

# *OROUA DOWNS MINIATURE RIFLE CLUB*

## **1923-1936**

Early 1923 saw ex-members of the defunct Himatangi Defence rifles Club meet in the Memorial Hall where a meeting was held to discuss the formation of a miniature rifle club. Mr R Witton was elected as President and 2 new Vickers rifles were ordered.

On May 25th the first practice shoot was held on the new range which had been constructed by Mr E Conlan and Mr A Jamieson. The scoring was good considering how few members had used the new Vickers rifles previously.

A visit from the nearby Awahuri Club in August (the first by a visiting team) saw the local team winning the match comfortably. Mr Cleaver, on behalf of the visiting club, expressed the appreciation of the team at the good treatment they had received, and for the most enjoyable evening in spite of their defeat. He also extended an invitation to the Oroua Downs Club to fire a return match at an early date. The return match was won narrowly by 2 points and the Oroua Downs President, R J Witton, thanked the Awahuri Club for their hospitality.

1924 saw the club become one of the founding members of the Manawatu Miniature Rifle Association and Mr Les Shailer took third place in the first Manawatu Championships.

During the 1927 season, the B team shot well and went down narrowly to the Bulls team in the final of the MMRA cup. The team comprised D Gustofen, A Bailey, V Gustofen, F Shailer, H Hamer, and A Nichols (A Nichols was the local storekeeper).

Over the years the club maintained a good membership and great rivalry amongst members but, with the country in a deep depression, it could not maintain a stable membership and, in 1933, had to withdraw from the Manawatu Association. However, by 1936, numbers had fallen away and it was decided to go into recess, with E Christiansen, C Conlan, and M Mills as trustees.

Two of the most notable members who started their careers at Oroua Downs were Les Shailer (1923) and Alex Marchant (1932) whose families still shoot today in the Manawatu.

Mr E Ferguson was Vice President of the MMRA 1927-1929.

Other pioneer families were the Conlan and Christiansen families, whose shooting days started with the Himatangi Rifle Club formed in 1903 on Mr Duncan's property.

Another interesting fact arising in the club's history was that there were 5 Shailer family members shooting for the club. They were Les, Albert, Stan, Charlie and Frank. Les Shailer (who was Morrie Shailer's father), later shifted to Awahuri in 1935, and then to Feilding in 1936.

