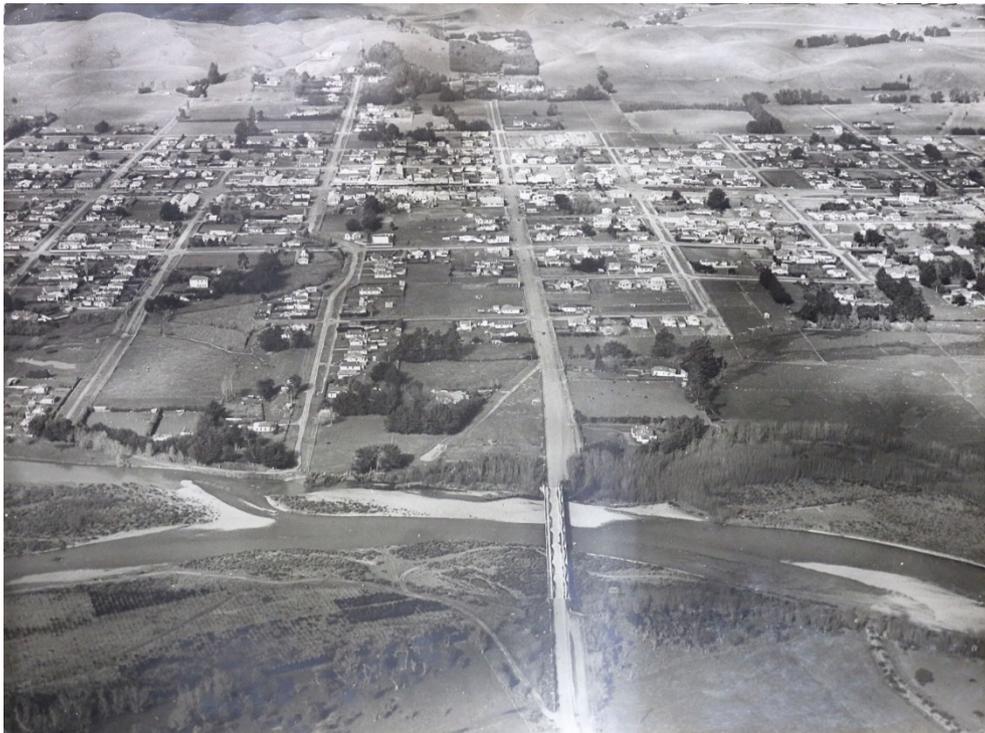


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'We must contribute'
The Pahiatua Region and the Second World War
1939 – 45



The town of Pahiatua, late 1930s

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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Stewart Holdaway
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Abstract

When war broke out in September 1939 approximately 500 men and women from the Pahiatua region enlisted in the armed forces of New Zealand, the British Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. But what was life like at home while these men and women served? This thesis examines the role the Second World War played on a 'typical' example of rural New Zealand, the Pahiatua region. It focuses on three key issues for the region during this time, the impact of the war, how business was affected, and the role played by local and national government in the region.

New Zealand during the Second World War has been a source of previous research. However, the majority of this research has concentrated on either a national perspective or a specific theme. Very little has been written on regional history during this time. This thesis attempts to address this by looking at a region that has barely been referred to in the secondary sources.

This thesis sheds new light on the Pahiatua region during the Second World War. Far from being a silent observer the region played an active role in supporting the war effort both socially and financially. There was very much a feeling in the region of 'we must contribute'.

Acknowledgements

I am firstly indebted to my supervisors, Dr Glyn Harper and Dr John Griffiths. There were many twists and turns throughout the process of writing this thesis and without their continuous support I doubt I would have finished this journey. I would like to acknowledge the financial and time support given to me by my employer, IPU New Zealand, in completing this thesis. I also wish to thank all the archivists and library staff that I troubled for resources. My thanks to my family for being a continuous fountain of support, despite me being at times a very absentee member. Finally, my thanks to the region of Pahiatua, for giving me an interesting subject to write about, and from where my interest in the Second World War originates.

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Introduction

The Pahiatua Region and the Second World War

When I mentioned to a number of people that I was thinking of completing my Masters, the overall response was positive. I was almost always told that the hardest part about writing a thesis is choosing the topic. This is something I certainly struggled with at the beginning. I knew that I wanted to research and write about something I was interested in and hopefully it would have something to do with the area I grew up in. I was born and raised in the dairy-farming district of Ballance, named after the former New Zealand Prime Minister John Ballance¹. Being from Ballance, and a former dairy-farmer, I seriously considered writing about some aspect of farming history. But as I went through the process my thoughts and interests changed until one topic became clear. A topic that on reflection now seems quite obvious and had been staring me straight in the face through most of my life. Ballance is in the Pahiatua Region and the topic I was to eventually decide on was something that I had seen the memorials to nearly every day while travelling to Pahiatua for high school and work.

It sometimes seems that every small town in New Zealand must have its own iconic memorial. Ohakune has the giant carrot, Paeroa

¹ John Ballance, Prime Minister of New Zealand (1891-1893), Leader of the Opposition (1889-1891)

the giant L&P bottle, and even Eketahuna has a giant kiwi. Pahiatua, of course, has one of its own. Anyone who drives into the township of Pahiatua from the north can't help but notice the replica Harvard Air Trainer from the Second World War.² In fact, anyone driving into Pahiatua can't help but notice the memorials to the Second World War that are scattered throughout the town. If you come from the south, you will notice a strange white statue shaped like a crab claw. This is the Polish Memorial.



The Polish Memorial

Inscribed at the base of the Polish Memorial is the following inscription:

² The original Harvard airplane was put up in late 1963. It was replaced with a fibreglass model in December 2015 and the playground was renamed the Harvard Adventure Playground.

THIS MEMORIAL

On the site of the former Polish children's camp

Was erected by the Polish Community

In appreciation of the shelter given

By the people of New Zealand

To 734 Polish children in 1944

In World War 2 they survived

Deportation to Siberia

And after a temporary stay in Iran

Found in this country

Home, friends and security

22 February 1975³

From the north, as mentioned previously, the first thing your eye is drawn to is the iconic replica Harvard Air Trainer in the Pahiatua playground, which now sees usage as a quite scary slide. From the west you drive towards the Pahiatua War Memorial Park with its two cenotaphs to the war dead of the Pahiatua region. Despite this obvious history and reverence to its role, in particular, to the Second World War, it is a region that has to some degree forgotten the important role and contribution it played in the history of the Second World War in New Zealand. When I started my research for this thesis, I was told in no uncertain terms by a resident of the community that

³ Inscribed at the base of the memorial.

“nothing happened in Pahiatua during the war.” However, as I hope my thesis proves nothing could be further from the truth.



The Harvard Air Trainer

This thesis will attempt to answer three key questions. They are: what was the impact of the war on the people of the region? How were the industries of the region affected by the war? And what role did local and national government play in the region?

Pahiatua actually proves to be an interesting region in which to examine how the Second World War affected small, rural communities in New Zealand. For example, here is a small selection of the numerous events that happened in Pahiatua during the war years. A Polish Children’s Camp was established in Pahiatua in 1944. Local man Sergeant Keith Elliott was awarded the Victoria Cross, one of only

eight New Zealanders to do so in the Second World War.⁴ An internment camp for the accommodation of enemy soldiers/aliens was established in Pahiatua for a short time. There were large-scale natural disasters and numerous political figures made visits to the region.⁵ Not many areas in New Zealand can claim even this small amount of history during the war years. These factors combined with the effect the Second World War had on the industries of Pahiatua, (farming, brewery and transport) and the social impacts felt by the people in the community make for a very interesting case study.

This thesis is suitable for a variety of reasons. While there has been a significant amount of research on the impact of the Second World War on New Zealand in general, most notably Nancy Taylor's two volume *The Home Front (1986)*, little has been written on the impact of the Second World War in specific regions of New Zealand.⁶ There is a great deal of information about the Polish Children's camp that was set up in Pahiatua and many books have been written by historians and the children who stayed there, but most are from the Polish perspective. In fact, very little has been written about the experience of the people in the Pahiatua region towards the war.

⁴ He would later return to Pahiatua to a hero's welcome. A book about the first fifty years of his life was later published in 1967. Elliott, K & Adshead, R. *From Cowshed to Dogcollar (1967)*. Wellington, New Zealand: A.H. & A.W.Reed, 1967.

⁵ The Prime Minister of New Zealand, Peter Fraser, and the Governor-General, Lord Galway, being two such visitors.

⁶ Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Volumes One and Two)*, Wellington: Historical Publications Branch New Zealand, 1986.

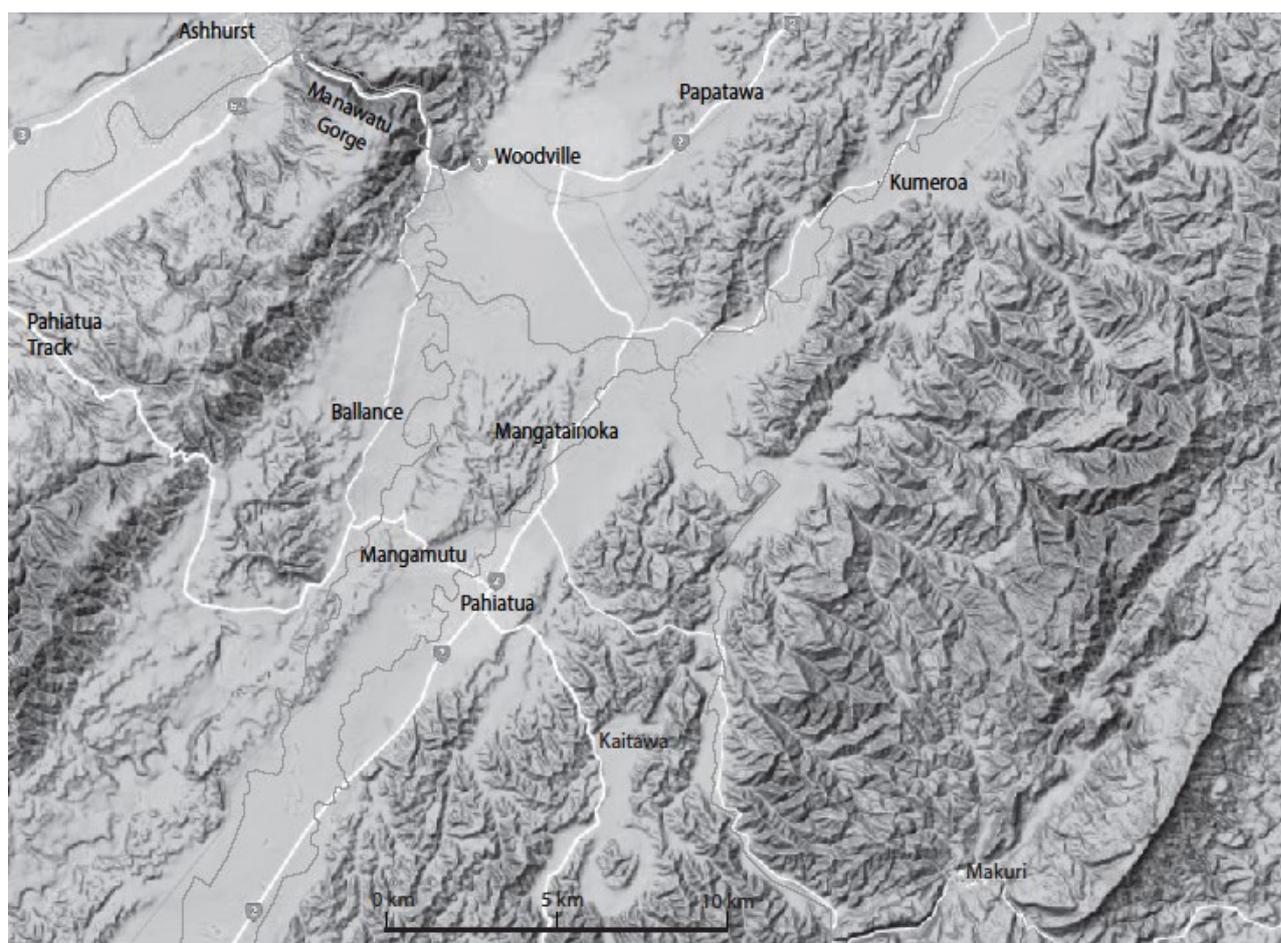
Despite having a rich history, very little has been written on the history of Pahiatua recently.⁷ Angus McCullum's history of the Pahiatua County, *Tui Country: A History of the Pahiatua County* was published in 1988. This excellent book covers 100 years of the history of the Pahiatua County from 1888 to 1988. However, his chapter on the Pahiatua County during the Second World War titled '*Into War and Beyond*', is only ten pages long and the second shortest in the book.⁸ The only other noteworthy book on the history of Pahiatua, Bryon Bentley's *Pahiatua (A Pictorial History 1881-1981)* was published in 1980 and again has only limited information about Pahiatua during the Second World War.

Regional history, while becoming more popular, has to some degree been overlooked in New Zealand. New Zealand historians have been taking a more 'regional' approach but internationally it has become an extremely legitimate research area, best emphasised by the *International Journal of Regional and Local History* published since 2013. This is especially true of regional history during the Second World War. So the question has to be asked as to why this thesis is titled "The Pahiatua Region and the Second World War" and not the Pahiatua County or Pahiatua District during the Second World War. While the majority of the thesis will concentrate on the Pahiatua

⁷ Apart from the numerous books on the Pahiatua Children's Camp. In particular, I highly recommend Manterys, A, (ed.). *New Zealand's First Refugees: Pahiatua's Polish Children (2004)*, Wellington, New Zealand: Polish Children's Reunion Committee, 2004. which gives over 100 personal, and in some cases, quite moving stories from these Polish refugees.

⁸ In total *Tui Country* has 384 pages. Pages 197 to 206 refer to WWII.

County during the Second World War, the social, cultural and economic factors that affected the Pahiatua County in the Second World War also affected the counties next to it and were often not mutually exclusive. Geographically, the Pahiatua County may have stretched from the Tararua mountain range in the west to the Puketoi mountain range in the east. However, there are no natural boundaries to the north and south and these were purely lines drawn on a map. The result is that many people who live in these ‘borderland’ areas often had contacts and connections that went beyond county lines, and often considered themselves part of a larger Pahiatua region. In



The Pahiatua Region

the late 1930s the Pahiatua County council even tried to extend its boundaries to incorporate part of Eketahuna County because, as the Pahiatua County Clerk wrote ‘the petitioners desiring to be included in this County used the town of Pahiatua for banking, shopping and as a stock centre...’⁹

So what is the Pahiatua region? Is it strictly geographical, vaguely cultural or by a broad political regional demarcation? For the purpose of this thesis the Pahiatua region is based on the geography of the Pahiatua County but with some overlap with the counties on the borders, especially to the north and south. As W.J. Gardner states ‘Regional history is about communities and the areas with which they identify themselves.’¹⁰ Many of the residents during the war that lived north or south of the Pahiatua County borders considered the township of Pahiatua to be their main service town and themselves to be part of a broader Pahiatua region.

What was the Pahiatua region like in 1939? Predominately a dairy and sheep farming community it was a region with a population of 4,640, of whom nearly 3,000 lived within the ‘administrative county’.¹¹ It was a region that was politically aware and socially conscious. For example, a meeting on the Social Security Act in Pahiatua on 27 of June 1939, had seen over 250 women, or approximately 5% of the

⁹ [Letter to The County Clerk – Uawa County Council]. (n.d.). Pahiatua County Council, Administration – General, TDC 00034:1:1.

¹⁰ W.J Gardner, ‘New Zealand Regional History and its Place in the Schools’, in *New Zealand Journal of History*, 13:2 (1979), p. 183.

¹¹ *New Zealand Official Year Book 1940*, p. 78-79.

population, meet to discuss its merits.¹² When war broke out in September 1939 'the response of the Pahiatua district was immediate and over the period of the war 1939-45 some 492 local men and woman enlisted in the Armed Forces of New Zealand, and in some cases in the British Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.'¹³ Victoria Cross recipient Keith Elliott's response of 'I must go. That was the only thought in my mind' was a common reaction amongst the men of the region.¹⁴

This thesis consists of five chapters that span the time period from 1939 to 1945. As regards the research material for the history of this region during the Second World War, a wide variety of primary and secondary material was consulted. A key primary resource throughout the thesis will be the newspapers of the era, and in particular the *Pahiatua Herald* (1893–1943) and the *North Wairarapa Herald* (1943–1954).¹⁵ These newspapers were invaluable in depicting the life of the region during this time. Books, articles, and theses about the era will be consulted. Parliamentary records and material at the National Archives will also be important resources. In addition, the Pahiatua County and Pahiatua Borough records, not only will give an idea of the workings of local government, but also give some illustration of life at

¹² *Evening Post*, 28 June 1939, p. 10.

¹³ Bentley, B.J. *Pahiatua. A Pictorial History 1881-1981*. Pahiatua: Carthew's Bookshop Ltd, 1980, p. 72.

¹⁴ Elliott, K. & Adshead, R. *From Cowshed to Dogcollar*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1967, p. 32.

¹⁵ Despite having a population of approximately 4 600 the Pahiatua region published a daily 'national' newspaper during the Second World War. It would later become three times a week in 1942.

the time. These materials are complemented with the printed personal recollections of Pahiatua residents at the time.

Chapter one will focus on Pahiatua in 1939 and during the first year of the war. The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of what Pahiatua was like in 1939, how well prepared it was to handle the outbreak of the Second World War, what its initial reaction was and how enthusiastic the region was towards the war. Chapter two will focus on the reaction and response of the Pahiatua region and its people to the war. Was there majority support for the war effort and if so, what did they do to help the war effort? Did the people of Pahiatua enlist and why or why not? The focus of chapter three is on the social impact of the war for the Pahiatua region. What was regular, everyday life like for the people of the Pahiatua region during the war years? How were gender roles affected by the Second World War? Chapter four will look at the impact the war had on the industries of the Pahiatua region. In addition, how was employment affected during this period? The final chapter will concentrate on local and national governance of the Pahiatua region during the Second World War. How did this governance effect the people of the Pahiatua region? What were the benefits and the drawbacks that the Pahiatua region faced due to this governance? Of particular interest is the impact of the Polish Children's Camp to the region.

This research is valuable. It will give an idea of the consequences of the Second World War on a small rural region. This has been a subject

that has been largely absent from the New Zealand historiography. The experiences and attitudes rural regions had towards the Second World War often shaped their future identity. These regions have a story to tell and this thesis will endeavour to tell one of them.

Chapter One

The Centennial Year

‘At the moment of writing, it seems that there is a good chance of war being averted wrote the editor of the *Pahiatua Herald* in late August 1939.¹ However, when war did break out in Europe in September 1939, there was an attitude of ‘It Can’t Happen Here.’² Or perhaps more correctly, it will not have any effect on us. As the Mayor of Pahiatua, Mr. S.K. Siddells said ‘...Pahiatua is particularly well situated geographically and I just want to advance the opinion that this district is in no danger whatsoever...’³ Siddells was the Mayor of the Pahiatua Borough from 1938 – 1942. He was considered the guiding spirit in many local movements during this period.

It was a war that seemed far away and initially, there was uncertainty about how it would affect the Pahiatua region. However, support in the Pahiatua region, like many other areas of New Zealand, for the war was positive, and was perhaps best summed up by the following comment of the Pahiatua County Council, ‘That this council offers the fullest co-operation and assistance to the Government in its efforts at the time of the war crises, which has been forced on the British Empire.’⁴

¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 28 August 1939, p. 4.

² *Ibid*, 26 August 1939, p. 4.

³ *Ibid*, 5 September 1939, p.4.

⁴ *Pahiatua County Council Archives* 4/1/1 Vol.11, 11 October 1939, p. 1031.

In fact, it should not have come as much of a surprise to the people of the Pahiatua region when war did break out. For a number of years, the editor of the *Pahiatua Herald* had been alluding to the problems Germany was creating in Europe and had warned of the 'new anxiety' of Japan.⁵

The refugee problem caused by the conflicts in Europe was also something that the Pahiatua region was well aware of, and while unknown at the time, was later to have a huge impact on the Pahiatua regions war effort. The Pahiatua County Council had been asked to fund a relief effort for Spanish Refugee Children in July 1938. In October 1938 an editorial in the *Pahiatua Herald* titled 'Wanderers on the face of the Earth', had warned that 'With the increase of intolerance and persecution in the Dictatorships of Europe, the refugee problem becomes daily more acute.'⁶

So what was the Pahiatua region like when war broke out? By the beginning of 1939 the region had slowly climbed out of the depression years of the early 1930s and there was a feeling that things seemed to be improving, especially economically. One example of this was that the Pahiatua County Council was undertaking a massive bridging programme. 'In the Pahiatua County there are probably more bridges...per kilometre of road than in any other county in New Zealand.'⁷ However, the council was having some difficulties with this

⁵ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 19 October 1938, p. 4.

⁶ *Ibid*, 21 October 1938, p. 4.

⁷ McCallum, A. *Tui County: A History Of Pahiatua County*, Pahiatua: The Pahiatua County Council, 1988, p. 197.



Main Street, Pahiatua, 1930s

Photo courtesy of 'Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries'

bridging programme. Loans had to be raised from a variety of sources, telephone and power poles often had to be moved to accommodate the new bridges, and even small areas of land had to be purchased. When war broke out, this financing became more difficult. The result was that some bridge projects were eventually replaced with culverts to save costs.

Pahiatua was seen as being an important and emerging region in the late 1930s. It was considered a needed stop of the tour of Lord Nuffield in March 1939.⁸ Lord Nuffield was the founder of Morris Motors Limited, the Nuffield Foundation, the Nuffield Trust, and Nuffield College, Oxford. It was a growing region that had just seen a record year of building activity in the township of Pahiatua.⁹ The inspector for the Bank of New South Wales had reported that ‘considerable activity continues in erection of new residences’ and that ‘a certain amount of movement is noticeable in residential properties.’¹⁰ Despite this increase in building activity there was still a housing shortage in Pahiatua, with it being reported that for every house becoming available ‘agents are receiving as many as seven or eight applications for each one vacant.’¹¹ The reason given for this shortage was a steady increase in population combined with a

⁸ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 8 March 1939, p. 6.

⁹ Over 30 permits were granted in the year to March 1939 with a total value of £15 909. Over £3 000 more than the year before. In 1935, 43 permits had been granted, largely due to the 1934 earthquake, but only to a value of £14 328.

¹⁰ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors’ reports, April 1939, MSDL-1406.

¹¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 4 May 1939, p. 4.

previous lag in building activity. By July 1940, there were only 423 houses in the Borough compared to a population of 1,800; approximately one house for every four people.¹²

When war did break out, it at first seemed to have little impact on the day-to-day life of the people of the Pahiatua region. Beyond a slight initial panic there was certainly a feeling of 'business as usual' after a few weeks. In fact, there was a general lack of concern in the Pahiatua region at the outbreak of the Second World War. This is best summed up by a tongue-in-check article published in *The Pahiatua Herald* on 26 September 1939.

Actually there was not enough traffic...something to do with the petrol restrictions we supposed – but this was the only visible sign of the war. No evidence of any tenseness, no worried faces or anxious groups gathered at street corners discussing the latest wireless news. Newspaper placards with heavy black headlines seemed very depressed about not attracting any attention.¹³

The Alcohol Question

Nancy Taylor mentions in *The Home Front* what soldiers did on their leave activity was an area of 'lively concern' for the majority of the

¹² *Ibid*, 25 July 1939, p. 4.

¹³ *Ibid*, 26 September 1939, p. 4.

country early on in the war.¹⁴ This issue of troops and liquor was certainly a hot topic of debate in the Pahiatua region. The temperance issue had been discussed in the region before the war. In August of 1939 roughly 80% of the letters to the editor of the *Pahiatua Herald* on the temperance issue had been in favour of regulating liquor. This suggests there was obviously some very active support for this movement in the Pahiatua region. This contentious issue was to arise again in the early months of the war effort.

The Pahiatua County Council came out very strongly that military camps should remain dry. They sent a resolution to the Minister of Defence stating 'That this council believes the great majority of parents would welcome the placing of hotel bars as out of bounds to all men in khaki, and further protests that it is not enough safeguard to have camps dry and the hotels open in every town, where the value of costly training for efficiency can quickly be nullified'¹⁵

In late September 1939 a meeting of the Pahiatua Council for Action against Alcohol was held in the local Methodist Church. This council was largely made out of members of various Pahiatua churches and it was presided over by the Rev. Armstrong.¹⁶ At the end of the meeting the council sent the following worded resolution to the Ministers of Justice and Defence:

¹⁴ Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Volume Two)*, Wellington: Historical Publications Branch New Zealand, 1986, p. 1015.

¹⁵ *Horowhenua Chronicle*, 26 September 1939, p. 5.

¹⁶ The Reverend of St Paul's Presbyterian in Pahiatua and a key figure in the temperance movement in the region during this time.

That in view of the proposals to increase taxation for war purposes this Council urges the Government to take action to eradicate the present deplorable wastage of natural wealth and foodstuffs and human efficiency caused through the indulgence in alcoholic liquor upon which £9 ½ million was dissipated last year.

This Council believes that the great majority of parents would welcome the placing of hotel bars out of bounds to all men in khaki. Further that alcoholism endangers physical and mental well-being, and reduces resistance to disease. The rigours of modern warfare undeniably require troops to be strong and healthy.

The council further protests that it is not enough safeguard to have camps 'dry' and 'pubs' open in every town where the value of costly training for efficiency can be quickly nullified¹⁷

This attitude towards 'wet' canteens in the Pahiatua region did not go unnoticed in New Zealand and unfortunately it had some unforeseen consequences. As one letter published nationally stated: 'Do the Pahiatua Borough Council and the Auckland Ministers' Association in the face of their recent remits imagine that enlisted men are just schoolboys – primary at that. May I remind these learned gentlemen that the age for rank and file of the enlisted force is between 21 and 35 years of age.'¹⁸ The Pahiatua Borough Council was very put out with being confused with the Pahiatua Council for Action Against Alcohol and made a point of mentioning in a number of

¹⁷ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 26 September 1939, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 4 October 1939, p. 5.

nationally published papers that they were not one and the same. 'The resolution complained of by your correspondent was passed by 'The Pahiatua Council for Action Alcohol' and not the Pahiatua Borough Council, which is concerned solely with its own business.'¹⁹

What the majority of the Pahiatua region, and in particular the men who enlisted, thought of this issue is perhaps best summed up in a letter to the *Pahiatua Herald* written by one J.P. Hogan on 14 October 1939.²⁰

In wet canteens, you say, the flower of New Zealand's young manhood would be 'brought into contact with man's greatest enemy, alcohol, which has slain its tens of millions.'...Since you call our soldiers the flower of manhood, they must have some sense of proportion and discretion, and be able to look after themselves where liquor is concerned?...Having enlisted, I expect to be called into camp in the near future. And let me tell you, "Anti-Humbug", that I, along with thousands of others of the Dominion's manhood, resent your impertinent interference.²¹

The issue became moot however when the government decided on the establishment of wet canteens on 15 November 1939, as it was in the 'best interests of soldiers'²².

¹⁹ *Evening Post*, 5 October 1939, p. 10.

²⁰ This letter was in response to a letter published by one "Anti-Humbug" two days before on the subject of wet canteens and the remarks of Archdeacon Whitehead of Dunedin.

²¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 16 October 1939, p. 4.

²² *Ibid*, 16 November 1939, p. 5.

The fact that one of the biggest industries in the region was a brewery seems not to have come up during the debates over this issue. It would be interesting to know what the Tui Brewery thought about this alcohol question, despite the answer being seemingly obvious, however no records seem to exist expressing their opinion.

Politics

Being the major population centre in the north Wairarapa, the Pahiatua region was often visited by the leading politicians of the day. It was also a region that was highly political, as can be seen by its reaction to many of the major political issues of the time. One in particular being the Social Security scheme.

While this issue arose before war broke out in Europe, the Social Security Act and the regions reaction to it is a good example of how political Pahiatua was at the time. The Social Security Act was seen as one of the Labour Government's key policies and was meant to be introduced without fail on 1 April 1939. This act was overall not very popular in the Pahiatua region and it even saw the comment made that 'not only is the scheme financially unworkable, but the medical services it promises are a make-believe thing.'²³ Information about the Social Security Act even appeared on the front page of the *Pahiatua*

²³ *Ibid*, 20 February 1939, p.4.

Herald on numerous occasions, which was extremely rare. Usually the front page was only used for local advertising.

A meeting was held on 28 June 1939 in Pahiatua to discuss the Social Security Act and its relationship to women. Around 250 women attended the meeting, which was later described as a protest meeting.²⁴ Both of the speakers were keen to stress the inconsistencies in the act and the need for women to protest it. At the end of the meeting a resolution was unanimously passed stating 'That this meeting of women protests against the provisions of the Social Security Act, more especially the clauses relating to women.'²⁵ The turnout for this meeting was so large it made national news and was well reported. In the region there were only approximately 4,640 people at this time, and over 250 women (or approximately 5% of the population) meet to discuss this issue.²⁶ When the poor transport conditions, petrol restrictions and other responsibilities are taken into account this shows how important this issue was for a number of people, and in particular women, in the Pahiatua region. It also gives a demonstration of how politicised the region could be.

Just before the budget of August 1939, the *Pahiatua Herald* sent a questionnaire to a number of businessmen in Pahiatua. 'A possible increase in the Social Security charge from one to two shillings...found

²⁴ *ibid*, 28 June 1939, p. 4.

²⁵ *Evening Post*, 28 June 1939, p. 10.

²⁶ *New Zealand Official Yearbook 1940*, p.78-79. The figures I give for the region are based on the Pahiatua County and Pahiatua Borough figures from the census.

to be feared by practically every person whom it approached.'²⁷ One respondent even suggested Labour should put the Social Security charge up to seven shillings as 'This would be a good thing for the country, because very shortly afterwards we would not have a Labour government.'²⁸

Politically, the Pahiatua region saw numerous political figures visit in the first year of the war. However, two of these figures made speeches that brought the region to national attention. The leader of the opposition, the Hon. Adam. Hamilton made a speech in Pahiatua on November 11 1939 that caused public denials to be made by the government. Addressing a crowd of mostly National supporters he argued that the objective of the government was to overthrow capitalism and the system of private ownership, especially individual private transport interests. This saw a strong denial by the Minister of Transport, the Hon. Robert. Semple, that the government aimed to wipe out private transport interests. He also said it was amazing that 'Mr. Hamilton made his statement at Pahiatua, after having been assured by operators themselves that there was no such thing as confiscation, commandeering or dictatorship.'²⁹

The controversial Labour M.P John Alfred Alexander Lee gave a widely reported speech on monetary reform and the control of

²⁷ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 1 August 1939, p. 5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 18 November 1939, p. 10.8

finance in Pahiatua's Drill Hall on the 21 November 1939.³⁰ It was advertised that Mr Lee would speak on 'Labour's Right to Govern'. It was also stated that 'Mr Lee is regarded as a particularly fine orator...he has been the centre of a storm of controversy, chiefly because of his candour and directness, and the meeting will be nothing if not interesting.'³¹ In this speech, he argued that unless the people ran the banking system of New Zealand true democracy would not be possible. He also argued that the reason for New Zealand's large debt was because private enterprise controlled money.³² This speech was not greeted with great support from the national media. '...his advice is empty. It is useless filling the air with words about true democracy and popular control unless he has a workable scheme.'³³ However, one of the most interesting aspects of this speech was when he was asked about whether opposition to the war should be suppressed. His response was that 'He was not in favour of suppressing anybody save the man disavowing the law and preaching insurrection'.³⁴ In perhaps a response to Hamilton's comments, another issue of particular importance to the Pahiatua region that he discussed was how farmers would want extension of the Government

³⁰ *Auckland Star*, 21 November 1939, p. 6.

³¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 18 November 1939, p. 4.

³² *Auckland Star*, 21 November 1939, p. 6.

³³ *New Zealand Herald*, 22 November 1939, p. 10.

³⁴ *Auckland Star*, 21 November 1939, p. 6.

marketing of produce after the war due to the fact their might be a fall in prices and a steady return would be welcomed.³⁵

Generosity

As well as being politically important, it could also be argued that Pahiatua was one of the most generous regions in New Zealand towards the war effort. In *The Home Front* Taylor states that 'It was not easy for patriotic campaigners to raise money' but this phenomenon was certainly not the case in the Pahiatua region.³⁶ This is well demonstrated in the first year of the war effort by the contributions the region made to the Wellington provincial contribution to the Sick, Wounded and Distressed Fund.

This fund was run by the Red Cross and the Order of St John. New Zealand was split into its ten provincial districts with the Pahiatua region being in the Wellington province. This fund saw large contributions from across New Zealand, but especially from the Wellington province. Started on 12 May 1940, it gave itself the target of raising £250 000 (\$24 078 790)³⁷. This target was on the low side as the fund eventually reached £746 451 (\$71 894 548).³⁸

³⁵ *Evening Post*, 21 November 1939, p.11.

³⁶ Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Volume One)*, p. 153.

³⁷ <https://rbnz.govt.nz/monetary-policy/inflation-calculator> (January 2019). All amounts in brackets following are a modern day value using the same inflation calculator.

³⁸ Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Volume One)*, p. 153.

At the start of this appeal a public meeting was held in the Pahiatua Borough Council Chambers on 15 May 1940. Over 70 people attended the meeting showing the interest in the region towards this cause. Perhaps the most important decision made at this meeting was when 'Mr. S.K. Siddells³⁹...suggested an annual quota for each person in the district to cover all (patriotic) appeals during the year.'⁴⁰ While there was no legal authority for an annual quota scheme, it was noted that it had been attempted in Otago and seemed to be working well. After some discussion it was decided 'that the committee fix a suggested personal quota for everyone in the district.'⁴¹ At the end of the meeting it was decided that the main method of collection for this appeal would be house-to-house collection in the town and a postal appeal for the country.

Three days after the appeal started in the Pahiatua region it was already being reported that 'the £1 000 promised by the Mayor...will be exceeded'⁴² This was despite the fact that the circular appeal had yet to be sent out. In fact the £1 000 (\$96 315) mark was achieved in only five days from the start of the appeal in the Pahiatua region and the £1 500 (\$144 472) mark 'was realised in nine days from donations before a postal and quota appeal was made'.⁴³ This can be seen as a great achievement compared with other regions. As mentioned in the

³⁹ Not only the Mayor of Pahiatua, but also the President of the Pahiatua Red Cross.

⁴⁰ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 16 May 1940, p. 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid*, 18 May 1940, p. 4.

⁴³ *Gisborne Herald*, 25 May 1940, p. 5.

Pahiatua Herald the ‘...willing generosity on the part of rich and poor alike and excellent organization by the committee and collectors have committed to make an outstanding response from Pahiatua, one that compares favourably with other districts’.⁴⁴

With donations ‘pouring in’⁴⁵ by 3 June it seemed possible that the £3 000 (\$288 945) mark might even be passed.⁴⁶ However, donations did start slowing down and it took until 13 June to pass this total. Despite this, the Pahiatua region could be rightly proud of its response to the Red Cross appeal. As the editor of the *Pahiatua Herald* wrote:

The response to the appeal in Pahiatua and district has been widespread and enthusiastic, and a glance at the donation lists will show that it has touched responsive chords among those less able to make monetary sacrifices as well as those in more affluent circumstances. The committee aimed, in the first instance, at £1 000, but it became apparent within a few days of the opening of the lists that the possibilities of the district had been underestimated...Many other centres, beside Pahiatua, have extended their original quotas, but the figure realised locally is outstanding. The people in this district can therefore take considerable pride in their part of the National effort to raise funds for the Red Cross appeal.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 25 May 1940, p. 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 28 May 1940, p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 3 June 1940, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 8 June 1940, p. 4.

‘We’ve reached it!’⁴⁸ was the response of the treasurer, Mr. J. Hutton when the Pahiatua Red Cross effort finally passed £3 000. The opinion was also expressed that worked out per head of population, it was a very high average compared to the rest of the country.⁴⁹ As the total continued slowly mounting, the excellent response of the people of the Pahiatua region was recognised when the treasurers of the Pahiatua fund received a telegram from the sponsors stating ‘Your appeal has been wonderful’.⁵⁰

Despite the great response to the appeal in the Pahiatua region, there was some critical feedback on the generosity shown, by one Mr S.K. Siddells in a letter to the editor of the *Pahiatua Herald* on 24 June.⁵¹

All good things must come to an end and it is desirable that the appeal for the above fund (Sick, Wounded and Distress Fund) come to an end this week. The response in the Pahiatua District has been truly remarkable, averaging 13s 6d per head of population, which clearly indicates the acknowledgement by the great majority of the residents of their responsibility to assist all war efforts.

I write to bring before the notice of those who have not yet made their donations, the fact that the Appeal closes this week, and this final opportunity is being given them to emulate the splendid example of sacrifice already made

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 13 June 1940, p. 5.

⁴⁹ Although this was not specifically implied, it was definitely alluded to.

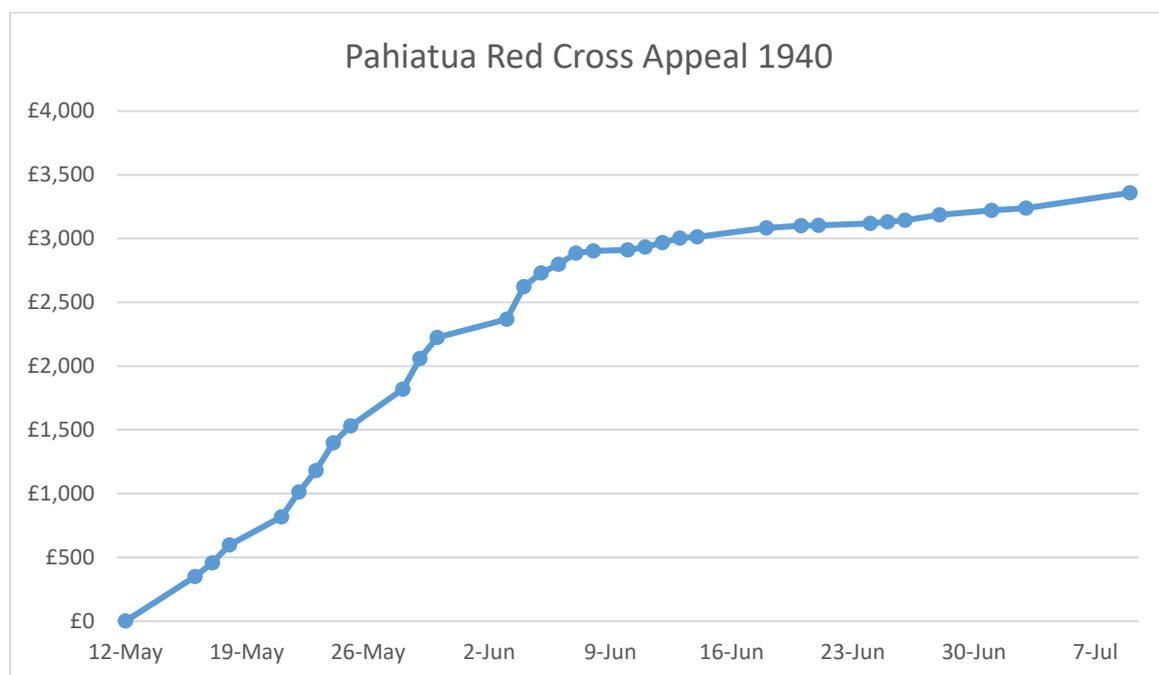
⁵⁰ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 18 June 1940, p. 4.

⁵¹ Who as you may recall was not only the Chairman of the Pahiatua Patriotic Committee, the Pahiatua Red Cross, but also Pahiatua’s Mayor.

throughout the Dominion. There are some, I know, who can well afford to give, but who have as yet held back for reasons of their own.

Consideration of the Armistice Terms imposed upon France by Nazi and Fascist Dictators will surely move the conscience of even the most selfish and self-centred individual, who in the past has always been content to leave it to the other fellow. I can only hope and trust that every resident of the Pahiatua District will see to it that he or she makes his or her contribution to this worthy appeal before the end of the week, no matter how small or large the donation may be. It is well to remember that thousands of little drops make the jug full.⁵²

On the official closing date, 30 June, the Pahiatua region had raised over £3 221 (\$310 231).⁵³ As noted, the donations to this appeal were reported in the *Pahiatua Herald* nearly daily, and it is interesting to look at this data.⁵⁴



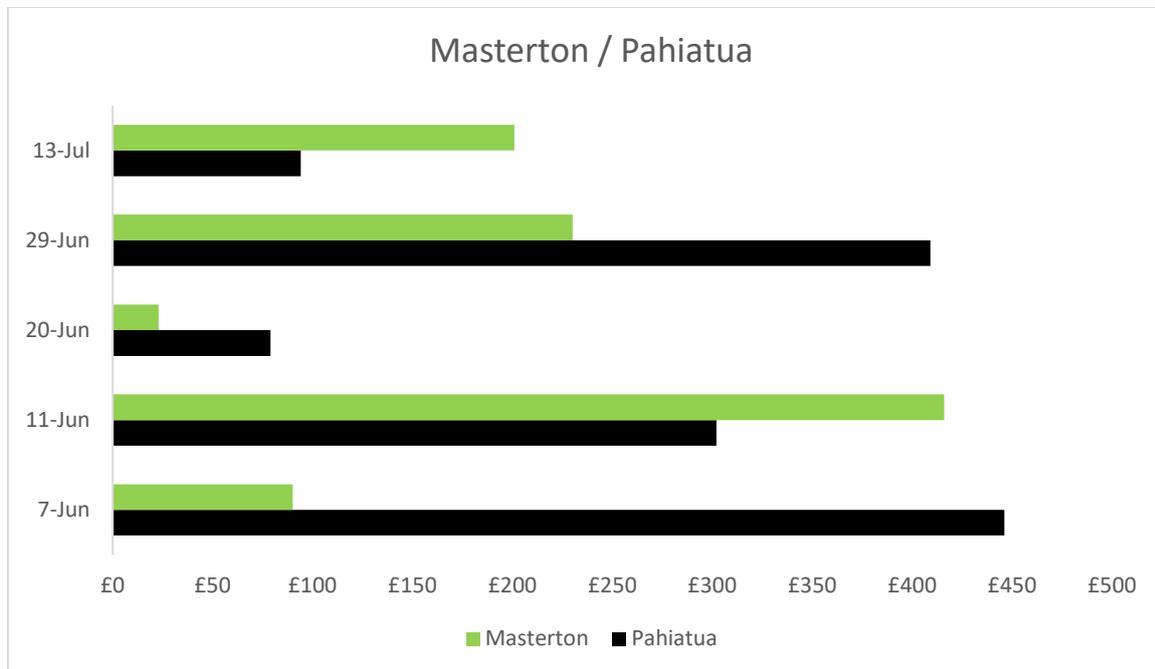
⁵² *The Pahiatua Herald*, 25 June 1940, p. 4.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 1 July 1940, p. 5.

⁵⁴ All figures in the graph below come from the donations that were published in the *Pahiatua Herald* on the dates stated during the time period.

There were definite spikes in contributions to the fund. The significant contributions to the fund happened from approximately the 24 to 28 of May (at the time of Dunkirk) and there was a slight boost at the beginning of June (the surrender of Belgium).

It is also interesting to compare the significant contributions the Pahiatua region made to this fund, compared to the largest population centre in the Wairarapa, Masterton. Masterton had a population of 9,500 compared to the Pahiatua regions 4,640.⁵⁵ The contributions to the Wellington Provincial Committee were reported in the *Evening Post* regularly.⁵⁶ On five dates the contributions of Pahiatua and Masterton were revealed in the *Evening Post* on the same date.



⁵⁵ *New Zealand Official Yearbook 1940*, p. 78-79.

⁵⁶ All the figures in the following graph come from the *Evening Post* published on those dates.

These figures give a good indication as to the generosity of the Pahiatua region compared to the largest population centre in the Wairarapa. On three of the five days the contribution of the Pahiatua region was significantly more than Masterton. This was despite Masterton having double the population of the Pahiatua region and ‘a corresponding increase in community facilities’.⁵⁷ The town of Masterton had also undergone an impressive building programme just before the war and a number of new businesses had become established, such as Hansells and the Reliance Tyre and Rubber Company.⁵⁸ Masterton certainly was on the rise but does not seem to have been as generous as the Pahiatua region, despite having over double the population.

There were a number of other patriotic appeals that showed the generosity of the Pahiatua region at the start of the war effort. An example was the £1,000,000 (\$94 046 803) appeal. For this appeal, the Pahiatua district was given a quota of £3 000 (\$293 000) to raise. By December 1940, due to a queen carnival held in Pahiatua, £4 658 (\$454 900.28) had been raised, well above its quota and second only to Waipukurau in the country.⁵⁹

These results seem to suggest that the Pahiatua region may have been significantly more prosperous than other regions, such as

⁵⁷ Winter, G. *The Look Of Masterton: A celebration of 150 years 1854 – 2004*, Masterton: Wairarapa Archive, 2004, p.44.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.46.

⁵⁹ *Auckland Star*, 4 December 1940, p. 4.

Masterton, at the start of the Second World War. However, the evidence suggests otherwise. The amount of deposits that the Bank Of New South Wales had in its accounts based on population figures for both regions suggests that in Pahiatua the amount was approximately £11 per person, and in Masterton £17 per person.⁶⁰ This combined with the fact that ‘by the outbreak of World War Two...the Council (Pahiatua County) was finding great difficulty in raising all the finance required...’⁶¹ suggest that the Pahiatua region was not as prosperous as its donations advocate.

The donations the Pahiatua region gave willingly at the start of the war seem to suggest that there was an extreme patriotic feeling towards the war, more so maybe than other regions. It was important to ‘do your bit’ or as the *Evening Post* so nicely put it, ‘give till it hurts – it is the least you can do’.⁶² The patriotic campaigners certainly were able to raise money in the Pahiatua region, despite it not being the wealthiest region in the province.

The Defence League

An organisation that was extremely active in Pahiatua in the months before war broke out was the New Zealand Defence League. The Defence League was established in late 1936, largely by people

⁶⁰ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors’ reports, April 1939, MSDL-1406.

⁶¹ McCallum, A. *Tui Country: A History of Pahiatua County*, p. 193.

⁶² *Evening Post*, 19 September 1940, p. 13.

with strong military backgrounds and interests. They were concerned with the lack of New Zealand's defences and the weakness of the League of Nations, as demonstrated by Italy's conquest of Abyssinia. However, the Defence League was mainly formed to try and inspire young men into military training.

While it took a few years, a branch of the Defence League was established in the Pahiatua region on 16 May 1939. Like many regions of New Zealand, support for the Defence League was strong in rural regions and this was certainly the case in Pahiatua. At the annual meeting of the Pahiatua branch of the Farmers Union on 5 May an invitation was extended to the President of the New Zealand Defence League, the Hon. W. Perry, to speak in Pahiatua.⁶³ This idea was unanimously supported by all members of the Pahiatua Farmers Union. Perry was unable to come but the Defence League secretary, Mr. Eric Reeves, keen to capture the mood of the people of the Pahiatua region quickly organized a meeting between the New Zealand Defence League and the Pahiatua Borough Council. A circular letter was delivered to all households and the Mayor made an appeal for the public to turn out at the meeting.⁶⁴

The meeting was held on May 16 and was presided over by Siddells and was addressed by the Defence League Secretary, Mr. Eric Reeves. Over 100 people attended and by the end of the meeting 66 people

⁶³ *Ibid*, 6 May 1939, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Mr. S.K. Siddells was a strong supporter of the New Zealand Defence League.

had enrolled in the newly created Pahiatua Branch of the League.⁶⁵ The Rev. A.A. Armstrong was unable to attend but sent his wishes for success and stressed his co-operation for the League.⁶⁶

In his speech, Reeves, made a number of typical Defence League statements. New Zealand should have a force of at least 9 000 trained men, a compulsory register of every man, woman and child should be drawn up, everyone over 18 should have three months' compulsory continuous military service after which they should serve in a territorial unit for four years, and the strengthening of the ANZAC relationship. On the economic effect of these policies Reeves stated 'The Defence League consider that in time of war sacrifice should be bourn equally by every man and woman in New Zealand and it approves the principle of equality of economic sacrifice in wartime. This amounts practicality to what is known as 'conscription of wealth' and although we say nothing of the formula for putting this into force, we approve the principle.'⁶⁷ Reeves concluded his speech by stating his wish that a branch might be created in Pahiatua and his disappointment with the widespread apathy in New Zealand with the defence measures that needed to be taken. '...we still need greater efforts so that when the Government does realise that something more must be done, it will have a responsive public. Our object is to

⁶⁵ *Pahiatua Herald*, 17 May, 1939, p. 5.

⁶⁶ The Rev. A.A. Armstrong was transferred in early August from St Paul's Presbyterian in Pahiatua to another parish in Drury, Auckland. Thereby ending his just over two-year involvement in the Pahiatua region.

⁶⁷ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 17 May 1939, p.5

make the Government's task easier when it does change policy'.⁶⁸ The Mayor closed the meeting by noting the enthusiastic response of the League's appeal 'especially as he felt that the people of Pahiatua were usually inclined to be apathetic on such matters.'⁶⁹

Interestingly, while 'apathetic' was certainly not the case, support for the Defence League was perhaps not as strong as this meeting or the mayor indicated in the region. At the meeting, the majority of questions asked to Mr. Reeves, were not on the key Defence League policy of military training, but actually on the lack of military equipment in New Zealand, for example gas masks and anti-aircraft guns.

The general feeling of the Pahiatua region to the Defence League can perhaps best be summed up in an editorial published in *The Pahiatua Herald* four days after this meeting. The editorial was addressing a speech made by Mr Semple in Christchurch on the Defence League. 'The only result likely to be achieved by Mr Semple in such speeches...when he referred to those interested in the New Zealand Defence League as a gang of scaremongers who want to create a psychology of fear, is to bring gratification to the type of person whom the classical Sir Thomas Browne described as 'those vulgar heads that look askint upon the face of truth'...'⁷⁰

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 20 May 1939, p.4.

The truth for the majority of the people of the Pahiatua region seems to be that if war was to come, which at the time seemed increasingly likely, New Zealand was not prepared for it. There was the feeling, mentioned at the Pahiatua Farmers Union meeting, that New Zealand did not seem to have much military equipment or troops. If the Defence League could improve New Zealand's war readiness it should be supported to a point. However, Semple himself came in for some criticism in the region with his supposed martyrdom of imprisonment for the sake of his opinions during World War One being compared very unfavourably to the thousands of New Zealand men who served on the battlefield. This feeling of New Zealand being ill-equipped for war in the region was obviously correct. As McIntyre points out in *New Zealand Prepares for War*, despite government expenditure on the Armed Services having greatly increased since 1934 New Zealand was overall not well-prepared for the war.⁷¹

The Petrol Restrictions

As Taylor mentions in *The Home Front* 'petrol rationing was the first dent in civilian life made by the war'⁷² and this was certainly the case in the Pahiatua region. One of the first major consequences of war breaking out for the Pahiatua region was the use of the private motor

⁷¹ McIntyre, W.D. *New Zealand Prepares for War (Defence Policy 1919-39)*, Christchurch, New Zealand: University of Canterbury Press, 1988, p. 259.

⁷² Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Vol 2)*, p. 742.

car. Only the day after the outbreak of the war large numbers of cars and owners were noticed outside the Pahiatua Post Office applying for the granting of licences to purchase supplies of petrol. However, the attitude was mentioned as being cheerful but resigned with the general attitude being 'it's worth trying, and if it doesn't come off – we'll have to walk.'⁷³

At first garage owners mentioned that they felt the petrol restrictions were not affecting their businesses. One garage owner stated that 'I don't think things are any different for this time of the year.'⁷⁴ However, it soon became apparent that this was not the case and the petrol restrictions were being felt in the region, '...the roads became so quiet it was an event if a car went past.'⁷⁵ When the Minister of Supply, Hon. D.G. Smith relaxed some of the restrictions it was greeted with approval in the Pahiatua region. 'For one thing it means that citizens will in a measure be able to get back to the enjoyment of more or less normal life, a sound factor in keeping up the public confidence. For another, a large portion of New Zealand's trade will be given a much needed fillip.'⁷⁶

However, this was not to last, as stricter petrol restrictions came into force on the 1 February 1940. Essential cars, for example for doctors, were allowed up to 30 gallons per month depending on the

⁷³ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 5 September 1939, p. 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 20 September 1939, p. 4.

⁷⁵ Champion, R and Smith, L. *Makuri School and District*, Palmerston North: NZ Lottery Grants Board. p. 20.

⁷⁶ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 13 October 1939, p. 4.

horse power of the vehicle. Semi-essential cars, such as in use of farmers to come into town, were allowed up to 12 gallons per month. Commercial vehicles, such as farmers trucks, had their fuel allotment cut by a third.⁷⁷

The government gave people a week's notice of these changes and '...many people who had containers, storage space and ready money, laid in reserves...' ⁷⁸ This practice was certainly seen in the Pahiatua region as well. In the two days before the restrictions came into being many garage owners in the region reported that sales were substantially above normal.⁷⁹ Apparently no guidelines were given to the garage proprietors about filling tins, which meant that practically any quality was available as long as you had a container. 'A good number of cars were observed to be leaving town with a drum lashed to the luggage-grid.'⁸⁰ These scenes saw the Pahiatua Borough Council remind its residents that it was illegal to store more than eight gallons of fuel without a licence, under the Dangerous Goods Act.⁸¹

Despite the petrol restrictions there was little effect in the number of vehicles registered in the Pahiatua region. It was originally speculated that the higher cost of petrol and the petrol restrictions would lead to a likely decrease in the number of vehicles registered.⁸²

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 31 January 1940, p. 4.

⁷⁸ Taylor, N. *The Home Front*, p. 745.

⁷⁹ The fact that many farmers were in Pahiatua for a stock sale two days before the petrol restrictions came into play, no doubt had quite a bit to do with this.

⁸⁰ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 1 February 1940, p. 4.

⁸¹ *Ibid*.

⁸² *Ibid*, 7 May 1940, p. 4.

However, at the end of the registration period there was only a little over 4% drop in the number of registrations.⁸³ In fact, heavy truck registrations increased from 58 to 68. The reason for this was 'not easily explainable, although it may be due in some measure to the growing mechanisation of farm transport'.⁸⁴

Sugar and Tea

'When Japan's attack threatened sources, there was widespread panic buying of sugar and tea...despite efforts by retailers to restrain buying and assurances by traders and officials that supplies were normal.'⁸⁵ This tendency towards hoarding seems to have occurred in the Pahiatua region as well, but more so at the beginning of the war rather than when Japan entered the war. A Pahiatua grocer summed up the feeling of many grocers in the region quite nicely in the first few days after war broke out in Europe. 'People seemed to go crazy for a day or two! Saturday and Monday were a nightmare...They went crazy on sugar and most of them seemed to think they weren't going to get any. But we just wouldn't let them have it, and when the position was pointed out to them, they quietened down and in a day or two were buying the normal qualities.'⁸⁶

⁸³ *Ibid*, 4 June 1940, p. 4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

⁸⁵ Taylor, N. *The Home Front*, p. 788.

⁸⁶ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 8 September 1939, p. 4.

Despite the Emergency regulations the majority of Pahiatua grocers could supply sugar in bags of 5lbs to town customers and 12lbs to country customers. They also stated that there were ample supplies of flour despite the increase in demand, with one grocer stating that while he was selling nothing 'larger than a 25lb bag...there was not even the suspicion of a shortage from the mills.'⁸⁷ They also stated that there was no reason to expect a shortage in tea.

By the end of September 1939 grocers in the region were reporting that hoarding and attempts at hoarding had completely ceased⁸⁸, and this seems to have remained the case for the rest of the war years. This does not mean that there were not still shortages of these key commodities in the region. Despite what Pahiatua grocers had said previously, within four weeks of war breaking out tea supplies had already been cut to one pound at a time for town customers and five pounds a month for country customers. There was also a temporary shortage of sugar within two months of the war breaking out.⁸⁹ With sugar costs rising to 4d per pound, and with the added cost of freight charges to the Pahiatua region, many grocers were suffering and arguing that selling sugar was not paying costs. The Price Investigation Tribunal did increase the price to 4½d on 26 October, but one Pahiatua grocer, at least, made the increase at least a day before the official date.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 20 September 1939, p.4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 27 October 1939, p. 4

The Centennial Celebrations

Perhaps the biggest impact of the Second World War on the community of the Pahiatua region in the first year of the war was the effect it had on the centennial celebrations. Following the immediate outbreak of war, there was a lively discussion in the region as to the advisability of continuing with the planned centennial celebrations. It was even suggested that should be cancelled or drastically reduced in size. One person who was against this idea was the editor of the *Pahiatua Herald*, who came out and stated that there should be an attitude of 'business as usual' and that the centennial should go ahead as scheduled in early 1940.⁹⁰

The Pahiatua Centennial Celebrations Committee met on 27 November to discuss this issue. However, at this meeting it was decided to postpone the decision until February. The Mayor, Mr. Siddells, presided over this meeting, and at the conclusion said 'We have to decide whether the Centennial programme as previously outlined is to be gone on with in full, curtailed, or amendments made. My personal opinion is that there is not the spirit of the general public behind the thing as there was at the time of the Coronation. Unless we have whole-hearted support, the effort expended will not be justified...'⁹¹

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 11 October 1939, p. 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 28 November 1939, p. 4.

It was probably a wise choice to postpone this decision. The war was still in its early days and there was no way to know yet what effects it would have on the Pahiatua region, and support for the Centennial was definitely split amongst the public in the Pahiatua region. The editor of the *Pahiatua Herald* and the Pahiatua Borough Council had come out in support of the celebrations. The Mayor and the Pahiatua County Council itself was sitting on the fence, 'The County has decided to hold the matter over until the end of the year...'⁹², while the Pahiatua Women's Division had passed a resolution that the celebrations should be curtailed or postponed.

The editor of the *Pahiatua Herald* was disappointed with public opinion. 'While this does not imply that the celebrations will definitely be postponed, it does seem to indicate that whatever functions Pahiatua does have to mark the centenary date are likely to be upon a rather meagre scale.'⁹³ He urged the Centennial Committee to keep the local celebrations. He gave a few reasons why he thought the Centennial Celebrations would be good for the Pahiatua region. First, the region owed it to itself to mark the centenary in a proper manner. 'This is a progressive area, and to wipe out the whole programme would be a sign of weakness and a retrograde step.'⁹⁴ Second, it was important in times of stress to put on a brave front and 'carry on'⁹⁵ as

⁹² *Ibid*, 28 November 1939, p. 4.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 30 November 1939, p. 4.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*.

normal. Finally, it would mean a lot to the local community, especially the local businesses. 'Pahiatua's Centennial Celebrations must go on, even if they last two, or three days, instead of the original week.'⁹⁶

In February 1940 the Pahiatua County Council received a letter from the Pahiatua Borough Council asking for the County's cooperation in a three-day Centennial celebration. But the County Council decided to abandon the centennial celebration. As Councillor A.W Bissett said, 'I don't think we can collect a fund for patriotic purposes one minute, and 'whoopie' down the street in carnival the next.'⁹⁷ It was also pointed out that with the Centennial tree-planting, the memorial in Petone and the Exhibition in Wellington, the County council had already spent £217 on the Centennial celebrations. A resolution was carried 'that in view of war conditions and appeals for patriotic purposes, it is the opinion of this council that all Centennial celebrations should be abandoned.'⁹⁸ The one exception, was that the County Council agreed to assist financially for school children to attend the Wellington exhibition, as long as the sum did not exceed £20.⁹⁹

The editor of the *Pahiatua Herald* was obviously disappointed at this decision and felt that since the idea of cancelling the celebrations a few months ago nothing much had changed. 'It is to be hoped that

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 15 February 1940, p. 4.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Both councils gave financial aid in the end and this resulted in over a hundred children visiting the Wellington Exhibition on 8 March 1940.

even in the face of the County's refusal to participate, the Borough will go right ahead with its plans, so a great day in Pahiatua's history will not be allowed to pass dismally and unnoticed...Pahiatua can surely manage a day, or two days' festivities, Pahiatua owes this much to itself, and to the pioneers who made this district what it is.'¹⁰⁰

At the Pahiatua Borough Council meeting held on 4 March 1940, the Borough decided to continue with the celebrations. As can be imagined, the editor of the *Herald* greeted this news with great joy. 'Somebody had to give the lead and Pahiatua owes a debt of gratitude to those who did so...due to the firm attitude adopted by the stalwarts in the community, the district will be able maintain its progressive reputation.'¹⁰¹

A circular letter was sent out to businesses and some residents by the Centennial Celebrations Lighting and Decorations Committee asking for bunting to use as decorations for the celebration and for each business to decorate its premises for the celebration dates of the 5th, 6th and 7th of April. It was also mentioned, that while they wanted the celebration to be a happy time for all residents 'we are fully conscious of the fact that owing to the war no large-scale scheme as was witnessed at Coronation time can be carried out.'

On 2 April the full details of the Centennial Celebrations were finalised. Activities such as a ball, a parade, afternoon teas, the

¹⁰⁰ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 15 February 1940, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 5 March 1940, p. 4.

opening of parks, sports events for children, church services, a fire brigade display, and even a cricket match had been arranged to celebrate the centennial.

On 5 April the centennial celebrations were opened by the Governor-General Lord Galway at Carnival Park.¹⁰² This was seen as a great honour in the region as a visit from the Governor-General was very rare for small towns. In his short speech, the Governor-General made numerous references to the war. 'We are living in dark, dangerous and difficult times, but there are still rays of hope'.¹⁰³ He spoke of the need for the home market to provide food, something that was very definitely of relevance to the farming community of the Pahiatua region. The parade that afternoon, also saw some allusion to the effects of the war with the float for Swanney's Garage having a lifelike demonstration of a steam-driven vehicle, alluding to the petrol restrictions.¹⁰⁴

The first year of the war effort saw many changes for the Pahiatua region. The people had to adjust to the new reality of a country at war and what that meant for them. Overall, the region was very supportive of the war effort, as is demonstrated by the generosity of the region to various public appeals during this period. However, was this generosity only financial or did the region respond militarily as well. Did they enlist? This is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 4 April 1940, p. 5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 6 April 1940, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*.



Photo courtesy of 'Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries'

Chapter Two

The Military Reaction and Response

‘A terrible catastrophe has occurred...There is little doubt that great sacrifices will be demanded of every one of us, and I feel justified in concluding that we of the Pahiatua district are only too willing to share them, no matter the cost...¹ was the special statement of the Mayor (Mr. S.K. Siddells) when war was declared. This so-called special statement was because it was a speech the Mayor made to the region that was published verbatim in the local media. An extremely unusual occurrence. But was the Pahiatua region willing to ‘share the cost’? Did they enlist? Was there support for the military effort in the region?

Enlistment

Support for any war, especially amongst men, can often be gauged by how many men enlisted. In the Pahiatua region, the Mayor was a great supporter of the military and within a week of war being declared he had made arrangements with the Defence Department to get men in the region to enlist. On the first day possible, twenty men from the region joined up. The feeling amongst the majority of these men was that they would rather fight and serve overseas than wait for

¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 5 September 1939, p. 4.



S K Siddells

Mayor of Pahiatua 1938 - 1942

Photo courtesy of Archives Central, Feilding

the war to arrive in New Zealand. 'I think we'll be needed there more than here.'² Keith Elliot, the Victoria Cross awardee from the Pahiatua region, had a very similar response on hearing that war had been declared. 'I must go. That was the only thought in my mind.'³ However, other reasons given for enlisting were that it was a chance to see the world, to gain aviation experience, they had no chance of meeting the requirements for the Expeditionary Force as they were married and had children, and one man over thirty stated that he was enlisting because 'I have had a good deal of my life and enjoyed it. If a few more of my age go over, it may mean saving a boy of eighteen or nineteen with his life still before him.'⁴ This attitude is in direct contrast to that expressed in the *New Zealand Herald* of many married men of 'It's not my job, I've a wife and kids.'⁵ So while the majority of these early enlistments could be said to be altruistic, there was certainly some men who enlisted in the Pahiatua region because of the perceived benefits they could obtain.

By 16 September 1939, 27 men had enlisted from the Pahiatua region.⁶ Three more men enlisted for the special voluntary force by 18 September. There was a real sense of pride in the region that due to these enlistments 'Pahiatua has shown that it is not found wanting in

² *Ibid*, 13 September 1939, p. 4.

³ Elliott, K & Adshead, R. *From Cowshed To Dogcollar*, Wellington, New Zealand: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1967, p. 32.

⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 13 September 1939, p. 4.

⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 18 March 1940, p.10.

⁶ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 16 September 1939, p .4.

the present stress, and local recruits have shown a fine spirit.’⁷ However, these enlistment rates were not ‘extraordinary’ and were very similar with the amount of enlistments that were happening around New Zealand at this time based on population figures.⁸

This fine spirit was also reflected by the public’s reaction to these first enlistments. Selected by ballot the first batch of recruits from the Pahiatua region (eight in total) were scheduled to leave on 3 October 1939. They were all presented with a fountain pen which was bought with money donated by the community. The Mayor, addressing the recruits, stated that ‘The material value of this gift is not much, but a far greater value is contained in the whole-hearted good wishes of the community, which go with it.’⁹

The farewell ceremony for these recruits in the Flagpole Square saw a huge turnout. ‘One of the most notable features at the gathering was the number of returned soldiers who attended. Over a hundred strong, they assembled at the Borough Council Chambers and...marched to the Square to pay tribute to their new comrades-in-arms.’¹⁰ This was an indication of the large support there was amongst the people in the Pahiatua region to the war effort, and in particular from returned servicemen.

⁷ *Ibid*, 28 September 1939, p. 4.

⁸ Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Volume One)*, Wellington: Historical Publications Branch New Zealand, 1986, p. 68.

⁹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 3 October 1939, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

These eight recruits came from a variety of economic backgrounds. Half of these recruits worked in the agricultural industry (three were farmers, one a cartage contractor), three were white collar workers (two worked in a bank, one in the Public Trust Office) while the final recruit worked in a store.¹¹

Overall, it seems that there was support for the war across all economic and cultural areas of the Pahiatua region. However, the pattern of 50% or more of the recruits coming from an agricultural background was to become a common and at times a controversial theme in the Pahiatua region. Even Keith Elliott himself was to experience this when he was called up.

Eventually I was called up for the first Echelon and my sisters gallantly stayed at home to run the farm. Someone, however, ruined my chances by telling the Army that I was managing the farm for my mother. I received a telegram from Headquarters instructing me not to proceed to camp, so I carried on as usual. I was considerably upset, as I had gone to a lot of trouble supervising a multitude of details in preparation for leaving the farm.¹²

At the start of 1940, 14 men from the Pahiatua region were selected to train for the Second Echelon of the Special Forces.¹³ These recruits attachment and ties to the region were strongly emphasized

¹¹ *Ibid*, 3 October 1939, p.4.

¹² Elliott, K & Adshead, R. *From Cowshed To Dogcollar*, p.32.

¹³ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 6 January 1940, p. 5.

in *The Pahiatua Herald*. They were described as ‘born and brought up in the district, while others have lived and worked here so long that they have become true citizens of Pahiatua.’¹⁴

The first indications of disapproval towards enlistment rates in the Pahiatua region was at the time of the Second Echelon. There was a perceived inferior response to the request for recruits to the Second Echelon compared to the First Echelon from the region. To be fair this was the experience of not only the Pahiatua region, but nationally. As Taylor puts so eloquently, ‘...as the first mood of acceptance and excitement waned, recruiting became slower and slower, and...it plainly needed gingering up to complete the Second Echelon’.¹⁵ The lack of response to recruiting for the Second Echelon was put down to a number of factors in the region. However, it seems the main one seems to have been the fact that after going through all the training there was no guarantee that as a soldier you would serve outside New Zealand. The lack of recruits for the Second Echelon in the region, compared to the First Echelon, was alluded to in *The Pahiatua Herald*. ‘These recruits are of a fine type, as fine as from any other part of the country, although their numbers may not be great.’¹⁶ It was also, tongue-in-check, mentioned that the state of the uniforms for the First Echelon could have resulted in the lack of enlistments for the Second Echelon.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 9 January, 1940, p. 4.

¹⁵ Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Vol One)*, p. 68.

¹⁶ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 19 December 1939, p. 4.

Despite this, the support for these recruits was still extremely strong in the region. Across country halls and private houses around the region large turnouts of people turned up to farewell these recruits for the First and Second Echelon. Marima saw over 150 people turn out to farewell one of the recruits on a Tuesday, which was close to the entire population of the area.¹⁷ This was not an unusual occurrence for the region. Every recruit or soldier who left would have an evening of dancing, singing and entertainment in their local area with a high turnout of the local residents. They would often then be given another enthusiastic send off at the local Pahiatua railway station. This seems to have been a very different experience from that of many other soldiers in larger regions 'were there were few cheers, some crowds were notably silent and women wept.'¹⁸

This is a good demonstration of how proud the region was of the men who enlisted. There was a real feeling that these recruits were putting the Pahiatua region on the map and, as such, the region had a special admiration for them. This attachment to the local recruits was only enhanced by the short biography each recruit received in the local paper.

Eventually 25 soldiers from the Pahiatua region left with the Second Echelon. The pride that was felt in the region towards these men can be shown by the response at the farewell to these soldiers on 20

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 28 December 1939, p. 4.

¹⁸ Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Vol One)*, p. 68.

March 1940. A ceremony was held for them at Foresters Hall in Pahiatua with 15 of the 25 soldiers attending. It was reported that over 300 people turned out to say farewell, making it the largest crowd of its kind for over twenty years in the region.¹⁹ As the Mayor stated 'no greater tribute could have been paid the soldiers than the size of the crowd which had come to wish them goodbye and good luck. It was a wonderful gesture of esteem.'²⁰ He also stated that 'On a proportionate basis...Pahiatua had probably given more men for the service of their country than any other district in New Zealand.'²¹ There is a touch of exaggeration to this, as best-case scenario, it was only approximately 2 to 3 per cent of the male population in the region.²² However, when these figures are compared to several South Island districts whose 'quota figures loomed heavily above enlistments' the Pahiatua region had every reason to be proud of its contribution.²³

Seventeen recruits for the Third Echelon were called up from the Pahiatua region on 17 May 1940 to enter camp.²⁴ This number was later to increase to 28.²⁵ Once again crowds thronged the Masonic Hall in Pahiatua to give them a rousing farewell. There was a definite feeling of pride in these young men especially since '...that this is the

¹⁹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 21 March 1940, p. 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *New Zealand Official Yearbook 1940*, p.78-79. The figures I give for the region are based on the Pahiatua County and Pahiatua Borough figures from the census.

²³ Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Vol One)*, p. 88.

²⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 10 May 1940, p. 4.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 9 August 1940, p. 4.

Third Echelon, and it is still a voluntary one'.²⁶ One of the recruits, perhaps summed up the feelings and expectations of these men best when he stated that 'The men in the last war did their job – we are going to do ours.'²⁷ Throughout all these farewells for the First, Second and Third echelon 'it was noticeable that a highly patriotic atmosphere prevailed throughout, while it was also evident that those present fully realised the great sacrifice being made by the local men in uniform.'²⁸

There was a definite feeling of patriotism towards these men who had enlisted from the Pahiatua region. So much so that it saw *The Pahiatua Herald* publish a special issue of the paper on 13 September 1940 to allow the businesses and individuals of the area to give special greetings to these men. The intention was to help 'remind those overseas of Home'²⁹ and by all accounts the response was such that it led to the editor of *The Pahiatua Herald* to state 'The response...once again demonstrates the fact that when this town sets out to do something, it takes no half measures.'³⁰ This was later to be repeated the following year on 12 September 1941 with the comment that 'The number of messages in this issue far exceeds the previous one, and

²⁶ *Ibid*, 15 May 1940, p. 4.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 15 May 1940, p. 4.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 9 August 1940, p. 4.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 13 September 1940, p. 4.

³⁰ *Ibid*.

plainly illustrates that many more men have left the district to join their pals.’³¹

Conscription

Conscription, was an issue that dominated discussion in the Pahiatua region, as it did in the rest of New Zealand, in the first months of the war. There was certainly a feeling within the region that conscription was not really necessary. There was a feeling that the volunteers for the special force were currently sufficient to meet military needs, most of the pick of New Zealand’s manhood had already enlisted, volunteer armies were better than conscripted armies, and ‘conscription cannot be fully discussed until New Zealand knows its precise position in the war.’³²

There was also a feeling among the people of the region, which predominately voted right of centre, that under a Labour government conscription was unlikely. It was felt that the majority of the Labour Party had been against conscription during the First World War, a current Cabinet Minister Mr. P. C. Webb, had been imprisoned for refusing military service, the Prime Minister Peter Fraser had been jailed for sedition, and that ‘the present Government could not well introduce conscription without a great deal of embarrassment. If they

³¹ *Ibid*, 12 September 1940, p. 4.

³² *Ibid*, 28 October 1939, p. 4.

did that they would be presenting a most remarkable reversal of form'.³³ It is interesting to note that one local organization who supported compulsory service at this time was the Pahiatua electorate Labour Representation Committee.³⁴ This position of there being no need for conscription in the region was to eventually change and change quite quickly.

One group that very early on came out in favour of conscription, were local farmers. It was thought by many in the region that farmers would be against conscription, due to the fact that any conscription of young men could leave a labour shortage in the farming community.

At a Pahiatua Farmers Union meeting at the Pahiatua Dairy Company on 13 October 1939 a frank discussion on the issue of farm labour volunteering for active service took place. At the end of the meeting the following resolution was passed, 'That the Government be urged to set up a national register with a view to introducing conscription'.³⁵ However, this resolution was not as noble as it sounds. As mentioned, approximately half of the volunteers for military service in the Pahiatua region in the first month of the war had come from an agricultural background. The major reason the Farmers Union was pushing for conscription is that it would give a reason for the Government to refuse to accept farm workers for enlistment. Farming could be labelled an essential industry. As one member of the Farmers

³³ *Ibid*, 18 November 1939, p. 4.

³⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 31 October 1939, p. 9.

³⁵ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 14 October 1939, p. 4.

Union said, 'I think conscription is the only way to stop the young men rushing off hot-headedly when they are needed here.'³⁶

Another group that came out in strong support for conscription was the Pahiatua Borough Council, becoming one of the first councils in the country to do so. On the 22 May 1940 the Borough Council passed a resolution that in view of the seriousness of the situation the Government be urged to adopt conscription.³⁷ This was despite the fact that only three months earlier, in a response from a letter from the Defence League, the same Council had publicly stated on the conscription issue, 'It seems absurd that we should be asked to say what should happen to the rest of New Zealand. Parliament is the proper place for the issue to be decided. It is not our duty as a council to express an opinion'.³⁸ The Mayor himself stated that 'Whatever we may feel personally it is certainly not our business as a Council to express an opinion about conscription. I am sure that if the necessity arises the Government will solve the question in a proper manner.'³⁹ At the time there was support for this position in the region, with the editor of *The Pahiatua Herald* stating 'The council is to be congratulated upon the stand it has taken'.⁴⁰

This somersaulting in attitude of the Pahiatua Borough Council was due to a perceived feeling, not only amongst the councillors, but also

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Evening Post*, 21 May 1940, p. 6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 February 1940, p. 4.

³⁹ Pahiatua Borough Council Archives, Minute Book, 12 February 1940, 4/1/1/ Vol 12. p. 379.

⁴⁰ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 13 February 1940, p. 4.

among the general public of the Pahiatua region, that the war situation was becoming extremely serious and therefore conscription was now necessary. The following motion was passed 'That in view of the seriousness of the international situation it is the personal and considered opinion of the Mayor and Councillors of the Pahiatua Borough that the Government should as a war measure urgently consider the question of taking a referendum on the matter of conscription...'⁴¹ The council felt that there could be no argument against conscription and that they were reflecting the feelings of the region.

Once conscription finally came in under the National Service Emergency Regulations (1940) the Pahiatua district came under the Napier Military Area (No 7). The first ballot for territorial forces, which was published locally on 2 October 1940, saw 120 men gazetted from the district, with 75 of them being from the Pahiatua region.⁴² It was noted that 'In the Pahiatua area...a goodly number of farm employees are included in the list.'⁴³

About one third of these men called up for military service applied for a postponement in their obligations.⁴⁴ Predominately, a large number of these men were from farming and associated industries. Appeals for the Pahiatua region were to be heard by the Masterton

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 21 May 1940, p. 4.

⁴² *Ibid*, 2 October 1940, p. 5.

⁴³ *Ibid*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 19 October 1940, p. 4.

Manpower Committee. There were concerns that this committee, being from Masterton, would not understand the needs of a predominately rural region. This resulted in the secretary of said committee being keen to stress that 'one of the members of the committee was a farmer with a comprehensive knowledge of the whole district.'⁴⁵

The second ballot saw 122 men called up from the Pahiatua region.⁴⁶ By this stage there were real concerns in the region about the large numbers of farm workers who had been included in both ballots. One farmer was even quoted as saying that, 'If it were not for the women on farms the cows would not now be milked.'⁴⁷ There were also concerns about the timing of the appeals board, with it coinciding with a busy farming season.⁴⁸

At the first Appeals Board meeting in Pahiatua on 12 November 1940 the Masterton Manpower Committee adjourned four appeals and dismissed a further 18, with these men to serve at a later date. It became apparent at this Appeals Board meeting that the farming community in the region, while saying it was co-operative and implying keen to serve, were very concerned about a potential labour shortage on the farms if they did serve. 'One father appealing for his son, (who stated) that the Government should find alternative labour

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 7 November 1940, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 8 November 1940, p. 4.

for farmers met with the retort that that was the farmers' own job and the Government was not the father and mother of all.⁴⁹ This friction between the appeal boards and the farming community of the Pahiatua region was to be ongoing throughout the war years.

Another common criticism that was made at these territorial service appeals boards was the feeling that a lot of the training could take place in Pahiatua, rather than in areas like Dannervirke and Wanganui, as had been done under the former system of compulsory military training. It was felt that there were 'Great War officers with fine records in the district'⁵⁰ who could supervise the training two or three days a week, thereby allowing the men to work and live at home.

These concerns were never really addressed by the Appeals Board and by the time of the fourth conscription ballot there were still major concerns raised about what 'a substantial drain'⁵¹ it was on the manpower of the Pahiatua region.

While the region might have grumbled about the number of men who were being conscripted from the region, there was a certain amount of pride with the fact that the majority of these men were passing the medical exams. At nearly all of these medical exams over 55% of the men were passed fit for territorial service. There was a real feeling in the region that the military was getting 'good quality

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 13 November 1940, p. 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 17 January 1941, p. 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 5 March 1941, p. 4.

manpower.’⁵² In fact, there was a real sense of regional disappointment when only 7 of 17 men passed the medical board sitting on 7 December 1940. There was also a perception that the men who failed the medical test were not pulling their weight. ‘It has been suggested that among many of the youth of the town, there is a feeling that their obligation to serve ends the moment they are rejected on medical grounds...this is a pity’⁵³ The fact that these youth could and should be serving in such organisations, as the Home Guard, was a common refrain.

The Home Guard

The Home Guard in the Pahiatua region was in Group 7B and was known as the Pahiatua Battalion. It was renamed to the Bush Battalion in approximately mid-1942. It was made out of six companies, the Headquarters Company (headquarters at Mangatainoka), A Company (headquarters at Pahiatua), B Company (headquarters at Mangahao School), C Company (headquarters at Konini Hall), D Company (headquarters at Makuri), and E Company (headquarters at Pongaroa). Each company had enough men to make three or four

⁵² *Ibid*, 5 December 1940, p. 4.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 12 April 1941, p.4.

platoons.⁵⁴ A Company later grew to five platoons with the establishment of a platoon to act as petrol guards in Pahiatua.⁵⁵

In Nancy Taylor's *The Home Front* she makes the claim that in many areas of New Zealand there was a feeling of apathy towards the Home Guard in the early stages of the Second World War.⁵⁶ This certainly proves to be the case in the Pahiatua region. It is often thought that the people in the Pahiatua region were keen to join the Home Guard but, at least initially, this does not seem to have been the case. In the region, there was also the popular belief that the Home Guard was 'formed after the Japanese entered the war in 1941, with the bombing of Pearl Harbour'.⁵⁷ While there was not a lot of initiative in creating a Home Guard, the Home Guard in the Pahiatua region certainly started well before the end of 1941. In fact its creation was a year earlier in December 1940.

In *The Home Front* Taylor also states that the early recruitment for the Home Guard in rural areas 'was more enthusiastic than in the towns.'⁵⁸ However, the Pahiatua region seems to have more in common with cities like Auckland and Wellington, where enrolment in the Home Guard was slow, than compared to other rural regions.

⁵⁴ General Staff Instruction No. 10 H.G. [Home Guard] – Bush Battalion, *Archives New Zealand*, AD-W10 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Taylor, N. *The Home Front*, p. 460.

⁵⁷ Eddie, J. (ed.), *Mangamaire "A Century of Change" 1897 – 1997*, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Stylex Print, 1997. p. 197.

⁵⁸ Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Vol One)*, p. 456.

The fact that the Pahiatua region was without a coastline, and surrounded by hills may have contributed to this feeling of security.

The region was definitely a late starter compared to other rural regions. It was not until 17 October 1940 that the Dominion Organiser of the Home Guard and the Minister of Manpower's liaison officer visited the Pahiatua region to discuss the creation of a Home Guard.

By mid-November 1940 concerns were being raised about the lack of co-ordination and how undirected the creation of a Home Guard was in the Pahiatua region. There had not been an enthusiastic response to the idea of creating a Home Guard and it was seen as somewhat disappointing that only approximately 30 men had so far tried to volunteer for the Home Guard at the local county and borough council offices. One of the problems seemed to be that 'no committee...does not yet appear to be functioning.'⁵⁹ However, the major problem with the delay in setting up a Home Guard in the Pahiatua region seems to be simply clerical. No one at the council offices was sure which form the volunteers were supposed to sign. This question was eventually solved by asking the Director of National Service and it was hoped 'that since this matter has been clarified, that local enlistment for service in the Home Guard will show an improvement.'⁶⁰ Despite this only eight enrolments had been made by 11 December 1940.⁶¹

⁵⁹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 15 November 1940, p. 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 21 November 1940, p. 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 12 December 1940, p. 4.

This attitude in the region is perhaps best described in a letter to the editor of *The Pahiatua Herald* on 10 December 1940. 'I have interested myself in endeavouring to enrol members for the above (Home Guard). This is the sort of thing I have come up against: - From a member of a labour union: "I would like to join but we might be used to break up strikes, etc.?" From a farmer: "We might be used to enforce the Small Farms Act." From another farmer: "Now what do they want – increased production, or me to waste time messing around parades?" From another: "I will join if(a neighbour) joins so that we can save petrol" From yet another: "Now what do I actually commit myself to?"⁶²

The Pahiatua County Council was also not happy with the attitude towards the Home Guard. The chairman stated that 'the response ...is to say the least tragic.' This is very similar to the response of Auckland's Mayor who was still complaining about the poor response and apathy towards the Home Guard in mid-December 1940.⁶³ One councillor at the same meeting had the opinion that 'plenty of men were willing to join if they felt they were going to serve a useful purpose'.⁶⁴ This seems to have been a key opinion of many in the region. There was a willingness to serve but a perceived lack of organization and knowledge of what would actually be required had resulted in the poor response. For once, it felt like and was apparent

⁶² *Ibid*, 11 December 1940, p. 4.

⁶³ Taylor, N. *The Home Front (Vol One)*, p. 456.

⁶⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 12 December 1940, p. 4.

that Pahiatua was behind other areas in the war effort with the establishment of a Home Guard.

A meeting of the newly created Home Guard Committee on 17 December 1940 started to make preliminary arrangements for the formation of a Pahiatua Home Guard. The main order of business was how to organize local manpower. Contacting returned soldiers in the region, holding public meetings and having a recruiting parade were all methods decided upon. There was now a feeling that the Pahiatua region was finally starting to meet its obligations to the country. 'The move for the foundation of an organization here in common with other districts is an essential move.'⁶⁵

It still was not until 23 January 1941 that movement towards actually getting a Home Guard started in Pahiatua went ahead. On this date Captain W.R. Birch, the area commander for Area 7B, Wairarapa addressed a meeting of the Home Guard committee. It was decided to hold a series of recruiting meeting across the Pahiatua region with Birch being heavily involved.

These meetings started having an immediate impact with the first such meeting on 29 January 1941 resulting in 43 enrolments in the farming community of Ballance.⁶⁶ This was over double what had been achieved by that date with enrolments at the Borough and Council Offices.⁶⁷ It is interesting to notice that the Pahiatua Home Guard

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 19 December 1940, p. 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 30 January 1940, p. 4.

⁶⁷ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 30 January 1941, p. 4.

committee was keen to stress that volunteering for the Home Guard would not interfere with production, which came first, and that men would not normally be required to leave their own district. Birch saw this as a great start and told a reporter that 'he believed that the Pahiatua district, by moving now, could quickly overtake other districts which had made an earlier start'.⁶⁸

At the meeting in Mangatainoka the next evening, there were 38 more enlistments for the Home Guard.⁶⁹ Birch made special mention of the 'response of the young men in the district, a gesture which...was noticeably lacking in larger centres.'⁷⁰

The meeting at Makuri saw 32 enrolments, Konini 28 enrolments, Kaitawa organized two sections of Home Guard after its meeting and Makomako-Nikau raised a platoon.⁷¹ After nine days of meetings over 250 men had enrolled in the Home Guard with meetings still to be held in Mangamaire and Pahiatua itself.⁷² The Mangamaire meeting saw the largest support for the Home Guard so far, with 58 men enrolling. By February 12 1941, 344 men had enrolled.⁷³

These meetings were not seen with fondness by all in the region. Many in the township of Pahiatua felt they were being overlooked by the Home Guard, and that the Home Guard was only concentrating on

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 31 January 1941, p. 4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6 February 1941, p. 4.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 7 February 1941, p. 4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 12 February 1941, p. 4.

the rural areas of the region. There may have been some truth to this claim, but the Home Guard committee handled this complaint well by saying that they wanted to have a large public meeting in Pahiatua with the Dominion General, Major-General R. Young being the invited speaker, and he was unable to come at present.⁷⁴

This meeting was eventually held on 13 February 1941, and it not only had the presence of Young, but also the Minister of National Services, Hon. Robert Semple. Some 500 people attended this meeting, with 69 enrolling at the end of the meeting, making the total Home Guard strength of the Home Guard in the Pahiatua region at just below 400.⁷⁵ In the Wairarapa region, at this stage 1 400 men were enrolled in the Home Guard.⁷⁶ So despite a slow start the Pahiatua region made up approximately 30% of the total Home Guard men in the Wairarapa.

By 19 February 1941, the total strength of the Home Guard in the region was 567, due to a last series of organizational rallies.⁷⁷ Of these approximately 150 were for the town contingent.⁷⁸ This was considered by some to be disappointing. It is easy to see why. Based on population numbers, only about 10% of all men in the township of

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 3 February 1941, p. 6.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 14 February 1941, p. 4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 14 February 1941, p. 4.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 19 February 1941, p. 4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 20 February 1941, p. 4.

Pahiatua has signed up for the Home Guard, compared to about 46% in rural areas.⁷⁹

It was perceived that the Pahiatua Home Guard would have three chief uses. They were to deal with hostile action, help evacuate a major centre, and dealing with earthquakes. There was certainly no feeling that the people of the Pahiatua region were in any particular military danger. In fact the Pahiatua Emergency Precautions brochure admitted that “the possibilities of hostile action in any part of New Zealand seriously affecting Pahiatua or the surrounding districts, are perhaps improbable.”⁸⁰

One of the first orders of business was to equip the Home Guard and this became the biggest issue for the Home Guard in the Pahiatua region for the first several months of its existence. The equipping of the Home Guard had been an area of concern as early as mid-October 1940 when the question of how to train without arms was put to the Dominion Organiser of the Home Guard.⁸¹ There was an appeal ‘for voluntary loan of privately-owned rifles to the Home Guard for training.’⁸² It had even been suggested that the eight South African war era rifles on the Public Library wall could be used for training

⁷⁹ *New Zealand Official Yearbook 1940*, p.78-79.

⁸⁰ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 15 February 1941, p. 4.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 18 October 1940, p. 4.

⁸² *Ibid*, 25 February 1941, p. 4.

purposes.⁸³ For the first few months training was conducted using rifles loaned by other members of the home guard.⁸⁴

By mid-June the lack of weapons for the Home Guard was such that at a Pahiatua R.S.A meeting it was stated that 'the necessary equipment in the way of arms, ammunition and other material so essential to adequately train the men was incomplete and it seemed to be everybody's business and yet nobody's responsibility'.⁸⁵

The Tararua Home Guard had stated that 'it might be a while before enough ammunition will be available to...practice on the range.'⁸⁶ When the Mangaho Home Guard company renovated its rifle range and targets all the material was provided by the members of the company.

The lack of resources eventually resulted in the Pahiatua Home Guard deciding to hold a dance in order to raise funds. While the reason for the dance was given as having 'the double purpose of contacting the public and raising funds to cover operating expenses'⁸⁷ there is no doubt that the later reason was the more important.

The Pahiatua units of the Home Guard were inspected by Col. R. St. J. Beere, the Wellington District Commander of the Home Guard on 6 April 1941. Once again the issues of equipping the Home Guard and the reason why a Home Guard was necessary were raised. Beere's

⁸³ *Ibid*, 27 February 1941, p. 4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 25 March 1941, p. 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 16 June 1941, p. 5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 8 July 1941, p. 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 17 July 1941, p. 5.

response was interesting, 'He said that the men might wonder why they were doing the work because at the moment it did not look as if New Zealand were going to be invaded but it was possible as this country exactly met the requirements of a certain nation.'⁸⁸

In February 1942 a request by the adjutant of the Pahiatua Home Guard for '100 shovels (length 3 feet overall), 50 picks. 10 cwt. Gelnite, 20 coils fuse, 200 detonators, 100 electric detonators, 2 tons barbed wire, 12 jumpers, 12 drills, 12 7lb hammers'⁸⁹, was met by the reply 'the Area Commander states he is unable to supply Tools or Explosives'.⁹⁰ The difficulties the Pahiatua Battalion had in receiving equipment led to the adjutant of the Pahiatua Home Guard to write 'The equipment of the Home Guard will make defence here practically impossible.'⁹¹

While equipment was to be a constant problem for the Home Guards in the Pahiatua region, local businesses always did their best to support the local Home Guards. A good example of this was the Tararua Power Board. They provided free flood-lighting to approximately 25 Home Guard parade grounds in the region free of charge.⁹²

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 7 April 1941, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Pahiatua Home Guard (Adjutant). (1942, 5 February). re Field Fortifications [Letter to The Adjutant – Quartermaster, Group Headquarters, Home Guard, Masterton.] *Archives New Zealand*, AD-W10 5.

⁹⁰ Capt. NZ.T.S (Adjutant-Quartermaster). (1942, 18 February). Field Fortifications [Letter to The Adjutant – Home Guard, Pahiatua] *Archives New Zealand*, AD-W10 5.

⁹¹ Pahiatua Home Guard (Adjutant). (1942, 2 March). Defensive Positions [Letter to The Adjutant – Quartermaster, Group 7B, Home Guard, Masterton] *Archives New Zealand*, AD-W10 5.

⁹² *Gisborne Herald*, 15 February 1941, p. 4.

On 7 June the first Battalion parade of the Pahiatua units was held at the Pahiatua racecourse. Over 400 men participated.⁹³ When you considered that this number was approximately 60 – 70% of the men enrolled in the region in the Home Guard it shows what an exceptional turn-out this was. When it is taken in to account that this parade was held in the afternoon, which would have meant many farmers may not have been able to attend the number is even more noteworthy.

This was not always to be the case however, as early on it became apparent that some companies were full of farmers and that turn-outs would be affected by this fact. For example, at the B. Company of the Pahiatua Home Guard field day only 67 men turned up. This was put down to the fact that after a spell of wet weather and with the members of the company being ‘practically all farmers...it was only to be expected that a number would avail themselves of the first fine day for sometime.’⁹⁴

The fact that the Pahiatua Battalion was approximately 90% farmers was an ongoing issue.⁹⁵ Of the 40 road blocks that were set up in the region it was uncertain how many could be defended due to the fact that ‘Owing to the state of...the number of men, their arms, defending each block cannot at the moment be given...’.⁹⁶ When

⁹³ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 9 June 1941, p.4.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 24 June 1941, p. 4.

⁹⁵ Macrae, S (Major Commanding – Bush Battalion H.G). (1942, 7 December). Defence Positions – Road Blocks [Letter to The Group Adjutant –7B, Area Commander] *Archives New Zealand*, AD-W10 5.

⁹⁶ Macrae, S (The Group Commander – Group 7B). (1942, 16 July). Numbering of Road Blocks [Letter to The Area Commander – Area 7). *Archives New Zealand*, AD-W10 5.

Colonel Raebone visited the region on 26 November 1942 he considered that the progress made on the Road Blocks was 'inadequate'.⁹⁷ However, as the Major Commanding the Bush Battalion, S Macrae, pointed out the demographics of the region were a serious handicap to this type of work.

...the personal of this Battalion...has been able to give approximately only 4 months of the winter season to this type of work. In the case of the dairying community farming interests did not cease till April and recommenced three months later in August. In September, sheep farming activities commenced in the way of lambing. Immediately after lambing, docking – then till Christmas shearing.

All farms have been denuded of extra labour by ballots, necessitating owners spending most time on their farms and neglecting Home Guard work...

...The position as we see it is not going to improve, as we already have men who cannot parade on account of tyres on motor vehicles being worn out, replacement of which is impossible today.⁹⁸

By the end of 1942 it was decided to drop the number of road blocks in the region from 40 to 22 'which are sufficient for the available manpower.'⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Macrae, S (Major Commanding – Bush Battalion H.G). (1942, 7 December). Defence Positions – Road Blocks [Letter to The Group Adjutant –7B, Area Commander] *Archives New Zealand*, AD-W10 5.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*

⁹⁹ Major Commanding (Bush Battalion). (1942, 9 December). Report Of State Of Road Blocks [Letter to Headquarters – 7B Home Guard, Masterton] *Archives New Zealand*, AD-W10 5.

It wasn't until 'New Zealand's new problem'¹⁰⁰ emerged with the bombing of Pearl Harbour that equipment started to arrive to the regional Home Guards in the Pahiatua region. 'The first of our equipment arrived within a fortnight. It was a good pair of army boots...I think it must have been six months to a year when we got our uniforms. Very good stock from the First World War. Much later, we were issued with our rifles but no ammunition. I assume this was kept in safe-keeping until 'D' day arrived'.¹⁰¹

Equipment never seemed to improve throughout the war years. Even when the Hakanui and Hamua Home Guards received new equipment there were issues with it. 'As time went on, new battle dress and forage caps were issued. A case of new American rifles arrived, covered in grease, and had to be cleaned with kerosene and very scarce petrol. The rifles were...not as robust. They had bayonets in plastic scabbards and used .300 American ammunition.'¹⁰²

While there was certainly apathy towards creating a Home Guard in the Pahiatua region at the start of the war effort, once a Home Guard Committee was created events moved extremely quickly. From only eight enrolments in mid-December 1940, within two months this had grown to 567 men, largely due to the efforts of the local Home Guard Committee. It is interesting to note how much better the

¹⁰⁰ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 15 January 1942, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ Holdaway, W, *History of the Mangahao Home Guard* (private papers), p. 2.

¹⁰² Eddie, J, (ed.), *Mangamaire "A Century of Change" 1897 – 1997*, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Stylex Print, 1997, p.197.

support for the Home Guard was in the rural communities of the region, than in the township itself.

Sergeant Keith Elliott

Perhaps, one of the best examples of the support the Pahiatua region had towards the war was their response to Sergeant Keith Elliott, a Pahiatua farmer, becoming the fifth New Zealander to be awarded the Victoria Cross in the Second World War. The reaction of the region was such that it was covered in all of the major national newspapers, such as *The Press*, *Auckland Star*, and the *New Zealand Herald*.

On his return to Pahiatua on furlough in July 1943, the people of the Pahiatua region came out en masse to honour the now Lieutenant Keith Elliott.¹⁰³ The town was decorated with flags and from 1 p.m. all shops were closed for the day. He had lunch with the Pahiatua Borough and County councils and there was a civic reception for him in the afternoon.

Before the civic reception there was a parade led by the R.N.Z.A.F. band, with a cross-section of participants. The parade had members of the Home Guard, E.P.S, returned soldiers, woman's organisations and schoolchildren. The parade was headed by children from Marina

¹⁰³ *New Zealand Herald*, 23 July 1943, p. 4.

School, the area where Lieutenant Elliott had his farm. After the civic reception there was a demonstration of ceremonial marching by the R.N.Z.A.F and the Pahiatua Patriotic Society put on a grand ball, not only for Elliott but all other N.Z.E.F men from the region who were on furlough. Support for a local VC winner is not surprising, but the fact that such a response was made demonstrates the support that the Pahiatua region not only had for Keith Elliott, but for the war effort in general.

Pahiatua and its relationship with the military war effort was complicated but overall it can be said that it was willing to 'share the cost'. In total, 34 soldiers from the Pahiatua region gave their lives in World War Two. The men of the region did enlist, although never in great numbers. The support for the Home Guard eventually came, although it was always more popular in the rural areas of the region than in Pahiatua itself. However, there was definitely a very strong feeling of patriotism towards the men who were serving from the region. So now, the question has to be asked how much support was there for the war in the Pahiatua region from a non-military perspective? In particular, amongst women in the region and how generous the region was from a monetary perspective. That is the subject of chapter three.

Chapter Three

The Social Impact of the War

Historians now try to understand the diverse impact that war has on society. This chapter will concentrate on two key aspects of the Second World War on society in the Pahiatua region: its impact on the women of the region and how charitable the region was towards the war effort.

Women's Organisations in the Pahiatua region

Women played a key role in the Pahiatua region during the Second World War. They were often at the forefront of a number of volunteer organisations, they played a major role in the fundraising in the region, and some even were appointed to administrative roles in military organisations. The war also gave a number of women a chance to join the local workforce.

One of the most crucial and active organisations in the region during the Second World War was the local Women's Institutes. Not only did they provide a place for women to share friendship, support and experiences, especially for women who lost sons during the war, but they quickly became organisations that greatly helped the war effort. In fact, the Women's Institutes dedication to patriotic work

often saw them abandon other community work they had done previously before the war and concentrate purely on their patriotic work.

The appreciation for these Institutes was not only valued by local residents in the region. One of the key responsibilities of Women's Institutes at this time was to provide parcels for the soldiers' parcel fund. These would nearly always contain woollen clothing plus a few edible items. For example, items such as jerseys, hussifs, biscuits, and cakes were nearly always included. To this end, a lot of the Pahiatua region's Women's Institutes held dances to raise funds for these soldiers parcels funds. Women always played a major part in organising these dances. Not only were they the organisers and providing the supper, but often being the musicians as well.

Records of how many women's institutes were in the Pahiatua region at the time of the Second World War are hard to determine. For example, the Pahiatua and District's Museum Society has a banner for the Tutaekara Women's Institute, which suggests that one existed, but no records can be found to confirm this.¹ Other institutes, such as the Kaitawa Country Women's Institute, 'went into recess during the Second World War because of petrol rationing' for a few years.² Based on information that can be found in the resources, at least a dozen

¹ Eddie, J, (ed.), *Mangamaire "A Century of Change" 1897 – 1997*, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Stylex Print, 1997. p. 168.

² *Kaitawa-Hinemoa Schools & District Centennial 1890 -1990*, Pahiatua, New Zealand: Pahiatua Printing Co. Ltd, 1990, p. 58.

women's institutes were active in the region at the time of the Second World War.

Soldiers serving overseas greatly appreciated the parcels they were sent from the region, as the Kaitawa Women's Institute was to discover when 'members were pleased to receive a letter from Gnr. J Clulow (Middle East Forces) thanking them for the parcel they had sent him.'³

Due to the petrol restrictions it became quite common for the husband to head off to his Home Guard meeting, while his wife would go to her Women's Institute meeting. This was because the meetings were often held at the same time in the same building to conserve petrol.⁴ At the Makomako Women's Institute meeting in February 1942 a lot of the meeting was used to discuss ways and means of carrying on the work of the Institute in view of the lack of petrol. At the same meeting the women of the Makomako Women's Institute also spent an hour making first aid supplies.⁵ This was not an uncommon practice around the region. The Ruawhata Women's Institute often made 'casts, splints and basins which were then painted white and sent to the front.'⁶ This demonstrates how important the making of medical supplies was to these women's institutes.

³ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 27 January 1942, p.4.

⁴ *Ibid*, 7 January 1942, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid*, 23 February 1942, p. 4.

⁶ Rossiter, J. *Ruawhata 1913 -2001*, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Stylex Print, 2002. p. 84.

This was often a common theme through the war years at women's institutes in the region. The teaching of basic first aid and the making of medical supplies was common at most institute meetings. At nearly every women's institute meeting in the region there would usually be some time spent on one of these tasks at each meeting. They also often became leaders in forming branches of the Red Cross in their local areas.

Mrs. L.T. Herbert, who was later to become the Centre Commandant, Wairarapa, gives a good overview of how many Red Cross branches were started and how popular they were in the region. 'As I had previously lectured at the Red Cross classes in Pahiatua I was asked to form a detachment. It was not a case of us looking for students. With the war clouds gathering, people were asking to be taught First Aid and Home Nursing. Fortunately, in the town and district of Pahiatua were several Registered Nurses. When I phoned and asked them to take classes, they replied 'I've never lectured before'. I replied 'We will learn' and over the years we did!'⁷ The success of the Red Cross in the Pahiatua region is best demonstrated by the fact that by 1942 Pahiatua had the largest membership of all the 11 sub-centres in the Wairarapa province, 347.⁸

Women's Institutes in the Pahiatua region were also quite aware of the hardships fellow women were facing in Great Britain. Many of the

⁷ Carle, C.J, *Forty Mile Bush – A Tribute to the Pioneers*, Pahiatua, New Zealand: North Wairarapa News Co. Ltd, 1980. p. 226.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 227.

local women's institutes shared correspondence with sister institutes in Great Britain. For example, the Konini Women's Institute shared letters with the Ashover Institute (in England). Letters from the Ashover Institute described the trials they were facing due to the air raids, helped contribute to Konini's and other women's institutes in the regions decision to make camouflage nets. While such war work as making camouflage nets was important for women's institutes, the feeling of community and togetherness in a time of crises was just as important. 'It was understood that when we had finished two nets, we could have supper. It took about a week to make a net – we went when we had time...We got quite enthusiastic about them. It was just one of the district activities, mainly in the evenings in the winter.'⁹

As well as the Women's Institutes, organisations like the Pahiatua Victory Club, Lady Galway Guild, the Women's Division of the Farmers Union (WDFU), the Red Cross, church groups and the R.S.A Women's Division, became very important for local women. They became organisations where women could feel and were making a major contribution to the war effort.

The Pahiatua Victory Club, may have been seen as nothing more than a knitting circle to some, but it greatly helped contribute to the war effort. It raised a lot of money for emergency hospital beds. It attempted to hold a meeting at least once every two weeks, and a

⁹ McCallum, A. *Tui Country (A History of the Pahiatua Country)*, Pahiatua, New Zealand: The Pahiatua County Council, 1988. p. 360.

dance at least once a month. These dances often raised contributions of around £15 to such funds as the Emergency Hospital Fund.¹⁰ Members also donated livestock that were later sold and the profits given to the patriotic appeals. The Victory Clubs support of patriotic appeals was appreciated with one observer noting in relation to the 1942 appeal that ‘This is only a small organisation, but through dances and other means they have been instrumental in raising the very acceptable sum of over £60 for the appeal.’¹¹

Another organisation that often made knitted goods and other comforts for the troops was the Sewing Bee section of the Pahiatua Red Cross. Their weekly “sew and knit” was described as ‘a veritable hive of industry’¹² with some members working ‘on hundreds of garments throughout the war.’¹³ They produced a number of goods, such as woollen pullovers, mittens, socks, hot water bag covers, hospital bags, balaclavas, towels, eye bandages, sponge bags, and pyjamas for the troops.

The Pahiatua Women’s Division of the Farmers Union

Arguably, the most important organisation for women, especially for rural woman in the Pahiatua region, was the WDFU. On 27

¹⁰ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 18 February 1942, p. 4

¹¹ *Ibid*, 2 April 1942, p.2.

¹² *Ibid*, 29 June 1940, p. 4.

¹³ Carle, C.J, *Forty Mile Bush – A Tribute to the Pioneers*, p. 228.

February 1940 the Pahiatua WDFU was visited by Mrs. N. Adams, the Dominion's President. She urged the '...members to get behind the government...not to let the Division lapse during the war...keep up their parties and social occasions. Their war work should be done through the Division.'¹⁴ The Pahiatua branch of the WDFU certainly tried to live up to this challenge.

The Pahiatua WDFU was extremely active during the war years. This was despite the majority of its members having important duties to complete on their farms. This did not stop them from doing useful patriotic work however. A lot of these women had sons fighting overseas and were keen to play a part in the war effort. The membership of the Pahiatua WDFU steadily increased during the war years and its monthly meeting was nearly always held in a different rural area in the Pahiatua region to encourage support for the organisation.

A lot of women's volunteer organisations had 'conflicting demands on female leadership'.¹⁵ Was it better to have an older, more traditional woman in charge, or did 'young, virile women' make better leaders?¹⁶ In early 1942, the Pahiatua WDFU made its choice by electing one of the youngest members, Mrs Cornelius Walker, as President. This saw a renewed energy in this organisation. There

¹⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 29 February 1940, p.3

¹⁵ Montgomerie, D. *The Women's War: New Zealand Women 1939 – 45*, Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press, 2001, p. 57.

¹⁶ *Auckland Star*, 18 March, 1942, p.8.

quickly became a real feeling in the region that this was an organisation that was making a major contribution to the war effort, as can be seen by the following letter to the editor of *The Pahiatua Herald* from the new President Mrs. Walker.

To this meeting I invite every town and country women who wants to play her part in our country's war effort. We now have a little knowledge of urgent and immediate requirements that every one of us can help with. There is no time to wait for direct orders and instructions, in fact there seems to be no one willing to give these orders. Let every one of us do our best to back up our soldiers and airmen...¹⁷

This comment seems to have arisen from a Primary Production Council meeting that Mrs Walker attended in Masterton in early August 1942. She was disheartened by the amount of talk but little action that was decided on by the men. She decided that the lead must come from the women and in particular the Pahiatua WDFU. The Pahiatua WDFU decided to establish vegetable gardens in every home, and the production of more eggs, potatoes, and meat so that each household could support itself. While this was not a new idea, something similar had been done in Christchurch in mid-1940,¹⁸ it seems to have been more successful than the Christchurch effort which was discontinued after one month. A telegram was even sent

¹⁷ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 3 August 1942, p.2.

¹⁸ Taylor. N, *The Home Front (Vol. 2)*, Wellington: Historical Publications Branch New Zealand, 1986. p. 1064.

to the Prime Minister stating the intention of the Pahiatua WDFU to grow more eggs, vegetables and potatoes for the war effort. The fact that supplies of eggs and vegetables were later sent to the soldiers' camp at Makomako show that locally this campaign was reasonably successful.

This production crusade was recognised by the national WDFU organisation and the Women's Institutes of New Zealand. Deciding that the scheme that Mrs Cornelius Walker had originated was worthwhile these organisations started a crusade for victory with the aim 'of having all New Zealand's food requirements grown within the Dominion, and keeping up the line of supply to Britain and the Allied forces.'¹⁹ The great thing about this crusade for victory was that it gained the support and co-operation of women from 'city, town and country and the united and consolidated effort of all women'.²⁰ This demonstrates the effect that one small initiative in a small rural region could have on the wider New Zealand community.

When the Dominion Secretary of the WDFU, Mrs. A.B. Smith visited the Pahiatua's WDFU in September 1942 she made special mention of this work. The strength of the WDFU in the region is perhaps best summed up by the following comment published in *The Pahiatua Herald*. "Keep it up WDFU and perhaps you may be able to put some spur and kick into some of our men's organisations..."²¹

¹⁹ *The Press*, 29 August 1942, p. 4.

²⁰ *Auckland Star*, 29 August 1942, p. 3.

²¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 11 August 1942, p. 2.

By the end of 1942 it became apparent to the Pahiatua WDFU that more soldiers would be coming to the region and this resulted in them deciding to concentrate more on local entertainment rather than food production. This included entertaining soldiers for Christmas dinner in their homes.²² One of the reasons for this was certainly the belief that it was important to keep these soldiers entertained to stop any potential trouble from brewing.

Women in the Pahiatua region

Throughout the war the local newspapers *The Pahiatua Herald* (1939 – 1943) and *The North Wairarapa Herald* (1943 - 1945) would on average once a week have a Women's Interests section. This usually conservative section often included two or three recipes, some fashion advice, and other advice that was considered relevant to women. Often in the early war years it was quite noticeable that there was not anything on the war. However, this gradually began to change. On 13 January 1942, perhaps not surprisingly only a few weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbour, there was an article on 'Women In Uniform' and how they were becoming more common and 'Warm Clothing - Essential In A Raid'.²³ This was followed on 7 February 1942, with an article in this section on how sleep was

²² *Ibid*, 5 February 1942, p. 2.

²³ *Ibid*, 13 January 1942, p. 2.

important in 'Combating War Anxiety.'²⁴ While these columns never fully concentrated on the war, there was certainly at least one or two articles per month with some important war advice for women.

It is often presumed that one of the consequences of war is that with significant numbers of men being away, employment becomes easier to obtain, especially for women. This idea that 'the war produced major advances in opportunities and status of women in the paid workforce' was challenged by Montgomerie in *The Women's War*.²⁵ But was this the case in the Pahiatua region?

One of the results of the war was that it actually saw a number of women leave the Pahiatua region to take up employment opportunities elsewhere. For example, one woman resigned from the staff of the local newspaper, to take up a position in a V.A.D (Voluntary Aid Detachment) in Featherston.²⁶ Miss Jean Bond, a nurse at the Pahiatua Public Hospital, joined the army.²⁷

The industrial conscription of women into the paid workforce does not seem to have had the impact in the Pahiatua region as it did in others. As Montgomerie states, 'The impact of industrial conscription varied markedly from region to region.'²⁸ The fact the region was rural, was desperately short of farm labour, and the National Service Department was averse to worsen this shortage no doubt contributed

²⁴ *Ibid*, 7 February 1942, p. 2.

²⁵ Montgomerie, D. *The Women's War: New Zealand Women 1939 – 45*, p. 63.

²⁶ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 31 January 1942, p. 4.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 30 January 1941, p. 4.

²⁸ Montgomerie, D. *The Women's War: New Zealand Women 1939 – 45*, p. 88.

to this. However, in 1943 when women aged 18-19 were included in industrial conscription there was some displeasure in the region. A number of women in the region, were interviewed by the District Manpower officer of Masterton in early 1943 for selection for essential work in Wellington. Many parents were upset in the belief that their daughters, especially if under 20, could be sent away from Pahiatua, and what the accommodation situation would be like in Wellington for these women. The officer, Mr. Crosbie, was quick to say that these women under 20 would not be sent away. 'These girls would be directed into essential work in the town, such as in hospitals, as waitresses in hotels, restaurants, etc., or would be required to replace girls in the older groups, who have been selected and directed to munition works and other industries in the capital.'²⁹

While some women found work in local businesses during the war years, the majority did not become permanent. A good example of this is the banks in the Pahiatua region. The township of Pahiatua had three banks and in April 1939 they employed a total of zero women out of 15 employees.³⁰ This was not an unusual as out of 30 employees at banks in Masterton none were women.³¹ Masterton had its first women bank officers by September 1940.³² It was not until late 1941 when the BNZ bank in Pahiatua, due to a number of men joining the

²⁹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 13 March 1943, p. 3.

³⁰ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, April 1939, MSDL-1406.

³¹ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, September 1939, MSDL-1406.

³² MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, September 1940, MSDL-1407.

army, employed a woman. Its first female staff member since 1923. A local historian wrote,

She was joined by three others in 1942. They all resigned at various times in 1946 as the men returned from the war and Pahiatua banking once again became a male business.³³

By September 1942, of the 15 employees at banks in Pahiatua, seven were women, or approximately 43%. This is very similar compared to what was occurring in Masterton, when for the same time period 44% of their bank employees were women.³⁴ By the end of the war this number in Pahiatua had actually grown to 47%, although with men returning from war, it quickly became a male-dominated industry by the end of 1946.³⁵ This seems to have been a very common theme in a number of Pahiatua businesses.

Montgomerie in *The Women's War* makes the claim that 'Replacing men with women raised the question of the relative value of the sexes. Many men felt threatened by the suggestion of male and female equivalence...'³⁶ This certainly seems to be the case in some businesses in the region. At the Pahiatua Post Office, women were often in charge during the war years. One male employee in a bid to annoy the patriotism of a female boss he disliked 'painted a German

³³ Griffin, R.H. *Pahiatua 1889-1989 A BNZ Century*, Wellington, New Zealand: BNZ Archives, 1989, p. 29 – 30.

³⁴ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, September 1942, MSDL-1409.

³⁵ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, September 1945, MSDL-1412.

³⁶ Montgomerie, D. *The Women's War: New Zealand Women 1939 – 45*, p. 67.

swastika on the mudguard' of his bike in the early war years. 'She thought it an affront and downright seditious...I can still see her coming back at 8pm one evening to check I hadn't seduced any of the girls.'³⁷ While this demonstrates how far some people might go to annoy a boss, and a female boss, it also demonstrates how little people of the region knew about the war and the lack of an impact it was having on them.

Patriotic Appeals

While women played a major part in the society of the Pahiatua region perhaps one of the most striking facts about the Pahiatua region during the Second World War was how generous it was to different patriotic appeals. This was a feature that was apparent from early on during the war effort (as mentioned in Chapter One) and was to continue throughout the war years. Patriotic appeals were seen in the region as a way to contribute to the war in a useful way. The fundraising efforts were also seen in the region as a great way to socialise during the war.

The Pahiatua and District Patriotic committee was extremely active during the war years. It held a number of dances to raise funds for a variety of patriotic purposes. Allocated wool for the knitting of

³⁷ *Pahiatua Toll Exchange 1900 – 1988 The End Of An Era*. Pahiatua: Pahiatua Print, p. 11.

comforts of seamen. Provide financial support to families with soldiers in prisoner of war camps. It provided soldiers gift parcels, (the districts quota was 181 parcels)³⁸, and making sure Pahiatua made its patriotic funds quotas.

Like the women's institutes, the Pahiatua Patriotic society was extremely active in making soldiers gift parcels. These parcels were always greatly appreciated and seemed to be of better quality than parcels sent from other parts of the country. Pte. F.B. Tait in a letter he wrote to his father, 'Will you please pass on...my thanks for the parcel which arrived...No letters got 'through' only parcel mail and I got five. It made one feel sorry for the other poor chaps who have no thoughtful people in New Zealand to send them those small comforts which mean so much to us.'³⁹ While a Spr. P.T. Spelman wrote, 'The parcel arrived in perfect condition and compared more than favourably with other parcels from different parts of the Dominion.'⁴⁰

The Pahiatua region during the Second World War was seen as a region that 'has always been recognised as a very fruitful field when appeals are lodged for any worthy cause'⁴¹ and this was definitely borne out during the war years. The yearly patriotic drives, Bonds for Bombers, mayoralty drives and other fund raising activities to do with the war all saw a great response from the Pahiatua region. This is

³⁸ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 7 February 1942, p. 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 9 February 1942, p. 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 27 February 1942, p. 5.

probably best shown and recognised nationally with the gift of a Bren gun carrier to the New Zealand War Effort in 1941.

Local Pahiatua resident Mr. Godfrey Taylor was impressed with the success Britain had had with its “War Weapons Weeks” and suggested something similar in New Zealand. ‘It makes one proud of the Mother Country...cannot the Pahiatua district raise say £1 000 in a week for such a cause...’⁴². He stated that he would contribute £50 to the equipping of a Bren gun carrier in the hope that at least nineteen others would follow suit. Interestingly, the first five donations to this appeal all came from women, one of which was Mrs. Cornelius Walker, president of the WDFU.⁴³ This was not uncommon for appeals in the Pahiatua region to see women be the first to get behind the appeal financially. It was a way for women to feel like they were contributing significantly to the war effort.

This idea was enthusiastically picked up by the Mayor (Mr. S.K. Siddells) who asked residents of the region to contribute to Pahiatua’s War Weapons Week. ‘Let the residents of Pahiatua District point the way to the rest of New Zealand’.⁴⁴ He also made a point of mentioning the women who had already contributed. ‘Already, four ladies have acceded to Mr. Taylor’s request, but where are the men?’⁴⁵ For those

⁴² *Ibid*, 26 May 1941, p. 4.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 28 May/29 May 1941, p. 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 31 May 1941, p. 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

who could not afford £50 he set up a Mayor's Fund to collect smaller donations for this cause.

However, there was no great influx of funds, with some in the region suggesting that the money would be better invested in the War Loan scheme instead. Even the Mayor admitted that this idea '...has considerable merit in it. But there are some basic objections, which seem to conflict with the originator's idea of the appeal.'⁴⁶

By mid-June the Mayor's attitude to the regions support of this appeal can only be said to be disappointing. Along with comparing the spirit of giving among members of the region, comments like 'This week's total has been brought to £871 17s 6d, which, in view of the cause is extremely disappointing and certainly not in keeping with the districts' former record of generosity'⁴⁷ and 'Not only is it your duty to do so, but it should be your privilege, without having to beseech you'⁴⁸ show his frustration.

Despite this, £1 154 was eventually raised and was presented to the Minister of Defence, by Godfrey Taylor on the steps of parliament. The Acting Prime Minister (Mr Nash) stated that

It is hoped that the example set by Pahiatua will be followed by other parts of the Dominion and the idea of a War Weapons Week in various localities prove as popular and beneficial here as it has done in the many centres of Great

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 6 June 1941, p. 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 12 June 1941, p. 2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 16 June 1941, p. 2.

Britain, where on each occasion in the short space of a week huge sums have been raised.⁴⁹

The Minister of Defence, Mr Jones, was said to say, "I am very proud of what the people of New Zealand are doing in connection with our war effort. We are getting stronger every day, though we still have a big job in front of us in defending our country. But we are going to go even further than defending New Zealand. We are going to take back from our enemies all they have taken from us."⁵⁰

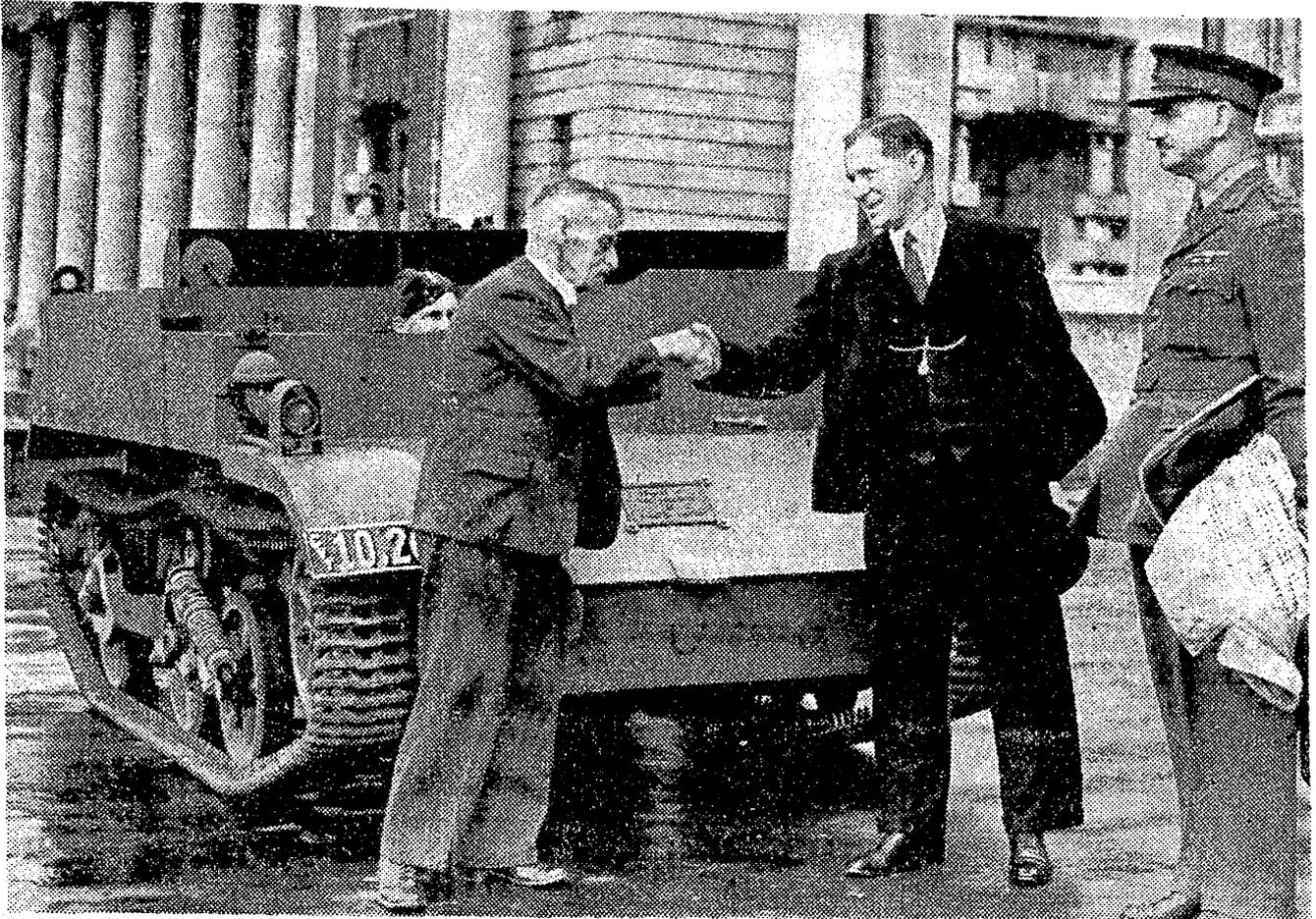
While the appeal for the Bren Gun Carrier was well supported by the Pahiatua region, the impression it had on the general public was not as well received. The New Zealand National Film Unit produced a short 20 second clip where in a slightly condescending tone the following was stated, '...this resident of Pahiatua started an appeal. The result another Bren Gun Carrier for the army. The inevitable small boy is present just to show his...ah...interest.'⁵¹

As mentioned in Chapter One, the Patriotic Appeal in 1941 saw an enthusiastic response from the Pahiatua region. Given a district quota of £3 000, after six weeks the region had raised over £4 658. As the organizer, Mr. J. Abel, was quoted, 'To the best of my knowledge Pahiatua is second only to Waipukurau in thus exceeding its quota...

⁴⁹ *Evening Post*, 9 July 1941, issue 8.

⁵⁰ *Auckland Star*, 14th April 1942, p.6.

⁵¹ National Archives. (1942). *Reference Videocassette Nos. 557-569* [VHS]. New Zealand: New Zealand National Film Unit.



The Minister of Defence, Mr. Jones, shaking hands with Mr. Godfrey Taylor, of Pahiatua, after accepting a Bren gun carrier which had been given by the residents of the Pahiatua district. *Photo courtesy of 'Archives Central'.*

...Pahiatua, with a population of only 4 000, has thus certainly put up a magnificent performance.’⁵² By 31 May 1941 it was estimated that the Pahiatua region, ‘with a population of only 4547, have subscribed £8715 to patriotic appeals’.⁵³ However, was this ‘magnificent performance’ kept by the Pahiatua region?

In 1942 the patriotic funds quota for Pahiatua was £2 660. This quota was based on population and valuation. On the opening night of the appeal (February 25th), nearly £1 000 was received. Mr. A.W. Bisset, the chairman of the Patriotic committee, mentioned that “Pahiatua had always exceeded its quota”⁵⁴ and could be expected to do so again when the appeal closed at the end of March. The opening night of this appeal was a great demonstration of the support the Pahiatua region had for these patriotic appeals. Despite it raining heavily, the Regent theatre in Pahiatua was completely full with dozens of people unable to gain admittance.⁵⁵ By 5 March 1942 the half way mark was passed. However, on 17 March 1942, with only another £200 to raise to make its quota, Pahiatua’s quota was changed from £2 600 to £3 250⁵⁶ as the National Patriotic Fund Board was now asking for £1 000 000 nationwide. This increase was put

⁵² *Evening Post*, 4 December 1940, p. 9.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 27 June 1941, p. 9.

⁵⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 26 February 1942, p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 26 February 1942, p.4.

⁵⁶ This was later raised to £3 466.

down to the greater number of men that had been mobilised and the larger than expected increase in prisoners of war.⁵⁷

However, it soon became apparent, that after a number of donation drives not everyone in the region was so fond of these Patriotic appeals. A common opinion in the region can be seen in a letter to the editor of *The Pahiatua Herald*. A "Once Bitten", commented that '...I see the Patriotic Society has launched another appeal for funds. Is it a fair thing to cadge money from us again? Surely if we pay our taxes we are doing all the Government expects us to do...'⁵⁸ and three days later he wrote '...I watched Mr Bisset (Chairman of the Pahiatua Patriotic Society) at the sale on Tuesday. People vanished in all directions when he appeared.'⁵⁹ When the Patriotic Committee canvased Pahiatua looking for donations for the 1942 appeal, it was reported that 'Some donors had given quite freely while others had given all kinds of excuses to dodge their obligations.'⁶⁰ There is no doubt that some in the region were experiencing donor exhaustion. It seemed every few months there was another organisation asking for donations to the war effort. Money was in short supply and some felt that they had given enough to the war effort.

⁵⁷ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 17 March 1942, p.5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 2 March 1942, p. 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 5 March 1942, p. 4

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 4 March 1942, p. 4

For the first time with one of these appeals, *The Pahiatua Herald* started to publish a column called 'Patriotic Meanderings'. It is apparent that one of the main reasons for this was to encourage the people of the region to donate to the 1942 appeal. Also, this can be seen as a clear sign that interest in the region was potentially waning towards these appeals. It is interesting to note the change in tone of this column throughout the appeal. With the appeal having been running for a month and with only £539 pounds to go, the column took a more negative tone with comments like 'why anyone should not contribute to such a worthy cause.'⁶¹ It seems this was brought on by two popular feelings in the region, that the money was not wanted and that the money was not well spent.

By 9 April 1942, and still £200 short of the new quota, 'Patriotic Meanderings' was stating 'Pahiatua is expected to do what is asked of it – it always has – will it do so again?'⁶² The Patriotic Society finally closed the appeal on 5 May 1942. At this date the appeal had reached £3306. Donations however, kept coming in and when it finally did close, on 18 May 1942, the total was £3 494.⁶³ The Pahiatua region had maintained its 100% record in reaching its appeal targets.

By the time of the 1943 Patriotic appeal there was real concern in the community that the region wouldn't reach its quota of £3 400, based on the response towards the 1942 appeal. It was even

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 23 March 1942, p. 5

⁶² *Ibid*, 9 April 1942, p. 3.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 18 June 1942, p. 2

suggested to the Mayor that he should postpone this appeal. At the first public meeting to discuss this appeal on 22 February 1943 there was real doubt as to if the required amount could be raised. The editor of *The Pahiatua Herald*, picking up on the feeling of the region, expressed the belief that 'It would be deplorable should the district lose its excellent reputation by failing its share on this occasion.'⁶⁴

On the first Saturday of the appeal 'several of the collectors reported that they were unfortunate in finding quite a number of people away from home when they called.'⁶⁵ Whether this was because they were busy or trying to avoid the collectors, no one was quite sure.

However, it seems to have come as a surprise to everyone involved when it was announced that the quota had been exceeded in the short space of one week. 'The completion of the Pahiatua 1943 Patriotic Appeal by Saturday night after one week's collecting must be close to a New Zealand record and reflects great credit on the Patriotic Society, the Entertainers and the general public.'⁶⁶ The achievement of the Pahiatua region in reaching its quota was even used by Mr. T. Jordan, chairman of the Masterton district's patriotic committee as an example, 'Bravo, Pahiatua, they did their task and more in less than a

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 24 February 1943, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 1 March 1943, p. 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 8 March 1943, p. 3.

week'⁶⁷, in response to his district's poor response to the 1943 patriotic appeal.

The annual patriotic appeal of 1944 saw the same response in the Pahiatua region with the £3 000 quota being reached in a week. This meant that for the second year in succession the Pahiatua region had been the quickest to reach its quota in New Zealand.⁶⁸ This demonstrates how passionate the patriotic feelings of the Pahiatua region were towards the war effort.

In the Pahiatua region women certainly 'did their bit' and contributed a lot to the war effort. Organisations such as the local women's institutes, church groups, and the Pahiatua Women's Division of the Farmers Union played a major role in the region. From making soldiers parcels, patriotic fund-raising, learning first-aid to providing entertainment they were definitely in the forefront of the war effort in the region. The war also allowed some women to move into occupations normally dominated by men, for example banking and farming. However, how beneficial for women this proved to be is certainly debatable as many of these jobs were taken over by men as they returned from the war.

Without any doubt, Pahiatua was a region that was extremely supportive of the war effort. While the war had an impact on peoples'

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 25 March 1943, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Manawatu Standard*, 4 May 1944, p. 4.

finances this did not stop them contributing money and other items for the defence of New Zealand. This is confirmed by the immense support patriotic appeals received in the region. Throughout the war years the region always made and went well above its quota. This giving to patriotic appeals was seen as a key patriotic activity in the region. While it is definitely true that some in the region eventually became weary of the seemingly continuous patriotic appeals, this had very little effect on the actual support given to these appeals. The pride the region took towards its generosity to patriotic appeals was certainly justified. Overall, people seemed to cope well with the changes brought about by the war, however was this the case with the businesses in the region as well? That is the subject of chapter four.

Chapter Four

Industry in the Pahiatua region

According to the records of the Bank of New South Wales, at the start of the war the Pahiatua region was earning income in a variety of industries. These ranged from commercial and trading, to professions such as lawyers and doctors to construction. However the majority, approximately 75% of all money earned in the region, was in agriculture.¹ The Second World War caused many restrictions and restraints for these industries in the Pahiatua region during the war. As Tom Hanrahan said when he took over managing the Tui Brewery in 1941, ‘...I had some problems on my hand...’² These problems such as an inability to attain key products, transport and petrol restrictions were not only problems that the Tui Brewery faced but all businesses in the region. How the Pahiatua region was able to cope with these problems, in particular the farming community, makes an interesting study and is the subject of this next chapter.

Carrier Companies

Being a rural region, Pahiatua had a number of carrier companies that were involved in a range of work. From the carting of lime and

¹ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors’ reports, September 1939, MSDL-1406.

² *The Best Little Brewery in Australasia. DB Central Brewery Centennial 1889-1989.* p. 8.

fertiliser, cream, livestock, wool, fencing materials and even being a postie by delivering small items for farmers the trucking companies did a decent trade. However, the onset of the Second World War was to have a major effect on these companies. Petrol, tyres and manpower became extremely scarce and 'a number of local trucks were requisitioned for use by the armed forces.'³ As can be imagined this had a major effect.

Carrier companies had to apply for a petrol quota during the war years. This was usually achieved by the granting of a six month licence, which amounted to approximately 42 gallons a month per truck.⁴ However, this amount of petrol meant that there was not enough for long trips anymore. This had a major consequence for sheep farmers in particular.

Tyres became extremely scarce for carrier companies in the region. Rubber for tyres was very hard to get. This was only enhanced after the capture of Malaya by the Japanese, which provided the majority of rubber supplies at the time. This led to many companies begging for supplies or making do with what they could get.⁵

The army commandeering trucks also had consequences in the Pahiatua region. In 1939 Ron Udy took over the local Hukanui General Carrier when his brother was one of the first to enlist in the region.

³ Carle, C.J, *Forty Mile Bush – A Tribute to the Pioneers*, p. 236

⁴ Eddie, J, (ed.), *"Road Transport in the North Wairarapa" 60 Years of Eric Gleeson & Sons*, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Keeling and Mundy Ltd, 1983. p. 13.

⁵ Ibid.

Two years later he was forced to return to farming when the army commandeered his lorry.⁶

However, some carrier companies in the Pahiatua region, were actually able to remain financially viable due to work the war brought into the region. There were two main causes why this was so, the internment camp and the ammunition dump.

In 1942, the Pahiatua racecourse was converted into a prison camp to hold all foreign “nationals”. While the main contractor for the building of the camp was a Wellington builder, some of the work was carried out by local contractors. ‘One of the first to be involved was Ted Lett who erected a six foot high barbed wire perimeter fence for £3 000...Ted made 10% on this which was typical of the financial arrangements.’⁷ The carting of the timber, cement and weatherboard to build this camp, helped a lot financially.

In 1944 this camp was converted into a refugee camp for the Polish children. This refugee camp was very much prepared at the last minute, and still looked like an internment camp when the Polish refugees arrived. One refugee stated, ‘On arriving at the camp we saw barbed wire and watch towers. Oh God! Not again!’⁸ The region was certainly not aware of the impression this would have on the refugees and the wire and towers were soon removed. The camps did however

⁶ Eddie, J, (ed.), *Mangamaire “A Century of Change” 1897 – 1997*, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Stylex Print, 1997, p.191.

⁷ Eddie, J, (ed.), *“Road Transport in the North Wairarapa” 60 Years of Eric Gleeson & Sons*, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Keeling and Mundy Ltd, 1983. p. 14.

⁸ Chibowski, A. *A Priest’s Odyssey*, Wellington, New Zealand: Future Publishing, 2013, p. 88.

provide a source of business for many local carriers and businesses in the region throughout the war years.

The second reason that helped many carriers financially during this time was the building of an ammunition dump on Eisings Road in Makomako. Makomako was most likely selected due to its isolation, being surrounded by hills and its proximity to the Ohakea Airforce base and Linton Army camp. The main contractor was from Napier, W.M. Angus, and he used a number of local carriers to construct the large Ammunition Dump. The cartage of timber, steel, cement, bricks metal and various other materials needed to build this Dump, gave the carrier companies a lot of work. Payment was on a “cost plus” setup, and it seems that there was some abuse of the materials, in particular the bricks. ‘Wastage was everywhere.’⁹ These supplies falling off the back of the truck certainly helped the carrier companies, and what was even better, was that it was all at the government’s expense.

Near the end of the war the carrier companies were also helped by the amount of public works and activities the Government designed to get the country working again. A number of state houses, shops, farm buildings, schools and public buildings were built in the Pahiatua region at this time. Farms still needed fencing, fertiliser, livestock and general materials. The cartage of the goods and materials to help with all this building all helped the carrier companies financially. ‘All this

⁹ Eddie, J, (ed.), *“Road Transport in the North Wairarapa” 60 Years of Eric Gleeson & Sons*, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Keeling and Mundy Ltd, 1983. p. 14.

(building) required quantities of timber, cement, steel, metal, sand and other materials to be carted.’¹⁰

Tui Brewery

The Tui Brewery has a special place in the hearts of many people from the region, and its iconic building, the Tui Tower, is known all over New Zealand. Pre-war Tui beer was described by the journalist Pat Lawlor as ‘an almost perfect marriage of the best qualities of Speight’s, Bass from England, Timaru Ale and Sunshine.’¹¹ The Tui Brewery was the largest country brewery in New Zealand at the time war broke out and it was one of the success stories for Pahiatua businesses during the war. At the start of the war the Tui Brewery had 147 shareholders and despite war conditions this had grown to over 160 shareholders in 1942.¹² It employed around 30, mostly married men who the majority had been with the company for a long time.¹³ While it never flourished during the war years, and it found things difficult due to war conditions, it managed to be kept ‘afloat when many of its competitors of the time collapsed.’¹⁴ In *The Story of Beer*

¹⁰ Eddie, J. (ed.), “Road Transport in the North Wairarapa” 60 Years of Eric Gleeson & Sons, p.15.

¹¹ Donaldson, M. *Beer Nation (The Art & Health of Kiwi Beer)*, Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books, 2012, p. 20.

¹² Hanrahan, T.R. (Manager Tui Brewery). (1942, 9 November). [Letter to The Hon. Minister of Transport]. *Archives New Zealand*, ABPJ W5797 7415 Box 4.

¹³ Alpass, M. (Chairman Tui Brewery). (1939, 12 December). [Letter to The Minister of Transport]. *Archives New Zealand*, ABPJ W5797 7415 Box 4.

¹⁴ *The Best Little Brewery in Australasia. DB Central Brewery Centennial 1889-1989.* p. 14.

McLauchlan claims that 'There were forty-three breweries in the country in 1935, and still thirty by the end of the war ten years later'.¹⁵ However, this still means that 30 per cent of all breweries closed down during this time period.

It seems that the main reason for the Tui Brewery not closing down was the appointment of Tom Hanrahan who took over as manager in 1941. After taking over as manager Hanrahan found '...we were short of glass, plant and lots of other things...sugar, one of the vital ingredients for Tui beer, more so than any other in New Zealand, was rationed, transport restrictions were enforced and petrol was rationed.'¹⁶

The petrol restrictions were to be a continual problem for the Tui Brewery during the war, especially with one of its bottling plants being in Wellington. Since 1928 the Tui Brewery had been transporting their ale and stout in kegs on their own lorries to Wellington for bottling in a depot there.¹⁷ This was to prove a huge issue for the Tui Brewery in the Second World War. The theme throughout the war years was to be how the petrol restrictions that affected all breweries were placing a greater burden on the Tui Brewery than others because 'The large Brewery Companies have breweries in or adjacent to the large densely populated centres where they distribute their goods direct to hotels

¹⁵ McLauchlan, G. *The Story Of Beer (Beer and brewing – a New Zealand History)*, Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books, 1994. p. 73

¹⁶ *The Best Little Brewery in Australasia. DB Central Brewery Centennial 1889-1989.* p. 8.

¹⁷ Ibid.

etc from the breweries and this constitutes a very large proportion of their trade.’¹⁸

The petrol restrictions meant that rail was the preferred method of transport for the government. Early in the war the Tui Brewery come into conflict with the Railways Department over whether the transportation of ale, stout and the backloading of empty bottles and kegs was better handled by road (e.g. Tui Vehicles) or rail. Tui argued that they used rail when suitable but overall it was too costly and would add approximately £40 a week to their costs. Also, that the delay in transport when using rail caused liquor to become ‘heady’ and that therefore the rail service would have to be available four days out of five.¹⁹ At least three bottling firms also contacted Tui to state that they would no longer be able to take the Company’s products if they were transported by rail at the extra cost.²⁰

By November 1940 the Tui Brewery had been advised by the Transport Licensing Authority that it was going to significantly have to decrease its long distance runs.²¹ The brewery contacted the local MP, Sir. E.A. Ranson, for help.²² Then on 13 October 1942 the No. 2 Licensing Authority cancelled Tui Brewery’s Goods Licence.²³ This

¹⁸ Gayle, G. (1939, 24 November). *re Tui Brewery Limited* [Letter to The Hon Sir E.A. Ranson M.P.]. *Archives New Zealand*, ABPJ W5797 7415 Box 4.

¹⁹ Tui Brewery Ltd, *Description of Appeal*. *Archives New Zealand*, ABPJ W5797 7415 Box 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Transport District Office, 22 November 1940. *Archives New Zealand*, ABPJ W5797 7415 Box 4.

²² Alpass, M. (Chairman Tui Brewery). (1940, 26 November). *re Transport Board*. [Letter to The Hon. Sir E.A. Ranson]. *Archives New Zealand*, ABPJ W5797 7415 Box 4.

²³ The Tui Brewery Ltd, *Appeal to the Minister Of Transport*, 27 October 1942. *Archives New Zealand*, ABPJ W5797 7415 Box 4.

meant that transport of Tui products to areas around the lower North Island, such as Featherston, Wanganui, Napier, and Paekakarike was no longer allowed. They would be only allowed to transport their goods within a 30-mile radius of the Mangatainoka Brewery. As pointed out in their appeal letter, because of the geography and population of the Pahiatua region this condition would put a greater burden on them than other similar breweries who were facing the same conditions.²⁴

The Tui Brewery appealed this decision and in their appeal they agreed to reduce the vehicles they were using from four to three and restrict deliveries as far south as Carterton. In this appeal, some of the other problems that the Tui Brewery were facing emerged. Tui was struggling to replace its tyres as it was not on the availability list and benzene was in short supply.²⁵

On 1 March 1943 the Transport Licensing Authority finally made its decision stating that Tui could service an area of '30 mile radius of Mangatainoka with the right to run to Webber and Porangahau once per month.'²⁶ These conditions were to remain until the end of the war.

For most breweries, the Second World War meant that 'brewers' profits were sharply down because money was short...and young men

²⁴ Hanrahan, T.R. (Manager Tui Brewery). (1942, 9 November). [Letter to The Hon. Minister of Transport]. *Archives New Zealand*, ABPJ W5797 7415 Box 4.

²⁵ Tui Brewery Ltd Minutes, 4 August 1942. *Archives New Zealand*, ABPJ W5797 7415 Box 4.

²⁶ Transport District Office, 1 March 1943. *Archives New Zealand*, ABPJ W5797 7415 Box 4.

– the prime beer target market – were shipped off overseas’.²⁷ However, it seems that Hanrahan, with his financial acumen, was able to guide the brewery through these difficult years and buck this trend. In fact, he was even able to increase the net profit of the company. From £6 626 in 1942, to £7058 in 1943 to £7275 in 1945.²⁸

The Second World War saw ‘capital development and heavy maintenance...come to a standstill’ in most breweries.²⁹ This was certainly the case with the Tui Brewery. There was little development of the brewery over the war years or as stated in *Beer Nation*, ‘There was little development over the next three decades’.³⁰

Farming

Farming was and remains the life blood of the Pahiatua region and the impact that the war had on this industry in the region was immense. From the sheep farms on the hills to the west and east, to the perfect dairy land in the middle, farming has always played a significant role both economically and socially in the Pahiatua region. But it has not always been an easy life, certainly pre the Second World War. Even VC awardee Keith Elliot struggled with farming in the

²⁷ McLauchlan, G. *The Story Of Beer (Beer and brewing – a New Zealand History)*, Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books, 1994. p. 17.

²⁸ *Auckland Star*, 15 May 1945, p. 3.

²⁹ McLauchlan, G. *The Story Of Beer (Beer and brewing – a New Zealand History)*, Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books, 1994. p. 141.

³⁰ Donaldson, M. *Beer Nation (The Art & Health of Kiwi Beer)*, Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books, 2012. p. 115.

region. As he says in his biography *'Cowshed To Dog Collar'*, 'One night I was sitting...bitterly reviewing the apparent failure of my first two years, my spirits drained to their lowest ebb with the physical exhaustion...'³¹

For a region the size of Pahiatua there was no veterinary clinic and before the war it was discussed about getting one. However, one of the first major consequences for farmers in the region due to war breaking out was that it was decided to 'let the matter drop until the end of the war.'³²

In Taylor's *'The Home Front'* she uses the sub-heading 'Hands For Industry'. This was certainly something that was of deep concern to a number of essential industries in the Pahiatua region. This lack of manpower, or perhaps more correctly perceived lack of manpower, was to come up again and again amongst the farming community in the region. Farm labour was already in short supply before the war. The Bank of New South Wales Inspector had reported in April 1939 that 'Labour for farms is difficult to obtain, and the great bulk of it is not up to required standard.'³³ This issue was only to get worse during the Second World War.

There was also major concern in the region on how some farmers were going to cope when more young men were taken from the farms to join the army. At one Pahiatua Dairy company meeting 'expression

³¹ Elliott, K & Adshead, R. *Cowshed To Dog Collar*, Wellington, New Zealand: A.H. & A.W. Reed, p. 24.

³² *The Pahiatua Herald*, 8 May 1940, p. 3.

³³ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, April 1939, MSDL-1406.

was freely given to the view that, while it was the obvious duty of all concerned to assist the Empire in the struggle so far as fighting units were concerned, these same units must be provided with food.’³⁴ These feelings saw the Pahiatua Co-operative Dairy Company co-operate with the local branch of the Farmers’ Union on how to try and alleviate this upcoming shortage of farm labour.

Pahiatua Farmer’s Union

The Pahiatua Farmer’s Union was an extremely powerful organisation in the region. The Pahiatua Farmer’s Union was formed in 1901.³⁵ By the start of the war it had 270 members and it continued to grow throughout the war years.³⁶ While the Farmer’s Union for the most part comprised of men of more mature experience than the Young Farmers Clubs, the work and guidance it gave for farmers in the region during the war years was immense and had a major effect.

It was definitely the feeling of the Farmer’s Union that the manpower of New Zealand, and in particular the Pahiatua region, would be much better served in making food than going away to war. However, it was acknowledged that it was going to be very difficult to stop the young men of Pahiatua from volunteering, therefore farm labour was going to be a problem. It was going to be very difficult to

³⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 12 October 1939, p. 4.

³⁵ *Dunstan Times*, 16 July 1901, p. 5.

³⁶ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 8 May 1940, p. 3.

find men who would be willing to work on a farm for 70 to 80 hours a week unless well paid. There was also the fear that many men would be more attracted to the public works than farming, especially since the government had just increased the pay by an average of five shillings per week. 'New Zealand has far too many public works schemes as it is, through which farmers have suffered, and increasing public works pay is going to cause the farmers more trouble still.'³⁷ As mentioned in chapter two this was a major reason why the Farmer's Union came out in support of conscription.

No one wanted to see what had happened in the region after the First World War when many men returned to find their farms in ruin, as there had been no one to look after them. A Mr. J.E Hewitt summed up the opinion of the region quite nicely at a meeting discussing the formation of forming a Pahiatua subcommittee of the Southern Hawke's Bay Primary Production Council:

Last time when farmers went away, men were put on to look after the farms, and the places went to rack and ruin...If I were going away, I would employ a man on my farm, but there should be some organisation to arrange a supervisor. There are any amount of elderly men who can't do much work, but they would be able to supervise.³⁸

³⁷ *Ibid*, 19 October 1939, p. 4.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 20 December 1939, p. 4.

One of the responsibilities of the Pahiatua Primary Council once it was formed was to report on and help solve problems with farm labour or material shortage. However, this perceived shortage of manpower which had caused a decrease in production for farms may not be as simple as stated. At a Pahiatua Farmers Union meeting on 9 April 1940, a Mr Brown remarked ‘...that there was only one man in his valley fit to go to the war. In the Great War they could muster some 15 of 16.’³⁹ There was also the opinion that there were enough men to work on the farms but it was seen as undesirable, due to the low wages, or being harder than other occupations. Farming was not a 40 hour a week occupation. Also, the fact that some of the land in the region was no longer suitable for production and needed to be brought up to standard needed to be considered. In *From Cowshed to Dogcollar* Keith Elliot gives a good example of what some farms were like in the region, when describing his first farm. ‘No only was the land full of fern and stumps, but it was the ragwort, which I had never seen before, that nearly broke me...the cowyard and bails were in a shockingly dilapidated condition.’⁴⁰

This problem of lack of farm labour and the need to increase production and the difficulties this was causing for farmers in the region was addressed by the President (Mr T.F Anderson) at the annual general meeting of the Pahiatua branch of the Farmer’s Union

³⁹ *Ibid*, 11 April 1940, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Elliott, K & Adshead, R. *Cowshed To Dog Collar*, p. 23.

on 7 May 1940. 'The acute shortage of farm labour in the district, especially towards the end of last year, occasioned many farmers a great deal of trouble.'⁴¹ It was mentioned that the Union was working extremely hard to get a new wage agreement for farm workers, but no agreement with the government had yet been reached.

This meeting became very heated with some farmers going as far to state that they had been living under war conditions for the last three years as far as labour was concerned. There was a real sense of unfairness in this group at the way they were being treated by the government and its call for more production. Labour shortages in farming were having to be filled by woman and children. As one farmer commented:

They are calling for more production from women and children and that cry is coming from men who are doing nothing in the way of more production except talking more. I see the watersiders are getting 8s 6d an hour. Do the farmer and his wife get that? They do not. I am as patriotic as anyone. The farmer is in the fighting line, but the farmer is not getting a fair deal. We were promised that our wives and children would be out of the shed when the guaranteed price came in. Still we can't afford to pay the price of labour.⁴²

When the government announced in mid-May that they had decided to curtail Public Works and place men in farm production

⁴¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 8 May 1940, p. 3.

⁴² *Ibid*, 8 May 1940, p. 5.

there was some concern amongst the farmers in the Pahiatua region. While some degree of tolerance and understanding was acknowledged as being needed, there was real concern about the experience and adaptability of these men. This concerns seem to have been justified as when labour was found it often was of very low quality.

Manpower became very short and some of the cowboys who turned up on farms had never seen a cow. Jock Udy had a cowboy who got stuck in the mud in the cowyard while wearing gumboots. He stayed there for about an hour until someone told him to step out of the gumboots and walk out.⁴³

The government's idea of combating the rural shortage and increasing production with a farm labour corps in June 1940 was greeted with cautious optimism in the Pahiatua region. Housing and payment were the two big issues farmers had with this scheme.

At a Pahiatua Farmer's Union meeting on 18 June 1940 the government was urged to make cheap money available to farmers for the purpose of increasing production. A resolution was passed stating 'That as a means of increasing production, this branch of the New Zealand Farmers' Union recommends that the Government should make available money for the farming industry at the lowest possible

⁴³ *Kaitawa-Hinemoa Schools & District Centennial 1890 -1990*, Pahiatua, New Zealand: Pahiatua Printing Co. Ltd, 1990, p. 10.

rate of interest.’⁴⁴ Farmers in the region wanted to produce more, and thereby help the mother country, but they were waiting for the Government to take the lead. This saw a response from the Minister of Finances office which wrote the Pahiatua Farmer’s Union a letter stating that ‘it is hoped to complete the arrangements for making available such essential finance as cannot be obtained from existing channels.’⁴⁵

A public meeting was held on 25 June 1940 to discuss how best to increase production. There was a large attendance, including the M.P for Wairarapa, and it would be correct to say it got quite heated. The only conclusion everyone could agree on was ‘...that this district should contribute its share in war effort...’⁴⁶ but what that contribution was meant to be was up for debate. The farm labourer problem also arose and the frustration that many in the region felt is best summed up by the following quote:

Last November, stated the interjector, “I applied at the Labour Department at Masterton for a man. They had none. I then applied at Palmerston North and they had none.” He applied to Palmerston North again in December but was told he was enquiring of the wrong Department and should see the Social Security Department. At the later Department he was told there were no men available – they were all on Social Security! They had no inexperienced men but where,

⁴⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 19 June 1940, p. 5

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 27 June 1940, p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 26 June 1940, p. 4.

he asked, were the 700 inexperienced men the Minister of Labour talked about? If he could get a man immediately he would take him and pay himself. He did not want the Government subsidy so that the man could turn around and say the Government was paying him and not his employer! He had 90 cows and when he could not get a man he and his wife milked them. Later he suffered an injury to his hand and his wife and a neighbour had to carry on, he concluded amid applause and uproarious laughter.⁴⁷

By September 1940 farm labour was in 'very short supply.'⁴⁸ The farm labour problem and the confusing nature of the government departments who were meant to be solving 'the elusive farm labourer' problem caused great frustration in the region. The farmers from the region had a genuine desire to get down to the business at hand, and did not appreciate being given the run around by government. This combined with the difficulty in receiving orders, and worries about feed caused concerns.

The problem of finding good labour for farms in the region also became a common problem that was often the subject of appeal board meetings. A typical exchange at these meetings was published in *The Pahiatua Herald* and gives a good overview on how some of these discussions went.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 26 June 1940, p. 5.

⁴⁸ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, Pahiatua, September 1940, MSDL-1407.

Mr. Wauchop (Crown Representative): "You have had a number of appeals and there is only one son in camp. People might be anxious. Did you advertise for help?"

David O'Brien (Farmer): "I advertised in "The Dominion" offering award wages."

Mr. Wauchop: "But I suggest you could have paid more. These ads have to be attractive, you know Mr. O'Brien."

David O'Brien: "I cannot get anybody at all".

Mr. Wauchop: "Well I saw six good replies to an ad for a position near Dannevirke. It was a call for an ordinary farm worker but it was an attractive ad."

David O'Brien: "We have even tried to sell the property. There is no labour."⁴⁹

This appeal was later dismissed but gives a good example of the problems farmers in the region were having finding good, quality labour. This issues never seemed to get fully resolved with labour shortages 'still causing concerns among farmers'⁵⁰ in the region in September 1943.

By the end of 1942 frustration at the government, and in particular the Minister of Agriculture resulted in the Pahiatua Branch of the New Zealand Farmer's Union passing a complete lack of confidence in the Minister of Agriculture. It was expressed that any Minister of Agriculture should have 'understanding and sympathy with the farmers' way of life.'⁵¹ However, it seems this was not a unanimous

⁴⁹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 19 March 1942, p. 5.

⁵⁰ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, Pahiatua, September 1943, MSDL-1410.

⁵¹ *Auckland Star*, 23 December 1942, p.4.

decision. The Wairarapa provincial president Mr. Hugh Morrison mentioned that it seemed 'futile passing such a remit'⁵² and that there were a number of members in the Farmer's Union who supported the Labour party.

By March 1945 the petrol shortage was obviously making itself felt throughout the Pahiatua region and was affecting the farming community. One of the major problems seems to have been the movement of labour from the countryside to the towns which resulted in a lack of farm workers. The Pahiatua branch of the Farmers Union made representations to the Oil Fuel Controller asking for more generous petrol allowances for farm employees. 'The controller has replied that each case is considered on its merits, the general policy being to allow sufficient petrol to enable farm employees to visit the nearest shopping centre twice a week.'⁵³

Despite the hardships being faced and the end of war in sight the Pahiatua Farmer's Union still had concern for the people of Britain. At a meeting they passed the motion 'This branch of the Farmer's Union pledges itself to do all in its power to encourage additional production of food for the benefit of the people of Britain and liberated Europe, and to assist in every way that might be taken by the government to ensure intermediate relief being given.'⁵⁴

⁵² *Ibid*, 19 January 1943, p. 4.

⁵³ *Evening Post*, 9 March 1945, pg. 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 29 March 1945, p. 4.

Production was also causing problems in the region by mid-1941. Production was meeting war requirements but there were shipping and storage problems. One of the few success stories was a request from the Army for horses. Apparently 'more than sufficient were obtained for their requirements'⁵⁵ in the region.

The Small Farms Amendment Bill, which purpose was for making provision for returning soldiers to settle on the land, was seen by many to be a relative harmless piece of legislation. However, the clause 'To provide for the settlement of discharged soldiers under the principal Act the Minister may take any land under the provision of this Act...the application of discharged soldiers for leases...shall have preference'.⁵⁶ This was to raise great concern among farmers around the country and the Pahiatua region was one of the first to respond to this bill.

By November of 1940 the Small Farm Act was starting to cause real anger in the Pahiatua region. Farmers were urged to take action and at a meeting of local farmers, described in the *Auckland Star*, as 'One of the largest meetings of farmers in the Pahiatua district...'⁵⁷ saw the following resolution passed. 'This representative meeting of farmers emphatically protests against the proposed amendment of the Small Farm Act, as if it becomes law it permits confiscation of owners' interests, and the bill is a gross invasion of the liberties of the

⁵⁵ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 14 May 1941, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 29 October 1940, p. 4.

⁵⁷ *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1940, p. 10.

subjects.⁵⁸ There was a real feeling in the region that this bill was ‘unBritish’, dictatorial, and an invasion of liberties. and that the Labour Government was trying to socialise farming. ‘..will give them power to take away your farm from you (ostensibly for, but not necessarily for) the purpose of settling returned soldiers on the land’.⁵⁹ Despite the resolution being sent to the Prime Minister, and his acknowledgement of the information ‘the government went ahead and passed the Bill’⁶⁰ to the consternation of the Farmer’s Union.

Sheep Farming

The outbreak of the Second World War came at a trying time for sheep farmers in the region. Lambing percentages were below average and stock prices were showing a decline.⁶¹ However, it seems the effect for sheep farmers was minimal. By April 1941 it was being reported that ‘all prices have shown farmers better returns than in previous seasons’.⁶² Seasonal movements of sheep always resulted in heavy business not only for carrier companies but the Pahiatua railway station as well. To modern eyes it seems amazing, but in January 1942 over 20 147 sheep were trucked along the railway from Pahiatua

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 18 November 1940, p. 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 14 May 1941, p. 4.

⁶¹ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors’ reports, Pahiatua, April 1939, MSDL-1406.

⁶² MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors’ reports, Pahiatua, April 1941, MSDL-1408.

railway station.⁶³ One problem that the war caused for many sheep farmers in the region was that due to the petrol and rubber restrictions 'sheep could not be picked up within five miles of a railway station and had to be "walked" to that point.'⁶⁴ In a bid to save rubber, the government had refocused its transport policy along rail, and this was the reason for this policy.

Dairy Companies

By the Second World War dairy companies in the Pahiatua region had grown from very small beginnings in the pioneer days to being the most prominent businesses in the region. They gave 'employment to many hundreds of employees in factories and on farms'⁶⁵ and supplied a solid financial backbone for the whole region.

One of the first issues to affect dairy companies in the region was the Government's request for an increase in the production of an extra 15,000 tons of cheese to export to Britain, which was seen as an essential food by the British Government. This meant that a large number of dairy factories in the region had to change-over from butter to cheese. This was not as easy as it sounds. The processes involved in making both are very different, and this meant that a number of

⁶³ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 26 February 1941, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Eddie, J, (ed.), *"Road Transport in the North Wairarapa" 60 Years of Eric Gleeson & Sons*, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Keeling and Mundy Ltd, 1983. p. 13.

⁶⁵ Carle, C.J. *Wairarapa. The first one hundred years of development of a great district*, p. 188.

companies would have to bring in new machinery. The majority of dairy companies in the region were co-operative, owned by the suppliers e.g. the dairy farmers, and the costs estimated by some dairy companies involved were as much as £200 per farmer. It is quite interesting to note the number of different responses and approaches from the farmers and dairy companies in the region.

The North Tiraumea Co-operative Dairy Company, despite having the smallest output of cheese of any factory in the region, was quick to say it would increase cheese production. 'Instead of being pleasantly received...we had in many cases to put up with insults pretty hard to bear.'⁶⁶ This may not only have been due to the increased costs involved in the change but also the fact that the North Tiraumea Dairy Company had just recorded its highest ever payment for butter-fat. There was no guarantee this would be the same for cheese.

The Mangatainoka Co-Op Dairy Company agreed to increase the guaranteed price for suppliers based on the increase in higher costs. The Konini Co-operative Dairy Company came to the conclusion that suppliers should be compensated by the industry or the Consolidated Fund. The Mangahao Dairy Company had a different approach, contending that an individual effort was required by farmers. Farmers could arrange better feeding methods and go in more for herd-testing

⁶⁶ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 21 August 1940, p. 4.

and identify the best producers of their herds. The Tararua Dairy Company, despite the directors stating that 'Had it not been for the fact that the directors had been requested to do what was possible to secure a larger supply of milk for cheese-making as a war effort...no one on our board would have made any move in the matter',⁶⁷ found only a few farmers resistant to the change. The Pahiatua Co-operative Dairy Company had a similar response as the Tararua Dairy Company.

However, not all districts in the region were as happy as with this change to cheese as a letter to the editor of *The Pahiatua Herald* stated. 'It is very evident that in one or two districts there are farmers who are torpedoing the effort by making as much trouble as possible and are still being allowed to dodge their war responsibilities.'⁶⁸ One of the districts in the region the writer might have been referring to is Hopelands. The chairman of the Hopelands Dairy Co had stated at their annual general meeting that:

I regret to state that we found considerable opposition to our efforts, made in good faith, to secure more milk in connection with the changeover to cheese. In some cases, district farmers showed no interest, in others no desire to assist, while in not a few real opposition was shown and insults offered. These are the facts, I much regret to state, and they should receive publicity in the national interests. I wish to stress the fact that we as directors were not wishful of securing this maximum supply. We were satisfied to run our business

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 28 August 1940, p.4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 16 September 1940, p. 4.

prosperously and happily and quietly, but there is with us the greatest war in history and we were asked to assist the Empire to win it. Hence we did what we were told to do and in doing it, we did not deserve the 'kicks and cuffs' which we received, and resented.⁶⁹

Despite this resistance, the inspector of the Bank of New South Wales was reporting that 'good efforts are being made to increase the Cheese supply.'⁷⁰ By August 1941 there had been a 100% increase in the cheese output in the region. This was important as it meant the Pahiatua region was able to easily reach its quota of an additional 80 000 tons of cheese called for by the British Government. However, collecting this milk to make the extra cheese necessary was a new problem that Dairy companies in the region had to face. Some were forced to buy more trucks, while some individual farmers who were within easy reach of a dairy factory, delivered it themselves. One of the unforeseen consequences of this was that the roads became in poor condition, which led to complaints to the county council to fix them.

Another problem some dairy companies faced was the extra expenditure some had to spend towards converting their factories to cheese. One dairy company, Rexdale, estimated that they spent over £500 (\$46 000) on fully equipping their factory to do the required job.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 3 September 1940, p.4.

⁷⁰ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, Pahiatua, September 1940, MSDL-1407.

The 'Directors did not like the spending of money for war purposes, but possibly the expenditure would justify itself in other ways.'⁷¹

Some other difficulties the Rexdale Dairy Company was facing because of the war arose at an Appeal Board meeting in March 1942. The company lodged an appeal for one employee and shared the lodgement with another. The reason given was that even though the government had asked for increased production men could only work 44 hours a week. Since production at Rexdale had increased from 400 tons to 1 000 tons they had to increase staffing to avoid paying overtime.

The Chairman: "It becomes a question of finance?"

Witness: "Yes, but the position imposed upon factories by the government is unbelievably contradictory."⁷²

This theme of dairy companies in the region lodging appeals to maintain staffing levels became a common argument in appeal board meetings with a number of dairy companies lodging appeals for their workers. The arguments were often extremely similar, such as the suppliers to factories relied on them being run by efficient labour, the quality and quantity would decline if untrained labour was used, and experienced men must remain.

⁷¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 2 September 1941, p. 2.

⁷² *Ibid*, 18 March 1942, p. 5.

This was not always a popular opinion in the region with many questioning why dairy factory workers should get special dispensation. ‘...There is too much whining over factory employees. They should be encouraged and allowed...to do some training, the same as the farm hands...Women are capable of holding the fort while the men are being trained to protect them.’⁷³ Not only does this show a slight contempt for the attitude of dairy factories but it also shows a great belief and confidence in the strength of the women in the region.

Farming (General)

Despite the continuous labour problems farmers had in the region during the war, dairy production seems not to have been affected. As mentioned in *The Women’s War* ‘midway through 1940 the New Zealand Dairy Board and six regional Herd Improvement Associations began recruiting women herd-testers to replace men’.⁷⁴ In the Pahiatua region a number of herd-testers during the war were women. Despite having to use horse and cart to get around, petrol had been cancelled for herd-testers as it was considered a non-essential industry, dairy production improved during the war years. One herd tester wrote, ‘over the four years I spent as a testing officer, I could

⁷³ *Ibid*, 2 May 1942, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Montgomerie, D. *The Women’s War: New Zealand Women 1939 – 45*, Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press, 2001, p. 67.

see the improvement in each herd. The Mangatainoka Group was amongst the highest producing in the Association at that time. Cow averages were very satisfying.⁷⁵ This seems to be borne out by the facts. In 1942 production showed a slight increase over previous seasons.⁷⁶ By September 1945 dairy production had increased by 25% over previous seasons.⁷⁷ The war may have impacted on farmers but it certainly did not seem to impact on the dairy livestock.

Farm sales in the region tell an interesting picture of how the region was feeling during the war. Before September 1939 there had been very few farm sales. A lack of confidence in the future and perhaps a fear of future government actions had contributed to this. From the start of the war to September 1943 sales of farms in the region all but dried up. The difficulty in procuring labour seems to be given as the reason for this. There was some interest in small properties which could be worked by a 'man and family' but no sales.⁷⁸ It was not until September 1943 that the first farms were sold in the region. Three dairy and three sheep 'one man' farms were sold. 1944 saw the sale of five of these 'one man' farms. While three were sold in 1945, this was put down to rehabilitation.

One perhaps unexpected result of the war was that it actually saw an increase in the membership of many Young Farmers Clubs in the

⁷⁵ Rossiter, J. *Ruawhata 1913 -2001*, Palmerston North: Stylex Print, 2002. p. 97.

⁷⁶ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, Masterton, April 1942, MSDL-1409.

⁷⁷ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, Masterton, September 1945, MSDL-1412.

⁷⁸ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, Masterton, April 1939, MSDL-1406.

region, despite many 'Boys going overseas'.⁷⁹ While Farmers Clubs gave good practical information to members, it seems one of the main reasons for the increase was the spirit of fellowship it gave members and a civic connection.

Pahiatua Racing Club

In *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Michael King states 'the number and frequency of race meetings were drastically reduced with the outbreak of war in 1939. In many local communities the race courses themselves were taken over for military training.'⁸⁰ This was certainly the case for the Pahiatua Racing Club, although its race course was originally used for other military reasons. During the early years of the war, despite a general tightening of belts, the Pahiatua Racing Club actually did well financially. 'The total for the 1941 meeting was £21 320, as against £17 318 10s in 1940.'⁸¹ However in that same year the Racing Club was informed by Adam Hamilton that the government was proposing to take over the racecourse for an indefinite amount of time.

The Pahiatua Racing Club tried to maintain its race meetings at other venues such as Otaki and Woodville but 'road transport difficulties two years ago forced the Pahiatua Club to abandon its

⁷⁹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 28 April 1941, p. 5.

⁸⁰ King, M. *The Penguin History of New Zealand Illustrated*, Auckland, New Zealand, 2007, p. 337.

⁸¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 28 January 1941, p. 4.

annual meeting, and last year it raced at Otaki. This year the meeting is at Woodville.’⁸² However, as will be discussed in Chapter Five the Pahiatua Racecourse was taken over by the army and by late 1944 with the Polish children’s camp it ‘would appear that it is unlikely it will revert to the Racing Club for some years, if at all.’⁸³

In a bid to maintain horseracing in the region during the war, the Pahiatua Horse Sports Club applied for a licence to hold race meetings at Rugby Park in Pahiatua.⁸⁴ While a few race meetings were later held in this location, it was always a stop-gap measure and eventually race meetings were moved to Woodville full-time, especially with the establishment of the Polish Camp on the Pahiatua racecourse in 1944.

Retail business

Before the war retail trade was generally consistent and this trade was scarcely affected after the first few weeks of the war. After a slight initial panic, which resulted in some hoarding, things quickly settled down to ‘business as usual’.⁸⁵ Pahiatua was relatively unaffected by the general shortage of Christmas goods in the country in 1939. It seems the major reason for this was that due to the slow turnover,

⁸² *Evening Post*, 28 January 1944, p. 6.

⁸³ Williams, A.B (Brigadier. District Commandant. Central Military District). (1944, 27 October). *Re: Pahiatua Racecourse*. [Letter to Army Headquarters].

⁸⁴ Anderson, J.J (Secretary of the Pahiatua Horse Sports Club). (1945, 22 January). [Letter to The Honourable Minister of Internal Affairs].

⁸⁵ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 20 September 1939, p. 4.

compared to other larger centres, Pahiatua was able to maintain their stock level. This was noticed and 'on two occasions a local firm received offers to purchase the whole of its reserve stocks at prices slightly higher than the retail rate. These were naturally refused.'⁸⁶

As far as Christmas 1939 was concerned, the Pahiatua region seemed to ignore the war with retailers stating that Christmas shopping was 'as heavy as usual.'⁸⁷

By Christmas of 1940 there was a much smaller range of toys available. The majority of toys had come from Czechoslovakia, Germany and Japan. However, the difference in food stocks and luxuries was very small compared to previous years. In fact, some retailers claimed higher profits than the previous year, although this might have been explained by the higher prices. This perhaps was not the case as the Bank of New South Wales was stating that 'retail trade has shown a slacking tendency, and accounts take longer to collect.'⁸⁸ However five months later, they were stating 'retail trade has remained more buoyant than had been anticipated.'⁸⁹

Retailers throughout the war years wanted to maintain the belief that Pahiatua was 'a very nice town'⁹⁰ and tried to keep an attractiveness to their business premises. One interesting consequence of the war is that due to the petrol restrictions it was

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 29 November 1939, p. 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 19 December 1939, p. 4.

⁸⁸ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, Pahiatua, April 1941, MSDL-1408.

⁸⁹ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, Pahiatua, September 1941, MSDL-1408.

⁹⁰ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 6 May 1940, p. 4.

noticed that people were more likely to buy their goods in Pahiatua rather than travel to larger centres such as Palmerston North and Masterton. This meant that some local shopkeepers had to re-orient their business to meet this situation.

Blackouts did effect business but some businesses had some unique solutions to this. The Pahiatua Post Office bricked up its windows.⁹¹ Men leaving for the war or joining other businesses because of serious shortages in staff resulted in some being promoted quickly. 'Fourteen months after I commenced as message boy, I was promoted to Exchange clerk.'⁹²

The Pahiatua Herald

During the Second World War many commercial institutions had to curtail production, and *The Pahiatua Herald* proved to be no exception. It was the second smallest daily newspaper in New Zealand, with only 21 shareholders,⁹³ and the increase and scarcity of newsprint resulted in it becoming a tri-weekly paper from 3 March 1941.

Within a week of the announcement, businesses and farmers were trying to stop this 'loss to the town' and restore *The Pahiatua Herald* as a daily newspaper. There was a real feeling that the voice of the

⁹¹ *Pahiatua Toll Exchange 1900 – 1988 The End Of An Era*. Pahiatua: Pahiatua Print, p. 8.

⁹² *Ibid*, p. 11.

⁹³ The Pahiatua Herald Co. Ltd Annual Reports 1939 to 1946. *Archives New Zealand*, CO-WW3445 206

region was being lost after 50 years of service and that it was not in the regions interest. The Pahiatua Progressive Association meeting, a local retailers and business organisation (meeting for the first time in a few years demonstrating the feelings of the community), held a meeting on 3 March 1941 in which many businesses agreed to increase advertising space in the hope of saving the paper. In addition, a Pahiatua Farmer's Union meeting the next night agreed to try and increase the circulation of the paper. A committee was set up by the Progressive Association and *The Pahiatua Herald* to discuss re-establishing the paper as a daily.

Within three weeks *The Pahiatua Herald* had reverted back to being a daily newspaper. The editor wrote, 'The community as a whole have made it possible for us to carry on as a daily newspaper, but it must be understood that we can only do so if their support is continued.'⁹⁴ This 'support' was based on the Pahiatua Progressive Association increasing the amount of advertising.

As with many other newspapers in the country, *The Pahiatua Herald* had to decrease its size to conserve newsprint, which it did from 1 April 1942. This was the first change to the format of the paper in over 30 years, even during the First World War they had maintained the 'normal' size. This was perceived as only being a temporary change, although that eventually proved not to be the case. This was

⁹⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 21 March 1941, p. 4.

actually not as simple a change as it appears, and caused a lot of effort. The printing plant was designed to produce the old size and with a reduced staff due to some staff members being in the armed forces, and the difficulties in producing the new 'size', saw a decrease in the amount of news, especially international news, published in the paper.

Businesses in the Pahiatua region faced many challenges during the war. These challenges, from the petrol restrictions to the lack of resources caused many of the business in the region to adjust how they functioned during the war years. While the majority of businesses were impacted by the Second World War, the majority were able to survive, and while they never prospered, they did manage to be financially secure through a variety of methods. More women joined the workforce during the war years, especially in farming and banking. Although, these numbers were not maintained as men came back from the war. The isolation of the region also contributed to the financial security of the region, due to such factors as the camps that were established in the region. Local and national government also played a large part in how businesses in the Pahiatua region coped with the war. The role they played in the Pahiatua region will be the subject of our next chapter.

Chapter Five

Local and National Governance

With the outbreak of the war, the Mayor of Pahiatua, stated that ‘...we must be ready to assist the cities and the coastal towns in cases of national emergency, there is no doubt, and it is probable that along those lines our active co-operation will be sought.’¹ The County Council stated ‘that this Council offers the fullest co-operation and assistance to the Government in its efforts at the time of war crises, which has been forced on the British Empire’.² But did the local councils live up to these declarations by the Mayor and County Council?

This chapter will examine the governance of the Pahiatua region by the two local councils in the region, the Pahiatua Borough Council (the township) and the Pahiatua County Council (rural areas) during the war years. It will also cover how national governance impacted the region, with emphasis on the camps the government set up in the region.

¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 5 September 1939, p. 4.

² Pahiatua County Council Archives, Minute Book, 11 October 1939, 4/1/1 Vol.11, p. 1031.

Local Government

In the Pahiatua region, the two major local government authorities were the Pahiatua Borough Council and the Pahiatua County Council. According to the *New Zealand Official Year Book* county councils were 'mainly concerned with the construction and maintenance of main arterial roads'³, while boroughs were 'concerned with a wide range of functions of a purely local nature'.⁴ This may have been the intention but both councils exceeded these narrow guidelines during the Second World War.

Number 13 Scheme

With the outbreak of the war, the Pahiatua Borough Council was astute enough to ask for an extension in subsidised labour under the Number 13 scheme, realising that the government might now have other more serious concerns. However, there was some understanding in the Mayor's letter to the government 'that when the matter is considered the whole of New Zealand be considered and not – just the unemployment of Pahiatua alone.'⁵ The Minister of Labour approved a tentative subsidy for labour to the Pahiatua Borough

³ *New Zealand Official Year Book (NZOYB)*, 1939, pp. 543.

⁴ *NZOYB*, 1939, pp. 544.

⁵ *Manawatu Standard*, 12 September 1939, p. 12.

Council under the No. 13 scheme.⁶ This was later to be a full subsidy for a period of two months,⁷ and later to be further extended.

However, overall the scheme remained greatly underused in the region. The major reason for this was that both the Borough and County council had concerns with it. The Pahiatua County Council had only employed an average of six men under this scheme by April 1940.⁸ When they discovered that changes in the scheme meant that subsidies were not to be at the same extent as in the past, county councillors became unsure of the worthiness of the scheme. The thought of the County Council was that men should now only be employed if the work was of benefit to the region and not just to find work for them.⁹

The Borough Council made greater use of the No. 13 Scheme, and employed an average of ten men, with approximately £2 495 of their wages subsidised by the government.¹⁰ However, like the County Council, the changes in the scheme caused issues. Unlike the County Council however, the major problem the Borough Council had with the scheme was the fact that men had to stand down for a fortnight from employment after leaving the scheme.

This resulted in the Mayor launching a vigorous attack on the No. 13 Scheme. 'This is the biggest absurdity I ever heard of in my life.

⁶ *Ibid*, 9 September 1939, p. 6.

⁷ *Ibid*, 20 September 1939, p. 12.

⁸ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 11 April 1940, p. 4.

⁹ *Manawatu Standard*, 12 April 1940, p. 10.

¹⁰ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 16 April 1940, p. 4.

When unemployed men are put off by any council they have to stand down for a fortnight and starve – literally starve, because if they earn anything during that period, they are not eligible for sustenance.’¹¹

These opinions of the Pahiatua Borough Council, and in particular its Mayor, received national attention. The Minister of Social Security, the Hon. W.E. Parry, felt compelled to state that the Mayor made ‘erroneous statements’¹² in his statement. In particular, he was upset with the Mayor’s statement that the stand down period was a fortnight, when in reality it was only a week. In a letter he wrote to the Mayor he was extremely critical of the Mayor’s opinion,

*...you will no doubt appreciate that the statements which you are alleged to have made were quite erroneous and misleading. Therefore, I suggest that in future, before making public statements on any general administrative matter relating to the payment of monetary benefits under the Social Security Act, the full purport and details of which you may not understand, that you approach the Registrar, Social Security Department, or the Social Security Commission for the purpose of obtaining reliable information.*¹³

The employment of No. 13 scheme workers was also not seen as a positive by many in the region, especially by residents of the township of Pahiatua. When one of the reasons the Borough Council gave for a rate increase of 1d for the 1940-41 financial year was the No. 13

¹¹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 16 April 1940, p. 4.

¹² *Ibid*, 7 May 1940, p. 4.

¹³ *Ibid*, 7 May 1940, p. 4.

scheme some in the region were displeased. The fact that these men were kept busy on a variety of menial work 'such as screening metal, sand concreting, boxing, and other such jobs' did not make many in the region disposed to this scheme.¹⁴ By the end of 1941, even the Pahiatua Borough Council were questioned the worthiness of this scheme as it was proving to be 'a very serious drain on finances' and was not popular among ratepayers.¹⁵

County Council

The outbreak of war did not seem to have much effect on the operating costs of the County Council with them reporting a credit balance of £471 7s 10d in April 1940,¹⁶ similar to previous years.

Like the Borough Council, the County Council was not above disagreeing with national organisations. In 1940 at an executive meeting of the New Zealand Counties Association a clause was passed stating 'That this organisation approves of the Local Body elections being postponed during the war period.'¹⁷ The Pahiatua County Council certainly did not approve of this opinion and came out very strongly that elections should be held. A motion was passed that the

¹⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 13 June 1940, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Manawatu Standard*, 11 December 1941, p. 8.

¹⁶ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 11 April 1940, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 14 August 1940, p. 6.

Association should not have made this decision without consulting the Local Bodies.

Despite not being as involved as the Pahiatua Borough Council in war issues, the influence the war had on the day-to-day running of County Council business was immense. In 1943 the County Clerk felt forced to limit the amount of work he did on Patriotic issues as it had 'taken up much of the time ordinarily devoted to the Council's work as well as any leisure hours.'¹⁸

The Undertaker Issue

The County Council and the Borough Council both came into conflict with the army over its refusal to release the regions undertaker from military duty. The only available undertaker in the region was seriously ill and unable to do his duties. His son, who had previously been working as the undertaker, had been called up, and although the Appeal Board recommended his release, the Army authorities ordered him to return to camp. 'We are now informed that Army authorities have recalled him and will not release him further.'¹⁹ The Inspector of Health even wrote to the County and Town Clerks stating that 'This condition...most serious, by reason that chaos, and construction may easily reign amidst our population, with the first

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 14 April 1943, p. 3.

¹⁹ Town Clerk. [1942, 10 December]. [Letter to The Honourable, The Minister of Health].

outbreak of disease, or enemy action that may cause death.’²⁰ The local doctor Hugh Paterson, had written to the Pahiatua Borough Council arguing that ‘...it causes delay as well as being an additional heavy expense to relatives to bring an undertaker from another town.’²¹

The army’s refusal to release the undertaker was seen with such serious concern in the region that the Borough Council, with support from the County Council, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister expressing their concerns. This letter gave seven key reasons why an undertaker was a necessity for the region. Reasons such as the scattered population and size of the region give a good indication of why an undertaker was necessary but the most compelling argument was ‘The business of undertaker for funerals has been declared an essential industry.’²²

However, it seems that the government was happy for the Woodville undertaker to take on the responsibilities of being the undertaker for the Pahiatua region, despite the County Clerk pointing out that Woodville was ‘a distance of twelve miles from Pahiatua.’²³

²⁰ Inspector of Health. [1942, 8 December]. Re Undertaker – Pahiatua District. [Letter to The County Clerk – Pahiatua].

²¹ Paterson, H. [194?]. Copy of Letter from Dr. Paterson, Pahiatua. [Letter to the Pahiatua Borough Council].

²² Town Clerk. [1942, 9 December]. In the matter of an Undertaker for Pahiatua Town and district. [Letter to The Rt. Hon. P. Fraser].

²³ County Clerk. [1943. 12 January]. [Letter to The Hon. The Minister of Health]. *Pahiatua County Council – Administration – General*, TDC 00034 Box 1.

Borough Council

Overall, the Pahiatua Borough Council was very supportive of staff who had extra or military commitments due to the war compared to other Borough Councils. An example of this was in June 1940 when the town clerk applied for five months leave to attend military camp, under the Government's Territorial military training scheme. Cr. Hodd moved that the town clerks' army pay be made up by the Council to his present salary. It was agreed by the Borough Council that the town clerks' army pay should be subsidised for five months.

Pay was another focus of the Borough Council meeting on 9 December 1940 when the Mayor asked for his annual honorarium to be increased to £100 per annum, from the current £50. One of the major reasons the Mayor (Mr. S.K. Siddells) asked for this increase was because of the amount of extra work the war had created on his time. He stated that he might not run again and that 'any aspirant for the office should know beforehand exactly how he stood'.²⁴ Despite two councillors arguing that a rise to £75 would be more in keeping with the practice of other boroughs the same size, the sum was increased to £100.

In the early months of 1941 a number of Borough Councils, most notably the Stratford Borough Council, wanted compulsory service in

²⁴ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 10 December 1940, p. 4.

the Home Guard and Emergency Precautions organisations. However, demonstrating the support the Pahiatua region had to the war, the Borough Council considered this measure unnecessary. The Mayor stated that 'Pahiatua had a good quota of enlistments for two forces. It might be different in the cities, where men had apparently not come forward...comparing Pahiatua with Masterton...Pahiatua had a good quota.'²⁵

Throughout the war years the Pahiatua Borough Council was very prudent with expenditure. Due to the war conditions and rising costs no extensive work programmes were attempted. This meant by June 1943 it was being reported that financially the Pahiatua Borough Council was 'in a most favourable position when compared with other boroughs.'²⁶

Conflict between the borough and county councils

During the majority of the war years the Pahiatua Borough and County Councils were united in their efforts. As early as 9 September 1939 the Pahiatua County Council was 'willing to confer and co-operate with the Borough'²⁷ on emergency precautions. Nevertheless, there were some significant differences between them as to how to show this co-operation. As mentioned in chapter one, one of their

²⁵ *Ibid*, 12 March 1941, p. 5.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 9 June 1943, p. 4.

²⁷ Pahiatua County Council. (1939, September 9). *Minutes – Ordinary Meeting*. P.C.C Archives, Fielding. p. 347.

biggest disputes was over the Centennial Celebrations planned for Pahiatua in April 1940. The County had originally postponed its own Jubilee Celebrations in order to hold joint celebrations with the Borough at the Centennial period. With the outbreak of war however, the Chairman of the County Council meet with representatives of the Borough Council to discuss these celebrations and if they should go ahead.²⁸ It was the opinion of the County Council that they should not.

As can be seen by the following conversation reported at the Pahiatua Borough Council support for the Centennial Celebrations was also mixed.

Cr. Watson: What's against carrying on?

The Mayor: Nothing that I can see.

Cr. Watts: Why should we cut the celebrations out? We only hear the war over the air. Otherwise we would never know there was a war.

Cr. Hodd: You wait until next year when you can't buy anything.²⁹

This discussion not only demonstrates the differences in the Borough council about this issue, it also shows how little impact the war was having at this stage in the Pahiatua region. Although, obviously, there was also the feeling that this may not continue.

This apathy towards the war amongst some Borough councillors was also demonstrated by their response to the local emergency

²⁸ Pahiatua County Council Archives, Minute Book, 13 September 1939, 4/1/1/ Vol.11, p. 1023.

²⁹ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 14 November 1939, p. 4.

precautions scheme prepared by the town clerk and county clerk. This scheme was set up because the government scheme was considered too complicated. It became very apparent at a council meeting to discuss this scheme that a number of councillors had not even studied the copies sent to them. This was seen as extremely disappointing by the mayor who stated 'I am sorry to learn that some councillors have not read the report...since the scheme has not been read by some councillors, I do not propose to hold discussion upon it...'³⁰

By February 1940 it was agreed by the Borough Councillors that the Centennial celebrations should go ahead, even if it was only for one or two days. There was also some ill feeling towards the County Council with the Mayor stating that the Borough could not afford to bear the whole cost if the County was not going to cooperate. Eventually a three-day celebration was planned by the Borough Council, despite the County Council passing a resolution to 'cut out celebrations'³¹ and 'That in view of the War Conditions and the appeals being made for Patriotic purposes, that this Council is of the opinion that all Centennial and Jubilee celebrations be abandoned.'³² Perhaps, feeling a degree of guilt, in August 1940, the County contributed the sum of £10 towards the Borough Council's expenditure in connection with the Centennial Celebrations. For the expense incurred by the Borough

³⁰ *Ibid*, 15 November 1939, p. 4.

³¹ *Ibid*, 15 February 1940, p. 4.

³² Pahiatua County Council Archives, Minute Book, 13 March 1940, 4/1/1, Vol. 11. p. 1067.

Council in running the Centennial celebrations this can be seen as a somewhat modest sum.

The differences between the Councils also became apparent as the war came to a close. The Pahiatua Borough Council wanted to recognise the returned service men and women who were returning to the region by offering them a souvenir certificate on behalf of the two Councils. However, the Pahiatua County Council was not keen on this idea and passed a motion that 'this council is not agreeable to act in conjunction with the Borough Council in the matter of the issue of a certificate to the Returned Servicemen and Women'.³³

Another issue that saw the two Councils disagree was with the planned peace celebrations for Pahiatua in 1944. The Pahiatua Borough Council approached the Pahiatua County Council to as if it would meet half the cost of purchasing flags and decorations for peace celebrations to the value of £50. Due to elections for the County Council being held at the time of asking, the County Council decided that the vote would be 'held in abeyance to enable the new Council to deal with such matter.'³⁴ In August 1944 the County Council voted to help purchase bunting and flags for the Peace Celebrations, but this issued raised its head only two months later when Cr. Moncrieff proposed an amendment that 'no money be expended on Peace Celebrations until final peace has been achieved.'³⁵ This amendment

³³ Pahiatua County Council Archives, Minute Book, 10 May 1944, 4/1/1 Vol. 13. p. 1386.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Pahiatua County Council Archives, Minute Book, 11 October 1944, 4/1/1 Vol. 13. p. 1423.

was only defeated by a vote of five to four, demonstrating that the County Council was clearly split on this issue.

Conflict between county council and national government

As mentioned in previous chapters, the Pahiatua region was extremely generous with its patriotic donations, however this does not mean that they were always content about how these funds were used or organised.

The Patriotic Purposes Emergency Regulations at the start of the war were not well received by the Pahiatua County Council. This regulation was seen by the County Council as a discouragement to local collection as stopped local bodies from arranging socials or concerts for war purposes without getting consent first. The Chairman (A.W. Bisset) stated that 'It looks to me as if it might kill a lot of patriotic giving'.³⁶

Looking after the roading of the region was the County Council's main purpose, and this became a problem for it during the war. So much so, that the County Council came into conflict with the government on this issue. This conflict was over the perceived army damage on the Makomako – Ballance Gorge Road. Army traffic on this road was high due to a large Army Ammunition Dump being situated

³⁶ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 13 October 1939, p. 2.

on this road. Who should pay for the upkeep of this road and replacement of the 50 year-old wooden Mangahao Bridge saw conflict between the County Council and the government. The County Council wanted the government to reimburse it for some of the major damage on this road. The government's resident engineer 'while admitting that a certain amount of damage had occurred on this section of road' disagreed that it was 'extraordinary' and suggested a compensation of '¾d per ton of freight per mile, or 9d per ton which would amount on a gross of 900 tons to £33.15.'³⁷

The County Overseer disagreed that this method of compensation was fair and the County Council wrote to the Public Works Department and the Minister of Defence requesting better compensation or that this road be declared a main highway. By June 1945 the local M.P, Mr. K.J Holyoake, a future Prime Minister of New Zealand, had become involved and was 'endeavouring to persuade the Minister of Works to inspect Pahiatua-Mangahao-Makomako road with a view to having this road declared a Main Highway'.³⁸ By the end of the war this issue was still ongoing and had yet to be resolved.

³⁷ Pahiatua County Council Archives, Minute Book, 8 November 1944, 4/1/1 Vol. 13. p. 1430.

³⁸ Pahiatua County Council Archives, Minute Book, 13 June 1945, Vol 4/1/1 Vol 13. p. 1488.

The Government

While the government was a major factor in all regions in New Zealand during the war years, its impact in the Pahiatua region was significant. This was not only due to the large number of politicians who visited or from the numerous political decisions that it made that affected the region. It was mostly through the 'physical' presence it created that lasts to this day.

In the early war years 'enemy nationals' had been held on Somes Island in Wellington Harbour. However, the accommodation on Somes Island had become inadequate³⁹ and on 3 March 1942 the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, announced that 'The accommodation on this island has become inadequate and does not fully meet the requirements of the Geneva Convention, 1929'.⁴⁰

Before Fraser made this statement however, plans were already under way to establish an internee camp for the male internees on the 64 acres of the Pahiatua racecourse. In January of 1942 Captain L.E Earle in the A.S.O Works had inspected the Pahiatua racecourse and wrote, 'The racecourse is quite suitable for a camp'.⁴¹ A further inspection of the area in February 1942 on behalf of Mr Adam Hamilton, Peter Fraser's opposite, a member of the War cabinet, and

³⁹ Although apparently the accommodation was accepted enough for the soldiers who manned the anti-aircraft guns that were placed on Somes Island after the prisoners were moved.

⁴⁰ *Opunake Times*, 6 March 1942, p. 4.

⁴¹ Earle, L.E. (1942, 23 January). Pahiatua Race Course As Camp Site: Report.

a man who knew Pahiatua well from several previous visits,⁴² had declared that,

This area appeals [as] generally suitable. There are one or two low lying areas that are subject to limited flooding, but there is ample area for building without excavating on those areas. The pasture is strong and vigorous, and there is every indication that if the internees are prepared to do a certain amount of work it should be possible to grow all the vegetables and provide part of the milk supply off the remaining area.⁴³

There was also a plan to establish a female internees camp on the 22 acres at the Mangatainoka Domain, something which never went ahead.⁴⁴ The reason for this seems to have been due to a lack of water supply.⁴⁵

On 23 February 1942 the 'War Cabinet approved the construction at Pahiatua racecourse of an Internment Camp for Aliens'.⁴⁶ Pahiatua was not the only area considered for the internment camp. Tauherenikau Racecourse was also considered as a site. Despite the higher cost of establishing the camp at Pahiatua, the fact that Pahiatua

⁴² *Otago Daily Times*, 4 March 1942, p. 4.

⁴³ Inspecting Engineer. (1942, February 17). Internees Camp [Letter to Hon. Adam Hamilton].

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 17 February 1942, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Ashwin, B.C. (Secretary to the Treasury). (1942, 26 February). Internment Camp For Aliens [Letter to The Permanent Head, Public Works Department].

could accommodate 1 000 people verses Tauherenikau's 500 seems to have been a deciding factor in the decision.⁴⁷

The 'War Cabinet approved an expenditure of £100 000'⁴⁸ for the construction of the Pahiatua Internment Camp. As mentioned in chapter four, some of this money was used to hire local contractors but the financial benefits for the region do not seem to have been as dynamic as local histories or the region believes. The majority of work on the camp was completed by workers from outside the region.

The internees themselves were employed to work on the camp as soon as accommodation was available.⁴⁹ Of the three contractors who tendered applications to build the camp, all were based in Wellington, with the winner being A.V. Swanson. His letter to the Government Architect, Mr. Patterson, gives a good example of how the majority of work was given to contractors outside the region.

Dear Sir,

With reference to the proposed Camp at Pahiatua I have been in touch with the Builders at Waipukurau & Mr Gillispie one of the main contractors at Dannevirke...to carry out the work & they would be very happy to cooperate with me. If necessary I am also prepared to meet the Builder at Eketahuna, Woodville & Pahiatua with a view to the above suggestion. Leaving out

⁴⁷ Ashwin, B.C. (Secretary to the Treasury). (1942, 20 February). Internment Camp For Aliens [Letter to The Rt. Hon. The Acting Minister of Finance].

⁴⁸ Major for Quartermaster-General. (1942, 15 April). Internment Camp – Pahiatua [Letter to The Engineer-in-Chief, Public Works Department]

⁴⁹ Major for Quartermaster-General. (1942, 15 April). Internment Camp – Pahiatua [Letter to The Engineer-in-Chief, Public Works Department]

Eketahuna, Woodville & Pahiatua I am assured of the following labour.
Carpenters 80, Labourers 20...⁵⁰

The Public Works Department also suggest that A.V. Swanson hire extra builders from the Hawkes Bay as 'little Defence Work is available in this District, and if anything there is a surplus of manpower'⁵¹ and that extra contractors be obtained from Palmerston North because 'this work...is apparently located in the Palmerston North area.'⁵²

Labour was a constant problem during construction of the camp. When Adam Hamilton raised concerns about the slow construction progress of the camp, A.V. Swanson stated that 'if it is required that the work be completed in six weeks or by 5th October, the contractor would require 60 additional carpenters to be provided.'⁵³ Delays were also caused by unforeseen circumstance and a lack of equipment. 'Records show that since the work started there have been 54 fine days and 45 wet ones, the definition of a wet day being one on which the men lost time due to bad weather. I was advised by the Chairman of the Pahiatua County (himself a farmer) that in all his experiences he

⁵⁰ Swanson, A.V. (1942, 22 May). Pahiatua Alien Camp [Letter to Mr. Patterson, Government Architect].

⁵¹ Under-Secretary. (1942, 22 June). Pahiatua Aliens' Camp [Letter to The Commissioner of Defence Construction].

⁵² Under-Secretary. (1942, 22 June). Pahiatua Aliens' Camp [Letter to The Commissioner of Defence Construction].

⁵³ Newnham, W.L. – Engineer-in-Chief. (1942, 27 August). Pahiatua Alien's Camp [Letter to The Commissioner of Defence Construction].

has never known a wetter summer and winter.’⁵⁴ With ‘no more than 20 pairs’⁵⁵ of gumboots available this was an issue.

The lack of local regional labour for the building of the Pahiatua Internment Camp should have been anticipated by the government. As early as August 1942 at a Borough Council meeting the Borough Overseer had stated ‘there was a scarcity of suitable labour’⁵⁶ in the region. However, what this means is that of the approximately £79 000 A.V. Swanson charged for the work the majority would have gone outside the region.⁵⁷

In addition, the majority of materials for the camp were purchased in Wellington and Masterton with even areas as far away as Christchurch and Rotorua providing some materials. These materials did have to be transported to Pahiatua, which some local trucking companies were able to gain contracts for.

In early March 1943 the prisoners were shifted to the Pahiatua racecourse, which had been converted into a prison for them. They were eventually moved back to Somes Island only half a year later in September 1943. During their time in Pahiatua the prisoners were well behaved and there were no major incidents, apart from one Japanese

⁵⁴ Newnham, W.L – Engineer-in-Chief. (1942, 28 September). Roads And Drainage – Aliens Camp [Letter to The Commissioner of Defence Construction].

⁵⁵ Johnston T.A – District Engineer. (1942, 24 August). Pahiatua Aliens’ Camp [Letter to The Permanent Head – Public Works department].

⁵⁶ *The Pahiatua Herald*, 12 August 1942, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Johnston T.A – District Engineer. (1942, 1 July). Pahiatua Aliens’ Camp [Letter to Government Architect]

prisoner being killed, after trying to escape for the second time, when a soldier shot to wound and missed.⁵⁸

The biggest issue for the people of the Pahiatua region that arose with the internment camp was the question of medical services. It was suggested as early as March 1942 that medical services could be provided by Pahiatua Hospital.⁵⁹ This was seen as being absurd by many in the region. The Pahiatua hospital was 'only a small Institution working at full capacity at all times, and if there are an additional 1 200 people accommodated in and around Pahiatua it is reasonable to assume there will be a certain amount of sickness for which there is no accommodation.'⁶⁰ It is interesting to note that the number of people interned at the internment camp, was never over 200. Nowhere near the 1 200 stated in this letter.

The medical superintendent of the Pahiatua Hospital, H. Paterson, was of the opinion that medical services could be provided by 'a few of the German Drs around the country, and a dentist or two might be interned to look after the flock'⁶¹ and that Pahiatua Hospital would need at least 21 extra beds due to the Internment Camp as the 'population served by the Pahiatua Hospital will be increased by one fifth.'⁶² This was an extreme exaggeration by Paterson as Wellington

⁵⁸ *Auckland Star*, 23 October 1945, p. 6.

⁵⁹ Brigadier. (1942, 31 March). Aliens' Camp – Pahiatua. [Letter to The Secretary of the Organisation for National Security].

⁶⁰ Managing Secretary – Wairarapa Hospital Board. (1942, 24 March). [Letter to The Director General of health, Wellington]

⁶¹ Paterson, H. (1942, March 8). [Letter to Normal Lee, Managing Secretary]

⁶² Paterson, H. (1942, March 8). [Letter to The Managing Secretary – Wairarapa Hospital Board]

Hospital Board figures showed that for a 12 month period from November 1941 to November 1942 only 30 Internees from Somes island had been admitted into Wellington Hospital, with five being the most in any one month.⁶³ In fact, Brigadier, Adjutant-General A.E. Conway was to state that medical services requirements were 'not likely to exceed five beds for 185 internees.'⁶⁴

This problem of medical facilities for the camp arose again with the arrival of the Polish children. Once again the question of how Pahiatua Hospital was going to cope with the camp potentially increasing the population of Pahiatua by 50 per cent was raised.⁶⁵ This was also enhanced by the difficulty in knowing how healthy these children would be. It was suggested that a 30 bed camp hospital could be erected on the Pahiatua Hospital grounds for these children. A special committee consisting of people from the Public Works Department, Department of Health, Pahiatua Hospital and the Wairarapa Hospital Board inspected the camp on 5 October 1944 and decided that accommodation at the camp 'should be sufficient for requirements.'⁶⁶

⁶³ Wellington Hospital Board, *Internees Admitted Monthly to Wellington Hospital – year ended 30.11.42* (Notes)

⁶⁴ Conway, A.E. (1943, 15 January). Medical Services for Internment Camp Pahiatua [Letter to The Director General of Health, Department of Health]

⁶⁵ Managing Secretary, Wairarapa Hospital Board. (1944, 26 August). [Letter to The Director General of Health, Department of Health]

⁶⁶ Director General of Health. (1944, 3 November). Hospital Facilities – Camp for Polish Children. [Letter to The Managing Secretary, Wairarapa Hospital Board].



Internees Camp – Pahiatua 22 February 1943.

Photo courtesy of Archives New Zealand.

The Polish Refugees Camp

As early as February 1942 it was suggested that ‘it is unlikely that there would be any use for the buildings after the war’.⁶⁷ However, this proved not to be the case. Prime Minister Peter Fraser, learning of the predicament of Polish children in refugee camps in Iran, decided to create New Zealand’s first humanitarian endeavour and invite them to New Zealand. ‘With reference to...the Polish refugee children...I have to inform you that the New Zealand Government would be very willing to afford hospitality in New Zealand to a total number of persons, including staff , of say 500 or 700...’, the majority of which were to be children.⁶⁸

It was not until August 1944 that the region found out that the Internment Camp would be made into a refugee camp for Polish refugees, who at that stage were expected to arrive in New Zealand in mid-September 1944. The cost of changing the Camp from Internment to Refugee was estimated at £20 000⁶⁹ and ‘In addition to the existing buildings, 20 classrooms and 20 temporary married quarters are required.’⁷⁰ With only a month and a half to prepare, approximately 100 women members of local organisations such as the Red Cross,

⁶⁷ Ashwin, B.C. (Secretary to the Treasury). (1942, 20 February). Internment Camp For Aliens [Letter to The Rt. Hon. The Acting Minister of Finance].

⁶⁸ Manterys, A, (ed.). *New Zealand’s First Refugees: Pahiatua’s Polish Children*, Wellington, New Zealand: Polish Children’s Reunion Committee, 2004. p. 27.

⁶⁹ Shanahan, F – Assistant Secretary to War Cabinet. (1944, 9 August). Reception Of Polish Children – Pahiatua [Letter to The Commissioner of Works – Wellington].

⁷⁰ Patterson, R.A. (Government Architect). (1944, 1 August). Pahiatua Camp for Polish Refugees [Letter to The District Engineer – Wellington].

Women's Institutes, Federated Farmers and Girl Guides helped set up the camp. Despite this, when the Polish children arrived 'the signs of the prison were still evident – the high wire fence, the barracks and communal facilities, the watchtowers.'⁷¹

The Pahiatua region looks fondly on this contribution it made to the war effort and how the camp became 'a community in the New Zealand heartland'.⁷² But how did this community contribute to the Pahiatua region?

The aim of the camp was very much to create a miniature Polish town for the children, with the idea that eventually these children were to be sent back to Europe. The camp's streets were named after Polish cities or national heroes. 'Kiwi Street was the only one named in honour of the host country.'⁷³ The culture of the camp was very much Polish as 'Polish, not English, was spoken. Polish history was taught...'⁷⁴ and 'Church services were conducted in a mixture of Polish and Latin.'⁷⁵ It was very much as one child stated, 'the little country of our own'.⁷⁶

The arrival of the Polish children was a momentous event in the region and saw people line the streets to welcome them. These refugees, and in particular the children, brought many benefits to the

⁷¹ Roy-Wojciechowski, J. & Parker, A. *A Strange Outcome: The Remarkable Survival of a Polish Child*, p. 125.

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 128.

⁷³ Suchanski, A. *Alone: An Inspiring Story of Survival and Determination*, p. 153.

⁷⁴ Roy-Wojciechowski, J. & Parker, A, p. 127.

⁷⁵ Suchanski, A. p.158.

⁷⁶ Manterys, A, (ed.). *New Zealand's First Refugees: Pahiatua's Polish Children*, Wellington, New Zealand: Polish Children's Reunion Committee, 2004. p. 193.

region. They brought home to the population of the region the horrors and tragedy of the war in a way that newspapers, radio and film could not. This was a chance for the region to show empathy to casualties of the war. 'The local people dealt with us with infinite patience in the shops, government offices, the post office and the bank.'⁷⁷ The refugees brought a financial benefit to the region as well as 'hundreds of other New Zealanders visited the camp nearly every Sunday...'⁷⁸ 'to mingle...or just gawk'⁷⁹ at the refugees. Local business also gained a slight financial benefit as 'each child received 25 pence pocket money per week'.⁸⁰ This money was often spent on such 'luxuries' as lollies, ice cream, chewing gum and movie tickets. The children also created local sports teams that played in the regional sports competitions.

However, there were some issues, with some in the region not beyond taking advantage of the maturing children. 'A local electrician refused to issue a boy his apprenticeship papers, claiming that the boys insufficient English was a hindrance...(and)...a farmer refused to pay two boys their wages and they were withdrawn from the farm.'⁸¹

One group which did have difficulties with the Polish Refugee Camp were local farmers. The Polish children were extremely curious and often wandered around the land surrounding the camp. Incidents such as the dismantling of tractors, the cutting down of trees, the

⁷⁷ Skwarko, K. (1974). *The Invited*. Wellington, New Zealand: Millwood, p. 60.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁷⁹ Roy, p. 127.

⁸⁰ Suchanski, p.166.

⁸¹ Roy, p. 133.

hunting of rabbits with homemade guns, the stealing of vegetables, caused minor issues with some resulting in court cases.⁸² As one refugee wrote, 'As you can imagine, we were very popular with local farmers!'⁸³

The Borough and County Council were split on a number of war issues. These issues never caused any major conflict between the two councils in the region, but they emphasised the clear differences each council had towards the war effort. While the County Council were certainly supportive of the war effort, it is very clear that their focus was very much on doing what the job required of them by the ratepayers. The Borough Council, definitely had a greater feeling of civic duty and that the region needed to contribute. One of the reasons might be that the Borough Council had a number of councillors who had a more military outlook. For example, the Mayor at the start of the war, Siddells, had volunteered, and this theme of Borough support for the war effort was consistent throughout the war. The government had a large role in the region with the Internment Camp and Polish Refugees Camp. These camps brought a slight economic impact to the region, although arguably not to the degree that is commonly believed. The most important contribution these camps made to the region is that it brought the war closer to

⁸² Manterys, A, (ed.). *New Zealand's First Refugees: Pahiatua's Polish Children*, Wellington, New Zealand: Polish Children's Reunion Committee, 2004. p. 155.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 112.

home and gave the people in the region a real sense of pride that they were contributing and helping with the war effort.



Children playing on grass when they arrive at the camp.

Photo courtesy of Archives New Zealand.

Conclusions

The Impact and Effects of the Second World War

The topic for this thesis has been the rural region of Pahiatua, during the Second World War. The aim throughout has been to outline and assess the impact and effects of the Second World War on a rural region, which was described as 'sound' during the war.⁴⁶⁸ It is the experience of the Pahiatua region that has been at the core of this thesis.

The region is full of testaments to the Second World War, if you know where to look. From the war memorials, to the plaques on buildings, to even children's playgrounds the presence of the Second World War and its impact on the Pahiatua region is felt.

The reaction in the region to the outbreak of the war was by no means enthusiastic, but perhaps typical of rural areas there was a stoicism and a feeling in the region that it was important for them to do their part. While this was not seen in enlistment rates, which were equivalent to other regions in New Zealand, it was in patriotic giving that the true spirit of the Pahiatua region and its support of the Second World War shone through. Throughout the war years Pahiatua donated to patriotic appeals at a rate that was always above the quota set. In some cases, for example the yearly patriotic appeals, the region

⁴⁶⁸ MS-Group-1977: Bank of New South Wales: Inspectors' reports, Pahiatua, September 1941, MSDL-1408.

made its quotas faster than any other region in New Zealand. Donations, both large and small, came regularly and there was a real pride in the region in the amount that the region contributed monetary wise to the war. It was not only money that was gifted by the region. While most regions made or contributed supplies to the war effort, not many regions donated a Bren Gun Carrier to the army through monetary donations. Whether this Bren Gun Carrier was necessary or not, it did however demonstrate the generous spirit of the region in a material way.

This thesis attempted to answer three key questions. They were what was the impact of the war on the people of the region? How were the industries of the region affected by the war? And what role did local and national government play in the region?

The impact of the war on the people of the region seems to be typical of what many in New Zealand experienced. The rationing and petrol restrictions all caused changes in the day to day life of the people of the region. However, these changes seemed to bring the people in the region closer together. Organisations gained members, meetings were well supported and the farewells for soldiers were events that the whole community came out for.

Enlistment caused concerns in the Pahiatua region. The region was pre-dominantly agricultural based and was suffering a labour shortage when the war broke out. Approximately 50% of all recruits were coming from an agricultural background and this caused some

anxieties in the region. With the introduction of conscription, these anxieties gradually lessened as it meant farmers were now regarded as an essential industry. Although, it did not totally stop agricultural workers/farmers leaving for the war, as the enlistment of Keith Elliot demonstrates.

Women played a huge role in the region during the Second World War. They were at the forefront of volunteer organisations and patriotic appeals. They were also often the first to donate to the various patriotic fundraisers. Women did gain employment opportunities in a variety of industries, from banking to farming, but they were not long lasting. As men came home from the war, these jobs were eventually given back. This theme seems to one that was common throughout New Zealand.

The realities of the Second World War had an impact on the industries of the region. Lack of labour, key products, and petrol restrictions all had a bearing. Yet, the isolation of the region actually helped some of these industries. Factors like the ammunition dump and the Internment and Polish camps would not have been built in the Pahiatua region, unless it was so isolated. These factors all helped the region financially but perhaps not to the degree that is originally believed.

The governance of the region played a large part in how the region was impacted by the Second World War. The policies of the Pahiatua Borough Council and the Pahiatua County Council were of benefit to

the region, despite their clashes at times. The Borough Council was supportive of the war, and showed this through its actions. It was extremely supportive of staff who had military commitments, and the two Mayors during the war years were both huge supporters of the war effort, with one even stepping down to join active service. Both councils were very outspoken on a number of issues, which often brought the region to national attention.

The government played a huge role in the region. Pahiatua was a very political region and this saw a great number of important politicians and dignitaries visit the area. This gave the region a national prominence during the war that perhaps was surprising for an area that was so isolated and with such a small population.

The greatest impact on the region – and the one with the longest legacy – is without doubt the two camps that were set up on the Pahiatua Racecourse for the duration of the war. These camps, while providing a slight economic impact to the region, most importantly brought the realities of the war home to a region that had largely been excluded from them. The Polish children made people in the region more aware of the atrocities happening in Europe and gave them a real feeling of contributing to the war effort.

Pahiatua was a region that did see a lot happen during the Second World War. It is a region that can be proud of its contribution to the war effort. The region was extremely patriotic and support for the war was always apparent. To paraphrase, the region's most famous

soldier, Keith Elliot, the regions thoughts could be perhaps summed up as 'We must contribute. That was our only thought'.

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