

South Terrace - *the First Karamea School*

c.1875-1877

Karamea settlement began in 1874, when the Nelson steamer 'Wallace' dropped off 30 men and their eldest sons at the beach. Together, they started building punga and sapling huts upon the boggy infertile ground leased to them by the government on the South Terrace. Two months later their families followed. The settlement grew with the influx of new settlers each time the steamer called.

Shetlander Helen Laurenson had taught the children on her voyage to New Zealand, and continued with this on the South Terrace.

THE FIRST SCHOOL BUILDING!

The Nelson Education Board minutes stated in January 1875, that books and maps would be provided "gratuitously" to a new school at Karamea, but the Nelson Provincial Government, responsible for the Karamea Settlement, would have to fund the school building.

The settlers used materials at hand to build a basic school room on a south-western boundary section of the South Terrace settlement.

Settler Laurence Johnson wrote:-

"...the framework was constructed of sapling....kie-kie was used to thatch the roof....All interstices were corked with moss....as windows, openings were left in the walls and covered with calico...."

In June 1875, only months after that first official mention by the Board, the first school in the Karamea district was opened on the South Terrace with Mr. and Mrs. Naylor (from Yorkshire) as teachers.

BRIEF EXISTENCE

W.C. Hodgson, Inspector of Public Schools, visited in March 1876, just 9 months after the school opening. His July report stated:-

"...the 35 children present were buddled in a room measuring only 15 feet by 9 feet ..."

Yet the older scholars read fairly, wrote tolerably well from dictation, and worked money questions in arithmetic very correctly, not one in the class failing to pass the second standard...all the scholars were remarkably well drilled and orderly...."

Less than two years later, in 1877, the South Terrace was abandoned as people moved to the more fertile river flats. Karamea was not designated as an Education District until a year later, when the Board funded a new school closer to the little township growing up near the harbour.



The first school was constructed from punga, sapling and kie-kie.



Inspector William C. Hodgson

In 1876 Inspector W.C. Hodgson, from the Nelson Education Board gave the isolated little South Terrace school a glowing report, despite the fear and dread that his annual visits engendered in both teachers and pupils alike. His official comments were published in the *Observer* in the press of the day.

Frequently hampered by prolonged spells of atrocious weather, he wrote

"each year...an increasing proportion of my time is unavailably frittered in endeavours (occasionally abortive) to reach the small and sometimes almost inaccessible schools that are now so nearly every day and raving in the Nelson District."
(from 'Inspection Reports', 1886)



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