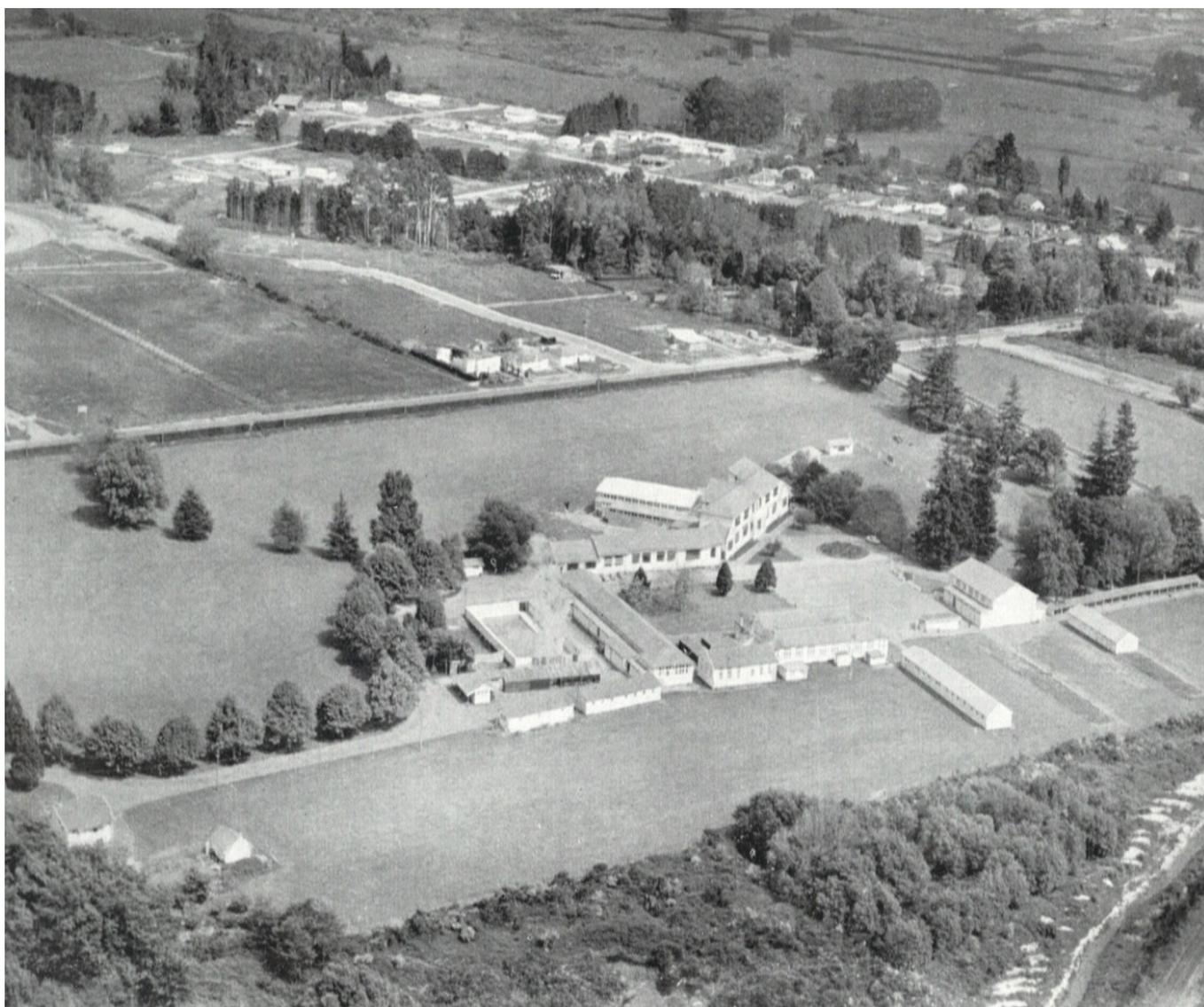




ROTORUA BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL DIAMOND JUBILEE

**60 YEARS OF EDUCATING BOYS
1959 - 2019**



Rotorua Boys' High School, November, 1959.

2019 marks the 60th Anniversary – Diamond Jubilee – of Rotorua Boys’ High School, and also the School’s 105th year. While we will not officially be 105 years old until 8 June, the 60th Anniversary of our re-opening as Rotorua Boys’ High School was Sunday, 3 February, 2019.

We became the Rotorua Boys’ High School when the original Rotorua High School was divided into separate boys’ and girls’ high schools at the end of 1958. The girls of the former school left to form the new Rotorua Girls’ High School on Old Taupo Road; the boys remained on the present site to become Rotorua Boys’ High School. We re-opened here on 3 February, 1959, with 582 boys and twenty-one staff members. 60 years later, there are 930 boys and just over 121 staff members! We also inherited 45 years’ of proud history and tradition from the former Rotorua High School dating back to 1914.

It is interesting to note that we have now been a boys’ only school for 16 years longer than we were a co-educational one, from 1914 to 1958.

In terms of marking our 60th Anniversary as Rotorua Boys’ High School, we won’t be holding a reunion like our sister school, Rotorua Girls’ High School, is in April. Our next major reunion will be held for the centenary of the Rotorua High School’s opening in 2027. However, the Prefect’s Badge was updated last year. This was the first time in 91 years that this historic badge, which has symbolized the office of Prefect at our school since 1927, was modified. The changes made to the badge were: to update the name of the school on the badge to Rotorua Boys’ High School; place the Māori head in his customary position atop the Shield; and add the Raukura plumes to it. The new badge, which will be worn for the first time by our Prefects in 2019, was also felt to be an appropriate way to commemorate our 60th Anniversary.

Let’s go back now and re-visit our school as it was when those first 582 boys and twenty-one staff members their school year here 60 years ago. We can do this by studying the photograph above, which was the first aerial photograph to be taken of the newly opened Rotorua Boys’ High School in November, 1959. In the School Archives I have a full-sized framed colour version of this photograph that was taken at the same time but facing towards A Block. It’s an interesting photograph for a number of reasons, not least of which is the very rural-looking landscape that surrounded us 60 years ago.

Starting at the top of the photograph on the left-hand side, we can see part of the old Rotorua Agricultural and Pastoral Association (A&P) show grounds of which the curve of the racing track is just visible at the top. Moving directly across from that is the (then) empty La Trobe Place, which was named after the man who designed A Block in 1926. On the other side of La Trobe Place, in amongst the densely treed area, is the former Riverholm estate. And on the northern-side of that we can see Shirley Street, Werrina Crescent and Sunset Road. In 1959, Sunset Road was little more than a dirt farm track and Old Taupo Road was an unsealed dirt road. The whole of the top part of the photograph was originally farmland belonging to H.C. Hardcastle, who built Riverholm in 1927, and the even larger adjoining farm of H.P. Ford to the west.

On the corner of Old Taupo Road and Pukuatua Street, we can see the reserve opposite the School which is officially known as the “Medical Officer’s Reserve.” The road opposite Riverholm, directly off Old Taupo Road, was the original road down to Mataatua Marae. That road was closed in the mid-1980s and a new road to Mataatua was formed off Pukutua Street opposite the School’s main entrance.

The Medical Officer's Reserve was formally set aside under the historic "Fenton Agreement" of 25 November, 1880 – Rotorua's founding document – as a grazing paddock for the town doctor's horse to graze in! Interestingly, the part of the site of our school directly opposite this reserve from the corner of Old Taupo Road and Pukutua Street to just opposite La Trobe Place was also set aside, in 1896, as a grazing paddock for the Department of Lands and Survey's horses to graze in! Whether or not the Medical Officer's Reserve and that part of our school were ever used for horses to graze in, I do not know.

Along the Old Taupo Road boundary we can see the long *Lawsoniana* hedge that once stood right along our western boundary from the corner of Old Taupo Road and Pererika Street right up to the opposite corner at Pukutua Street. It was planted during World War II, and most of it survived up until 1984 when it was removed. I remember the hedge before I came to the School as a boy, and it was in a pretty bad shape by 1984.

Starting from the corner of Old Taupo Road and Pukutua Street, we can see many of the same trees along our northern boundary that are still there today. The tallest of the trees are the *Douglas firs* which were planted, as tiny saplings, in 1885. The long structure we can see on the eastern-side of the main drive (on the site of what is now the staff car park) was a covered bicycle rack. The original 1952 gymnasium is next to it, and beside that there is a toilet block.

The two long buildings we can see projecting to the east opposite the gym and beside T Block, were blocks of pre-fab classrooms joined together. There were three such blocks of these classrooms built after World War II to accommodate the post-War baby boom. We can also see in the photograph the footprints of the central block of prefabs that was not long removed when the photograph was taken. We can also see the footprints of where classrooms were at the end of first block opposite the gym formerly were. This whole area is now the site of B Block.

Next to the second and longest block of prefabs is T Block. Behind T Block, we can see three smaller buildings. The building in the centre housed the original heat exchanger for the School's geothermal heating system, the geothermal bore for this being located in Kuirau Park. It was closed down in 1987.

Wedged in between T Block and S Block we can see a very interesting and important building in our school's history. It was originally known as the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) building. Originally built on Pukeroa Hill next to what is now Rotorua Public Hospital but was then known as King George V Military Hospital, it was officially opened by the Acting Prime Minister, the Hon. Sir James Allen, on 17 April, 1919. It had two large rooms and was used by the YMCA and for recreational purposes. It was into this building that our school moved into from our original home in the Victoria Institute on Arawa Street where the Court House is now in August, 1924. Our school was based in one small room at the Victoria Institute from 1914 until we outgrew it in 1924. After moving to the YMCA building in mid-1924, we stayed there for the next two-and-a-half years until the end of 1926. In 1927, we moved from the YMCA building into two disused wards of the re-named King George V Hospital (it has ceased to be a military hospital in 1921). In 1928, we moved down into A Block at Pukutua Street and the YMCA building also followed us. It was re-located to our present site and it was used here as our first Technical Block until the new T. Block was opened in 1939. The YMCA building survived wedged in between T and S Blocks until 1966.

Beside the YMCA building is, of course, S Block. It looks much the same now as it did 60 years ago. Further additions were made to it in 1997.

On the southern-side of S Block, we can see the School's former geothermal swimming pool which was built in 1954. It was called the "Jubilee Baths" and it was built to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the School's re-opening, as the Rotorua High School, in 1927. In the photograph, we can see the pool, the adjoining concrete changing rooms with its flat-topped roof which served as a viewing platform, and the cooling towers for the hot water system. Before being pumped into the pool, the boiling hot water from the bore in Kuirau Park passed through the heat exchanger building mentioned above and it was then piped to the pool. The hot water was cooled down before it entered the pool by running it over the cooling towers we can see steaming at the eastern-end of the pool. Beside the pool, on the southern-side (where the boardwalk is now) was the original rifle range which was re-established on the site of what is now the South Hostel of Tai Mitchell House in the early 1960s. Behind the rifle range we can see the old Cadet Battalion Armory building where the Cadet Battalion's munitions and guns were kept. That building burnt down in the mid-1970s. This whole site is now the Jubilee Quad.

The long strip of land we can see at the bottom of the photograph extending from Old Taupo Road in the north down to the south gate up from Pererika Street is today the site of the staff car park, the large gym, B Block, C. Block, M Block, and the two Mitchell House Hostel buildings.

The buildings we can see at the bottom left-hand corner by the south gate were the Caretaker's house and garage. The house (with the garden beside it) was moved to the School from elsewhere in 1928, and was originally located where T Block is now. The house was moved from there to the south gate when T Block was built in 1939. The scrub-covered land at the bottom of the photograph is now the site of Trade Central. That land gives us an excellent idea of what the whole site of the School originally looked like before the construction of A Block in 1927. At the bottom right-hand corner of the photograph we can see the original railway line that once ran past the School and on into the centre of town terminating where the Mall is now. The railway line was laid down in the early 1890s, and it was pulled up in the mid-1990s.

Moving back up to the south drive, we can see our magnificent Tulip trees lining the drive. They originally terminated where the Millennium Centre is now. The small structure we can see in between those trees and directly opposite the Silver Jubilee Baths, was a sports pavilion. It was built at the same time as A Block in 1927, and it provided shelter for people watching rugby games on the fields behind it (its counterpart for the tennis courts can be seen on the opposite side of A Block). That pavilion was later closed in and it became the School's first tuck shop after World War II.

The large tree in between the sports pavilion and the southern-end of A Block is the original memorial to A.R. Ryder, Principal from 1927-1931. It was a Scarlet oak, and it was originally planted in front of the Majestic Theatre (it was demolished in the mid-1980s) on Tutaneikai Street in 1914. In 1928, the tree was moved the School and, in 1964, it was dedicated to Ryder and it survived until the mid-1970s (Ryder's memorial is now the main entrance gates on Pukuatua Street).

A Block looks the same today as it did 60 years ago (the War Memorial Hall had been built that year). On the northern-side of A Block, we can see the School's extensive grass tennis courts – they were the best grass tennis courts in Rotorua after with the ones in the

Government Gardens where the Energy Events Centre is now. On part of these tennis courts was built the original block of the Harwood Library in 1979.

Opposite the roundabout in front of A Block and just along from where the Harwood Library now stands, we can see three tall *Douglas fir* trees on the bend of the main drive directly opposite the gym. These trees, like their counterparts along the Pukuatua Street boundary were all planted, as tiny saplings 135 years ago, in 1885. Of them, only one now remains – the tall and mighty sentinel *fir* that has watched over us since we moved here in 1928. The first of the three *firs* on this site was cut down in the 1970s, and I watched the second one being cut down from my B Block classroom in early 1985.

The sole survivor of those three *fir* trees greeted the first 582 boys and twenty-one staff members of Rotorua Boys' High School when they began here on 3 February, 1959. He is still here 60 years later silently watching over us. I would like to think that he still will be here, standing tall and proud, long after all of us have gone. I would also like to think that he is, in this his 135th year, wishing us a very happy 60th birthday.

Kevin J. Lyall

SCHOOL ARCHIVIST & HISTORIAN.