received, the one selected being that of the local builder, Mr. Geo. Robinson, for 183 pounds, with a further 17 pounds for the erection of the wing walls. The Memorial was duly built to the complete satisfaction of Mr. Moore, who congratulated Mr. Robinson on his thorough and painstaking work. To quote Mr. Linehan:- "A pleasing feature of the very handsome memorial which was erected was the fact that it was constructed of local stone, and so was, in that way, a most fitting memorial to the men from the district. A departure from the architect's plan was made when a crown, the gift of Mr. W.R. Wright, was placed on top of the arch.



Memorial erected at Rahotu to the Soldiers who fell in the Great War 1914 - 1918

The Memorial was unveiled and dedicated in a special ceremony on Sunday 26th November 1922, at 1.30 pm, by the Ven. Archdeacon F.G. Evans. Other short addresses were by Col. Weston, Mr. O.J. Hawken, M.P. and Mr. G.E. Roper of the R.S.A. Total cost of the Memorial was two hundred and seventy four pounds, five shillings and no pence. This amount included the architect's fee and other expenses in connection with the unveiling. The Committee was also responsible for the erection in the Public Hall of a Roll of Honour showing the names, ranks and decorations of all the men of the district who served in the Great War.

In 1949, the War Memorial 1939-45 Committee was formed for the purpose of placing in the Public Hall a suitable Roll of Honour giving the names of all Local men who served in World War II. It is of great regret that the writer has been unable to track down any written information on the election and work of this Committee. It is believed however that the attractive Roll of Honour erected was made by a firm in Stratford.

In 1955, the remaining members of the two Memorial Committees convened a public meeting at which it was decided that those two committees cease to function, and hand over their funds to a new committee called the Rahotu War Memorial Committee. This was done and the duly elected members were instructed by the meeting to consider having a Roll of Honour tablet made for Servicemen who had participated in the Korean War. From three sketches submitted by Mr. C. Harding of Opunake, one was selected, manufactured by Messrs P. H. Harding & Son, and erected in the Rahotu Hall the following year.

By 1982, the three remaining Committee members unanimously decided that the Committee had served its purpose, and arrangements were made whereby the Egmont County Council accepted responsibility for the maintenance of the Memorial Arch, and the Rahotu Hall Society the Rolls of Honour in the Public Hall.

It is a pleasing aspect of local thought and pride in the District Memorial to know that the School Committee recently sought and obtained permission from the Council to water blast the whole structure. The council readily paid for the hire of the equipment, and the Committee members are to be congratulated on their thought and application in removing the stains of over sixty years, and so restoring its original impressive beauty.

