



Wallingford – circa 1853

www.wallingford.co.nz

EARLY WALLINGFORD and its PERSONALITIES by Sir John Ormond - written 1986?

The Honourable J D Ormond – comes to New Zealand

In a small town in England called Wantage, a naval lieutenant married a girl from a neighbouring town known as Wallingford. This naval lieutenant, Francis Ormond, moved to Wallingford with his bride. Over the next twelve years they produced five children. The fourth child, and third son, John Davies, was born in May 1832. Being a naval man, Francis moved his family to the port of Plymouth.

It was here that John met Edward Eyre, a notable explorer and adventurer. Eyre was courting John's sister Adelaide and no doubt John saw a lot of this man over the next eighteen months. In 1846 Eyre was appointed Lieutenant Governor to the southern districts of New Zealand and was very keen to enlist the support of John as his private secretary.

John arrived in Nelson in 1847 and moved to Wellington to take up his post of private secretary to Eyre. Due to tightness in the economy, the Governor, Captain Grey (soon to become Sir George), refused Eyre permission to pay John a salary. However in 1848 he was officially appointed as confidential Clerk to the Lieutenant Governor. Eighteen months later he was promoted to Private Secretary and Clerk of the Executive Council with a salary of 200 pounds. Whilst being Private Secretary he met and enjoyed the company of Donald McLean, a land purchaser for the Government. This began a new era for John, as early in 1849 he accompanied Donald McLean on a land purchasing trip to the Rangitiki. Soon after this he purchased 500 Merino ewes from an Australian Trading Brig. These were run on a Wairarapa property owned by Mr Richard Collins, Te Ore Ore. The wool clip was shared and John took two-thirds of the natural increases.

At 21 years of age, the activities of the Australian goldfields attracted his attention, so after resigning from his Government position, a quick visit was made to Australia. It did not take long to realise what life in New Zealand held for him and he was soon back.

Donald McLean invited him to join him on a land purchasing trip up the Wairarapa coast to Napier. Donald McLean was noted for his good relations with the Maoris and was called upon for discussions on settlement when purchasing land. Obviously John was similar in his dealings with them and over the years became a trusted friend. A recent indication of this was in Taupo when Mrs Margaret Hope, his granddaughter, wished to start up a Red Cross branch. She approached the Mayor for his support and he suggested she should see a certain Maori woman to seek her opinion and support, as he said, "Without it you will never get off the ground." In conversation with this woman, Margaret identified herself as the

grand-daughter of the Honourable J D Ormond. When the Maori women heard this, her whole attitude changed as she recalled to Margaret, how much they had trusted him and what a great Rangatira he had been for her people.

My grandfather was impressed with an area then known as the Porangahau Block. As with the majority of settlers, a lease was made with the Maoris and a rental agreed upon. This block, "Mangarara" consisted of 13,400 acres covered in scrub, bush and fern. The 500 ewes were moved along the coast from Castlepoint and thus began the Wallingford we know today.

It was initially known as the Eparaima Settlement after a block of 4,800 acres was leased from the Maoris. "Taurekaitai", which was used as a letterhead is the name of the river through the Eparaima Block. By 1861 the name "Wallingford" had replaced Taurekaitai and the Eparaima Settlement.

The immediate years following his purchase were involved in establishing Wallingford. He played an active part in local affairs and would appear to be the spokesman for the local settlers in their dealings with the Government. By 1859 he was elected to a newly formed Provincial Council. The first meeting elected him as speaker. This Council and its various sub committee, to which he was Chairman of several, occupied quite a bit of his time. It also meant that this time was spent in Napier.

Hannah Richardson – her family and arrival in NZ

It was here that he met Hannah Richardson who was to become his wife in 1860. Hannah was born in England, her father died when she was very young. The family consisted of Hannah and Geordie. Geordie was two years younger than Hannah. Hannah's mother married again to a Mr Thomson and as he was a Scotsman, moved his family back to the North. This was where Hannah was educated. She has been described as an intelligent, attractive and versatile girl who could turn her hand to most things. She was a person who loved her music and became a talented performer, which has come out in later generations.

Mr Thomson died and by 1857 Geordie was on his way to New Zealand. Mr Richardson's estate had gone to Geordie and Mrs Thomson and Hannah were dependent on Geordie for income and soon followed him to New Zealand. They arrived here in December 1858.

Hannah was a great writer and correspondent and kept a full diary. This appears to have been mislaid but one hopes it will be found as it holds a ready account of early Napier life. (Writers note - diary found in Turnbull Library 2005).

From Mrs Wilson's book "The Master" it appears that life in Napier was not easy as they were dependent on Geordie for income and Mrs Thomson missed her friends. Geordie was a warm fun-loving man and much loved by his sister Hannah. He brought many people back to the house where Hannah and her mother lived. Hannah was attractive and intelligent and had many suitors. John Ormond was one of these.

Being in Napier for Provincial Council meetings meant he could see more of Hannah and after a steady courtship they decided to marry. They were married in the Te Aute Church (Writers note - now called the Pukehou Church) on 4th December 1860 by the Reverend Samuel Williams. After the wedding the bride and groom rode on horseback to Wallingford, a distance of 40 miles. The main speech at the wedding was made by Mr J H Coleman who was the original Coleman from Cottenham, Wanstead, Hawke's Bay.

Grandfather's political life continued when he was chosen to represent Clive in Parliament. This encompassed Hawke's Bay, south of Napier. My grandmother accompanied him to Auckland for Parliamentary sessions and to Napier for local body affairs. A tree planted at the rear of a Hotel in Roxburgh shows she also travelled with him to the South Island when he was Minister of Works. Life must have been fairly busy for both as at this time Wallingford was becoming quite a rural establishment and no doubt this took careful planning.

Early years at Wallingford and the Village

By 1861, sections were being sold at the “Eparaima Bridge”. On the Waipukurau side of the river were a hotel, blacksmith’s shop and two large droving paddocks. On the Wallingford side a stable, store and post office. The blacksmith’s shop flourished and attracted customers from as far a field as Porangahau and the fringes of the forty mile bush. Early mail and passenger coaches stopped here for repairs and to change horses. The hotel established in 1861 provided liquid refreshments and lodgings for dust wearied passengers. The post office served a wide area providing a central point of pick-up and delivery for the Flemington area. I still have a ledger in my possession, which shows this village still active around 1908.

Such names as R S Mackersay of Lake Station, D Fleming of Flemington, R Hall o f Porangahau and Oakbourne Station featured prominently as users of the blacksmith’s services and the hotel accommodation.

In May 1900 the ledger shows the purchase of materials for the erection of a shop. A carpenter, Mr P Drover was employed at the rate of 30/- per week at the beginning of June. Trading continued at a brisk pace up until 1905.

Some prices around 1905 are shown in the ledger: one weeks board at the boarding house – 7/6, a meal – 1/-, blacksmith’s wages – 1/- per hour, beef –3d per lb, mutton – 3/- per ¼, cook’s wages – 2 pound 8/0 per week, whiskey – 7/- per bottle, brandy – 8/- per bottle. July 1905 J Cook rent of Wanstead shop for 17 months- 3 pound 12/0, 1905 – use of whare for 12 months – 1 pound, April 1913 – A Johnston, purchase of 61 breeding ewes at 12/+6 each, 500 pine battens at 9/- per hundred.

Fleas were the plague of the early traveller and an identity of the district recalls how father, in trying to destroy the fleas around the blacksmith’s shop with paraffin unwittingly made a bonfire of the shop. There is no record that the same treatment was handed out to the hotel but it also burnt down. The Ormond family still retained the licence but mother wouldn’t allow it to be renewed and so it expired.

An interesting activity at Wallingford in the 1860’s included the building of a ketch, the “Mary-Ann Hudson”. This was built about 5 chains above the Wallingford Bridge and floated out on a flood river. She traded between Wairao, Mohaka and Port Ahuriri, eventually being wrecked at Mohaka.

As communications and roads improved, more goods were purchased from Waipukurau and gradually the use of the village declined. Bulk stores were still purchased over the years and every one of us will remember the delightful smells issuing from the storeroom at he back of the Wallingford homestead. A bulk store was also built, over the bridge on Ugly Hill Road, just short of the present A J Speirs homestead.

Roading was a big community problem. The road between Wallingford and Porangahau was pretty nigh impassable in winter. The ridges were fine but the gullies were very boggy. Metal was scarce coming from Pukekura quarry – presently owned by Lee of Wanstead, or Kate’s quarry – Porangahau, named after the owner of the land, Kate Ropiha.

An alternative method was devised and this was the hardening of the papa by burning. A kiln was built about half a mile on the Waipukurau side of the Wallingford Bridge at the foot of a papa hill. Matai was brought in by contract and laid out with a layer of papa spread on top. This was repeated to a reputed height of 30 feet, using a crane for hoisting to high layers. Flues were inserted to provide the draught necessary to keep the wood burning. According to reports it took three months to consume the pile and a month to cool down.

For mail delivery and transport 4 horse carriages were used until 1912, changing horses at the Wallingford stable.

1912 saw the first car being used to transport mail. Two early competitors were Sutton and Horne, soon to be superseded by Ropiha and Glenny. I remember riding down to Wanstead on a draught horse called "Bloss" to pull these mail cars through the flood waters.

Prior to the introduction of the service cars and the trucking service, wool was carted by bullock dray to Blackhead to load onto lighters. A contract was let to the Pungi family to cart wool by dray and horse in later years. They were paid in gold sovereigns.

My grandfather imported Clydesdales, which were subsequently crossed with thoroughbreds and these provide horses for drawing drays and carts. These were bred for faster pulling.

Alec Johnstone set up as the Wanstead carrier. His son Acki is well remembered. He had a property at the back of Epae Hill – Mingi Valley. He had light horses and heavy horses, which were suited to a variety of work.

John and Hannah began their family soon after arriving at Wallingford. Their first born was George, in November 1861, followed by Fanny in 1863, Carrie who died in 1867, Frank in 1868, Ada in 1872 and Jack in 1873.

Jack Ormond youngest son of JD & Hannah

We will follow my father's career

Schooling was carried out in the home – a governess was common. At the age of seventeen he was sent to Christ's College for two years. No doubt here he made friends with quite a few South Islanders, people who were friends of his future wife. He was the only male of the family to attend Christ's College.

Like his brothers, except Frank, furthering of education was paramount, so a trip to England in 1895 was the order of the day. Each son was expected to enter some business organization or pursue some worthwhile cause. Father stayed with Lady Minutzshagen in Chaney Walk in London. She has owned Waimarama Station. His business contact was a Mr Horner of Horner & Co. He was the representative for the wool firm who bought the Wallingford wool clip. No doubt he carried instructions from his father and was given a thorough tour of the woollen areas by Mr Horner.

Father also shared his father's love of racehorses and so horses and races occupied a good deal of his time. He didn't stay long in England, coming back via the United States where he visited friends. One may wonder why the eldest son never took over Wallingford but to George, Mahia was a big challenge – he was involved with its development and had fallen in love with the locality and a Maori princess called Maraea, a queen descendant of the Chieftaness Rongomaiwahine, all of which made him reluctant to move to Wallingford.

Uncle Frank was very deaf and found it hard to cope with many of the difficult problems confronting them in those days. So my father, sharing his father's interests, settled admirably into the job.

Father because of his organisational ability and love of racehorses, became very close to his father, often administering his affairs. He accompanied his father to race meetings and took an active interest in breeding, the stud being at Karamu.

The interest in racing continued throughout his lifetime. Trips to the races in Napier were by horse or train. Polo was also played in Hastings and father would go up weekly to play.

In 1901 he went back to England. Whether this was because he had broken off his engagement to a Miss Kettle or because of business, we don't know. He didn't stay very long. In 1902 he met and became engaged to Gladys Wilder in Christchurch.

Gladys Wilder and her family

Gladys Wilder lived at Ngapari-Fernside at Rangiora. She was one of two daughters with four brothers. Her parents came from Staffordshire, England, to a farm in Rangiora. The farmhouse is perched on a river terrace overlooking a riverbed of gorse and broom bushes. Gladys, in her diary, mentions picnics in the riverbed and rabbit shooting with her brothers.

Her parents were avid golfers with her mother being New Zealand Ladies Champion. Golf filled a lot of their time, as did looking after extensive poultry runs and entertaining. Mother's diary, when she was 20, hardly has a week when they were not staying with someone or someone was not staying with them. Tennis and cricket featured prominently with music evening being a favourite source of entertainment for the family or visitor.

Mother enjoyed riding and especially hunting. She would have liked to have done more hunting, but lack of good horses prohibited this and her father would not let her borrow them.

She first mentions meeting Jack Ormond at the ball following the "National" races in Christchurch in August 1902. Quoting from her diary: "The ball was glorious – heaps of people and the decorations magnificent, several new men. Amongst them, Jack Ormond from the North Island, such a nice man It was about the best ball I have been to. Next day races again. Mr Pyne drove mother and me out – young Ormond (no 'e') was so nice"

Mother was very close to her mother and father and a favourite big sister to Standish (Uncle Tim) and Jack.

One delightful entry in her diary needs recording. She visited a person by the name of Fahey – "How horrid to have such a lot of children." She had five children.

Soon after Mother and Father were married, the Wilder's sold Ngapari and moved up to a house near Hastings beside the Waiohiki Golf Course. They lived there until Mr Wilder died and then Maude Wilder moved to live at Wallingford. The front spare room was built on for her. Mother's sister Pearlie, married a Williams and lived at Atua, Granny stayed with them too.

Interestingly, with Father's engagement to mother, Mr Wilder insisted on a dowry which was a parcel of land from then on known as the Marriage Settlement. The actual acreage we are not sure of, but it was about 2,000 acres. This block ran from the present Wilder Settlement Road – across Mangawhero – through the Malings property to the Speirs. This land was leased back to Father to farm.

In 1913, my father gave to Jack Wilder, a block of land on the Wilder Road. This occurred when Jack became engaged to Miss Dumpy St. Hill. Jack was killed in the war and having formed a trust, the land went to his brothers. In 1917 the Wilder Settlement was wound up and with the money Uncle Tim bought 1,400 acres on the corner of Ugly Hill and Clay Road (writers note – now called Wallingford Road), Uncle Perry bought a block of land from Mr Limpus where Warner Wilder now lives, on the Porangahau – Waipukurau Road.

Wallingford with Jack & Gladys

Around 1930, Father and Sir Clifford Plimmer organised the division of Wallingford amongst the sons and daughters. These were farmed as separate blocks.

Mother and Father began their family in 1905 and had their earlier children at Waipukurau or Wallingford. In 1907 they went to England.

Brother Ted recalls that it wasn't until after he was born that a Nannie was employed; "Our first nurse Nannie applied to come when Meg was born. My mother turned her down as she couldn't sew – she applied again when John was born, my mother again turned her down, but when I arrived at 4 ½ lbs Mother was desperate so Nannie came this time and stayed with us until she retired to Christchurch."

I recall "school" was in the morning and the afternoon was spent on the horses. I can remember being made to sit in the chair reading my book whilst Mother picked the nits out of my hair. We were fairly wild children as we spent a lot of time with the men. Anywhere we went we had to wear velvet suits, which we loathed.

In 1916 Ted & I were sent to boarding school in Day's Bay, Wellington. The sea in the front and the bush behind, anything else and we would have run away.

A Governess, Miss Farrow, was employed to educate the children. Ted & I were sent to boarding school soon after she arrived. Boarding school was not much fun and all our efforts were made to avoid going back as Ted explains:

"When we first went to school we had to catch the train at 7.30am. One morning we got up at 6.00am and hammered three 6" nails into each tyre. Unfortunately for us, Dad came out at 7.05am and discovered the flat tyres, so he got all available manpower onto repairing them and we just made the train as usual."

I recall that the train was actually held up for our arrival. I also recall travelling to Napier and someone was sick on the train. The train was stopped whilst the involved party went to the Giblin's house near Te Aute for a cup of tea. When they returned the train moved on.

A schoolroom was built under the oak trees on the lawn, this was too cold in the winter and so when Wallingford was added to in 1919, a schoolroom was also added. The old schoolroom was moved from under the oaks to the Dan Ormond's house at Long Island. In the early days the stations provided a schoolteacher who lived with his family in a small house, which is now the Wallingford Church.

Father always took an interest in Church affairs and was the landowner of the area who made it his responsibility to organise funds for the payment of the vicar. The landholdings were large and therefore few landowners, so should one have fallen on hard times, it placed an extra burden on the others.

He also took an active part in local affairs and with the engineer, Mr Sidwel of Porangahau, played an active part in mapping out the roads of the area.

Father would put aside some of his winnings from racing to build funds for a local church. Instead of a centennial in 1954, the funds which would have been used in this capacity went to the conversion of the school to a church. We didn't have to pay for the schoolhouse but we had to buy the land because the Education Board had had the use of it for more than 25 years and all the records of land transactions of earlier years had gone in the Napier earthquake. This cost 400 pounds.

It took quite some time to shear all the ewes. Shearers would book their stand at Wallingford for the following year. In the evenings, particularly at the end of shearing, the Maori folk would sit on the old tennis court, (now in front of the dining room) and sing. The children would be picked up from their beds and taken out to the lawn to listen to them. Uncle Frank was the sheepo for all of my grandfather's shearing sheds and this was the way he earned his pocket money.

I remember being sent to stay with my grandmother in Napier and being sent to school there, for a month every winter. We hated school there but loved staying at Tintagel, fishing at the spit with O'Rourke, the coachman and collecting fruit from Karamu were some of the highlights.

Every second Christmas we spent at Atua and they'd come to Wallingford in return. Once a year we were sent to Burleigh (Wilson property in Bulls) with Aunt Aida and Uncle Hamish. If we misbehaved Uncle

Hamish would give us “Nutters”. This was flicking our heads with the forefinger. Uncle Hamish would meet the train whenever we were headed south for Christ’s College and give us each a half crown.

Riding occupied most of our spare time when we were young. Mother and Father would teach us to ride on Sundays – usually for a start up and down the plane trees at the bottom of the garden flats. Later on we would ride out to meet Father with picnic lunches and a favourite spot was at the bush at the end of the Ugly Hill Road.

Grandfather’s first hut was down by the creek below where the stables are now located. (Writers note – these burnt down in about 1985 below the homestead). Building began on the house, the woolshed, whare and stable in the middle 1850’s. The original stable is now the present garage.

The first house was the size of the middle part of Wallingford. The builder walked up from Masterton. I had a letter from the builder’s son who tells me he walked up to see his father building Wallingford. It took him three weeks to walk to Oakbourne where he stayed several nights before walking over.

In 1864 the original house burnt down and was rebuilt on the same lines. (Writers note – I don’t think this was a total burn down many of the rafters show the fire today). Additions were made in 1918 – the house was extended. Mr Winlove was the builder with Mr Wharmby. The schoolroom wing, married couple wing, extension to the dining room and a new drawing room and alterations to Mother’s room and the veranda were made. (Writers note – Aunt Sheila tells me they lived in the couple’s wing while the building was taking place and it was in fact original, certainly looks that way)

Some Wallingford personalities

Mr Archibald was the Honourable J D Ormond’s overseer. He was 6’ 7” and a Scotsman. A property was bought for him and interestingly enough this property is now farmed by Mathew Ormond at Omakere (Titoki). The Archibald’s struck hard times and the property had to be sold. This was bought by the Herricks.

Charlie Madden was a very good cook at the Plough camp. He had two weeks holiday around Christmas each year and this was spent at Wanstead where he had a hut. This was opposite the Motuotaraia gateway where there is a clump of oak trees on top of the hill. Here he would get very drunk and I remember him arriving back and getting into the methylated spirits in the store. Father was very annoyed so Ted and I were summoned to take him back to the Plough camp. Wheat sacks were tied on his saddle front and back and we tied him on. “Billy” was the horse used on these occasions. One would lead and the other would come behind to keep the horse moving. Ted and I were so scared of him that when we came to the camp we would drop the reins and leave him on the horse until the men from the camp came in from work. Ted tells a lovely story of Charlie; “Charlie used to give us soup and chops and strong black tea with condensed milk in it. The flies were bad in summer and Charlie (I believe it was Uncle Frank) would ladle the soup into his mouth, then spit out the flies and put them on the side of his soup plate.”

John Munroe was a Scotsman. He was my father’s head shepherd and lived in a hut at Mangawhero. In the cookhouse, his place was head of the table – porridge for breakfast was sprinkled with salt and he always ate his standing up. Each person had his own mug – big china mugs which hung on the wall. He had a soft spot for us. He wrote to us at school every two months and sent us stamps. Great delight was to go mustering with John Munro. He was always found sitting on a knob and we would head for him and he would supply us with cigarettes.

Bill Bird was the bullocky who lived in a house at Eparaima. He used to cut posts for the Ormond, the Hunters and himself.

The Rarotongans came to Wallingford about 40 years ago. Among them were Emily and Puku and Joe and Kath who now farm in Te Puke (Writers note – Joe Tautu turned 80 in 2005, brothers George Alastair, Mick and JDO all went up to his birthday party. Joe & Kath now own a block of land north of

Auckland where they both still work hard and produce vegetables (developing now into organic) for the market).

Wallingford, R.D.4, Waipukurau 4284, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand
Phone 06 855 4701 – Fax 06 855 4740 – Mobile 0274 845 228