

# **Tarata School and District Centennial**



---

**1889 — 1989**

---

# Thirty-five Village Sections

IN THE

## VILLAGE OF TARATA

### FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION FOR CASH.

NOTICE is hereby given that the undermentioned Village Sections will be submitted to Public Auction, at the District Lands and Survey Office, NEW PLYMOUTH, on WEDNESDAY, the 12th NOVEMBER, 1902, at 12 o'clock noon.

Village of Tarata.

Section.	Area.	Upset Price.	Section.	Area.	Upset Price.
3	0 1 15	5 0 0 0	29	0 1 0 0	7 10 0 0
4	0 1 8	7 10 0 0	30	0 1 29	5 0 0 0
5	0 1 29	5 0 0 0	31	0 1 29	5 0 0 0
6	0 1 0 0	7 10 0 0	32	0 1 0 0	7 10 0 0
7	0 1 29	5 0 0 0	33	0 1 18	5 0 0 0
8	0 1 0 0	7 10 0 0	34	0 1 8	7 10 0 0
15	0 1 8	7 10 0 0	35	0 2 20	15 0 0 0
16	0 1 18	5 0 0 0	37	0 1 0 0	10 0 0 0
17	0 1 0 0	7 10 0 0	38	0 1 0 0	5 0 0 0
18	0 1 29	5 0 0 0	39	0 1 0 0	5 0 0 0
20	0 1 29	5 0 0 0	40	0 1 0 0	7 10 0 0
21	0 1 0 0	7 10 0 0	41	0 1 0 0	7 10 0 0
22	0 1 0 0	5 0 0 0	42	0 1 29	5 0 0 0
23	0 1 0 0	5 0 0 0	43	0 1 0 0	7 10 0 0
24	0 1 0 0	5 0 0 0	45	0 1 8	7 10 0 0
25	0 1 0 0	5 0 0 0	46	0 1 18	5 0 0 0
26	0 1 0 0	5 0 0 0			
27	0 1 0 0	20 0 0 0			

Locality of Village.

This village is situated on the Junction Road, where it crosses the Waitara River, eleven miles and a half east of Inglewood. There is a Government school here; and ample reserves have been made for recreation, public buildings, &c.

#### TERMS OF SALE.

One-fifth of the purchase-money to be paid on the fall of the hammer, and the balance, with Crown-grant fee (£1), within thirty days thereafter, otherwise the part of the purchase-money paid by way of deposit will be forfeited, and the contract for the sale of the land be null and void.

Full particulars may be ascertained and plans obtained at this office.

**J. MACKENZIE,**

COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS.

District Lands and Survey Office, New Plymouth, 15th September, 1902.

It is obvious that Tarata was meant to have a town. Mr W. H. Skinner surveyed it into residential sections. As early as June 1887 a "rubbish depot" was set aside by the Taranaki Land Board on Section 10 Block 3 which is on the Waitara River bank along from the cemetery. The cemetery is section 21 Block 3.

Within the township, survey sections 1 and 2 were made a police reserve, section 9, 10, 11, 12 and 49 were for public buildings and section 19 was reserved for an 'Institute'. Section 44 was intended as a pound, and section 35 as the site for a roadman's cottage. Section 53 where the school is now situated was vested in the Taranaki Education Board.

When sections were offered for sale few were taken. Those to buy sections were J. P. Clifford, J. Pratt, Richard Speck, a publican, E. R. A. Haworth, four members of the O'Donovan family, Edward Olsen, and the stock firm Vickers and Stevens who built the first saleyards on Section 50. Another interesting purchase was a one acre block between the school and the hall, bought in 1889 by Mr James Tarry who was well known in the coach and carrying business. This section still belongs to the Tarry family although it has been grazed by the Patersons for many years.

With so many sections remaining unsold, the Lands and Survey Dept. offered the surplus sections for auction on November 12th, 1902. The upset prices ranged from £5 to £10. It would appear that none of the

sections were sold. Most of the sections were then leased to local farmers.

When a hall was mooted, the Lands and Survey Dept. suggested section 4 where the hall now stands, as preferable to a site across the road which was quite damp at the time.

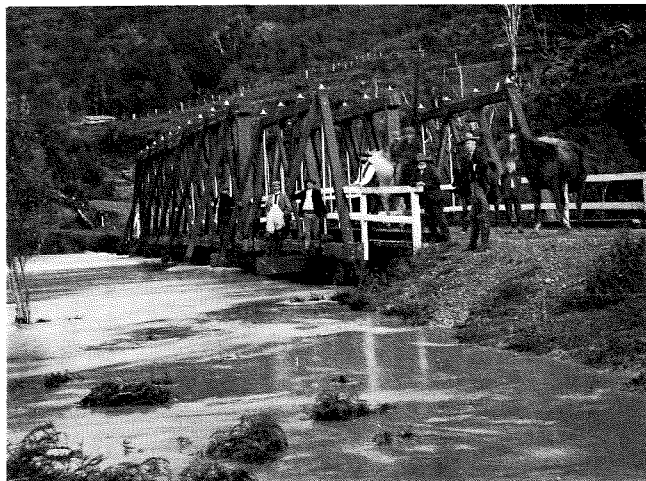
Jim and Bob Paterson bought section 6 where they built a shop next to the hall. They also leased sections opposite the hall. Others to lease or purchase sections were W. Ludeman and J. S. Wilson.

## TARATA BRIDGE

The first settlers and travellers into Tarata crossed the Waitara River over a ford upstream from where the present bridge now stands, at a place called Kerikeri.

The Government, realising a bridge was necessary, let a contract to Claire and Rundle for an estimated £939 in March 1888. Strange as it may sound, the timber consisting of totara and maire was brought from Palmerston North. The weather and muddy road caused considerable delays and the bridge was finally opened in January 1889.

This structure was 161 feet long with a main span of 100 feet. It served the district well for 66 years and withstood many massive floods during its life time. It was lower than the present bridge, and it was not unusual for big floods to bubble up through the carriageway. During such times, local men would stand guard on the bridge to ensure that logs in the river did not cause damage, or build up and dam the water which could have proven disastrous.



The Waitara in flood at Tarata bridge, May 26, 1904.

In 1926 the bridge decking was tarred and sanded because of the slippery surface. Five years later new decking was put on the full span. In 1942 extensive repairs were made after a heavy truck broke a cross girder.

After the war a very strict weight limit was imposed and stock trucks were compelled to fill their upper decks with sheep after they had crossed the bridge, two trucks being involved in shuttling sheep to fill the one truck on the opposite bank.

Between 1946-50 work was carried out to make the bridge a semi-suspension bridge. This involved placing "deadmen" on each bank, with two very robust wooden towers and heavy wire ropes over the top, to carry the weight of the bridge and its traffic. For some reason, at the same time, the County loosened all the decking. The result was a great clatter of planks as traffic passed. This could be heard for miles with the aid of the wind. The loose planks also made it an ordeal to coax cattle to cross. On one occasion Ian and Duncan Paterson were driving a large number of 2½ year bullocks across the bridge to the local sale, when for some reason they all decided to crowd on to the bridge together and broke into a rapid trot. They thought that the bridge was going to collapse. On checking later, they found that the main totara beam on which the carriageway planks sat was broken on one side. The wire ropes took all the strain, but the poor old bridge was tilted to one side — so much so that the vibration of traffic passing would shift planks sideways and leave gaping holes in the deck.

**New Bridge.** Work began about 1950-51 on building the foundations for piers. This involved a lot of quite dangerous work, as the foundation had to be dug under water. The method used was a large steel cylinder placed on bed of river and progressively dug into river bed. To keep the water out, an air compressor was used. It was very heavy, hot and dangerous work. On one occasion, the air compressor failed, and the two men inside the cylinder had a narrow escape.

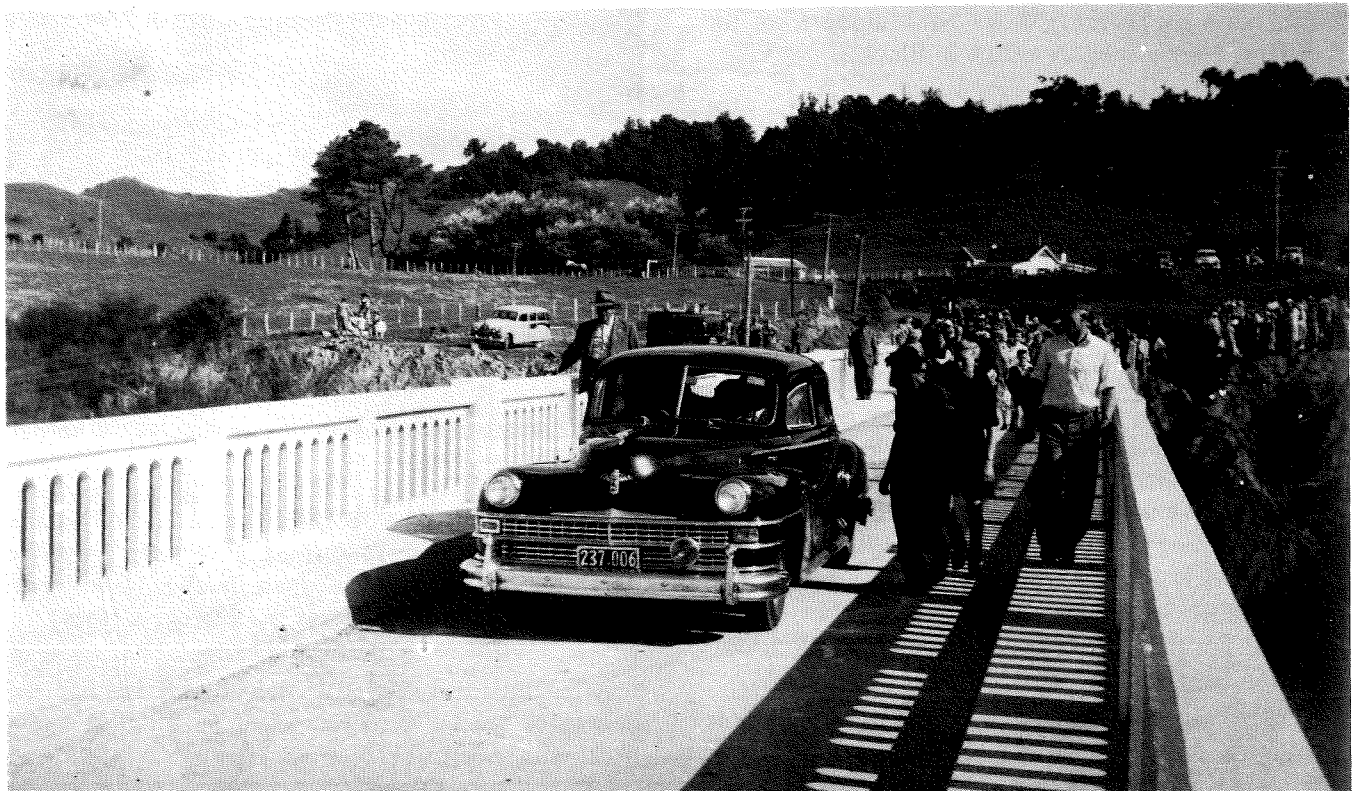
Next came the driving of piles. This went on for weeks, as there were three sets of seven piles to drive — two on south bank, and one on north. The bridge took two full years to complete. Most of the time, there were five to seven men working there. MacMillan and Julian were the contractors.

When there was to be a concrete pour, as many of the locals as could be recruited were used, and at times there were quite large gangs at work.

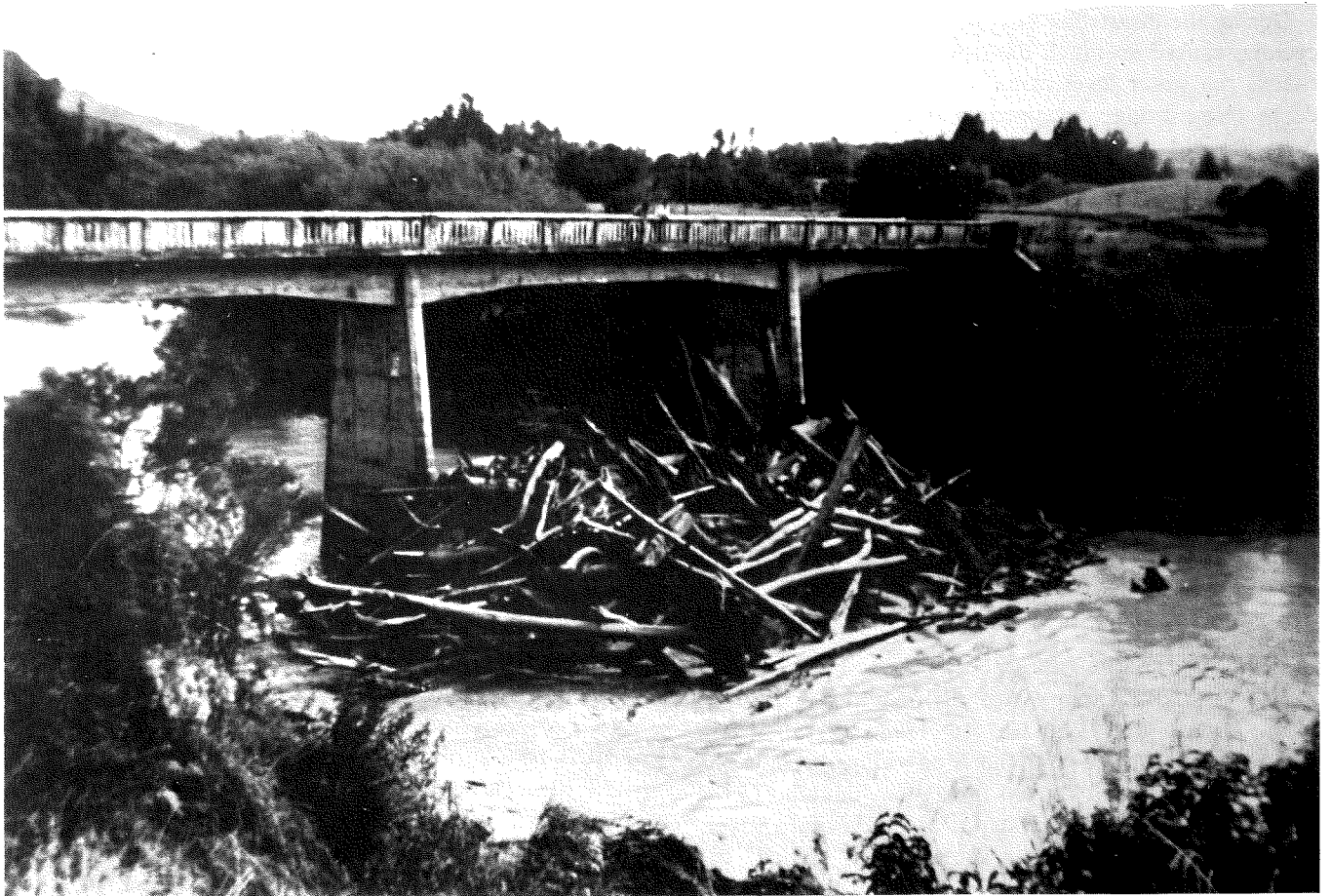
The approaches were constructed by Merv Jensen of Matau. This too was a big job, as the earth from the south end cutting plus a large amount of earth about and up to fertiliser ramp, had to be carted to northern approaches. This was done by pushing earth on to dump trucks off a ramp with a bulldozer. No motor-scrappers in those days! Indeed a very long and tedious job.

Next came the opening. This was performed by Mr Gooseman, the then Minister of Works. The ribbon that was used at the opening ceremony was cut into small pieces which were given to each child then attending the Tarata School. Present at the opening were Mr F. Claire whose father was one of the builders of the old bridge. As a boy Mr Claire had hauled some of the timber to the site with bullock teams. Also present was Mr Godfrey Smith, 81 years of age at the time, who had been the first man to ride across the old bridge 65 years previously. The Inglewood County then put on an 'evening' in the Tarata Hall, and what an evening! All local ratepayers did their utmost to get as great a discount on their rates, by way of drinking as much as they possibly could!

The first real test for the new bridge came in 1964, when as a result of a cloud-burst in the upper reaches of Waitara River, a huge amount of debris in the form of native bush was swept down into the river. A log jam developed against the centre pier of the bridge and created quite a waterfall. This same flood began what could be termed Tarata's nearest thing to a gold rush. Almost all local farmers descended on the coastal beaches to harvest the large quantity of totara, rimu, matai and other fencing timber.



First car over the new bridge.



*The debris at the bridge after the 1971 flood.*



*The old and the new bridges.*

During the disastrous flood of 1971, when a tropical cyclone caused so much damage to our farmland and roads, the water level came to within 1 metre of the deck. (New bridge is approximately 3 metres higher than the old wooden bridge). The new bridge came through with flying colours, but the County Council had a big job removing the pile of trees and debris that had accumulated against the bridge.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In 1852 New Zealand was divided into six provinces, later 10, each with its own Provincial council. New Plymouth was one of these, in 1858 renamed Taranaki. These provinces were abolished in 1875 and government was centralised in Wellington. With the abolition of the provincial council, Taranaki was divided into two counties. Patea in the south and Taranaki in the north.

The Taranaki County was divided into 3 ridings, Moa, Omata and Waitara. In 1877 several Roads Boards were formed and the Moa riding became the Moa Road Board. It ranged from Waiwhakaiho in the west, to Tarata in the east as far as the Waitara River. This meant that when Tarata was settled the Motukawa, ToeToe, and the Junction Road from the zigzag to the Waitara River were part of the Moa Roads Board. Likewise once the Inglewood County was formed in 1920, this area was not included in the East riding despite many suggestions that it should have been. Meetings of the Roads Board were held in the Inglewood library.

Members to represent this part of Tarata were in 1902 Mr Chamney and from 1905-20 Mr Alf Corkill.

The Clifton County broke away from the Taranaki County in 1885 and within this was included all of Tarata east of the Waitara River, Purangi and Matau, in fact it extended towards Lake Taupo.

Councillors to represent the Ngatimaru riding of the Clifton County were:

F. B. Hutchinson	1889-1893
E. R. A. Haworth	1893-1899
F. J. Webb	1899-1905
L. F. Laurent	1902-1905
G. E. Bishell	1905-1908
Herman Sander	1908-1919
H. Waite	1919-1920
H. R. Harrison	1920-1921
R. Mounsey	1921-1923 1926-1929

Council business in the early years was naturally preoccupied with roading, although they do not seem to have been responsible for the original financing and forming of the roads. Their role seems to have been administration and maintenance. The local representative, Dr Hutchinson, could not attend the council meeting in August 1893 because of the state of the road.

The procedure re roads seems to have been for a settler or group of settlers to petition the council for

access or improved access to the property they had purchased. The council would estimate the cost and apply for the money from the government under the 1886 "Loans to Local Bodies" act of parliament.

According to the cost of forming a road the council would levy rates on a farm or road basis. There was not a uniform rate over the riding or county as a whole.

Finance was also made available for roading from a scheme known as "thirds". This scheme was so called because the Government returned one third of the land revenue money to the local body to be used for roading improvement. These "thirds" were allowed to accumulate until a useable amount became available.

In 1891 the following roads were declared county roads and then came under the care and control of the Clifton County — Junction, Autawa, Pita, Oapui, Otaraoa and Wiri.

From settlement until 1920 Tarata, east of the Waitara River, comprised the Ngatimaru riding of the Clifton County. The early settlers must have been in a quandary regarding council allegiance. There was only a track to Clifton headquarters at Waitara. This makes it a little strange that in May 1889 the settlers of Ngatimaru petitioned the Clifton County asking to become part of that County. Even stranger, when we consider that Tarata must have already been included in the Clifton County as occupiers of land in the district had paid rates to Clifton County the previous year. Most traffic used the Zigzag road towards Inglewood. The Moa Roads Board were not happy maintaining a difficult road for the benefit of Clifton Council ratepayers. In fact in September 1892 "the Moa Roads Board closed the Zigzag until word had been received from the Clifton County. The Zigzag is unfit for traffic, and the board has no funds to keep it open."

In 1893 a fully attended meeting of Ngatimaru settlers was held in the school to consider four propositions:

1. to form a separate county.
2. to join the Moa Roads Board.
3. to form a separate Roads Board.
4. to apply for a second representative on the Clifton County and elect a works committee to work with them in matters of the district.

The fourth option was decided upon.

Between 1900-1909 there were strong suggestions from the Moa Roads Board that a toll gate should be set up on the Zigzag. Ngatimaru residents discussed this fully and said it would be a very foolish move. They pointed out that there was now a "beautiful" road out of the district to Waitara and that the rail fare from Waitara to New Plymouth was lower than the fare from Inglewood to New Plymouth. Nothing came of the idea.

In 1919 moves were afoot for the Moa Roads Board to break away from the Taranaki County, and Messrs Corkill and Stuart attended meetings in Ngatimaru to assure ratepayers that they were prepared to incor-