

Korokoro School – 100 years of learning

Experience Petone – Supplement to the Hutt News September 2004

Former pupils from as far away as Switzerland and Australia are expected at Korokoro School's Centenary celebrations this Labour Weekend. Also present will be descendants of the Bond family of Korokoro Road, one of the original families who first petitioned for a school at Korokoro. Centenary chairperson Jan Twort says using the "old friends" sites on the internet has been a great way of getting in touch with former pupils – a far cry from the technology of 1904 when the school began.

After input from locals as to their preferred site for a school after they felt the original site was unsuitable, a triangle of land was set aside in 1903. A petition of settlers then asked the Government for a school to be built. There were 31 school age children at the time and another 17 pre-schoolers waiting in the wings. A school was recommended because the hilly road to the valley floor "would be unfit for winter travelling" and because of Korokoro's "separate environment." A deputation to the then Education Minister Richard John Seddon (who was also the Prime Minister), by the cash strapped settlers resulted in a special grant being made, enabling the school to be built immediately.

Korokoro School opened on 7 March 1904, but made no progress until the arrival on 1 June, 1904 of Miss Nita Johnston (it was to be years before married women were allowed to teach). Miss Johnston had to teach 30 or more children, ranging from 5-13 years, in one room. *Calling Korokoro Home*, a history of the area from 1800-2003 by Kate Malcolm and others, chronicles also the history of Korokoro School and contains some delightful reminiscences of early school days there.

The original school was set in a hollow below Korokoro Road (between the present dental clinic and administration block). It was just a single room, 22.5ft (6.8m) long and 18.5 feet (5.6m) wide with a door and a porch facing the road and high windows facing north and west. In one corner was a fireplace and against an outside corner a water tank. Toilets were outside and shelter sheds were built against the base of a hill to the north west. There was little natural shelter.

Like any other, the school has had its ups and downs over the past 100 years. In 1909 an outbreak of diphtheria and scarlet fever closed the school that winter. In 1925, like many others, it was closed for the polio epidemic. Rolls fluctuated. In 1936 it was back to a one-classroom school with about 30 pupils, with many others walking down the hill to the larger Petone West School on Hutt Road.

- 1960 The school ceased being classed as “country service.”
 1967 New buildings were added with the roll around 140
 1970-1971 Summer, the pool opened
 1972 The roll was 175
 1973 Open plan teaching was embraced
- 1975 Parents fought to keep school a full primary. An intermediate had been proposed in Alicetown. It never went ahead and was said at the time to be a victory for parent input into the process.
- 1987 A new school hall was named after esteemed teacher and community leader George Nicholson. It was opened by no less a figure than the Governor-General Sir Paul Reeves.
- 1989 “Tomorrow’s Schools” was introduced by the Lange Government – but really it was nothing new for Korokoro parents to have a say in how they wanted their school run.

Over its time, the school has had a total of 17 permanently appointed heads/principals. Today Korokoro School is a full primary (up to Year 8/Form 2) with 111 pupils and staffed by Principal John Wootton and five teachers. Many of the children are second and third generation Korokoro families. In fact, there is such a strong interest in the area and its history that Kate Malcolm’s *Calling Korokoro Home* was sold out. However, a reprint has been organised and will be ready for the Centenary. Contact Jan on 569-1821 for further information on the book.

Programme:

The programme for the Centenary Celebrations includes:

Friday, 22 October: 3.30-10.30pm – register and meet and greet at Korokoro School

Saturday, 23 October: 10am-Noon – register and look around the school. 11am group photographs and the cutting of the cake. 2.30pm-4pm concert by present pupils at the Lower Hutt Town Hall (no cost). 7pm-8pm cocktails, 8pm-1am Dine and Dance at Lower Hutt Horticultural Hall.

Sunday, 24 October: 10.30am onwards – informal day to allow people to visit the school again, meet up with old friends and staff and, if the weather is fine, perhaps arrange a picnic lunch at the school. For further information or to register contact Jan Twort on 569-1921 or email admin@korokoro.school.nz

This item includes what is thought to be the oldest photograph of Korokoro School pupils taken in the Domain around 1908/09. In the centre is the first teacher Miss Nita Johnston. The two little girls with the white collars to the left of the other woman in the picture are Violet Anslow (later Mrs Clement) and her sister Doris Anslow, who died at the age of 18. The family shifted to Korokoro in 1905 and built a house in Maungaraki Road. Violet's daughter Nancy Clement (now Mrs McArtney) has lived all her life in Korokoro and features in Korokoro's history "Calling Korokoro Home" for an incident in 1948 when the quick actions of herself and Jimmy Meachen and their teachers, using wet sacks, saved the school from possibly burning down. A gas fire lit by one of the older pupils had ignited mats left hanging on the fire screen. Mrs McArtney says Korokoro is a "very special neighbourhood" where up to three and four generations of the early families have now made it their home, appreciating the natural environment. "We are all very protective of our bush and our natural surroundings here."

Education Annual Reports – Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives – Korokoro School teachers

1879	C. R. Josslin	Salary £120	
1880	C. R. Joplin	Salary £120	
1881	Charles R. Joplin	Salary £120	(Charles Reesby Joplin)
1882-1883	Laura Medley	Salary £100	
1884-1885	Charles F. Gulliver	Salary £140	(Charles Frederick Gulliver)
1886-1889	Sarah Elkin	Salary £100	
1890-1893	Maud Ryder	Salary £100	
1894-1895	Francis A. Chatwin	Salary £100	(Frances Annie Chatwin)
1896	Margaret Nairn	Salary £67 10s	
1897-1898	Margaret Nairn	Salary £70	
1899	Margaret Nairn	Salary £80	
1900-1901	Nanette Gower	Salary £80	
1902	Nanette Gower	Salary £70	
1903	Nanette Gower	Salary £80	
1904	Nanette Gower	Salary £76	
1905	Nanette Gower	Salary £80	Korokoro South School – Grade 1
1905	Nita Johnston	Salary £136	Korokoro School – Grade 3
1905	During the year special grants for new schools, amounting to £771 7s 3d were expended in the erection of a new school at Korokoro, and additions at Makuri, Kaiparoro, and Tokomaru.		
1906	Nanette Gower	Salary £100	Korokoro South School – Grade 1
1906	Nita Johnston	Salary £136	Korokoro School – Grade 3
1907	Nanette Gower (Mrs)	Salary £110	Korokoro South School – Grade 1
1907	Nita Johnston	Salary £160	Korokoro School – Grade 4
1908	Nanette Gower (Mrs)	Salary £110	Korokoro South School – Grade 0
1908	Trisitana E. N. Johnston	Salary £160	Korokoro School – Grade 4
1909	Nanette Gower	Salary £78	Korokoro South School – Grade 0
1909	Tris E. N. Johnston	Salary £160	Korokoro School – Grade 4

1910	Nanette Gower	Salary £90	Korokoro South School – Grade 1
1910	Tris E. N. Johnston	Salary £185	Korokoro School – Grade 4
1910	Grace B. Gaudin	Salary £90	Korokoro School – Grade 4 Assistant Teacher
1911	Beatrice S. Ryan	Salary £90	Korokoro South School – Grade 1
1911	Tris E. N. Johnston	Salary £190	Korokoro School – Grade 4
1911	Grace B. Gaudin	Salary £90	Korokoro School – Grade 4 Assistant Teacher
1912	Robertina M. Milne	Salary £104 10s	Korokoro South School – Grade 1
1912	Tris E. N. Johnston	Salary £195	Korokoro North School – Grade 4
1912	Kate Kilmartin	Salary £94 10s	Korokoro North School – Grade 4 Assistant Teacher
1913	Florence Rose	Salary £90	Korokoro South School – Grade 1
1913	Kate Kilmartin	Salary £162	Korokoro North School – Grade 4
1914	Florence Rose	Salary £90	Korokoro South School – Grade 1
1914	Sarah E. B. Lea	Salary £180	Korokoro North School – Grade 3
1915	Korokoro South School was closed		
1915	Sarah E. B. Lea	Salary £180	Korokoro North School – Grade 3
1915	Florence Rose	Salary £105	Korokoro North School – Grade 3 Assistant teacher
1916	Sarah E. B. Lea	Salary £200	Korokoro North School – Grade 3A
1916	Florence Rose	Salary £120	Korokoro North School – Grade 3A Assistant Teacher
1917	Sarah E. B. Lea	Salary £210	Korokoro North School – Grade 3A
1917	Florence Rose	Salary £130	Korokoro North School – Grade 3A Assistant Teacher
1918	Marjory U. Fellingham	Salary £200	Korokoro North School – Grade 3A
1918	Florence Rose	Salary £140	Korokoro North School – Grade 3A Assistant Teacher
1919	James F. Fanning	Salary £250	Korokoro North School – Grade 3A
1919	Ivy H. Smith	Salary £120	Korokoro North School – Grade 3A Assistant Teacher

Evening Post 05 Aug 1878 Education Board

The report of the examiners (Messrs Kenneth Wilson, M.A., and Mr R. Lee) on the fourth annual examination of teachers held on 2nd and 3rd in the Thorndon schools, and the Greytown school, was read... The following list of candidates in order of merit was appended to the report:- Third Class Certificate List... Mr Toplin, head master, Korokoro School...

Evening Post 27 Aug 1879 Mr Hutchison and the Education Board

At the last meeting of the Education Board the question arose as to who should be appointed master of the Korokoro school, and Mr William Hutchison, as a member of the Board, nominated a Mr Joplin for the post. Mr Lee, the inspector, then remarked that Mr Joplin was not competent to take charge of so large a school, and added that he did not speak very good English, and sometimes dropped his "h's." The reporters were asked not to publish this, as it was a confidential communication made by the Inspector to the Board. There were only two papers represented at the meeting and neither of them referred to the matter either in their journals or otherwise. Next evening, however, a report appeared in the Chronicle giving a circumstantial account of what had taken place on the previous day with regard to Mr Joplin. At the Board's meeting this afternoon the Chairman, Mr C. J. Pharazyn, said that Mr Joplin had resigned his present position under the Board, in consequence of the statement made by Mr Lee with respect to him. He asked Mr Hutchison to inform the Board whether he had supplied the information to the Chronicle, whose reporter was not present when the discussion took place. Mr Hutchison said he did not do so, but he had no doubt that if a reporter had asked him what had taken place, he would have given the information. The Chairman said the reporters who were present had agreed to avoid making any reference to the matter, and they had apparently kept their word. Mr Toomath remarked that if reporters were going to publish matters which the Board requested them not to print, the best thing that could be done would be to exclude them from the meetings. The Chairman explained that this could not be done, as the meetings of the Board were open to the public. The Ven. Archdeacon Stock said he had been prevented from bringing certain questions forward, because it would not be discreet to publish anything regarding them. Mr Hutchison – A reporter may have asked me what took place, and I may have told him. Mr Toomath – The discussion is reported so circumstantially in the Chronicle that there can be no doubt that somebody who was present gave the information. Members should be loyal to each other and not carry information outside. The Chairman – It was not right, and, in fact, I consider it very unjust on the part of Mr Hutchison to give the information to the paper when he knew that the Board desired to keep the matter quiet. Mr Hutchison – I claim to have a perfect right to give any information I think proper. The Rev Mr Paterson – I think we ought to have confidence in each other, and be true to each other. Mr Hutchison – I shall be true to nothing which I do not think is right. Mr Toomath – An you will be the judge of what is right? Mr Hutchison – Yes. Mr Toomath – I am sorry to hear it. Of course members may express their opinions to each other outside the Board, but they should not give information to anybody else. The Chairman – The young man has been thrown out of his employment through Mr Hutchison's action. Mr Lee said he had not used the words referred to with the view of injuring Mr Joplin in any way. He was a young man on his trial, and doubtless when he had had more experience he would do better. After some further discussion in which the action of Mr Hutchison was condemned, it was decided that Mr Lee should write to Mr Joplin explaining the matter.

Evening Post 18 Jan 1883 Education Office, Wellington

Applications for the following Appointments will be received at this Office up to Monday the 29th instant:- ... Master or Mistress, Korokoro School

Evening Post 26 Nov 1884 Board of Education

The monthly meeting of the Education Board was held at 10 o'clock this morning... On the recommendation of the local committee, it was resolved to give three months' notice to Mr Gulliver, of the Korokoro school.

Evening Post 14 Feb 1885 Education Board Office, Wellington

Applications stating qualifications and experience, will be received at this office up to Saturday, 21st instant, for the following appointments:- ... Teacher, Korokoro School – salary £100.

Evening Post 19 Sep 1885

The annual inspection of the schools under the control of the Board of Education was commenced this week. On Monday and Tuesday Mr Lee visited the Kaiwarra School, on Wednesday and Thursday he was at the Johnsonville School, and yesterday he inspected the Korokoro School.

Evening Post 17 Jun 1889

The vacancy in the staff of the Wallaceville School has been filled by the transfer of Miss Elkins, late of the Korokoro School, where she has been succeeded by Miss Ryder, late of Mount Cook Boys' School.

Evening Post 09 Apr 1896

The repairs required to be done to the Korokoro School have been completed by the Education Board's carpenter, and the school will be reopened immediately.

Evening Post 04 Jan 1899 Education Board, Wellington

Applications will be received at this office up to the 13th instant for the following positions:- ... Teacher, Korokoro School; average attendance, 16. Salary £90.

Evening Post 26 Jan 1899 School Appointments

The Education Board yesterday decided to supply the press in future with an official list of its recommendations to school committees for school appointments instead of, as heretofore, withholding them from the public till they have been considered by the committees. The following recommendations for filling vacancies were made at yesterday afternoon's meeting of the Board... Head teacher, Korokoro School (salary £80) – Miss Ada Banks, Manukau.

Evening Post 06 Jul 1899 Local and General

For two years the Korokoro School has been without a committee. On Monday evening residents met at the Schoolhouse, and the following were elected:- Messrs J. J. Burn, A. Baden, J. Murray, I. Stewart, and G. T. Langley (who was elected Chairman), with Mr Stewart as Secretary. The new committee starts with some £8 in hand, and has decided to initiate some much-needed improvements.

Evening Post 26 Apr 1904 School Committee Elections

... Korokoro – Messrs S. Glading, J. McMillan, F. Heppleston, W. Heppleston, J. Flight, C. Mellwood, and W. Laurance. Mr Glading was re-elected Chairman and Mr W. Heppleston Secretary. The school already has a roll number of 32, with an average attendance of 30...

Evening Post 15 Mar 1906 Wellington Education Board

Tenders are invited for Fencing the Korokoro School Site, and will be received at the Board's Office up to Noon of Saturday, 24th March. Specifications may be seen at the Petone Chronicle office, and at the School. G. L. Stewart, Secretary, Education Board.