

SANDON MINIA TURE RIFLE CLUB

1930 – 1973

A meeting of those interested in starting a miniature rifle club was held in the Manawatu County Council's offices in Sandon on March 30th, 1930.

There were a good number present and Mr A K Drew was voted to the chair. Mr W A Lumsden, an old stalwart of the Ohakea-Sandon Rifle Club in 1902 which had its range on Major Wilson's property, stated what the object was in calling the meeting, and briefly outlined what would be required to carry on. It was decided to form a club and a provisional committee consisting of Mr Drew, Mr Lumsden and Mr Jones were elected to meet the Sandon Hall trustees to see whether a range could be constructed on the premises.

On April 5th, a public meeting was held where the club was officially formed. Mr W Lumsden stated that an inspection of the hall had been carried out and that an excellent range could be made.

Office bearers elected for the year were: Patron, W A Lumsden: President, W Penny: Secretary, E Jones and Coach, K Lumsden. Annual subscriptions were set at 10/- (\$1) for seniors and 7/6 (75c) for members under 18 years of age.

Shooting commenced shortly after and several unsuccessful challenges were made during the year for the McKelvie Cup. The first season ended with a flourish when a team comprising K Lumsden, W and K Pearce, S Mason and R Lumsden tied for second place with Bunnythorpe in the Jones Shield match, and Ken Lumsden won the MMRA No 2 Cup for the highest A grade aggregate. It was also noted that S Mason shot the first double possible on the range.

The following year (1931) saw the Manawatu competitions split into three sections with Sandon being placed in the Northern section. This decision was reached after a lengthy discussion as to the best ways and means of reducing the travelling expenses of the clubs. The winners of each section were to meet on a neutral range to decide the final winners of the cups. The A team met with moderate success but the B team (all hot shots) won through to the final only to be beaten by the Linton Club.

Reference was made to the passing of Mr W S Penny, who was the first President of the club, and who took a keen interest in the club's welfare, by the new President, Mr P M Gedye (1932). He stated that the club's liability of £30 (\$60) had been reduced to £8/17/- (\$17.70). These debts had been mainly due to the costs incurred in setting up the range.

The club had also affiliated with the Wanganui Association where it finished third in the A grade and second in the B grade Postal shoots.

At the 1933 annual meeting, Mr A K Drew was elected President and he stated that the average attendance at the weekly shoots was 17. During the previous year the club had won the McKelvie Cup from Bulls, holding it for four challenges before losing it again. It was decided to suggest that the Wanganui Postal shoots commence earlier and that the matter of affiliating be left in the hands of the Secretary and President.

Great interest was taken in the McKelvie Cup match with Ohakea. The challengers (Ohakea) put up a phenomenal performance, dropping only 17 points on the two ranges, their total of 1103 included double possibles by P Ellery and J Simpson. With one exception, the team shot magnificently and it's been some time since such a total was put on in a match shoot. Sandon put on a fairly uniform score, though there was a lack of fireworks in their shooting, Fred Lumsden being the only one to register a possible.

At this time no official matches had been arranged between the Manawatu and Wanganui Associations, but an annual match was shot between Wanganui and representatives of the Northern section of Manawatu (comprising Ohakea, Sandon and Bulls) in late September, resulting in a win for Manawatu by 27 points. Henry Hill of Ohakea top scored for the local side with C Lister top score for Wanganui. The club closed the season with a dance in the public hall. The attendance was fair and a very enjoyable time was spent.

The display of trophies was of much interest, and the President, Mr A Drew, in making the official presentations congratulated the club and individual members on the success attained. Supper was served under the direction of the ladies with male members acting as waiters. Several of the trophies on display were Wanganui Senior and Junior Postal competition cups (record shoots) and the Noble Cup.

Changes in the club in 1934 saw Mr J Fagan elected as President and Keith Lumsden as assistant Secretary. A notable achievement was recorded when 5 members of the Lumsden family combined to win the Jones Shield. Ken Lumsden went on to win the New Zealand Championship with a score of 200.16, while Tom Pritchard of the neighbouring Bulls Club won the New Zealand Aggregate Championship (Turner and Le brun Cup) with a fine score of 649 (possible 650), with Wes Birch of the Longburn Club being runner-up with 645 points, thus a unique double was achieved by Manawatu riflemen.

In 1936 the club began using the new metric targets, which have a much smaller 'bull' than the old targets. A splendid single possible was recorded by J Fagan, his target being an almost perfect one and one of the best possibles ever seen.

In 1937 as a mark of respect the President, Mr E Green, called for a minute's silence to be observed in honour of Mr P M Gedye and Mrs W Henson who had passed away since the last annual meeting.

Mr Gedye, by his work for the club, was one of its most valued members, while Mrs Henson had been keenly interested on the club's welfare. Both had been deeply involved since the club was founded and would be sorely missed. The finances of the club ended up being in credit by £10/7/6 (\$20.75) after the purchase of a new rifle, and a new competition was to be introduced in the form of a single men versus married men match.

One of the final events held in the pre-war era was the annual dance in 1939. Over the years these had proved of great value in social entertainment and were good fundraisers. Mr Ken Pearce, in the absence of the President (Hamilton Henson), thanked all those who had helped, and extended special thanks to the ladies of the district who had arranged the supper. He called on Mr A K Drew (President of the Manawatu Association) to present the cups and trophies. Mr Drew then presented the McKelvie Cup to Mr E Green to hold for the year saying that the cup had been shot for since 1922, and had been held by nearly every club in the Association. That year alone there had been eleven challenges for it.

Over the years the Sandon Club had been fortunate in having the services of Mr A K Drew, the Manawatu County Clerk, who had been one of the driving forces in the formation of the club. He had also taken over the President's position at short notice in the Manawatu Association in 1933 on the death of Charlie Page (Linton) and held this position until 1940.

Other members to figure prominently in Association affairs were W Jenkins, who was Secretary/treasurer in 1935-37 and Ken Pearce (1938-39).

Shooting ceased in early 1940 when all the ammunition supplies were diverted to the war effort and the club went into recess.

Shooting commenced in 1945 after the Second World War ended, with Roy Lumsden winning the A grade and Laury Curtis runner-up, R Meyer won the B grade with K Masters runner-up. The following year (1946) saw the following office bearers elected: Patron, W Lumsden; President, B Masters and Secretary, J Meyer. The Secretary stated that the range rental had been increased from 5/- (50s) to 7/6 (75s), and it was resolved that the time limit for each card be 10 minutes. This was in answer to the question that too much time was wasted by various members, thus prolonging the night's shooting.

Further club records were not available at the time of writing, though it has been recorded that the annual meeting in 1957 elected the following officers: Patron - B Masters; President - M Shailer; Vice-president - H Henson; Secretary - K Reeve; and Assistant Secretary - A Shailer. Other office bearers were B Rowe, K Masters, L Gennills, W Lawrence, M Burmiester, J Philips and R Henson.

The continued urban drift of population from the rural areas and the advent of modern transport saw the club rolls diminish. The club could no longer raise enough members for MSRA shoots, holding its last interclub match in late 1973, finally deciding to go into recess at the 1974 meeting.