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**WHATEVER HAPPENED TO TUATAPERE:
ARE WE DOING VERY NICELY THANK YOU?**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is on a rural South Island community and how it managed the dramatic social changes over the past fifty years. Government policies, changes in international trade and markets, environmental policies, globalisation, change in the structure of local and regional government and legislative changes impacted on all New Zealanders during this period but the rural hinterland of New Zealand was affected in particular ways.

The township which is the focus of this study is Tuatapere on the south west corner of southern New Zealand. The researcher grew up in the district and witnessed the changes from a flourishing timber and farming service centre to a quaint tourist town. The residents and how these changes impacted on their lives are explored in this thesis through the eyes of eight long term residents. This is a qualitative study in which four men and four women were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire exploring their views on social change, the way the community has responded to changes in service provision, how they have managed the move from being a vibrant rural service community to a tourist town.

This thesis celebrates their successes, tells of their hardships, explores their attitudes to change, records their life work choices and decision making. Five themes were identified from the literature and provide a framework for this study: historical influences and cultural expectations, impact of Government decisions on their lives, sense of community, sense of self and access to services.

The population in rural communities has been slowly decreasing over the years as urbanisation has been a reality in New Zealand. Services within the area have diminished and younger families have moved away to seek employment elsewhere. The remaining residents are an ageing population. This brings with it a range of interesting issues for the community. The elderly have to travel for their health and other service needs and the unavailability of regular daily transport services makes it difficult for them to meet appointments. They have to rely on family and friends for transport and many no longer have the family available to support them locally.

This older population also provides the pool of volunteers for recreational and social functions. The elderly feel burdened with this responsibility. The geographical isolation provides a sense of wellbeing and attraction for the residents but it also has its disadvantages. The remoteness is a deterrent for access for tourists that would bring financial advantages to the community. The isolation is also a deterrent for new inhabitants who would provide the much needed contribution to the social functioning of the community. In spite of the aforementioned difficulties with living in a remote rural corner of New Zealand the participants expressed a determination and stoicism that can only be admired. Their life stories are presented in this research.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents

Hector and Iris Carr

Merrivale

and my grandparents

Charles and Elizabeth Carr

Pukemaori

True pioneers of the Tuatapere district.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to Helen, Margaret, Ngarita, June, Donald, Robin, Bill and Hugh. I feel honoured that you allowed me into your homes and your lives and you shared your stories in such a trusting way. These treasured gifts are so precious and I have endeavoured to treat them with the respect each one deserves. Without your participation this research would not have been possible.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisors Rachael Selby and Helen Simmons. Your patience and encouragement as you read draft after draft and your monthly supervisory phone calls were the rocks that kept me secure in the knowledge that I could complete this research.

During the two year period of preparing this research I lost in close succession two uncles, an aunt and a sister-in-law who was also my close friend. I want to acknowledge Wal, Selwyn, Bev and Doreen, as they each resided in the Tuatapere area for some part of their lives.

I acknowledge my sisters and brothers who shared a life with me in the Merrivale valley.

Finally I want to thank my family who has supported me all the way through my academic journey culminating in this final research project. To my husband Jim I thank you for all your support and encouragement.

“Lang may yer lum reek.”

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