

PALMERSTON NORTH BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

MINIATURE RIFLE CLUB

1926 – 2024

The Government of the day, alarmed at the outbreak of war in South Africa (1900), decided that it was in the country's best interests that a reserve of trained riflemen be created in case of further conflicts. In order to do this the government encouraged the formation of cadet and territorial unit to which rifles and ammunition would be supplied.

One of the first formed was the Palmerston North Boys High School cadet team coached by Mr T Foot, one of the masters who was a keen shot. The team shot on the government range at Hokowhitu, now the site of the Massey campus, mainly using 303 calibre Lee Enfield rifles.

In 1907, Mr Rutherford donated a cup for competition between the school's cadets, the first winner being G Perrin, followed by Sergeant A Young in the next two years. His displays in winning the cups were very creditable.

Later years saw school members become involved in miniature rifle shooting. One of these was P. Skoglund who became a respected teacher at the school, a local MP and a well known lawn bowler who won several New Zealand championships.

The Linton Club approached the school in 1925, offering them the free use of the club's indoor range in King Street. Mr L Jones (RSA), who held the proxy vote of the school, attended the Manawatu Miniature Rifle Association annual meeting in 1926 where they were admitted to membership. The school teams performed creditably against the more experienced teams, but a complaint that the evening shooting interfered with the boys schooling resulted in the club defaulting matches late in the season. The club finally withdrew from competition citing lack of membership.

Several of the members who took part in this era were L Jackson, T Gabriel, R Page, J Danks and D and J Hopcroft. The latter two members went on to join the Aokautere Club where they presented the Hopcroft Shield in 1935 to the Manawatu Miniature Rifle Association.

On their withdrawal, the school teams concentrated on cadet shooting over the longer out door ranges until shooting ceased in the fifties.

In 1990 Dominic King, who had immigrated from South Africa and who had a background in shooting sports, joined the staff at the school. He resumed his shooting career by joining the Palmerston North RSA Club. His interests led to a rifle club being started at the school. thus forming a liaison between PNBHS and the RSA club which has continued to this day. Amongst the first students introduced to the sport were Michael Mortlock, Duncan Baker, B Cook and P Kirkman.

During the early nineties the New Zealand Smallbore Rifle Association in conjunction with Winchester Ammunition Company, instituted a secondary school competition for the Winchester Cup, in which Winchester donated a brick of ammunition to each school taking part, and the NZSRA on their part waived the entry fees, which removed all barriers from schools competing.

In the years following 1995, PNBHS teams were placed sixth, eighth and sixth respectively. The 1998 team comprised Nic Wilson, David Kernohan, Tama Randell, Paul Deighton and Scott Gordon. They are excellent performances considering these competitions attract almost 100 entries.

More impressive results were still to come under the management of Dominic King. In 2012 the team of Jack Cavanagh, Jacob Lawson and Kyle Robertson won the Boys Grade of the TSNZ Postal match, and the PNBHS team reached another pinnacle in 2019, winning the TSNZ Inter-secondary Schools Inter-Island Match with the team of Shaun Jeffery, Lachie McNair and David Murphy.

Many of the students have also represented Manawatu in inter-association matches, taken part in Manawatu and North Island Championships, and today take part in interclub matches as members of their respective Manawatu Clubs.

Over the years the school has contributed greatly to the welfare of its students by the introduction and instruction of the rules of safety in firearms handling.

Though the first history of miniature rifle shooting may have been of short duration, the school today carries on the proud tradition of shooting sports which has existed since the school was formed in 1902.