

both parents. Ten acres of land were purchased from Mr Nicholas Muir on the Mangawhero Road by Mr Jenkins. Timber felled on his farm 'Dovedale' was milled at Willy Bros. mill, Mangawhero Road, and the sawn timber stacked on the site ready for the builders.

The plans for the building were drawn by Lieutenant Colonel Saunders in Melbourne and the building contractors were Messrs. O'Reilly and Miscall of Ngairi. Furnishings and fittings were supplied by the Salvation Army. Completed late in 1909, the opening was conducted by the Hon. W. C. Carncross M.L.C. on Boxing Day of that year, the Army representative being Lieutenant Colonel Knight. Staff Captain and Mrs Glitheroe were the first managers and 50 boys became the first residents.

In 1917 an additional 25 acres of land were bought and this the boys helped to develop and farm. During this year a gymnasium and managers' cottage were built. Until 1928 the boys received their school education at a classroom at the home after which time they attended the Eltham Primary School. This caused a sudden influx of 60 pupils at the local school.

Over the years the requirements for the home decreased, so in January 1954 the institution closed and the remaining boys were transferred to a similar home in Putaruru.

### Eventide Home

After the closure of the Boys' Home a scheme in 1959 was launched to convert the building into an Eventide Home. Eltham Jaycees, in two major fund-raising drives, raised much of the necessary \$42,000 required for alterations and additions and a Government subsidy filled the shortfall.

Mr F. J. Taylor, Mayor of Eltham, laid the foundation stone on 3 October 1959 for a new wing. The building of this and the modernisation of the old building were completed ready for the opening on 3 December 1960 by Mr W. A. Sheat, M.P. for Egmont.

The home served a very necessary requirement for the district, housing 33 elderly women.

On 3 January 1970, a major fire caused considerable damage to the original building by gutting the kitchen, staircase and several bedrooms. Timothy, a ginger cat, gave the alarm by waking Lieutenant Savage at 5 a.m. enabling the 25 residents and five staff to escape safely. Accommodation was found in Eltham homes until the Home could be renovated and made habitable again.

By 1974 decision had been reached to demolish the old Mercy Jenkins Home and to construct a new replacement wing. The residents were relocated at the unused Mount View hospital on 7 March 1974 while work proceeded on the new building. Costing \$220,000 the new Eventide Home ready for occupation was opened by Dr H. J. H. Hiddlestone, Director General of Health on 14 December 1975.

In recent years the scope of the Home has expanded to include men, giving a total of 36 residents.

An Eventide Home Advisory Committee with members drawn from many South Taranaki organisations have assisted with the running of the

home since its inception, and Mr F. J. Taylor, a former Mayor of Eltham, served for many years as Chairman.

### The Gospel Chapel

From 1882 a number of itinerant evangelists of the 'Open Brethren' faith travelled throughout Taranaki with Mr E. Mayes and Mr C. H. Hinman being the most notable. The converts in those days gathered with others at the Gospel Hall at Ngairi. After a meeting held in 1918 at the Athenaeum Hall by Mr Hinman, the number of local adherents were sufficiently large in number to gather for services in the Foresters' Hall in York Street.

In 1923 Mr P. W. Chinery purchased the present site from Messrs. Rube and Thomas. By the end of 1924 the building of the chapel was completed with substantial financial assistance from Mr J. G. Robertson.

To provide accommodation for the expansion of youth work, the adjoining Oddfellow's Hall was purchased in August 1983.

### Every Girl's Rally and Every Boy's Rally

As a follow-on to the work amongst the Armed Forces in World War II with the Everyman's Hut, the Every Girl's and Every Boy's Rallies were commenced.

The Girl's Rallies began at the Gospel Hall in 1959 with Miss A. G. Robertson as leader — Mrs J. M. Heywood presently in charge. The Boys' movement commenced at Kaponga in 1969 and Mr B. Heywood is the present leader at Eltham.

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Charles Anderson Wilkinson, C.B.E. was born at Konui near New Plymouth in 1868. The son of a pioneer family, he lived his boyhood days at Urenui. Chew Chong, a friend of the family, brought young Charles Wilkinson to Eltham in 1884 to take charge of his trading business. The running of the store meant more than just the day-to-day activities. It also involved the delivery of goods by packhorse to back-country work camps. On reaching the age of 21 in 1889, Charles Wilkinson started business on his own account. He spoke in later years of galloping through to Hawera at night with the bank takings. Over the years the business was built into a thriving concern with the main office and bulk store at Eltham and branches at Eltham, Hawera, Stratford and New Plymouth. 'Wilkie' as he was known locally, became involved in many local body activities as well as serving as Mayor 1941-47. As an Independent Member of Parliament for 22 years, he was responsible for New Zealand minting its own coinage and the introduction of six o'clock hotel closing. He also brought many progressive ideas to Eltham, making the town a leading example to other centres. He lived at his impressive residence in High Street, he also maintained an old English-style stone and wooden-beamed house constructed with considerable Eltham labour at his farm at Wai-iti. Charles Wilkinson, who could rightly be called the 'Father' of Eltham, died in 1957.

## BANKS

### Bank of New Zealand

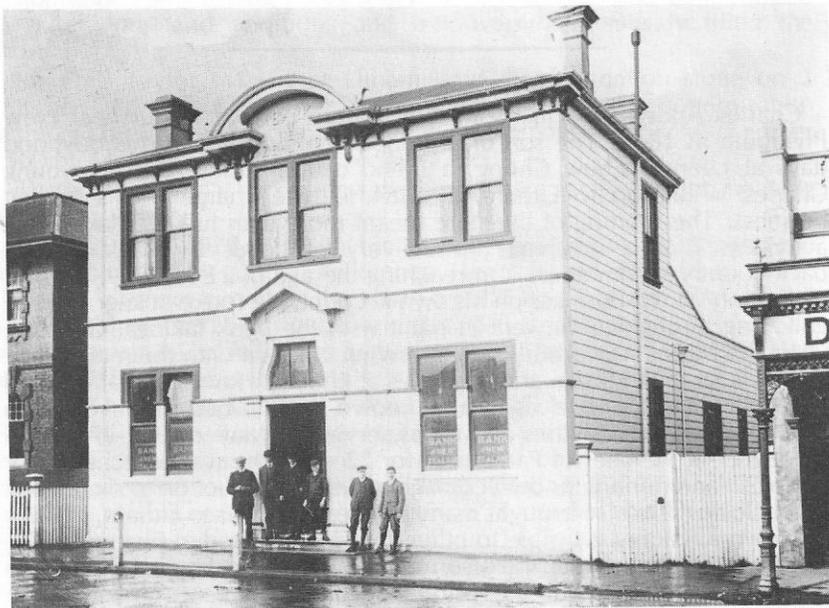
In 1889 the Inspector of the Bank visited the township but did not consider the time opportune for opening an agency. The population was less than 200. About 50 Eltham and Ngaire residents at that time banked with the Hawera branch.

Eltham had to wait a further six years before an office was opened as a sub-agency of Hawera on 27 September 1895 and provided service on Tuesdays and Fridays. It was converted to a branch on 13 September 1898.

The first office rented was a small single-storeyed building in Bridge Street. In 1899 the Bank occupied a site on the corner of Bridge Street and the main road north. The building was owned by Mr W. H. McGarry. It was 29 feet square and contained a banking chamber, manager's room and the officer's bedroom.

In 1901 a property was purchased in Bridge Street (the present site) from Mrs W. J. Crawshaw, and a two-storeyed wooden building was erected here, and occupied at the beginning of June 1902. The contractor was Charles Potts.

The present structure (of brick and concrete) was completed in October 1916. The first Manager who served from 1898 to 1904 was Mr W. J. Crawshaw. The present Manager is Mr P. J. Howarth.



The first Bank of New Zealand built on the present site — 1901.



Temporary premises rented by the Bank of New South Wales — 1905.  
(Turnbull Library, McAllister Collection.)

### Bank of New South Wales

The agency was first opened about the beginning of 1887 being visited twice weekly by an officer from the Hawera Bank. The premises, previously Eltham's first store on the Railway-Bridge Street corner were rented for 7/6d per week for two rooms. This building was shifted slightly to the east to make way for a new two-storey building. On completion in April 1900, the bank occupied this new building with a five-year lease at £100 per annum.

By the end of this term the owner Mr R. A. Adams had died and the trustees were not interested in renewing the lease. A move to Hansons Bank Chambers, which was a real estate office adjoining Chew Chong's premises in Railway Street resulted.

In September 1905 premises were leased from Mr W. Matthews but as these were out of the way and not suitable, another move took place to a more central position nearer the Post Office.

Plans had been approved for a bank building to be erected on a section purchased in 1905, on the corner of Bridge and York Streets. On completion, the bank moved to this new building from the High Street position, now the Eltham Fish Shop and restaurant. The bank now known as the Westpac Banking Corporation still occupies these Bridge Street premises. The present Manager is Mr Douglas McIver.

### Bank of Australasia — A.N.Z. Bank

The Bank of Australasia attracted to Taranaki in the 1880's by the developing dairy industry, opened its Eltham Branch on 16 May 1905. The building in High Street, formerly occupied by the Eltham Lending Library and owned by Mr W. C. Page, was rented for £39 per annum.

Expenses recorded at the time show that it cost the Manager £2 2s. to stay at a hotel for a week and the train fare to Stratford was one shilling.

In February 1906, the Bank purchased the rented section and building for £750. Alterations were carried out to make the bank more serviceable and living quarters were added for the Manager. Stables were also added, consisting of a 'loose box, trap shed and small feed and harness room'.

The first manager, Mr F. L. Ford, on his later retirement, became the Governor of the Reserve Bank.

Now operating as the A.N.Z. Banking Group, the Eltham Branch has become an agency of the Stratford Bank, the Manager being Mr Bernard Bragg.



**Eltham Motor Cycle Depot (approx. 1938). Formerly Bodles Motor Cycle Shop. Left: Ted Crockett, Roy Salter and Keith Cross.**

### Taranaki Savings Bank

An agency opened in the shop adjoining Connell's Photographic Studio in Bridge Street in October 1964 with Mr J. Ainsworth as part-time Manager. A move followed to Stark's old shop, now demolished in High Street. With the completion of the new present building, a shift back to Bridge Street was made.

The Bank's new premises were opened by the Mayor, Mr H. Drabble on 4 October 1970. The present Manager is Mr Pat McLaughlin.

### Excitement in Eltham

One day in May 1915 a client of the Bank of New South Wales in Eltham, advised the Manager, Mr W. D. Ross, that two men had tunnelled under the next door billiard saloon to the bank strongroom. He had been invited to join the robbery attempt but thought better of it.

Mr Ross lifted a trap door in the floor and was amazed to find that the tunnel led right through under the bank's concrete foundations to beneath the strongroom. The police were immediately advised and found that the tunnel originated from a concealed trap-door on a vacant section. Big enough for a grown man to crawl through, it contained tools ready for the break-in through the strongroom's concrete floor.

The police, on making further investigation, found the culprits had made a more successful attempt on Wilkinson's Store by tunnelling from a store shed into the shop emerging through a trap-door concealed under a bench. A considerable quantity of goods were found in the tunnel.

The two men involved, however, made no further attempt on the bank's strongroom, as they recognised a pair of detectives who had been sent from Wanganui. They were arrested and a quantity of goods from Wilkinson's was found at one of their residences.

They were later found guilty at the Supreme Court and sentenced to two years hard labour. They admitted spending 18 months constructing the tunnel, which subsequently Mr Ross at the New South Wales Bank allowed the public to view for a 1/- donation towards the local Patriotic Fund.

A few mornings ago, when one of our Eltham businessmen came down to his usual daily routine, one of his staff informed him that a great big rat had got into one of the otherwise empty packing cases. A consultation was held and various suggestions were made as to how to deal with the intruder. A proposal that Constable Wade should be sent for and that he be requested to bring his handcuffs, was not seriously entertained. Suggestions that Capt. Clark and the Volunteers should be sent for, or that Superintendent Nuttall and the Fire Brigade be called out were scornfully rejected. One of the interested parties said he had a friend who possessed a dog that was 'death on rats', so a messenger was sent for the dog and he duly arrived on the scene of the slaughter. The two strong men carried the packing case into the middle of the road, the dog jumping around and barking frantically, and an interested crowd waiting to see the coming tragedy.

One of the would-be murderers turned the case up on edge and ran away for fear the rat might run up a leg of his pants, for that is a favourite shelter for rats when hard-pressed. When the case was up-ended the excited dog rushed in, and out ran a tiny little mouse the size of one's thumb; so small indeed that the dog never caught sight of it, and it quickly escaped up a drainpipe. When the interested parties who had gone to so much trouble fully realised what had happened, they simply exploded with laughter, and are probably laughing still.

## HOTELS

### Sawmillers Arms

Eltham's first hotel, situated in a roadside bush clearing on the south-western bank of the Mangawhero Stream, first opened its doors as Price's Boarding House in 1880. Placed between Normanby and Stratford it proved a popular resting place for the travelling public, even more so when the owner, Mr L. Price, was granted a licence in June 1881. The house served also as a stage coach station and Post Office in its early days.

With a change of ownership in July 1881 also came a change of name — The Sawmillers Arms. In spite of the grand new title some of the pioneers declared that the common fare at that time was bullocks' liver for tea and fleas for bed mates. However, many travellers being pleased to get accommodation, generally accepted it as being equal to any other bush pub. The conditions cannot have been that bad as in March 1882 it was announced that Mr Tisch had sold his 'comfortable' little house at Mangawhero.

The new owner, Mr John Inston, was granted a transfer of the licence to his new hotel in the Eltham township in July 1885 by the Normanby Licensing Committee. The old hotel converted into a dwelling house was totally destroyed by a mysterious fire on 19 May 1887.

### The Law-benders — 1882

Members of the Licensing Committee, to lengthen a convivial evening they were enjoying in a local house drew up a document in pencil, a conditional license upon which authority the house was kept open until midnight.

The matter is likely to be investigated by the police. . . .

### The Branch (Central)

With the announcement of the proposal to build the new Eltham Hotel, Mr John Inston declared his intention to erect new premises on the junction of the Mountain and Eltham roads. As a temporary measure the bar of the Sawmillers Arms, a small separate building, moved to the new site, continued to satisfy local thirsts.

Mr George Turner undertook the construction work of the new hotel using locally sawn timber and Mr J. Hawkes bullock team hauled the joinery from Hawera.

Transfer of the license was granted in July 1885, on completion of the 16-room building, now named the Branch Hotel. Additions were made in 1907 by the building of the Bridge Street wing and a further change of name occurred, to that of the Central Hotel. Recent extensive modification to the exterior have occurred with the removal of the balcony and with the granting of a Tavern License in 1966. The Bridge Street wing has been replaced with modern facilities.

Although the Eltham Hotel claims the distinction of opening first, the Central holds the oldest license. The Central Tavern is at present owned by the Taranaki Breweries and is leased.

## BRANCH HOTEL, ELTHAM.



### Eltham Hotel

When Mr A. C. Leslie, a Hawera plumber and tinsmith, drew a railside 10-acre section for £21 in a Government Land Ballot he decided to build a hotel.

It was considered at this time that Eltham being the proposed main trunk railway junction would require considerable accommodation for the travelling public. On applying for a license he ran into considerable strife, a hotel building was first required to be built. Also, objectors stated bushfellers returning from their contracts would have to pass it and everyone knew their peculiarities.

However, Mr Leslie undaunted by these difficulties, had the 12-roomed hotel constructed and the necessary license was granted. Complete with outbuildings and furnishings the whole venture cost £670. The doors opened for business in July 1885. Management problems were soon encountered and in June of the following year Messrs. Nolan and Tonks of Hawera sold the property by public auction. Mr George Moir, the successful bidder, bought the property for £480 and commenced a new career as a publican. Commonly known as the 'Railway', this is Eltham's oldest existing hotel although at the time of its construction it stood just outside of the township boundary. It is now owned by Lion Breweries and is leased.



Mr Seddon arriving at the Eltham Hotel.

### Coronation Hotel

Removal of the Primitive Methodist Church to another site and extensive earthworks had to be carried out before construction could commence on this hotel. The desirable Bridge and York Street corner site, once a high bank, had earlier needed steps to gain access to the church. The hotel was constructed by a New Plymouth builder, Mr Steel for Mr James Hawkins known as 'Appy' Awkins from Maxwell. Critics of the day described it as one of the finest on the coast. The establishment of the hotel cost the then large sum of £8,000 which included the land and the purchase of the Normanby Hotel for its license. Opening 2 July 1902, the hotel was named in honour of King Edward VII's coronation held that year.

### Ashleigh Lodge

The land on which Ashleigh Lodge is built was acquired by Mr C. A. Wilkinson in the early 1890's and at the time was clad in heavy native bush. It originally was part of Mr George Moir's farm and one of the main means of access in those days was a bush track which came in from what is now King Edward Street following the Bath Street area. Hundreds of fencing posts were cut off the area as were scores of cords of firewood. It was not long before a six-roomed dwelling was erected and a start made with the planting of ornamental shelter trees, hedges and shrubs to replace the native growth. Some of these trees are now very fine specimens of huge proportions.



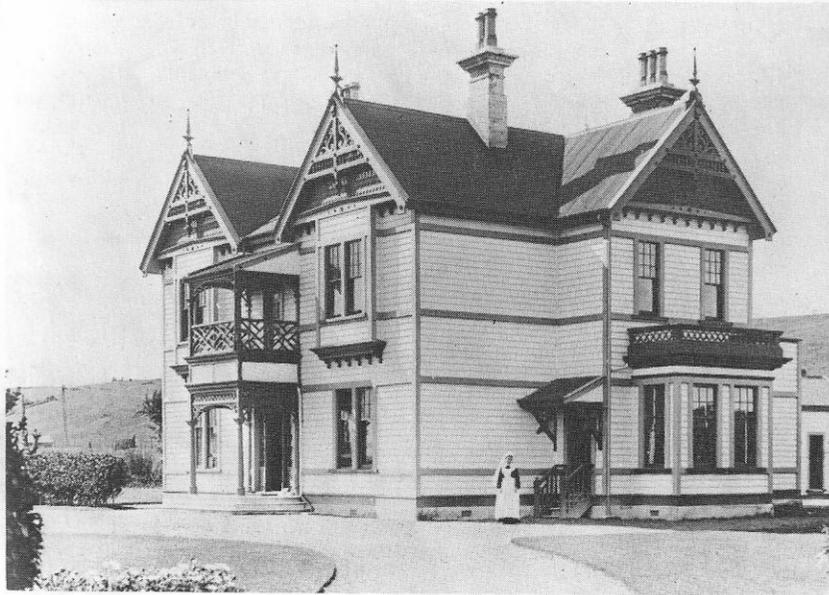
Coronation Hotel.

For a number of years the dwelling house served its purpose and was then bodily removed to Meuli Street and is now, with considerable modifications the residence of Mr and Mrs L. S. Murray.

To replace the original house the handsome two-storeyed structure of 12 rooms which was used by Mr Wilkinson as his Eltham house was built in 1904. All the timber required for this imposing residence was locally grown and milled. The required joinery was also locally made.

On the death of Mr Wilkinson in 1957, the family retained the use of the house until in 1960 it was let to Mr and Mrs John Kydd who developed a guest house and dining rooms. The name Ashleigh Lodge was adopted at this time derived from the avenues of Ash trees flanking the rear driveway (Ashleigh — 'to rest amongst the Ash trees'). In 1968 the Lodge was purchased by Mr and Mrs N. F. Probyn who in 1971 constructed the four motel units near the main entrance. A gradual development of the restaurant for private dining and functions followed until the Lodge changed ownership in 1976.

Michael and Christine McCrae, the new owners, have considerably upgraded the dining facilities with attractive surroundings, and the acquisition of a liquor license has made the Lodge a popular venue for weddings and other functions.



Mr C. A. Wilkinson's residence — about 1906 — now Ashleigh Lodge.

### The Day the Circus came to Town

For many years there has lain in the grounds of Ashleigh Lodge an old gypsy-like wagon almost concealed by the overhanging trees. In the early days, circuses were inclined to bypass this town, but this old caravan is a reminder of the day the magic of the Big Top came to Eltham. In 1911 Mr C. A. Wilkinson bought out the house of Wirth's Circus for a one-night stand for 23 February, tickets being sold at his store. The result proved outstanding, the Big Top at the school grounds being packed, many patrons were forced to find seating on the grass. The circus management, so impressed by the result, vowed and declared never would Eltham be by-passed. A friendship developed between Charles Wilkinson and Herr Wirth who visited the Wilkinson home during their now regular visits.

One evening, Wirth's host let slip his ambition to make a leisurely horse-drawn trip through New Zealand. Next morning a circus wagon arrived on the Wilkinson's front lawn. Unfortunately Charles Wilkinson never found time to realise his ambition.

In addition he was presented with a Talisman, the possessor being guaranteed immediate admittance to the show at any time. This was put to the test one evening, a burly hostile gatekeeper's demeanour changed magically on its display and all doors opened wide. Now the days of Wirth's Big Top are gone forever and all that remains of this link is the old circus wagon they once left behind.

### Moir's Railway Paddock

The first recorded sports day held in Eltham occurred on 15 March 1887. Considerable planning went into the event requiring two committee meetings alternating at each of the two hotels (thirsty work). Mr C. Wilkinson, the secretary, advertised in the big prize list, £8 for the main event, and £2 for the others.

On the day the weather dawned fine and continued so until at 5 p.m. clouds settled over the bush and rain fell. The spectators literally melted away. The day's events went well as the committee had devoted much expense and energy in clearing the field.

It was reported that the most popular event proved to be the refreshment booth manned by Mr Moir of the nearby hostelry. The Hawera band were in attendance and livened up the proceedings greatly. However, the day did not go without incident. During the running of the hurdles, the leader J. Hood was felled by a mighty shove by the next contender, Te Ara and a protest resulted. The planned Tug of War, the Natives v Europeans did not take place. In the running of the handicap mile event the judges raised the finishing tape on the fifth lap (they claimed the spectators did it) with one lap to go. It was quickly dropped but confusion reigned, some stopped, some continued. The race was re-run but only three started. Controversy raged for days.

The local footballers also played here on this paddock opposite the Railway Station. All the area had to be stumped and cleared and the players had to work by lantern-light until all hours, logging up, clearing and levelling. A man named Scott provided a stumping-jack of a primitive nature and while fairly effective, it was slow and entailed much heavy work. Bullocks also played a big part in the clearing operations, Mr H. Northcott employed at Southey and Willy's Sawmill bringing his team along to assist.

Use of this paddock continued for several years until in 1892 Mr Moir erected the boarding house, still standing in Railway Street.

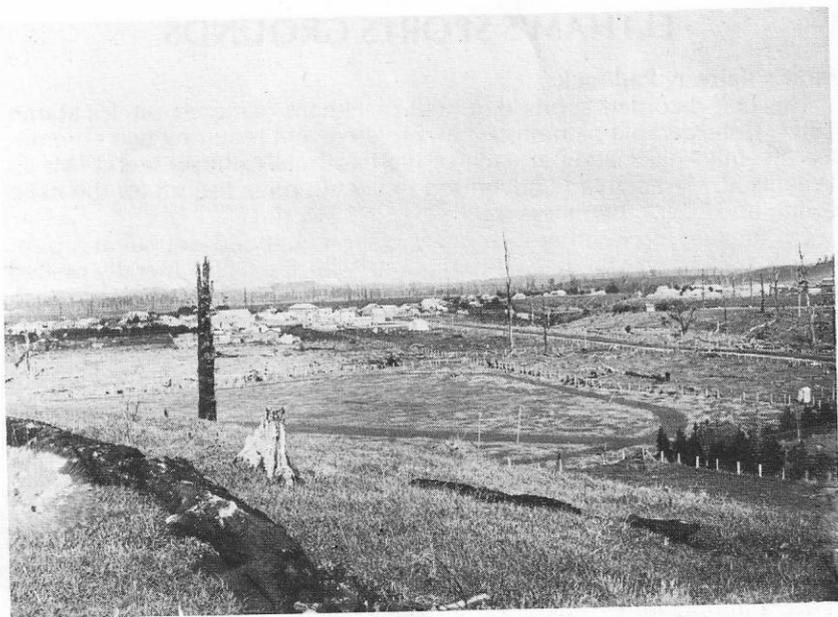
### Hawkes Mountain Road Ground

This sports ground north of Chartwell Drive, on the farm of Mr J. Hawkes proved popular for picnic meetings, a notable celebration being Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee — 20 October 1887. The local footballers also used this ground for practice preferring the larger railway ground for matches.

### Moirs Mountain Road Ground

To recompense the sportsmen for the loss of their first ground Mr Moir made available a second site situated between what is now Meuli Street and the Main Road. The first sports meeting held here on 4 March 1892 proved the site to be satisfactory. It was reported that Mr Higham's band had played good music and the public had a splendid view of the races from the face of the hill overlooking the course on the flat.

The major event of the day, a tug of war, Eltham vs The World attracted much attention. A contender who had been pulling for the World and



**View of Eltham from above what is now Meuli Street overlooking the Sports Ground — about 1900.**



**A group of athletes and trainers at a Caledonian sports gathering in Eltham, 1903.**

had been refreshing himself after his exertions failed to turn up. Eltham declined to go one man short and the result was soon in favour of Eltham — enterprising if not sporting.

The Eltham Caledonian Society also held their games at this sports ground holding some major sporting events.

With a threat of subdivision looming and dissatisfaction with rentals charged for the ground the various sports bodies began to cast their eyes around for a more permanent public sports ground.

#### **Henwoods Hill**

On losing Moir's Railway Street ground the footballers moved to a ground on the farm of Mr Henwood. This hilltop ground above Hill Street proved a boon to teams holding a narrow lead. The slopes on either side being very steep, a team with a narrow lead near time, could gain considerable time by kicking the ball down the slopes. The Football Club later moved to the Meuli Street ground until that closed.

#### **Taumata Park**

Sportsmen, being dissatisfied with their nomadic sportsground arrangements called a public meeting in April 1899. They investigated the possibilities of securing a permanent site which the villagers could call their own. Mr Thos. Mabey offered ten acres of his Clifford Road land, stumped and ploughed for £30 an acre. Mr Brown also offered ten acres of his farm "Aorere" (Dawn of Day) for £35 an acre. This latter land had been a popular picnic ground for some years, train loads of children journeying from Hawera to enjoy the riverside setting. With a large flat clearing and pleasant bush-clad banks sloping down to the Waingongora River only walking distance from the Railway and Town, it proved to be the obvious choice.

Mr J. Boddie, a delegate appointed by the meeting, travelled to Wellington to investigate the possibility of Government assistance from the Minister of Lands. Encouraged he returned home with a promise of a pound for pound subsidy, provided £170 could be raised by the local people. At successive meetings a subscription list was passed around and this soon raised the necessary capital. A deposit of £40 was paid for 11 acres to Mr Bridger Snr., the new owner of the land.

Taumata, the name adopted for the new reserve meaning a crest of a hill, suited the geographical nature of the land. Trustees were appointed and the property was made Crown land by vesting the title in the Queen's name. The Domain Board soon organised 'working bees'. Volunteer labour stumping and clearing the land often working into the night to enable ploughing to be completed. A need for fences became obvious as wandering stock seriously hampered the sowing of grass seed and landscaping work.

As late as 1904-05 members of the board and businessmen would put in a Thursday afternoon (the half holiday) on clearing operations, using explosives to remove stumps on the grounds perimeter.

For a considerable time amenities were almost non-existent. There was a draughty dilapidated shed on the western boundary used by the footballers and sports competitors as changing sheds. This being replaced later by another building on the north-western corner.



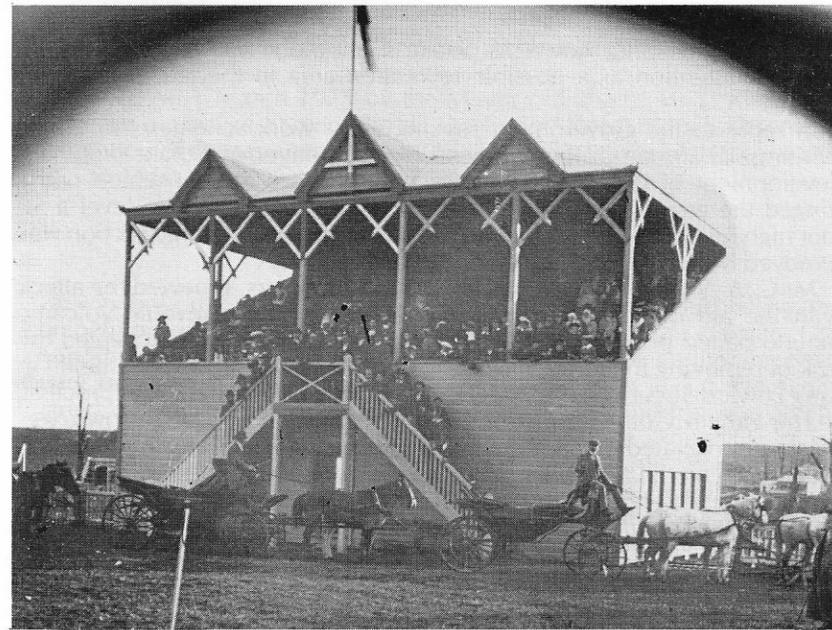
**An early Sports Meeting at Taumata Park — note the dressing shed in the foreground.**

By means of a bazaar and sports meetings, the Domain Board raised sufficient capital to erect the first grandstand, and this was opened by Sir Joseph Ward on 25 May 1905. The Borough Council expressed the desire to control the reserve so in 1912 the Trustees, Messrs N. Muir and C. E. Goldstone handed over the park free of debt.

The present grandstand, a reinforced concrete structure replaced the old building 50 years after its construction. As a War Memorial project for Eltham a Queen Carnival raised £11,800 and a Government subsidy completed the £18,000 necessary to build the new amenity. On 10 August 1957 the Hon. E. B. Corbett performed the official opening ceremony of the new 650 seat stand.

Other development work carried out by the Council was the construction of the eastern embankment of the ground. A combined effort between the Borough and the Rugby Club, with a Recreational Society grant, provided flood lighting for the ground.

Widely used as a camping ground Taumata Park is widely recognised as one of the most attractive reserves in the province, thanks to the efforts of our pioneer citizens.



**The official opening of the first grandstand at Taumata Park by Sir Joseph Ward — 25 May 1905.**

#### **Saunders Park**

It became obvious that extended sporting facilities would be necessary with the growing numbers of various clubs. Mrs M. E. Wilson in 1912 offered five acres of her land that adjoined the park. The Council of the day turned down the offer.

Problems arose through lack of space with the hockey ground laid out on the south-western portion of Taumata Park. So in an effort to overcome the difficulty the Borough Council led by the Mayor Mr D. H. Saunders re-opened negotiations. With a successful result achieved, the 4½ acres purchased has gradually been developed into an attractive sports ground.

With a grant of £500 from the Council the hockey players erected a pavilion by means of volunteer labour. The Council erected gates and Mrs J. H. Morton donated the shrubs that flank the driveway. On 12 October 1957 the official opening took place in the presence of Dr Saunders after whom the grounds were named — a tribute to his endeavours and to his respect in the community.

#### **Soldiers' Memorial Park**

Through the efforts of Sir Walter Carncross and Mr C. A. Wilkinson a reserve of some 45 acres, named the Soldiers Memorial Park was acquired in August 1919, the Main road frontage being used for housing purposes and the remainder being leased as farmland. The section adjoining Conway Road in the early days proved to be a profitable hunting ground for wild pigs, this being one of their last retreats near the

township. This area known as Snake Gully, due to the twisty road, attracted attention as a possible recreation area in the late Depression days.

In reply to the Government seeking relief work schemes, Mr A. G. Whiting, Chairman of Reserves and Deputy Mayor of Eltham suggested development of the site. The Mangawharowharo Stream which partly fringed the ground was diverted and attempts were made to level a 50 foot high hillock in the middle of the swampy ground. A large section was removed before work ceased.

Mr C. A. Wilkinson as Mayor during the war years, renewed the attack with the aid of earthmoving machinery until an immovable volcanic mound halted progress. During the 1950's Mr Ted Maslin accepted the task of removing the remaining stone and gravel. The spoil became fill in King Edward Street and other areas. This completed the levelling process.

The Eltham Golf Club acquired the land when a move to town was made. An elevated green reached by a footbridge near the waterfall was established on the rear of this developed land. However, the Eltham Civic Recreation Society formed by Mr Rolly Walker to build new swimming baths for the town, successfully tendered for the lease of this section of land.

An enthusiastic committee headed by Dr B. W. Scott as President and Mr P. J. Smith as organiser of volunteer labour soon set the project in motion. Those with concrete, building and other trade skills were allocated tasks suited to them. The baths, completed in 1964, were opened by the local M.P. Mr W. A. Sheat. A problem with drainage hindered development of the remaining sports ground. Once this had been remedied good playing grounds have resulted being used by several sporting organisations in the town.

In recent years a children's playground has been developed in the baths foreground by the Eltham Rotary Club.

### **Bridger Park**

During 1923 the Borough Council investigated the possibility of utilising the area of land behind the shopping centre between High Street and Stanners Street to create a children's playground. This land had been donated by the various owners, principally Messrs. C. A. and J. F. Pease. Problems arose regarding a proposed roadway through the area but this was resolved. By utilising unemployed labour, the bracken covered depression eventually became an attractive reserve.

Recently the Eltham Lions Club replaced the old wooden footbridge over the Mangawherowharo Stream and a general upgrading of the reserve took place.

Although the reserve became known for many years as the Children's Park, it is officially recognised as Bridger Park in honour of the mayor at the time of its creation.

### **Taylor Street Reserve**

Located on Taylor Street, named after the town's first Mayor, this swampy reserve area was developed in 1974 to provide a playing ground for the newly reformed Eltham Soccer Club. Members of the club aided by machinery donated by local contractors spent many hours levelling

the ground. Borough Councillor Kevin Probyn organised much of the labour force.

Opened on 1 March 1975 by the Mayor of Eltham, Mr T. R. Bourke, the reserve was re-named the F. J. Taylor Recreational Reserve in recognition of the services given by Mr Taylor as Mayor of the town from 1953 to 1968.

## **AXEMEN'S CARNIVAL**

It was only natural with a ground of sawmilling and bushfelling that competitions developed to test the prowess of the district's axemen. Odd chopping matches occurred for a wager, one of the earliest recorded being between Oliver Robinson, a local millworker and a Tasmanian named Badcock. The stakes were for £10 a side — Robinson won and his supporters collected substantially from the Tasmanian's friends.

Mr H. Wolfe suggested that organised contests be run similar to those he had witnessed in Australia so a public meeting was called. Only three attended, the Chairman and Messrs Wolfe and Tom Bennett. Undaunted after a 'Committee meeting' held at Fred Hardy's Saddle shop a second meeting resulted at the Athenaeum Hall. This proved to be more successful, the Mayor Mr G. W. Taylor being appointed President, Mr F. Hardy Secretary and Mr Wolfe as Chairman of the committee. A



**Committee of the New Zealand Axemen's Carnival 1904.**  
Back row: T. C. Stenners, J. Haywood, A. Whiting.  
Front row: F. H. Armour, F. Hardy, G. W. Taylor, J. Wolfe, A. Hansen.

membership fee of five shillings was set and a competition meeting arranged for 9 November 1901 at the Taumata Park Domain. The first meeting which included sawing proved highly successful so a second meeting was held on King's Birthday the following year. This, still a greater success, encouraged the committee in 1903 to hold a two-day meeting on Boxing Day and the day after. The Governor Lord Plunket, at this time agreed to the position of Patron of the Association. The expansion from this point on became continuous until eventually the body became the New Zealand Axemen's Association.

To accommodate the increasing number of competitors and spectators a move was made from the south-west corner of the park to the Oval where athletics and cycling were added to the programme.

The sports became a major attraction becoming one of the best-known carnivals in the country. On sports days High Street and Bridge Street leading to the park became lined with gigs and other horsedrawn vehicles. The livery stable reaped a harvest as every available space was used, while the overflow parked on roadsides and in every vacant section in the vicinity. Crowds also arrived by special trains, walking across from the nearby station. The Railway Hotel did a roaring trade. At the park all the fun of the fair prevailed.

The band played, the side show men cajoled the crowd to part with their hard-earned cash as did raucous voiced bookmakers clad in their loud checked suits calling the odds, and the excitement ran high for the major attraction, the chopping and sawing.



**J. Pettit breaking the World Record sawing 18 inch log.**

As many as 50-60 entries were received for some events, several heats having to be run. Axemen were attracted from as far away as Australia as well as from all over New Zealand. Some of the country's top axemen were Dave and Esau Pretty, Ned Shewry, C. Rourke, Charles and Lew Hutton and Con Casey. Several world records were established during the years the carnival was run.

After several years the popularity of the sport began to drop off — some blamed the introduction of horse racing in New Plymouth on the same dates. Problems also arose in obtaining a suitable supply of white pine chopping blocks, these later having to be railed to Eltham at considerable cost. Despite these complications, the association continued until the outbreak of World War I.

An attempt to resume activities was made in 1919 but the number of competitors proved to be comparatively small, so the organisation was wound up. The surplus funds were donated to the Borough Council for improvements at Taumata Park.

Eltham still retains a vivid record of these exciting days, with the showing on suitable occasions of the film Mr C. A. Wilkinson had made of the 1911 Axemen's Carnival.



**The winners — N.Z. Cup: Messrs P. D. Hope and Lims.**

## ELTHAM RACING CLUB

The first meeting of the Eltham Hack Racing Club took place at Chislehurst about a mile north of Eltham Village on 2 November 1884. Some of the most attractive prizes in New Zealand racing circles were offered for the seven events on the programme. Prize money totalled £250, and the major event of the day, the Eltham Cup, carried a stake of one hundred guineas. The track, on land owned by Mr Thomas Mabey required considerable preparation such as, filling creeks and removing stumps and logs amongst the felled and still-standing dead timber. Contract labour provided by Mr J. Daines was engaged for £300. An advance from a bank guaranteed by an enthusiastic committee and supporters enabled the work to be completed. A grandstand and a saddling paddock were erected on the western perimeter of the track now Templar Street, against the still standing bush.

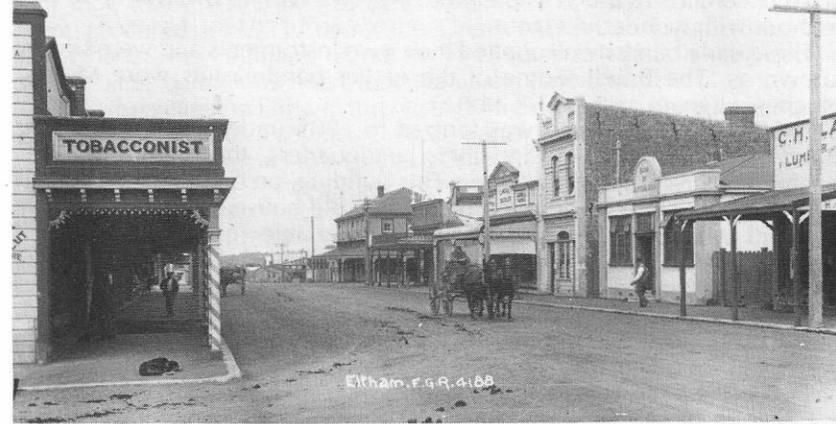
The first meeting proved a tremendous success — visitors came not only from the surrounding district but from New Plymouth and Wanganui. The train stopped on the line opposite to disembark the eager race-goers. The grandstand and lawn were filled to overflowing. The Eltham Band under Bandmaster Hughes provided music at intervals and a refreshment booth catered for the thirsty.

Some of the best hacks in the North Island were entered and up to 20 came under the Starter's Orders of Mr C. Brewer in each event. The day was fine but the course was heavy being not well grassed at this stage. A bay gelding 'Itch' proved to be the winner of the glamour event of the day, The Eltham Cup. Speculation was heavy, nearly £2,300 passed through the totalisator and the police had to keep the eager crowd back, as they strove to invest their money. Bookmakers who were legal in those days also did a roaring trade.

A second meeting proved to be just as successful and the Club seemed to be assured of a bright future. A totalisator permit however, could not be obtained for the next meeting, the official reason given being that the nearby Stratford Club had been granted an extra day's racing. However, those in the know claimed that this could be blamed on the undisclosed slick dealings of an unnamed individual.

An attempt to continue running the club using bookmakers charging £20 a stand was attempted, but the results were discouraging. As a result the club ceased its activities, but Eltham enterprise was not easily beaten and resulted in a few unofficial races to be staged until 1902 when the course was abandoned. Mabey Street now dissects the eastern perimeter of the track, but the outline of the course is still easily discernable.

Henry Coutts, another early player in the Eltham Rugby Football team was also involved in the back-country development work. A member of the Boer War's first contingent, he was awarded the Queen's Scarf for an act of bravery at the Battle of Koornspruit. It was one of only four scarves knitted by Queen Victoria and it was generally accepted that the honour was equal to that of the Victoria Cross.



An early street scene of High Street.



High Street, 1984.

## STRIKE UP THE BAND

Eltham from its early days always had a band. On sports days they were on hand to liven up proceedings and they were always recorded as playing good music, even if their repertoire was somewhat limited. One of the first bands programme consisted of two tunes, 'Swanee River' and 'Two Little Girls in Blue'. These were played over and over for up to half an hour with wonderful vigour.

These early bandsmen supplied their own instruments and were simply known as 'The Band'. Some of the earlier bandmasters were Messrs. Hughes, Higham and T. G. Gubb.

The Eltham Brass Band was formed in 1903 under the command of Bandmaster Bert Beesley and their headquarters, the Bandroom, was behind the Fire Brigade belltower. This building, on being demolished in 1946, left the band without rooms until an old house, removed from the Soldier's Memorial Park in 1959, was available in the old Borough Council yards.

The Brass Band in 1937 became the Eltham Municipal Silver Band and competed with success at provincial and Dominion contests. Through lack of support, the band in 1960 went into recess and the instruments were sold soon after.



The Eltham Brass Band and its first public appearance — Taumata Park 1903.

## Eltham and District Highland Band

An early pipe band known as the Taranaki Caledonian Pipe Band existed in Eltham about 1904. Its members were drawn from the whole of the Province. The present band originated on Armistice Day 1918 when a spontaneous victory parade took place through the town. Mr W. J. Tristram, the flag-bearer for the triumphant parade, did much to foster the formation and existence of the band through the years.

It took many years for the band to acquire uniforms but once these were procured in 1921, being the Green McKenzie Tartan, the band flourished. The Highland Band in 1947 purchased its own building which, after being renovated, opened as the Pipe Band Hall.

Over the years the Eltham and District Highland Pipe Band has entered successfully at the Provincial Pipe Band contests and as Eltham's surviving band, appears at many public events.

## The Victor's Return

When Leo Quin returned to Eltham on 16 September 1924, by train, victorious after winning the New Zealand Golf Championship at Auckland, he received a hero's welcome. The Eltham Brass Band struck up 'Hail the Conquering Hero Comes' as he was carried shoulder high from the train.

Unbeknown to those in the gathering, there was another distinguished traveller on the train in his own private carriage and he, so impressed by the fanfare, descended from the train and commenced to address the crowd before discovering the true position.

Governor General Lord Jellicoe then admitted golf should take precedence.



Chinery's High Street was one of Eltham's many grocery businesses in the pre-supermarket days.

## EARLY ELTHAM SPORTS CLUB

### Eltham Rugby Football Club

Eltham's most senior sports club was formed at a meeting called in August 1888. Although it was late in the season it was resolved to form a Club at once so that the ground could be prepared for the next season. About 20 of the settlers attending indicated their willingness to join. The name decided on for the club was 'The United Club'. The following committee were elected: Messrs W. Sangster, F. Hawkes, T. Stanners, H. Henn and C. Wilkinson as Hon. Secretary.

A match arranged at Stratford for the next Saturday resulted in a win for Stratford 3-0. Considering the short time Eltham had been practising, the result was commendable. Eltham won the return match 11-0.

The first Club colours were a blue jersey with the letters E.F.C. inscribed in white across the front. The name had been changed to Eltham Football Club the next season. The Club acquired its own gymnasium in 1937, a former butter factory operated by Mr Cooper. The capital necessary to purchase the building was raised by a Queen Carnival.

The Eltham Rugby Football Club has won the Taranaki Championship on eight occasions and the following members have earned the distinction of becoming All Blacks: Frank Glasgow (who toured with the original All Blacks in 1904), Roger Urban, Jazz Muller, Murray Watts and Jeff Old.



An early Eltham Rugby Club photograph. Bill Sangster was Captain (centre).

### Eltham Athletics

Along with rugby, athletics can claim the distinction of being the oldest organised sporting activity in Eltham. Notable athletic sports meetings were held in conjunction with the Axemen's Carnival meetings and produced many fine sportsmen, one being Alf Parks who, in 1908, was New Zealand Track Cycling Champion. A professional club as well as an amateur club ran for many years in the town. Recently the Athletic Club has been revived after a six-year recess by the Eltham Sports and Recreation Society. In recent years cyclist Stephen Cox has represented New Zealand at the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton in 1978 and at Brisbane in 1982. He was a member of the projected team that was to be sent to the Moscow Games and has been selected for the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Blair Cox, a Junior Cyclist in 1980 represented New Zealand in Tasmania and rode in the demanding Grafton to Invercargill Classic with distinction.



Eltham Caledonian Society members organised many Athletic Sport gatherings.

### Eltham Cricket Club

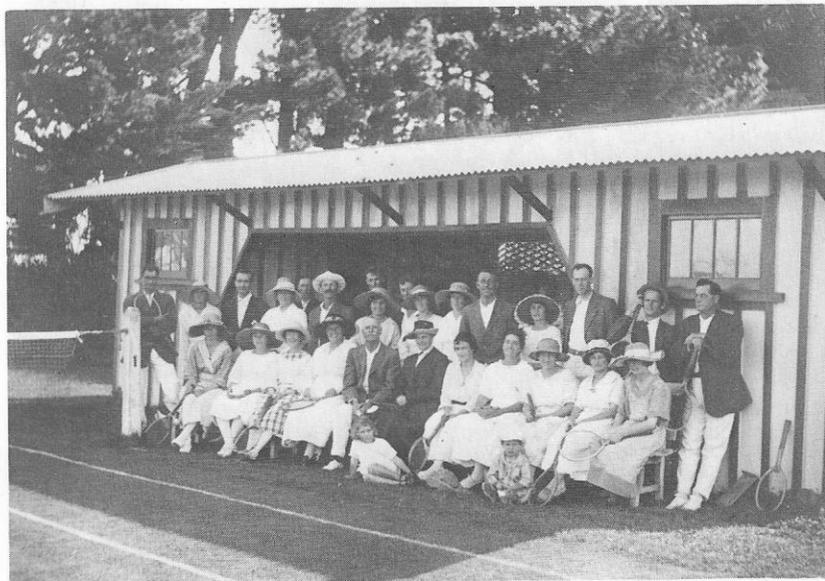
The Eltham Cricket Club was formed at a meeting held early in November 1888. A Committee was formed consisting of Messrs. Parks, Sangster, Kelly, Cox, Hamilton and Wilkinson as Hon. Secretary. The membership consisted of 38 members, some being experienced cricketers. The Eltham Club became affiliated to the Taranaki Cricket Association on 4 October 1895. In 1903 the Club were granted

permission to lay down an asphalt cricket pitch at Taumata Park. The Club became the Eltham Colts Cricket Club in 1938 and fielded a Senior A and B team. During the 1940-41 season the team went into recess as many members were serving overseas. The Club was re-formed in 1946 becoming officially the Eltham Cricket Club in 1949.

#### **The Eltham Tennis and Bowling Club**

At a meeting called in June 1903 Mr T. B. Crump outlined proposals to form a combined Tennis and Bowling Club. Several suitable sites were investigated and that of Mr Mills, a two acre market garden between King Edward Street and Graham Street was the most suitable at £350. As a result the Club was formed with the following Committee elected: Dr Wake, Messrs Crump, Dive, Tayler and Stanners. Work on the ground commenced in August 1903 and was completed by the following February. At this time the bulldozer had not been invented, the laborious task of clearing and levelling had to be performed with shovel and wheelbarrow. The opening of the Bowling Club was held in November 1904. The first Club colours were a myrtle green jacket with white facings, striped hat band and tie to match.

The Tennis Club were offered the use of Mr C. A. Wilkinson's courts at his home until their own grounds were ready. The Bowling and Tennis Clubs in recent years have gained separate land titles for their grounds.



**Eltham Tennis Club Pavilion.**

#### **Eltham Hockey Club**

A Hockey Club was formed in Eltham in 1903 with Mr Nicholas Muir as President. The game was first played on a paddock in the vicinity of Mount View Hospital, the players transferring to Taumata Park about 1906. The south-western corner was used until, in 1957, the new Saunders Park ground was provided for the Club. Here, with the assistance of a Borough Council grant, the club members erected their own pavilion. During the 1920-30 era the Eltham team consistently won the Taranaki Championship and at this time the Taranaki Association Headquarters moved to Eltham.

A highlight in the Club history was in 1920 when the Indian team played Taranaki at Eltham. The Club was required to produce cash in advance to guarantee the game, the money being provided by the Eltham businessmen. Their faith was justified with a record crowd of 7,000 spectators attending. Notable supporters of the Club over the years have been Messrs. Ben Urry, Pennington and A. J. Bennett.

#### **Eltham Golf Club**

The Eltham Golf Club was formed early in 1905 and the Club's first greens were on the site of the present Eltham Public School. The course was laid out by Mr F. Morgan. The Club went into recess during the First World War and resumed again later when Mr J. T. Quin made his property at 'Highlands' available. At this time the Eltham Club was regarded as one of the leading Clubs in the country with such players as Mr Leo Quin who won the N.Z. Amateur title at Christchurch in 1927. The Club has also been located on the Rotokare course on the farm of Mr T. Kelliher and for a number of years on the Upper Stuart Road. The Soldiers Memorial Park grounds were acquired in 1960.

#### **The Eltham Croquet Club**

The Eltham Croquet Club was formed on 29 August 1912. The Club's first lawn was rented from the Tennis Club and the Bowling Club's pavilion used. The members played for the first season on the lawn of Mr and Mrs Carman until their own ground was ready for play. On 5 May 1924 it was decided to purchase their own property on King Edward Street. Messrs. Carman's and Tiplady's lawns were used until the official opening of the new grounds occurred on 22 October 1925. In recent years Mrs Betty Boyes won the New Zealand Women's Championship in 1977 at Nelson, and in 1983 won the New Zealand Women's Invitation Championship at Hawera.

#### **The Eltham Amateur Swimming Club**

The Eltham Swimming Club evolved from a Boy's Swimming Club, who in 1928 organised a Swimming Carnival. At one time this Club experimented with the heating of the school baths with steam from the Borough Council road roller. The scheme was not successful. At a public meeting on 19 October 1931 at the C.E.M.C. Clubrooms the Eltham Amateur Swimming Club was formed. After school hours the baths were used for Club events. The club aided the Education Board considerably with baths maintenance. With the completion of the new pool at the Soldier's Memorial Reserve the Club has transferred its activities here.

The convenor of the Club, Mr A. J. Bennett, has been actively involved since its inception.

### Eltham Smallbore Rifle Club

The Eltham Miniature Rifle Club was formed in 1944 at a meeting called by Mr Frank Lowe. The first range was on the riverbed behind Hutton's with the river bank used as a target. The meetings were held on Sunday afternoons. Later in 1945 the Club held meetings under Pease's building, the area being excavated and a range set up by voluntary labour. In 1970 the Smallbore Rifle Club as it was now known, shifted to new clubrooms and range by the Eltham County Council yards. This building was previously used as power pole manufacturing plant by the Taranaki Power Board and proved ideal for this purpose. An outdoor 50 metre range was opened in May 1971.

### Eltham Archery Club

An Archery Club was formed in Eltham in 1936 utilising land in Chislehurst for a range. Foundation members included Messrs. O. Manley, H. W. Edwards and E. Standish. The members manufactured their own equipment calling on the skill of Mr Manley, a well-known cabinetmaker in the town. In 1975 a new Club was formed in Eltham by the Sports and Recreation Society making use of the Smallbore Rifle Club's former range beneath Pease's building. The Club also has established a Field Course on a riverside property at Chislehurst and an outdoor range at the Soldier's Memorial Park.

### Soccer Club

As no hockey was played in Eltham in 1924, the members formed a Soccer Club fielding a team which played with considerable success. Another soccer team was formed later which ceased playing about 1955. The sport was revived at a meeting on 1 April 1974 when a new club was formed with Mr W. D. Higham as President and Mr W. R. Sproul as Secretary. Grounds at the F. J. Taylor Reserve were provided by the Eltham Borough Council and were opened on 1 April 1975. In 1983 the Club fielded 115 Junior players giving Eltham the largest membership in the Egmont Junior Football Association.

### Eltham Basketball Club

The Eltham Basketball Club was formed late in 1931 at a meeting convened by an infant school teacher, Miss Harper. At first the Club played on the Eltham School courts, until in 1934 grass courts were provided at Taumata Park. Mrs Dal Knuckey who has had a lifetime interest in the sport (Netball as it is known today) was awarded the N.Z.N.A. Service Medal in 1983

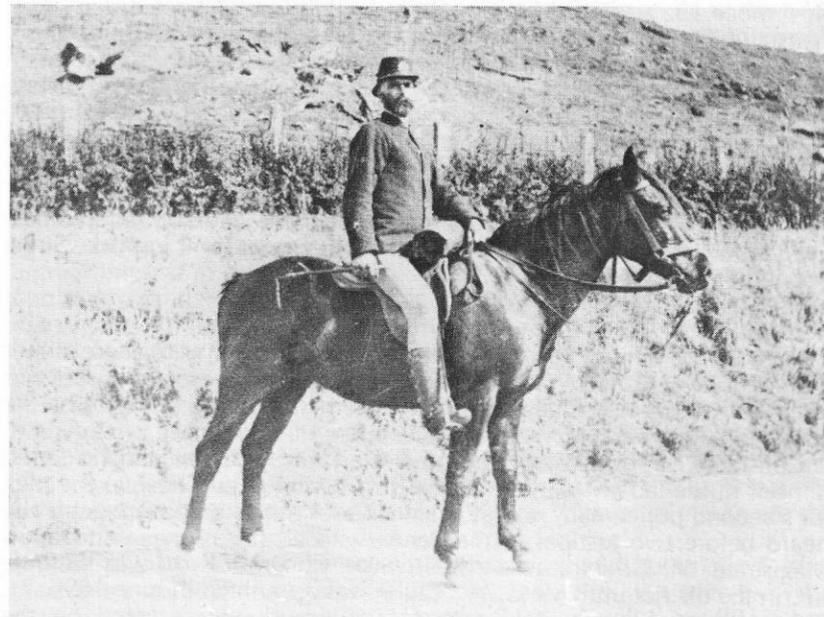
<sup>BURROWS</sup>  
~~Burroughs~~ Arthur Burrows too served the district as a photographer and was a noted conversationalist. He travelled the country districts on foot selling his work — mainly photographs of Mount Egmont. He was well recognised also for his many years' service to the Eltham Fire Brigade for which he was awarded the M.B.E., presented by the Governor General Lord Cobham personally in Eltham.

## LAW AND ORDER

Eltham in its youth was a wild and lively town, when on the weekends gangs of axemen emerged from the bush to cut out their cheques. Co-operative men working digging drains in the Ngaire swamp also added to the turmoil. In the football season, particularly if a win occurred, the town really came to life. Respectable citizens of the time took care not to walk under the Branch Hotel verandah preferring to trudge through the mud to the other side of the street to avoid contact with hard-working, hard-playing larakins. Care also needed to be taken on the open streets as wild spirits galloped past yelling at the tops of their voices, it was recommended to take refuge in the stumps on the roadside.

Church-goers at the time were a favourite target for harrassment by local youths who would cause a commotion outside the Mission Hall or let loose the tethered horses of the congregation to wander off at will.

No wonder repeated pleas were made to the authorities to station a law enforcement officer in the village. Finally, on 2 March 1894 Eltham's first policeman, Constable J. Simpson, commenced duty. For a time he lived in McDonald's cottage on Moir's property, Railway Street. Then he and his family moved out to a house opposite the five-acre police reserve horse paddock on the corner of Rama and Rawhitiroa Roads. A police station was finally built on the Railway Street police reserve, being first occupied in June 1897.



Eltham's first policeman Constable J. Simpson — about 1904 on Burkes Hill.

After a ten-year term Constable Simpson was relieved by Constable M. Radican. He must have been a man of improvisation for in February 1908 he arrested a man who was somewhat the worse for liquor. The man resisted the constable and the two did a little scuffling, but eventually the man was overpowered. A wheelbarrow was procured and the constable trundled the man to the police station with two civilians on the port and starboard sides to prevent a shipwreck.

Constable H. C. D. Wade, known in the town as Charlie Wade, took over on 29 February 1908. Being a keen sportsman, he was a member of the local Hockey Club and the Sports and Pastimes Club until his transfer to Wellington on 9 January 1915.

Constable Townshend who arrived in Eltham on 29 February 1915 was a popular and respected policeman. Charlie Cook, a baker for Sheehy's at the time was recognised as 'Townie's' deputy. During the hours of darkness when bakers worked, nothing suspicious escaped Charlie's eagle eye. During his term Constable Townshend's old grey mare was the last of the police horses. He was transferred to Masterton in January 1935.

Constable J. M. Fleming, fresh from the Wellington Wharf Police, took over on 9 October 1935. This tall austere policeman enjoyed game shooting experiences which he told of at length in his Irish accent. Jim Fleming retired in August 1951. During his term a new police station was built in Burke Street.

Constable G. F. McKenzie, who took up his appointment on 15 November 1951, died during his term of duty on 21 September 1955. Constable H. J. Forsey filled the gap later being replaced by Constable J. Casledene. During the final year of Constable Townshend's term, a second policeman was appointed to Eltham and the last of these, Constable A. Stewart took control when Constable Casledene transferred.

The role of the local constable changed at this time with the end of the era of six o'clock closing, the man on the beat being replaced by the patrol car. Successive policemen since have been Constables Hill, L. Fabish, R. Nicholson, J. Perry and at present R. Mead appointed on 20 September 1981. A new police station on the street front in Burke Street opened on 9 September 1977.

### Retribution

For any misdemeanours committed Eltham citizens had to attend either the Stratford or Hawera Courthouses. After many representations, it was gazetted in July 1898 that the Eltham Town Hall would in future be the venue for sittings of the Magistrate's Court.

Constable Simpson was appointed Clerk of the Court and he found himself burdened with an additional responsibility and despite the plea for a second policeman, no help came. Cases at this time were generally heard before two Justices of the Peace with an occasional visit from a Magistrate. Mr Godkin, an early settler on Cornwall Road was the only J.P. in the district until Mr G. W. Tayler was appointed in June 1896.

A substantial brick and concrete courthouse was erected on the Railway Street police reserve in 1908. Mr Turnbull S.M., in view of the auspicious occasion treated the first two cases with leniency. Charged

with letting their chimneys catch fire, they were convicted and discharged, the customary two shillings and six-penny fine being waived. The official opening took place on 26 May 1908 by the Premier Sir Joseph Ward.

In May 1951 the Justice Department closed a number of small courthouses, Eltham being one of these. The local Post Office took over many of the Court's official duties.

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## NEWSPAPERS

### Eltham Guardian

This small newspaper first appeared on 5 August 1894 and was printed at Stratford. A copy of the first paper published is in the possession of the Eltham and District Historical Society.

A good description of the development of the town at that time is given. Printed as a bi-weekly paper, it ceased publication in 1901.

## The Eltham Argus

Eltham's second paper, the Eltham Argus, was established in December 1897 by two brothers-in-law, Messrs. J. H. Claridge, and T. D. Taylor. The printing works were set up in the business sector of the town in Chew Chong's building, now the Farmers' Co-op yard. A tri-weekly paper was produced and this gave a good coverage of local and overseas news. The original proprietors operated the business for three years before disposing of it to a small company. Shortly after the change of ownership in 1900 a disastrous fire destroyed the whole block of buildings, the printing works losing all its records and plant.

A new building arose and new plant and equipment was procured, but shortly afterwards the Argus again changed hands being taken over by Mr W. Carncross, later to become Sir Walter Carncross. The new owner took a great interest in the community and used the editorial columns in an unbiased manner fearlessly writing on any issue at stake. Under his management the paper flourished and became a daily newspaper. With the building of a new Post Office in Bridge Street, the Argus joined the business drift eastward and moved to new premises on the site of the present newsagents shop on High Street. This location was considered a high fire risk as the building was constructed of wood and corrugated iron with no brick or concrete fire walls, so a further move took place.

A new reinforced concrete structure was erected in Bridge Street east on the opening up of this area in 1908. Three years after moving to this location the previous premises were destroyed by fire.

New plant including mechanical typesetting and automatic folding machinery improved the printing process. Motive power over the years varied. A pelton wheel installed when the Borough water supply became available proved unreliable due to fluctuations of water pressure and a petrol engine often became obstinate to start when the printing deadline

approached. With the introduction of electric power in 1922, the problem, except for later power cuts, became a thing of the past.

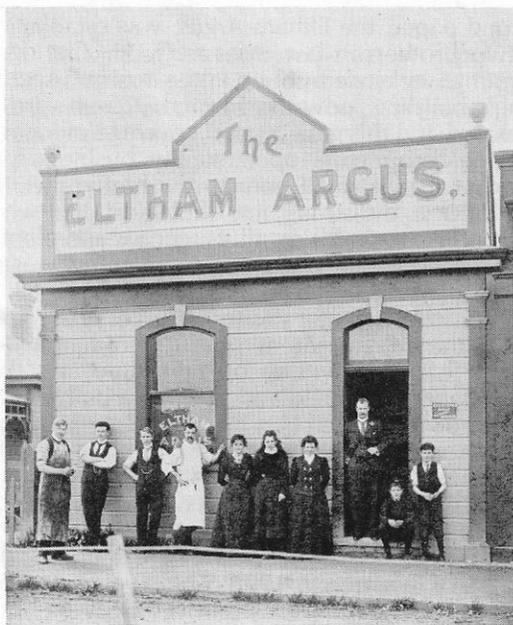
Over the years the Argus had a wide circulation, two editions being printed, the first for country delivery by boys on horseback or by the local stage coach. Runner boys delivered in the town area, and many stories were told of the short-cut methods used to dispose of the papers.

In 1930 Mr A. W. Packard acquired the business at the time when the effects of the world depression were beginning to be felt. Several cost-saving cuts were made which included reducing the paper's size.

A new proprietor, Mr C. S. Rush who came from Dargaville, took over in March 1936, his eldest son Mr D. O. Rush becoming the succeeding owner. Due to several factors, mainly the pressure of commercial printing, the final issue of the Eltham Argus was delivered on 30 June 1967.

The files of the Eltham Argus from 1904 have been preserved and are now in the care of the Eltham and District Historical Society. They give a graphic insight into the development of the town, its triumphs and tragedies, and the lives of its citizens over 67 years. Copies printed prior to 1904 were destroyed by fire.

The commercial printing works, now the Rosen Argus Printing Co. Ltd is owned and operated by Ian and Pauline Turpie.



**The Eltham Argus premises — Railway Street. From left to right: B. Binning, J. Staples, Jack Andrews, Jos Andrews, Miss Taylor, Miss Matheson, Miss Henwood, T. D. Taylor (Editor), G. Naismith and Will Glentworth.**

## ELTHAM VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE

Shortly before midnight on a Saturday night in May 1904, the cry "FIRE" rang out. Smoke was discovered issuing in dense volumes from Arthur's Fruit Shop. It was soon seen that there would be no hope of saving the shop so efforts were then made to save the threatened adjoining Post Office and Branch Hotel. The situation had become serious when a loud cheer announced the arrival of the recently defunct Fire Brigade's manual engine under the command of Captain Coffey. The hose was quickly run out and a Volunteer crew on the pump immediately got up full pressure. Two hoses blew out at once but the third stood. Branchman Cooper worked the nozzle to the best advantage bringing the flames into subjection in two or three minutes.

Such were the perils of the early Eltham Settlement with no adequate water supply and small wooden buildings crammed cheek by jowl in the business area. Five years earlier a big fire had swept along High Street East destroying every building in its path from Bridge Street to King Edward Street, impressing on residents' minds the need for a fire fighting service. A meeting was finally called on 20 June 1902 in the Athenaeum Hall. This resulted in the Eltham Volunteer Bucket Fire Brigade being formed. Although on its formation this was the only method available to fight fires, the wooden bucket soon became obsolete. The opportunity to purchase an old two-wheeled manual engine from the Hawera Borough Council for £75 gave the Brigade a fire fighting advantage.

This pump, operated usually by volunteers from the crowd by swinging on long poles, was described as a man-killer. Also, being heavy and cumbersome to haul, it was dependent on nearby wells and tanks for water. Above all it was described as being useless.

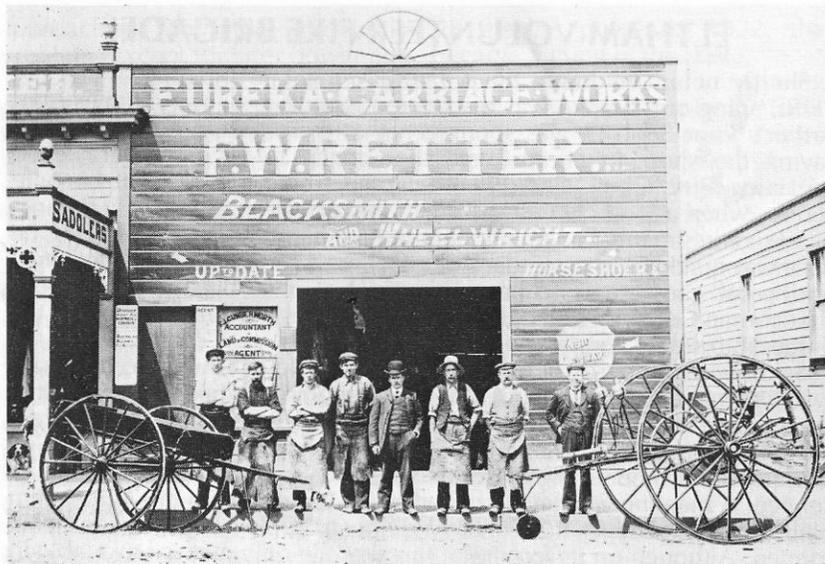
The brigade pined and died but the members were still expected to pay a balance of £25 still owing on the engine. A decision had been made to return the engine to Hawera but the saving of the Post Office and Hotel from destruction by fire soon changed public opinion — also the main problem, a faulty suction hose, was solved. Fund-raising soon paid off the deficiency and the engine was vested in the Borough Council.

Mr H. Ramsay of the Mangawhero Sawmills donated timber towards a small building to house the brigade's appliances. Uniforms consisting of bright red tunics, belts, small naval rating type caps and firemen helmets were procured for the brigade.

A bell tower erected at the new quarters now in York Street, took the place of the school bell which up to this time had been used to raise the alarm.

More suitable quarters were provided with the building of a fire station in 1910 with funds provided by the Borough Council. When the town became reticulated with a high pressure water system in 1906 a reel and hose cart replaced the manual engine which was held in reserve for fires beyond the range of the town water supply. The new equipment still proved a hardship for the strong team required to haul it around Eltham's rough streets.

Mr J. Crabtree presented the Brigade with a Ford Model T Truck in 1919 specially adapted for its fire-fighting role. With the passage of time



**Fire and hose reel built for the Eltham Fire Brigade.**

other appliances have come and gone. In 1938 a Ford V8 was purchased, in 1957 a Bedford and trailer pump and in 1969 a Ford D600 was purchased as No. 1 appliance.

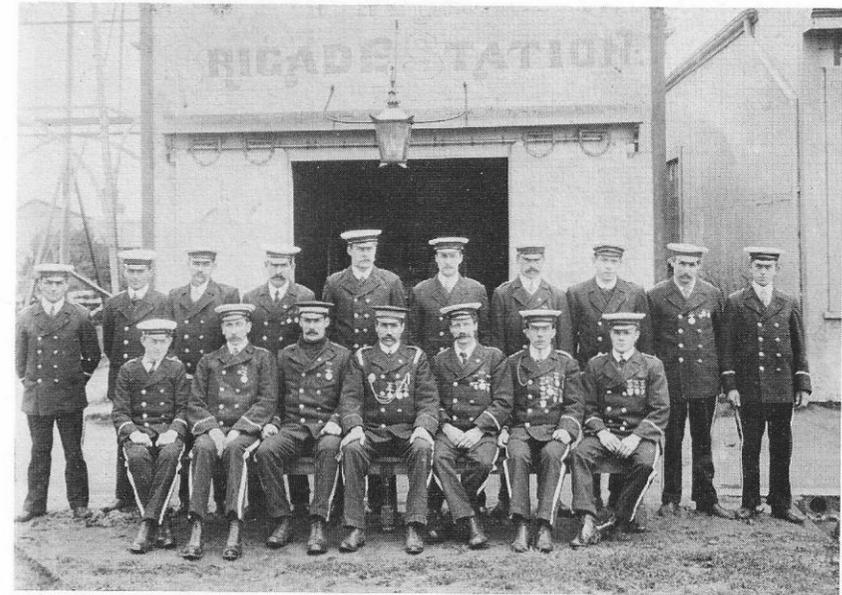
This supply of more satisfactory equipment and finance was due to the initiative of Mr C. A. Wilkinson who in 1924 persuaded the Borough Council to pass the majority of the control to the New Zealand Fire Board. The Eltham Fire Board came into being in 1925.

When more space became necessary a second station was erected and in 1925 officers quarters were added.

On 11 August 1973 the ringing of Eltham's old fire bell signalled the opening of the new modern fire station in London Street, the ceremony being performed by the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Hon. F. L. May, M.P. The Eltham Brigade recently came under the control of the Fire Service Commission who is responsible for the supply of appliances and equipment. At present the appliances in use are a 1969 Ford D600 with a low pressure system and a 1978 Commer with a high pressure system.

Several Eltham firemen have given outstanding service over the years. Mr A. M. Burrows, a fireman and secretary for over 50 years, received the award of the M.B.E. and a double gold star for his services. Mr H. A. Nuttal served for several years as a fireman and for 40 years as Superintendent of the brigade. Mr S. Murray served 43 years, much of the time as deputy Superintendent and Mr L. S. Murray, following the family tradition joined the Brigade as messenger in 1938, rose to Deputy and became Chief Fire Officer in 1949, a position he filled until 1962.

Other gold star members, in addition to the above, are Messrs. G. V. Philpott, W. Hornblow, S. Glentworth, Dr D. H. Saunders, A. L. Vickers, L. McGonagle and A. W. McCullum.



**The first fire station built in 1910.**

### Major Fires

The first big fire the Brigade had to contend with in 1906 was Garry's Stables in High Street. This building was completely destroyed but the fire threatened the Athenaeum Hall next door, so a bucket brigade kept the smoking walls doused. During the same year Blackhall's furniture factory in Bridge Street was also destroyed. To fight this fire the manual engine was lowered down beside the Mangawharowharo Stream. A further fire that year destroyed the South Taranaki Bacon Company factory.

A whole block of buildings in High Street were destroyed on 7 July 1907 creating the gap where Bridge Street is now. In 1922 C. A. Wilkinson's Hardware store and Goldstone's Drapery in Bridge Street were totally destroyed.

The most tragic fire in Eltham's history was that which destroyed the Dominion Boarding House opposite the Farmers Co-op corner in 1926. Four lives were lost and two people were injured. Stanners Garage was completely gutted in 1956 and the following year a major fire destroyed the Rennet Company's Blue Vein cheese plant. One of the worst fires occurred on 4 January 1971 when the upper floor of the Eventide Home was gutted, fortunately with no loss of life. A major alert and evacuation of the area occurred when a gas container began to leak at the Eltham Railway yards in March 1975.

The Rawhitiroa School was destroyed in June 1976 and the last major fire occurred on 16 August 1981 when the Eltham Rugby Club's Gymnasium Hall was completely gutted.



The major fire at the Rennett Company's Blue Vein cheese factory — 1957.

## THE ELTHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

The settlers in the country districts of Eltham became so dissatisfied by the manner in which the Hawera County Council maintained their roads, that they were successful in having a Bill introduced to Parliament to enable them to form their own Council. Due to the efforts of Sir Walter Carncross, a member of the Legislative Council, the Eltham County Council Bill, despite strong Hawera opposition became law on 29 October 1906.

At a public meeting held on 10 November 1906 chaired by Mr J. Boddie, a committee of 13 members was set up to recommend the number of ridings, their boundaries and representation. The recommendations of this committee were accepted and the Eltham County Council Ridings were gazetted on 29 November 1906. With Mr W. J. Tristram appointed as returning officer, elections were held for Council, the successful candidates being Messrs. A. B. Dive, King, Preece, Quin, J. Phillips, Pease, J. Boddie, Swaddling and Fitzgerald.

At the first council meeting on 22 December 1906, Mr Dive was elected County Chairman and applications were called for the position of County Clerk. Mr Tristram, from a field of five contenders was appointed at the following meeting, as County Clerk, Treasurer and Collector, his

salary being fixed at £150. The advisory services of Mr F. Basham, Engineer of the Hawera County Council were retained.

The new council then tackled the problem of bringing the roads up to a reasonable standard, the heavy solid-wheeled traffic of the time playing havoc with the gravel road surfaces.



## The Eltham Road Tollgate near Mangatoki.

In an effort to finance this work, two toll gates were erected in 1908 on the Eltham Road, one a short distance west of the Stuart Road and the other at Riverlea. Some of the charges levied were: a horse — 3 pence, light vehicles — 6 pence, dray waggon or coach — one shilling, a bicycle — one penny, a motorcar — three shillings and a cow — one penny. A traction engine over five tons was charged £6.

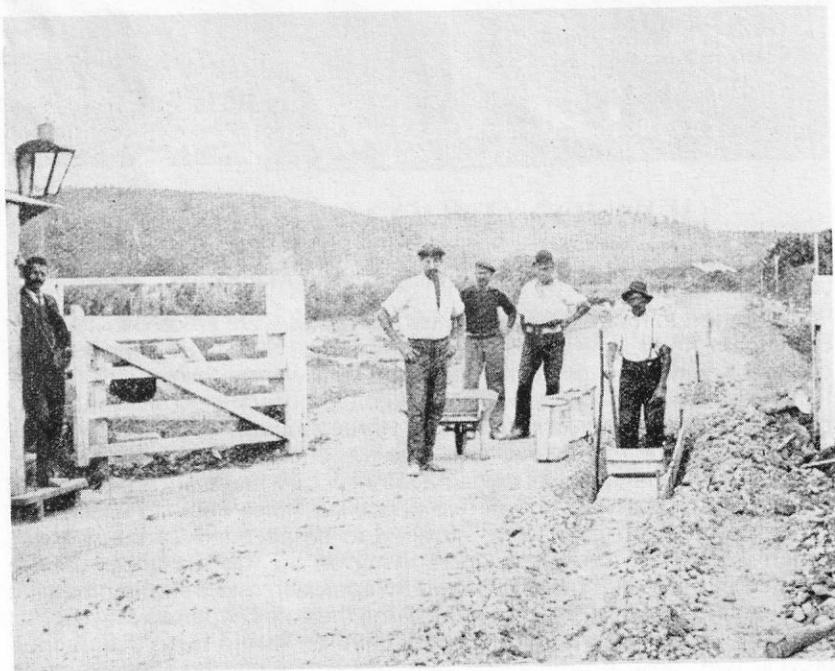
Dairy suppliers at the Jerseydale Dairy Factory made such a protest at the charges that a reduction of two pence per horse and cart was finally agreed to. The toll gates were required to be attended 24 hours a day which resulted in the gate keepers living on the job. Instances can be recalled of horsemen making a stealthy approach and if finding the gate open, galloping furiously through, leaving the gate keeper waving his fists in the air. A favourite prank of school children would be to deflate their bicycle tyre, push it through on foot free of charge, then pump up the wheel once more and proceed on their way, one penny the richer. On one occasion on a dark night, the gate was removed and thrown into a nearby stream.

Revenue from the first 12 months resulted in £790 being collected at the Mangatoki gate and £120 from Riverlea. The Highway's Board in 1924 agreed to subsidise the County's roadworks so on 31 March 1925 the toll gates were removed enabling the traffic to travel free of charge.

Mr Basham, in an effort to obtain a permanent position as Engineer in March 1907, offered his services to the council for £150 per annum, the council made a counter offer of £100 which was accepted. In December 1908 he resigned the position, being re-appointed in January of the next year after the council called for applicants, at a salary of £250.

In an effort to establish a permanent road surface, Mr Basham evolved a system of interlocking concrete blocks laid at wheel track widths. A private company known as the 'Basham Concrete Highway Company Ltd' was formed with Mr C. A. Wilkinson as Chairman. An offer made to the council to lay a trial section of 30 chains was made at a cost of £800 per mile.

The offer being accepted, an experimental section of roadway was laid down in the Mangatoki toll gate region and this worked well for a time but the interlocking edges failed to stand the test of the heavy traffic. The blocks in wet conditions began to tilt and rock so a Mr Bailey was paid to remove the blocks, being given three months to complete the work.



New experiment in road-making — laying concrete blocks in place of road metal at Eltham.

Following a special report in April 1912, the council decided to follow the lead of the Eltham Borough Council with its successful use of tar-sealed streets. An order was immediately placed to procure a tar spraying machine.

Hunter and Hastings Roads were laid down in this manner in 1912 and Boylan Road which the council metalled in 1915 was similarly sealed in 1917. The Eltham County Council has continued this sealing policy throughout the years until practically every road in the County has received this treatment.

Considerable upgrading of the back country roading has occurred, particularly the straightening and widening of the Mangamingi Saddle Road. A major project also completed has been a new access road into the Rotokare Reserve.

Two major road formation projects have recently been completed. The Oru Road known locally as the Swamp Road, a surveyed dry weather track across the Ngaere Swamp, has been reformed and metalled and the five kilometre Aoriri Road at Mangamingi to the Collier Beard Estate has been completed.

The Eltham Road has also recently received considerable attention by County workmen straightening and removing several dangerous hollows, and upgrading it to a Class One loading. An estimated 1,600 vehicles a day pass over this road with an excess of 22% of this being heavy transport.



A busy quarry scene near Eltham.

The Eltham County Council has long been involved in a campaign to eradicate noxious weeds being one of the first counties to introduce a hormone weed spraying service for farmers. Today Mr Dan Collins fills the position of Weed Control Officer dealing with problems extending to water-weed control at Rotokare.

In the past, part of the duties of the County Inspector consisted of Traffic control. In 1911 the council adopted bylaws related to width of tyres and offences committed on roads and public places. Mr Ivan Williams and his father Mr Harold Williams before him, filled the position of Inspector until, in the 1960's a resident Ministry of Transport Traffic Officer was appointed to the Eltham district.

In 1917 the Council purchased a site for a County office in Stanners Street where an office was constructed. With the purchase of the Taranaki Dairy Company's new modern laboratory in Collingwood Street it is intended that a transfer of offices will be completed by June 1984.

Mr Des Bevan, who took up the position of County Engineer on 6 March 1972, was appointed County Manager on 1 April 1983.

Mr Phillip Gibson is at present Works Engineer and Mr Peter Gibbs is the County Clerk.

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## ELTHAM'S DISTRICTS

### **Te Roti — The Way South**

The name Te Roti is derived from a legend about a Maori woman travelling through the bush. She came across a repulsive scorpion-like creature in a swampy area which is now the junction of the Boylan and Mountain Roads. The disgusted exclamation 'te roti, te roti' that passed her lips became the name the natives gave to the area. Later, surveyors hearing the story used it on their maps.

In the early eighties, sections in the Te Roti area were offered for sale by auction. Mr J. T. Quin bought the block of land now known as Highlands at the corner of Mountain and Boylan Roads and Mr Robert Fitton bought 188 acres on the corner of Boylan and Dalziel Roads, the prices paid were £3-5s an acre.

Mr W. A. Cleaver, his wife and brother John purchased a 90 acre section of Crown Land for £3 12s. an acre which they named 'Tanglewood Farm' due to the difficult nature of the bush and undergrowth that needed to be cleared. The railway, which was laid here in 1881 passed through their land and was used to advantage later when they opened a small store opposite the railway station built in 1882.

As with other areas the settlers took up work wherever possible to assist their difficult early days of establishment. The land in heavy forest was noted for its numerous Matai and Rata trees with approximately 20 to an acre in some cases.

The first mill located on the Austin Road was operated by a Mr Wilson and later taken over by Robson Bros. Another mill, Greenwood's, stood on the site of the old Te Roti factory. Mr Coleman later ran a small mill on his Dalziel Road property.

As the land became cleared and a growing number of dairy cows

appeared, a need arose for the marketing of butter. A small company set up in 1885-1886 established a factory on the western side of the railway line and Mr Charles Curtis's contract of ¼ pence a pound was accepted to work the plant. The settlers after settling the milk in pans, churned the cream at home and brought the lumps of butter in to be worked. As the butter brought in varied in colour, it had to be blended together on a sloping table with a triangular shaped rimu butter worker. After a second working and made into one pound blocks, it was sold in Wellington for nine pence a pound. The factory produced about half a ton a week. Unsuccessful attempts were made to ship butter in kegs to Australia and Britain before the days of refrigeration.

Another small factory on the Dalziel Road was established where Mr Fitton worked up and blended some settler's home-made butter. Chew Chong also established a creamery, this concern eventually being taken over by the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Company. Finally, the Eltham Dairy Company moved into the district.

A venture into hop growing by a group of settlers did not prove successful. A company was formed, land purchased and hop gardens planted. A building erected as a drying kiln, and later purchased by a Mr Johnston for use as a brewery also did not prove successful and soon after he moved the operation into Hawera. The building was then acquired by Messrs. Robbins and Pierard and converted into a butter factory.

With the growth of the area, the need for a school was met with the opening of a one-roomed building on 4 July 1887 on the Skeet Road corner. The school was shifted in May 1939 to its present position.

The original road, the Mountain road, following the Chute and Nairn Track was the main route south, whereas the Boylan Road was only a mud track running through the bush. It was suggested that it would be much better if this track could be metalled, as the distance was no greater and it gave good access to large areas of settled land. The Mountain road passed through a native reserve and there were two steep hills to negotiate. However, it was not until the end of 1887 that Te Roti became connected with Eltham by a satisfactory road. The lack of two culverts and a little filling had prevented it from being used so a long journey south and back up the Mountain road resulted when a visit to Eltham was required.

However, after opening, in the winter this section of the Boylan became a sea of mud or in the summer travellers were smothered in clouds of dust, so the alternative nightmare hills of Dalziel Road were often chosen.

It was round 1915 that the road was metalled and in due course, sealed and improvements were effected from time to time. Corners were cut back and gradients were reduced until it became the main thoroughfare it is today.

### **Mangatoki**

A contract to fell the bush on the Eltham Road was awarded in 1881 to Mr Carl Ritter who established his base camp about five minutes walking distance from the Eltham railway siding. Keeping the cooking pot well stocked at the time proved no problem. Two visitors to the camp reported

shooting 21 wood pigeon and several kaka on the future site of Bridge Street.

By June 1881 bush along Eltham Road had been felled two chains wide and it was reported to be ready for horse traffic. Land surveys had been completed and a new block of 12,000 acres extending for a mile each side of the Eltham Road became available for settlement and brisk settlement was expected. The first section of land in the Mangatoki area, then known generally as the Eltham Road Settlement was taken by Mr James Linn, opposite the Mangatoki School. Settlers felled the bush under contract and the land became available in sections of 100 to 120 acre lots, prices ranging from £1 to £2 2s. 6d. per acre. The settlement grew to some 20 families, some of these first settlers being Messrs. Pease, Marx, Astbury, Phillips, Gardiners and Kenah.

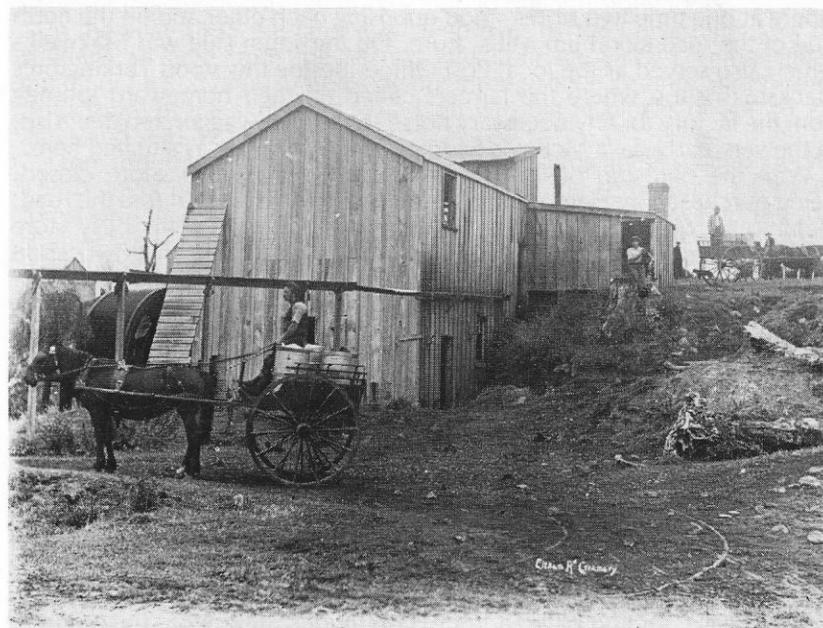
The district soon gained a name by adopting that of a nearby stream — Mangatoki. The Maoris used the name to refer to the black stones found in the river bed which made such good axes, thus — Manga, black — Toki, axe.



**Mangatoki Bridge of the Eltham Road.**

With land cleared, dairying activities soon commenced. The first factory in Mangatoki was opened in 1892 when Mr C. A. Wilkinson, having purchased land on the banks of the Mangatoki Stream, erected a dairy factory close to the Opunake-Eltham Road. He obtained his power by means of a water-driven turbine, this method continuing in the factory for many years. Mr Wilkinson, then a young man, ran the factory for a period but his financial supporters, failing to fulfil their guarantee, forced

him to close down. The property then passed into the hands of Chew Chong who, however, did not operate the factory. The New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Company in Wanganui were at that time interested in erecting or financing dairy factories and on learning of the Mangatoki factory, purchased it from Chew Chong.



**Eltham Road Creamery.**

Further creameries were erected in neighbouring districts and settlers guaranteed to supply milk from a required number of cows for three years. The company over-estimated the expected return on the London market and paid out sixpence a gallon for the first year. The settlers received only threepence a gallon for the next two years.

After remaining with the Loan and Mercantile Company for a further year, the Mangatoki Co-operative Factory was formed in 1900. At the meeting held at the Mangatoki Hall it was agreed to purchase the factories and creameries of the Loan and Mercantile Company at a price to be fixed by arrangement. Mr J. Marx was elected the first Chairman of Directors. Over the ensuing years the company expanded into cheese manufacture at Mangatoki, Matapu and Mahoe.

To establish an outlet for pigs raised by the farmers, the Dairy Company in association with the Eltham Dairy Company purchased Messrs. Buchanan Bros. Bacon Factory situated on a stream bank on the Eltham Road east of the lower Hunter Road entrance. In 1904 this factory was relocated in Eltham.

During World War I at the Mangatoki Factory, Mr C. Cooper carried