

Chapter 2

Waikato Town & Country Festival Society

Tuesday, 5th March, 1968

The First General Meeting of the proposed Waikato Town and Country Festival Society (Inc), was held at Waikato Motor Hotel, Hamilton, at 8 p.m.

Those present at this meeting were -

Dr D R Llewellyn (Chairman) - University of Waikato
Mr H Barrance - Winstones Ltd
Mrs H G Bennett - Country Women's Institute
Mr P Bourke - Waikato Times
Mr M Campin - Hamilton Playbox Repertory Society
Mr R G Cuff - Waikato Display Associates
Mr D G Edgar - Ruakura Research Centre
Mr J R Eide - New Zealand Milk Board
Mr J Foreman - Trigon Plastics Ltd
Mr C H Gorge - Federated Farmers
Mr A J Harwood - Waikato A & P Show Association
Mr K D Hickson - Waikato Public Relations Foundation
Mr E M Horan - Tourist & Publicity Department
Mr H Hornsby - St Paul's College
Miss R Irving - NZ Broadcasting Corporation
Mr O J James - James Aviation Ltd
Mr R M Jansen - Norris, Ward, Jansen & Webb
Mr W J Lock - Waikato Display Associates
Mrs M J Maisey - Country Women's Institute
Mrs J K Martin - Women's Division Federated Farmers
Mr P Nicholl - (Secretary) Federated Farmers
Mr M D Port - Port Bros Ltd
Mr J D J Scott - Ruakura Research Centre
Mr J L Walcott - Waikato Valley Jaycees
Mrs N L Wanhill - Women's Division Federated Farmers
Mr R J Webb - Norris, Ward, Jansen & Webb
Representative of Hamilton Industrial Development Council
Representative of Hamilton Round Table

Apologies were received from G Banfield, H Clapham, P Cuming, I J Drabble, P V Harkness, M G Hewitt, T C Hickmott, T G Hodgson, F C Johnstone, G Lovell, G N Marshall, D McLeod, R Middleton, R B Seabook, K C Schultz, W H Wallace, Prof A J Ward and G W Wilson.

There being only one nomination, the Chairman declared Mr O J James elected to the position of President of the Waikato Town and Country Festival Society (Inc.).

There being only one nomination, Dr D R Llewellyn was declared elected to the position of Senior Vice-President of the Waikato Town and Country Festival Society (Inc.).

The following Vice-Presidents were nominated by the Steering Committee and all were elected -

Mr A B Baker	Mr R A Candy	Dr D G Edgar	Mr G M Firth
Mr P V Harkness	Mr M G Hewitt	Mr F C Johnstone	Mr R Seabrook
Prof A J Ward	Mr B E Woodhams	Mr A J Yendell	

The following were nominated and elected to the Executive Committee -

Mr H Barrance	Mr A J Harwood	Mr T C Hickmott	Mr K D Hickson
Mr H Hornsby	Mr P Kirk	Mr D McLeod	Mr P Nicholl,
Mr M D Port	Mr J D J Scott	Mr J Walcott	(Secretary)

Messrs Norris, Ward, Jansen & Webb were elected as Honorary Solicitors.

Society Patron

Sir Arthur Porritt (1900-94) was born in Wanganui, but a British resident. A physician, military surgeon, statesman, and athlete, he served as New Zealand's first NZ-born Governor-General between 1967 and 1972.

The Society's invitation for Sir Arthur to be their Patron was readily accepted although, unfortunately, he was never available to officially open a National Field Days.



Patron - Sir Arthur Porritt



GOVERNMENT HOUSE

AUCKLAND,
22nd April, 1968

Dear Dr. Llewellyn,

The Governor-General has asked me to thank you for your letter of 11th March and to say that he is very pleased to become the Patron of your Society.

His Excellency was interested to read the recommendations of the Steering Committee, and sends the project his best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Official Secretary

Dr. D. R. Llewellyn,
Waikato Town and Country Festival Society,
c/o University of Waikato,
Private Bag,
HAMILTON

Monday, 13th May, 1968

The First meeting of the Executive Committee of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society (Inc), was held at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, at 7.30 p.m.

In attendance were -

Mr O J James (Chairman)

Mr H Barrance

Mr A J Harwood

Mr T C Hickmott

Mr K D Hickson

Dr D R Llewellyn

Mr P Nicholl (Sec)

Mr M D Port

Mr D J D Scott

Mr R J Webb

Apologies were received from

Mr H Hornsby, Mr P Kirk, Mr D N McLeod and Mr J L Walcott.

Dr Llewellyn reported on a meeting that he had with Mr Sharpe, the incoming President of the Australian National Field Days, held at Orange in New South Wales, Australia.

Discussion took place on the need for a full-time Officer for the Society and arrangements for surveying a range of firms and underwriters regarding the proposed Festival. This was considered a top priority. Mr L Atherfold of Edridge Advertising was to be approached to draft a letter suitable for use as an introduction to potential underwriters and exhibitors.

Mr Belz of Plastic Products to be asked to draw up a critical path analysis.

Further meetings of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society Executive Committee took place as follows - **Tuesday, 4th June, 1968**, when members of the Tauranga Public Relations Office were introduced to the meeting - **Wednesday, 19th June, 1968**, records the following attendance: O J James (Chair), Dr D R Llewellyn, Dr D G Edgar, Mr H Barrance, Mr P V Harkness, Mr T C Hickmott, Mr H R Hornsby, Mr P W Kirk, Mr P Nicholl (Sec), Mr M D Port, Mr D J D Scott, Mr J L Walcott, Mr A Watkins, Mr R J Webb, Mr M Yardley (Waikato Winter Show Association Representative) and Mr A J Yendell. Messrs A D Clarke and P D Clarke from PRO Tauranga were also in attendance - **Monday, 1st July, 1968**, records Mr L Atherfold being co-opted to the Executive Committee. At this meeting Mr A D Clark from the Tauranga Public Relations Office presented a paper on a possible activity programme for the Festival which would take place from Friday, 23rd May, 1969, to Thursday, 5th June, 1969.

This programme included:

Waikato Winter Show (Opening Friday, 23rd May).

National Field Days (Four days of agricultural displays and demonstrations at Te Rapa from Tuesday, 27th May to Friday, 30th May).

Pageant of Progress (Consisting of a Procession of Floats, Athletic Meeting, and Highland Games on Saturday, 31st May).

Church Parades (Sunday, 1st June).

Military Tattoo and Air Pageant (Monday, 2nd June. Queen's Birthday).

National Agricultural Conference and Farmers Field Days at Ruakura Research Centre (Tuesday, 3rd June to Thursday, 5th June).

Evening entertainment by various organisations during the Festival period.

Maori, Pacific and Asian participation to be sought with groups invited to attend the Festival and tours offered to visit Dairy Factories and farms in the area.

A budget totalling some \$10,000 was also proposed.

Mr M D Port outlined the proposed plans for the machinery demonstrations.

Thursday, 11th July, 1968

At this meeting of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society Dr D G Edgar was co-opted to the Executive Committee. Mr P West (Waikato Times) was introduced and it was confirmed that his employers were making him available for a period of one month to ascertain support from firms. The Waikato Times to also underwrite his expenses. Mr O J James also offered expenses for the Secretary, Mrs Blackett, of the Australian National Field Days to be brought to New Zealand to help speed the arrangements for the festival.

Mr L Atherfold was elected Chairman of the Publicity Sub-Committee. A Te Rapa Sub-Committee consisting of Mr J D J Scott (Chair), and Messrs Hickmott, Port and Johnstone was also appointed.

Friday, 26th July, 1968

In addition to the regular attendees, Mr M West, deputising for Mr M Yardley (Waikato Winter Show Association) was present at this meeting.

Mr P West (Waikato Times) the former's twin brother, tabled a written report on his survey of potential exhibitors and underwriting firms. The Report, in essence, indicated that a Festival as proposed, in June, did not find favour but that a Farming Festival, 'standing on its own feet' would be more preferred. The Report was discussed at length and it was resolved to re-approach firms with a final alternative, "that a report be drafted on a revised programme of two or three days, annexed to the Ruakura Farmers' Conference".

Friday, 6th September, 1968

At this meeting Mr P West tabled his findings on his revised survey and it was agreed that two National Machinery Field Days be held immediately following the Ruakura Field Days in 1969. As a result of that motion which was carried unanimously, it was also agreed that a sub-committee be formed to devise a concise programme and a budget for the proposal. The sub-committee to be - Scott (Convenor), Port, Hickson, Atherfold and Kirk.

A letter from Mr H C H Pearce, District Soil Conservator for the Ministry of Works, Palmerston North, was tabled. Mr Pearce outlined details for a suggested National Farm Fencing Competition in conjunction with the proposed Farm Festival.

Monday, 16th September, 1968

Mr J D J Scott tabled a detailed report from the Te Rapa Sub-Committee at this meeting, covering a budget and programme. Two days of machinery demonstrations to be held on Friday, 13th June and Saturday, 14th June, 1969, at the Te Rapa Racecourse, with a budget of \$10,500. An income of \$11,000 was expected from participating firms and gate takings.

The meeting resolved that Edridge Advertising, of Hamilton, be asked to accept the appointment of promotional organisers to the Society.



Mr Laurence Atherfold of Edridge Advertising (left) inaugural Field Days Director/Organiser, meets Mr John Moore, Chairman of the Australian National Field Days Society, at the Orange Field Days circa 1969-70.

Further sub-committees were to be considered and formed, to attend to Finance, Publicity, Tours, Accommodation and Programming.

It was also agreed that the Internal Affairs Department be written to requesting approval for the use of the title, "**New Zealand National Field Days**".

Messrs Scott and Atherfold were especially thanked for their time and effort expended on the matters that had been agreed to preceding these decisions.

Monday, 23rd December, 1968

Mr R McDonnell and Mr R J Webb were also present at this Executive meeting and were elected to the Executive Sub-Committee which also consisted of Messrs J D J Scott, P W Kirk, T C Hickmott and K D Hickson, with Mr O J James and Dr D R Llewellyn ex-officio members, with full power to act in the organisation of the NZ National Field Days.

It was formally approved that a bank account be opened and that all future meetings would take place at the University of Waikato, commencing at 8 am.

Mr James agreed to approach a member of his firm, Mr Calkin, to undertake the work of Minute Secretary to the Executive.

WOMENS DIVISION OF FEDERATED FARMERS (Rural Women New Zealand)

The association of WDFF with NZ National Field Days began in 1968, when Mr Max Hewitt, the Waikato Federated Farmers President, asked Mrs Lulu Peacocke, the newly elected President of the Waikato Women's Division, if members might be interested in catering for a proposed Town and Country Festival to be held at the Te Rapa Racecourse in June 1969. The WDFF members were consulted. None could know the magnitude of the task that they were considering. However, the answer was, "What a great idea, of course we can!"



Never did they realise that Fieldays would develop into a world-class event.

Sandwiches, pies, tea and soft drinks were to be available to the public. No expected attendance numbers available. Where to start? How to begin? So many things to consider. Power, hot water, tea urns, quantities of food items to order, etc, etc. It is easy for those members who were involved to look back now, and laugh at their difficulties, but they were real enough at the time.

(Further history and details will appear in subsequent Chapters - Editor)

Between **3rd February and 3rd June, 1969** (four months), no less than 16 meetings of the Executive and Sub-Executive Committees of the Waikato Town and Country Festival Society were convened. A huge range of topics pertaining to the Society but most importantly the proposed NZ National Field Days, was discussed, decisions made and motions passed.

During this period Robinson, Taylor, Somerville & Gardner were elected as Auditors, the Finance Sub-Committee obtained a \$500 overdraft at the ANZ Bank, a Vice-Presidents' Meeting was held at the University of Waikato, YFC were invited to participate in the organisation, job specifications for a host of sub-committees were drawn up, arrangements with Waikato Racing Club for the use of their property were finalised, permission was sought from Civil Aviation (full co-operation offered) for aircraft to operate at the racecourse venue, services for catering, fuel (Shell Oil at no cost), advertising and gate-keeping were sought and accepted, a programme for comparative demonstrations of machinery was devised, and arrangements for judging of a variety of agricultural equipment awards and practical aids were carried out.

Also during this period a Prospectus for Exhibitor participation was designed and distributed to prospective companies, a National Farm Fencing Competition was discussed, and an invitation to the Prime Minister of NZ to officially open the first NZ National Field Days was declined but was accepted by the Minister for Agriculture, Hon B E Talboys. Chairmen for the various sub-committees were also finalised.

The following were recorded in **March-April, 1969**: Mr B Pleasants, Comparative Demonstrations; Mr D Baldwin, Demonstration and Ground Preparations; Mrs Johnstone, Static Display Snack Bar; Mrs M G Hewitt, Ladies Entertainment Centre; Mr R Vine, Practical Aids Awards and Mr J Clements, Ground Planning. Arrangements for St John Ambulance to be in attendance at the event were finalised and an offer of a \$100 prize from Europa Oil, for any event, was accepted. The proposed public address system was arranged and a security firm engaged to patrol the exhibition area after hours.

A particularly important decision was made regarding the eligibility of companies to exhibit at the National Field Days. The Union Steamship Company wished to participate and they were informed that provided their display had an agricultural emphasis the Society would look favourably upon their application.

The Comparative Demonstrations Sub-Committee, involving Mr Bryan Pleasants and the Chief Marshal, Mr Hillyer, provided a comprehensive report of their proposed programme and details of its operation.

On **8th April, 1969**, a nation-wide list of possible firms and manufacturers who would be eligible to take exhibiting space at the NZ National Field Days was tabled at a meeting. 230 companies had been, or were in the process of being approached. At that date some 20 companies had signed a contract and a further 39 were expected in the mail shortly. 12 more firms had shown specific interest and were considering participation. Several 'official' Field Days Contractors were being approached to provide necessary services for the event, such as Photography, Electricians, Signwriters, Carriers and Mobile Cranes.

One topic of discussion concerned the realisation that on the Saturday of the Field Days (13th June, 1969) the New Zealand versus Wales Rugby Test was scheduled to be played at Auckland. It was agreed that the programme for that day should be planned a little earlier and that the second half of the test match would be played over the loudspeaker system. The P & M Plaza (Upstairs Gallery) in Hamilton City had signified that they were planning a special window display for the week of the National Field Days.

GKN New Zealand (the parent company originally established about 1759 in Britain as Guest, Keen & Nettlefolds) agreed to sponsor the National Farm Fencing Competition provided that the total cost of staging the event did not exceed \$2,000. Professor Burton accepted the position of Chairman of the Farm Fencing Competition Sub-Committee.

Dr Manson and Mr Doug Mulholland agreed to assist with the judging of the Practical Aids Awards. Mr Colin Follas from the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation accepted a position on the Publicity Sub-Committee and confirmed that Town & Around and Country Calendar TV programmes would have pre-publicity for the Field Days. Mr Don Kjestrup was appointed Chairman of the Communications Sub-Committee. Mr T Laurent was engaged to assist with organising exhibitors into their display areas and the Women's Division of Federated Farmers agreed to provide the catering arrangements.

The Waikato Town & Country Festival Society Sub-Committee confirmed that Field Days charges would be as follows: Adults 50 cents, Children under 16 years 20 cents, and car parking 20 cents per car.

It was approved that Keith Hay Homes could exhibit a house (at no charge) at the National Field Days provided that a portion of the building could be made available for use as an Event Headquarters and office.

Vaughan Jones attended a meeting of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society Sub-Executive in **May, 1969**, and spoke, on behalf of Mr Clements, to a report on electricity reticulation proposed for the exhibits area of the NZ National Field Days. A decision was required whether to install electricity cables above or below ground. Cost, of course, was a factor.

Vaughan Jones recalls events and thoughts leading up to his involvement ...

In 1966 Auriel and I retired from dairy farming on the Piako Road, Gordonton, appointed a sharemilker, and moved in to town. While on the farm I had also engaged in agricultural



Vaughan and Auriel Jones, c.1970's

contracting in the summers, mostly developing peat from swamp and improving farms for other farmers. This required specialised equipment which I invented, developed and made in winter months. I continued this activity after moving to town. When the demand for the spinner drain diggers, chisel ploughs, fertiliser spreaders and automatic hitches, etc, grew, I arranged for Vogal NZ Ltd to make them, and I assisted with the marketing.

After moving to town I joined the Waikato Show Committee. At that time I was also consulting for Vogal NZ Ltd. They and Gallagher Engineering (who I helped with ideas to improve the rotary hoes they were making) wanted to demonstrate their equipment at the Summer Agricultural and Pastoral Show (known as A & P). I raised the matter of demonstrating at an A & P meeting and was informed, in no uncertain terms by the grounds manager, "I've got the grass in good order now and no one is going to mess it up." A number of A & P and Summer Shows, including Hamilton, were losing exhibitors and attendances because the static displays of tractors and agricultural machinery could be seen in many towns on any weekday.

In 1967 I attended the Australian National Field Days at Orange, New South Wales, Australia, to look for agents for Vogal NZ Ltd and my farm equipment. Some time after returning from Australia, I met dairy farmer and ex-Ruakura technician, Tom Hickmott, in Hamilton. I knew him from our being on the same dairy farmer discussion group back in the 1950s. I mentioned my visit to the Australian Field Days and, as a result of that conversation, Tom invited me to attend a meeting of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society because they were in the process of planning a very similar national agricultural event in New Zealand. By this time they had arranged to organise a field day on the Waikato Racing Club grounds at Te Rapa, Hamilton, in June, 1969.

At my first Waikato Town & Country Festival Society Sub-Executive meeting in the University of Waikato board room, I queried a recommendation to install underground power cables to supply power to exhibitors. The Society had very little money and the cost of underground was many times more than I thought an overhead supply could be installed for. I also informed the committee that I'd seen the farm that the Australian organisation had used for their event, and having described the demonstrations of crop harvesting, hay and silage making, cultivation, etc., felt that we would need a similar facility to be able to run a good and effective Field Days. The committee asked me to get a price for the power reticulation, which I did, and we went ahead with overhead. There was an often repeated joke about the Society's only asset, a few months later when we were attempting to borrow funds to buy the Mystery Creek property, being the rolls of copper wire (and poles)! - Vaughan Jones

Bill Gallagher (Jnr) recalls an early Field Days organisational meeting

I attended my first meeting of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society early in May, 1969, where the agenda was mainly on possible rain at the forthcoming NZ National Field Days. I remember particularly the concern there was regarding the weather that might be experienced during the event because we needed gate money to break even so we seriously considered taking out Rain Insurance. It was, actually, a very poor deal as the premium was a considerable part of what would be received if the rain did fall. I recall that we did take



Bill and John Gallagher

Rain Insurance for a limited amount with the proviso that there had to be so much rain before a certain nominated time during the morning of the event. The really good news, particularly from the Exhibitors point of view, was that attendances were only slightly lower than our estimates, but business was unaffected. The majority of attendees were farmers and they were serious purchasers. In subsequent years rain insurance was not considered.

- Bill Gallagher

(The consensus is that the weather has never really affected the attendance of farmers at the NZ Agricultural Fieldays to any great degree. It is the 'general viewing public' who, when the rain is very persistent or heavy, or there is fog or early morning frosts that linger on, consider whether they will attend or stay away - Editor).

John Scott recalls and comments on NZ National Fieldays beginnings

On 25th July, 1966, John Kneebone wrote “Would it not be possible with a little co-operation and co-ordination to have our famous Ruakura Farmers’ Week and our Winter Show coincide so that New Zealand farmers could have their annual outing in Hamilton as they do at the U.K. Royal Agricultural Show at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire. A little imagination could make a really big affair of it”.



John Scott

John at the time was a Nuffield scholar in the UK and wrote a weekly report to the Waikato Times recording things that had interested him.

The idea was taken up by Pat Cuming, the Agricultural Editor of the Times. I personally was also very keen on the idea as my primary interest as Scientific Liaison Officer for Ruakura Research Centre was to try and get more farmers to the Ruakura Farmers’ Conference and in the process help them become more efficient in agricultural production. We had also had quite a bit of experience at Ruakura at running small machinery displays. We knew that farmers were particularly interested in labour saving devices and mechanical activities; witness the 8000 people who turned up at the Ruakura Farmers Conference in 1967. They loved gadgets and mechanical activities, particularly those which decreased their workload. These included such things as the Ruakura milking machine, which attracted the first large crowd; and the unshorable electric fence developed by Doug Phillips. This was the forerunner of the modern day electric fence sold worldwide by Gallagher’s.

However, it was fine to have a good idea. How could it be put into practice? There were a number of preliminary discussions, but the idea had to be sold to a wider audience to get some action.

We needed a front person who was well known, respected, and able to command and direct an audience. Dr D.R. Llewellyn, the Vice-Chancellor of Waikato University was considered to be an ideal person, so in October 1967 a group consisting of Tom Hodgson and Ken Hickson from the Public Relations Office, Gordon Edgar and myself from Ruakura, and

Messrs Harkness, Masters, Hewitt and Ingram from the Waikato Times and Federated Farmers called on him.

We suggested that a public meeting with invited guests be arranged and chaired by him. He agreed to this, but made the point that he would do it once, but that would be the end of his involvement. It was far from that because he became hooked on the idea and the prospect of what was to follow. In fact he became Sir Donald Llewellyn much later, partly because of his Fieldays efforts.

As an aside, in my opinion, Don should have been awarded a knighthood years earlier for his efforts in establishing the University and getting it involved in the community. He told me later that such a proposal had been put forward but it was said the authorities didn't want a person who promoted people in grass skirts. This was a reference to the Universities' strong promotion of Maori involvement.

Linda Thompson "In Having a Fielday" describes the inaugural meeting meeting. Those who came along to the crowded public meeting which followed a few days later at the Waikato Motor Hotel came from all walks of life – farmers, manufacturers, cultural groups, staging theatre and music in the city, sports groups, retailers, commerce, industry, government departments, community service organisers, travel and hotel owners, Maori interests and the media.

Prime Minister Keith Holyoake and various MPs sent their apologies and wished the project well.

The festival, as Don Llewellyn outlined it, could be held in winter closely allied with the city's longstanding A and P Society winter show and Ruakura's popular Farmers' Conference. But it could also be held at an entirely different time of year.

The group explored all the possibilities. Sports tournaments, national events, cultural and artistic performances were suggested. My contribution included the idea of a "consumer service" for farm machinery and appliances. The idea had worked at Ruakura and had created tremendous interest among farmers attending their annual farming week.

Aviation entrepreneur, Ozzie James, who became President to launch the first festival, didn't like the idea of a "town and country festival" at all. He had visions of people cavorting down the city's main streets in tights playing tin whistles like an old fashioned English fairground. The ideas being tossed about seemed to be directed at anything but farming".

Ross Jansen, later the Mayor of Hamilton, questioned why we should have such an event in June which was well known for the amount of rain which fell. It was pointed out that the new event would follow the Ruakura Farmers' Conference which was always held in June because that was a time of year when most farmers were not busy with essential work.

Back to the old problem we had a good idea – but where to next? Quite regular meetings were held in the new Federated Farmers building.

An informal group, including invited people known to be achievers, plus others who had time available and would bring in other skills and contacts attended. Don Llewellyn chaired almost all those meetings. Later the group gathered in Ozzie James' business premises adjacent to the Hamilton Airport and at the University of Waikato.

Another question was where could such an event be held? We eventually decided that the Waikato Racecourse would be a suitable venue so a delegation of Gordon Edgar, Don Llewellyn and I called on the President, Togo Johnstone and his committee which included people such as Percy Vercoe who had a long association with agriculture. After a short discussion, Percy would suggest to Togo “Why not crack the whip for these boys Togo?” where upon Togo produced a bottle of whiskey and the discussion livened up.

We had no formal agreement with the racecourse people, but Togo said that if we made some money, they would take a cut. That was enough for the venue.

What was wanted was promotion and sales. Edridge Advertising, spearheaded by Laurie Atherfold, took over. The event was advertised widely in various forms and Russ Rimmington, later the Mayor of Hamilton, sold it to exhibitors. The response was amazing. Thousands turned up for the first event in June 1969. There were not enough racing club gatekeepers at Te Rapa and of course the farmers jumped the fences, so we dipped out on thousands in entry fees. However, the enthusiasm was overwhelming. The event was opened by Brian Talboys, the Minister of Agriculture.

Meantime, a formal committee had been developed to run the Fieldays. It was led by Ozzie James, but as he was frequently on business overseas, Don Lewellyn chaired most of the meetings and organised the events. This committee turned out to be a very well balanced one with a number of very practical farmers, some academics and various manufacturers including Max Port from Morrinsville who was an enthusiastic member in the initial stages.

The voluntary committee which ran the first event included such people as Doug Baldwin who was a very hard-working farmer. Doug not only milked his cows, but also found time to get out to Te Rapa Racecourse in the mornings and shift the riding rails from the course proper so that the events could go ahead. He replaced them in the evenings.

Another major contributor was the Women’s Division of Federated Farmers. They played a tremendous part in feeding the mob that came.

The first Fieldays was a tremendously successful event. It had a plane crash which was marvellous for publicity; and included the first ever New Zealand National Farm Fencing contest.

It was clear that both the crowd and the exhibitors loved it, and it was so popular that the Hamilton City Council asked us to repeat it in March 1970, just nine months after our first ever event. This would also be the city’s hosting of the Royal Family who were represented by the Queen, Duke of Edinburgh, Princess Anne and Prince Charles.

It was clear to the Committee that we had a winner. We had a product for which there was a huge demand, but it was also clear that another venue was needed because the racecourse was not suitable long term.

Hence, the Mystery Creek property was found, and after a frantic burst of activity, was made ready for the third Fieldays which were held in June 1971.

I personally was extremely keen to help achieve better farming performance, and I had anticipated that by running a popular machinery display we would get more farmers coming to our own Farmers’ Conference which immediately preceded it. However I was quite wrong. In fact the Fieldays became extremely popular and actually swamped, or rather

replaced Ruakura, so that the number of visitors to that event dwindled. Later the Conference disappeared entirely from that week. It is slightly ironic that AgResearch, the successor to Ruakura, is now a frequent exhibitor at the Fieldays.

- John Scott.

John Scott was a member of the original organising committee, and later a Committee Member and President of the NZ National Fieldays Society - Editor.