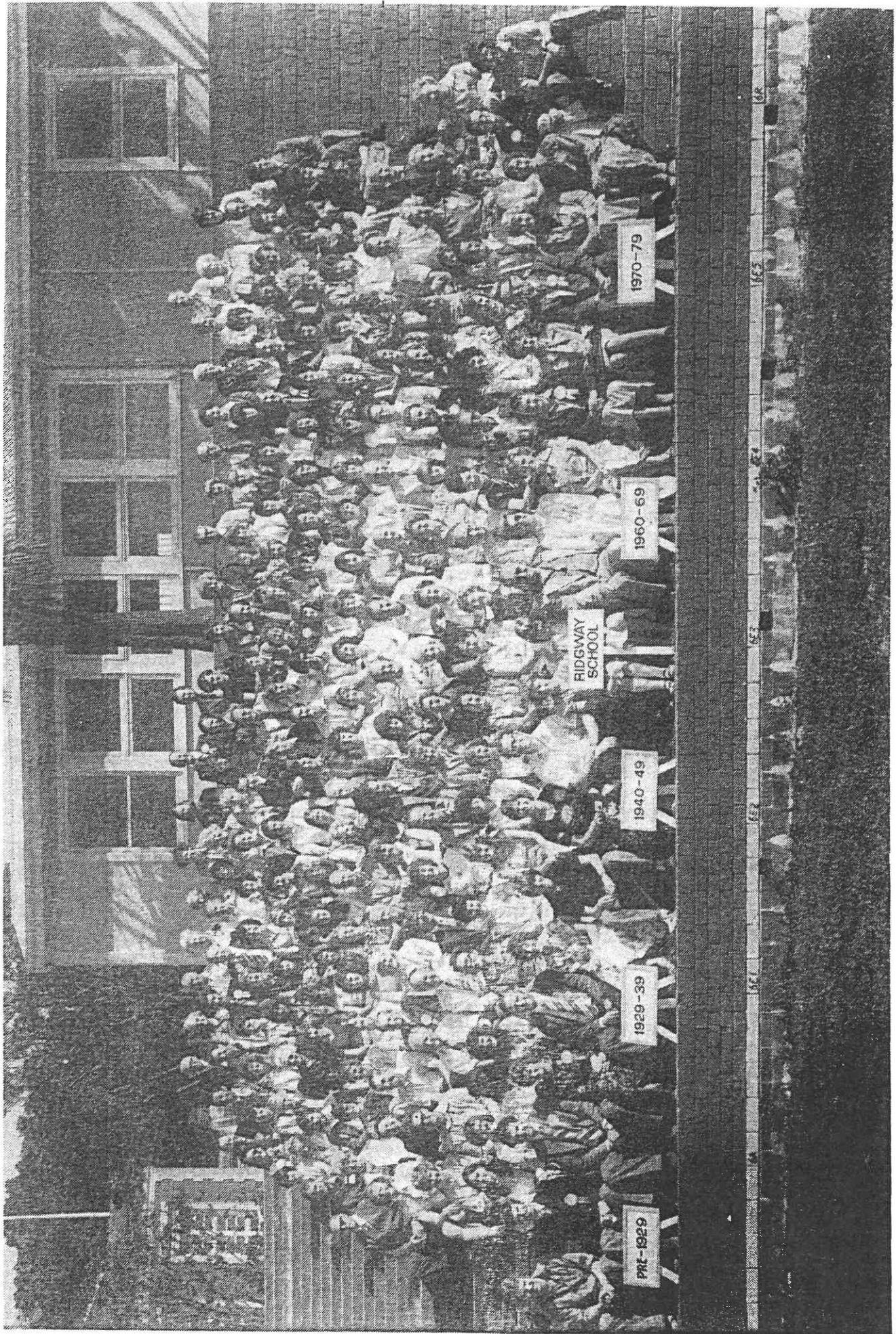


RIDGWAY SCHOOL

THE GOLDEN YEARS

H.D. GRAHAM

**Written and compiled to commemorate
the 50th Jubilee celebrations
October 1979**



P R E F A C E

With the publication of this brief history, we come to the conclusion of the Golden Jubilee of the Ridgway School and Vogelmorn Tennis Club. It is my privilege to write a short account of some of the many activities which have made this Jubilee such an outstanding success.

As early as mid 1977, a group of enthusiastic ex-pupils rallied together to discuss the possibility of arranging a series of functions to formally celebrate the fiftieth year of the School's being. At this time, members of the Vogelmorn Tennis Club were likewise discussing similar proposals as their Club approached it's half century of operation. With many folk involved in both organisations, and true to the co-operative and close-knit spirit in the neighbourhood, it seemed very natural for both groups to combine.

On 17 August 1977, the first public meeting was called and an enthusiastic committee of 12 was formed under the capable chairmanship of Mr Keith Backhouse. Committee members were: Secretary, Mrs Mae Hansen (McCullough); Treasurer, Mrs Jean Streeter (Baker); Mesdames Audrey Swallow (Annabel), Betty Read (Brunsdon), Eetty Blair (Backhouse), Merle Mills (Jones); Messrs David Pyle, Laurie Randell, Alan Randell, Colin Frampton; Tennis Club: Mr and Mrs Frank Simonsen.

The work of this Committee tends to be overlooked in the general organisation of the Jubilee, and although their efforts were obviously "Labours of love", their work is deserving of the highest praise and appreciation.

Meetings were held monthly during '78 and '79 and lively discussions ranged over topics such as advertising procedures, venues, costing, the programme of events and the availability of souvenirs.

At this time the School was preparing for a series of changes, the first of which came about in May '78 with the resignation of Mr L. Pearson, Principal for some 16 years. A large crowd gathered at a Farewell Evening to wish Mr Pearson a happy retirement. This evening is remembered with affection by many as the forerunner to the successful reunions to come at the Jubilee celebrations in the following year.

The next major change came about with the commencement in February '79 of the remodelling of the School. This in itself caused some difficulties for the Jubilee Committee as it became obvious the School could not be used as a venue for the celebrations and alternative accommodation must be found.

As Labour Weekend '79 approached, each difficulty was methodically overcome. Many of the planning meetings were lengthy but morale was high and the general excitement and tempo steadily increased. The climax in planning was reached during the week leading up to "The" weekend when the Committee held no fewer than three "final" meetings - and possibly as many more of an unofficial nature.

The celebrations commenced with a "Get Together" on the evening of Friday 19 October. The Committee had been warned that to arrange a formal welcome or any entertainment was not only unnecessary but very likely a hindrance to the real purpose of the evening. How right they were.... People had travelled from the four corners of N.Z. and beyond with the ultimate purpose of meeting old friends and reminiscing over times gone by. Fashions may have changed, faces aged and figures thickened or thinned, but minor barriers of greying hair, wrinkles or other evidences of the march of time were soon overcome. The Brooklyn Community Centre became the venue for reliving School concerts, playground

"happenings", long walks to Evans Bay for swimming lessons or to South Wellington Manual Training School, and drawing verbal portraits of vivid personalities long remembered. Feelings of genuine warmth and joy were very evident and will remain lasting memories for all those present.

Saturday 20th dawned with tailor-made weather conditions for the afternoon's programme - the Official Opening and Roll Call - held in the Wellington College Hall and Grounds. The official programme commenced at 1.30 pm. with a selection of songs, instrumental items and choral speaking performed by present day pupils. The Mayor of Wellington, Mr Michael Fowler, officially opened the celebrations and the roll was called in groups covering the five decades of the period represented. Five Jubilee cakes, very delicately iced and made by ex-pupils and friends were cut by Mrs Thora McArthur (Staples), the oldest ex-pupil present, and Mr C. Backhouse, the first Tennis Club President. Photos were taken, afternoon tea served and the vast throng of over 500 people present were free to pursue memories of shared joys of bygone days.

In the evening an enthusiastic crowd of over 300 people returned to share good food, good music and good friends at the Dine and Dance function.

Fittingly, a large gathering of folk attended on Sunday morning to fill St Matthew's Church in Brooklyn and share in a Thanksgiving Service conducted by the Rev. Barry Olsen. In his role of Church Warden, Mr Gordon Churchill, a past pupil of the School, welcomed everyone to the Service which was followed by a luncheon.

In the afternoon the tempo of the weekend slowed for some, yet a few folk took the opportunity of a sightseeing tour of the City and environs, some viewed the "gallery" of photos on display at Vogelmorn Hall, while others openly relaxed in preparation for the Farewell Gathering and Tea held at the Brooklyn Community Centre.

So the celebrations concluded. All who attended the gatherings must have departed the richer for having shared the hours in renewing and strengthening old friendships. No doubt the events of Labour Weekend 1979 will live again where-ever past pupils of Ridgway School meet.

Yet the work of the Committee members was not quite over. The minutes of the meeting of 21 November '79 expressed their well earned satisfaction as the Secretary recorded, "Saturday, 20 October arrived with perfect weather conditions which set the seal of success on our Jubilee Celebrations. It was agreed that the time and effort given by all had been well worthwhile. The excitement and enjoyment had not dulled throughout the entire weekend....."

The prime aim had been to organise a fitting and successful weekend of celebrations, but it transpired the Committee members were able to take pride in the added bonus of a financial gain. The profits were shared on the basis of two thirds for the School (a share of some \$1,400) and one third for the Tennis Club. In addition a generous donation was received from an ex-pupil, Mr Don Langley. These funds have been used to purchase additional equipment for the School's new library and classroom block; later officially opened in April '80. The celebrations have therefore been recorded in a tangible form for the pupils of today and tomorrow.

It but remains for me to extend grateful thanks to the Jubilee Committee members, to men and women, boys and girls representing either the School or Tennis Club, and to friends from near and far who worked so diligently to make our celebrations such an overwhelming success.

Barbara Harford
Head Teacher



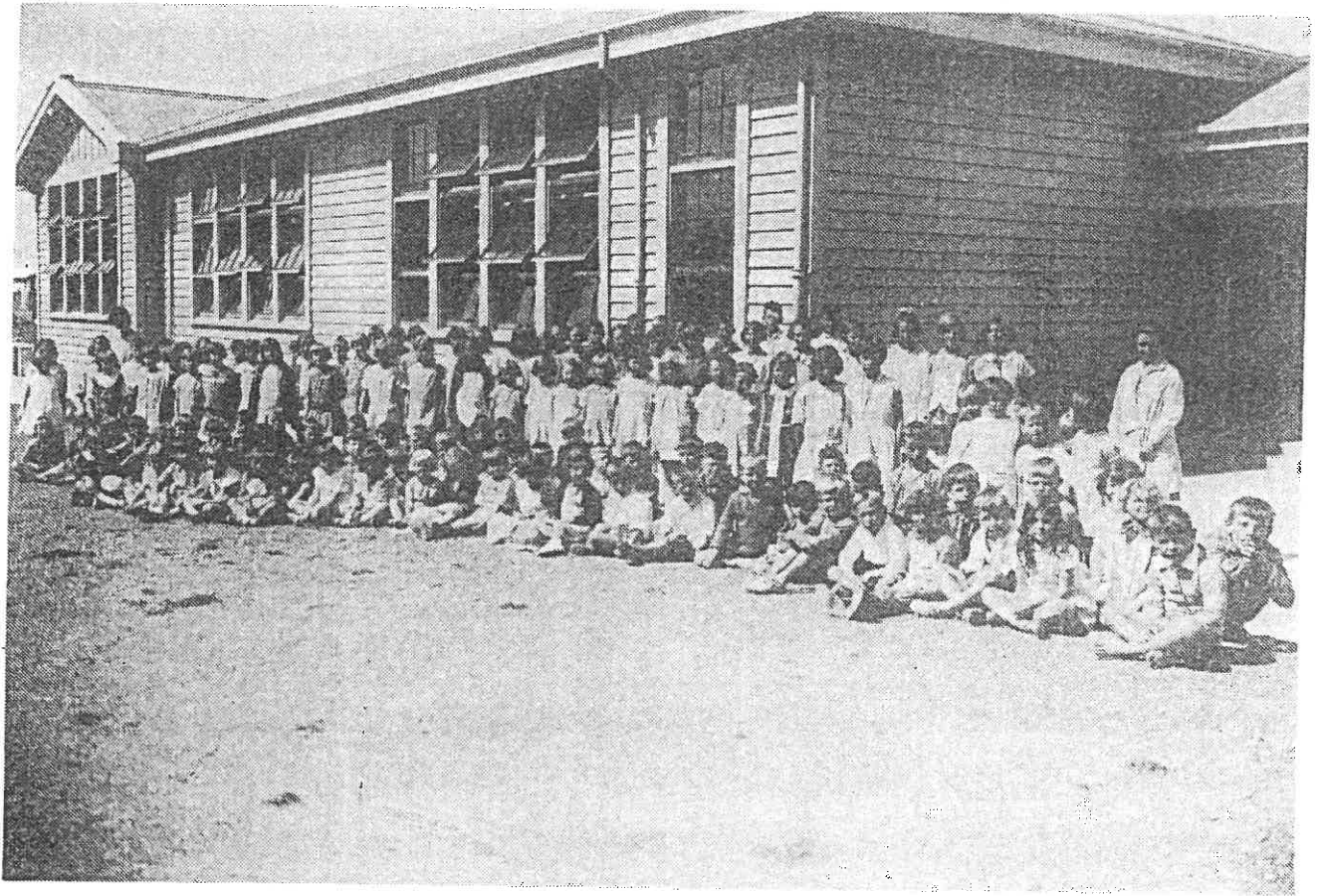
Back row: Mr. H. Graham, Mrs. A. Swallow, Miss B. Harford

Front row: Mrs. McKeich, Miss R. Cattnach, Mrs. R. Rose,

Miss M. Lynsky, Mr. L. Pearson.

RIDGWAY SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS

May 1929 - July 1936	Mr W.S. Bowie
July 1936 - February 1942	Mr P.M. Jackson
April 1942 - December 1943	Mr G.C. Smith
February 1944 - May 1948	Mr P. Williams
May 1948 - July 1948	Mr A.W. Torrie
July 1948 - August 1952	Mr W.F. Vietmeyer
September 1952 - May 1958	Miss R. Cattanach
May 1958 - August 1962	Mr J. Graham
September 1962 - December 1962	Mr M. Coates (Acting Headteacher)
February 1963 - May 1978	Mr L.G.A. Pearson
May 1978	Miss B.B. Harford



Early Days at Ridgway School
1929 - 1930



Mr. W. S. Bowie

RIDGWAY 1929 - 1979 A PERSONAL VIEW

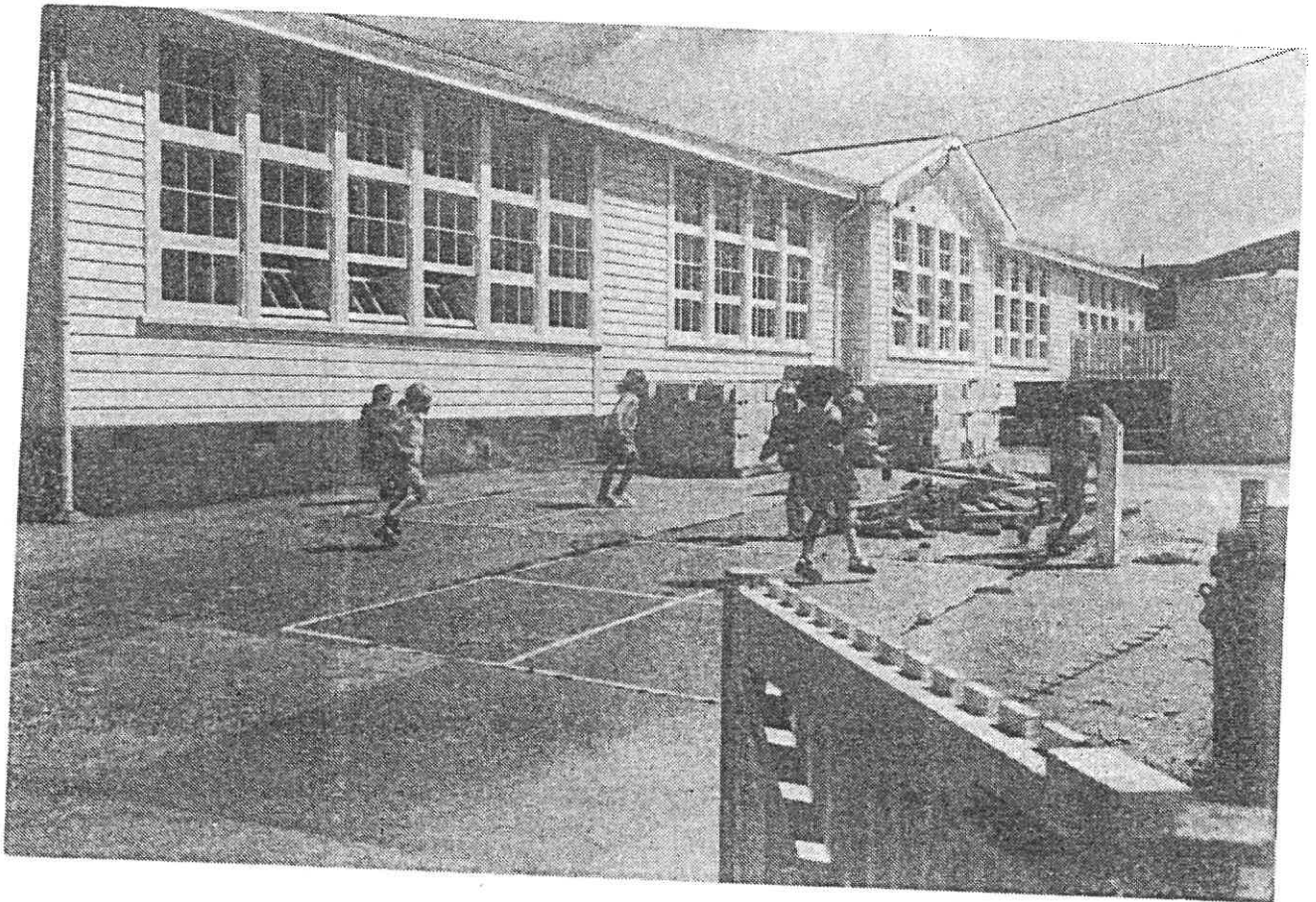
I have decided to base this history of Ridgway School on the school principal's official log. The Education Board's instructions on keeping a school Log meant that it is a document of diverse information. Furthermore, it has the advantage, as far as I am concerned, of providing within two covers a continuous record of events at Ridgway School from 1929 until the present day.

Obviously, then the personal view of the past 50 years is not only mine - in selecting what to write - but it also incorporates the personal views of the various head-teachers, in deciding what went into the Log. Some principals were more assiduous in keeping the Log than others. For instance, some years have only one or two entries, while the records for other years occupy several pages. But the amount of writing isn't everything. One head-teacher felt that the main point of the Log was to note the weather conditions and pupil attendance figures. Other head-teachers used the opportunity to set down in the Log all the details of staff appointments and school committee elections. Still others again used the Log to record important changes in school policy, but also managed to include lighter, individual touches in preserving some personal comments about the everyday aspects of school life.

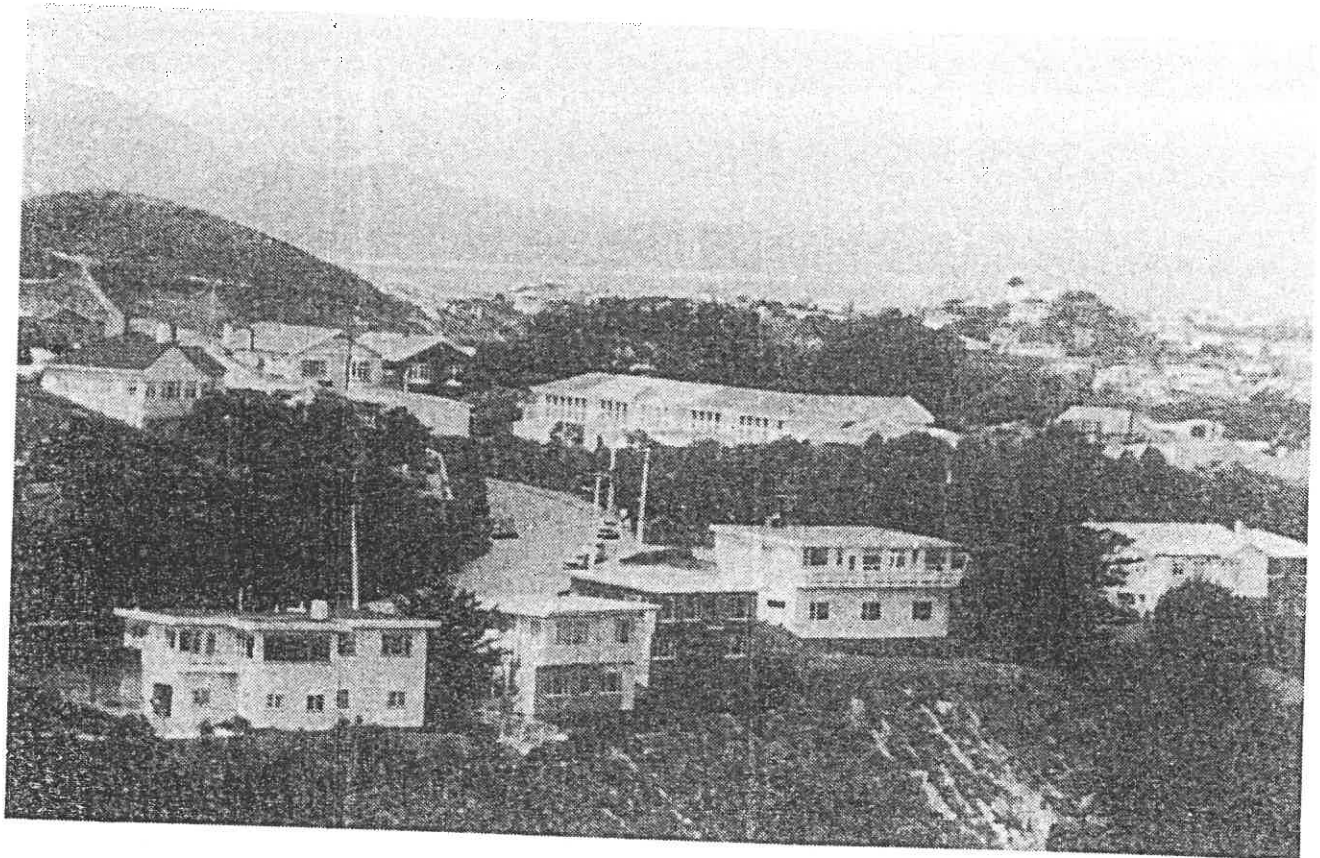
It was this last type of thing that appealed to me, and which provided the basis for much of this booklet. If the tone of both the Log and of this account tend to become more clipped, more business-like and less cosy as we approach the present day, then it is most probably a reflection of the times.

I have arranged the material from the Log under various headings - not so much in order to portray the past as either the Good Old Days or The Bad Old Days compared with the present. But more in order to illustrate the fact that, although 50 years have passed and the world in general has gone through some overwhelming and rapid changes, life at Ridgway School is not greatly different. Today's principals keep the Log in a very different style to those of half a century ago; but, essentially, the joys and worries of being head-teacher at Ridgway have not altered significantly.

And I anticipate that when someone (not me) introduces the booklet to celebrate Ridgway's Centenary, they will be moved to set down that same reassuring statement. I wish them, and indeed all the future associates of Ridgway School, the very best of luck for the next 50 years.



Before Remodelling



YES... BUT WON'T IT BE LOVELY WHEN IT'S FINISHED

As you are undoubtedly aware, 1979 not only marked Ridgway's 50th birthday, it also saw the completion of the school's long-awaited re-modelling. And that is a scheme which many of the local people involved might have to be forgiven for thinking has been going on for nearly as long as the school itself.

In fact we have to go back in the school Log to February 1972 to find first mention of Ridgway's most recent facelift. At that time Mr Pearson wrote: "The (Education Board's) building requirements over the next five years will be the remodelling of old schools. Ridgway is included for 1975."

Then, in September 1975 he again noted - with a wisdom acquired by years of experience in education: "According to an N.Z.E.I. circular this school is now eighth on the Board's list for remodelling - which simply means sometime in the future, possibly 1980."

We know now how close Mr Pearson was to foretelling the future. His successor, Miss Harford, has in 1979 overseen the disruptive procedure whereby four classes of children were bused each day to Kingston, while two classes remained in the Pre-fabricated rooms already at Ridgway.

The existing prefab. classrooms have attracted some ironic comment over the years usually because of their "relocatable" or "dismountable" nature, and because they're intended as "Temporary". But the fact that both rooms 6 and 7 have served Ridgway so well in recent times has made the school glad to have them. And the rooms' big advantage is that they can be erected so easily. As if to restore teachers' faith in the Education Board, the time lag between Board approval and actual occupation by classes, was 10 months for Room 7 (opened September 1974) and 9 months for Room 6 (opened March 1969).

But Board action to alleviate classrooms brimming over with children has not always been lightning-fast, as Miss Harford and Mr Pearson realised.

Mr Bowie, the first head-teacher, reached the same conclusion in 1931. By December of that year the school roll had reached 142 - in a school which had opened in February 1929, 3 years before, with 87 pupils. In the school Log Mr Bowie wrote: "The work of the school has been greatly hampered during the year through lack of accommodation. The teachers' room has been used for oral classes, but this arrangement necessitated much changing, and crowding of desks into the middle room."

Then, by the beginning of the 1934 school year Mr Bowie (and his staff, and his pupils) must have been rather fed up: "Shortage of accommodation, the necessity for (the) use of (the) teachers' room for oral class work, and the constant changing of Std's 1,2,3 and 4 are a great drawback to the efficient working of this school. This state of things has been going on since May 1931."

Nearly two years after that note, everyone at Ridgway must have sighed with relief. Mr Bowie's entry in the Log for 19 December 1935 reads: "A grant of Five Hundred Pounds was obtained by Mr Wright M.P. for the construction of an additional room - a need now five years overdue."

But their joy was short-lived. 3 February 1936: "Our hopes not realised - no new room has been built during the holidays."

Then, the great day: 27 March 1936: "The contractors turned up today to make a beginning on the building of the new room."

The saga does not end there, however.

Mr Bowie discovered that there was a catch: "The noise of hammering prevents any oral work from being done. I have lost my voice owing to attempting to make myself heard above the din." (I wonder if the children in Mr Bowie's class considered that such a disaster.)

Eventually, after 5½ years' wait and after 2 weeks' frantic construction, the Log for 9 April 1936 says: "Carpenters finished today... everybody glad... Painting still in progress. Miss Coster's class installed in the new room. During the building operations the class was installed in the Vogelhorn Hall."

This was not the first, or indeed the last, occasion on which Ridgway School suffered disruption of its classes. In general, the three main causes of classroom overcrowding were (and are); 1. a shortage of teachers, 2. fluctuations in the school roll, and 3. a lack of suitable rooms. All three factors have posed recurrent problems for Ridgway. In June 1949, for instance, Mr Vietmeyer wrote: "Mrs N. Taylor arrived today as relieving assistant. She is to have Std 1 and 2, and should relieve us all, as classes will be thirties instead of forty-odd. (children)."

And, in June 1958, when Mr Graham was head-teacher, he reported that a survey of the locality showed "... a steady and definite increase in the roll, and the committee has decided to approach the Board for extensions to house another classroom and thus relieve the position." In fact, the growth of Ridgway's population in the years 1958-1963 did not quite match up to the predicted increase; but clearly the situation in mid-1958 was already difficult. The Board was not able to provide a new room at short notice, but is was able to furnish an extra teacher. Of course, this was a blessing in disguise, as Mr Graham explained in August 1958: "... an extra P.A. (Probationary Assistant) has been appointed which will mean using the Staff Room as a classroom and the centre passage as a temporary staffroom." (I'm sure the children never disturbed their teachers during morning tea!)

But the problems associated with growth are not the only cause of head-teachers' headaches. The trend of the last few years has been for Ridgway's roll to fall somewhat, from the peak of 218 in 1973-74. In 1978 the number of pupils enrolled did not officially justify the existence of 7 teachers, and the school's staff allocation was cut back to 6 full-time appointments and 1 part-time. It is true, though, that the organisational needs of the transitional stage before the recent remodelling was completed meant that Ridgway was temporarily back to a staff of 7.

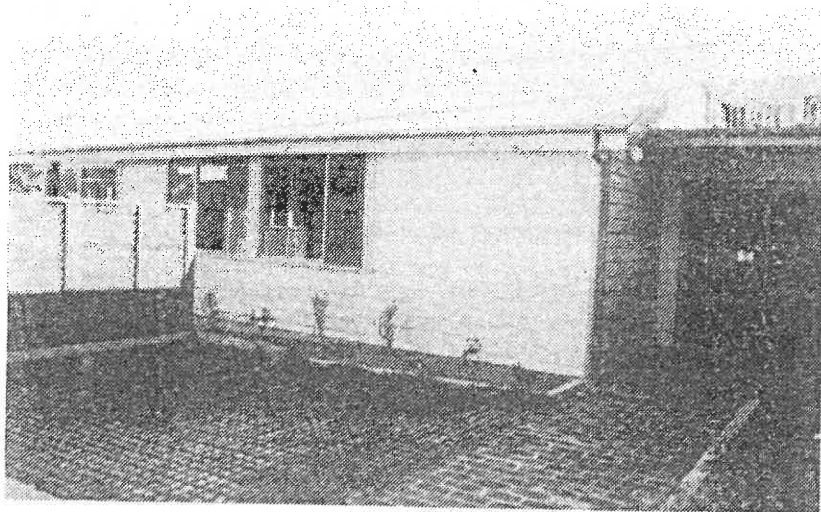
Even so, the problem is not a new one. At the beginning of the 1942 school year, the principal Mr Jackson lamented precisely the same situation that hampers the efforts of Miss Harford to keep class sizes at a manageable level. At the end of 1941, with one week of school before the summer holidays, Mr Jackson noted that: "Mr Pankhurst, P.A. has been suddenly called into camp to serve during the duration of the war."

Unfortunately the School Log doesn't tell us any more of Mr Pankhurst's activities in the army. But Ridgway felt the pinch the following year.

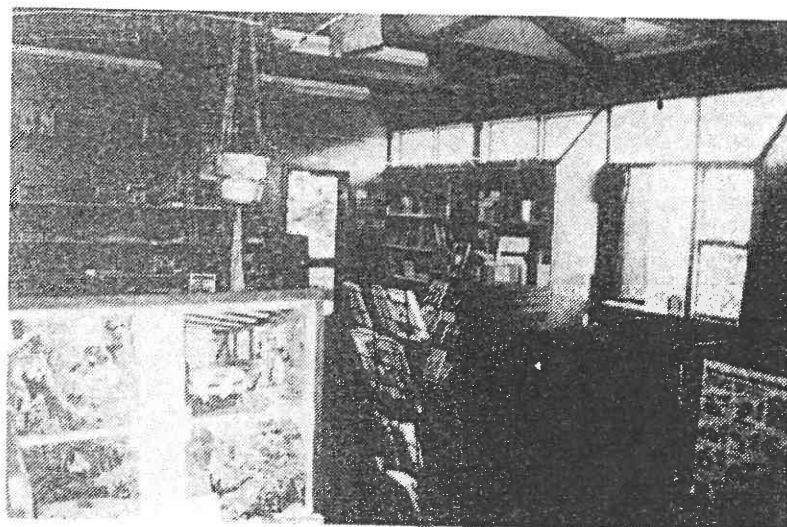
In February Mr Jackson wrote: "The school starts today with only three teachers. We have lost the P.A. (Mr Pankhurst). The average roll for the first four weeks of last term was 117; it required an average attendance of 121 to retain the fourth teacher. The school opens today with a roll of 107. The number of infants being enrolled does not equal the number of Std 6 pupils who leave. This is a New Zealand (-wide) result of smaller families."

We've noted already that on various occasions the number of pupils at Ridgway demanded more classroom - space than was available. Using the local Sunday School, The Public Hall, the corridor, and the staffroom as teaching areas were ways that early headmasters found to alleviate the overcrowding - if only temporarily. But in 1958 it must have been a really testing time. In November of that year the chairman of the School Committee, Mr Meggett, arranged with City Council to look over the Pavilion at Vogelmorn Park as a stand-in classroom. Whether or not it was actually used, is not recorded in the official papers, but the fact that these items appeared in the local press in June 1959 suggest that the matter was not really sorted out until the additional, fifth classroom opened in April 1961.

In February 1980, however, the "new-look" Ridgway School opened for business, the remodelling complete. In precisely the year that Mr Pearson had predicted, the modernised teaching and learning environment that will cater for Ridgway School until, one hopes, the turn of the century, was at last finished. At least on the surface, the classroom interiors of the 1980's are vastly different from those of 50 years ago; there's even carpet on the floors!



Entrance to New Block



New Library Interior

"BY ALL MEANS RUN UP THE FLAG - BUT MAKE SURE IT'S INDOORS"

Even the proudest and most parochial Wellingtonians will admit that the local climate can be a little unkind - just occasionally. And the residents of Mornington, Vogelstown and Kingston are in an ideal position to appreciate just how inclement the weather can get. Especially when it comes to southerly storms, which tend to favour the exposed hillsides around The Ridgeway with some spectacular "blows".

Perhaps the most infamous of such storms occurred on 10 April 1968, and its effects on the school were graphically described by Mr Pearson in the Log: "Severe gale. 31 children attended (out of a total school roll of 183), but were transported home by Mr Nicholson and self by 12.30. Damage amounted to: weakened staffroom wall, 7 galvanised pipes of the South fence snapped off, tree in Northwest corner fell over power lines, 30 feet of guttering blown away, main gate blown over. Wahine Day."

Apart from particular storms, though, even ordinary wintry weather conditions have had a great effect on Ridgway School over the years - an effect that was not greatly helped by the school's rather exposed site. The School Log, especially in the earliest days, often noted: "...the weather was so severe that the school has been kept on till 1 O'clock without recess, and the children dismissed for the day."

The solemnity of Anzac Day ceremonies at the school was however, an antidote to inclement weather. In 1933 Mr Bowie remarked in the Log, with admiration "Anzac Day Service in the school at 9 O'clock. About 100 children (out of about 140) and 20 parents, etc. attended. The weather was bad, a cold southerly blowing. All the teachers were present, though they just managed to escape a bad ducking, it being necessary to walk from the tram terminus at Brooklyn in the teeth of a heavy southerly. Considering the weather, the children's attendance was remarkable."

(On the day before, 24 April 1933, the same spell of bad weather had meant that the annual meeting of householders, held to elect a new School Committee, had been able to tempt only 12 people out into the wind and rain.)

Obviously, little could be done to influence the weather itself - such a thing is still beyond our technology in the 1980's. But from the outset, Mr Bowie and his staff, and the parents of children at Ridgway School, appreciated that the effects of such stormy conditions could be alleviated. Mr Bowie, well-known for his keenness for gardening, together with the School Committee made early efforts to help Ridgway dodge the worst of the winds. From the Log, 23 August 1929: "During the holidays, with the help of Stanley and Douglas Bennett and Ken Kindell, trees (Macrocarpa and Cypress) were planted to the west and north of the school buildings, with the hope that they will, in time, afford some shelter from the heavy winds on that side. It is rather late for tree planting and the weather has since been very windy; it remains to be seen what proportion of them will grow."

And the planting programme, to provide shelter for the buildings and the playground, has been a continuous if intermittent process. For instance, in July 1955, Miss Cattanaich noted: "A new hedge of approximately 270 trees', (olearia albida), was planted at the school by parents."

Today, the children attending Ridgway School can be thankful that such far-sighted plans were undertaken. To the living shelter belts that offer both protection and privacy, we can also add man-made structures, of which the recent fences and pool-enclosure are but the latest examples. Such building programmes also began early, as the Log for 1 February 1932 says:

"During the holidays ... a breakwind was erected between the school and the girls' latrines (on the north-west end of the classroom block). This should prove a very welcome improvement."

There was also a great deal of work done to make the school playground a more useful and congenial area for both children and teachers to work in. Throughout his long appointment as Agricultural Inspector with the Wellington Education Board, Mr Hesse helped Ridgway School by the provision of suitable trees and shrubs. This was particularly true in the 1930's.

But that decade also marked the disruptive and rigorous Depression years. The public works schemes which provided much-needed employment for so many folk, also contributed to Ridgway School.

In July 1931 Mr Bowie had approached the Education Board with suggestions of various improvements to the school grounds - the removal of the bank opposite the front of the school and the levelling of the lower ground. He also "...made a request for gravel on the playground", and wanted "...attention to storm-water from the Infants' Play Shed, as now a great pool (has) formed, there being no way for storm-water to drain itself."

Such problems as poor drainage had been recurrent ever since a school had first been erected on the site in 1929. But conditions in the playground greatly improved as the work progressed. In August 1932 Mr Bowie was anxious to see the landscaping completed: "The relief work in the school grounds is going on slowly and there is still a big cavity to be filled in before the grounds will be available as a play area." It was left to Mr Jackson at the end of 1936 to write happily: "During October the playground was levelled and grass seed sown. It is intended to have a good grassy playground. The relief worker has done excellent work in keeping the grounds, garden plots etc. in very good condition."

In the intervening years that good, grassy playground had provided a safe playing surface for many young would-be footballers, athletes and gymnasts at Ridgway. In the School's Jubilee year, 1979, the playing area was again disrupted, though - this time by the building activities. However, it is now returning to normal usage, and it's anticipated that the concrete studs with grass growing between them will prove to be both safe and attractive underfoot.

Ridgway's story, though, ought not to be viewed as a gloomy, but ultimately successful, struggle against the unkind elements. Life is not really as melodramatic as the T.V. soap operas would have us believe: Just to show the other side of the coin, for example, after the summer holidays of 1934-5 Mr Bowie wrote: "Owing to the hot weather the Board decided (that) schools were to carry on during the morning sessions only - school accordingly kept going from 9 to 12.30." The scheme lasted from 5 - 25 February 1935, but Mr Bowie did observe that it "...has an unsettling effect on the children." No doubt, though, Bill Bowie's Boys were sad to see it end!

And then there's the flag. For many years there was a flag-pole at the school, and the requirements of the Education Board that the flag be shown on specified days of the year meant that the flag-pole got good use. This was particularly true during the second World War.

However, in 1955 the flag-pole had to be resited, and the School Committee made a novel but typically "Ridgway" suggestion to the Education Board. Unfortunately, the School Committee's letter to the Board is no longer in the correspondence file, but the Board's reply is. It is a very neat indication of the cause of many of Ridgway's problems over the years, and yet remains pleasantly amusing. On 9 September 1955, Mr W. Deavoll,

Secretary-Manager of the Board wrote to Mrs E.T. McNaught the School Committee Secretary: "In the circumstances it would appear undesirable to reinstate the flag-pole in view of the fact that, on the occasions required, the flag is invariably hung inside the school building on account of the high winds which prevail in your district."

PEOPLE TODAY TAKE SO MUCH FOR GRANTED....

It's understandable that, at any particular moment, human beings become almost blase in their acceptance of their surroundings - and, this is, in all probability particularly of children. Nevertheless all the pupils currently at Ridgway now appreciate all too clearly the disruptions that stem from a rebuilding programme.

Yet, in this age of cassette tape-recorders and overhead-projectors, it may be instructive to look at a few of the campaigns that were undertaken by the teachers, parents, and ex-pupils associated with Ridgway which have helped to keep the school up with the times.

One of the outstanding, early examples of technology helping education at Ridgway was Mr Bowie's Baloŕtican. On 16 July 1934, he wrote in the Log: "(School) Committee held a special meeting to view the Baloŕtican on offer from Mr W.H. Stevens of Wellesley College. They decided that it would be a valuable acquisition for the school at the price asked - Five Pounds." And it was a good buy. The new price was Twenty Six Pounds Ten Shillings; a matter which had not escaped Mr Bowie's notice.

Many of the children who were bemused by Mr Bowie's machine are today, themselves, parents and grandparents. Some of them still have strong connections with Ridgway, and it is to them as well as to the many other friends of the school, that the present pupils can be grateful for such recent fund-raising efforts as the Library and the swimming-pool enclosure.

Even so, it is still hard for many folk to imagine the school without, for example, a film projector, or a telephone.

It was during wartime - on 9 April 1945, to be exact - that the School Committee first discussed buying a movie projector. Because of financial considerations, the plan was eventually shelved for a few years; and their other topic (a radio for the school) didn't fare well either. From the minutes of the meeting: "The Secretary reported that it appeared that the manufacture of sets of the type desired was prohibited at the present time, but that he was still making enquiries."

By October 1945, when peace had allowed a relaxation of the laws governing radio sets, the Committee priced the standard design for school-use at between Fifty five and Fifty seven Pounds. And in December they went ahead with the purchase.

The film projector, meantime, took second place: the radio had represented a fairly sizeable investment. In September 1948, however, at a Committee meeting "... the matter of a film projector was discussed and it was decided to "pencil" in a Bell and Howell-Gaumont machine." The cost to the Committee was to be Eighty four Pounds - the balance of the total price of One hundred and sixty seven Pounds and Ten Shillings to be met by the Pound for Pound education subsidy.

Ultimately, though, in March 1949, the Ridgway Parents' Association decided in favour of the "Ampro" model projector, and made One hundred and twenty Pounds available to the School Committee for its purchase.

The matter of a school telephone, however, required a great deal more negotiation. In September 1947 the School Committee decided in favour of installing a telephone, and approached the Parents' Association about the finance. The Parents' Association, though, decided against the idea. "...as we thought with the money we raised there were things more necessary than a phone, and we couldn't guarantee the payments for every year."

In October the School Committee again wrote to the Parents' Association "...pointing out the disadvantages of depending on the Store for use of the phone, and that it (Ridgway) was almost the only school in Wellington without a telephone."

By April 1948 the School Committee heard that Ridgway's application for a phone had been added to the waiting list. And in August, the Committee Secretary wrote to the Chief Post Master asking that the School get an extension line from the phone customarily used at Mr F. Robertson's store, opposite the School on Morningson Road.

At the same time, the Secretary wrote to Hon. Robert McKeen (the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and local Member of Parliament) asking for his support for their telephone application. This appeal to authority obviously carried some weight, and was well-chosen tactically, because, in September, the reply from the Office of the Post Master General to Mr McKeen let both him and Ridgway School know that a vacancy had occurred on a party-line in the locality.

But the Post and Telegraph Department had the last word. Two weeks later they wrote offering the School a share of a 4-party line and notifying them of the One pound installation fee. Even then, however, a telephone didn't appear immediately - but fortunately the wait wasn't as long as the School Committee must have feared as they read these words from the P & T.: "It is desired to point out that due to prevailing conditions and depleted line staffs, there is likely to be some delay before actual installation is effected."

It's the same today - the Post Office is one business that just can't be hurried.

Mention has been made of the Parents' Association, and it is to this dedicated group that present Ridgway pupils (and teachers) should give a great many thanks (while also saving plenty of gratitude for the School Committees and Home and School Committees who, over the years have helped to provide Ridgway with many of the facilities necessary for the present-day business of education.)

But the Parents' Association deserves special mention in connection with one particularly major undertaking. The body was formed at the biennial meeting of householders in April 1946, and took the initiative in plans to provide Ridgway School with a swimming-pool. Their financial reports even included a separate Baths Account.

By March 1948 they had raised almost Seventy Five Pounds towards the cost of a pool, mainly through bazaars, bring and buys, raffles, donations and picture evenings.- Remember that One Hundred and Twenty Pounds towards a film projector? By April 1950 the total stood at just over One hundred and eight Pounds.

As the money accumulated and the goal of a school pool became closer, the pace hotted up. Money was quickly raised from the generous and concerned residents of the area. And, after many joint meetings of the School

Committee and the Parents' Association - together with various consultations with Education Board architects and building contractors - the Parents' Association in August 1950, made available to the School Committee the princely sum of Three Hundred Pounds, which was to be by the Education Board's subsidy.

(And it was a princely sum - especially for a relatively small school like Ridgway. In these times of what's called "double - figure" inflation, it does us well to remember Mr W.G. Morrison. Mr Morrison and his wife were part-time caretakers at Ridgway, a necessary but too - often rather thankless task, for 30 years, from 1934 to 1964. Just by way of comparison, at the end of 1946 when the campaign to raise the Three Hundred Pounds had just begun, Mr Morrison's salary for 15 hours' work per week was Five Pounds, Ten Shillings and six Pence per month.)

As for the pool, only one tender was received, from Messrs Lloyd and McKenzie Ltd, who quoted Five Hundred and Ninety Pounds, Twelve Shillings and Six Pence for the pool and One Hundred and Thirty Eight Pounds for the surrounding fence. The Committee gave them the go-ahead in November 1950.

The contractors were then asked for a revised estimate for a wire-mesh fence rather than one made of boards, and since the price of One Hundred and Twelve Pounds was within the Committee's budget, work proceeded apace.

It was necessary, however, for the School Committee to ask the City Council to dispose of a large pine tree which was overhanging the pool site. The Council was most prompt in dealing with it, as were the contractors, and the pool was near completion early in 1951.

The Official Opening of Ridgway's pool was set down for Wednesday 21 February 1951 at 2.30 pm. It coincided with the school picnic on Vogelhorn Park (then called Mornington Reserve), rather than a more distant venue, in an effort to save money. The previous year's picnic at Karori Park had set the School Committee back about Twenty Five Pounds; the picnic just "next door" cost just over Two Pounds.

The School Committee and Parents' Association held joint meetings in January and early February to arrange the details of the combined Sports Day - Baths Opening. But there were some hitches. The Headmaster, Mr Vietmeyer, told the Committee he was worried that some of the uprights posts holding up the pool fence were "Riddled with borer holes". The matter was taken up with the contractors and the Education Board. Others at the Committee meeting on 14 February were perturbed that some of the plastering work on the paths and entrance gate was still incomplete, and this, too was looked into.

Eventually, however, the event passed off with much acclaim. There was, though, one fairly major, last-minute hold-up that was thankfully sorted out just in time by the action of some helpful individuals. And what was it that nearly caused chaos? Well when it came to put water in the pool, it was discovered that there was a fault with the Outlet valve for the new baths, and the inlet pipe would not fill the pool quickly enough. These brief phrases in the minutes of the School Committee meeting on 5 March 1951, paint the picture clearly enough; "The Chairman advised members of the ready assistance he had received from the members of the Fire Brigade in supplying the use of a stand-pipe and hose for filling the school baths on the night before the Official Opening Ceremony, and of the excellent work done by Mr Marshall, the drainlaying contractor, for coming up the same night and repairing the outlet valve and assisting in filling the pool.

Members decided that letters of appreciation should be sent to both Mr Bruce of the Central Fire Station, and Mr Marshall."

LEST WE FORGET...

A school, almost by definition, is concerned in the first place with the welfare of children. Education, as such, is a vague, inconstant thing. There are changes in syllabus content, in teaching styles, in classroom organisation and, as Ridgway has recently demonstrated, there are even fashions in school design. Throughout the decades, though, there is the ever present need for schools in the role of guardians of the young.

There is probably, for example, at least one occasion in everyone's life when the school medical room, the staffroom, or even the head-teacher's office, has been a peaceful haven in time of personal discomfort. And over the years, Ridgway has probably had its fair share of illnesses and accidents. Many of them, mercifully, were relatively minor; and most went largely unrecorded except in the school's official returns to the Education Board.

In her time as head-teacher, though, Miss Cattanach made carefully detailed accounts of her children's misfortunes, ranging from William Russell's dislocated elbow and Leslie Meggett's broken arm (both in 1954) to the index finger that Lorraine Carnegie sprained the following year, and the cut above the eye which Kevin Parminter received from a cricket bat in 1956. The School Log is sprinkled with such pieces of information throughout the fifty years. One particularly tragic story does stand out however. On July 7, 1931 Mr Bowie recorded in the Log: "A boy, Jack Wise, fell down the bank between the Upper and Lower playground when running after a football. He got up, went out of the gate on The Ridgeway and went home. The following day we heard that he had died under the anaesthetic at the hospital." Later, on the 10th, Mr Bowie added: "Funeral of Jack Wise. School Supplied a wreath. Funeral attended by the boys of his class and Head Teacher, together with the Chairman and Secretary of the School Committee. Letter of condolence sent to Mr Wise. This sad accident cast a gloom over all, and was the result of pure mischance."

Jack's funeral was a sobering and memorable moment for his school mates of 1931. But fortunately, tragedies of such magnitude have been averted since then - although combination of the bank, a rugby ball, and an enthusiastic footballer did lead to William Lewis breaking his arm before school one morning in April 1942. It may be said that, as long as a large number of high-spirited youngsters are collected together in an environment like Ridgway School's, some accidents will inevitably happen. It is to be hoped, though, that serious injuries can be prevented in the future.

Schools, however, are not merely the scenes of accidents, they are also ideal breeding grounds for contagious illnesses. Any family which has recently watched successive children come down with a class-mate's cold or flue will testify to that: Of course, this fact has long been appreciated, and Ridgway has had its share of medical troubles. In September 1935 Mr Bowie knew exactly where to lay the blame: "Influenza and mumps have been troublesome all this term. The overcrowded conditions of the Head Master's room have probably assisted."

More serious disruptions to school life occurred on a wider scale as well. On December 14, 1936 Mr Jackson was notified of an outbreak of infantile paralysis (poliomyelitis) in Otago, and in accordance with Education Board instructions the school closed early for the Christmas Holiday. It was not until March 1, 1937 that Ridgway reopened, although Mr Jackson observed in the Log. "Correspondence lessons have been carried out while schools (were) closed: teachers only attended (from) 9 - 3 for the last week of February; only seven weeks of schooling possible in the first term."

And the problem recurred. On November 28, 1947 Mr Williams wrote: "School closed as from today on account of the epidemic of infantile paralysis that has broken out in the North Island." Again, classes did not resume until March the following year, and the August holiday in 1948 was extended from two weeks to four for the same reason.

There must have been many relieved sighs both locally and, indeed, nationally, when Miss Cattnach in 1957 was able to write in the Log: "This year, polio vaccination of 5-year old to 10-year old pupils took place." The disease was by no means entirely wiped out. But the co-operation of the Health and Education Department's efforts consigned polio as a widespread, disruptive menace to child health to the same category as the defused threats of earlier years, like diphtheria, whooping cough, and scarlet fever.

Another era which demanded that the school assume extra responsibilities for the welfare of its pupils was the period from 1939 to 1945 - years which Mr Smith then described as "abnormal times". (After Mr Jackson left Ridgway in February 1942, Mr Williams was appointed to succeed him as Head Teacher, but was then, in the phrase of the day, "in camp". As will be remembered, it was Mr Smith from Kelburn Normal School who stood in as a direct war appointment as Head at Ridgway, until Mr Williams was released from his military duties at the beginning of 1944).

The concern of the local community for the wellbeing of the children of Ridgway during those stressful years is well expressed in the minutes of the School Committee's meetings. On March 2, 1942 the Committee received a deputation from the parents of the district, who enquired about the arrangements that had been made in the case of an emergency for the dispersal of the pupils, why identification discs had not been issued, and how air-raid precautions were being handled at the school. The Committee Chairman, Mr F.J. Wilson carefully explained the procedure that the Education Board had laid down in order to be well prepared for such eventualities. And the opportunity was taken at that meeting to investigate the matter fully. The Education Board notified the school that emergency fire-fighting equipment had been allocated appropriate to Ridgway's size, and had been dispatched, (1 rake, 1 shovel, 2 bags of sand,) but that bucket pumps were in short supply. In the meantime, until stocks were available, "The Committee should make an effort to secure buckets, tins or other suitable receptacles, in order that water might be made available in case of emergency." Furthermore, Mr Haynes thought it advisable that emergency rations be stored at the school, and moved that the Committee purchase "3 pounds sugar, 4 quarter-pound tins cocoa, 6 tins condensed milk, and 1 tin rice wafers." This suggestion was proceeded with eagerly, and a Special Meeting was called for March 19 to let concerned parents know about air-raid precautions.

On that occasion a number of suggestions about the best ways to deal with war-time emergencies at Ridgway were discussed. Mr Randell stated that the school was one of those classed as being in a non-vulnerable area, and added that the experts who had visited the school reported that the children should be dispersed down the south-most spur at the end of Vogel-morn Park, on a track cut down the hillside. "The Committee did not favour this course because the area was covered with gorse and was a death-trap for children." Various alternatives were considered. "Mr Ogg moved that enquiries be made from owners of garages adjacent to the school to see if, in the case of an emergency, they could be used by the school children as shelters." Duplicate keys to the garages were to be held by the head-teacher, and first-aid equipment and supplies of chocolate to be placed there in readiness. It was also mooted that slit trenches be cut along the side of Vogel-morn Park, but it was eventually agreed to consult the expert opinion of a Mr Askew, technical adviser to the E.P.S. (Emergency Precaution Scheme). On the following Saturday, Mr Askew visited the school to investigate the parents' suggestions. "He stated that garages... would not be suitable as shelters unless the doors were

sandbagged" - which, presumably, would limit their usefulness as garages - and decided in favour of the slit trenches, despite the disadvantage of water accumulating in them.

Thankfully, of course, in the long run none of these measures was needed in a time of emergency, but they amply demonstrate some of the ways in which the people of Mornington and Vogeltown reacted to the stresses of war-time.

But more importantly, perhaps, they also point out how resilient the local community has been in coping with far-reaching changes: changes which often seemed enormously catastrophic, and yet so distant; while others struck only too close to home. By dealing with these crises in a flexible and level-headed manner, the teachers and parents of Ridgway School provided their children with an education that (it might be argued) was more lasting and worthwhile in the long term than most formal book-learning. In any event, Ridgway's pupils over the past five decades have, in general, been well prepared for life in the twentieth century.

As an example of such changes, we can consider for a moment the Great Depression. A glance at many class photographs of the early 1930's will show that the wearing of warm winter clothing was by no means universal, and that even socks and shoes were beyond the means of many families. It has been noted already that Ridgway's playground received some benefits as a result of the schemes to provide relief employment. But money was tight, and the school's income, and thereby its ability to improve its educational efficiency, suffered somewhat. Yet the parents and friends of the school rallied round: every little bit helped. Thus, the Log could proclaim with some pride in August, 1932: "A Mr Davis gave an elocutionary and dramatic entertainment in the school tonight. The school funds profited to the extent of Thirty Shillings as a result." (Mr Bowie was no doubt pleased!..)

On the other hand, the children at Ridgway for some years now, have been fortunate to have the opportunity of hot cocoa during the winter term. Some folk may view this as a fringe benefit, but in earlier times it was an out-and-out luxury. Mr Bowie's comment in July 1932 makes the point well: "During the last month of this term soup was provided and made by Mrs Bennett, so that children coming to school any distance and staying to lunch could have the benefit of hot soup. Some of the children seem to be suffering from lack of proper food. Many of the parents are working on relief."

There is another outstanding example, also from the 1930's, of Ridgway School's community spirit. On February 3, 1931 the Hawkes Bay region, and particularly the town of Napier, was devastated by an earthquake - until recently the worst disaster in New Zealand's history. "Several children from Napier attended school here whilst living in the district as refugees, from the distressed area." With that typically brief statement in the Log, Mr Bowie made modest mention of Ridgway's assistance to the less fortunate. Another entry reads: "Owing to the disastrous earthquake in Hawkes' Bay, the Committee decided to abandon the School Picnic, for this year, Five Pounds of the money was given in the name of the school children to the Salvation Army Relief Fund to aid distressed children suffering through the effects of the earthquake." (It may be noted that a holiday was granted in lieu of the picnic, but it shouldn't be forgotten that Five Pounds then represented a significant amount of money).

In the next decade, the 1940's, the greatest single influence on the lives of almost all New Zealanders was, as we've seen already, World War II and its aftermath. Ridgway's Honours Board records the names of 40 ex-pupils who served in the armed forces, and includes 3 who died in action. One such was Murray Metcalfe. He attended Ridgway School from 1928 to 1936, before going on to Wellington College. He left school in 1941 to join the

ROLL OF HONOUR

Ex Pupils of Ridgway School
who served Overseas in World War II
1939 - 1946

Bade, L. A.	Langley, D.
Baker, G.	Lawton, L.A. (A.F.C.)
Beedle, R.	McCullough, R.
Bennett, K.	McHardy, G.W.
Bennett, S.	Mence, A.A.
Carnegie, D.	Mence, W.A.
Clentworth, J.A.A.	Metcalfe, M. *
Coburn, J.	Morrison, D.
Daly, A. J.	Needham, F.
Daly, J. R.	Richardson, E. *
Davidson, B.	Russell, I.C.
Galvin, B. J.	Russell, R.M.
Henderson, A.	Scott, C.W.H.
Hodgson, K.W.	Thomson, R.
Hughes, H.S.M.	Tichbon, R.H.
Irons, C. *	Upham, G.F.
Irons, H.	Way, K.M.
Jenkins, H.	Weir, G.A.
Kelsey, H.A.	Wheeler, D.E.
Kindell, K.C.	Winchcomb, J.R.

* Killed in action

Royal New Zealand Air Force, where he became a Flying Officer in the 485 Spitfire Squadron. On September 16, 1943, at the age of 20 years and 6 months, Murray Metcalfe was killed in action over France.

Unfortunately, pressures of space and time dictate that we regard Murray's life and his sacrifice, not merely for their own sakes, but also, and more importantly, as salutary examples which allow younger generations a more appreciative understanding of the personal commitment made at home, as well as overseas, by countless others during those traumatic years.

For children attending Ridgway School at the time, the war effort was seldom far from the surface in daily classroom life: sometimes an occasion for sadness or patriotic feeling, sometimes a cause for celebration. In the latter category we can place two of the holidays granted, one on 2 April 1940 when Ridgway joined the rest of the Capital in welcoming the crew of the "Achilles" and another when Mr Smith recorded in the Log: "The school was closed on Friday 10 September 1943 in honour of the victory over Italy." The school and the local community worked hard to do their bit, as the Log records for December 1940: "Thirteen Pounds, Two Shillings and Six Pence was raised for the Ridgway School Patriotic Fund from the raffling of a supper cloth, worked and donated by Mrs Hood of Mornington." And on at least one occasion, traditional events were turned towards productive ends when Guy Fawkes' Day, 1940 became Guy Hitler's Day. Mr Jackson noted, no doubt proudly, that "The pupils collected Two Pounds and Eleven Shillings for the Patriotic Fund." Even the day-to-day operation of the school was affected by war-time conditions. There is, for instance, the matter reported by Mr Hastings to the School Committee meeting of 7 July 1942: "...that neighbours had complained to (the) Block warden that too much light was shown at night during the cleaning of (the) school. It was resolved to write to Mr Morrison (the caretaker) telling him that lights must be shielded properly."

But it would be impossible to move on from the war years without mentioning one final example of Ridgway's contribution, one in a slightly lighter vein, but also gleaned from the School Committee's minutes. July 1941 saw the pupils of the school conclude a very successful bottle drive for patriotic purposes, in the course of which they collected a total of some 9,000 empties. As an incentive, the management of the Vogue Theatre (now reopened as the Penthouse) offered two tickets for the best contribution by an individual girl and boy - a prize which no doubt had the winners Betty Brunsdon and Laurie Randell, anxiously awaiting the next feature. I trust they enjoyed it.

TOO MANY HOLIDAYS, THAT'S THE TROUBLE...

As adults, we often consider it understandable (and in some circumstances, proper) that, even today, primary school children should remain a bit vague about the great forces which shape our world and our society. Indeed, is it at all possible to explain economic recession to a 9-year-old, when famous economists can't agree about it? So, even in this age of mass-communications, children stay, at least for a time, blissfully unaware of their school in its wider context of disasters, wars, and so on - until they are affected personally, that is.

We might wonder, then, how pupils at Ridgway see their life at school.

Ask them about what's important at school, and many children today will probably answer exactly as children answered in 1929: school work. There are even some for whom school means little else - just one long routine chore of spelling tests, reading lessons, physical education, and that stuff with numbers (sorry, numerals!) that used to be "arithmetic", and somehow became "maths".

And, of course, they're not wrong. Schools exist to provide educational opportunities and successes, and Ridgway has a proud record of 50 years to look back on.

Certainly, the first permanent headmaster, Mr Bowie, believed that academic success was of paramount importance. In the School Log at the end of most years he carefully recorded the names of the scholars who had been awarded the Dux medal: Donald Cathie (1930), Mary Weir (1931), Joyce Mary Baker (1933), Cynthia Way and Dorothy Davidson (1934), Denis Wheeler (1935). Furthermore, Mr Bowie kept up with the news about those of his star pupils who'd gone on to bigger and better academic things. Thus (Log February 1933). "The following children who passed for Proficiency at this school in 1930 have now passed the Intermediate Exam and obtained their Senior Free Places: Donald Cathie (Nelson College), Alan Lawton (Wellington College), Margaret Bowie (Wellington East Girls' College), Clarence W. Scott and J. Albert Thomas (Wellington Technical College)." And when three of them went on to pass their Matriculation, the items were duly noted by Mr Bowie in the Ridgway Log.

Given his keenness for academic enterprise, those who knew the inimitable Mr Bowie can possibly imagine his thoughts as he filled in the Log for May 22, 1933, when two boys "left having reached the age of 14."

But any of "Bill Bowie's Boys" (or the girls, for that matter) will tell you that he was fiercely loyal to Ridgway, and to its pupils. It might be interesting to speculate how he viewed a small crisis that arose in February 1936. Just when the anticipated, and long awaited, new room had again not materialised over the Christmas holidays, Miss M. Riley arrived on February 3 to take up her position as a first-year teacher. On the 19th however... "Miss Riley informs Head Teacher that she is departing today as she finds it costs her Seven Shillings a week travelling expenses. Apparently the school is not sufficiently handy for her attendance at lectures at Victoria College (University)."

Since Mr Bowie's time, of course, things have changed - at least superficially. Dux medals gave way to prizes for excellence and diligence, which themselves were allowed to lapse; Competency and Proficiency disappeared, to be replaced by Annual Surveys and more recently, by mysterious things called P.A.T. (Progressive Achievement Tests) and "running records". (If in doubt, contact Miss Harford). But if, nowadays, the top scholars and their place in the class are no longer held up as wonderful examples to the rest of us mortals, children still feel the challenge of educational achievement, and still strive to get their school-work done. Teachers, now naturally, are more concerned with their pupils

achieving a standard they're capable of, and of their working up to their own capacity. Nonetheless, the competitive spirit is still there.

And there seems to be so much more to master. (As any Standard 4 student will tell you - now, you not only have to be able to do multiplication, you have to be able to understand it as well).

As we move into the 1980's, there's also less time, too. The distractions of television and skate-boards apart, our relative affluence compared with the early days at Ridgway has meant a host of extra-curricular activities, which all bring new pressures to bear on the children.

But for a good number of pupils at Ridgway, throughout the five decades, it was often these fringe-education areas which held the appeal.

Sport has always been a means to social advancement in the eyes of your classmates, and in this area, Ridgway has often done well.

Swimming, with its obvious life-saving appeal has always been encouraged, and we can expect good things to result from the recent alterations to the school pool. It's certainly a far cry from the days of Mr Jackson's report to the School Committee in 1941 "... that the school attended swimming instruction on 8 occasions at Evans Bay during February. 23 obtained their swimming certificates ranging in distance from 25 yards to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Three girls obtained the $\frac{1}{2}$ mile certificate, entitling them to a free pass to the Te Aro Baths for one year."

In more recent years, another out-of-school activity (yet fostered within the school) has been established on a sound footing at Ridgway. And, again, there are clear benefits to be gained by the children both in opportunities for community service and in terms of personal safety: the School Patrol. Here, moreover, is another chance to excel, as Mr Pearson recorded on at least two occasions: (November 1967) 'A Std 4 girl, Joanne Diggle, won recognition as a Knight of the Road during Wellington's (Road) Safety Week.' And (November 1974) "Two girls of Std 4 - Tania Schaefer and Catherine Rice - were honoured as Knights of the Road for outstanding service as School Patrol Wardens - their prize, a day's airtrip, etc. to Christchurch."

On the other hand again, the highlight of a school year, or of a schooling, at Ridgway may, for some children, be an exchange visit to (or from) another school - or a trip to another city, as witness Miss Harford's recent outing with Standard Four to Nelson.

But certainly for all of us there are a few school days of especially outstanding importance, which we recall with relish just after the event, or which live in our memories for years. As often as not, such memorable times were important educational occasions, whether a trip to the Milk Department or a Museum exhibit; a school concert, picnic or reunion; or an important national occasion like a Royal Tour or Vice-Regal visit.

Glancing through the Ridgway Log and other documents, one is struck by the wide and varied experiences offered to the children over the past five decades. One early intriguing example was on 18 March 1930 when the pupils, as Mr Bowie put it, were "...taken down to Mrs Metcalfe's to hear a wireless message from Commander Byrd, and an account of his experiences in the South Polar regions." Or, to take another entry, from July 18, 1934: "The Standard classes 2 to 6 (were) taken to the State Theatre to view the film Romantic New Zealand." And another outing, which may yet seem a recent experience for the children who participated, was the exhibition of handwork which 16 pupils, together with Mr Gunn, gave at the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition in March 1940.

Then again, the visit that Mr Graham arranged in 1962, which allowed his class to be shown over the liner Dominion Monarch (and which Graham Randell wrote up for the school magazine that year) may have inspired a Maritime career or two.

But I suspect that at least the Standard Three children who visited the ship in 1962 might have had the memory superseded by the pageantry of the following February, for on the 11th, as the newly-arrived Head Teacher, Mr Pearson, noted in the Log "49 Standard 3 - 4 children attended a sports function at Athletic Park on the occasion of the visit of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, and the Duke of Edinburgh."

Furthermore, while some of Ridgway's pupils in 1953 may have forgotten that both the 1st and the 2nd of June were holidays, that year, perhaps there are still a few households that preserve the medal from the School Committee and the illustrated folder from the Education Department which were issued to commemorate Coronation Day.

Holidays granted to mark remote, State occasions probably tend to be lost in the depths of memory, I guess - like the school closing for a day and a half for the death of Sir Joseph Ward in July 1930; or like the two days set aside out of respect for the Prime Minister, Mr M.J. Savage, on 28-29 March 1940.

But one term in Ridgway's 50 years really stood out as a holiday bonanza - at least to Mr Bowie's mind. In the same year, 1935, that the abnormally hot summer closed schools early for much of February, a number of celebrations kept Ridgway pupils from their books. On 15 March, for instance, Mr Bowie wrote: "Children (were) at Newtown Park - farewell ceremony to Lord Bledisloe on his departure for England. The school has been affected by the many half-days and extra holidays this term."

Perhaps Mr Bowie realised what was to come. On 12 April: "Children given a whole day's holiday to mark the arrival of the new Governor General, Lord Galway... So far there have been only 5 weeks with the full 10 half-days out of the nine weeks of term," he lamented. And there was more to come - April 19-25, for Easter and Anzac Day; and later May 6, to celebrate King George the Fifth's Jubilee;

Not a vintage term for lessons?

However my favourite "special event" in Ridgway's past hardly qualifies as such. It may be that it's virtually forgotten except for Mr Bowie's note in the Log, written in full, since it obviously left him a little indignant. September 19, 1932: "School closed in the afternoon by permission of the Education Board to allow boys, etc. to witness a batting display by Bradman, the Australian Cricketer, at the Basin Reserve. Wet in the morning, but cleared later. Head Teacher rang up other schools and found that these schools were closing, so decided to close also. However, Bradman did not turn up and the children were disappointed."

Surely, though, the most important days in the school calendar as far as children, teachers and parents alike are concerned, are the school-orientated occasions. They may turn out to be less memorable for the children than the day young so-and-so got the strap for some terribly anti-social crime. They may be just as funny as the time that boy in Standard 3 laid his teacher out with a soft-ball bat. (Pure accident I can assure you - from personal experience!) But I don't think it's going too far to say that school festivities like concerts and picnics have, over the past half-century, demonstrated Ridgway's particular strength. For in just such get-togethers, we see the school and the community interacting: the school providing a focal point of community interest and involvement; and the community of both staff and parents working together to ensure that the events are social and financial successes.

It might be quite easily overlooked that Ridgway School has, as a public institution, provided the residents of Mornington, Vogelstown and (more recently) Kingston with a social hub. From the earliest days there were Euchre and 500 evenings, political meetings, and every three years or so, a polling booth. For decades Ridgway's non-working hours allowed a number of Sunday Schools to have a base, and during the war years, the school buildings were utilised by the Home Guard. The Red Cross and Civil Defence have also employed the school's facilities, as have countless local sports teams.

These are the less obvious aspects of Ridgway School's role in the life of the district; the real test of a school's social function is clearly demonstrated by local participation in its festive occasions. And at Ridgway, keenness has always been the keynote.

Mr Bowie and the first School Committee got the ball rolling early. The first Ridgway School picnic was held at Hutt Park Race Course. As the Log for February 19, 1930 puts it: "Six motor buses were commissioned to convey children and parents. All events were carried out successfully, and a very pleasant time was spent. The behaviour of the children was very good." Then, later in the same month it was decided to hold a Queen Carnival in order to raise money for the school, The Town Hall Society and the Vogelstown Tennis Club. Each body provided an organising committee, plus a combined co-ordinating committee, with all proceeds to be divided equally. A combined Bazaar was held in St Matthew's Church Hall in order to raise funds to get the Carnival off the ground.

On the day, Mr Harold Cragg, a well-known early stalwart of both Tennis Club and school functions was (as always) Master of Ceremonies. The winner, Miss Broughton from the Tennis Club was crowned by the local Member of Parliament, Mr "Monkey" Wright. Amid an enthusiastic reception, many other amusing titles were bestowed upon those present, including a mock-knighthood for Mr Wright. (His crest badge was to be a sprig of gorse mounted on a traction engine;) All in all, a most successful occasion.

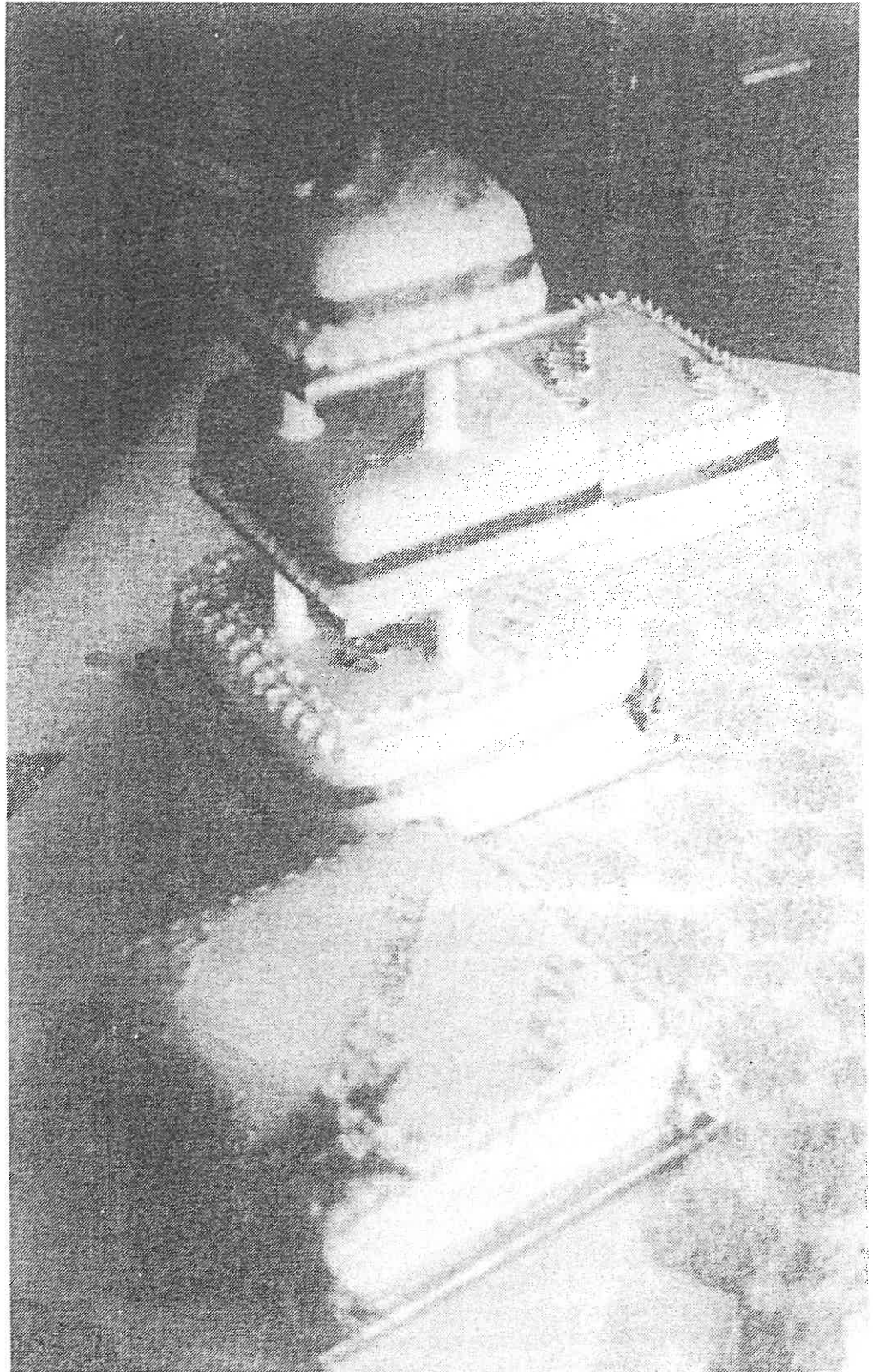
Mr Wright was able to reciprocate the district's good-will later in 1930 - in September, 40 Ridgway children were invited by him to Parliament Buildings where, as Mr Bowie crisply described, they were "shown over things (and) the various objects and proceedings were lucidly explained."

From time to time the school picnic has been adversely affected by bad weather - notably in the 1970's. But they have always fulfilled a most worthwhile function in keeping the school and the people of the locality in close proximity. And so too have the Parents' Days, first begun under that title during the time of Mr Jackson. The inaugural event was in November, 1939. The Log reports: "About 100 people came. We made Two Pounds, Ten Shillings, by the way. The best part of it was the great enthusiasm and interest of the children. It was a very happy and successful day."

The children's interest must have been contagious, for the following year's Parents' Day saw the attendance of "every parent", except one or two. It was a great opportunity for parents and teachers to get together. And, according to Mr Jackson's Log entry the pupils managed most of the organising on the day largely unaided - one was even the treasurer who kept an eye on the Nine Pounds and four Shillings that was raised for the benefit of the school.

The trend, began in those early days, for the fairs and the picnics to be hugely successful, and for the School Concerts to be packed to capacity, has continued to the present time. Anyone fortunate enough to attend the 1976 Concert in the Vogelstown Hall, can only wonder at the strength of community spirit which has seen Ridgway through 50 hectic years.

And the culmination to that eventful half-century, must surely be the Jubilee itself. A more fitting tribute to the special place that Ridgway School occupies in the hearts of past pupils would be hard to imagine. Long may that spirit survive.



A BIT OF HISTORY:-

- 1883:- 3 September. Vogeltown Public School "opened this Monday morning, at half-past nine o'clock. As the weather was very wet only nine children applied for admittance. Everything needful for school duties has been supplied by the Board. The school apparatus consists of the following: Three maps, viz. the World, Europe and New Zealand; six wall pictures; a set of Chambers' reading sheets; clock, black-board and easel; abacus; chair; brushes, etc. There is desk accommodation in the schoolroom for 34 children."
- The only teacher was Miss Ada R. Warren, whose salary was 120 pounds a year. The roll at the end of the year was 24.
- 1886:- Emily M. Browne took over as Head Teacher with one pupil-teacher, Emmie Meek. Roll: 42.
- 1896:- Miss Browne had one female assistant teacher, and two pupil-teachers. Roll: 121.
- 1897:- "Vogeltown Public School, a wooden building of the usual design, has 190 children on its roll, the majority coming from Brooklyn. The Headmistress is assisted by two certified teachers, and a pupil-teacher." (Cyclopedia of New Zealand, 1897, P.806).
- 1898:- "The Vogeltown School was removed to a more central position at Brooklyn": Report of Mr J.R. Blair, Chairman of the Wellington Education Board. The new Brooklyn School had well over 200 pupils, and its Headmaster was Mr J. Hopkirk. By 1904, there were 317 children at Brooklyn.
- 1920:- Correspondence commenced between the Brooklyn School Committee and the Education Board over the siting of a "Side School" to reduce the pressure of numbers at Brooklyn.
- 1921:- 16 February. On the motion of Mr Wright, the Education Board "resolved that the nucleus of a new school to serve children up to Standard 2 be erected on the Morningson Site." (Vogelmorn Park).
- 21 December. The Evans Bay Timber Company wrote to the Education Board: "We have to advise the completion of a Portable School at Morningson. Total cost 575 pounds."
- 1922:- 7 February. Mrs B. Look, the teacher-in-charge, began work with the 13 children who had been enrolled the previous day by the Headmaster of Brooklyn school - the same Mr Hopkirk. The Morningson-Brooklyn School was in business, with furniture: 33 chairs, 10 tables, 1 teacher's table, 1 chair, 1 blackboard, 1 easel. A local property-owner, Mr Bethel offered land for a right-of-way to give children from Vogeltown access to the school. This became Ingestre Street. Mrs Look brought the attention of the Brooklyn School Committee to the facts that an open drain ran through the school grounds, and that stock wandered in the playground. In August, a water meter was put in the grounds, because cattle wandering there had been seen to turn the tap on, and thus waste water.
- 1925:- 15 April. School reopened for the first time since the Christmas holidays because of an epidemic of infantile

- 1925
(Cont'd):- paralysis. A man was employed in the playground to cut down gorse and bushes, and to clear the ground. School Roll: 35.
- 1926:- April. The Education Board agreed to apply to the Department for a grant in order to build a new, three-room school, and was assured that 150 children would be immediately available to attend the new school when it was erected. By October, the roll had reached 49. Mrs Look notified the Board that the single schoolroom was overcrowded, and an arrangement was made with the Baptist Church to rent facilities for two classes at 12 shillings and sixpence per week.
- 1927:- February. Standard 3 was retained at the Side School instead of going to Brooklyn. Now 34 children had their classes in the Baptist Sunday School room, and 25 Primers were left in the schoolroom. In May, the erection of a new school (on the present site) was authorised, and a grant of 2,985 pounds was approved. By November the roll was 60, and Mrs Look wrote that the "infant school is now very crowded, there being no room for children to move about."
- 1928:- February. A tender for the building of the new school - for 2,501 pounds - was accepted from Messrs Hazlett and Newberry. In May the school roll stood at 68. A request forwarded to the Board that the new school be called Vogeltown or Mornington. Quite a discussion then followed about a name for the school. One suggestion was Aratau, which was translated as the Ridgeway. How it came to be accepted, and in common use, without the "e" is not clear. Some folk have asserted that the school was named after the "Martha Ridgway" an immigrant ship in the nineteenth century. Another contender for the honour may be a Mr Isaac Ridgway, who was a prominent citizen of Wellington around the turn of the century, and had a wharf named after him. On the other hand, the omission of the "e" may be a mere slip. The Education Board's references to the school sometimes include it, and sometimes leave it out. (Mr Bowie, however, always left out the "e".) The new school buildings opened in September 1928. The transportable Side School went to the Wairarapa to become Ahiaruhe School, near Carterton.
- 1929:- 2 February. Mornington School ceased to be a side school to Brooklyn, and opened with a staff of three, and 87 children. Mr J.F.C. Hiddlestone was Acting Headmaster. In May, the Board complied with a request for the school to be called Ridgway. On 27 May, the school reopened after the first term holidays, with Mr W.S. Bowie (Head Teacher), Miss Paul (Infant Mistress) and Miss Parker (Assistant Mistress). The school was "in future to be known as Ridgway," Mr Bowie wrote. The first School Committee was: Mr J.M. Russell (Chairman), Mr G.H. Weir (Secretary), Mrs E. Metcalfe, and Messrs J. Staples, R.R. Bennett, R.D. Haymes, and T.J. Kelly. The Official Opening caused a fuss, though. Word was received that the ceremony had been fixed, as Mr Bowie put it, "for Monday next at 3 p.m. The Board's Officials rushed up furniture for the teachers' room: 1 table, 3 sea grass arm chairs, and one morris couch; also pillows and curtains for the window, floor laid with linoleum. Previous to this, the reply (from the Board) when asked to supply furniture was always: "No funds. No sanction from the Department." Eventually, however, all went off well. On 29 July, Mr Bowie recorded in the Log that: "The Honourable Minister of Education Mr Atmore, supported by

- 1929
(Cont'd):- Mr Wright MP., Members of the Board, etc. attended the Official Opening. The children sang a song of welcome, and were granted a holiday on (the) following day."
- 1930:- 4 February. School reopened after holidays. Roll: 122.
- 1935:- February. Catholic school opened in Brooklyn: Ridgway's roll fell by about 20. Roll: 130.
- 1936:- April. Fourth classroom finally added, after more than five years' wait. August. Roll: 139. Mr Jackson (Standards 5 and 6) - 32; Mr Maciver (Standards 3 and 4) - 29; Miss Coster (Standards 1 and 2) - 41; Miss Hughes (Primers 1 - 4) - 37.
- 1938:- 30 April. Mr Jackson wrote in the Log: "For the first time Mornington Park was played on, on Saturday afternoon, by two non-school soccer teams."
- 1946:- 4 February. School opened for the year minus standards 5 and 6. Ridgway "decapitated." Roll now 90, after hovering around 110 for most of the war-years. November. Ridgway School Committee made definite arrangements about erecting an Honours Board, having first discussed the idea as early as 1944. Mr Eric Trail offered to see about the manufacture of such a Board. The Secretary, Mr A.B. Thomson, "to check from Army records details of those killed in action and decorations awarded."
- 1948:- April. School roll: 109. The Honours list had been completed, after much careful research, in December 1947. Now the finished Board was with Mr A. Kindell, Senior for inscribing. After a great deal of difficulty, the Secretary managed to buy 5 books of gold leaf (total cost 2 pounds, 10 shillings). November. Official unveiling of the Honours Board by the Australian High Commissioner, Mr A.R. Cutler, V.C. "Many of those honoured and their relatives were happily able to be present at the ceremony, which was also attended by a goodly number of the residents and children of the district," as the Committee's Biennial Report recorded. Mr Kindell was presented with a pipe in appreciation of his work.
- 1951:- February. School swimming pool opened. 131 children (68 boys 63 girls) on the roll. The roll numbers fluctuated about this mark for much of the decade, until 1958-9 when there was a jump to around 160.
- 1961:- Fifth classroom completed. Dressing sheds had been built the previous year, and at this time, too, the filtration plant for the baths went ahead.
- 1969:- Sixth classroom added: February roll tallies now reached 170, which meant that often there were more than 190 children at Ridgway by the end of the school year.
- 1974:- Ridgway's roll hits its peak in these years 1973-75. September, seventh classroom sited.

- 1975:- November. Adventure playground officially opened on Gala Day by Mr G. O'Brien M.P. (At the school fair 12 months earlier, \$950 had been raised, of which \$500 was earmarked for the construction, which was greatly aided by the Brooklyn Lions Club).
- 1979:- 5 February. Classes began at Kingston School for Ridgway's children - except two Standard 3 - 4 classes in Rooms 6 and 7, who remained while the remodelling of the original school block was effected. Renovations to enclose the school pool also commenced. Roll: 154.
- October. Jubilee Celebrations of both Ridgway School and the Vogelmorn Tennis Club held conjointly.
- 1980:- February. Ridgway reopens, now with a spacious library, and much-altered variable teaching spaces in place of traditional four-wall classrooms. September roll: 201.

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