

RONGOTEA MINIATURE RIFLE CLUB

1921 – 2024

To the west of Palmerston North lies the small country township of Rongotea which was a busy and prosperous settlement in 1921. The dairy factory was a meeting place for local farmers and various businesses had been set up in the town square.

Miniature rifle shooting as a sport was gaining popularity at this time and several prominent sportsmen had been invited to Palmerston North to view the Linton Miniature Rifle Club facilities. Encouraged by what they saw, it was decided to call a public meeting which was held in the town's Board room on June 10th, 1921. The report was greeted by an enthusiastic group of supporters who decided to press ahead and form a miniature rifle club. The election of officers followed where Mr E J Arnott was elected President, F Wright and M Blaxland as Vice-Presidents, D Papps as Secretary, and L Ross as Treasurer, with a committee consisting of F Hogg, R McMillan, W Amey, A Hintz, W Foster and H Blaxland. 51 members signed up.

One of the first competitions organised was held for a trophy donated by Mr E Lees, resulting in a win for Mr E Arnott. The proceeds of this competition, 32/- (\$3.20) were handed over to the 'Help the Mothers' campaign.

An excerpt from the Evening Standard dated September 27th, stated "The highlight of the season occurred last Friday when Rongotea beat the strong Linton Club by a single point. Owing to one of the visitor's shots being in dispute, the result was declared a draw. Upon the conclusion of shooting, both teams adjourned to the 'hostel' where host, Morris Blaxland, the local Policeman, had prepared a dainty supper in his usual first class style. Several toasts were duly honoured and altogether a pleasant evening was spent. Mention was made during the evening that a move should be made to form a miniature rifle association. Perhaps the Linton Club will try to get such an association formed, if so they will be assured of strong support from this district."

According to records, it appears that two annual meetings were held in 1922, the first on March 3rd when F Hogg was elected President and the second on December 2nd where Mr J F McKelvie was elected as Patron, W Croucher as President, and W Smith as Secretary/Treasurer. A strong committee was formed with subscriptions fixed at 10/- (\$1) for new members, 5/- (50c) for old members and youths at half rates.

The annual report stated that "the club now possesses the McKelvie Cup which is a handsome silver cup valued at £20 (\$40), having been donated by Mr J F McKelvie, a prominent landowner at Carnarvon." This is a challenge cup shot by a 10 man team and had been successfully defended against all comers in the district.

An outdoor range had been set up on Mr Gust's property and several members had tried their hand at this branch of the sport. Mention was also made of the fact that 80 prizes had been shot for during the season, including several roosters, a salad bowl, boxes of tea, a pair of slippers and a cigarette roller. The aggregate prize (with handicap), a £2/2/- (\$4.20) gold medal, had been won by F Hogg.

During the previous season (1922), McKelvie cup challenges had been mainly confined to the three strongest shooting clubs and a decision was made to amend the rules so all clubs within a 25 mile (40 km) radius would be eligible. However this turned out to be an error of judgment as

the Bulls Club, which at the time was affiliated to Wanganui Districts Association, paid a visit on 22nd June, winning by 3 points. Top scores for the challengers were: C Broughton 139, F Rolfe 136 and H Hill 135. The locals, who did not shoot up to their usual standard, replied with E Arnott 135, and F Blaxland and F Wright with 134.

The Rongotea Club, with E Arnott in the chair, went on to play a vital role in the formation of the Manawatu Miniature Rifle Association at a meeting in 1924, held in the Coronation Hall. delegates from 5 clubs attended with F Wright representing Rongotea Club.

With the establishment of new clubs in the surrounding districts, Awahuri (1922), Oroua Downs (1923) and Ohakea (1925), club numbers were beginning to diminish and Rongotea struggled to maintain teams in the interclub series.

Mr W Amey presided over the 1926 AGM where the balance sheet showed a credit of 17/3d (\$1.72) and the club had a membership roll of 17. Interest in shooting fell away during the season with only a few enthusiasts seeing it through and the club finally decided to go into recess, citing a lack of interest and finance for its demise.

The Rongotea Club remained in recess for 32 years until interest was rekindled in 1958. A meeting was called by the Rongotea Returned Services Association to gauge interest in the reformation of the club where 25 locals were present. A committee was formed and a delegation approached the Te Kowhai Rugby Club to discuss the possibility of constructing a range in their gymnasium. Permission was granted and a series of sports nights, dances and raffles were hastily arranged to raise finance. The district was scoured for building materials, volunteers were pressed into service, much sawing and hammering took place and finally the split level 10 mound shooting bay and butts were finished. Both these were able to be closed off, leaving the intervening sawdust floor available for rugby training.

The first shooting took place in 1959 when the club was successful in regaining the McKelvie Cup, which it had last held in 1923. Club scores continued to rise and the club created a record in 1962 when four members won titles at the North Island Championships, these being Morrie Shailer (Master), Bruce Gates (A), Garry Bidlake (B) and Gail Thompson (C).

With strong support and an average membership of 25 members, the club reached its peak in the seventies. Amongst members shooting were M Shailer, S Shailer, K Pettersen, S Arnott, M Giles, D Coles, Gail and Graeme Burgess, the Angus Brothers, the Hensons, J Feldburg and R Brumby. One of the crackshots of the era was Morrie Shailer who, at the time was a freelance camera man for TV1. His assignments took him to all parts of the North Island and he would inevitably arrive late at the shoots, thus earning him the nickname 'The Late Mr Shailer'. Donning his shooting gear he would disappear onto the mound, shoot his cards in double quick time, usually with a top score, and he became known as the 'Fastest Gun in the West.'

The club received a bombshell letter on 20th September 1978, when they were requested to vacate the range, as the Te Kowhai Rugby Club had applied for an ancillary liquor licence which did not permit shooting on the premises. The rifle club members were devastated as the decision meant that as well as losing the range, they were evicted owning nothing after years of hard work.

Various sites were explored and an approach was made to the Rongotea Returned Servicemen's Club with the suggestion that a range could be built onto the southern side of their hall. However this idea was put to the vote and rejected by the RSA members.

Further explorations were successful when the club obtained permission to shoot at the Ohakea Hall on the defunct Ohakea Club's range. This was fully equipped with a 5 mound shooting bay and, while satisfactory for club shooting, posed a problem when interclub matches were conducted, with shooting often continuing until 1am.

The club continued to search for a more suitable site so that it could return to Rongotea, and discovered that the Lutheran Church in Hunter Street was for sale. This was ideal and an extra ordinary meeting was called on March 28, 1980, where discussion took place as to how to fund the purchase. Three members, Morrie Shailer, Steve Arnott and Ken Pettersen each put up \$1,300 each and a bank loan was arranged to meet the purchase price of \$9000.

Planning consent was required to build the range and an inspection was carried out by a Manawatu County building inspector who saw no reason why the permit could not be issued. However, objections by three locals who complained that their property would be downgraded saw the council decline the application. The church was then put back up for sale resulting in a profit of \$2,500. Once again the club was left with finance in hand but no range to shoot on.

The money was then lent to the Manawatu Smallbore Rifle Association who were, at the time issuing debentures to raise funds to build a new range in Totara Road, Palmerston North. The club shifted to Palmerston North and shot on the range in Albert Street in conjunction with the Palmerston North Club.

On completion of the new range in Totara Road, the Rongotea Club moved in and shot on Mondays nights still with the Palmerston North Club. The Palmerston Club went into recess in the mid eighties and its remaining members joined the Rongotea Club.

By 1999 the club has a large membership, has regained its former glory and takes a full part in the affairs of the Manawatu Association. It's notable that two members shooting today, Steve Arnott and Martin Hunt, belong to families who took part in the original founding of the club in 1921.

RONGOTEA SMALLBORE RIFLE CLUB JNC.

PRESIDENTS REPORT for 1986 Season

The Club has successfully completed a seasons shooting. We have just managed to field a team at the interclub shoots. With a membership of 8 we need a 100% turnout to be successful. The membership prospects for 1987 doht look like increasing.

With a 25% drop in the price of ammunition, we hopefully will not loose any of our existing members and perhaps gain the 2 or 3 desperately needed.

The Manawatu Smallbore Rifle Association has now repaid to the club all of the \$3000-00 loaned to them in October 1984 for the Range building fund.

With our subscriptions kept at Senior \$50-00 and Junior %25-00 our fiancial balance will continue to grow. This will be needed should we ever decide in the future to build our own range in or around Rongotea.

Could members make an effort to support the working bees held at the Association Range. As users of the range we will have the finger pointed at us if we do not partisapate. I appreciate that we all have a good distance to travel to Palm. Nth. but an effort must be made.

Thanks again to Maurice And Shirley Shailer for their Vehicle use in bringing members to the range on Monday evenings. This is appreciated by us all.

To all current members I say 'Hang in there' and keep the Club functioning. When the upsurge in interest of the shooting sports does arrive then the club will have the foundation to handle it. Maybe we will return too the membership numbers of 32 plus that we had when the club used the Tekawau Football Rooms in Rongotea.

All the best and good shooting for 1987.

Stephen Arnold
13/3/87

RONGOTEA SMALLBORE RIFLE CLUB JNC.

BALANCE SHEET 1986

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>		
Cash in hand	1/1/1986	60-51	Range Hire M.S.R.A.	336-00
Subscriptions	8 at \$50	400-00	Affiliation fee	10-00
Ammunition Sales (see below)		nil	Capitation fees	189-00
Bank Interest		354-96	Insurance	38-04
M.S.R.A. coaching grant		11-00	P.N. Public Relations Sub	15-75
Loan Repayment from M.S.R.A.		1000-00	Engraving of Cups and Trophies	nil
			Bank service and commission fee	5-00
			Competition Fees	6-00
			Secretarys expenses	7-80
			Gun oil - patches - score book	5-68
			Transferred to investment	1000-00
			Cash on hand 31/12/1986	213-20
<u>Current Assets</u>				
Term Deposit	\$2800-00			
Amo stocks	450 rounds			
Amo sales money held in cash box	\$29-00			
		1826-47		1826-47

PARTICULARS OF PREVIOUS REGISTRATION OR DEALER FROM WHOM PURCHASED

NEW ZEALAND No 435007

Police 67D [ORIGINAL]

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION

The Arms Act 1920
Palmerston North Police District.

Insert full name, address, and occupation. This is to Certify that The Hon, Secretary, Rongotea Small Bore Rifle Club of Rongotea.

Insert description of firearm. has this day registered the under-mentioned firearm, viz, One ' 22 Calibre Single Shot B.S.A, Martini I2/I5 Target Rifle Rifle Number P.74054.

Note—For regulations and particulars of previous registration see back hereof.

Permit No 483478 issued at Rongotea. on 2/1/59. 19 59.

Given under my hand, at Rongotea. this 24th day of February. 19 59.

Signature: *[Signature]*
Rank: Arms Officer.

Fee, 5/-, received

Note—The above-mentioned firearm cannot be lawfully delivered to any other person without a permit from the Police.
600 lbs./11/57—86584 J

Pol. 67D

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION OF FIREARM

(Arms Act 1958, Section 9)

No 84055 ORIGINAL

The President of Rongotea Small Bore Rifle Club.
(Full name)

of RONGOTEA.
(Address and occupation)

has this day been registered as the owner of (describe firearm): One 22 Calibre B.S.A. International Single Shot Target Rifle.

Permit No. 49747 issued at Rongotea on 25th June 19 62

The names of the following persons are included in this certificate pursuant to section 9 (5) of the Arms Act 1958 (State full name, address, and occupation of each person):

Dated this 28th day of JUNE 19 62 Signature: *J. Balloch*

FEE 10s. received Rank: Constable
Arms Office: RONGOTEA

Particulars of previous registration or dealer from whom purchased:			
Former Registered Owner	Date	Certificate No.	Issued at

Name and address of dealer:

The 2000's were the start of a very successful era for Rongotea Smallbore Rifle Club.

Hans van Dam was the president, Janet Hunt was secretary, Warren Oakes was the Club Captain and Stephen Arnott was the Treasurer. Ken Peterson was the Patron until he passed away in 2002, when Shirley Shailer graciously accepted the position. Sadly, late in 2000 Morris Shailer passed away.

Morrie was one of the original members from when the club restarted back in 1959. He was also the patron of the Manawatu Smallbore Rifle Association. His enthusiasm and passion for both the club and the sport of smallbore rifle shooting was infectious. Many a story has been written about Morrie. One memorable inter club against Utuwai, the Rongotea members arrived an hour late (in the Shailer bus) because a wrong turning was taken on the way (everyone was talking too much). We shot in the Utuwai Hall with only a curtain separating the mounds from the social area. On the way home it was tradition to spot possums, once a possum was spotted the inmates of the van would disgorge to chase the poor creatures up the road. This night a possum was spotted, Martin Hunt and Ross Lomas leapt out of the van taking one of Stan Turner's crutches each. The crutches were returned to Stan a bit bent and different lengths. The possum escaped.

In 2001 Stephen Arnott was nominated for life member of the Rongotea club. Stephen started shooting towards the end of the 1959 season and from then on has held several positions within the club from ladder steward, club captain, vice president and president/treasurer during the turmoil of losing the club rooms at Rongotea. He oversaw the shift to temporary lodgings at the Ohakea Hall in 1979 and then to the Albert St range in 1981, and finally to the newly built MSRA Totara Road association range in 1982.

He was Rongotea club treasurer in more recent times and still managed to divide his time with the Poroutawhao Club (near Levin) firstly as the Horowhenua Association Secretary 1967-1968 then as secretary/treasurer 1991-1996 then President for one year in 1969. Then as Secretary for Poroutawhao 1973 to 1981 and president 1988 to 1992.

Brian Lewis also passed away in March 2001. Brian was one of 7 members of the Palmerston North club which combined with 7 members from Rongotea in 1988 (Stan Turner, Brian Lewis, Bill Sewell, Hans Van Dam, Jack Blackmuir, George Kent and Bob Kent-not related). It was said of Brian that his love of shooting was only surpassed by his love of fishing.

Fundraising as always, is an issue for any Club (or Association) and novel ways of raising money were devised. As funding raising, MSRA sold bags of pumpkins in the mid 80's. Then lamingtons replaced the pumpkin selling, the members making approx. 900 dozen three times a year, all coated in either chocolate or strawberry, and then coconut. Rugby ticketing at the showgrounds proved to be very profitable, instigated by Craig Morris and organised by Roy Sanson. We also were stewards for Trail rides at McKelvie's farm,

organised by Ross Lomas, again another profitable fundraiser. The annual MSRA Business House shoot still exists as another fund raiser.

Times change, and the concept of applying to Pub Charities for funds to buy new Rifles and coats etc. for the club was embraced, although social shoots for Scouts and social groups like Young Farmers are still run.

In 2004, rather than lose the history of the Palmerston North Club trophies, it was decided to recycle the trophies and use them for the 20 shot Club Champions in each grade.

Club Champions 2005



Terry Robinson (C Grade), Shirley Shailer (Patron), Warren Turner (A grade), Craig Morris (Master grade), Stan Turner (B Grade), William Darlow (D grade)

By 2005 Membership is up and we have 32 members. Being a town club means we attract student imports and the next generation of shooters, Stan's son Warren Turner, Ian Westcott, Robbie McNair, Caroline Rhodes and Daniel Morris. Our existing Rongotea base is still there with the addition of Brad Webb, William Darlow, Lance Hurley, Patrick Lindsay and Daniel Morris as junior members who upped their game. We had 11 D grade shooters and for the first time in many years won the D grade Aitken Shield. We challenged for, then successfully defended the McKelvie Cup (Open team of eight shooters). We wrestled the Gledhill Cup (B grade and lower) off Colyton then defended it against Marton (with a record score). 2005 was a big year with 4 members representing

NZ at Oceania in Brisbane Martin Hunt ,Janet Hunt, Caroline Rhodes (Junior bronze) Ian Westcott (Junior Gold).

Rongotea at MSRA Windup, Cloverlea Tavern 2007



Back Row: Stan turner, Craig Morris, Roy Sanson, Robbie Eastham, Ian Westcott, Warren Turner, Warren Oakes, William Darlow
Front Row: Jon Phillipps, Bob Kent, Daniel Morris, Lance Hurley, Helen Freiman, Martin Hunt, Janet Hunt

Rongotea windup 2007 Shirley Shailer (Patron) and Aldyth Sanson



By 2010 we have grown to 36 members with 11 in Master grade. For the next few years Rongotea dominates, defending the McKelvie cup (for 20 years of the last 24 years) The club is very successful at competitions and Rongotea members represent our Association, and we feature in many NZ teams, but the club isn't just about winning. There is a mindset to improve individually, and to help others do the same no matter which club or Association they come from. Coaching became common place and members such as Martin Hunt, Jon Phillips and Helen Freiman lead the charge. The club is in good heart, and we have attracted the Reesby family, so the links to the wider Rongotea district are still intact.

Murray Giles accepts the office of Patron in 2012, Jackie Lindsay is Secretary, Hans is still the President.

Steve Arnott and Murray Giles Rongotea Windup 2013



So, inevitably what goes up must come down, that is the reality of any sport. Our older shooters can't see any more and getting up and down off the mound seems too hard, however Bill Sewell and Ross Sheerin put their workshop skills to the test, fabricating a rest and various attachments as they decide they will put scopes on their rifles and shoot F class indoors for several seasons (off a rest), taking great delight in beating the master graders on occasion, before they also stop shooting. Bill was the maker of all those

coloured front Perspex elements and screw in rear sight filters that were common a few years ago, he believes he made 1000's of them and "he sent them all round the world"

Bob Kent also perseveres, not being able to see the target as he once could as a Master grader and NZ Rep frustrates him, and some nights it seems that mound 12 turns into a mini workshop as Bob surrounds himself with rifle parts to adapt it so he can see. Bob stops shooting in 2015. Membership dips again.

Bill Sewell September 2024



2014 Wade Mace is now secretary, Hans is still President, Stephen Arnott retires in 2015, and Jackie Lindsay takes over as Treasurer.

Stan Turner, sadly passes away in late 2017, one of the Palmerston North Club members who merged with Rongotea in the 1980s. Stan had a trophy named in his honour prior to his passing. "The Stan Turner Travelling Award" it is the 3 monkeys "*see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil*" and it came about because Stan would often work late, and it was accepted that if he was going to get to an Interclub, it would be by 9pm.

Go Karts - Stan with his old racing helmet and goggles - 2005



This was in the days before the internet, emails and texting, long story short, he would forget where Rongotea was going to Interclub. He would start by going to the MSRA range, if the lights were off, he would know we were somewhere else, next stop was the Awahuri range (in Awahuri at that time). Once there, they would set him right, and he could veer off to Colyton or go straight on to Bulls or Marton. He was a bit stuck if he had to backtrack to Aokautere. He thought no one would mention these indiscretions, no such luck, each year this trophy is gleefully awarded to those who suffer embarrassing memory lapses and try to keep it quiet.

Murray Giles our Patron passes away in late 2018. Murray was another long-time stalwart of the club and as is often the case, persuaded his sons, Douglas and Hamish to shoot in the 90's.

Roy Sanson takes up the reins as Patron. Roy had shot for Horowhenua but when retirement beckoned, he and Aldyth shifted to Palmerston North and Roy joined Rongotea in 2007.

The Government changes the arms act in response to the Christchurch Mosque shootings in 2019 which impacts the perception of shooting clubs generally.

In March 2020, Covid 19 strikes. The cessation of shooting competitions for several months meant that the momentum is lost, and it seemed much harder to get people motivated. Although "normal" competition resumed in 2021 the impact on shooting was significant with many not returning due to health concerns or being out of the habit of going shooting. Juniors grow up and leave for further study, or employment takes priority.

We lose four members to the South Island and one to England. Our membership dips again.

Rongotea - MSRA Windup 2022



Alex Sharpe, Andrew Henderson, Kim Sharpe, Jess Steffert, Janet Hunt, Ross Lomas, Barry Scott, Martin Hunt

Most parents get involved helping at Rifle Club (or any organisation) as they support their children. Rongotea has been very lucky over the last 25 years (doesn't time fly) to have the support of several families who have helped or been roped in to help at shooting events. They are not necessarily shooters themselves.

Carole Morris took over running the MSRA kitchen for a few years after Janet Hunt, followed by Wade Mace (also the Secretary and shooter) with wife Louise. Then Tracey Burgess, steps up as daughter Jess Burgess Smith, leaves for the South.

Aldyth Sanson for many years was in the office or kitchen helping and now enjoys a real retirement a far cry from ticket ripping.

Lesley Lomas is the perfect foil for Ross and would help him devise the end of year novelty nights. I remember a particularly evil night where, before you shot you had to complete a

quiz, eat dry Weetbix™ plus there was the challenge of assembling a model plane blindfolded whilst your team mate tried to direct you.

Sandra and Gareth Reesby would turn up every time to help with ticket ripping and change targets at most Manawatu events for several years, as their way of supporting Sarah, David and Meggy and cousin Cameron. Sandra has since had a dabble at shooting.

Sadly, the Aokautere club disbanded around 2017. Jim Dann was the first to join Rongotea, followed by Barry Scott, then Kim and Peter Sharpe, with son Alex and daughter Olivia being the third generation to shoot.

Sarah Reesby became Secretary in 2021 just as Covid hits, until study takes more of her time. Janet Hunt takes over again as Secretary in 2023 with Warren Turner as President and Jackie Lindsay as Treasurer and Martin Hunt as Club Captain.

The loss of members to the South Island and overseas means the club again starts its rebuilding phase. We don't win as many of the Manawatu trophies, but confidence and skills improve thanks to MSRA encouraging a "10.1 training night" instigated in 2023 for anyone to come to each month.

Sadly, Steve Arnott passed away on 05 September 2024.

On the 16th September 2024 Rongotea challenge for the McKelvie Cup against Marton. The Marton club invested in electronic targets a few years ago and a TV screen mounted inside the social area provides real time results. This is a bit disconcerting if you're in shooting and can hear the crowd commenting! By the end of the night, we have the McKelvie Cup back where it belongs.



McKelvie Cup - Total Marton				Rongotea			
Handicap				Handicap			
			16/9/24				
Tony Bayler	97.5	99.4	196.9	Martin Hunt	97.6	98.4	195.10
Gary Cuff	95.2	100.8	195.10	Janet Hunt	98.3	98.3	196.6
Peter Lissington	97.6	97.4	194.10	Warren Turner	97.4	97.4	194.8
Dave Gledhill	95.4	95.3	190.7	Casey Bowater	96.5	96.5	192.10
Barry Nelson	96.3	98.5	194.8	Caley McNair	98.4	99.6	197.10
Total			969.34	Total			974.44
Handicap				Lachie McNair	92.3	94.2	186.05
<i>ABell</i>	Total			<i>M Hunt</i>	Total		

Rongotea Windup 2024



Jackie Lindsay, Mark Coory, Kim Sharpe, Callum Tatton, Caley McNair, Lintang Krohn, Lachie McNair, Martin Hunt, Olivia Sharpe, Warren Turner, Barry Scott, Josh Love, Casey Bowater, Peter Sharpe, Peter Weir, Janet Hunt, Alex Sharpe, Ru Buckland, Roy Sanson (Patron) Absent : Ross Lomas, Toby Cressy, Brent Henderson, Andrew Henderson.

Club membership has increased this year to 23 which is encouraging.

I noticed that a theme running through Hans Van Dams President's reports is *..that no club can function without the enthusiastic support and effort by its members...* We are fortunate to still have that support, and what the future may bring is unknown, but the opportunities are there.