

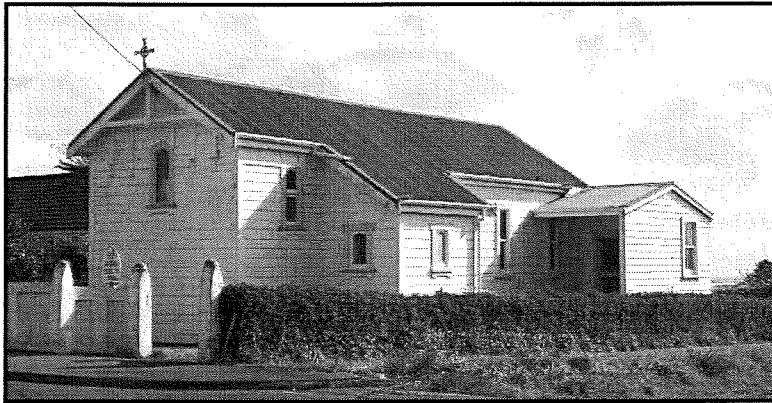
St. NICHOLAS' ANGLICAN CHURCH

The first reference that can be obtained of the presence of Anglicans in Rahotu is recorded in the minutes of a "meeting of church delegates held at Okato on June 8th, 1899" when "Mr Elwin moved that the church members of Rahotu be requested to form a committee and assume some measure of responsibility in connection with church work in the parochial district. Seconded by Mr W.J. Gray Carried.

Church life flourished in the area over the years, in spite of the lack of a church building, until 1910. In that year the vicar and committee purchased the Masonic Hall which had become vacant when the lodge transferred its centre to Opunake. With the devotion and generous donations of time and money, the building was converted to a beautifully appointed little church. Let extracts from the Auckland church gazette of January 1911 tell the story of the opening:

"On Sunday, December 4th, 1910, a new church at Rahotu was opened and dedicated to the glory of God and in memory of his servants, St Nicholas Bishop, by the Venerable Archdeacon Cole – The Gospel was first read in Maori by the Maori missionary for the district, Wai Kaipu, and it was then read in English by the vicar, Rev C. Addenbrooke. Thus was the equality of the two races before God suitably marked and the church's mission to both emphasised".

For many years following, congregations at services were numerically much greater than they are today. In those far-off days, each village area was a fairly tight knit community, and every function of



whatever kind was well supported. As time passed, step by step improvements were made. The building was brought up to the middle of the section from the bottom corner, and was later enlarged. The roadside trees were removed, and also the broken-hinged wooden gate that had to be dragged through the mud to allow the horses and gigs into the section. And so it has gone on.

Vicars have come and gone, some good and others not so good, according to one's taste, but each and all dedicated to their task of uplifting the souls of their flock. As church attendances started to decline in line with the national trend, Rev E. Addis introduced films in lieu of sermons, at his own expense, but with nil results.

One departure from the usual programme of services was tried in the 1960s when Maori-Pakeha communion services were conducted once a month for several years by the area Maori missionary. These were a success for a time, but one fine day in spring there were no Maoris present, and after service Rev Tim Flavell was heard to remark "No Horis here today. Must be all away whitebaiting!"

Owing to boundary difficulties, Rahotu is more or less isolated from the rest of the Okato Co-Operating Parish, but for years now there has been encouraging co-operation between local Methodist and Anglican people.

Arthur Gibson



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Since 1984 many of the Parishioners of the St. Nicholas Anglican Church have moved away. In 2008 it was decided to close the church and sell the building. A stained glass window that was in the St. Nicholas church was moved to St. Paul's church in Okato. The window was installed in the St. Nicholas church in April 1961 by four Gibson brothers, Massam, Alick, Don and Arthur. This was in memory of their parents George and Jane Isabella Gibson. The Gibson family asked permission to have the window moved to St Paul's, as George had been a Lay Preacher in the Okato Parish.

This window was made by Messrs James Powell and Sons in England and shipped out to New Zealand, arriving in Wellington March 1961.

Willie Gibson
