

Narrative of Mrs Hazel Williams (nee Tuffnell.)

Mrs Williams recalls aspects of her childhood and the years of the Second World War in Richmond, and in Motueka. Her father, Albert Tuffnell, was Mayor for nine years from 1939, and a Councillor since 1933.

Mrs Williams recalls her schooldays, the Depression of the 1930's, social life and connerce of Richmond during those years until the end of the war.

Tape-recorded on 14th March 1984 by Leslie Slater for the Richmond Borough Council, and typed by Louise Charters.

" There are sane funny things I remember being told when I was a little girl that have stuck in my memory. One of them is about the class consciousness that was in Richmond when my mother and father came to live here. My father was 27 and he came to set up a plumbing business on his own and people were in the habit of visiting and leaving visiting cards amongst a certain select group. My father was interested to hear that the ladies couldn't decide whether to leave visiting cards for my mother or not because sane felt that he was a business man and therefore she was his wife and she should be called on; and the others that he was a plumber which was a very low calling on the social scale and so they were of divided opinion. Finally they decided not to. But I may add that as the years went by and my mother became Mayoress and my father was successful in business, people did call, and as a child I was called in - to play the piano which I absolutely loathed - and served cakes and bread and butter to various ladies who came and sat upright like pieces of fried bread in the sitting-room.

Another thing I remember^ about the Fire Brigade that always amused me; Dad used to take the Fire Brigade on the back of his truck and we were never allowed to go. We were just always, you knew, 'you children be quiet,' and the fire. be// was down by the old Post Office where the Power Board is now. It would ring, but our heme was so close to it that it was terrifying. The fire bell would ring when the man in the exchange got a call from the person who rang up, because it wasn't an automatic exchange, and he would go out from the exchange and ring the fire bell. Then he would ring it until he heard the top bell ring which was up in Henley. And when Dad heard this at one certain stage, I don't remember what year it would be; he would get up and go and get the truck out and hitch the reel onto the back of the truck. As a little girl I can remember being frightened and running into Mum and Dads bedroom, and Dad ccming in pulling on his clothes and going over to the dressing table and brushing his hair. My mother saying w ] 'it's a fire, you're not going to work!"

Another time he took the gate off the driveway, he was in such a hurry to get there. It was always of great excitement when there was a fire in Richmond, but the bells were so, so loud.

I remember Dr Currie who was very well loved in Richmond, and a lot of people will have talked about him I daresay. He used to be the dentist as well as the Doctor. I can remember going in fear and trembling to the house that's still there, at the top of Oxford Street, sitting there waiting for a tooth to be pulled.

We all went to school in Richmond and one of the things I remember was about Mr Harrison, who we were absolutely terrified of. I think perhaps all kids were scared of headmasters in those days, and we nicknamed him -'Beaky.' I think he must have had a long nose, but I apologise if he didn't.

In school days I suppose I was like other kids; always a wee bit timid about school. I think we were all worried about authority, more so than children today. One of the things that happened when I was there in the primers was the Murchison earthquake and we were all out in the playground having drill. We had a Miss Jean pird teaching us. She was what we called a pupil teacher and she must have only been young as I recollect, because in later life she didn't seem very much older than I did. And we were doing drill and she kept us jumping up and down doing our exercises, and so

whereas other children were petrified about the earthquake; I wasn't at all scared. So she must have been a pretty clever person mustn't she.

We lived in an old two-storeyed house in Queen Street and there were lots of after-shakes, and we had to come downstairs and sleep in the dining room and thought it was great fun. I remember everyone talking about the people who were shaken out of the Maruia and came into civilization as it were.

During the depression the men were at Spooner's carp, the forestry, and I don't know which part of the depression it would be, and I think Dad must have been on the Council or had some position in the Borough at that time, and they marched down, they went on strike. They marched down from Spooner's and Dad rang up Mr Eastgate who was the baker, old Bill Eastgate we used to call him, and he made a lot of buns and quick bread, and they got the Institute Hall ready. I found it very traumatic (that's a fashionable word today,) and I've never forgotten it, I could hear them coning and I didn't quite understand what it was all about. But I thought it was so wonderful that they came and Mr Eastgate made the buns and the bread and the ladies went and made them cups of tea.

My Dad lived until he was 93 and I did ask him after years if it served any good purpose, and he said it did; that conditions improved after that.

Dad used to take the Plunket Society gear down to the Showgrounds every A & P showday and they had a little roan set aside for the purpose where the mothers could go and feed their babies and boil the billies, because they came in from the country, and it was always kept in a big cupboard at home - the mattress, and I don't know what other paraphenalia there was? and an 8 o'clock show morning I was allowed to go down to the Showgrounds with Dad and take the things to set up the little plunket roan. The Plunket Nurse used to come and Mum used to give her a cup of tea and a bit of lunch. I used to think we were very important because the Plunket Nurse used to come to our place. I \* f / 0

Showday of course for us was the greatest occasion. We had the Friday off school. They took the animals all down Queen Street. There was Griffins, and Suttons\*. They had pedigree herds, and the bulls, the men took them on each side, and we used to have the day off so supposedly it wasn't dangerous for children going to school. But it was absolutely

ridiculous because we all, I only had to sit on our front door-step, but of course the other kids went on the street to watch the animals go down. There was nowhere to house them so they used to take them back at night, on Friday night.

One of Griffins bulls at one time ran amuck and had to be shot, round in the old sale yards. |~Show Day was always the big thing in Richmond and if you were lucky enough to have a new sunnier dress you kept it for the shew.

I remember Mr. George Baker who worked at May's Store for years and I can remonber Billy May. We used to go down to get our groceries and we were allowed to get a pennys worth of <sup>i</sup>boiled sweets. He used to tear a square of newspaper and make it into a poke and give it to us with the sweets. (A poke was a square of paper and was rolled like a tube, then he'd put the sweets in that and we wouldn't get a bag. If we got a bag, well I don't know hew many sweets you had to buy before you got a bag, but we thought that was wonderful.)

Mrs May, Mr May's wife, she was one of the ladies at Richmond that was well looked up to and respected. She was musical. As a teenager I was~I suppose I was sent and one

didn't ever dream then that you didn't ever want to do that and I was sent there to a singing circle that she held in May's home. It was a singing circle and the other ladies were all a lot older than I was because I'd stopped home to help when I left college, which was acceptable then, and we sang terrible songs like "and Shepherds Cane Away," and things like that and all tra la la la la, and when I think now of a of 16 to go and stand in the drawing room at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and sip tea with their little fingers hooked and sing these songs, it was quite unbelievable. But that's what I did.

I worked at home and that wasn't unusual, even though it's not that long ago. But however girls were starting to get good jobs and go to work, get jobs in banks and things like that; and I decided I'd like to go and work at the Power Board, that was the Waimea Electric Power Board and they were just starting the reticulation of the outer area. So, much against iry parents will, because they couldn't see any reason at all why I should; Dad spoke to Mr. Carl Webby who was a member of the Waimea Electric Power Board, and he said that they'd give me a job which they did. I actually took Keith Skiplings job as a clerk as he was going overseas. *In the early 1940's.*

Mr

I wanted to work. I didn't want to stay home because it had got to the stage where all my contemporaries worked and I was a bit of an oddity not working; so I wanted to work. I also wanted to leave home and I wouldn't have been allowed to even though I was coming up to my 20th year, except that they were then manpowering girls from our area to Ngawatu Hospital. And although the patients came from a wide area, the girls were manpowered in the 20-24 age group from the Nelson district. My mother and father thought that girls who worked there were very fast because they smoked, and I don't know what else they did but I wouldn't have been allowed to know I don't suppose, and they thought it was preferable to let me go to Motueka and do nurse aiding, which I did. I left the Power Board and went to Motueka.

I think seeing as I worked at the Waimea Electric Power Board I wouldn't have been manpowered. It could have been classed as a central industry. Had I not worked there and been at home ~ and my mother she always had poor health and so somebody was always employed at home .''possibly I wouldn't have been conscripted from the Power Board, but I would have been if I had been at home. But they were still worried that I might have been called to Ngawatu.

Really, I just wonder when I think back whether many were actually conscripted there, or whether girls did just go and work there. At that time people were more enlightened and they were getting a different attitude to mental hospitals and to psychiatric treatment. But we were brought up with a completely wrong attitude. That's one of the things that's good about changing times.

When we went to Matueka for nurse aide training there was only one sister left there, everybody else was overseas, and there were three girls there in my age group and we had to do everything. We had to get the meals, do the domestic work and we had to help in the theatre on a roster basis. So we learnt very very quickly because if the patients didn't like the tea, (it was a small hospital, about 10 patients,) they used to know who was cooking tea and so you had to learn very quickly to do it. But seeing as I'd had to stay at home after I'd left college, the cooking wasn't really a problem to me and I just loved the nursing. I found it a challenge. I suppose I was frightened to a degree, but I loved it. They were sane of the happiest times I had.

We lived in at the hospital. I'm not a woman's libber, far fran it, but it was just a little bit of independence I'd never had, although it was very, very strict. The Sister in Charge was an Exclusive Bretheren lady, of whan I thought the world - she was a real Christian, but the rules were very, very strict. We had to tell her where we were going and we had to be hone by 9 o'clock. By that time I'd had my 21st birthday, which seeing as I'm 60 and not 80, sounds absolutely ludicrous.

But we learnt the nursing, well we had to do everything because there was only one sister and she used to sleep at night. If there was a baby who was having breathing problems, she used to sleep with the baby on the end of the bed, or a new baby, and then one nurse would be detailed to get up at 5 a.m. and take the babies to the mothers and wake Sister, and we'd take our turn as I said before, in the theatre. It was mainly a maternity hospital and a few tonsils - just things like that. All the big cases would go into Nelson and if there was any problems the mothers would go into Nelson too.

There were two ladies working there under Sister Hodges and they had never trained; they had never studied but it was

always said that they could qualify as Sisters, but they didn't have any theory. But we couldn't do any theory because there was nobody to take us. We would have had to come over to Nelson. I can remember coming over and Dr Frenett at the Public Hospital saying 'what are you girls wasting time over there under Sister Hodges thumb for? You should be learning your training,' and that in fact was what I decided to do. In 18 months you could take a course, a maternity course, without having general nursing. But in the meantime I met and married my husband so I didn't do that. Once I married I stopped working. When you got married you were happy to be married and I was happy to be Mrs. Williams and have a baby and look after my home.

My Dad who worked the Tuffnell's plumbing business - A. R. Tuffnell Ltd., - up from a little one-man business. During the depression when there wasn't any work, he was a tinsmith as well as a plumber, and he used to make kettles and billies and pots and pans of various sorts and take them on his bike and hook them to the door. He used to hate doing it, he felt absolutely mortified and he told Mum that the ladies used to see him coming and they wouldn't come to the door; and then when he'd come home he'd throw a handful of money on the table and say 'well there you are Charlotte, that's it.'

So it was a very hard time for him, and frcsn that he work-  
ed up the plumbing business. So I was very, very proud of what  
try Dad did. He employed through the years, I couldn't tell you  
how many apprentices, but they in turn started up businesses  
of their own. Jack Lusty in Motueka, and Ken 'Thorpe, perhaps  
the ones that came to ny mind. But they learnt their apprentice fa  
at Tuffnells.

We lived at the back of the house and the office was at  
the front of the house. It was all there, but Dad owned the  
property that went through to Oxford Street. So in time when  
I was about a 15 year old college girl, we built what was call-  
ed a new house and we were very, very proud of this. We  
thought it was a very flash house indeed. The new house was  
in Oxford Street - it's there new, 64 Oxford Street. The new  
house was on Dad's property facing Oxford Street. Dad had  
cwned that property and he was paying it off to a Mrs Crabtree  
who was an old Richmond identity. She used to live in  
Gladstone Road. Dad was very worried when the depression came  
that he couldn't keep up his payments. Somebody kept a cow on  
it and he got on his bike and he went round to Mrs Crabtree's  
arid said that he couldn't keep up the payments and he was very  
worried about it. She said verbally that there was never any-

thing written down. You'll know what you've paid and I'll know what you've paid, and it won't always be like this; and when times are better you can start to pay me again, which he did.

I thought Mrs Crabtree was a bit of a grand lady - she was a little lady. We were always closely associated with the Anglican Church and so was she. She lived in a house off Gladstone Road that was big and grand for those days - there was a big weeping elm with a seat under it on the lawn. She must have been an old lady then and I suppose if she owned that property, she must have had same means.

My father was bom in 1888 and he died in his 93rd year. We don't know very much about his family at all. His father died when he was a little boy and his mother remarried and he had a very hard childhood. His mother I know had to go out and do midwifery and Dad had to make his own way in the world, but we knew very little about his own father. He had a sister who lived in Fielding in the North Island. There was also contact with the sister when she was alive.

My father had a sister and a brother and they were brought up in Wanganui. He was under-privileged because his father died when he was young and his mother and his aunt had to go out and keep the family by doing midwifery. She did subsequently re-marry but Mr. Prince was very fond of his bottle and money was very, very short. So Dad left home and went to live with relatives and from there at some stage in his teens he went up into the Wanganui district where his brother Charlie was living. His brother was up there. I don't know whether he was contracting or just doing farmwork, amongst the Maori s. Dad went up to be with Charlie who was his older brother, but it was a very easy-going existence and Dad didn't ever tell me why, but at some stage he realised if he was going to make anything of his life, that he'd have to get out of this environment; which he did and came back into Wanganui proper and was apprenticed to a Mr Carlisle, a plumber. That was where he learnt his trade and then he came from there to Nelson.

We did keep contact with my father's sister's family. We were always in close contact with them because my father's mother, granny, she lived with my aunt up in Fielding, and in later years she came down and lived with us. My father found her accommodation with old Walter Fool who somebody might have told you about. And then she lived in our home so there was

always family contact.

My fathers<sup>I</sup> brother (Uncle Charlie) was always a mystery to me and I was told different stories and I'm never quite sure what was really the truth. He went away from where he lived with the Maori's to the First World War, and my mother told me that he didn't cane back. That he stayed in Australia. He had a child by that marriage who also kept contact with the family and came and saw us, and who was very much a Maori and very proud of his Maori heritage. I can remember being on the wharf when Charlie Tuffnell, (my fathers nephew,) came on his leave after the Second World War, and my Dad was standing on the wharf to meet him with Harry Atmore (the M.P.), Harry Atmore and Dad got on well together; and this Maori came along, he'd lost a limb overseas, and Dad said 'this is my nephew Charlie Tuffnell.' And seeing Harry Atmore trying not to look surprised because he really was a very dark-skinned man, and he just looked so surprised that it was Dad's nephew. But he also kept contact with the family and was very proud to have Dad as his uncle.

My mother's family is a lot easier - it's not so obscure. She was bom and bred in Nelson. She was bom on the Port Hills.

She was a Kidson and at the moment there's a great interest in the Kidson and the Newport family trees: Marion Stratford's mother and my mother were cousins and there was a bigger blood-tie than that by virtue of the fact that two Newport sisters married two Kidson brothers - Charles and John married Eliza and Martha. So ray mother was bom and bred in Nelson and when Dad came to Nelson, ray mother was very much involved with the All Saints Church. So Dad became involved with the Anglican Church and he became a teetotaller. I think ray mother and father both had things in their backgrounds that had happened through liquor, and so they were very much against it. So Dad always used to laugh going to Fire Brigade dinners, that they'd call him a 'wcwzer.' It was always done in fun. In fact before he died. Dad would have an ale or enjoy a sherry\* But I was brought up in a home where you'd think the devil would jump out of a beer bottle. But I think they were very -strained circumstances from the past as to why ray mother and father went without. The Kidson family were associated with the lighthouse.

I'm the youngest of four children. My eldest sister died a year ago. My remaining sister is Mrs Eric Wilkes in Richmond, and the Wilkes have got very strong ties with Richmond.

So, our history, we just seem like we're part of the place. My husband was also bom and bred on the Port Hills and cones from Nelson people. So we feel very much at hone in Nelson and Richmond.

I've got one brother and it's my nephews that have the firm. One brother Jeff, and he lives in Stoke.

The Emergency Precautions'Scheme - I can remember that I thought it was very scary. I remember my Dad sitting in his office, and he had a register of everybodys\* name in the village, and he went down it systematically ticking everybody off - what pe^ople could do, their addresses. I don't knew what - it was all supposed to be very hush hush. I can remember him being very frustrated because in Richmond there were so many people belonging to the ~~open Pretheren~~ - the open Bretheren are wonderful people, but belonging to the sect where they are known to be Exclusive Bretheren. They would have no part of it. They wouldn't even give in their names and addresses. But there were just so many of them and they would have been the people that had resources, and so it was a very frustrating business

At our hare in Oxford Street we had dances, patriotic dances.

**A**  
And 'gala day? A red white and blue fair; we only had one but  
then we had the dances, for the Second World War.

The Hcmeaard-were in camp down at Richmond Racecourse.

While my father was the Mayor someone decided that it would  
be a good idea for the then Governor General to make a visit to  
various parts of N.Z. And originally they didn't know how small  
Richmond was, and so they passed Richmond on the itinerary.  
And when my father, the Mayor, and Council got the notification,  
everybody was thrown into a great tiz.

But however, evidently they decided it wasn't the thing to  
do to say he wouldn't be welcome, so there was a public recep-  
tion given for him - I've got photos of the event. It was held  
outside the Town Hall on the steps. They put up boxing, chairs,  
and made a .

There were such a lot of problems because there was no-  
where for them to go for their lunch - the official party -  
and Dick Alexander was the publican at the time at The Star  
and Garter Hotel. So my father went and asked him and he said

'Oh well, I think we could put on a lunch that could be reasonable. '

And they put their best foot forward. There were no caterers. We just had the tearooms in those days. And so they really did. They put on this lunch.

And so the problem came for Her Excellency;<sup>1</sup> that there would be no comfort stop - where would she go?. So this was a big headache and my mother said they could have the use of our home in Oxford Street.

My sister was at home at the time. Her husband, Eric Wilkes, was serving overseas with the Army and I was there as a teenager. And we scrubbed that house from top to bottom because the Governor General was coming to our house.

And the next problem was - as I earlier told you - that Mum and Dad were teetotalers and so there was great discussion in our house as to whether they might be expected to offer a drink. They wanted to do the right thing but they did not know whether to do something on this exception, which was against their principles.

So finally they decided yes, they would, and Dick Alexander said he'd send down a bottle of this and that and glasses.

However, when they did arrive, they only had a drink of water; so it was a bit of a joke in the end I

We had net curtains all around our house and my mother took them all down and my sister and I had to wash and iron them all.

I've got a letter that my mother wrote, where all the bowls of flowers were put at strategic positions around the house.

And I think they were in our house after all that for about a quarter of an hour or so. We - my sister and I - weren't introduced; we were only allowed to peep out and see them in the carpark.

The aide-de-camp spoke with my sister and I. And we thought he was just the gear, a bit of alright.

New towels were bought for the bathroom, and matching soap.

The Governor General spoke very nicely. He talked about pigs! Because he'd obviously done a bit of homework and been told it was a farming town.

My Dad was a bit overawed by the occasion; he was basically a very down to earth sort of person, and he thought he'd just ask the Governor General when to propose a toast and when to do this and that; and he said 'oh don't worry, we'll tell you when it's time.'

And so the Governor General came to Richmond. <sup>1f</sup>