

HISTORY IN A CHURCH

More than a century ago Patea, then known as Cariyle, was envisaged by its inhabitants as the "Gateway to Taranaki," and many fine homes and public buildings were erected in keeping with this concept.

But geography defeated ideals, and Patea's growth never came up to the settlers' realisations. However, some of the fine buildings remain. One is St George's Anglican Church — its wooden Gothic form and flying buttresses make it an attraction for students of architecture and for many tourists.

It was designed by Mr F. de J. Clere, Wellington, in 1884, and consecrated on March 5, 1885, by Bishop Hadfield. It was built by Messrs Thompson and Eklorn, and cost \$750. Allow-

ing for translation to dollars and nearly 90 years of escalation of costs, it was still a cheap building.

Mr Clere designed many early New Zealand churches, more than 100 in the Well-

ington diocese alone, and one of them, the Anglican church in Feilding, is of similar design to St George's.

Unfortunately in those days there were not the grading rules for timber now

known; wood was just wood. It was built of whatever was available, mostly rimu with some totara, but generally it was not heart timber, and the parish was faced with major renovations in 1956.

The only piece of kauri in the whole church is the outside notice-board, which was made from part of the first church building.

RENOVATIONS

It was a moot point in 1956 whether the church would be pulled down and another built, or whether the historic building would be preserved.

The traditionalists had their way, and the renovations were carried out under the direction of Mr Kevin James of the Auckland firm of architects, Rigby Millin. He still has the drawings he made then.

The tower and steeple were in such bad condition that all the interior framing, which had pulped with rot, was removed and a steel frame put in to hold it up. Even 18 years ago, the renovations would have cost many times the original cost of the church.

Since then a small amount of borer has made its appearance and been treated, said the vicar, the Rev. A. K. Everitt.

The church has been maintained in good condition since the renovations were done, and has recently been painted.

GOTHIC ARCHES

Inside, soaring Gothic arches, stained glass and generations of prayer give an atmosphere of peace and uplift infrequently felt in more modern buildings.

Not that the beginnings of the parish were calm. The first Anglican services held in Patea were conducted for the troops by Army chaplains during the Maori wars.

While St George's parish in the Parochial District of Patea is the oldest between Wanganui and Hawera, dating back to March, 1871, the present church is not the original building. This stood where the vicarage now stands, on Egmont St, and after the present church was built, was used as a Sunday School until it was pulled down to make way for the vicarage in 1856.

Apparently the old building was not big enough for the size of the congregation, and moves were made in the early 1890s to have it replaced by the present church.

In those days it was the custom for parishioners to apply for their seats in church, available at a yearly rental, and at that time applications exceeded the number of seats available.

The original church cost £227.

PARISHIONERS' GIFTS

Much of the furniture and fittings of the church were the gift of parishioners when it was being built. The east windows, of a rather Persian-patterned stained glass, were erected to the memory of William Derrett of Pine Hill, south of Patea, in 1884-5.

The brass lectern still in use came from England in 1885, the gift of a parishioner, Mr Arundell, and the Oamaru stone font was also a gift at that time, given by the Sunday school.

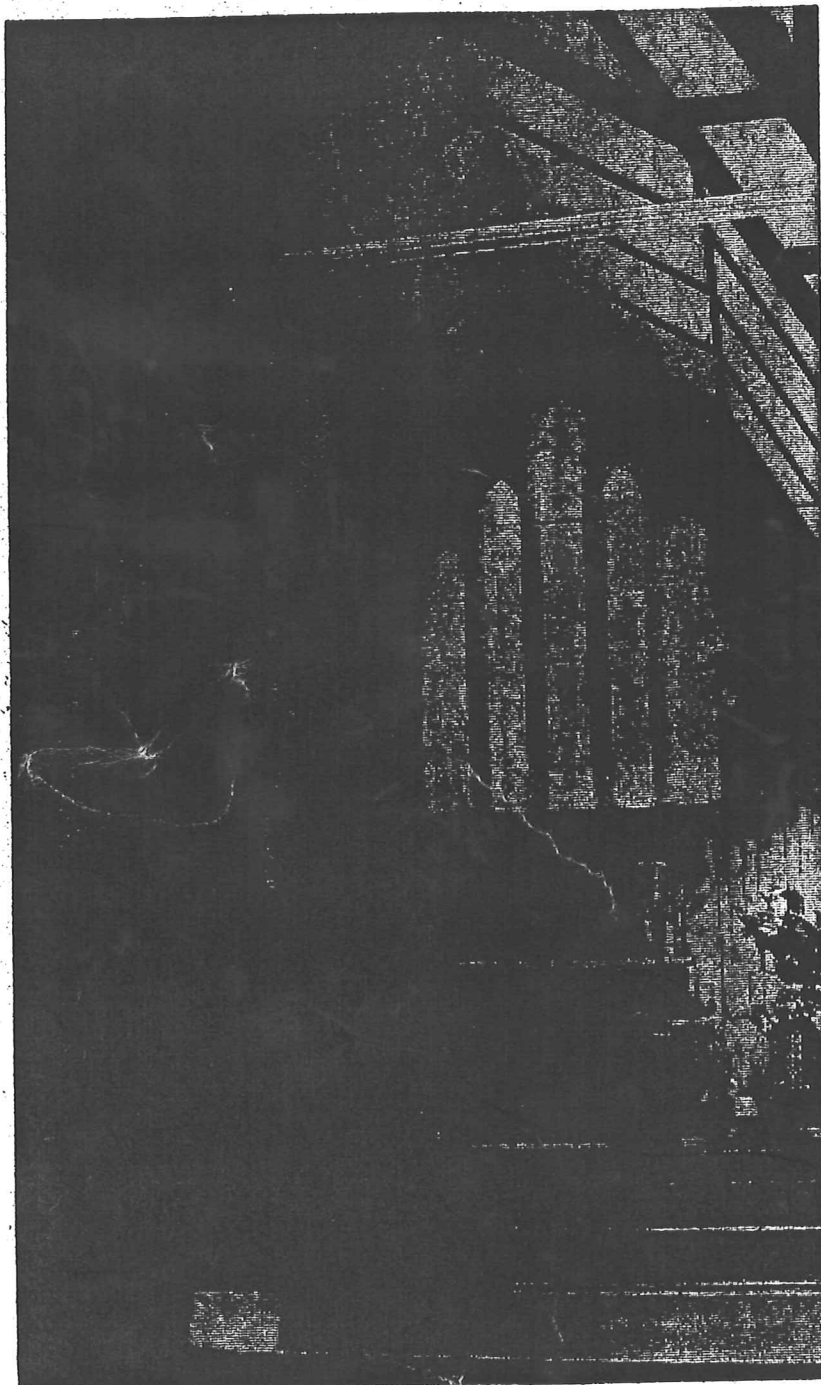
The very fine stained glass windows at the west end of the church were the gift of Mrs Catherine Honeyfield in 1920, whose family has the longest association with the church of any, even up to the present generation.

The Patronal flag which hangs in the church, and the pulpit, were also her gifts.

The parish did not celebrate its centenary in 1971 as it was not realised at the time that 100 years had been reached, but is firmly looking forward and planning for the centenary of the church in 1985.



ST GEORGE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, Patea, with its flying buttresses and tall windows, is an attractive feature of the town's skyline.



1966 Interior shot shows the fine stained glass west windows.

SPORTSWEAR