

Interview with Mr Norman Andrews. Conducted by  
D. J. Runnacles in March 1984.

Born in the Wairarapa. Served in France  
during 1916-18. Worked for the Taranaki Power Board,  
then the Bay of Plenty Power Board at Whakatane/  
Opotiki.

The only generator that the Motueka Power  
Board had in 1934 was a gas generator. I came down  
here in 1934 working for Vickerman and Lancaster who  
were the consulting engineers. They were doing a  
lot of jobs throughout N.Z. at this time and in this  
field. They asked me to come down here to act as  
their resident representative to put in the reticula-  
tion in Motueka.

At that stage they were only interested in  
the Motueka side. They only had power for lighting  
over there, and the odd heat plug. We put in a  
hydrogenerating plant at Brooklyn. That was really  
what I came down here to do; put in a plant and then

reticulate the area. That served Motueka, Riwaka and Mapua etc. and gave them a decent power supply.

The North Island Power Boards that I worked for previously, i.e. Taranaki and Bay of Plenty, were not really more advanced than down here. It was construction work that we did for them too. It was quite an exciting period.

You see, when I finished my part in the war I was convalescing in England and I did a rehabilitation course. I had had a hip break and a bit knocked in in the side of the head when a four inch shell went off amongst us. There were seven in our section. The bomb killed four and wounded three. So while I was in hospital I did this electrical course.

When I got back to N.Z. my parents were living in Levin and I went to work in a garage doing electrical repair work. My doctor said I should do outside work so I went to Mangahau, near Shannon. That was one of the first Ministry of Works Hydro plants. I went up there as a mechanical engineer

in their workshops. These workshops wer less healthy than the garage I'd worked in.

I got a job working for Clymie the consulting engineers on the construction of plant for the Taranaki Electric Power Board. I was up there for three years and after that I got a job with Vickerman and Lancaster working on the Bay of Plenty Power Boards new plant.

(At this point tape-recorder failure resulted in loss of the rest of the narrative. This failure was not discovered until the interview was concluded at which point Mr Andrews stated that he would be happier if the remaining notes would stay as the only record of the interview. I consider this unfortunate as Mr Andrews is a very interesting and articulate person and subject - David Runnacles.)

After the Motueka job I moved over to help develop the reticulation in the Waimea area.

The power lines that Mr Ellis had already established were too light for the needs of the area and of course the voltage was too low. Many such modifications had to be made to the early system but it should be borne in mind that Mr Robert Ellis made a great contribution to the development of this area.

In his early days at Brightwater Bobby Ellis needed a switch to start power generation in the evening and stop the generators in the morning. They didn't have time switches in those days of course. He connected a switch to the chickens perch in his fowl house. When the chickens started to roost the weight would turn it on and in the morning when they got down off their perches, the spring switch would turn the generator off. An ingenious and effective use of a natural timing mechanism.

Lat er I worked for the amalgamation of the Electric Power Board, first with Murchison and then with Golden Bay.

Early on the local power supply company applied for and got a ~~£~~<sup>£</sup>50,000 loan to reticulate the area from Wakapuaka to Wakefield. They put in a diesel generation unit at Stoke while waiting for the Government supply. When the government supply came through there was no unit charge. They only charged for peak power demand. Off-peak power was therefore free to the board. Hence the water heater power charge of ¼d. per unit for users.

The power had cost the consumers more when it had been supplied by the diesel generator. This system needed the use of 'ripple' switches or similar. They used an electronic pulse system to turn the water heaters off when power peaks. They used an audio signal. This eliminated the necessity for time switches which demanded maintenance and adjustment etc.

There was a definite feeling of being an outsider when I first came to Richmond. There were many closed doors. The Town and Country Club and similar outfits have helped to change that situation

for people over the years.

I got involved in quite a few things. Three or four of us started the golf course at Richmond Park. It was a good club and a good training ground, always having 50 or 60 members. I helped form the local Rotary Club 28 years ago. Keith Walker proposed it to me and he came out and talked about it for quite a while. We had to have 23 members to start the chapter and we managed to get that many.

I was on the council for about seven years, during much of which time I was the Chairman. I helped form the Ski Club at the Lakes with Tas McKee. That association had developed because we had tramped a lot together. In those days people built their own ski's.

My wife died of a heart attack in 1959. We had two sons and one daughter.