

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

FOXTON - A SMALL TOWN IN THE MANAWATU

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in  
Geography at Massey University

By

ANTHONY NEAL HUNT

Massey University

1968

## CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter 1	
Historical Development	1
Geographical Setting	1
Historical Setting	3
Chapter 2	
Small Towns	11
Chapter 3	
The Survey	15
Chapter 4	
Residence	17
Chapter 5	
Employment	30
Chapter 6	
Commerce	38
Chapter 7	
Recreation	46
Chapter 8	
Education	52
Chapter 9	
Does the Town Succeed?	60
Appendix	63
Bibliography	67
Acknowledgments	68

List of Maps and Graphs

		Page
Figure 1	Manawatu - location	2
Figure 2	Foxton's population (1874-1966) and Flax Industry employment (1937-1966)	5
Figures 3 and 3a	Foxton - location	8
Figures 4 and 4a	Foxton - state housing areas	26

## List of Tables

Table		Page
I	Towns with populations between 2,000 and 3,600 and percentage of labour force in selected industrial divisions	12
II	Percentage of labour force earning in excess of 2,200 dollars in selected towns	13
III	Statistical information on population and dwellings of small towns	14
IV	Coverage of households by survey conducted December 1967 - January 1968	15
V	Percentage of adult population born in selected towns	18
VI	Length of residence of adult population of selected towns	18
VII	Percentage giving selected destinations and reasons for leaving Foxton	20
VIII	Percentage giving selected reasons for taking up residence in Foxton	22
IX	Housing - age, percentage of state houses, and length of residence of those attracted to the town by housing	24
X	Percentage of residences that are state houses in selected towns	25
XI	Length of home ownership	27
XII	Occupation and home ownership	28
XIII	Occupations of those employed in Foxton	31
XIV	Occupations of those employed outside Foxton	31
XV	Reasons for taking up and leaving employment in the flax industry	32
XVI	Attitude towards family working in the flax industry	33
XVII	Destinations of those travelling outside Foxton for employment	35
XVIII	Reasons given for taking employment outside Foxton	35
XIX	Occupations of wives employed full time	36

Table		Page
XX	Commercial premises in Foxton	38
XXI	Percentage giving each reason for shopping outside Foxton	39
XXII	Reasons for shopping outside Foxton of those doing so at least once a fortnight	40
XXIII	Comparative cost of groceries and meat in Foxton and Levin	41
XXIV	Rate of employment in commerce: Foxton compared with other small towns	44
XXV	Committee activity and organisation membership	47
XXVI	Committee activity by occupation	48
XXVII	Committee activity of those utilising pre-school facilities	54
XXVIII	Increase in College and sixth form rolls and those sitting School Certificate	56
XXIX	Destinations of school leavers	58

1. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Geographical Setting

Foxton (2,819)<sup>1</sup> is located on a former meander of the Manawatu River three miles from its mouth. It lies on the inland margin of the coastal sand dunes where they begin to merge into the flat alluvial plain of the Manawatu's lower course. To the north-east, at a distance of 24 miles by first class roads, lies Palmerston North (46,832), the main urban centre of the Manawatu, and eleven miles to the south-east is Levin, a bustling town of 11,402. Passing ten miles to the east is the Main Trunk Railway upon which is situated Shannon (1,544). (see Fig.1)

The area surrounding Foxton contains two distinct physical units. To the north and west are consolidated sand dunes which run inland from the coast and are separated by small areas of swampy ground. To the south and east lie the former swamplands of Moutoa.

The sand dune area can be further divided into two zones. The first is the actual dune complex, which consists of bare sand and marram-scrub cover, and stretches one to two miles inland from the coast. Limited areas of this zone have been developed to a semi-improved state and these portions are being used for semi-extensive sheep raising or dairying (where pockets of heavier soils occur in the swampy inter-dune areas). The second zone lies further inland and in this, farming is more intensive, with dairying being particularly important in the Croua Downs locality, eight miles to the north of Foxton.

The Moutoa district lies within a large loop of the Manawatu River and on its western edges fingers of consolidated sand dunes stretch down into it. Formerly Moutoa was swamp and highly susceptible to flooding but today it is drained and provides a fertile soil to support

<sup>1</sup> Population figures are taken from 1966 Census.

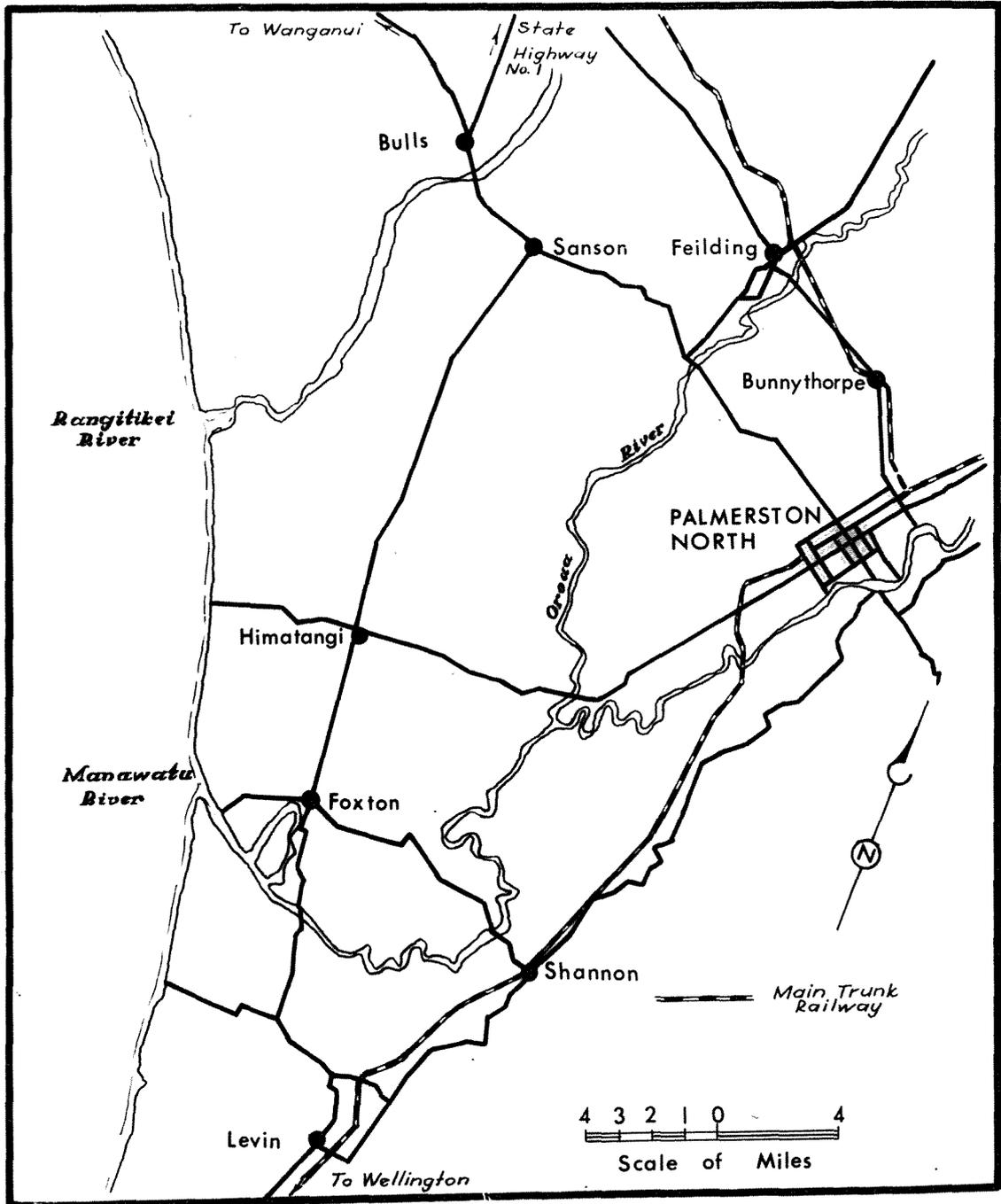


Fig.1 Manawatu — Location

the mixture of dairying and fat lamb raising that is carried out there. More important, it is here that the Department of Agriculture has established the Moutoa Estate which is the main source of Phormium tenax for the New Zealand Woolpack and Textile factory in Foxton.

This then is Foxton's physical setting: on the Manawatu River, near the lowest bridging point, on an important road route but not on the rail, and between the coastal sand dunes and the drained alluvial plain of the lower Manawatu. It is centrally situated in the southern North Island within easy reach of the three cities of the area. This location explains the rise, decline, and revival of Foxton.

#### Historical Setting

Foxton, the oldest town of the Manawatu owes its beginnings, in the 1850s, to its location near the mouth of the Manawatu River. From the time of its founding, until the construction of the Wellington-Manawatu railway in 1886, Foxton was the point of entry for the whole Manawatu. "For about 12 years Foxton was the only township in the whole district, and because of its coastal trade it remained the commercial centre for many years."<sup>1</sup> In 1870 a settlement, later to be known as Palmerston North, began in the Papaioea clearing. By 1878 this had a population of 880 compared with Foxton's 563. By then a railway link had been built between the two settlements. "In 1879 Foxton's future seemed sufficiently assured to justify the port being gazetted as a 'port of entry with a Custom Officer of its own and a bonded warehouse'."<sup>2</sup>

But the challenge of the railway soon put the future of Foxton as a port in a different light. The Government decision to

1 Oliver 67

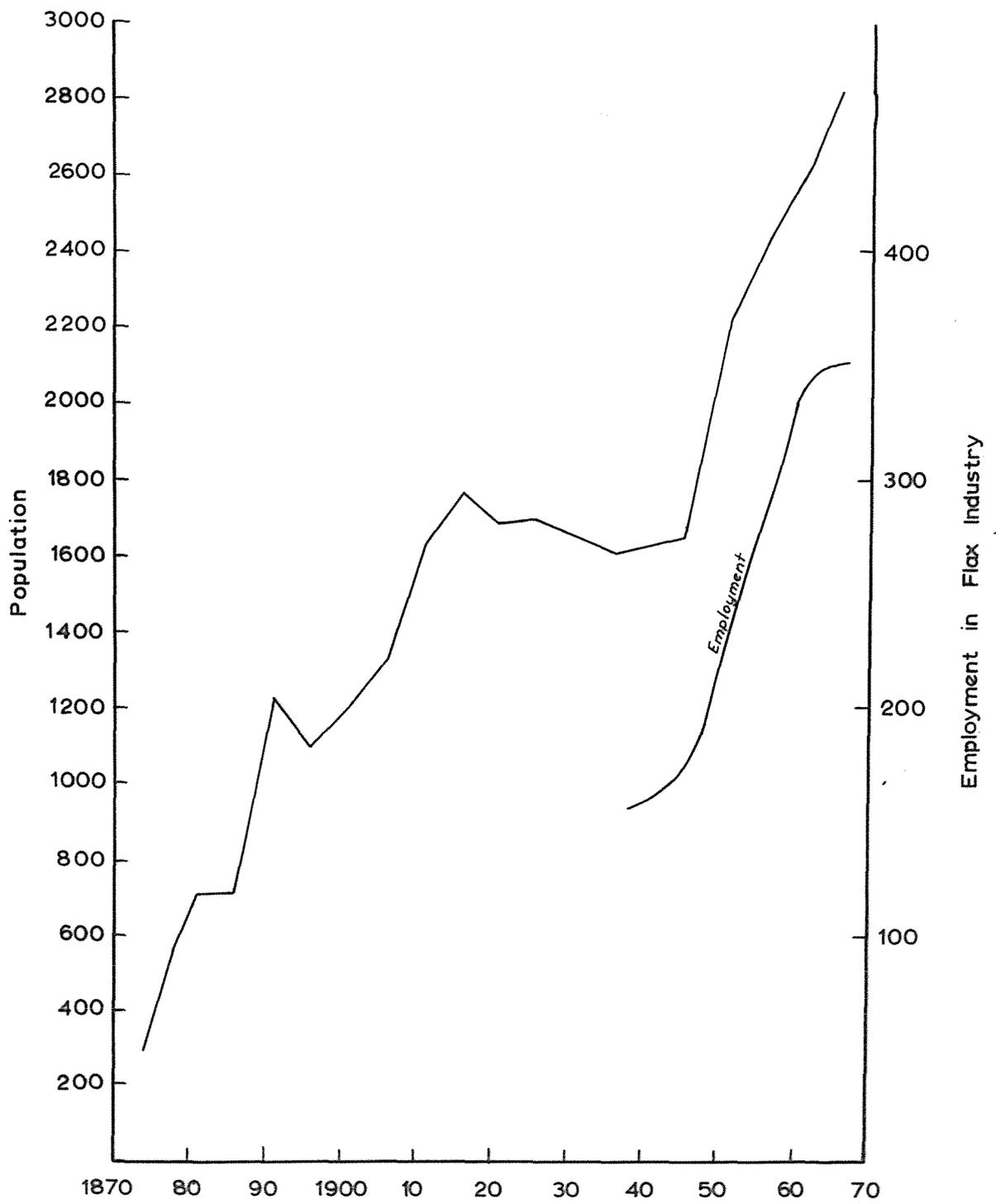
2 Hely 44

abandon the scheme to build a railway along the coast of the Manawatu area was crucial for the town. When the rail link between Wellington and the Manawatu was finally constructed in 1886, it was done so by the Manawatu Railway Company. Since this company owned land along the foothills of the Tararua Range they built the line there, ten miles from Foxton. This caused a sharp decline in Foxton's function as the point of entry to the Manawatu. From 1881 to 1886 Foxton's population grew by only one percent whereas Palmerston North's grew by 95 percent.

The late 1880s brought a flurry of renewed hope to Foxton when the price for flax rose rapidly on the London market. Between 1886 and 1891 the growth rate of the town was equal to that of Palmerston North and wharf revenue returned to the level attained prior to the construction of the Wellington-Manawatu Railway. But this boom period was short lived and the 1896 census revealed that the population had actually fallen. From then until 1911, due to the activity associated with the clearing and draining of the inland swamps, the town grew slowly reaching a population of 1,637.

Figure 2 illustrates the stagnation of Foxton between 1911 and 1946. During this period, while Levin was doubling in size, Foxton's population remained virtually unchanged. This stagnation was a reflection of the decline in Foxton's function as a communication and market centre. The growth of Levin as a rail centre, the decline of the port at Foxton, the lack of an extensive area of rich farmland to serve, and the ending of the flax clearing-swamp draining era, all played their part in practically halting the development of Foxton. The prospects of the town grew dim and efforts were made to persuade the Government to build a Levin-Greatford rail deviation to pass through Foxton. These failed and stagnation truly set in. The importance of both the port and

Fig.2 Population of Foxtton (1874-1966)  
and Employment in Flax Industry(1937-1966)



the rail link to Palmerston North continued to decline. The question of where to site the main Wellington-Auckland highway during the 1920s saw the revival of the argument as to whether a coastal or inland route should be followed. This time the chosen route passed through Foxton, although not before some consternation was caused by an announcement that a Waikanae-Tokomeru path had been chosen.

Road transport began to expand at about this time and the railway revenue for the Foxton branch line fell even further. The flax industry declined to one small mill by the 1930s and from 1921 to 1936 the population fell by some 81 persons. Finally, in 1943, the Whirokino Cut, which was part of the Lower Manawatu Flood Control Scheme, was completed and the Foxton Harbour Board found itself without an effective harbour.

Thus in 1947 an observer could comment that: "It is the farmer who justifies the economic existence of the retail establishments."<sup>1</sup> After considering the prospects of the town's future, and noting the amount of undeveloped Maori land in the vicinity, the same observer concluded that "...the future function of Foxton is in a very definite way bound up with the future of its Maori people and their lands."<sup>2</sup> But he did note, although none too enthusiastically, that "...the whistle of the textile factory is a whistle of hope."<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately for the borough of Foxton this hope has been fulfilled. The beginnings of the town's revival were in the formation of New Zealand Woolpack and Textiles Limited which began production in 1934. During the 1920s the plentiful supplies of the superior sisal

1 Boniface 12

2 Boniface 76

3 Boniface 24

on the world market caused trade in Phormium tenax to virtually disappear. The development of a method of softening the phormium fibre so that it could be spun and woven had an important bearing on the decision to form the Woolpack and Textile company. The new industry was able to surmount early problems of production and by 1937 its woolpacks were selling well. World War 11 gave the fledgling industry further impetus and when this market was no longer available, a floor covering section was established. It is this development that has been the focus of recent growth.<sup>1</sup>

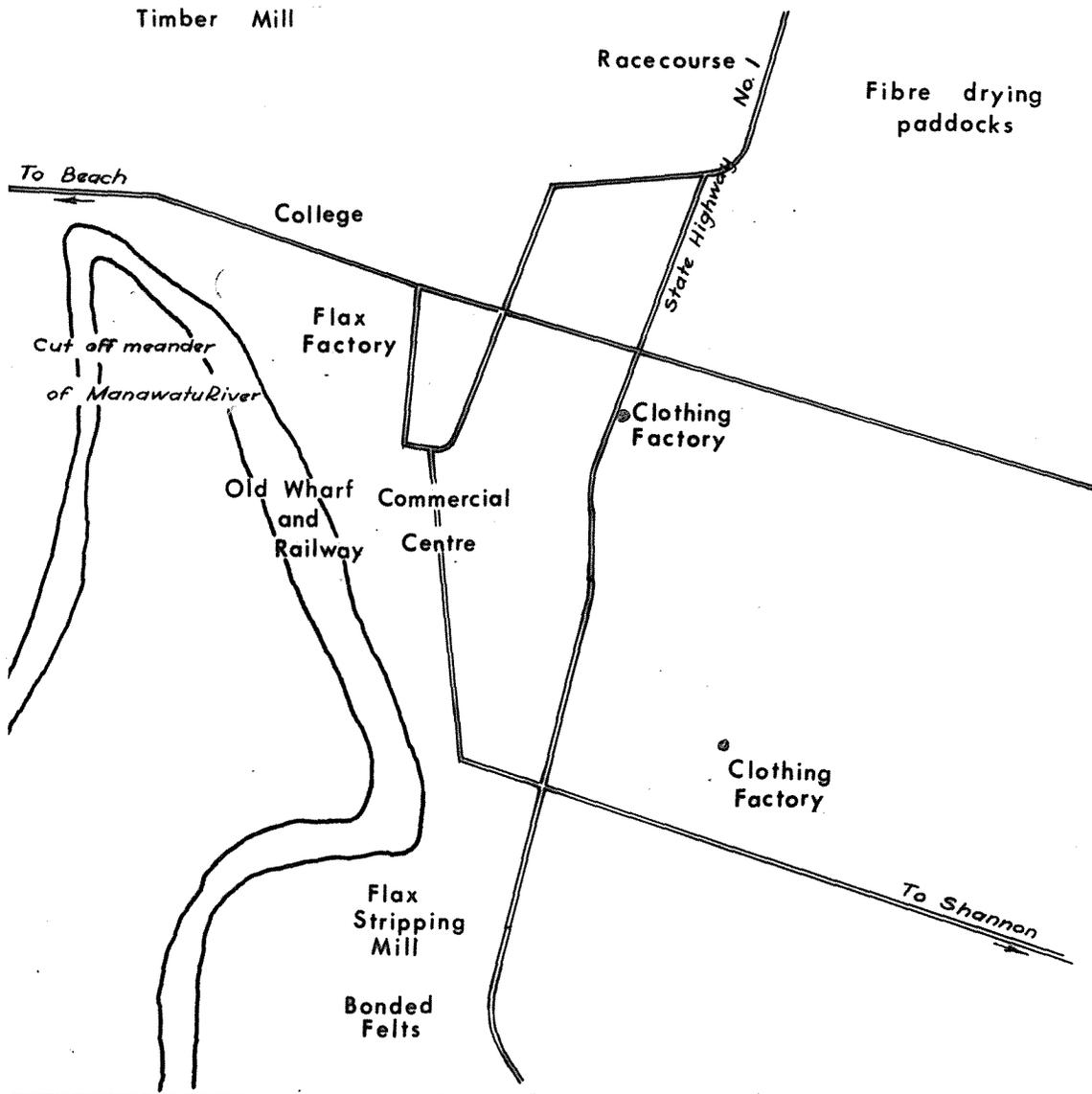
Since 1945 the population of Foxton has increased by 71 percent and employment in the flax industry by 100 percent. (See Fig. 2) The industry now employs 374, 308 of whom reside within the borough of Foxton. The industry has truly become the lifeblood of the town. From the production of woolpacks only, the company has expanded to the manufacture of carpeting, underfelt and upholsterer's padding. (The latter two are produced by a subsidiary, Bonded Felts Ltd.) Of the three types of carpeting produced, only one contains Phormium tenax (55 percent) and the other two use imported artificial and natural fibres. Today carpet production is one-third by value of the industry's output.

The success of the company has meant a revitalised town and the growth engendered by it has greatly increased the attraction of the town as a place of residence. During the 1950s, two clothing factories were established in the town to take advantage of the female labour that had become available. Today these two plants employ 83 persons or ten percent of those in full time employment in the town.

Other developments that have provided increased employment opportunities include the expansion of a small timber company which

1 A more detailed discussion of this development is found in Saunders and Anderson (ed) 203 - 206

Fig. 3a Foxton - location



Scale: 1 to 30,000

Fig. 3 Foxton



Photo. Lands and Survey Dept.

Scale: 1 to 30,000

today employs 35 men, although to some extent it has replaced jobs that disappeared when an older timber firm amalgamated and consolidated on the centre of its partner at Marton. The establishment of Manawatu College to replace the secondary department of the local District High School made Foxton a centre for education as well as providing additional employment. From seven in 1955 the number of staff at secondary level has risen to 22. During the same period the number of pupils has risen from 120 to 450. Over half of this increase has been due to the attendance of Shannon children at the College and the provision of school buses from Oroua Downs to Foxton rather than to Palmerston North as previously (see Chapter Six).

Future growth of Foxton would appear to be dependent on several factors, none of which seems likely to produce rapid change. First there is the possibility that ties formed as a result of attending College in the town may attract the patronage, if not the residence, of some of the nearby rural population. Second, the continued growth and popularity of Foxton Beach may also help the growth of Foxton, particularly as a service centre.

Third, and most significantly, there is the possibility of Foxton developing as a dormitory town for increasing numbers of the work force of Levin and Palmerston North. At present 18 percent of those employed full time are employed outside the town. Of this number the majority travel to Levin or Palmerston North. Should the road route to Palmerston North be shortened by three or four miles as is at present being considered, commuting from Foxton would be more attractive. The hopes that the much discussed Jumbo Jet Airport will be built on the Himatangi sand dunes, and thus give Foxton renewed prosperity as a residential and commercial centre to serve it, would appear to be without much concrete foundation.

An economist has suggested that the Moutoa Estate would be more profitable for the nation if it were used to grow grass. A move such as this could be a serious check to the town, but the continued increase in the production of carpeting from artificial and imported fibres would cushion the effect of it on Foxton. Whatever the extent to which the foreseeable changes do occur, the continued prosperity of the town would appear to be intimately dependent on the Woolpack factory and slow but steady growth in population is probable.

## 2. SMALL TOWNS

The 1966 Census revealed that there were twenty-seven towns in New Zealand that had populations between 2,000 and 3,600. (These are listed in Table I.) Although there are features that are common to all these towns, each is unique as an attraction to population. Similarities in function also exist and seventy percent of the towns had over one-third of labour force employed in either commerce or service industries. A similar percentage of these towns had less than one-third of their labour force employed in manufacturing. (See Table I)

Generally the dominant function of the New Zealand small town is the provision of services for its citizens and those of the surrounding district. There are however, eight towns in this group which are dominated by other functions. These include the transport centres of Lyttelton, Port Chalmers and Bluff, the manufacturing towns of Waihi, Foxton, Kaiapoi and Mataura, and the forestry town of Murapara. Manufacturing is also important in Patea, Eltham, Picton and Temuka, but this group have other functions that are equally important.

The industries that support these manufacturing towns are generally concerned with the processing of local raw materials such as meat, wool, wheat and Phormium tenax. The last named is the basis of the manufacturing function of Foxton. Foxton, in common with Mataura and Kaiapoi, had over half of its work force employed in manufacturing in 1966 and this concentration gives this group of towns a function different to that of others included in this survey. The aim of this thesis is to investigate further the functions of Foxton, how it has attracted its present population, and attempt to ascertain to what

Table I

Towns with populations between 2,000 and 3,600 and percentage of their labour force in selected industrial divisions, (1966)

Population	Industrial Division	
	Manufacturing	Commerce
Kaitaia 3,056	14	54
Kaikohe 3,134	20	57
Paeroa 3,129	25	34
Waihi 3,169	41	24
Te Aroha 3,212	26	37
Te Puke 2,601	28	34
Murapara 2,670	2	10
Opotiki 2,585	25	31
Inglewood 2,003	30	37
Waipukurau 3,569	15	54
Eltham 2,319	36	38
Patea 2,013	48	36
Taihape 2,861	9	47
FOXTON 2,819	51	28
Otaki 3,573	22	36
Pahiatua 2,597	23	46
Carterton 3,536	38	35
Picton 2,560	23	34
Hokitika 3,258	20	50
Kaipoi 3,528	57	26
Lyttelton 3,493	20	26
Temuka 3,703	35	35
Waimate 3,300	21	40
Port Chalmers 3,071	35	26
Alexandra 2,979	14	44
Mataura 2,629	64	19
Bluff 3,279	21	23

extent the dominance of manufacturing in the town's industrial activity affects other aspects of life in this small town.

Unlike the other towns in which manufacturing dominates, (with the exception of Waihi), Foxton's principal industry is not based on pastoral products. One of the effects of this is that wage levels are somewhat lower than the towns classified as manufacturing above.

(Table II)

Table II

Percentage of labour force earning in excess of 2,000 dollars in selected towns. (1966)

Foxton	22	Kaiapoi	30
Waihi	21	Temuka	24
Patea	35	Mataura	42
Picton	29		

Further statistical information on Foxton's relative ranking among the small towns included in this survey is listed below.

(Table III)

The dependence on manufacturing and the relative unimportance of the service and commercial and service sectors make Foxton a suitable settlement in which to study a New Zealand small town that has a minimum of rural character. It is hoped that this study will become part of a wider study of the New Zealand small town which, in this age of rapid urbanisation, is a part of the settlement pattern which is beginning to lose its vitality.

Table III

Statistical information on population  
and dwellings of small towns, (1966)

	Percentage population increase 1961-66	Percentage of population over 65	Percentage of Maoris in population	Percentage of labour force earning over \$2,200	Percentage of homes owned by occupier
Kaitaia	12.9	8	17	32	67
Kaikohe	14.7	4	33	27	62
Paeroa	8.1	8	12	31	62
Waihi	.2	14	4	21	84
Te Aroha	5.0	11	4	27	68
Te Puke	13.2	7	7	35	74
Murapara	46.0	1	57	48	17
Opotiki	.2	7	36	31	64
Inglewood	5.4	10	2	30	75
Waipukurau	9.8	8	7	30	62
Eltham	2.1	10	7	30	71
Patea	1.2	7	20	35	60
Taihape	6.7	5	13	33	55
FOXTON	7.3	10	16	22	63
Otaki	12.5	15	13	23	75
Pahiatua	.7	10	3	28	69
Carterton	14.9	9	5	28	82
Picton	10.6	13	5	29	72
Hokitika	8.3	10	1	28	76
Kaiapoi	13.4	8	3	30	78
Lyttelton	2.7	9	3	39	78
Temuka	11.2	13	3	24	80
Waimate	- 0.3	15	0.4	22	82
Port Chalmers	- 1.6	9	1	30	74
Alexandra	23.9	8	0.4	34	79
Mataura	26.1	5	6	42	74
Bluff	7.8	5	7	50	77
New Zealand	10.8	8	8	34	69

### 3. THE SURVEY

This thesis is based on information gathered during December 1967 and January 1968. All households in the borough of Foxton were visited and the household head, or a representative, was requested to answer a questionnaire. (See Appendix A). The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine the attractions Foxton held as a place of residence and to obtain information as to the extent of the residents' involvement in activities inside and outside the town, particularly in the satisfaction of occupational, commercial and recreational needs. The information was coded and put on punch cards which are held in the Geography Department at Massey University. A summary of the interviews obtained is given below. (Table IV)

Table IV

Coverage of households by survey  
conducted December 1967 - January 1968.

Households visited	754
Interviews obtained	700
Interviews refused	14
Households not contacted <sup>a</sup>	40

a Of this number 25 houses were either unoccupied at the time of the survey or the head could not be interviewed, usually due to old age or ill health.

During these interviews it was established that 255 employed independents other than the household head and his wife resided in the 700 households. Of these 200 answered a questionnaire similar to that used to interview the household heads. The survey therefore covered 93 percent of the household heads and 79 percent of other independents.

Throughout this study all tables record percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Statistics, other than those based on the questionnaire are taken from the published results of the 1966 Census.

#### 4. RESIDENCE

Foxton presents to the prospective citizen all the attractions and inconveniences of a 'small town'. The purpose of this chapter is to determine which forces are active in attracting population to Foxton, and in particular, those not generally associated with the 'small town'.

As in all forms of urban settlement, there exists in Foxton a degree of inertia which ensures, except in the event of economic collapse, a stable sector of the population. A more detailed account of this phenomenon is given by Pownall who states that 'because an urban centre has been created it tends to remain alive of its own volition'.<sup>1</sup> It is this factor which is the basis of the oft expressed opinions that "Once you shift to Foxton you will never get out of the place", and "You must be careful what you say about people in Foxton as they are all related in some way".

In order to establish the extent of this inertia, those interviewed were asked where they were born, how long they had resided in Foxton, and why they came to live in Foxton. Thirty-one percent were found to have been in Foxton all their lives, while an additional 15 percent regarded Foxton as their home and gave this as their reason for residence. A further 13 percent gave some family or marital reason for coming to the town. The importance of family ties and of original residence are important in sustaining the population of small towns for in Foxton, 59 percent gave these reasons and in Hawera a figure of 57 percent was obtained.<sup>2</sup>

1 Pownall 279 This is part of a discussion and illustrations of inertia in 277-282

2 Congalton 86

The proportion of Foxton's population who had lived in the town all their lives is high when compared with other centres for which figures were available. (Table V) The trend of 'native sons' remaining in Foxton to a greater extent than the other centres suggests an element of truth in one of the sentiments noted above.

Table V

Percentage of adult population  
born in selected towns

Foxton	Hawera <sup>1</sup>	Masterton <sup>1</sup>	Hamilton <sup>1</sup>
31	25	25	16

Another measure of inertia is the length of residence.  
(Table VI) This table indicates that at the time of the respective

Table VI

Length of residence of adult population  
in selected towns

	Foxton	Hawera <sup>2</sup>	Masterton <sup>2</sup>	Hamilton <sup>2</sup>
Less than five years	20	15	26	26
5 - 20 years	42	35	31	41
Over 20 years	38	50	43	33

1 Vandenberg 8

2 Vandenberg 17

surveys both Hawera and Masterton had larger proportions of long term residents than Foxton. For clarification, these figures should be considered in the light of fluctuations in growth rate. Since Foxton's population was almost stationary between 1921 and 1945, the small percentage of the present adult population that has been in the town for over 20 years is to some degree to be expected. The recent growth of the town, particularly in comparison with the inter-war years, explains this comparative lack of long term residents in comparison with Hawera and Masterton, which grew at a rate of 14.3 percent and 18.0 percent respectively in the period 1921-45.

Another aspect of inertia to be considered is the extent to which people would consider leaving Foxton. Each subject was asked "If you shifted from Foxton, what size town would you prefer to shift to?" and were then asked to give any reason they might have for shifting. The results showed that 39 percent would prefer to shift to a town of similar size to Foxton. Sixty percent could not give a reason why they might leave Foxton other than economic collapse of the community or an involuntary departure. (Table VII)

These results indicate a general satisfaction with the town by the household heads and to a lesser extent by other independents. Both groups prefer to live in a town of Foxton's size and this is an indication of the settlement inertia resulting from the attraction of Foxton as an example of a small town. The responses as to why a shift might be made are further evidence of satisfaction with the town. The most popular destination for a shift other than to a similar sized town, if one had to be made, was the city. Those giving this response fell into two groups. There were those, particularly the young, who answered 'city' without any qualification, indicating that it was the amenities of any large settlement that they were attracted by. Among

Table VII

Percentage giving selected destinations  
and reasons for leaving Foxton

	Size of town in relation to Foxton							
	Country	Smaller	Similar	Bigger	City	No preference		
Household heads	2	2	39	12	18	25		
Other independents	1	1	41	15	28	15		
	Reason for shifting							
	Work	Family	Change	Retire	Transfer	Personal	Bored or Climate	None
Household heads	17	8	3	2	3	5	2	60
Other independents	22	1	7	1	1	10	8	50
Factory workers	24	8	2	1	-	3	2	60

the middle aged and elderly, those indicating the preference for a shift to the city were usually explicit, naming cities which they had visited and been attracted to.

The reasons for a possible shift revealed the greater mobility of the younger citizens, especially in the rather more subjective categories of 'bored' and 'change'. But more significant was the proportion of even this group which could give no reason why they might shift, for it is this group that is most vocal about the shortcomings of a small town. Significant too was the higher proportion of employees in the flax industry who would shift because of work, as compared with the population as a whole. Discussion below investigates why people have taken up employment in this industry and reveals that the flax industry is not a positive attraction as a place of work. (See Chapter 5)

The above discussion has given some indication of the extent to which inertia has sustained the population of Foxton. Three out of five people reside in the town because it is their home town or that of a near relation. A similar proportion could give no reason why they might leave the town although this figure was a little lower among the younger independents. The desire to get out of Foxton is therefore not strong, especially as many of those who gave a reason for leaving the town, did so with no indication that a move was contemplated. This would suggest that claims that the town lacks the activities necessary to keep the younger population are not particularly well founded although there is a definite need for the more capable youngsters to find employment outside the town. Sixty percent of the College children in the town did not expect to find employment there, although a like proportion would live in the town if suitable employment could be found near at hand.

Other reasons for taking up residence in Foxton were given, (Table VIII) which did not have overtones of inertia.

Table VIII

Percentage giving selected reasons for  
taking up residence in Foxton.

	Household heads	Other independents	All
Home	36	84	46
Relatives there, marriage or with spouse	15	5	13
Flax industry employment	6	-	4
Other employment	11	7	10
Transfer	3	0.5	3
Bought business	6	1.5	5
Small town features <sup>a</sup>	9	1	8
Housing	6	-	5
Climate - health	8	1	6

a These include cheap land, lower cost of living, quietness for retirement, and centrality.

The importance of responses concerned with employment is to be expected, although only twentytwo percent came to Foxton because of this. (c.f. Hawera 48 percent) Of significance is the small number who came to the town primarily because of attraction of employment in the flax industry. It is of interest, therefore, to note that 41 percent of all household heads have, however, been employed in the flax industry at some time.

The responses to which some sort of uniqueness may be attributed are climate and housing, for these are not synonymous with the 'small town'. The climate that attracts residents is noted for dryness and clarity of atmosphere. This has resulted in several households coming to the town in order to improve respiratory troubles suffered by one or more of their members. The lower rainfall experienced by the coastal areas of the Manawatu is also a significant part of the climate which attracts population. Climate is a strong secondary factor in attracting many people and is of more importance to the elderly than to the young.

Housing, although it attracts citizens to all settlements, is of special interest in the case of Foxton because of the presence of a large proportion of state houses, many of which were built to help attract workers to the town for the flax industry. One in four of the household heads interviewed was residing in a state house, although some of these had been purchased by the resident. An indication of the attraction of housing in terms of its availability is given below. (Table IX)

The proportion of state houses in Foxton is high for New Zealand small towns. (Table X) Murapara, the only town with a higher proportion, is a town created merely to facilitate the milling of the State owned forests in the area, and as yet lacks many of the functions

Table IX

Housing - Age, percentage of state houses, and length of residence of those attracted to the town by housing

	Age of housing						
	0-5	5-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	Over 50
Percentage of residences	10	9	27	19	2	8	25
Percentage which are state houses	12	16	34	69	-	-	-
Length of residence of those attracted by housing (percentage of all attracted)	24	9	35	32	-	-	-

of a small town. The large proportion of state houses has a noticeable effect on other features of the town (e.g. the rate of home ownership), because of the economic group for which they are provided.

Table X

Percentage of residences that are state houses in selected towns

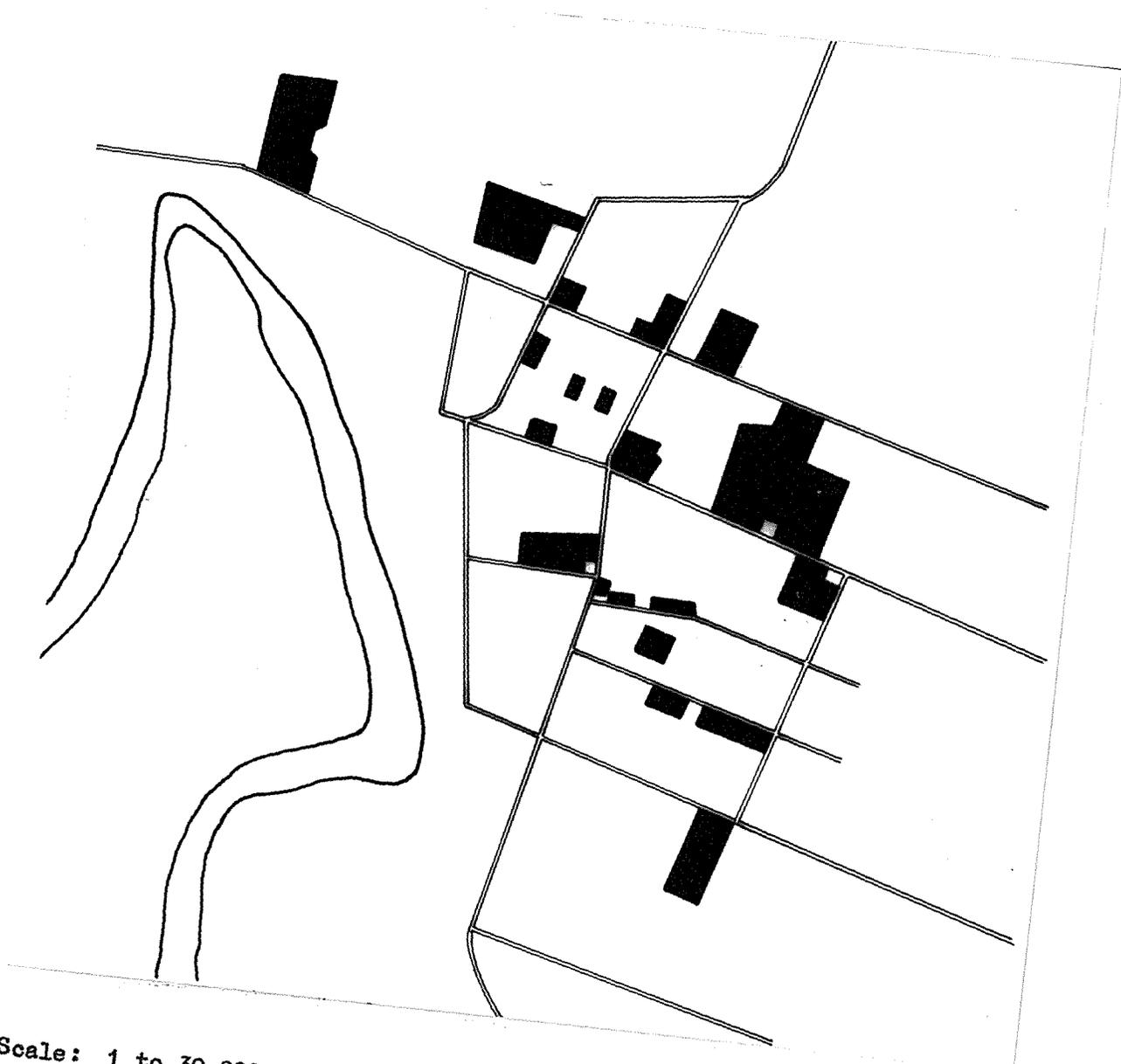
Kaitaia	12	Waipukurau	20
Kaikohe	12	Pahiatua	16
Paeroa	12	Carterton	3
Waihi	3	Picton	2
Te Aroha	11	Hokitika	7
Te Puke	7	Kaiapoi	11
Murapara	56	Lyttelton	2
Opotiki	9	Temuka	9
Inglewood	5	Waimate	7
Eltham	7	Port Chalmers <sup>a</sup>	-
Patea	17	Alexandra	3
Taihape	11	Mataura	4
FOXTON	25	Bluff	2
Otaki	10		

(Source: State Advances Corporation)

a Figure unobtainable as State Advances Corporation include this borough in Dunedin Urban area.

The dearth of houses between 30 and 49 years of age is a reflection of the stagnation of the town between 1921 and 1945. The relationship between state house construction and attraction to Foxton because of housing, is further highlighted when noting that 88 percent of the state housing in the town is between ten and twenty-two years old. State housing was an important part of the added attractions of settlement

Fig. 4a Foxton - state housing areas



Scale: 1 to 30,000

Fig. 4. Foxton



Photo. Lands and Survey Dept.

Scale: 1 to 30,000

in Foxton that developed along with the growth of the flax industry after World War II. In more recent years, the attraction of the town in terms of housing has been influenced by comparatively cheaper costs in Foxton and the proximity of the town to Palmerston North and Levin.

To further ascertain the importance of housing as an attraction for residence in Foxton, a measure of home ownership was obtained. (Table XI) Of the households visited, 65 percent were owned by the resident. The rate of home ownership in Foxton is low for a town of its size but the complicating factor is the high percentage of state houses. (See Table III)

Table XI

Length of home ownership  
(Percentage of each category)

	Years since buying or building			
	0-5	5-9	10-19	20 and over
Bought	31	19	31	19
Built	23	26	36	15
All	28	21	33	18

The age of housing also gives evidence of the growth between 1947 and 1957. Twenty-two percent of the state houses have been bought by their occupiers. Among houses other than state houses, the rate of ownership was 79 percent, which is a rate more typical of a New Zealand small town. A group of citizens whose affinities to Foxton may be of increasing importance to the development of the town are those who commute out of the town to their workplace. This group has a home ownership rate of 72 percent, which indicates that they have strong residential ties with the town.

An analysis of home ownership with respect to occupation reveals no concentration of ownership in any one group although generally the lower income groups have a lower rate. (Table XII) The major exception is the professional group but 33 percent of this is in houses which go with their positions.

Table XII  
Occupation and home ownership

Occupation	Percentage of household heads	Percentage of home-owners
Flax industry	34	30
Other industry	6	7
Professional	9	7
Retail	4	3
Business owner-proprietor	9	9
Contracting and transport	4	5
Clerical and domestic	3	2
Tradesmen	7	8
Agriculture etc.	6	8
Labourers etc.	2	2
Employed outside Foxton	16	19

The above discussion supports the contention that it is inertia which is the major factor in sustaining the population of Foxton. This term carries with it connotations of stubbornness and complacency but for many, these emotions are not an integral part of their reasons for residence in Foxton. Nineteen percent of household heads had left Foxton and returned. Twenty percent of the other independents had done likewise. A comment that was made by several who were interviewed was that Foxton was an ideal place to raise a young family but when the family

reached the working age it was not so attractive due to lack of employment opportunities.

Inertia is not then merely a passive force in maintaining the population of Foxton for it embodies positive aspects as the town does provide the facilities and environment that many demand from their place of residence. Satisfaction with what Foxton provides is thus an important force in the maintenance of the population. Besides the usual attractions associated with a small town the features that have drawn citizens are the climate and housing. Compared with family ties and home town sentiments these attractions are minor, but climate in particular is a strong secondary force. Among the retired residents 14 percent gave climate as their reason for coming to the town.

Housing, particularly in respect to its cheapness, also attracts settlement but the strong influence exerted by the building of state houses in the immediate post war years has diminished. Some of these state houses were used to attract workers to the flax industry but the management of that industry has not needed to go outside the local labour force for process workers in the last three years, although most of the technical staff is advertised for on the national market.

Today Foxton has a stable population residing there principally because of the satisfaction they have experienced while living there. Inertia, complacency, or contentment, whatever term is used, the majority of the population of Foxton like their town, although the claim that it is not the long term residents that support the town's activities deserves investigation. (This is carried out in a subsequent chapter.) Despite the relatively minor importance of work opportunities in attracting population the provision of places of employment is vital to the continued growth of the town.

## 5. EMPLOYMENT

The dominance of the flax industry is clearly reflected in the employment structure of Foxton. One-third of those interviewed gave the flax industry as their source of employment. With such a large proportion of the town dependent on it, the industry is a vital factor in all aspects of life.

Analysis of the structure of the town's employment reveals that, other than the flax industry, there is no other major focus of employment. (Tables XIII and XIV) The only establishments which employ any great numbers are the two 'shirt factories', and the timber mill. The former of these employs principally female labour and this is the reason for the importance of 'other industry' as a place of work for 'other independents' whose numbers include many young women.

The flax industry, the lifeblood of Foxton, is all that remains, apart from its service function, of the earlier functions of the town. Despite its rather unsteady beginnings, the industry, in its modern form, has become the 'raison d'etre' for the town. It supports most of the town's activities, either as an actual work place, especially when there is little else available, or as the source of a large part of the consumer force. Of the 900 who were interviewed, 39 percent are or had been employed in the industry. Their reasons for taking up employment in the industry varied, but four out of ten stated that they went to work there because it was the only job they could obtain in Foxton. The answers given to the questions asking why employment was taken in the flax industry, and reasons why those who have left did so, were analysed. (Table XV)

Only one-quarter of those who are or had worked in the flax

Table XIII

Occupations of those employed  
in Foxton. (Percentage of total)

	Flax Ind.	Other Ind.	Profess- ional	Retail	Manage Prop.	Trans. Commu.	Cleric Domes.	Trades	Agric. Poultry Horses	Other
Household heads	41	6	11	4	11	4	4	9	8	2
Other independents	29	12	4	17	6	-	9	18	11	-

Table XIV

Occupations of those employed outside  
Foxton. (Percentage of total)

	Freezing works	Other industry	Retail	Manage Prop.	Trans. Commu.	Clerical Domestic	Trades	Agri- culture	Other
Household heads	19	9	4	5	13	6	28	2	14
Other independents	9	26	7	-	-	16	5	23	14

Table XV

Reasons for taking up, and leaving  
employment in the flax industry.

	Only job	Only suitable job	Leaving school	Change	Pay	Housing or conditions	Fill in	Good job or opportunity	No answer
Percentage giving each reason for working there	38	11	9	3	9	2	9	12	7
	Better pay	Conditions	More suitable job	Better occupation	Job gone	Retired	No answer		
Percentage giving each reason for leaving	14	10	22	44	2	1	7		

industry had gone there as the result of a positive attraction. Two-thirds of those who had left went to what they considered better occupations or jobs, although these were of a varied nature. In addition, almost one-third have taken occupation outside Foxton, principally in the freezing works, trades, and transport and communications. Of those at present employed in the flax industry, 18 percent reside outside the borough of Foxton, 62 percent of whom are from Foxton Beach.

A measure of the flax industry's attraction as a place of work was obtained by asking parents what their attitude was towards their children taking up employment in the flax industry. (Table XVI) These are a further indication of the negative attitudes that are held towards the industry. As well as those who stated that they would object to their family working there, there were many who, although they did not actually object, hoped their children would manage to get what they considered, a better occupation.

Table XVI

Attitudes towards family  
working in flax industry

	All household heads	Heads who have worked in flax industry at some time
Remained in Foxton because of chance of family obtaining work in flax industry	13	8
Object to family working in flax industry	23	19
Do not object	67	70
Object except for stated departments	10	11

The flax industry, despite the town's dependence upon it, is not generally regarded highly as a place of work but to those who have not followed a vocation it provides a steady occupation. It is not a positive force in attracting people to the town for only four percent of the adults had been attracted by it, but its stabilising effect is vital in the continued prosperity of the settlement.

Outside the flax industry, the major occupational groups are ones which have grown as a result of the population increase engendered by the development of that industry. The garment industry, which employs most of those working in 'other industries', was attracted to the town by both its location and the availability of female labour. The next largest employment groups were the 'professional' and 'managerial and proprietor', both of which have grown as a result of developments in other sectors of the community. But in Foxton, manufacturing dominates the employment structure and will continue to do so for some time.

Sixteen percent of all household heads were employed outside the town, as were 20 percent of the other independents. The destinations of those travelling shows that the Palmerston North area attracts half of those going out of the town. (Table XVII) Seventyeight percent of the community who were commuting household heads had worked inside Foxton and almost half of these have done so in the flax industry. Among the 'other independents' who commuted, half had worked in Foxton and two-thirds of these had been employed in the flax industry. The main reason given for taking up employment was that there was either no job, or no suitable one, available in Foxton. (Table XVIII) Only half of those employed outside said they would take employment in Foxton if something suitable were available.

This would suggest that there is a definite sector of the

Table XVII

Destinations of those travelling outside  
Foxton for employment. (By percentages)

Palmerston North	Levin	Longburn	Ohakea	Himatangi	Shannon	Bulls	Other
33	22	18	6	8	9	1	3

Table XVIII

Reasons given for taking employment  
outside Foxton.

	Higher pay	No job or no suitable job	Job held be- fore residing in Foxton	Transferred	No answer
Percentage	16	48	8	8	20

community who are using Foxton as a dormitory town from which they commute to work. It is this function of the town which is suggested above as being the one most likely to cause future growth. Of those now employed in Foxton, 20 percent of the household heads and 13 percent of the other independents had at some time travelled outside Foxton for work. Among this group there was a higher proportion who had worked at the Longburn freezing works than obtains among the present commuters and a much smaller proportion who had travelled to Levin than do at the moment. This increased attraction of Levin as a place of work is most probably a direct result of the greatly increased employment opportunities that have developed there.

Secondary employment and part time work was not very important to the adult sector of the community. Only 32 adults had secondary

employment and 79 wives held part time positions. No particular occupation was dominant in providing secondary employment although among school children employment in the increasing number of racing stables in and just outside the borough is a supplementary source of income in several families. The married women working part time were engaged in the clothing manufacture (outworkers), as shop assistants, and office and domestic workers.

A more important group of workers other than those already mentioned was married women employed full time. Twentytwo percent of wives were employed full time and their occupations reinforced the evidence of the dominance of manufacturing in the occupational structure of the town. (Table XIX)

Table XIX

Occupations of wives employed full time.

Flax industry	Clothing industry	Education	Retail	Clerical and domestic	Other
20	34	8	18	17	3

The working wives came from a normal cross-section of the community except that the younger wives were more likely to be working than others.

A sector of the community which, although not actively employed, plays an important part in the town's life, are the pensioners. These make up one-quarter of the household heads and over ten percent of the population. Some measure of the relative importance of Foxton as a place of retirement is gained from its rank of seventh among the selected small towns for the percentage of its population over the age of 65. (Table III)

Those who have retired to Foxton include both former and new residents. About half were living in Foxton at their retirement and one tenth were people returning to Foxton. Those who came to live in Foxton for the first time when they retired came there for varied reasons. The four most common given were the climate, housing, small town attraction, and having friends or relations already living there, although not necessarily in that order.

As is noted in a later chapter, this group supports the town's facilities to a greater extent than any other age group, due to some extent to their lack of mobility.

In summary, the major feature of the town's employment pattern is the dominance of the flax industry, despite the rather negative attitude that is held towards it. Other employment opportunities in the town are varied but apart from the timber mill and the clothing factories, they are of an essentially service nature. Commuting outside the town is either necessary or desirable for a significant minority of the labour force and this is a trend that is likely to continue to expand. The town has a relatively large section of its population over the age of 65 and this is likely to grow as life expectancy increases and the more southerly small towns of the west coast e.g. Levin and Otaki, grow to a size where they are too big, or expensive, for people seeking a cheap, and/or, quiet place for retirement.

The trend towards employment outside the town reflects a lack of opportunities in the town. As well as employment, one of the most important functions which a small town must give its residents, is the provision of shopping facilities and in the case of Foxton, the proximity of Levin and Palmerston North makes this a vital consideration.

## 6. COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

The basic function of the commercial sector of a town is to provide the goods required for the day-to-day existence of its residents. But because of the size of the market there is some limitation on the variety of goods that can be made available and on the number and type of commercial premises in Foxton. (Table XX) Of these, two of the drapers, a shoe shop, the electrician, a furnisher, one of the groceries, and the jewellers, are branches of, or have close contacts with, firms in Levin and Palmerston North.

Table XX

Commercial premises in Foxton.

Drapers	5	Grocers	4
Hairdressers	5	Dairies	7
Footwear	2	Restaurants, Milk bars, etc.	6
Garages and service stations	7	Butchers	2
Chemists	2	Booksellers	2
Electrical and radio	2	Fruiterers	3
Hardware etc.	4	Banks	2
Bicycles	2	Jeweller	1
Secondhand dealer	1	Gift shop	1

The important question that arises is whether the citizens of the town consider these facilities sufficient or whether there is a deficiency in them that is filled by trips to Palmerston North and Levin. When interviewed, 63 percent of the households stated that they did not shop in Palmerston North more than twice a year, if at all, and 51 percent shopped in Levin as infrequently. Of the 17 percent who did all their shopping in Foxton, over half were 65 or older.

A complete analysis of reasons given for shopping outside Foxton is given below. (Table XXI) Dissatisfaction is inherent in both 'cheapness' and 'variety'. Two different causes of shopping outside the town because of the lack of variety were apparent. First, the lack of range to the level that could reasonably be expected and second, the need to obtain goods which were outside the capabilities of the local businesses to carry.

Table XXI

Percentage giving each reason for shopping outside Foxton<sup>a</sup>

	Palmerston North		Levin	
	Household heads	Other	Household heads	Other
Cheapness	9	3	24	4
Variety	40	56	36	49
Outing	55	39	49	38
Other	6	15	4	22
Cheap meat	-	-	12	-

a. These figures total more than 100 percent as some people gave more than one reason.

Those who went to shop in Palmerston North went principally because of the larger variety of goods available there or because of the chance for an outing. These reasons attracted 95 percent of those travelling to Palmerston North to shop compared with 85 percent who went to Levin. Economy was, however, the reason for 36 percent of those who shopped in Levin but only nine percent of those who travelled to Palmerston North.

But the true drain on the economy of the town is that caused

by frequent shopping outside, and those who do so at least once a fortnight are most likely to be dissatisfied with Foxton's facilities. (Table XXII)

Table XXII

Reason for shopping outside Foxton of those doing so at least once a fortnight

	Palmerston North		Levin	
	Household heads	Other	Household heads	Other
Cheapness	19	-	54	3
Variety	29	19	18	19
Outing	32	42	24	19
Working there	20	39	4	59

This table reveals that only half of those shopping in Palmerston North frequently do so for reasons which are concerned with actual shopping while 85 percent who shop in Levin do so for reasons which express some dissatisfaction with Foxton's facilities. The dominant feature of this table is the large proportion travelling frequently to Levin because of cheapness. This trend may be seen as a direct reflection of some dissatisfaction with Foxton's facilities. Opinion is divided as to whether such trips are in fact a means of saving on living costs. Those in favour of these trips quote differences in grocery and particularly meat prices, as justifying the outlay of the cost of travel. Businessmen and those satisfied with what is provided put forward the claim that the amount purchased must be large to cover the cost of travel and that shopping outside the town for cash purchases and expecting the local businessmen to allow credit, when it is necessary, is morally dishonest.

In order to ascertain the validity of either claim, a comprehensive list of groceries and meat was compiled and priced in a Foxton grocery and butcher's shop, and also at Levin Discount Stores and the freezing company's butcher's shop, the major stores visited by those seeking economies. From these, the savings made per dollar spent were calculated and the cost of transport, at Government mileage rates, was reckoned. (Table XXIII)

Table XXIII

Comparative cost of groceries  
and meat in Foxton and Levin

	Cost (dollars)	Saving (dollars)	Saving per dollar spent
Foxton grocery	16.18		
Levin Discount Store A	15.65	0.53	3.4 cents
Levin Discount Store B	15.62	0.56	3.6 cents
Selection of A and B	15.44	0.71	4.6 cents
Meat in Foxton	5.07		
Meat in Levin	4.07	1.00	24.8 cents
Cost of travelling - 24 miles at 8 cents per mile	1.92 dollars		

From the survey conducted, the financial gain of a trip out of Foxton is marginal. Two factors, however, must be remembered about the above figures - namely that the travel cost may be assessed rather highly and that membership of the Consumers' Co-operative (Manawatu) Ltd, would reduce the cost of groceries in Foxton by at least five percent. The greatest savings are made on meat purchases and if these are made in sufficiently large quantities (necessitating the ownership of a deep freeze or a system of group buying), then the shopping trip to Levin is on a

sound economic basis.

Some people stated that they combined a trip to visit a specialist service or an outing, with their shopping. If this is the case, that the trip is necessary on some other grounds, then to shop in Levin will result in a saving. But there are some grounds for the claim that to shop in Foxton only when credit is needed is morally dishonest. If the town does in fact fail to provide the necessary commercial facilities, it is not going to help future growth if business is continually taken to other centres.

The occupational groups who went to Palmerston North most often because of variety, were the professional, managerial and proprietors, and trades. Among the other independents, the clerical group were most active in shopping outside for this reason, and flax industry employees least active. A similar pattern was revealed for those shopping in Levin for better variety.

The reasons for this pattern are complex but a major factor is the greater mobility and more selective purchasing of the higher income groups. Since half of those going outside Foxton because of variety find it necessary to do so no more than three or four times a year, the drain on the town's commerce is probably not of very great magnitude. Loss of some trade due to inability to provide a comprehensive range of goods is to be expected by a commercial sector that serves a relatively small market.

Among the reasons for shopping outside Foxton, that of providing an outing was the most important to the household heads of the town. The proximity of both Levin and Palmerston North, and the widespread possession of motor vehicles, makes a visit to town for the family easily organised. Despite being more distant, Palmerston North was the more favoured place for an outing. The total number of people travelling to each town was approximately the same, but three times as many went to Levin for cheaper purchases as went to Palmerston North.

Shopping outside Foxton was not so common among the elderly, due largely to their immobility. On the other hand, half of those who were shopping outside the town because of cheapness, were households where the head was under 40 years of age compared with the 30 percent of the households they constituted. These households are those with young families and careful budgeting is more likely to be a major concern for them.

In order to determine whether those shopping outside the town were less active in the town's life than other groups, the extent of their activities was ascertained. This showed that there was no neglect of community duties by any group, although the wives of those shopping outside because of cheapness, were slightly less active than other wives. There is no doubt some connection between the general youth of this group and their lack of community activity for, as commented above, it is these younger women who have families to care for, and thus their social life is somewhat curtailed.

Professional services are also a vital part of a town's amenities. The professional services offered in Foxton are a dentist (who also serves Shannon), one resident legal firm and one from Levin which visits weekly, two accountant-secretaries, two trading banks and two doctors. Those interviewed were asked if they went outside for their dentist, lawyer, accountant or bank. The mobility of occupational groups mentioned above in regard to shopping outside the town was reflected in these replies. The professional and managerial-proprietor groups went outside for professional services at a higher rate than other groups. A high proportion of the transport-communication group went outside for their lawyers and banks but many of these were contractors whose businesses take them all over the Manawatu. The agricultural group found

it necessary to go outside Foxton for its accountants, as they need specialists in this field.

Frequency of shopping visits to Palmerston North and Levin was higher among those going outside for their professional services than among the populace as a whole, particularly so in the case of travelling to Palmerston North.

The competition of Palmerston North and Levin will continue to hamper the development of the commercial sector of Foxton. In the small towns listed above, the average percentage employed in the commercial industrial division was 17 percent, and the average percentage of the labour force employed in sales work was ten percent. Foxton's figures of twelve and seven respectively indicate the restricted development of the functions and its rankings are similarly low. (Table XXIV)

Table XXIV

Rate of employment in commerce: Foxton  
compared with other small towns

	Commercial Industrial Division		Sales workers	
	Percent employed	Rank/27	Percent employed	Rank/27
Foxton	12	21	7	19

Foxton appears to have an underdeveloped commercial sector for its size, due in part to its proximity to the larger centres of Palmerston North and Levin. Shopping outside Foxton is likely to continue as a feature of the town's economic activity until such time as its market is large enough to support services that are at present provided in the larger centres. Besides limiting its commercial sector, the size of the town

also places some restriction on the scope of the recreational facilities that are provided.

## 7. RECREATION

One of the most common complaints levelled against small towns is that "There is nothing to do". If this complaint is justified in the case of Foxton, it would be expected, in this mobile age, that many people would travel out of the town for their leisure time pursuits. There are some recreations whose provision is beyond the capabilities of a small town. Nevertheless, only five percent of household heads interviewed stated that they were dissatisfied with the recreation available in the town, although seven percent actually belonged to organisations in other centres. Among 'other independents', five percent were dissatisfied and six percent belonged to outside organisations. Dissatisfaction is therefore not widespread. Among half of the household heads, satisfaction was easily provided as they belonged to no organisations and expressed little desire to do so. Perhaps the presence of four licenced hotels in the town is all that many of these require!

Those who expressed dissatisfaction fell into two groups. First, there were those who wished to participate in activities that were of the intellectual nature and second, those who complained of not enough entertainment. Seventy-seven percent of the first group were members of at least one organisation in the town, while 61 percent were committee members. Of the second group, only 47 percent belonged to organisations in Foxton and only 32 percent were committee members. Dissatisfaction would seem to be most common among those who make least effort to take an active part in the life of their town.

Of the 63 persons who belonged to organisations outside Foxton, 22 were members of national associations which did not have branches in Foxton. A like number belonged to sports clubs, in particular, rifle shooting. Four were travelling outside Foxton because of dissatisfaction

with local organisations on the grounds of limited scope and competition. These figures do not present a picture that would justify the claim that Foxton does not provide adequate recreational facilities for its citizens.

In order to ascertain the extent to which different sectors of the community were active in the organisation of the recreations and services provided for the citizens, each adult was classified on the basis of his committee activity. Four categories were chosen, inactive, minor, average and major. (Table XXV) This table also shows the percentage of each group that were members of at least one organisation in the town.

Table XXV

Committee activity <sup>a</sup> and  
organisation membership

	Inactive	Minor	Average	Major	Member of at least one organisation
Household heads	16	16	8	10	54
Household heads' wives	73	13	9	5	45
Other independents	83	13	2	2	40
All adults	71	15	7	7	50

a Minor - member of one committee

Average - member of two committees or office holder

Major - office holder in at least two committees

This table shows that only three out of ten adults are active in committee work. Any claims that opportunities are limited are soon dispelled when it is realised that there is a long list of organisations which rely on voluntary officers. Within the town there are ten religious denominations which maintain their own buildings, five sports clubs with permanent clubrooms, and seven other voluntary organisations

and clubs with their own facilities. In addition, there are at least ten sporting clubs, eight service organisations, and fifteen associations of various kinds.

Another complaint about recreations in a small town is that the same people seem to do all the work. These complaints are often expressed by some sectors of the community, especially those who are willing to do their share. This is reflected above (Table XXV) for the classification used grouped only those who belonged to one committee in the 'minor' category. Thus, those people in the other two active categories, who were of about the same numerical strength, actually held two and a half times as many committee positions. That is, approximately 70 percent of committee positions are held by 14 percent of the adult population.

Although those who had lived in the town for over ten years provided 71 percent of the active citizens as compared with 65 percent of the adults, the committee duties were shared proportionately among the adults on the basis of length of residence. It is only logical that new citizens will be in the town for some time before taking a place on a committee.

Activity on the basis of age groups also followed an expected pattern. Since the young, because of family raising and inexperience, and the elderly, because of decreased agility, would not be expected to take a very active part, the 40-50 years age group is expectedly dominant. Among the non-household heads, it was the elder ones that were most active.

Relating committee activity with occupation shows that the 'professional' and 'managerial-proprietors' groups are the most active in relation to their numbers. (Table XXVI) Perhaps the most noticeable figures are those concerning flax industry employees. This group, who

Table XXVI

Committee activity by occupation  
(percentage of total)

	Flax Ind.	Other Ind.	Prof.	Retail	Manag. Prop.	Trans. Comm.	Cleric Domes.	Trades	Agric. Poult. Horses	Other	Out of Foxton	Not empl. <sup>a</sup>
All heads	24	4	6	3	6	3	2	5	4	1	11	31
Heads on at least one committee	26	2	14	3	11	2	4	7	4	2	7	19
Wives on at least one committee	26	6	15	3	12	2	1	6	3	1	15	12
Heads in 'major' activity	17	3	28	3	19	-	1	1	1	3	4	19
Wives in 'major' activity	23	3	23	6	17	-	-	7	-	3	7	14
All other independents	22	9	3	13	-	-	7	13	8	-	22	3
Other independents on at least one committee	22	-	9	15	-	-	12	12	12	-	18	-

a These included retired persons, other pension holders and unemployed persons.

tend to be dominantly in the lower economic levels of the community, are active to such an extent that they can be said to do at least their share of the committee work in the town, and would appear to be not as big a burden on the town's recreational facilities as some are wont to suggest.

The least active groups are those who are retired and those working outside Foxton. The first of these groups is, by its very nature, unlikely to be able to participate in active committee work, while the latter is probably hampered by lack of time. This lack of identity with the town as far as helping in providing adequate recreations, could become a problem if, as suggested above, Foxton continues to develop as a dormitory town. Will the situation arise where those working in Foxton will have to provide increasing recreational facilities for increasing numbers of commuters? This seems a likelihood if the town's dormitory function grows.

The 'professional' and 'managerial-proprietors' are even more dominant in the category of 'major' activity than in committee activity as a whole. In this group, their twelve percent of the population provides almost half of the number. This supports the contention that the same few are enabling many of the recreations to operate effectively. This predominance is to be expected to some extent, for these two groups contain a higher proportion of the more able in both initiative and education.

Foxton provides for its citizens the great majority of their recreational needs and most are fully satisfied with what is available. The provision of the recreations is not evenly shared among the groups which make up the community, although the lack of activity among the elderly is to be expected. Despite this lack of activity, the dominant recreational facility in the town is the Sunshine Club which is run entirely by the town's oldest citizens for their own enjoyment. The

club, which has a membership in the vicinity of 140 and an average weekly attendance of 80, provides for its members an afternoon of social contact and recreation once a week.

There are, of course, facilities such as night life, which are not provided in Foxton, but most residents accept this as part and parcel of living in a small town. Satisfaction is not universal but it is dominant. The town does no doubt lose citizens because of boredom, but their protestations do not reflect the true sentiment of the majority of the town's residents.

## 8. EDUCATION

The provision of adequate educational facilities is vital if a town is not to lose families as their members grow older. Today the educational facilities of Foxton consist of a Play Centre, a Child Care Centre, two State and one Church Primary school, and a College. The first two have been in existence for at least fourteen years, and at present provide pre-school education for 68 children. Primary school facilities have existed almost since the founding of the town and the local Roman Catholic parish built its first educational facilities in 1911. In 1967 a second State Primary School was opened and at present there are approximately 715 children attending the three Primary schools.

Until 1961, Secondary education in the town was provided by the Secondary Department of the Foxton District High School. Prior to its establishment in 1926, any children who wished to have a secondary education had to travel to Palmerston North by train or attend a boarding school. The new secondary department provided a rather limited range of subjects up to the Fifth Form level, and occasionally up to the Sixth Form. In 1960, the last year of its existence, this department had a roll of 187 but with the establishment of the Manawatu College and the addition of first, pupils from Croua Downs, and then Shannon, the roll had grown to 334 in 1964 and to 463 in 1968.

Prior to the establishment of Manawatu College, the educational facilities were generally regarded as barely satisfactory for the attainment of School Certificate. Parents often sent their children by bus to Palmerston North so that they might study subjects that were not available at the District High School, e.g. languages or engineering. Other parents sent their children to boarding schools, particularly in Wanganui. Some of these children spent the early part of their

secondary education at the local Secondary department while others went direct to boarding schools from Form II. When the College was established, some of those attending outside Colleges returned to make use of the new facilities. Today there are six children from five households attending school outside the town, but all of these went direct from primary school to boarding establishments.

Those interviewed were asked if they considered the educational facilities available in Foxton were adequate, both now and in the past. Ninetyfour percent of those concerned were satisfied with the present ones whereas only 77 percent felt that those offered before the establishment of the College were adequate. Dissatisfaction with the present facilities was most prevalent among those who held managerial positions or were business proprietors. They provided 22 percent of those dissatisfied, although they made up only six percent of those interviewed.

Use, rather than provision, is the measure that should be used in considering the adequacy of the town's educational facilities. Of the 348 families that could have made use of the pre-school facilities, only 167, or 47 percent, had done so. Analysis of this group showed that they represented a cross section of the community although the professional families made more use of these facilities than others. Length of residence was likewise not significant among those who made use of these facilities. Parents who have sent some, or all, of their children to Play Centre or the Child Care Centre, have been more active in community affairs than those who have not. (Table XVII)

These figures make it clear that those people who are concerned with the provision of pre-school education for their children also have the well being of the community more at heart than those who

do not. This negates the often levelled charge that those who send their children to pre-school establishments do so "merely to get rid of their kids so that they can take a job and are interested in nothing else".

Table XXVII

Committee activity of those utilising pre-school facilities

	Percentage on at least one committee	
	Husband	Wife
Play Centre parents	61	58
Day Care Centre parents	50	38
Non pre-school users	39	21

Primary school education is, of course, compulsory and dissatisfaction with this is only on the most subjective levels. Some parents have, however, felt that the environment of the Intermediate school may be to their child's benefit and so some have occasionally sent children to that type of school in Palmerston North.

The dissatisfaction with educational facilities which was expressed was based on two major complaints. One was the highly subjective claim that the standard of education provided was inferior and the other that the range of subjects provided was not comprehensive enough although most admitted this was a result of the size of the town. Despite these objections, there can be little doubt that the establishment of a College in the town has improved not only what education is available, but also the extent to which it is being used. This can be best demonstrated by comparing the levels which Foxton children have achieved in their

education before and after the College's establishment.

From the beginning of its existence, the District High School did, at intermittent times, provide tuition to the Sixth Form. However, between 1948 and 1960, there were only four years when this occurred. In these four classes, there were enrolled a total of seven pupils from the district then served by the District High School. (This included Foxton Beach, Moutoa and Motuiti.) Only three of these Sixth Formers went on to higher education, one to Palmerston North Boys' High School's Upper Sixth, one to Teachers' College, and one to University.

When Manawatu College was established in 1961, the sixth form numbered seven and in the following year eight. Of these fifteen, thirteen were from the Foxton area and seven of them went on to Teachers' College and one to University. Since then, the sixth form has grown until in 1967, it numbered 29 (including seven in the upper sixth), and in 1968, 42 (including eight in the upper sixth). In 1967, of the 15 from the Foxton district, one left for Teachers' College and five for University.

The growth in the size of the school has not been because of Foxton's growth alone. In 1961, a few children began to attend from Croua Downs and from 1963, an increasing number were brought by bus from Shannon. (Table XVIII) The percentage of children attending the College who come from Foxton has stayed between 50 and 60 percent since the full number of children from Shannon have attended. The proportion of Foxton children in the sixth form has shown a decline during the same period. In the case of School Certificate, the proportion of Foxton children has begun to settle at a figure near or above their proportion of the school roll. Since 1957, there has been a 230 percent increase in the number of Foxton children presenting themselves for School

Table XXVIII

Increase in College and Sixth Form  
rolls and those sitting School  
Certificate

	1960	1961	1963	1965	1967	1968
Total roll	163	187	303	402	418	463
Percentage from Foxton	100	90	65	-	53	58
Sixth Form Roll	-	7	23	30	29	42
Percentage of Sixth Form from Foxton	-	57	65	60	52	48
Number sitting School Certificate	13	24	41	67	92	98
Percentage of School Certificate candidates from Foxton	100	88	78	54	59	59

Certificate but the number of pupils at the school who are from Foxton has increased by only 64 percent.

These figures do not account for the children who were attending school outside Foxton during the time of the District High School. Between 1955 and 1960, twentytwo pupils left the Secondary Department to attend school outside Foxton. Fourteen went to schools in Palmerston North while most of the others (five), went to Wanganui schools. In addition, several children went directly to Secondary Schools outside the town when they left Primary School. Therefore, the difference between the roll increase and the increase in School Certificate candidates is not quite as wide as the above figures suggest, but it is still significant.

The role of the College in retaining these children in the town has not only social advantages but also economic ones. Attendance at a school outside the town will, of necessity, result in money being spent in the centre where the school is situated. In addition, the attendance of Shannon and Oroua Downs children at the College will have a similar effect but in this case it is to the benefit of Foxton.

The education that is provided at the College is, in part, designed to prepare children for their future occupations. The major point to consider here is the extent to which the children leaving school are able to find employment in the town. Since the major source of employment, the flax industry, does not generally require highly educated youngsters, it would seem probable that this would decline as an attraction as a place of employment for school leavers, as they obtain higher standards of education. Except in 1967 when numbers were affected by the economic situation which made job opportunities scarce in many fields, this trend appears to have been established. (Table XXIX)

Table XXIX

Destinations of school leavers  
(percentage of all leavers)

	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
Flax industry	25	20	16	30	11	17	10	24
Teachers' College or University	-	4	11	12	11	-	22	10
Outside Foxton	28	22	16	16	40	27	33	22

Apart from 1965, when a large number of Foxton children returned to the sixth form, and 1967, when jobs were not so easy to obtain, there was a trend towards obtaining occupations outside Foxton. Sixty percent of the children attending College in 1967 felt that they would probably be unable to obtain the employment they wanted in Foxton. Since only four of the 154 interviewed stated the flax industry as their probable place of employment, it is likely that the number that do actually go outside the town will be somewhat lower than 60 percent. The figures above suggest that something like 20 percent will find their school leaving jobs in the flax industry and only a slightly higher proportion will leave the town. (Table XXIX)

These figures show that as far as the young are concerned, the flax industry is not a positive attraction of Foxton as a place of employment. A job in the flax industry would appear to be, in many cases, a matter of necessity rather than of choice. In the last twelve months, the employment opportunities in the flax industry have been somewhat curtailed and this may result in a change of attitude among those with inferior qualifications who are seeking employment.

Education is a definite attraction to settlement even if it only retains those who might otherwise leave the town if the present

facilities did not exist. With established pre-school services, (and moves afoot to extend these), and a college that is rapidly developing, the town possesses all the educational facilities that a young family requires. Not only is the College active in retaining the families who would otherwise seek education for their children outside the town, but it is also helping in establishing Foxton as the shopping centre for a larger proportion of the nearby rural population. It may, however, in producing children with higher educational qualifications, cause many to seek positions in their chosen vocations outside the town.

## 9. DOES THE TOWN SUCCEED?

It would appear that Foxton is regarded by most of its citizens as a 'good' place to live. The principal factors giving rise to this satisfaction are: 1. It is their home or they have close personal ties with some residents. 2. The town satisfies their social and recreational needs, at least as far as one could expect in a 'small town'. 3. It is located within easy reach of large shopping centres. 4. Educational facilities are adequate up to the Sixth Form. 5. The climate is a mild and pleasant one.

The flax industry dominates the town's employment structure but a significant number of people travel outside the town to their place of work. This travelling is a reflection of the advantages the town derives from its location near to Palmerston North and Levin. Another advantage of this location, as far as the average resident is concerned, is that a wider variety of shopping opportunities are easily utilised. Although this conflicts with the development of a comprehensive commercial sector in Foxton itself, it should be noted that the majority of those going outside the town for shopping, do so infrequently, and generally only after doing the majority of their purchasing in the town.

Recreational facilities are comprehensive although there is a tendency for those holding the more responsible occupational positions to be carrying much of the burden of committee work. The fact that those employed in the flax industry are active in proportion to their numbers indicates that this often criticised sector of the community is not a completely negative one in community life. The popular Sunshine Club does much to improve the standing of Foxton as a place of retirement.

The most significant attitude to come from this study is the attitude of the residents of Foxton to the flax industry. A sizeable

portion of the town does not view it as a suitable place for employment for their children and the majority of people who have worked there were not attracted to it, but to the unskilled it was a place to work if they lived in Foxton. Very few secondary school pupils wanted to take jobs there but it is probable that at least twenty percent will.

Like most small towns, Foxton is finding difficulty in retaining its more capable youngsters, although those remaining in the town are generally satisfied with what it provides. The type of occupations available is an important factor in explaining this situation for those available tend to attract people of lower educational attainment.

The town's retention of population would appear to be, to a large extent, due to inertia. Whether this inertia is a reflection of the lack of ambition among those attracted to factory employment or the result of satisfaction among all sectors of the community, is answered in part by the answers given to the question, "For what reason would you shift from Foxton?" Fiftyseven percent of the flax industry workers could not give any reason, while 51 percent of other workers were similarly reticent. Complacency or satisfaction, inertia is the major force building and retaining the population of Foxton.

Foxton is a manufacturing town based on an industry that has little positive attractive power and is now able to obtain all its unskilled labour needs from the local force. The town is centrally situated, has an attractive climate, and has had in the recent past a plentiful supply of housing, particularly that built by the State. Apart from the flax industry, the major single focus of employment is clothing manufacturing, although this employs predominantly female labour.

Despite the changes that have occurred in the products of the Woolpack and Textiles factory, Foxton and flax are still synonymous.

Foxton has grown, in recent years, at a rate which, although it is below that of New Zealand as a whole, is near the median of the small towns included in the survey made above. Its role as a market and communication centre are gone, but today its future is intimately linked with its location, as it was at its very beginnings.

A role as a dormitory town for its larger neighbours and the home of increasing numbers of retired people would appear to be the most probable basis of Foxton's future growth. There would, however, seem little likelihood of faster growth than the 1.46 percent per annum experienced in the 1961-66 period.

Although not typical of New Zealand 'small towns' in its employment structure and functions, present day Foxton shows few signs of restricted development resulting directly from its dependence on a single industry for the last thirty years. The low levels of income and the restricted range of employment opportunities are two minor problems that would be overcome to some extent by expansion in the industrial sector. For the majority of its residents, Foxton does succeed as a place of residence and any development that would cause a rapid growth in the size of the town would certainly cause many to reconsider the town as a place to live in, although inertia would, in many cases, outweigh other factors in the final decision.

## Appendix A

Questionnaire presented to all Household Heads  
(or representative)

1. What is your age?
2. What is your sex and marital status?
3. What race do you belong to and what is the place and country of your birth?
4. How many of your family, including your wife, live here?
5. How many dependents in this household are not members of your family? What is their relationship?
6. How many of your children at home are independent?
7. What are their occupations?
8. How many independents in the household are not members of your family? What is their relationship?
9. What are their occupations?
10. Have you any dependent family members living away from home?
11. Where are they living?
12. Where are your independent sons, if any, living?
13. Are they married?
14. What are their occupations?
15. Can you give a reason for their leaving Foxton?
- - - - -
16. Do you rent this house? Do you know its age?
17. When did you buy it or have it built?
18. Is this a state, Maori Affairs, or factory house?
19. Is this state/Maori Affairs house bought/rented from the Government/privately?
20. Have you ever lived in a State house as a household head in Foxton?
21. Have you a washing machine, refrigerator, T.V. set?
- - - - -
22. Have you lived in Foxton all your life?

23. Why did you come to live in Foxton?
24. Have you lived in Foxton, left, then returned? How long were you away?
25. How long have you lived in Foxton (since returning)?
26. Why did you leave Foxton?
27. Why did you return?

- - - - -

28. Are you employed full time? If not, what employment have you?
29. Have you any secondary employment? (What?)
30. Are you employed in Foxton? If not, where?
31. How do you travel to work?
32. Why are you working outside Foxton?
33. How long have you worked outside Foxton?
34. Would you work in Foxton if a suitable job were available?
35. Have you ever worked in Foxton? At what?

- - - - -

36. If employed in Foxton, what is your job?
37. Do you, or have you ever worked in the flax industry? What section? Why did you start work there and why did you leave?
38. If a returner, did you work in the flax industry during your earlier residence?
39. Did you return to a job in the flax industry? Why, then?
40. What work did you do while away?
41. Have you ever travelled from Foxton daily for work? If so, where to? What job and for how long?
42. If you were to go to another job in Foxton, what would be your main reason for changing?
43. Would you shift only to a similar job to your present one?

- - - - -

44. What sort of town would you prefer to shift to if going from Foxton?
45. For what reasons would you shift from Foxton?

46. Does your wife work full or part time? For how long has she?
47. What is her occupation?
48. Has your wife ever worked in Foxton since marriage? At what?
49. Would your wife like a part time job (or full time)? Would she take one in the flax industry? What section?
50. Does the chance for your wife to get a job in the flax industry keep you in Foxton?

- - - - -

51. Does the chance of your family getting a job in the flax industry keep you in Foxton?
52. Would you object to your son or daughter taking a job in the flax industry? Any particular section?
53. What type of job do your secondary children seek?
54. Would they expect to find this in Foxton?
55. Would your children stay at home or board if their employment on leaving school was not in Foxton but nearby?

- - - - -

56. Do you do all your shopping in Foxton? How often do you shop in Palmerston North? In Levin?
57. Do you shop in Palmerston North and/or Levin, for cheaper prices, better variety or an outing?
58. Do you regularly go outside Foxton for banking, dentist, lawyer, or accountant?
59. Why do you go outside?

- - - - -

60. If you left school in Foxton, did you do so as early as possible, and did you leave to work in the flax industry?
61. If you attended school in Foxton, did you leave the town for any level of education? What type?
62. Does Foxton provide adequate educational facilities for your family up to the sixth form? Has it always done so?
63. Have any of your children left Foxton for any level of education?
64. What level did they leave for and how long did they attend?
65. Did or do any of your children attend play centre or kindergarten?

- - - - -

66. Does Foxton provide all your recreational needs? What is not provided?
67. Do you go outside Foxton for any recreations? Where to and what?
68. Why do you go outside Foxton?
69. What cultural, sporting, etc. organisations do you belong to in Foxton?
70. Are you, or have you and your wife, held any office in a local organisation or been on any committee(s)?

- - - - -

#### RETIRED PERSONS

71. What is your marital status?
72. What type of accommodation have you and are you satisfied with it? If not, what would you prefer?
73. When you retired, were you - Resident in Foxton? Living elsewhere after having lived in Foxton previously? Had never lived in Foxton?
74. What was your occupation at retirement?
75. Had you ever worked in the flax industry? What section?
76. Why did you retire to Foxton?

- - - - -

## Bibliography

- Boniface, H.G. 1947 Foxton - its site and changing function. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Univ. of N.Z.
- Carr, Margaret A. 1966 Market Town in transition. A study of industrial growth in Levin. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Vic. Univ. of Wellington.
- Congalton, A.A. ed. 1954 Hawera - a social survey; a report of a community venture.
- Department of Statistics 1967 1966 Census of population and dwellings.
- Hely, A.S.M. 1947 Some Effects of Changes in Transportation upon the Economic Development of the Manawatu 1816-1946. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Univ. of N.Z.
- Oliver, R.G. 1963 The impacts of Communications on the Kairanga-Manawatu 1874-1916. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Vic. Univ. of Wellington.
- Page, Alexia. 1928 Manawatu: from the earliest times to 1900. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Univ. of N.Z.
- Pownall, L.L. 1955 The Contemporary New Zealand Town - a study in Urban Geography. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertaion. Univ. of N.Z.
- Vandenberg, D.M.,  
McCreary, J., and  
Chapman, M. 1965 A Social Survey of Hamilton.
- Saunders, B.G.R. and  
Anderson, A.G. 1964 Introducing Manawatu.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my thanks to the people of Foxton for their ready co-operation during the survey which this thesis is based upon, to Mr E.M. Irving, Principal of Manawatu College, for making available the College records, and to Mr W.E. Hale and the executive officers of New Zealand Woolpack and Textiles Limited, for their assistance.

I would also like to acknowledge the help given by members of the Geography Department at Massey University, and in particular, Mr B.G.R. Saunders, my supervisor.

To Mrs V. Philpott goes my appreciation and thanks for the work she has done in typing this thesis.

For her support and understanding throughout the preparation of this thesis, my deepest thanks are extended to my wife.

Photographic prints in this thesis were prepared by the Central Photographic Unit at Massey University.