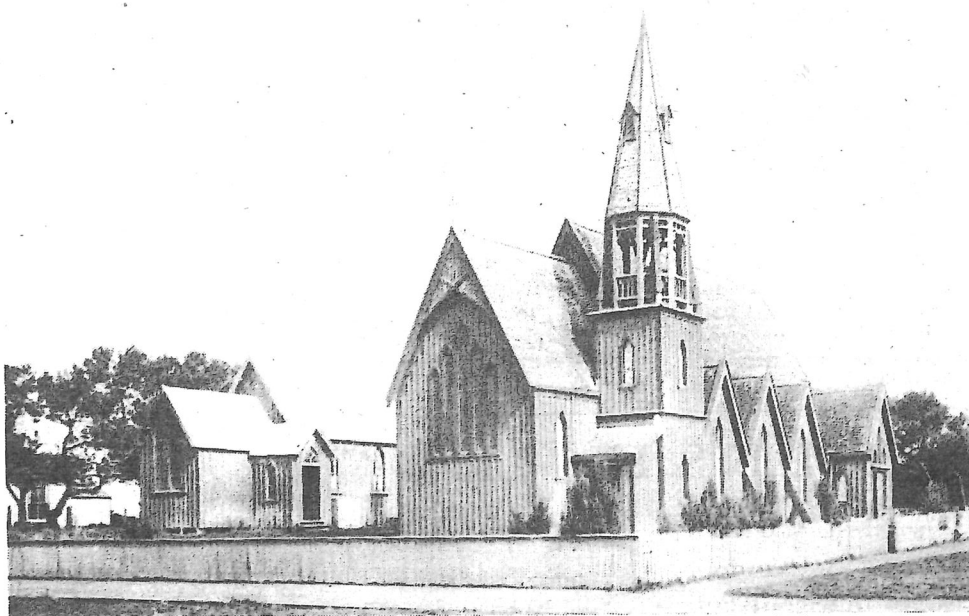


# A SHORT HISTORY OF ST GEORGE'S



St George's Church before the renovations with the original church, later used as a hall, on the left.

Photo — Alexander Turnbull Library

St George's Parish in the Parochial District of Patea is the oldest between Wanganui and Hawera, dating back to March, 1871.

The first church building in the parish stood on the site where the present Vicarage now stands and was possibly erected in late 1871. The cost of that building was \$227! (The building was pulled down to make way for the present Vicarage in 1956). Apparently the old building was not large enough for the size of the congregation, because in the early 1880s moves were put forward for the building of a new Church. In those days it was the custom for the parishioners to apply for their seats in the Church, at a yearly rental and at this time applications exceeded the seats available. How times have changed!

Reading from the records, the new Church building had not been approved in the middle of August, 1884 but the next thing we read is that it was

consecrated on 5th March, 1885 by Bishop Hadfield. So the building standing today is almost 100 years old. The cost was £750 and was built by Thompson and Ellerm. The architects for St George's were Messrs Atkins and Clere from Wanganui. The Gothic style with its pillars and arches is not common in New Zealand and we must admit that there is beauty and atmosphere both in the nave and the chancel and this has been appreciated by visitors from many parts of the world. The tall spire is reminiscent of those seen around the English and European countryside.

The stained glass windows and furnishings were mainly given by faithful parishioners.

Many were presented during the building in 1884/85 as were the east windows to the memory of William Derrett of Pine Hill whose family was for many years prominent in the parish.

The brass Eagle or Lectern was a gift in 1885, from Mr Arundell, a parishioner. This lovely piece of brass came from England.

The font was also presented in 1885. A gift from the Sunday School and made of Oamaru Stone. The Sunday School was then run by a Mrs Dale, a forebear of the Beamish family. The Font Cover of Heart Totara wood was carved and donated by one Mr Iazard of Motueka.

The beautiful stained glass windows at the west end were the gift of Mrs Catherine Honeyfield. The subjects were chosen personally by her and the designs excellently carried out. These windows were given in 1920 and their full beauty is to be seen with the late afternoon sun.

The Patronal flag of St George was also a gift from Mrs Honeyfield as was also the pulpit. The Honeyfield family has the longest and most active association of any member of St George's, even to the present genera-

tion.

From information recently received we learn that the pulpit was designed and made by the late Mr J.S. Kirkman as was also the Roll of Honour.

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

The present Altar is of recent construction and was presented by the family of Mary Jane Besley, a very faithful parishioner who at the age of 84 years used to walk from Whenuakura into Patea each Sunday morning.

The wrought iron and Rimu altar railings were presented at the rededication, in 1958, by the Duncalf Family, late of Patea.

The Corpus Cristi on the front pillar was donated in 1973 by the family of Mrs Maida Sheild who was a faithful worshipper and stalwart member of the choir up to her departure from Patea in the 1940s.

2 July 1900: Letter from Peace Celebration Committee asking Council to allow Memorial Lamp and Fountain to be erected in the Triangle, and if consent is given, will Council undertake lighting of the lamp with oil until electricity is established and also if Council will allow water from the reservoir to be laid on to the fountain and trough. Resolved: That this Council, in reply to the request of the Peace Celebration Committee to be allowed to erect a lamp and fountain in the Triangle, is willing to undertake the lighting of the lamp there, but would suggest that a more suitable site might be selected at the junction of Egmont and Bedford Streets; but cannot consent to allow the water from the reservoir to be laid on to the fountain and trough. (This was anticipating peace after the Boer War by two years).

By the 1950s the church building was in such a state of disrepair that decisions had to be made as to its future. Lengthy discussions and arguments were held as to whether a new building should go up or the present one retained. The latter alternative ruled and restoration of this beautiful Church took place in 1957/58.

Re-dedication was on 27th April, 1958 by the Rt. Rev. E.J. Rich, Assistant Bishop of Wellington. It is hoped that this present building will now see its 100 years in 1985.

A silver jug was given in 1980 by Mr and Mrs Geoff Honeyfield in memory of Mrs Elsie Honeyfield.

The most recent bequest, in 1981, was from the Estate of Mrs M.F. Loftus part of which was used to purchase a Good News Lectern Bible.

23 April 1963: Mr G. F. Rooks' tender for building convenience accepted.