

Chapter 4 **Decisions and Planning**

BUILDING ON THE INITIAL SUCCESS

Thursday, 19th June, 1969

A meeting of the Sub-Executive Committee of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society was convened to hear reports on many aspects of the first NZ National Field Days event. Mr Laurie Atherfold advised in his report that gate takings had amounted to \$6,880 with \$516 received for the sale of programmes. Some issues regarding the gate-keeping were discussed, and whilst not specifically 'minuted' it appears that a large number of Field Days patrons gained free entrance by climbing over fences, such were the unexpected numbers of the large crowd that arrived at the venue. The various reports at the meeting clearly indicated that a further Field Days in 1970 would be held. Mr John Scott informed those present that consideration was also being given to holding a competition for the best farms in the area, in conjunction with the NZ National Field Days.

Thursday, 3rd July, 1969

The finance report tabled at this meeting revealed that a surplus of some \$7,000 could be expected from the running of the first Field Days. Insurance, safety, and competition matters were discussed and 'thank you' letters to a host of organisations and volunteers were approved.

Between **5th August and 15th December, 1969**, a further 12 meetings of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society Executive and Sub-Executive Committees were convened. The majority of meetings involved the Chairmen of all the Sub-Committees that had been set up to manage the NZ National Field Days.

It was resolved on **5th August, 1969**, that the 1970 NZ National Field Days should be extended by one day, to three days in total.

Reports and discussions at these meetings covered a huge range of topics and issues. The following have been selected to mention -

Following their tabled report of the first Field Days, Edridge Advertising were offered the position of Organiser for the 1970 event. Guest Nations were discussed and it was noted that the Australian High Commission had shown some interest. Mr L Atherfold reported on his visit to Australia to attend the Australian National Field Days at Orange, with a view to attracting Australian Manufacturers to exhibit at the NZ National Field Days in future years. Mr John Scott was commissioned to convene a meeting of media personnel consisting of Mr D Kjestrup, Mr H Carlisle (NZ Broadcasting Corporation), Mrs Baigent (NZ Herald) and Mr Jansen (Waikato Times).

The Annual General Meeting of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society was set to be held on Wednesday, 15th October, 1969. Mr J Jackson was nominated to take over the position of Secretary as Mr Calkin was seeking 12 months leave of absence. A Honorary

Treasurer was being sought and it was agreed to approach Messrs Frew, Devitt, Hoskin & Co to have one of their staff act in this capacity. Mr Peter Crabb, from that company was duly nominated, elected and invited to attend all Executive Meetings.

The following persons were elected to the Executive Committee following the AGM of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society:

Mr O James (President)
Dr D Llewellyn (Vice-President)
Mr L Atherfold
Mr D Baldwin - Ground Preparation Chairman
Mr J Doua - Accommodation
Dr D Edgar
Mr W Gallagher
Mr G Hillyer - Chief Marshal
Dr D Johnstone - Farm Fencing Chairman
Mr V Jones - Ground Planning Chairman
Mr D Kjestrup - Promotions Chairman
Mr R McDonnell - Safety Chairman
Mr B Pleasants - Comparative Demonstrations Chairman
Mr V Richards - YFC Liason
Mr J Scott - Farms of Year Chairman
Mr J Webb - Finance Chairman



*Peter Crabb,
Society Treasurer from 1969*

Mr H Carlisle later replaced Mr D Kjestrup as Chairman of the Promotions Sub-Committee.

Investigating Properties and Purchase of the Mystery Creek Venue

A sub-committee consisting of Dr Don Llewellyn and Dr Gordon Edgar, with power to co-opt, was formed to investigate alternative sites for future National Field Days. Mr F C Johnstone was also to be enlisted to assist this sub-committee. A meeting was also arranged with the Waikato Racing Club to discuss the use of the racecourse again in 1970. At a subsequent meeting Dr Llewellyn reported that a farm adjacent to the Hamilton Airport was being investigated as a suitable venue. Later still the sub-committee, to which Vaughan Jones and Tom Hickmott had been added, reported that a number of properties had been viewed and considered. Following several further reports, the Executive Committee then appointed Mr John Scott and Mr John Webb, with power to act in negotiations, to purchase a property up to a limit of \$60,000. On **Wednesday, 3rd December, 1969**, following additional reports from Mr John Scott regarding several investigations of suitable properties, it was resolved that he should convene a deputation consisting of Dr Llewellyn, Dr Edgar and Mr Vaughan Jones, to view a particular property in Mystery Creek Road. At a meeting on **Monday, 15th December, 1969**, it was reported that the deputation had viewed Mr W MacGregor's farm in Mystery Creek Road and found it suitable for the Society's requirements. A number of points were raised, answered and discussed and then the following motion was put to the Executive Committee meeting; moved John Webb, seconded John Scott - 'That the negotiating

committee offer to purchase Mr W MacGregor's property in Mystery Creek Road, at the sum of \$61,500 or less, settlement date at 1st June, 1970, such an offer to be conditional on obtaining finance by the end of February, 1970.' The motion was carried.

Vaughan Jones recalls some aspects of searching for a suitable property

I had seen the Australian National Field Days farm at Orange in 1967 which had room for crop harvesting and demonstrating many farming operations, so we needed something big. At least 20 hectares had been agreed to, as the size required.



Australian National Field Days at Orange, NSW, Australia

John Scott, Tom Hickmott and I were appointed to locate a suitable property. We knew it had to be free draining, which in the Waikato meant Horotiu Sandy Loam soil-type which is in pockets at Horotiu and a few other places, would be suitable, or an old river bed which, of course, is what we finally purchased.

We were told by the Waipa County Council that they would not give us approval to buy property on State Highway 3 because they had read about the traffic jams at the two field days we had run at Te Rapa, where cars had backed up for a kilometre. At Te Rapa we had under-estimated the crowd and not realised that patrons would all arrive at about the same time. Farmers are not ones to sit in traffic jams, so they parked on the road verges when all formal parking was taken, then walked, aiming for where they knew the race course was. When they came to a fence, they didn't look for a gate, they saw all the machinery and action, so their mouths watered and they just hopped over the fences. When we saw this happening it was all hands on deck collecting admission money with no change and no tickets. Don Llewellyn, always first when there was work to be done, ended up with his pockets bulging with notes. To this day we don't know how much we lost. I think the farmers thought it was a Christmas party just for them, with all their toys spread out before them in all directions that they could try, and if necessary, buy.

The property across the road from the one we finally purchased, was for sale. We walked onto that farm, opposite where the Fieldays main entrance is now. It had a high bank (just like the one we finally purchased) but below that was an undrained swamp with water lying through it and reeds and Pussy Willow all over. Two seconds viewing and we all turned back. I said that we should not just be looking at farms for sale, but finding a suitable one and then buying it. As we talked we walked across the road and



An early view of Mystery Creek venue from the present Headquarters location.

there it was - - we were looking at our new home. Again, within seconds, we could see that it was perfect, despite being weedy, with undrained pockets of swamp. We could visualise those being turned into lakes to useful and tremendous advantage. We decided that we would have to be careful that the owner didn't find out that the NZ National Field Days Society wanted it, or the price could have doubled, so it was agreed that John Scott (and others) call on the farmer. The owner, Mr MacGregor, agreed to sell, but because it was a dairy farm, milking cows, not until the usual changeover date of 31st of May, 1970.

The position of the property was ideal because it had three roads leading to it, and was not on a state highway, so Waipa County Council would agree to it.

Lola Devitt recalls a property finance incident

Ossie James arrived at our home one day, very excited, asking my husband, Bruce Devitt, if he could arrange \$20,000 (or it may have been \$10,000, I can't remember) to put a deposit on some land to provide a 'home' for the Field Days project. The local banks did not appear to be very interested. They knew nothing about the Field Days that Ossie had seen at Orange, in Australia. Ossie thought, "Why can't we do that in a farming country?"

Bruce knew Trevor Williamson, the ANZ Bank Manager in Hamilton, but he had been transferred to Head Office in Wellington. So off they went to Wellington, next day, after having talked to Trevor on the phone. Trevor was interested, asked a few questions, signed the cheque and said, "You cannot lose."

So, what we have at Mystery Creek now, is a project that is just wonderful for all walks of life, and especially for the Waikato.

Note - Bruce Devitt was the first Treasurer appointed to the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society.

Tom Hickmott recalls an amusing finance incident

Finance for property purchase was finally secured through ANZ Bank provided that sufficient guarantees were forthcoming (*further details on this matter to appear at a later date - Ed*). I, along with a number of others, was a guarantor. My wife, Wendy, was somewhat dismayed, 20 years later, to learn that we had just been released from our guarantee. We were duly thanked by the incumbent committee.

Royal Visit Advised and Accepted

Prior to October, 1969, the Hamilton City Council contacted the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society stating that the Queen, Prince Philip, Prince Charles and Princess Anne were scheduled to visit Hamilton in March, 1970, and they didn't quite know what to do with them. They asked if it would be possible to change the dates of the 1970 NZ National Field Days to coincide with the Royal Visit.



At an Executive Committee meeting it did not take very long to make that decision as the honour of a Royal Visit and the publicity that the Royal Visit would generate was tremendous for the event. The revised dates of Monday 23rd, Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th March, 1970, were confirmed. In November, 1969, Mr Laurence Atherfold informed a meeting of the Executive Committee that, following a number of discussions, he had received a letter from Mr Compton of the Internal Affairs Department confirming that The Queen and Royal Family would attend the 1970 Field Days, subject to Palace approval.

Discussions held with Hamilton's Mayor and the City Council resolved a number of minor issues and in December, 1969, Mr J Scott reported that 'the Queen would arrive at the Field Day at 11.55 a.m. on Wednesday, 25th March, would view the exhibits, displays and demonstrations until 1 p.m., have lunch on the grounds, and then leave at 1.45 p.m.'

New Zealand National Fieldays Society (Incorporated) Created

Friday, 6th March, 1970

A Special Resolution was put to the meeting of the Waikato Town & Country Festival Society Inc. - 'That the name [of the Field Days organisation sub-committee] be changed to New Zealand National Field Days Society Inc.' The resolution was carried unanimously.



Wednesday, 11th March, 1970

The first Executive Committee meeting of the newly named NZ National Field Days Society was convened. Those in attendance were:

- Mr O James
(Chairman)
- Mr L Atherfold
- Mr D Balwin
- Dr G Edgar
- Mr G Hillyer
- Mr J Jackson
(Secretary)
- Mr D Johnstone
- Mr V Jones
- Mr T Laurent
- Mr B Pleasants
- Mr V Richards
- Mr R Rimmington
- Mr J Scott
- Mr J Webb



Apologies received from: Mr W Gallagher, Dr D Llewellyn and Mr R McDonnell.

Arrangements for the staging of the GKN Farm Fencing Competition were re-scheduled so that the Royal Family would be able to view the action.

Waikato Motors had offered two 'Viva' vans for use by the Society during the Field Days and this offer was accepted.

Other details discussed included programme sellers, bus transport to Farms of the Year winning farms and contacting charter firms for flights over the winning farms.

Tuesday, 17th March, 1970

The Executive Committee received reports from a number of sub-committees and discussed Comparative Demonstrations (re Exhibitors' Meeting, with refreshments), Gate Control (donation to Jaycees), Farm Awards (signs and letters of appreciation to judges), Insurance and Security for the forthcoming Field Days, and that Rotary Slashers should be referred to in future as 'Land Cleaning Equipment'.



Success assured

By
MR. O. G. JAMES . . .
president of the New
Zealand National Field
Days Society.

The success of New Zealand's first National Field Days run in conjunction with Ruakura Animal Research Station's Farmers' Day appears to be assured of further success this year.

Run in June of last year on the race course at Te Rapa in ideal weather conditions it attracted 30,000 people who inspected \$3,000,000 worth of equipment.

Application for space exceeds last year and there is an indication that most companies plan to enter more equipment.

Reported sales were in the tens of thousands of dollars while farmers commented favourably on the method of demonstration.

The Field Day has its origin in Orange, NSW, Australia where it has been run for 17 years. Support from Australian organisers has contributed to the success of the local programme.

As a token of appreciation for the assistance received airline tickets have been presented to the President and Secretary to attend our New Zealand Field Days this year.

The acknowledgement of appreciation by presenting air line tickets was given considerable publicity in Australia.

Only minor modifications to last year's programme will be made. An additional interest has been the Farm of the Year competition. This is



MR JAMES

being judged mainly on profitability.

This competition follows the objects of the Field Days Society by assisting in improving the economics of farming by competitive demonstration of machinery and equipment and examples of highly developed farms.

This year the programme has been brought forward to March so that we would have the pleasure and honour of being host to Her Majesty and the Royal Family. In the brief 90 minutes they will be in attendance on the 25th it is hoped they will watch competitive demonstration fencing and aerial topdressing.

Negotiations are progressing for the purchase of a 150 acre farm to provide the society with a permanent home in addition to supplying the district with another venue for recreational purposes.

Three Hostesses were chosen by Field Days organising consultants, Keith Edridge Ltd, of Hamilton, to work at the NZ National Field Days for the three days. The fabric for their striking red, white and blue outfits was imported especially from Australia. It was striped pique, chosen in those colours to commemorate the Royal Visit to the Field Days. The outfits were designed and made by Mrs Colleen Reid of Hamilton. Their duties were to act as guides and supply information about the Field Days programme to the visiting public.



On Friday, 20th March, 1970, the Waikato Times published a 12-page feature promoting the 2nd New Zealand National Field Days to be held at the Te Rapa Racecourse. This photo and the images on the preceding two pages were included in that promotional feature.

*These three Waikato ladies (Housewives) were chosen to act as hostesses for the 1970 Field Days by the organising consultants, Keith Edridge Ltd of Hamilton. The outfits worn were red, white and blue.
From Left: Mrs Carole Linehan, Mrs Mavis Connell (Matangi) and Mrs Robyn Smith*