

OPIKI MINIAATURE RIFLE CLUB

1952 – 1964

Disaster struck the Opiki community when, in the early hours of the morning of September 13th 1944, the local hall and contents were destroyed by fire. A bitter blow for the residents. At the time of the fire, the hall and contents were insured for £900 (\$1,800).

A decision to rebuild the hall was made and a live wire committee chaired by Mr W N Williams sprang into action. The district was canvassed for funds and the committee considered many fund-raising options. The completed cost of the new hall, including architects' fees of £75 (\$150) was £3,257 (\$6,514).

The sports minded residents of the area called a public meeting in January 1952 to consider forming a combined indoor bowling and miniature rifle club. Twenty five enthusiasts attended and a committee of 5 were elected - R Phillips, J Hansen, A Watt, G Clifford and O Phillips.

Separate records were not kept until 1955, when Ron Phillips convened a meeting with 7 members present. Ivan Claridge was elected Chairman, Jim Phillips Club Captain and Dick Wilde Secretary/Treasurer. Subs were set at 10/- (\$1). Alan Watt was made a life member after presenting a cup to be known as the Handicap Cup. Raffles were held to raise funds. Some of the costs in the 1950s were - Remington Rifle £8/10/- (\$17), Range £20 (\$40), 350 Targets £2/12/6 (\$5.25) and 2656 ammunition £17/3/7 (\$34.36).

Through a lifelong interest and expert knowledge in rifle shooting, Jim Hansen gave a tremendous amount of time and encouragement in getting the club established. Mr "Pop" Whiteman also was very helpful in instructing new members.

The club was affiliated to the Horowhenua Association and shot in interclub competitions, although many friendly matches were shot with Manawatu Association clubs. Others taking an active part in the club included J Wilson, E Pedley, L Craw, W Tate, J Bishop and D Clarke.

Access to the Opiki Hall was via the Opiki Toll Bridge where the charge for cars was 2/6 (25 cents) for the return trip, but as traffic gradually increased this was reduced to 1/- (10 cents) in the 1960s.

With the weekly crack of the rifles, a small but extremely enthusiastic group kept up the fire for a good 10 years, while taking part in interclub shoots, with Ted Pedley as Chairman in 1962.

According to Brian Madden, a resident of the area, the club was still functioning in 1964, but with the advent of television and other forms of entertainment the club finally ceased shooting the same year.

