

# The Gift of Arohiwi







# The Gift of Arohiwi

There are places where the land speaks, not in words, but in generations of stories, toil, care and transformation.  
Arohiwi Station is such a place.





# Contents

Introduction • 9

Arohiwi Timeline • 15

CHAPTER ONE

IN THE BEGINNING • 21

CHAPTER TWO

COMMUNITY HISTORY • 31

CHAPTER THREE

THE GARDENS • 35

Arohiwi Farmhouse Garden	36
Marian’s Memorial Garden	42

CHAPTER FOUR

RECOLLECTIONS • 47

David and Margaret Evans	48
Janet McCardle	54
John Springford	58
Marie Burgess	62
Peter Tod	66
Sandra Faulkner	70

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FARM • 75

Arohiwi Station	76
Robbie Schaw, Farm Manager	82
Arohiwi on-farm team	86
Pests, diseases and barriers	88
The environmental plan	89
Arohiwi Station in the community	90
Farm development for the future	91

CHAPTER SIX

THE AROHIWI BOARD • 93

Peter Tod	94
Marie Burgess	95
Ken Foote	96
Sandra Faulkner	97
Ross Shepherd	98

CHAPTER SEVEN

IN CONCLUSION • 101

Arohiwi Legacy	102
----------------	-----





---

# Introduction

There are places where the land speaks, not in words, but in generations of stories, toil, care and transformation. Arohiwi Station is such a place and is a living legacy, a gift. It carries with it the whispers of Māori tūpuna who walked its soils, the vision of pioneering settlers who saw promise in its rugged hills, native forestry and fertile flats, and the stewardship of those who shaped it through changing seasons and social landscapes. This publication is a testament to that ongoing legacy.

From its early days, Arohiwi has been marked by connection to whenua, to whānau and to purpose. Tangata Whenua were the first to understand its rhythm, relying on the land for sustenance, shelter and spiritual grounding. Tangata Whenua presence laid the foundation for a deep respect for the environment, a respect that endures in the farm's practices and philosophy today.

Arohiwi history evolved through waves of land acquisition and consolidation, under the guidance of dedicated Board members and Farm Managers. The Station grew, not just in hectares, but in meaning and in connections with Presbyterian Support East Coast (PSEC) and the community. In 1978, a pivotal chapter was written when PSEC became a part of the Arohiwi story. This marked a new era, one that further intertwined social mission with rural enterprise.

The journey from partial ownership to the present-day reality of full ownership by PSEC represents more than a change of title. It reflects a deeply intentional alignment of values: the profits of this working station now directly support the wellbeing of East Coast communities through PSEC's community services. Arohiwi, in its modern form, is both a thriving agricultural operation and a cornerstone of regional social good.

PSEC's kaupapa is simple but profound: to support underserved individuals and whānau across the East Coast. With the proceeds from Arohiwi, PSEC delivers essential services: programmes and wraparound support for children and whānau, in-home and community support for older people, and supporting disabled people to live a good life. With the help of over 200 staff and 100 volunteers, PSEC delivers over \$15 million worth of social services to local people each year, through its services: Enliven Disability, Enliven Older People and Family Works.



The chapters that follow capture Arohiwi's full arc: from the recollections of Board members, whose strategic oversight has guided the Station through economic highs and agricultural challenges, to the hands-on knowledge of Farm Managers and workers who have shaped the land day by day. You will also encounter the narrative of generous families and partnerships, whose governance, faith-based values and community service have combined into something uniquely resilient and hopeful. This is a collection of narratives and not intended to be a complete history publication.

It is easy to look at farmland and see only paddocks and production. But when you look more closely at Arohiwi Station, you see something richer: a place where history is honoured, where stewardship is sacred and where farming serves not only markets, but people.

This book honours that story. It records not just what Arohiwi is, but what it means, to those who have walked it, worked it, governed it and who now benefit from it. It is a story of generosity and purpose. Of strategy and soil. Of people and possibility.

As you turn these pages, may you see Arohiwi not only as a remarkable agricultural enterprise but also as a model of social responsibility and regional pride. May it inspire further conversations about what it means to own and operate land with heart, and how, when done with integrity, it can uplift entire communities.

Arohiwi's story is far from over. But here, in these chapters, we pause to reflect on the road already travelled and acknowledge those who've made it possible.

Through this book you will read of their rich history and how the generosity of gifting a parcel of land from Laura Mitchell (née Holt) to PSEC began a ripple effect over time that has led to Arohiwi Station being fully owned by PSEC.

You will hear from past and current Board members, where you will feel their passion and commitment to both PSEC and Arohiwi. Their foresight and clever business acumen have now presented PSEC with a gift that will change the lives of many people for years and generations to come.

Arohiwi Station Limited Board  
AND  
The Board of Directors  
Presbyterian Support East Coast







Back L-R: Benjamin Crosse, Robbie Schaw, Ross Shepherd, Stuart Signal, Sanja Majstorović,  
Marie Burgess, Ken Foote, Peter Tod, John Cannon, Mary Wills, Regan Loach  
Front L-R: Sarah Andrews, Monique Murphy, Sandra Faulkner





# Arohiwi Timeline



We acknowledge  
Tangata Whenua  
and Mana Whenua  
where there are  
deep and enduring  
connections to  
geographical areas

**1851**  
Part of the Ahuriri  
Block, known as  
Arohiwi, was sold  
to the government

**1880**  
Land in Puketitiri  
was subdivided to  
encourage further  
settlers to the  
region

**1895**  
The Holt family  
purchased land in  
Puketitiri, because  
of the native tree  
forests

**1896**  
Puketitiri school  
was established

**1906**  
The Holt Family  
established a  
timber mill on  
Arohiwi

**1914**  
Farming  
operations  
commenced at  
Arohiwi after scrub  
was cleared

**1942**  
The last of the  
three timber  
mills closed

**1952**  
Arohiwi  
acquired 800  
hectares from  
Brownlie  
Family farm

**1955**  
Electricity through  
power lines arrived  
in Puketitiri

**1974**  
The property known  
as John Holt Limited,  
comprising 1,819  
hectares, was put up for  
auction – it didn't sell

**1978**  
The farm was split in  
two for John Holt's four  
children – John, Rhoda,  
Gordon and Laura. One  
called Rocky Hill Station,  
the other called Arohiwi  
Station.

**1978**  
Laura Mitchell (née  
Holt) gifted half of her  
original gift (half share  
of her half share – i.e.  
25%) in the property  
to Presbyterian Social  
Services Association  
of Hawke's Bay and  
Poverty Bay, as PSEC  
was then known

**1988**  
Gordon Holt died.  
His interest left to  
his children, Janet  
McCardle, David Holt  
and Marian Holt.

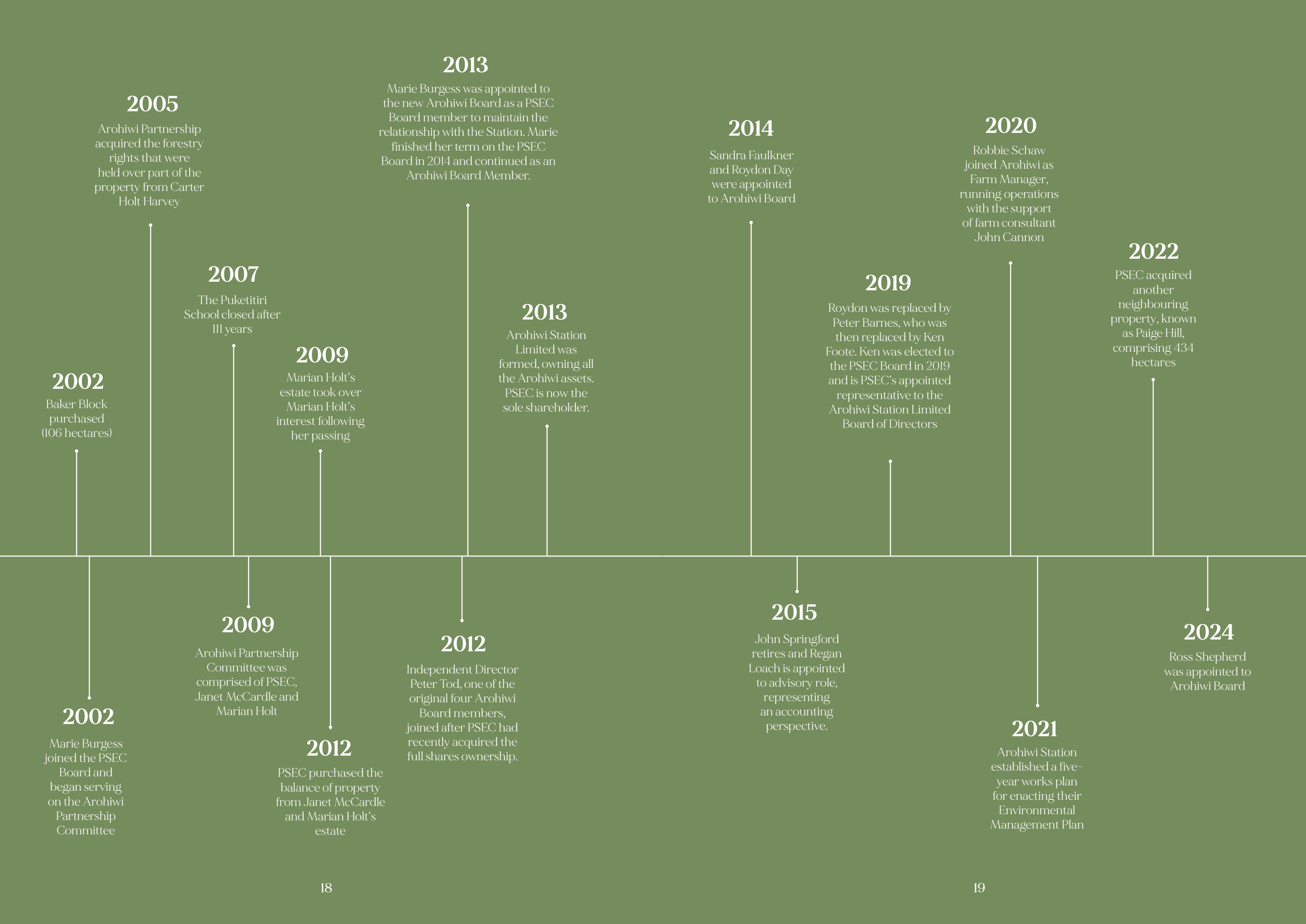
**1991**  
David Holt (son of  
Gordon Holt) sold his  
interest in the property  
to PSEC, Janet  
McCardle and Marian  
Holt (his sisters),  
forming Arohiwi  
Partnership

**1990**  
Following the earlier death of her son, Laura  
left the remaining shares in the property to  
PSEC in her will.

John Springford, senior accountant at  
Chartered Accountancy firm Brown Webb,  
now Brown Webb Richardson Limited  
(BWR), began overseeing the administration  
of the Station, providing the link between  
management and the Board.

**1992**  
David Evans  
became Arohiwi  
Station Manager  
until 2020









CHAPTER ONE

# In The Beginning



---

Tangata Whenua first arrived in Hawke's Bay around 1250–1300. While settlements were initially on the coast, people gradually moved inland, following waterways. There were Māori settlements on the eastern Kaweka foothills, with the Kaweka forests representing a good food source.

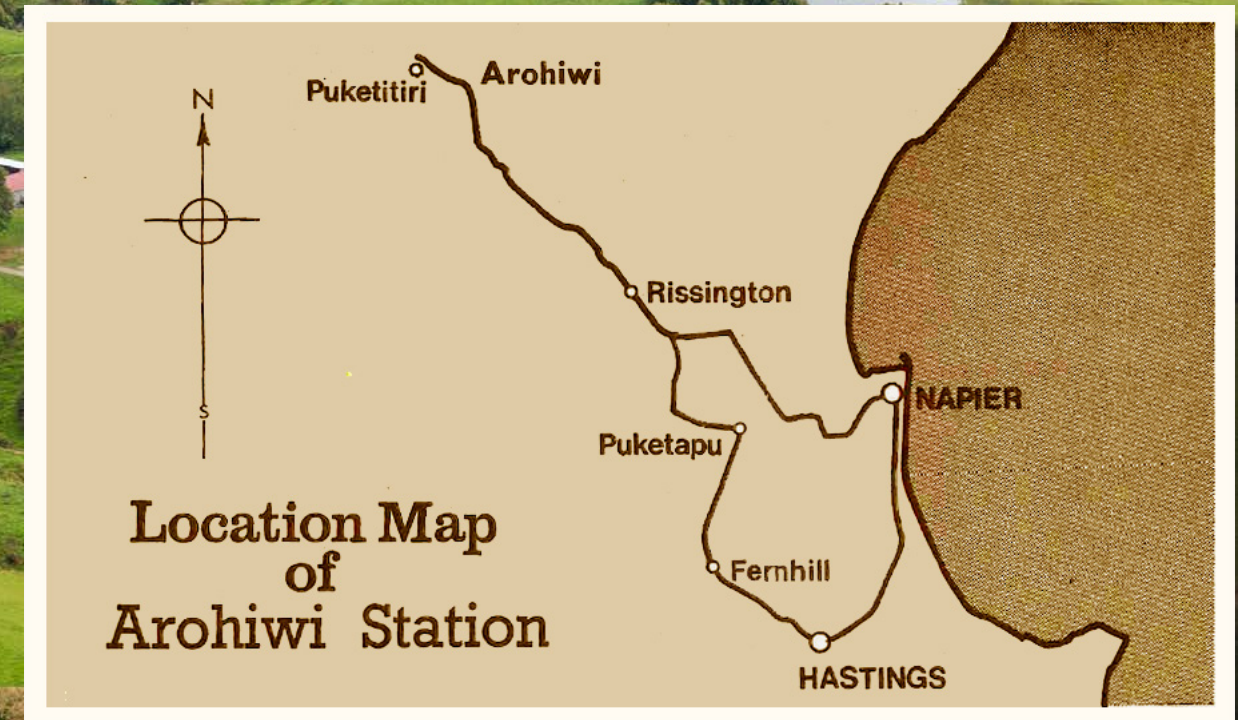
Puketitiri could mean “the hill with cabbage trees on it.” The meaning behind the name Arohiwi Station was not known to the contributors at the time of publishing. In te reo Māori ‘aro’ could mean before or in front of and ‘hiwi’ could mean hill, so possibly the name could relate to the lay of the land.

Although there was apparently no great permanent settlement in the district nor any fortified pā, there is ample evidence to suggest that this area was visited with frequent regularity as a favoured hunting and camping ground. It must indeed have been a paradise for such a purpose, with its rich abundance of varied wildlife. Kea, kiwi and pigeons abounded, and mutton birds existed on the banks of the Mohaka River. Midden material from rock shelters where burnt stones from early ovens exist lends evidence to this.

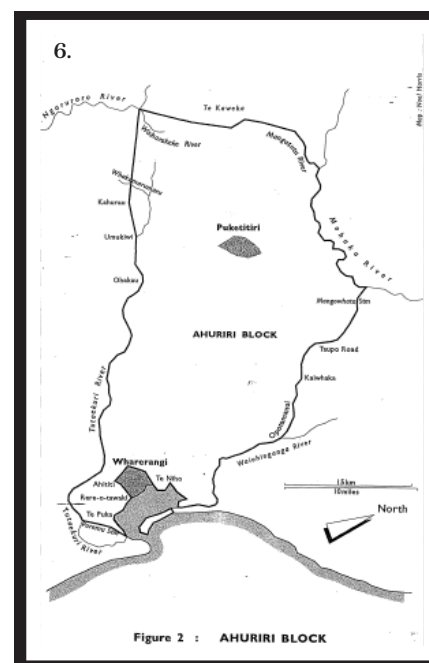
Weapons, tools and greenstone have frequently been unearthed by local residents. A half-finished Māori canoe was discovered near the Hot Springs by the Mohaka River which, the legend goes, could have been named after a person who was drowned there. On a bluff on the Pakaututu side of this river, apparently a Māori chief is buried.

The Puketitiri valley, which is the home of Arohiwi, was once recognised as having the largest (20,000 acres) and most dense stand of podocarp forest in New Zealand. There are 15 species of podocarp, the best known are rimu, kahikatea, miro, matai and totara.

The Mangatutu Hot Springs, northwest of Puketitiri, attracted settlements. The people who lived in the area were apparently the Ngāti Mahu and Ngāti Hinepare, both part of the Ahuriri Hapū.







The upper Mohaka River contained renowned eeling grounds, and transient camps were established during the eeling season by tribes from as far away as Taupō.

Puketitiri was part of the Ahuriri Block sold to the government on 4 November 1851. The deed included only two reserves – te Whanganui-ā-Orotu (Ahuriri's inner harbour) and 500 acres at Puketitiri. This shows the value placed on the forest

there. Originally Puketitiri was set aside by the government for a military settlement at the time of the Land Wars, but in the early 1880s it was cut up for closer settlement.

This attracted saw millers, and the native timber industry was prominent until the 1930s. John Holt bought land, including Arohiwi, as virgin bush for logging. The property, parts of which can be traced

through John and brother Robert Holt as far back as 1895, was originally noted for the quality of its native bush, including stands of rimu, matai and kahikatea trees.

Strong soil types (Ngaroma sandy silt, formed from Taupō's volcanic ash shower) and the excellent growing conditions of the district were accredited for the quality of the trees, which fed a timber mill that flourished on the property from 1904 until 1940.

After logging concluded, John Holt spent much of his time bringing the land into farmland. Robert Holt formed Robert Holt & Sons timber merchants in Hastings (third biggest company in New Zealand at that stage). It became part of Carter Holt Harvey in 1985.

1. Mill Cottage at Holt's Mill, early 1900 2. Timber truck from Puketitiri Mill, carting wool  
3. Trestle bridge

4. Robert Holt and Sons' Mill 5. Robert Holt 6. Map of Ahuriri Block  
7. Arohiwi Homestead 1922-33



# “AROHIWI STATION”

PUKETITIRI, HAWKE’S BAY

ONE OF THIS PROVINCES FOREMOST  
SHEEP AND CATTLE PROPERTIES

**COMPRISING 4,496 ACRES FREEHOLD**

(1819.51 HECTARES)



A view over portion of the property, Main Buildings middle distance (hill country outside boundary).

TO BE OFFERED FOR SALE BY

**PUBLIC AUCTION**

ON

**FRIDAY 6th DECEMBER 1974 at 2.30 p.m.**

IN THE

**WOOL EXCHANGE, MARINE PARADE, NAPIER**

BY

DALGETY NEW ZEALAND LTD.,

WILLIAMS & KETTLE LTD.,

M.R.E.I.N.Z. — Auctioneers in Conjunction

## Arohiwi Station Composition

Located near Puketitiri, 56km north-west of Napier

Total Station Area	1,471.5 ha
Arohiwi Station Owned Land	1,396.2 ha
Leased Land	75.5 ha
Effective Farmland Total	1,118.5 ha
Exotic Forestry	149.2 ha
Indigenous Bush	91.7 ha
Regenerated Scrub	63.6 ha
Retired Pasture	40.0 ha
Broadleaf Forestry	2.2 ha
Dams	1.8 ha
Non-Productive Utility Areas	4.5 ha



---

The property, which had grown to 1,819 ha (trading under the name of John Holt Limited), was auctioned to the public on Friday 6 December 1974. The farm failed to sell at auction and was subsequently split in two. The property was then passed on to John Holt's four children in 1978, with one half (now known as Rocky Hill Station) becoming the property of John E. Holt and Rhoda Burr, and the other half (retaining the title of Arohiwi Station) being left to Gordon Holt and Laura Mitchell. At that point Laura Mitchell gifted half of her interest in the property to the Presbyterian Social Services Association of Hawke's Bay and Poverty Bay (known now as PSEC).

Arohiwi Station was overseen by Gordon Holt until his death in 1988. His interest in the Station was left to his children David, Janet and Marian. Two years later Laura passed away. Laura's family trust, which held her remaining interest in the property, was distributed in 1991, passing on her remaining 25% interest in the Station to Presbyterian Support East Coast (PSEC). At the same time David Holt sold his interest (which equated to a 16.6% share) to the three remaining parties (Presbyterian Support East Coast, Janet McCardle and Marian Holt). The M.L. Holt Trust Fund took over Marian Holt's interest following her passing in early 2009. During 2012, a decision was made by Janet McCardle and the Trustees of the M.L. Holt Trust Fund to offer up their respective 20% interests to PSEC for sale. Having taken many factors into consideration, PSEC decided to purchase the balance of the property, taking full ownership of the property and its comprehensive operations as from 1 July 2012.

On 1 July 2013 Arohiwi Station Limited was formed, purchasing all Arohiwi Station's assets from Presbyterian Support East Coast (PSEC). At that point PSEC became, and remains, the sole shareholder of Arohiwi Station Limited.

The generosity and foresight of the Holt family have impacted hundreds of people in need through Presbyterian Support East Coast's (PSEC) services. In turn, through its stewardship of Arohiwi, PSEC not only has the responsibility of protecting this legacy for generations to come, it has also unwittingly become the catalyst of being a 'constant' in an ever-changing rural community.

In 2022, Arohiwi Station Limited acquired the neighbouring property known as Paige Hill. This opportunity was made available as a result of the strong relationship between the Le Comte family and Arohiwi Station Manager Robbie Schaw, who was also the former Paige Hill Farm Manager. The Paige Hill property borders the Puketitiri Golf Club and Arohiwi properties and added a further 434 hectares to the Arohiwi Station. The name Paige Hill came from Geoff and April Le Comte in memory of their late daughter. The property is still referred to as Paige Hill today.

Puketitiri mirrors many small rural localities throughout New Zealand that have evolved to a point where they look and feel significantly different from what life was like only 25 years ago and beyond.

Memories of a community where life revolved around school and gatherings at the local hall, familiar faces from established families and understanding the historical ties to the land are just that – memories.

Puketitiri is symptomatic of many changes, with modern farming practices reducing the need for labour; improved roading, making travel less onerous; families seeking supplementary off-farm income; rural school closures/mergers; and farming dynasties being curtailed as younger generations opt for alternative career paths.

In amongst those changes, the gifting of part of Arohiwi Station in 1978 to PSEC has provided the Puketitiri community with a romantic link to the past, through the back-story of the Holt name, which will be kept in perpetuity.

Arohiwi Station's connectivity to Puketitiri goes back to around 1895 when John Holt took up part of the property for timber milling purposes. This is around the time when Puketitiri was developing as a community, with trees being actively milled in the district.





# Community History



Puketitiri School traces its origins back to 1896 and was kept busy educating the children whose parents worked on Arohiwi Station and surrounding areas. Farming operations at Arohiwi are believed to have commenced around 1914. Over the years, the property expanded, with an additional 800 ha (approximately) acquired in 1952 through a purchase from the Brownlie family, who are known for their All Blacks rugby legacy.

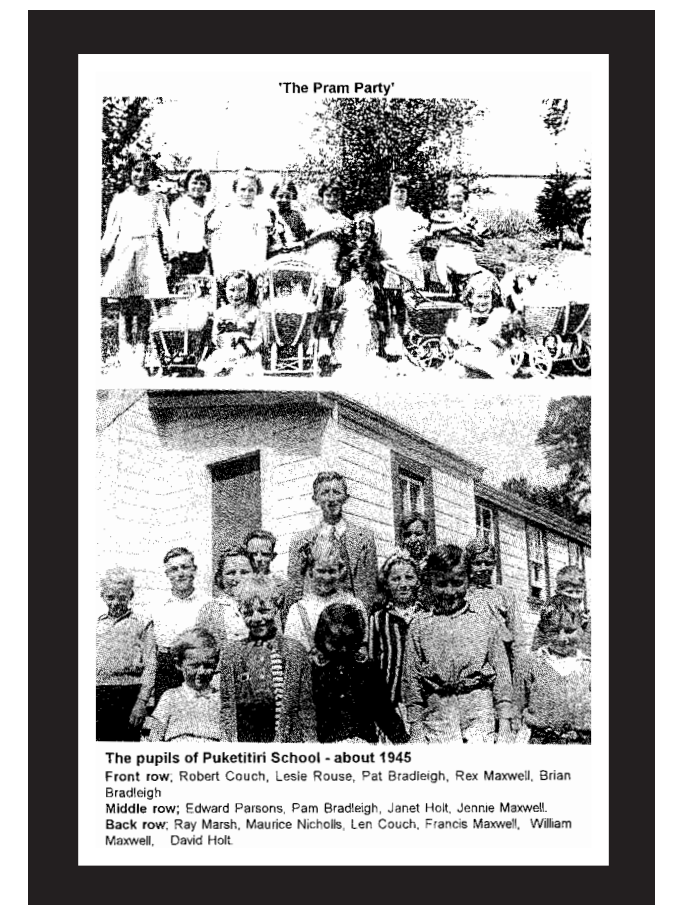
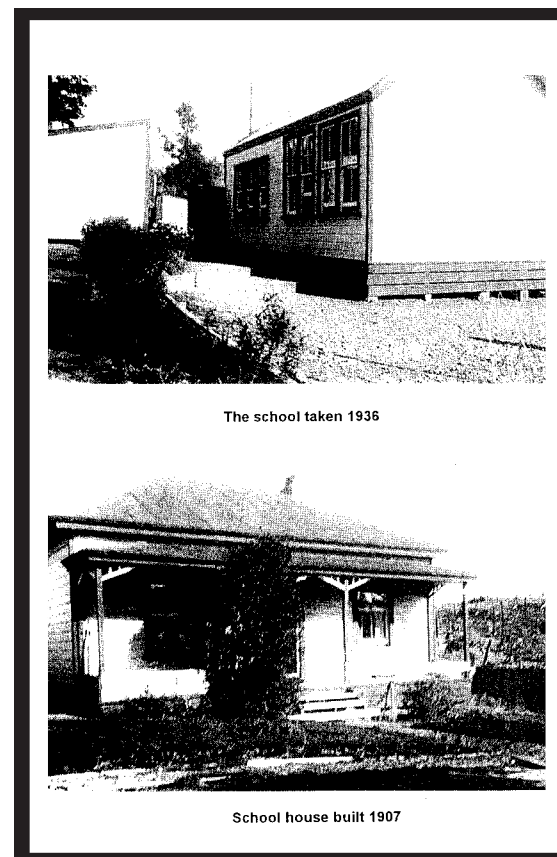
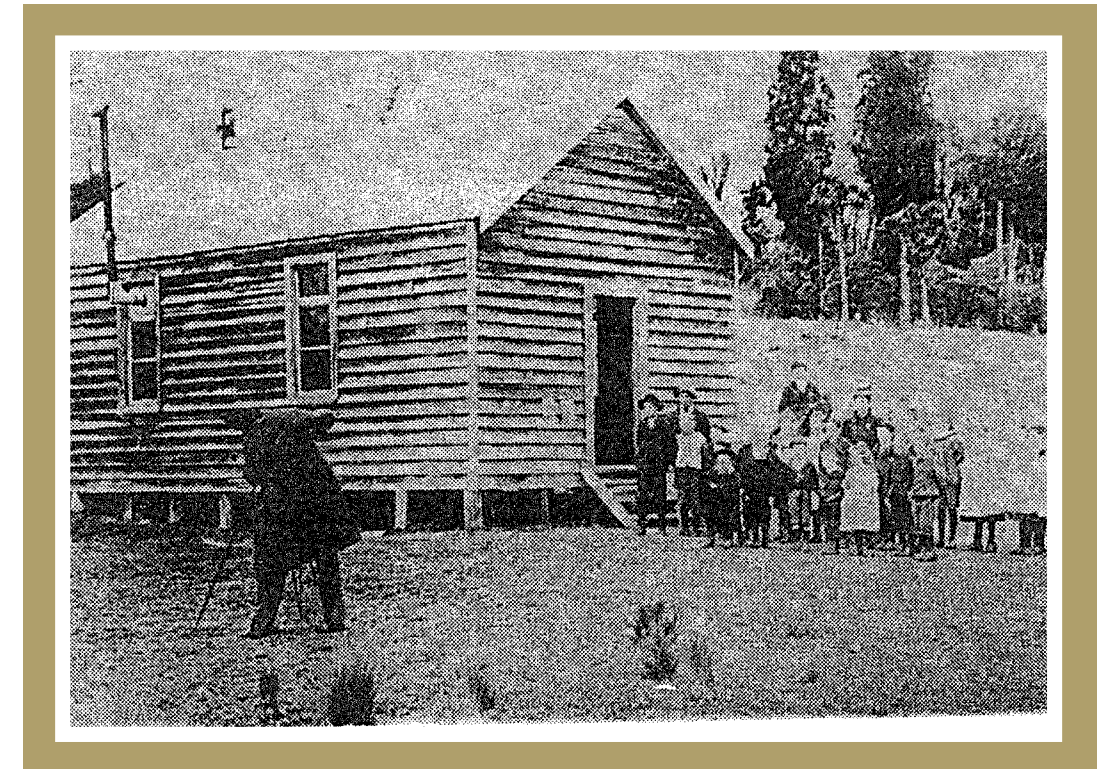
The 1,819.51 ha property was divided among Holt family interests in 1978. This division set off a series of transactions that ultimately shaped Arohiwi into what it is today.

Arohiwi also leases 75.5 ha of land known as Hutchinson Domain. When not grazed by stock, the domain serves as a golf course and hosts various local events, including dog trials.

At one point (exact time unknown) the farm had three airstrips used by top-dressing planes (and where Janet used to ride her horse). Airstrip One was opposite Little Bush Road, Airstrip Two was opposite Brownlie Road, and Airstrip Three was at the extreme of the property – flat and plain, the only one that hadn't had to be cleared. None of these exist now.

Electricity lines did not reach Puketitiri until 1955.

Puketitiri School in the late 1930s, had a roll of 60 students, primarily from timber mill, farm and farmworker families. By 2007, the roll had declined to just five students, leading to the school's closure at the end of that year.





# The Gardens



---

## Arohiwi Farmhouse Garden

The current farmhouse is situated close to the golf course and was built around the 1930s.

Several changes were made to the house over the years, including insulation, replacing the open fireplace with box fires, and a few internal wall removals to allow more light through. The kitchen still features the original wood-fired stove. However, from the outside it is largely the same house.

The house was originally surrounded by large trees: macrocarpas on one side; a copper beech, planted when the house was built; and a spectacular lime tree (non-fruiting) on the other side. Over the years, some of these have been removed, allowing more sunlight into the home. The lime tree was perfectly shaped like a giant bell but sadly split in two and had to be removed. The macrocarpas were felled more recently; however, the copper beech still stands proudly.

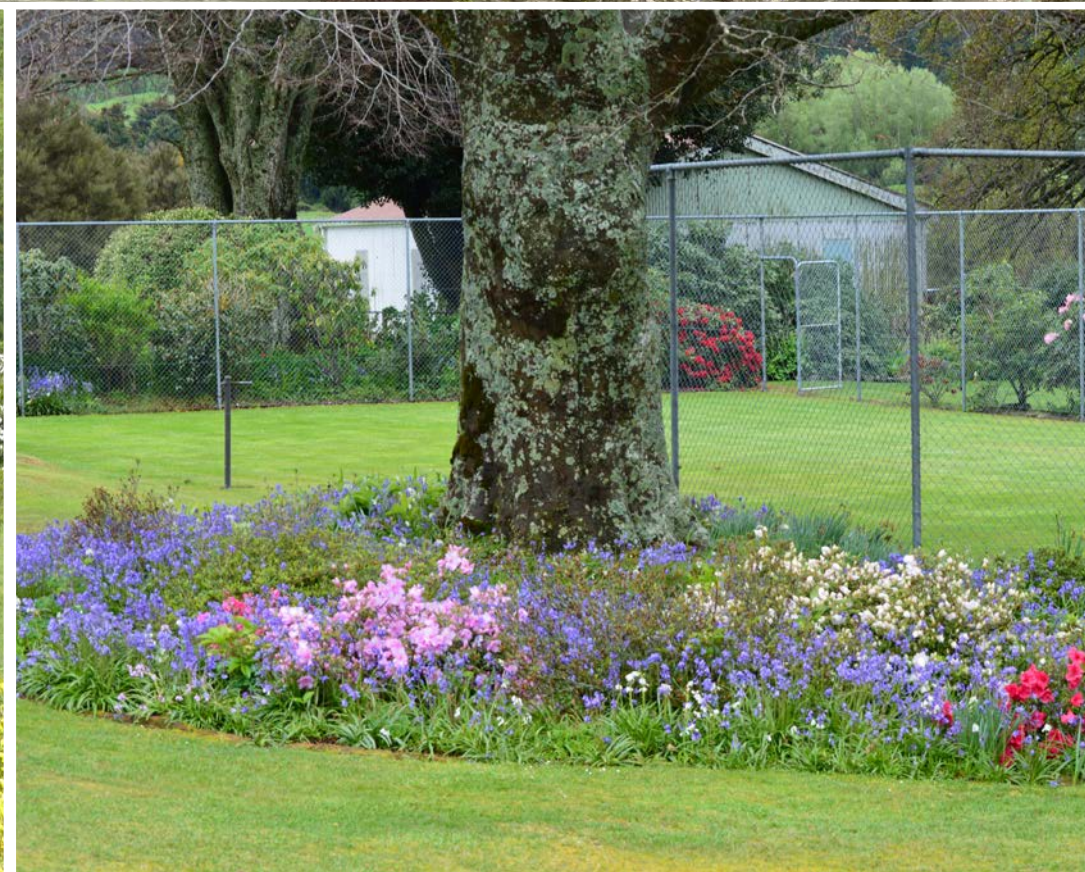
When her husband, David, was Station Manager from 1992 to 2020, Margaret Evans reshaped and expanded the Arohiwi garden. David was a passionate dog trainer and had set up an area by the house for dog training purposes. The training ground was converted to a garden by David and Margaret. After scalloping the waterways through the garden, David built the walking bridges over the drains, while the totara batten seats were made by John Dunnet, who was the tractor driver general hand at the time.

The size and beauty of the garden have made it a notable place amongst the community to be an apt venue for weddings.

Margaret layered the garden around the tall original trees, including the Williams' bon Chrétien pear tree that sits centre stage and the picturesque copper beech with approximately 100 selected rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias. David and Margaret also reinstated the tennis court, although it was only in the dryness of summer droughts that the court was hard enough to bounce a ball. It did serve a dual purpose as a cricket practice pitch.







The last part of the layering involved Margaret's love for dahlias, delphiniums and gladioli. Bluebells pop up in abundance every year, even though Margaret says she never planted any in her time there. These would have been planted by Gordon's wife, Margaret Holt; they are one of the few annuals in the garden.

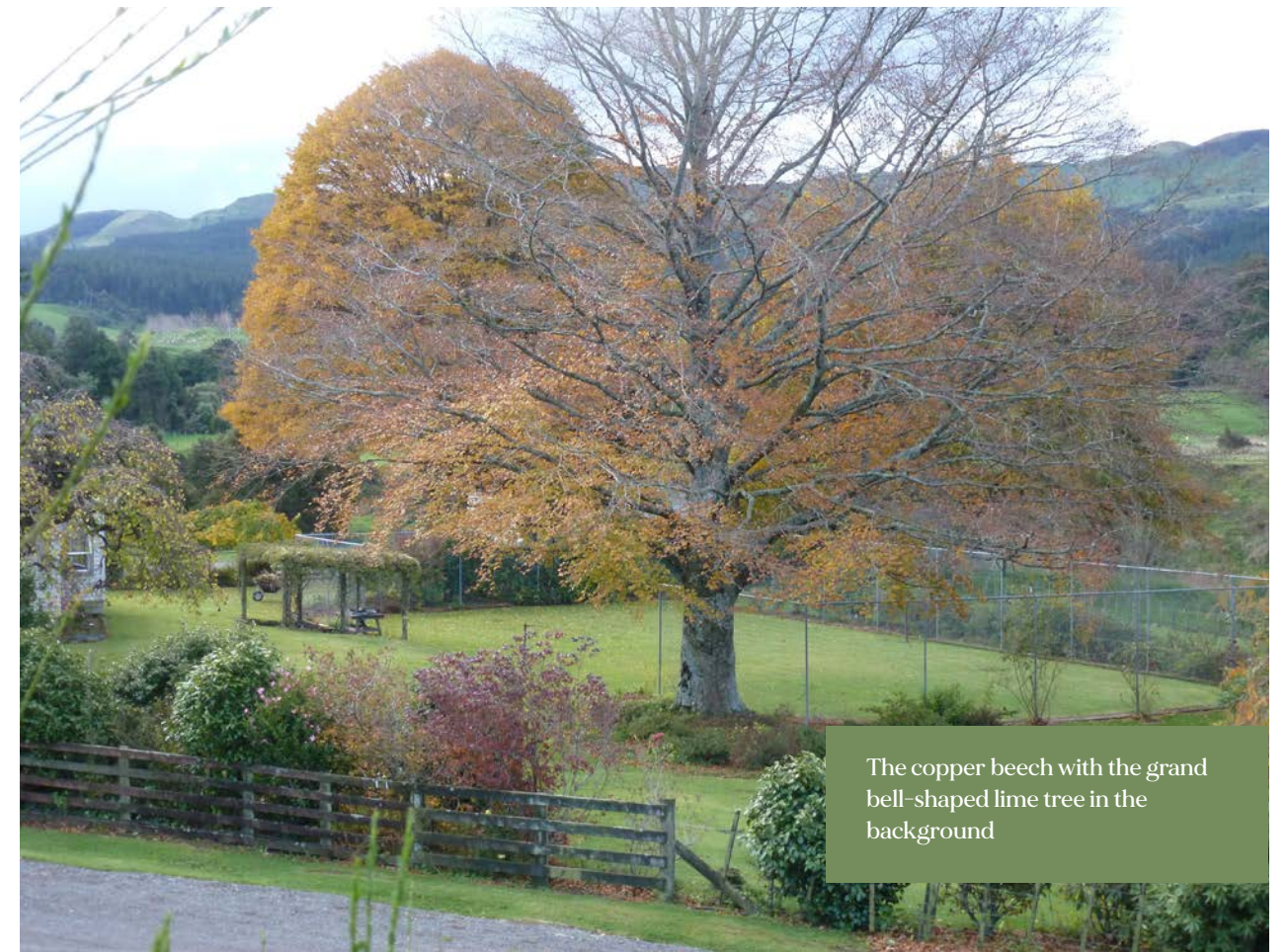
One of several severe snowstorms occurred in 2005 and covered the garden in about 12 inches of snow. The trees and plants weren't used to this kind of weather, and many buckled under the weight of the snow. This caused many broken branches throughout the garden and some of the

trees are misshapen still as testament to that damage.

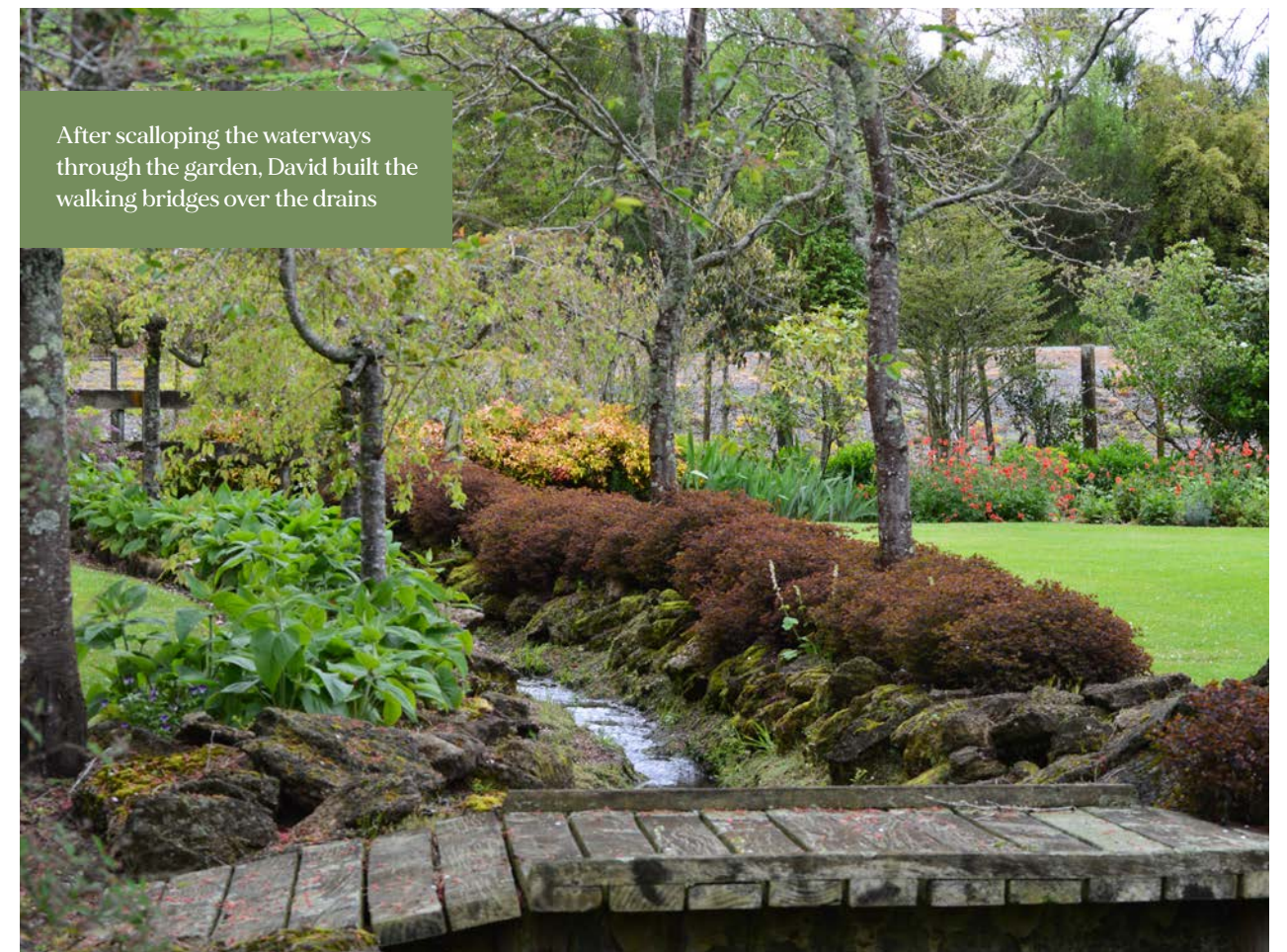
The rose Margaret chose was 'Graham Thomas', a fragrant yellow deep-cupped rose that flourished in the Puketitiri environment. Double white cherry trees were planted as the backdrop to the northwest side of the garden.

David found an old tram wheel from the logging train that would have been used to remove the native timber from the farm in the Holt days of milling. This now sits in the garden as an ornament and as a connection to the roots of the farm.





The copper beech with the grand bell-shaped lime tree in the background



After scalloping the waterways through the garden, David built the walking bridges over the drains





---

## Marian's Memorial Garden

Another garden at Arohiwi was created by Marian Holt. Marian's cottage was on a ridge, about one kilometre down the road from the current farmhouse. Marian gardened on both sides of the ridge, capturing the benefits that each side presented.

Rhododendrons flourished in this environment, being well-suited to the climate of mild to temperate conditions and tolerant of the cold Puketitiri winters.

The original house was on a quarter-acre section, portioned from a 100-acre block. The Puketitiri area was surveyed into blocks following the war and owners were permitted to subdivide, with many landowners creating 25-acre blocks and sections down to quarter acres, often in the corners of the blocks.

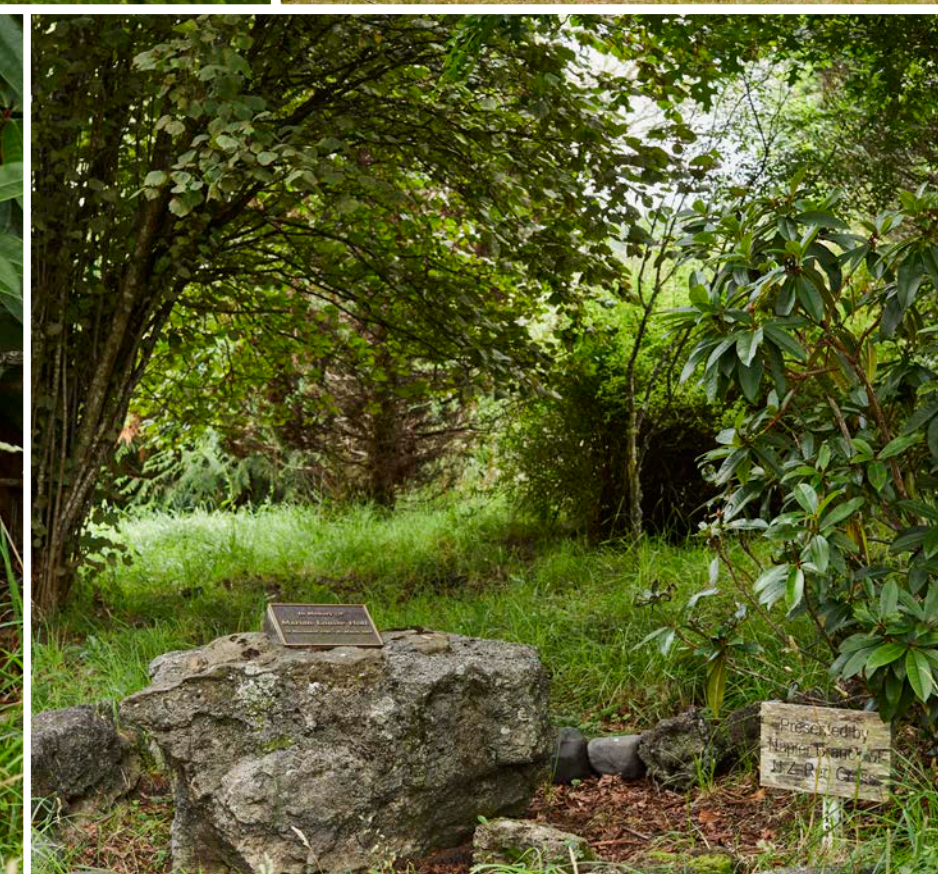
The oldest remaining tree in Marian's Garden is the English oak. It stands at what would have been the bottom corner of her garden on the western side of the house. It is still a spectacle to behold and would have been a proud showstopper amongst her varied garden at the time.

The oak is now registered with the Hastings District Council's Plan as an 'Outstanding Tree' and is therefore categorised as a protected tree under the category of 'Trees of historical value because of their age and/or the person who planted them or because they commemorate important historical events'. This was the first non-native tree planted in Puketitiri.

After Marian died, the cottage was to be removed and the section not rebuilt on, as was the wishes of her father. The remaining family let her close friend Beverley Halliburton remove some of the plants. Marian was a member of the Hawke's Bay Iris Society and introduced Beverley to iris growing.

---

*Right: Marian's memorial garden as of 2025*







The back of the garden has been retained as a memorial, the fenced-off smaller area making it easier for Farm Managers to maintain. Cattle were not permitted in the area surrounding the oak tree to protect it from damage.

Many organisations have planted more rhododendrons on the remaining section

in memory of the fond connections and contribution that Marian had made to them.

One such organisation that Marian was a supporter of was the Red Cross. The Red Cross provided a plaque in honour of her support.



*The 200-year-old English oak is the oldest remaining tree in Marian's garden, and is now registered and protected with the Hastings District Council's Plan and is categorised as an 'Outstanding Tree'. The Hallet family planted the oak tree before a house was built on the farm.*



# Recollections



---

## David and Margaret Evans

David was Arohiwi Station Manager 1992–2020 and his wife, Margaret, developed the gardens and was involved in the farm community. They have retired to a property half an hour's drive down the road from Arohiwi.

David Evans managed Arohiwi (1,396 ha) plus the lease of Hutchison Domain (75.5 ha) adjacent to the domain, which created a 1,471.5 ha property from 1992 to 2020. This was stocked with around 5,500 Romney ewes and 300 beef. Arohiwi shares boundaries with 17 different properties. David previously managed property at Mangatahi (4–5 years) and Moteo, Puketapu (7 years).

David employed one shepherd and one general hand. He worked at increasing the stock numbers and is proud of the year when he achieved a 160% ewe scanning rate. He also increased his cow herd from 220 to 280 and changed the makeup of the herd from a Simmental/Hereford/Angus cross to an Angus herd. He bought bulls from Te Mania stud in North Cheviot, and he was able to sell steers at 18 months, reaching 300 kg before their second winter.



David recalls annual visits by the PSEC Board for the AGM and their interest in the farm. Improvements were made to the property: covered yards were built in three stages; new cattle yards were installed; and a lane system was developed over the property to keep stock off the road while going to the woolshed. Paddocks were also subdivided to make them more manageable.

Arohiwi was relatively isolated, as it was a windy, gravel road all the way to the farm when they started. Later, the road was tar sealed as far as the school.

David and Margaret recall severe weather events affecting the property and how they managed it. David managed through three droughts, the worst being in 1997/98, where he had to graze stock away in Havelock North, Crownthorpe and as far away as Woodville.











Arohiwi also has regular snow falls and frosts, as it is high enough and sheltered enough for both. In June 2006, heavy snow closed roads, and in October 2010 snowfall brought down power lines: “They fell over like dominoes”, and the properties in the area were without power for days.

Margaret helped out on the farm when short-staffed or when extra hands were needed, e.g. for docking. She became the school bus driver when they were on the property.

This was somewhat expected of the Farm Manager’s wife if she had no small children at home, and as both their children were at boarding schools in Napier, she took over the school bus

run to and from Puketitiri School for 23 years. The school bought its own bus, but when the 111-year-old school closed in December 2007, Nimons was awarded the school bus run and Margaret continued as the driver.



Margaret is a keen gardener, and she reshaped and expanded the Arohiwi farmhouse garden during the years they were there.



---

## Janet McCardle

**Janet is John Holt's granddaughter and her father, Gordon, was Station Manager at Arohiwi. Her mother was Margaret Holt. Janet grew up on Arohiwi with younger sister Marian and brother David. Janet was a partner in the Arohiwi Station Partnership until 2012.**

Janet McCardle (née Holt) grew up on Arohiwi with younger sister Marian Holt (six years younger), as her father, Gordon, was the Farm Manager from the late 1920s, and her grandfather owned the property. Gordon Holt was previously a shepherd at Rukumoana Station owned by the Chambers family.

When Janet was young, Puketitiri was a real village with a school, a pub, a general store, a hall and several houses, and was at the margin of the bush, which was still being cleared of totara, rimu and kahikatea. There were three timber mills operating: Holt's Mill (John Holt Limited), McLeod's and Gardner's. Janet recalls walking the wooden tracks the men built to slide logs down to the mills, including constructed viaducts over the gullies. There were enough men in the area to form a cricket team at the cricket ground at Puketitiri, and the village also had tennis courts.



Arohiwi was a mixed beef and sheep farm, producing wool, fattened lambs and beef stock. They also grew crops. In 1952, Rocky Hill on Brownlie Road was bought from the Brownlie family to extend the Arohiwi property. Dorothy Brownlie was Margaret Holt's best friend.

Janet's uncle Leslie Holt worked in the office. Her father employed a Shepherd General, and various other workmen, during the 1930s until the men went to war. The property had been owned by her grandfather John Holt before that and, although the area was a known Māori route into the hinterland, there was no knowledge of any previous permanent Māori settlement in the area.

A special oak tree still stands on the land planted by the Hallet family. Janet recalls houses being moved all over the district to accommodate families as farm needs changed. There was a sizeable population with sixty or more children at the school, the families of farm staff.

There were two cottages, the little one that eventually fell to bits and one that remained in use by the family as a weekender for extended Holt family. Members of the Heretaunga Tramping Club often stayed there before they headed into the Ruahines. This later became a farmworker cottage.

As a child, Janet was required to help with jobs around the home: cleaning screens for the milk, keeping the firewood box full, cleaning out the chook house, egg hunting and looking after the horses. During the war when manpower for farms was short, the family did more work on the farm, and the children helped more.

"I loved the draught horses, especially Nelly," said Janet. Her father bred draught horses used for ploughing and cartage. These were managed by horse trainer Ted Riley, who was also called on for all the jobs that involved the horses. At harvest time, Janet helped with stabling the horses, raking hay and hooking the horse up to the dray. Creating a haystack was a manual job and a dangerous place for children to play in, and she recalls being warned off.



In 1945–46 Hutchison Domain was burning and locals kept up a night-watch for fire. Ohukura was cleared of bush for farming: “they were basically arsonists at heart”. This was during the severe drought of 1946, which Janet recalls as severely affecting the farm.

Following WWII, ballot farms were set up in the area for returning servicemen, to provide them with land, employment and an opportunity to get ahead. Rabbiters were kept busy in the district. Clearing noxious plants, like foxgloves and nodding thistle, was also a perpetual job that the family had to do when the war made manpower scarce. The family would also walk the paddocks to check stock on Sundays.

When Janet reached high school age, she attended Napier Girls’ High School as a boarder. “You had to live 30 miles (48 km) or more away from the school to qualify to be a boarder.” She was at the school from 1947 to 1951, and there were 60 girls in the hostel. She recalls post-war food rationing in place during that time. Janet then went to Victoria University for three years but would return to Arohiwi to work in the holidays. “In the first year I was planting pine trees, and we used a long pole to transect and keep the trees in even rows.”

Janet remembers when Puketitiri was connected to electricity in 1955, generators and ‘wizard’ gas lights being used before that. She also recalls driving down from Arohiwi to find ‘LBJ Jade’ the champion bull standing in middle of the road unwilling to move.

When John Holt got married, he moved to Caroline Road in Hastings. He lived there until he died. Janet used to sit on his fence and watch as builders constructed the Wattie’s factory. John would give Janet farming documents to give to Ms Duff at the New Zealand Mutual Building Society, when the children travelled to town once a month.

When Janet’s father, Gordon, retired from actively farming in 1968, he moved to Higgins Street, Napier, “and took up playing bowls”. Peter Harris was appointed as long-serving Farm Manager consistently throughout, although for some years Gordon would drive up to his property every day.

Janet served twelve years on the Hawke’s Bay A&P Society committee and is a life member. She first got involved as member of the Country Women’s Institute in 1960, and as she had done night classes in calligraphy, “it was useful for writing certificates.” She took on responsibility for the ‘make and model’ sewing competition and the handcraft competition.

Janet took a Massey University veterinary course in canine behaviour in 1989. In 1990 she engaged in extra-mural study through the British Canine Institute. She was very successful in dog training competitions and was a long-time patron of the Hawke’s Bay Dog Training Club.

Janet says the best part of Arohiwi were the people, and she recalls Bill Kelly, John Rainer, Mike Sayers and Ida Gaskin, who won Mastermind and was the wife of a farm worker, and was “always reading a book”. She also recalls a worker, Hans Olsen, who lived in a cottage up Hukanui Road, who would go to town every two years to renew his wardrobe.

Janet and sister Marian continued their interest in the property until Marian died in 2009. Marian’s interest was retained in a trust managed by Guardian Trust and was subsequently sold to PSEC in 2012. At that same time, Janet reviewed her options and decided to sell likewise.

This followed the practice of their aunt Laura Mitchell (née Holt) who lived in Caroline Road, Hastings. She originally left half her stake in Arohiwi to PSEC in 1978, following the death of her husband and son, and the remainder of her shares a short time after her death in 1990, increasing PSEC’s holding to 50%.

Janet likes that Arohiwi continues to provide a steady income (despite some fluctuation with seasons and storms) to PSEC, so they can deliver services to meet community needs, such as Rowan residential service for younger adults living with complex physical disabilities.



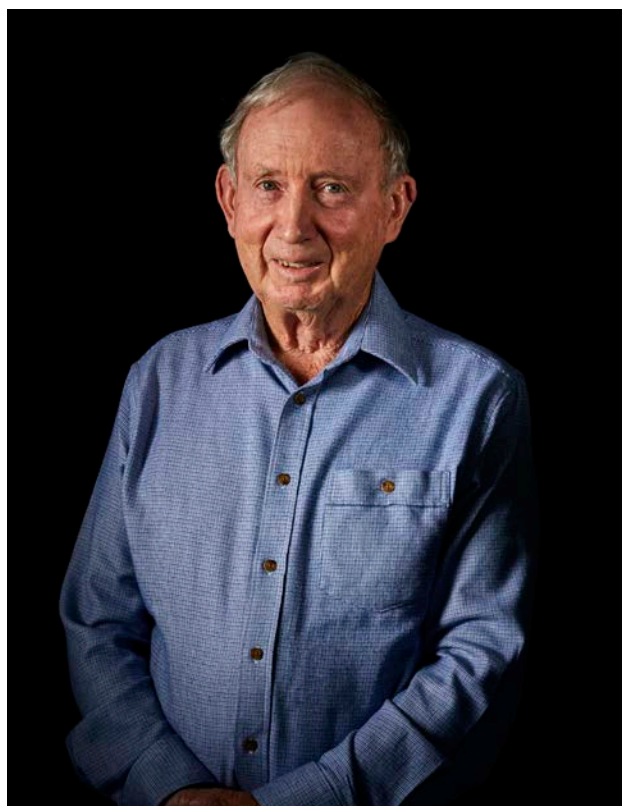
---

## John Springford

**Arohiwi accountant and financial advisor 1990–2015.**  
**John Springford has enjoyed his involvement with Arohiwi, and the people involved.**

John was a senior accountant at Brown Webb Limited, which was managing the property for the partnership (now merged into Brown Webb Richardson) and continues to be the accountants for Arohiwi Station Limited.

He was invited to take on the accounting role for the Arohiwi Station partnership in 1990, around the time of Laura Mitchell's death. Guardian Trust had been managing Laura's gift, but John was asked to manage the more complex matters regarding the tax effects of livestock changes which affected the individual partners' personal tax position. He then started to attend all on-farm meetings to report on the finances and related matters.



The station was then run as a partnership of Presbyterian Support East Coast with David Holt, Janet McCardle and Marian Holt as the family interest.

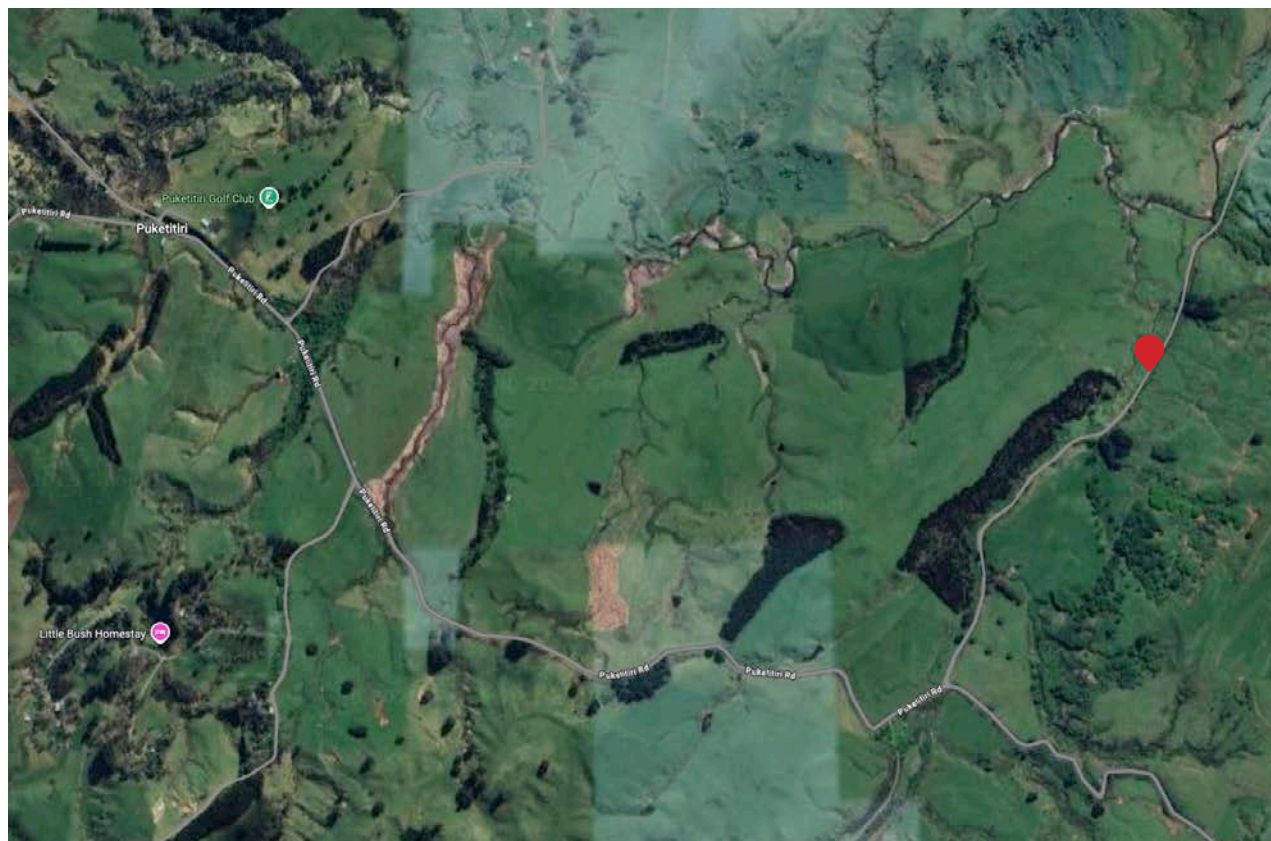
David Holt was living overseas and sold his interest in the partnership to PSEC in 1991. Marian's share on her death in 2009 went into her trust, and in 2012 PSEC was able to purchase the interests of Janet McCardle and Marian's trust to acquire a 100% ownership.

Other than the financial and tax matters, John took an active interest in the property and its farming operations. He enjoyed visiting the farm over 16 years for these meetings, which were held in the homestead where David and Margaret Evans had their home. Marie Burgess represented the PSEC Board interests, and very occasionally John would drive her from Napier to Puketitiri.

John describes the station as "a beautiful, well-managed farm, making a good income and destined to increase in value." He enjoyed working with David Evans, whom he says was a very competent farmer, supported by his wife Margaret and the shepherds.

John stayed in this role until about 2015, when he retired from full-time accountancy (although he has been involved from time to time as a consultant).





*Shows Baker Block on Potter Road in connection to Arohiwi*

## Baker Block

John had a key role in negotiating the purchase of what is known as the Baker Block in 2002. This was an additional 106 hectares offered for sale by the Baker family on Potter Road. John had to appear before the whole PSEC Board regarding this purchase, but he was successful in submitting a tender with a lower offer than the authority he'd been given by the partnership.

The benefits of the Baker Block were that it was a good-sized property close to the boundary, something that was not often available. It offered the improved management of Arohiwi, with more economic use of existing labour and better use of developed land, offering an additional 1,000-1,100 stock unit capacity.

Adding the Baker Block boosted efficiencies in stock management, i.e. by being able to shift stock only three times a year for hoggets (Oct-Jan), ewes (Jan-May) and cattle (May-Sept); and as a rough sheltered block, it was ideal for cattle. On top of that, the cost could be paid off in ten years, although John had noted the risk areas were in stock returns, interest rate changes and possible increases in costs.



*The heavy snow brought down hundreds of power poles, cutting electricity to 400 rural homes in the Taupō plains and Hawke's Bay regions.*

## Snowstorm of 2006

John recalls one of the snowstorms occurred on 5 October 2006 and the civil defence emergency, which meant drivers on the Taupō to Napier Road were trapped in their cars and rescued by the army and 4-WD club members.

The road to Puketitiri was snowed out. Not long after, John went out to Arohiwi and witnessed the extensive damage to the forestry blocks – many trees had their top sections broken off by the weight of the snow, which took days to melt.



---

## Marie Burgess

**Marie was a long-standing member of the PSEC Board and has been involved in Arohiwi Station for almost as long. Marie served on the Arohiwi Partnership Committee from the early 2000s and was an original director of Arohiwi Station Limited. She is currently on the Arohiwi Board.**

The first time Marie Burgess knew about Arohiwi and the role it played in PSEC's community funding was when she joined the PSEC Board in 2002.

Marie's background is in nursing, particularly public health and education, and she also has a farming background. Originally her interest in governance developed through her profession, as she was first involved with the Student Nurses' Association and later was national President of the NZ Nurses' Association that became the NZ Nurses Organisation. She currently serves on the Nursing Education and Research Foundation Board of Trustees.



Marie moved back to Gisborne in 1995 where she had already had a home built. She had been elected to the Tairāwhiti District Health Board in 2001 and served three terms. She was approached to be on the PSEC Board through her church by a Presbyterian Church elder, who was manager of a PSEC elderly care home. She was nominated onto the board by the Presbytery and soon after was placed on the Arohiwi Partnership Committee.

At her first farm committee meeting, she met Janet McCardle and Marian Holt who were, at that time, the other partners with PSEC in Arohiwi Station. Marie was pleasantly surprised to find that she already knew Marian as she had been a ward sister when Marie was undertaking midwifery training at St Helen's Maternity Hospital in Wellington (now closed).

In joining the Board, Marie learned about the history of Arohiwi. "It's precious what we owe to the aunt, Laura Mitchell, and the sisters, Marian and Janet."

Marie finished her term on the PSEC Board in 2014. However, in 2013 the station had become a charitable company, and she was appointed to the new Arohiwi Board as one of the two PSEC Board members, along with Roydon Day, to maintain the continuity of relationship between PSEC and the station.

A major highlight for Marie was when the PSEC Board decided to purchase the remaining Arohiwi shares from Janet McCardle and Marian Holt's estate (who died in 2009).

"It was a bold decision by PSEC to buy them out. I was the Chair of the Arohiwi Partnership Committee and was delegated, along with PSEC CEO Sanja Majstorović to negotiate with Janet and her advisors. It was a very amicable negotiation. Convincing the Board that this was the right decision was not so easy-going. I look back with pride that we've been able to keep the connection with the original gift and the generosity of the Holt women in so many ways."

Good stewardship is important for Marie, who works to develop a greater vision for Arohiwi. The last two years have been tough with significant losses after Cyclone Gabrielle and tumbling commodity prices (now recovering). The Board is now focused



on getting the environmental plans required by the regional council back in operation and developing larger forestry areas. The Baker Block and Paige Hill properties were added in recent years, as the Board sees the importance of acquiring more land to make farming sustainable.

“I like that Arohiwi Station is something you can see and touch, and there’s an opportunity to make a difference to it as good stewards of the land,” Marie says.

As Arohiwi is a registered charity, Marie would like to see it making a contribution to the local farming community, particularly in encouraging women in the farming industry, perhaps through scholarships.

She shares a vision with Board member Sandra Faulkner for seeing more women involved in rural governance. Marie was responsible for encouraging Sandra to express interest in joining the Board. The PSEC Board had established the new constitution, so expressions of interest were invited. Sandra had spoken at a recent meeting in Gisborne and impressed Marie with her background, so Marie suggested she respond to PSEC’s advertisement.

Marie is confident about Arohiwi’s enduring ability to provide for PSEC as the sole shareholder and its work in the community.

Marie enjoys working with the Arohiwi Board and is in the final term of her role as a director. “We are a small board that was recently increased to five members, and we have always enjoyed a good working relationship. It’s been good to be part of appointing the right people to manage Arohiwi and to see the station progress over time.”





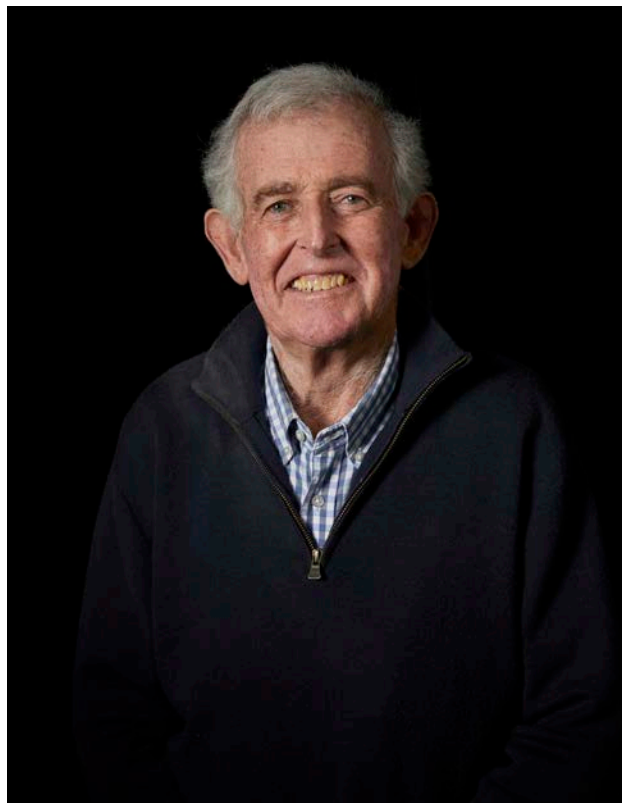
---

## Peter Tod

**Peter is the current Chair of the Arohiwi Station Limited Board. He farms in the Ōtāne District. Peter has served on the Board since its inception in 2013.**

Peter Tod first got involved with Arohiwi in 2012, when PSEC had just acquired the full shareholding of Arohiwi Station, and in 2013 making Peter one of the four original Arohiwi Board members. He was asked to consider standing for the Board by the then Chairman of PSEC. His background in farming and governance meant he had relevant skills and, as he'd just finished up a similar role for a volunteer organisation, he decided he had the time.

"It was where I felt I could contribute. You have to do something in society. It is an extremely good cause, with what PSEC does with the profits from going to town. So, I said yes."



Peter also knew something of Arohiwi through Janet McCardle at the A&P Society and John Springford of Brown Webb Richardson (BWR Accounting), who had looked after Arohiwi prior to it becoming fully owned by PSEC.

"Arohiwi has an absolutely incredible history and is such an amazing station. It's a spectacular farm, one of those iconic stations.

When you go over that last range and look into the Puketitiri basin, it's mind-boggling stuff. It's the frost bowl of Hawke's Bay, it's so cold up there, they can get a frost at any time of year, but it breeds such healthy stock. It tends to deliver when Hawke's Bay is under the pump. If we're dry down here, they're having a great season up there."

His experience of farming and with a couple of boards meant he was happy being involved on the Board. "And then there is Marie Burgess with a huge passion and wealth of knowledge and history for the place," Peter says.

"You've got to give a bit back. You can see the ones that do support community, and there are some amazing people in Hawke's Bay who give back but who sit under the radar. That's great, and we also do our little bit."

Cyclone Gabrielle had a huge impact financially and physically on the station, and the extra hit of prices that collapsed suddenly.

"We know things are cyclical. As a board we have to try to manage our cost structures. Everyone sitting around the board table has a different skill set, so it's good."

There's more forestry work to be done at the farm, and the Board had just started down an environmental planning path when the Cyclone dealt to some of the infrastructure and their plans.

Consolidating the purchase of the Paige Hill property into the business is still being worked on. "It's been challenging, but we have a plan we are working to but, once we have that fully bedded in, it'll be great. Robbie, the Station Manager, will be able to enjoy farming instead of development, which takes a lot of energy and thinking ... and money."





Cyclone Gabrielle had a huge impact financially and physically on the station, and the extra hit of prices that collapsed suddenly.

Peter says the Board is mindful of the history of Arohiwi, as not every organisation has a station with such significance. Having Sandra on board with her family connection with Marian Holt has been valued. Peter also admires the surrounding community at Puketitiri, which he says is very strong and a great farming area.

He says, “I want to be doing something for Hawke’s Bay, and this is something I know about, so I can help the station succeed.”

Historically the farm was originally carved out of native forest and resulted in the development of a significant forestry company, Carter Holt Harvey.

“With all that Holt history and the history of the whole area, here we are turning the tables and back planting trees into the harder country. Although Arohiwi is a wonderful livestock farm, it’s also some of the best land on which to grow pine trees. It’s created from Taupō ash, and it gets rainfall.

If you look after your staff and their passion, it sort of becomes their farm; with good staff support and a good board, wrapping policy and strategy around them.”

“Arohiwi really gets a hold of people,” says Peter.





---

## Sandra Faulkner

**Sandra has been an Arohiwi Board member since 2014. She has a background in rural governance and served as a Gisborne District Councillor. Sandra was Marian Holt's goddaughter.**

Sandra Faulkner brings both her strong interest in rural governance and her personal connection with Marian Holt to the PSEC and Arohiwi Boards.

Sandra was very positive when told about the opportunity to be part of the Board as she viewed the ethos of PSEC as being “in direct line of sight with Marian’s own personal altruism. The sense of responsibility was the draw for me. I decided to serve, and I had good ideas,” she says.



Sandra’s connection with PSEC and Arohiwi is through her mother, Beverley Haliburton (née Wooding), who was Marian Holt’s close friend. Beverley and Marian met as boarders at Napier Girls’ High School, where they studied from 1954 to 1957. Beverley had moved up from Marlborough at the start of her secondary school years and, with their birthdays only a day apart, the girls formed a strong friendship, becoming known as ‘Woody’ and ‘Spuddy’. Beverley often stayed up at Arohiwi during holidays and their friendship was a very important connection through their adult lives.

As Sandra’s godmother and mentor, Marian Holt frequently invited her up to her cottage at Arohiwi. The cottage had been gifted to Marian by her father, when she asked to come back to live on the family farm after her years of work and travel.

The proviso was that she had it for life but, once she died, the site would be returned to paddock, which happened, although some of the garden was retained.

Sandra was in Farmlands in Gisborne when she met Marie Burgess in 2014. Marie asked Sandra to apply to be one of the directors of the new charitable foundation being set up to govern a farm – she didn’t know that Sandra had a connection with Arohiwi.

Sandra asked Marie where the farm was. “I could have sworn in that moment Auntie Marian was sitting on my shoulder chuckling, because Marie said it was ‘right up the back of Puketitiri and you probably won’t know it, it’s called Arohiwi’. Marie was probably taken aback when I said, ‘Where do I sign?’”

Sandra comments, “It was a pleasure to step into Auntie Marian’s dream of the charity and providing for the community.”

She recalls Marian’s love of needlework, books and travel: “She was a fascinating aunt and told outrageous stories.” She also fostered a love of horses in Sandra who has trained polo ponies, a passion which gave her the opportunity to travel in Europe.



Sandra began her governance career in 2002 and has become a committed and highly respected rural leader. She was a Nuffield Scholar in 2012, a Kellogg Rural Leader, and is a member of the Institute of Directors.

In 2014, her Wairakaia Partnership farming business won the Supreme Award in the East Coast Balance Farm Environment Awards. She is currently a National Board member for Federated Farmers, with specific policy responsibilities in local government, land access, adverse events, rural health, fire and emergency, and postal services.

Along with Marie Burgess, Sandra is determinedly looking for gender diversity in governance; she is currently the only woman on the Board of Federated Farmers.

Working with the other Arohiwi governors and management, Sandra is concentrating on bringing Arohiwi through the perfect storm of recent years – challenging markets, challenges with animal health, Cyclone Gabrielle and interest rates.

“Arohiwi has a long history of being a top 5% performer, but everyone has taken a hit. We’d like to be giving more to the community, but it is very difficult at the moment.”

Returning Arohiwi to the former level of contribution will be one of Sandra’s highlights, but she knows it will be a long haul, which she says PSEC, and the Board also clearly understand.

“When you consider the portfolio PSEC holds, and the amount of work and research that goes into maintaining the level of service to those in need in our community, it’s a testament to probably generations involved with PSEC and their ability to think in the interests of the community.

“It’s a privilege to be able to serve on the Arohiwi Board. But alongside that, it’s a comfortable space for me, as that’s Auntie Marian all over – the desire to serve.”







# The Farm



---

## Arohiwi Station

Arohiwi Station is wholly owned by Presbyterian Support East Coast, and the proceeds of Arohiwi Station Limited are to be used to support PSEC's social services delivery at the discretion of the PSEC Board. PSEC has been involved in the farm ownership since 1978 when it was first gifted 25%, right up to 2012, when they purchased the interest of the remaining partners.

Arohiwi Station is a highly regarded breeding and finishing sheep and beef farm situated in the Puketitiri District, approximately 56 kilometres north-west of Napier, running a 60/40 sheep cattle stock mix, wintering approximately 12,600 stock units in 2024.

The primary Arohiwi Station is accompanied by the recently acquired and neighbouring Paige Hill property of 434 ha.

The total area of Arohiwi Station is 1,471.5 ha, of which approximately 23% is flat to undulating; 32% is rolling to strongly rolling; 42% is moderately steep hill; and the remaining 1% to 3% is steep to very steep hills.

At the time of publication, the vegetative cover comprises approximately 1,118.5 ha of effective area. Approximately 149.2 ha of the property consists of exotic forestry, 91.7 ha of indigenous bush, 63.6 ha of regenerating scrub, 40.0 ha of retired pasture, 2.2 ha of broadleaved forestry, 1.8 ha of dams and the remaining 4.5 ha consists of non-productive utility areas, buildings and yards.

Incorporated within the 1,471.5 ha is approximately 77.5 ha of leased land, a portion of which is a Department of Conservation reserve area and partly a domain area occupied by the golf club.

The underlying geology or parent rock material consists predominantly of Taupō/Waimihia tephra and/or rhyolitic tephra overlying sandstone or limestone. The lower flats are formed from alluvium, water sorted pumice or alluvial gravels. There is also colluvium with some localised areas of old peat, and eleven dominant soil types exist on the property formed from the underlying parent rock material.

The buildings and infrastructure supporting the production include a Manager's dwelling on the Arohiwi title, a second substantial home on the Paige Hill title, two other cottages, large primary woolshed and covered yards complex and a second woolshed, alongside other high standard farm buildings including haybarns, implement sheds and workshop areas.

Arohiwi Station is 460–750 metres above sea level and covers a total of 1,471.5 ha of which approximately 1,118.5 ha is effective farmland.





The other land areas can be separated by:

Exotic forestry	149.2 ha
Indigenous bush	91.7 ha
Regenerated scrub	63.6 ha
Retired pasture	40.0 ha
Broadleaved forestry	2.2 ha
Dams	1.8 ha
Non-productive utility areas, buildings and yards	4.5 ha

The farm’s stock includes:

Romney ewes	4,500+
Friesian bulls	600
Angus cows	400
Angus steers	160



Much of Arohiwi’s success over the long term can be attributed to the effective management and successful implementation of innovative farm policy that has resulted in the production of high quality, high value livestock. Peter Harris (the Station Manager before David Evans) left behind the legacy of a superior flock of sheep; and between 1992 and 2020 David Evans fine-tuned what is now a flock of 4500+ purebred Romney ewes into the producers of high quality, easy care, fast maturing 21st century lambs, which are all finished on the property.

Arohiwi Station also attests to being in possession of what must be regarded as one of Hawke’s Bay’s very best herds of commercial beef cattle (predominantly Angus, with some Hereford influences), the evidence of which is quantified by the weights and grades of the cattle sold.

One of the investment purchases resulted in the acquisition of forestry rights held over part of the property’s forestry plantations. The rights, which became available during a change in Carter Holt Harvey ownership in 2005, stem from a partnership established between Carter Holt Harvey and Gordon Holt during his tenure. This sought to convert unproductive areas of the Station into valuable pine plantations, which are now maturing and will continue to do so over many years to come.

A resurgence in the value of timber since the acquisition and the timely harvesting of matured woodlots has seen a prompt return on this additional investment, and a positive flow of cash into the business repeating the successful endeavours into the timber industry of 65 years earlier.

Arohiwi Station represents one of Hawke’s Bay’s best properties of its size. The quality of its livestock, the experience and commitment of its directors and management team, and the diversity of its income stream make it a sound and robust investment for the future.





← No 11 TEE





## Robbie Schaw, Farm Manager, Arohiwi

Robbie Schaw and Monique Murphy, with their two children, George and Sophia, moved onto Arohiwi Station in 2020. They live across the road from the golf club in the Arohiwi farmhouse. No strangers to Puketitiri, they previously managed a neighbouring farm block across the valley. Monique is a registered nurse and works part time for Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora at Hawke's Bay Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, Hastings.

The attraction for Monique and Robbie to Arohiwi was based on what Arohiwi does for the community. "We love the fact that the profit from the farm goes back to the community through Presbyterian Support networks," Robbie said.

Robbie and Monique both share the same thinking and values of helping people, with a strong emphasis on community. At times it can feel isolating being an hour's drive from Napier, so supporting the small rural community is a key part of their lives. Their ethos is it's a privilege to serve their community with their talents, work and support.

This ethos became very tangible for both Monique and Robbie when Puketitiri was cut off from Hawke's Bay after Cyclone Gabrielle. No power and no transport link to Napier or Hastings meant the Puketitiri community had to rally together; this tested everybody's skills and resilience.

Robbie also likes the support and knowledge that he receives from the Arohiwi Board and is able to tap into their experiences in farming.









---

## Arohiwi on-farm team

On the farm, Arohiwi Station is diligently managed by Robbie Schaw, who is supported by his partner, Monique Murphy, and two dedicated staff, Sarah Andrews and Benjamin Crosse. Farm Supervisor John Cannon assists in the farm decisions with Robbie. Farm finances are supported by Brown Webb Richardson and Regan Loach.



*L- R: Robbie Schaw, Ross Shepherd, Ken Foote, Marie Burgess, John Cannon, Peter Tod, Sandra Faulkner and Regan Loach*





---

## Pests, diseases and barriers

Arohiwi doesn't have a lot of pests that cause too high a degree of damage to the farm or farming practice. Wild deer cause issues throughout the farm from time to time, as they nomadically think they have rights to wander where they like. Robbie monitors their movements and numbers, taking measures to cull them when required to keep them under control.

Porina moth has been an issue this past summer and Robbie had to take swift action to control them. They can devastate the pasture, particularly with large numbers. It is not a pest that generally appears every year, however, it can become a problem 2–4 years after droughts and new pasture cultivations.

The farm doesn't suffer from wild pig damage or roaming wild goats from the neighbouring bushland.

Arohiwi is set up well and has the ability to adjust to future farm preferences or stock changes, and Robbie sees little reason that would stop the station being productive and profitable in the future.



---

## The environmental plan

All members of the team at Arohiwi are conscious of being the best custodians of the land, with the understanding that they need to be thinking many years into the future to ensure they don't ruin what nature has provided, by decisions they make today. This includes considering best farm practices, maintaining and rejuvenating native plantings, fencing off waterways to protect the water quality, and planting trees to provide cover for cattle and erosion control.

Poplars and willows are being planted in high erosion risk areas to help stabilise the ground, and unproductive land is being utilised with forestry planting. One wetland area has been fully fenced and protected, while two other identified wetland areas are being deer-fenced and developed. Riparian planting is also protecting the waterways.

Robbie works closely with the Hawke's Bay Regional Council for advice and funding opportunities, including the supply of poplar plants for the erosion control programme.

Water testing is essential and ongoing, as Arohiwi is part of the Kaweka Catchment Collective involving the Inangatahi Stream, which flows through the farm and into the Mohaka River. Testing of the water quality is a manual process of collecting water samples for analysis.

Arohiwi is fully invested in soil quality testing and soil mapping in connection with Balance Agri Nutrients. Regular reports provide extensive data that shows variable rates of leaching and water retention depending on the land positioning, slope angles of the land, variable soil infrastructure changes and height from sea level. This is used to determine safer applications of fertiliser, avoiding the leaching of nutrients into waterways and wetlands. Monitoring the soil maps and soil quality results has also been beneficial for making farm management decisions to reduce overcompensation and reduce financial wastage.



---

## Arohiwi Station in the community

At the centre of Puketitiri is the golf course with hall facilities. Arohiwi leases and grazes the land it sits on with sheep, the perfect natural lawnmowers. However, no sheep breeding has been able to perfect the natural management of the golf greens. These are maintained by the community. Each year a one-day golf tournament is held there, which attracts hundreds of folks from all over Hawke's Bay, who eagerly make the journey to be part of it.

Arohiwi employs two staff to work with Robbie. It is an expectation and an important part of Robbie's ethos of ongoing improvement that they are constantly involved in training and learning more about farming techniques. Both employees are currently undergoing training with ITO and are also encouraged to be active members of the community, including participating in working bees at the kindergarten and school, and golf course or hall maintenance. "We pay our staff to be involved in these community projects as well," Robbie adds.

From time to time, Robbie arranges for guest farm experts to come and present to the local farmers. Topics could range from parasite control to the best farm practices.



*Monique Murphy*

Registered nurse Monique was involved with communication and organising supplies during the cyclone, as well as connecting with the army, police and health providers. Through Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora, GPs and nurse practitioners at the hospital, Monique received medical supplies and set up a clinic for two days per week. Many residents don't have an assigned doctor and so Monique became the first responder.

Monique is often called on to check on locals with health issues; some calls are more related to providing advice on how serious a condition may be and what action to take next.

---

## Farm development for the future

It is hard to predict what opportunities the future will bring as the farming sector is continually changing. "We do know that technology will be a big part of the future. For example, the rapid rise of collars for cattle instead of fencing, drones and better animal testing equipment. Research and development will be coming thick and fast, and we will need to keep up with it to remain profitable and sustainable," Robbie says.

"Managing staff through technological changes will also be interesting, both in keeping the skill set to use the technology and managing the effects technology will have on staff levels. This may have a flow-on effect on our community as well," Robbie said.

Robbie predicts that it's likely we won't have farms of just stock in the future. He thinks farms will have stock, plus native bushes, plus pine blocks and biodiversity, all forming a big part of the farming model. Managers' jobs will need to change accordingly.

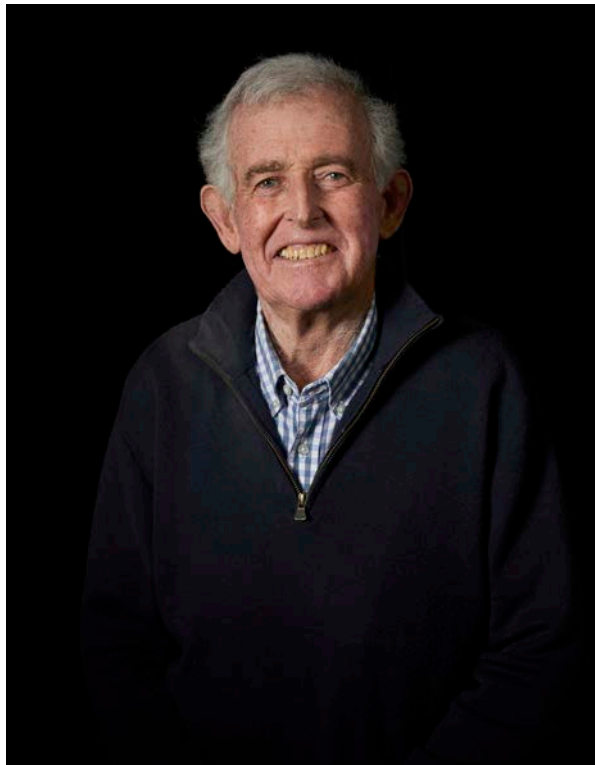
"We may have more sheep breeds that don't require shearing, like Wiltshire. This, too, will change the shape of sheep farming. It's been a long time since we had even a cost recovery from shearing given the wool pricing," Robbie said.

Monitoring parasites in sheep is now conducted onsite using new AI technology that once relied on veterinarians to perform, with a time delay for results. Now this can be done on the farm with results returned the same day. This use of AI is an example of technology that helps produce better outcomes, healthier sheep, saves money and allows for more efficient planning.



# The Arohiwi Board

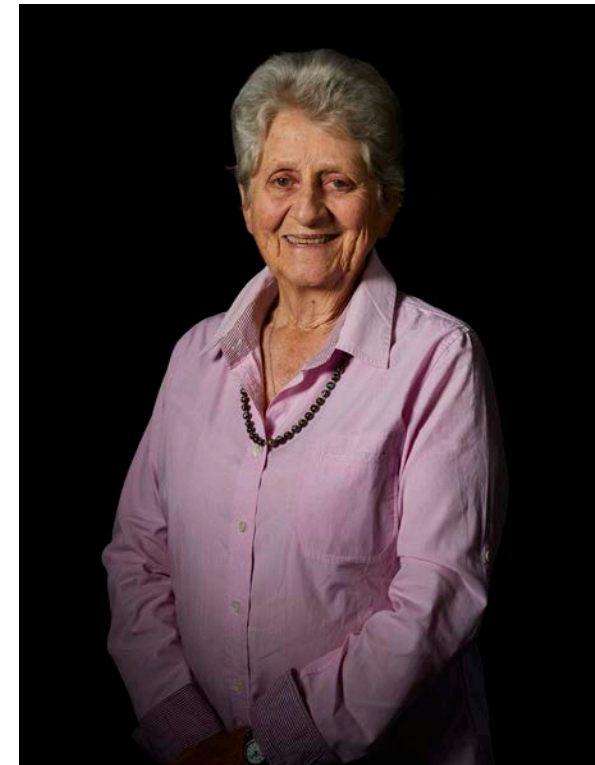




### **Peter Tod (BBS)**

Independent Director Peter is the Arohiwi Station Limited Chair. He farms in Central Hawke's Bay, running a sheep, beef and cropping enterprise on 900 ha.

Peter is a past president of the Hawke's Bay A&P Society, winner of the Hawke's Bay Farmer of the Year in 1998, was a Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme graduate in 2005, a Lindisfarne College Foundation Trustee, and has served as a trustee on several farming trusts.

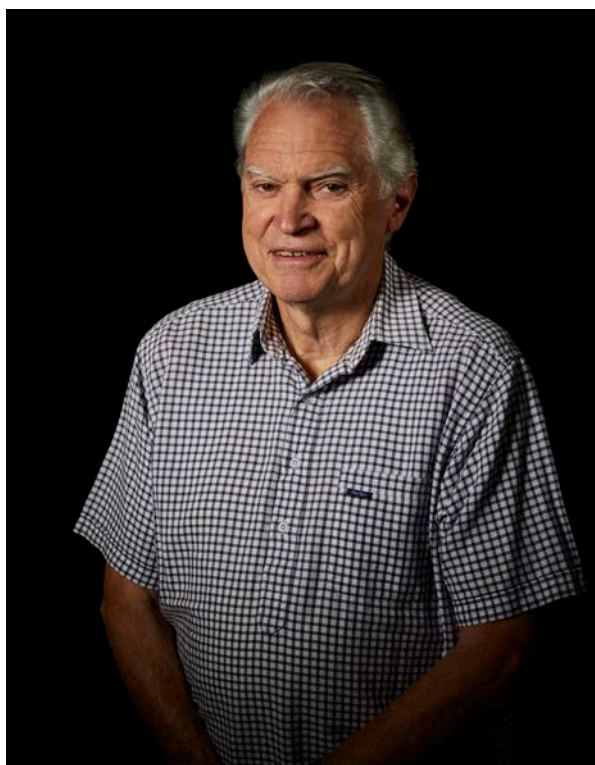


### **Marie Burgess (QSM, BA)**

Independent Director Marie is the former Chair of Arohiwi Station Limited and a former PSEC Board member. She holds a wealth of knowledge of the property, having represented PSEC's interest in the former Arohiwi Station Partnership over many years. Marie was a trustee member of the Presbyterian Church Property Trustees until 2024 and was convenor of the Farms Committee, which has governance responsibility for a sheep and beef farm and a dairy farm in the lower North Island.

Marie has a farming background and, with a small block, still retains an interest. Previously, she had an extensive career in nursing and the health services and was an elected member of the Tairāwhiti District Health Board for nine years.





**Ken Foote**  
(ONZM, ED<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, JP, BCA, Dip Bus Stud  
(Dispute Resolution), MinstD)

Ken was elected to the PSEC Board in 2019 and is PSEC's appointed representative to the Arohiwi Station Limited Board of Directors. Ken is now a management consultant, having recently completed a varied career in senior management, finance and administration roles in Hawke's Bay, the last 10 years of which was as the company secretary for HBDHB.

Ken is a member of the Institute of Directors and is currently the Chair of Allied Laundry Services Ltd. In 2006, Ken retired from the Territorial Force of the NZ Army, having completed 32 years of service and reaching the rank of Brigadier. He was subsequently made an Officer of the NZ Order of Merit for services to New Zealand and is currently a serving Justice of the Peace.



**Sandra Faulkner**

Sandra and her family run a farming business in Gisborne, which includes sheep and beef, annual cropping and citrus. Her Wairakaia Partnership farming business won the Supreme Award in the 2014 East Coast Balance Farm Environment Awards. Sandra is a 2012 Nuffield scholar, a Kellogg Rural Leader and a member of the Institute of Directors.

Sandra is currently a Federated Farmers NZ National Board member, a Presbyterian Support East Coast Director, Chair of the Gisborne/Wairoa Rural Coordination Group, President of Gisborne Riding for the Disabled and a trustee for the Campaign for Wool New Zealand. Her focus is firmly on the future, particularly confidence in, and across, New Zealand's primary industries – economic, environmental and social.





## Ross Shepherd

With over 30 years of experience in Aotearoa New Zealand's agriculture sector, Independent Director Ross brings a wealth of knowledge and a deep commitment to the land and also its people. Ross is the head of Kowhai Ag Ltd and has spent decades managing some of our country's largest farming operations and land development projects. Ross was elected to the Arohiwi Board in 2024.

Ross is driven to care for both the land and the people while moving forward together, as he is guided by the principles of manaaki whenua, manaaki tangata, haere whakamua (care for the land, care for the people, go forward). Ross lives in Taupō, where he, his wife and their three children enjoy numerous sporting activities and outdoor pursuits.







# In Conclusion



---

# Arohiwi Legacy

Arohiwi Station has stood as a quiet yet steadfast witness to more than two centuries of transformation. Encompassing the valley of Puketitiri, this remarkable property has weathered storms – both literally and figuratively – adapting through changing climates, evolving land use and the passage of different hands. From early pioneering days to modern agricultural innovation, the farm has consistently served its purpose with resilience and grace. Each season has etched its mark into the land, shaping a landscape that is as productive as it is beautiful.

Arohiwi remains a beacon at the heart of its community, a place where tradition meets purpose. Today, it continues to thrive as a productive and profitable station, its well-managed operations serving not only its immediate stakeholders but also the wider good. It stands proudly as the crown jewel of the Puketitiri Valley, a living testament to the spirit of stewardship and community.

Now owned in full by Presbyterian Support East Coast (PSEC), Arohiwi Station Limited has become more than a farm; it is a legacy of generosity and vision. Originally gifted in part to PSEC by Laura Mitchell (née Holt), the farm now plays a vital role in funding the organisation's life-changing work. Dividends from Arohiwi help sustain PSEC's wide-ranging social services, which support both elderly and younger generations throughout Hawke's Bay and the East Coast.

The purpose of Arohiwi's ownership runs deep, resonating with every member of the governing Board, the dedicated farm team, and the many individuals – past and present – who have been touched by its story. For them, Arohiwi is not just land; it is a living, breathing entity that connects people, uplifts community and safeguards a future filled with compassion and care.

This is more than a farm.  
This is Arohiwi – a place where land  
and community grow side by side.







Copyright © October 2025  
by Presbyterian Support East Coast

ISBN 978-0-473-76627-6 (PDF)  
Publisher: ND Publications

All rights reserved. The publication was compiled from contributor narratives and recollections and does not intend to be a comprehensive history record.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any other organisation.

Drone Photos: Duncan Brown  
Portrait and Board Photos: Charlotte Anderson  
Other Images: Supplied by PSEC  
Some information kindly supplied by Knowledge Bank





