Interview with Noel Richard Meads of Richmond. Interviewed by D. J. Runnacles. (Sept 1984)

I was born on November 4th 1906 in Hampden Street in my parents house. Job Meads was my father's name. Grace Pearce Ching was my mother's maiden name and her family lived at Stoke.

My paternal great grandfather landed in the North Island in the 1840's. With him came my grandfather who was about 11 at the time.

My mother's father came out in the 'Will Watch' in 1841 in the Wakefield expedition. He was Richard Ching. They settled in Stoke later but when my grandfather came out they were in Nelson and there were only men in the settlement.

My paternal grandfather was the only one of the family to come down here to Nelson. He settled in the Wakapuaka area on a farm. Of his family most
went back up north. Even though he (i.e. grandfather) had gotten married down here to a Nelson girl, most of the family went back up north, except for my father, one of his brothers and two sisters. That was my uncle Dick. I only remember him from my childhood days when he and my father used to go shooting a lot together.

I lived in Nelson until 1936 when I came out to Richmond. I was the assistant town clerk in Nelson for a number of years and then I came to Richmond when I was appointed to the position of secretary treasurer of the Waimea Electric Power Board. I was there for 30 years and retired in 1967. I was the first full-time secretary at the Power Board. Prior to that a Nelson public account was employed on a part-time basis.

Mr L. G. Francois worked for me for a while and later transferred to the engineering side at the time of the introduction of radio-communication.
I was married on the 2nd January 1930 in Richmond at the Methodist Church to Linda Fowler, (sister of Fred and Maurie Fowler). When I met her she was living and working in Nelson having only shortly arrived back in Nelson after spending a year or so in the North Island.

While in Nelson we lived in Locking Street. I built a house there and we stayed there for a few years before coming out to Richmond. Previously I had lived at home.

When we came out here in 1936 we bought a house in Edward Street that had previously been owned by a chap Woods. That was Eric Woods, known as Sam. We lived there for 30 years and then in 1966 I built this house up here (6 Mason Place). It was the second house in the street.

It was originally part of Griffin's farm but I think the land sharks bought it first. Suttons' farm was the next one (North).
I helped to get the Nelson Chess Club going in the 1930's after it had gone into recess. I was the first secretary of the revived club and it is still going now. I was three times champion of the club 1936-37 and 44 and was accepted in the N.Z. reserve championship once. I also played on the 5th Board for the South Island in correspondence chess one time in the North versus South match.

I joined the bowling club (Richmond) in 1937 and I am a life member. I was very active both on the green and in the administration (three times a Nelson representative and three times President of the club).

When I first came to Richmond it was a bit of a dead show. There were lots of young fellows around wanting to do something. We got together and decided to start a small bore rifle club which we did with the backing of a number of men of substance. That was pretty early in the piece, about 1937 I think, and it's still going. I was the first secretary of that. Every week we would have two nights at the range between about 6.30 and 10.30. When the war
came along we couldn't get ammunition so the club went into recess for a while.

I have two sons and a daughter but none of them are in Richmond. The two sons, both in their 50's, live in Christchurch and my daughter lives in Marton. Both sons went to sea. The younger son, Lex, was the chief engineer on coastal ships and is now the chief maintenance engineer at the Feltex Carpet factory at Riccarton. The elder, Barry, was an apprentice to a shipping company in the U.K. going straight there from college. He served his apprenticeship on one of the two cadet training ships, the Durham and the Rakaia. That was the N.Z. Shipping Company. He eventually got his foreign going Master's ticket and returned to N.Z. to work for the Union Company.

The training ships were set up like a normal school with schoolrooms and teachers etc. Every six months I received a report card detailing Barry's progress. The apprentices did all the deck work as there were no deckhands on the ship. There were 40 apprentices on the ship and of these one was taken
from N.Z. and one was taken from Australia every six months. During the first year they earnt 6 ($12) per month. That was in 1950.

My wife died about 1977. She was 68 years of age. Fred Fowler is her only living brother down here, though she has a brother and a sister alive in the North Island. They are Jack and Daisy or Marie. There were six of them altogether - Linda, Maurie and Percy having died.

Roly Mirfin's daughter used to work for me, in fact she was the first secretary I had at the Power Board. Roly Mirfin himself used to have a party occasionally. Quite well-known they were. That was out at Appleby where he lived and actually we were at a party at his place the night the Star & Garter burnt down.

Ray Williams was with us and he was running Warring's garage then and living next door to it in a two-storeyed place. Now they were just over the road from the Star & Garter so from out country it looked as if it might have been Ray's place that was
burning. Ray died just a little while ago. Jack Warring was his father-in-law so he took over the garage after Jack Warring. He had some of his children in the house at the time so Ray was in a great hurry to get home.