

"Our new parson has fixed to hold services every month at Ngamatapouri at 11.00am. There is no building here to hold services in at 11.00am!

"We had a Dipper up a few weeks ago. He was indiscreet and so became offensive and I fear he did no good at all.

"We had a bush missionary unattached to any denomination up three times. He is welcome. Asks for nothing — takes what is given him and does good."

— Joseph Smith, Ngamatapouri, 1879

NGAMATAPOURI CHURCH: ST HILDA IN-THE-WOOD

"On March 6, 1898, the vicar, the Rev C.A. Tisdall, called a meeting of residents in Mr Armstrong's store after morning prayer to consider what steps should be taken to make use of a section which the Wellington Board of Diocesan Trustees had secured for a church site at Ngamatapouri.

"A committee 'to make all necessary arrangements for fencing the site and erecting a church room thereon' was appointed as follows: Messrs E.F. Liffiton, C. James, Parkinson, A. Smith, Haddon (Secretary), J. Armstrong and G. Braithwaite. The minutes of this meeting record a vote of thanks to Mr Armstrong for lending his store for a place of worship. The services continued to be held in the store until the church was built.

"At subsequent meetings of the committee plans were discussed of the proposed building and a plan and specifications were drawn up by Messrs Clere and Swan, architects, of Wellington. These and the original contract are still held with other parish records. A canvass for subscriptions towards the building was made and the list of subscribers includes the names of nearly all the settlers, the Bishop of Wellington, Archdeacon Fancourt, Rev C.A. Tisdall, Rev D. Major, Dr Earle and H.I. Jones & Son (Wanganui).

Help from England

"In the meantime Mr Tisdall returned to England to become vicar of St Hilda's, Darlington. He took with him his burning enthusiasm to have a church built at Ngamatapouri. He showed photographs of the services being held in Mr Armstrong's store to his

parishioners and on March 7, 1900, he wrote out with the good news that he had been given by an anonymous donor the sum of £150 towards the building of the church. He said that he had also been promised other help by parishioners at Darlington towards the furnishing of the church. In this letter Mr Tisdall suggested that as the parish and Church of St Hilda, in which he was now working, was taking an intense interest in the matter of the church at Ngamatapouri and had provided the means of building it without further money trouble, the church, when completed should be consecrated in the name of St Hilda. This suggestion was agreed to by the committee. Later, gifts from St Hilda's, Darlington, included the rich embroidered altar frontal which is still admired today, and which was valued at £50 over 50 years ago.

Built for £158

"At a meeting of the committee on January 19, 1902, it was decided to call for tenders for the erection of the church. Still held is a tender by Mr G. Braithwaite for £281.12.6, but this was too high for the committee's means and was not accepted. Some of the building material was bought and given and Mr Braithwaite offered to build the church and supply all material not already ordered, for £158. This offer was accepted and the contract was signed on March 23, 1903.

"The church building was taken over on November 6, 1904, but it still had to be lined and furnished. Funds for this work were sought from parishioners and friends.

"By the date of its consecration on March 13, 1907, St Hilda's was complete. Bishop Wallace preached from Psalm 132, verse 6, and after the service there was a happy gathering. A photograph of the special cake for the occasion shows it to be an outside one.

"St Hilda-in-the-Wood has been a loved centre of worship in the years since its consecration. There have been great improvements in the roads and transport over those years. The older parishioners recall the days of bullock teams, pack horses, waggons and buggies and mud — much mud.

"They recall when the only way of getting supplies to their settlement was by the

"We are to have a church up here right enough. The money can be raised easier than I thought. Both Hutchison and Dr Earle have promised two guineas. But we shall not be able to go in for stained glass windows and that sort of thing."

— Walton Smith



Waitotara River and the first clay road up over the saddle through Ngutuwera. They recall the many times through the years when they have been cut off from civilisation by floods, slips and broken bridges.

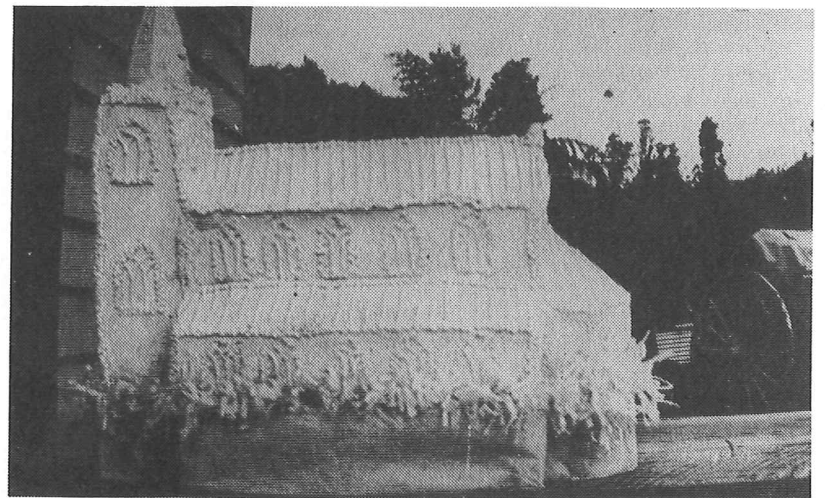
"And they recall the ministers who have served them faithfully, often getting through almost impossible conditions to minister to them – men like the Rev H.F. Wilson, who used to make the 35-mile journey from Waverley on foot to take a service in their church.

"There are the names ever living in their memory, too, of the loyal churchmen and churchwomen who have gone on before them, who, by their self-sacrifice and loving service, gave them the church they love today. They take inspiration from their faith and effort, their trial and victory, their sorrow and gay and carry on that their heritage may be blessed to future generations."

– *Wanganui Chronicle*, April 6, 1957. (See also Smith family.)



Unlabelled, but presumed to be opening of church.



Opening of St Hilda-in-the-wood. Note cartwheel.