

# *Longburn Miniature Rifle Club*

## **1931 – 1948**

Longburn was a small settlement which had grown up in the shadow of the nearby Palmerston North Borough. Its main attraction was the local dairy factory and a few industries to service the rural area. To help prevent the population drift to the larger cities, it was decided to hold a public meeting to explore ways and means of providing a better social and entertainment life for the settlers of the town. At this meeting, chaired by Mr F S Birch who for many years had owned a bakery in the town, an idea was floated to form a miniature rifle club.

The club was formed in 1931 with Mr F S Birch as President, Mr C Cooksley as Secretary - Treasurer, Mr H Hayter as Club Captain, and Mr W Birch as Vice-Captain. Club subscriptions were set at 5/- (50 cents) for seniors, and 2/6 (25 cents) for juniors.

The end of the first year saw the club hold a dance in the Longburn Hall where a large crowd danced to the strains of a popular orchestra of the time, and during the evening the Patron, Mr A Mathieson, presented trophies won during the year. The Cooksley Cup for the highest aggregate went to Mr H Mabey, and Mr H Hayter who was runner up, received the silver medal.

The club continued to prosper and in 1933 wrested the McKelvie Cup from the holders Ohakea, after a keen exhibition of shooting. This caused great delight in the area as the cup competition had been dominated by the Ohakea, Bulls and Sanson clubs over the previous years. Wes Birch top scored with a double possible.

In 1934 it was decided that ladies be allowed to join the club, and those who joined recorded some good scores. Miss R Birch being the winner of the Ladies Aggregate Cup presented by Mr W Kells.

For several years the club had successfully run the Jones and Collinson competition on behalf of the Manawatu Miniature Rifle Association. and decided to apply to run the Manawatu Championships in 1935. However, this was to be a bit of a disaster as, having only 5 mounds and an abnormal number of entries, shooting carried on until 2.30am when the final detail was shot. This competition in later years was run by the Feilding club which had eight mounds at its disposal.

Over the years, friendly matches had been shot with neighbouring clubs. One of the most popular annual fixtures was shot with the Aokautere Club for the 'Mugs Cup'. This cup caused great rivalry and competition between the clubs.

In later years preceding the Second World War, club numbers diminished slightly although the club was able to field strong teams in the competitions. As a result of the neighbouring Palmerston North Miniature Rifle Club going into recess, Longburn gained some new members being Mr & Mrs E Strong, A Barnard, J McAvinue and S Brookie.

The Manawatu Championships in 1939 almost saw a notable double when A Gale won the A Grade and Miss A Gale came runner up in the B Grade.

Shooting recommenced in 1946 though only the Longburn name remained in existence, as most of its members came from Palmerston North.

An offer from Mr E Strong in 1947 of a property in Manawatu Street, Palmerston North for use as a miniature rifle range was accepted, and at a special meeting it was decided to use the club's resources to finance the range.

At a further meeting on March 6th, 1948 a new club was formed, to be known as the Palmerston North (Longburn) Miniature Rifle Club. Mr F Andrews was elected President, E Strong, W Birch and N Hanson as Vice-Presidents, and Les Hunter as Secretary. Shooting was to commence on April 5th.

So thus ended the existence of the Longburn Club which had, over the years, been a prominent part of the entertainment and social affairs of the Longburn district.

