

# *The Anglican Historical Society of New Zealand* *Te Rōpu Hītori o te Hāhi Mīhinare ki Aotearoa*

## *Self-Sacrificing Service: women workers at the Whakarewarewa Mission House 1905-1946*

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In 1905 the Rev. Frederick Augustus Bennett, later the first Bishop of Aotearoa, was appointed as superintendent of the Māori Mission for the Rotorua-Taupo district. The same year **Deaconess Kathleen Doyle** from Sydney started mission work in a small, old, rented cottage opposite the Geyser Hotel. A suitable mission hall was built on land given by M. Aporo. With the assistance of one Māori girl whom she trained as a mission worker Doyle conducted a Sunday school for about 60 children at Whaka, took Bible classes in her cottage every morning before school, and visited the sick and needy. **Mrs Bennett** supervised another 40 or so Sunday school children at Ohinemutu.

Mission work declined after Doyle moved to Ruatoki in 1907 but then expanded under the leadership of **Sister Alice Griffin**, an Englishwoman who came in 1908 from the South African Mission, where she had been in charge of a large hospital. In 1909, a new Mission House was built, with four bedrooms, a large room for activities, a modern kitchen and dining room, a bathroom and laundry, and a tennis court. Bible classes, singsongs, table tennis, poi and other games and entertainments were held in the Mission House which was popular with Te Aute College boys in their holidays. Sunday school and services took place in the mission hall, across the bridge from which children dived for pennies thrown by tourists. Miss Griffin was assisted from 1909 to 1913 by **Miss Agnes Lilian Grant**. Having graduated from Canterbury College of the University of New Zealand with a BA degree in 1897, Grant spent several years teaching at the

isolated Karioi Native School, near Ruapehu. She then went as an assistant teacher to Hukarere School where she studied Māori. Although based at Whakarewarewa, Grant spent half the week at Ohinemutu.

Throughout its history the connection between the Mission House at Whakarewarewa and Hukarere School was strong, and during this early period a dozen or so former pupils were trained for mission work among the people of the different villages. One of these was **Rotu Numia**, later wife of the Rev. Wharetini Rangī, who with Deaconess Doyle started mission work in her own community at Ruatoki. Others were **Miss T. H. Hekata** and **Miss H. Tumataroa**. **Iritana Kainamu** took a short nursing course before being appointed as one of the assistants at the Mission House. She was later transferred to Te Hauke and then to Tokamaru Bay before leaving in 1917 because she was needed at her home in Mohaka. **Florence (Flossie), Woodhead** (later Mrs Harsant of Hahei) was also trained by Miss Griffin. Flossie, whose parents were teachers at the Native School at Waitahanui on Lake Taupo, was a fluent Māori speaker. In 1908, aged 16, she went by invitation to the Mission. Dressed in a light blue uniform with stiff white collar and cuffs Flossie learned basic nursing skills, soon called into use in a typhoid epidemic. She later wrote of the heart-rending task of nursing sick children, many of whom died. She became friendly with the elderly Guide Sophia and enjoyed hearing her accounts of the Tarawera eruption in 1886. On cold frosty nights she liked to join Māori girls in one of the big hot pools where they sang and

chatted together. The Mission had its own thermal cooking hole in the pa and Flossie described cooking their dinner of meat and potatoes in a billy, with a pudding on top, and a flax kit of potatoes at the side. Flossie enjoyed life at the Mission House, which was harmonious and peaceful, yet very busy, but had to leave in 1911 to nurse her mother.

In 1914, **Miss Irene Maud Hare** succeeded Miss Griffin as superintendent. In 1901 Hare, who was in charge of the state primary school at Hurunui, North Canterbury, volunteered as a mission worker at Putiki in the diocese of Wellington, regarding this as a call from God. She worked there for several years, living with Māori in a very simple way before going to Whaka. In 1918 she was transferred to Ruatoki and died following surgery in Melbourne in 1925.

**Constance Siddons Young** joined the Mission House in 1913 from the staff of Queen Victoria School. She assisted Miss Griffin, then Miss Hare, and became superintendent herself in 1918. Young, whose father was a Canterbury farmer, was born c.1888 in Christchurch.

During her time at Whaka the Scout Movement flourished: the Girl Peace Scouts under her leadership and the Scout Boys under Mr Hawkins. In July 1921 Young was married at St John's Cathedral, Napier, by Bishop Sedgwick to James John Anderson who a few years later was ordained deacon, then priest. Following her marriage Mrs Anderson left Whaka but was later (1925-6) superintendent of the Mission House at Nuhaka. She died in 1972, aged 84.

In 1922, **Miss F. Olive Seth-Smith** came out from England to replace Young as Lady Superintendent. Described as 'a cultured and devoted Englishwoman 'she went to England in 1926 on furlough and did not return.' In 1923 the mission work was extended to Te Ngae. a pa about 8 miles away where Canon Williams had just conducted a mission. About 40 children attended class in the Mission House in the

morning before going to the Native School about five minutes away. The following year a room was added to the Mission House, the verandah was extended, and a chapel was built through the gift of an anonymous friend. Many baptisms and marriages were held there, and it was regarded as their spiritual home by Māori living at Whakarewarewa, Ohinemutu, Horohoro and Te Ngae. Sunday school for European children was held at the Mission House on Sunday afternoons. The Girl Peace Scouts became Girl Guides with Miss Seth-Smith as their captain and the Whakarewarewa Company was registered as the first Māori company in the Auckland province. Distance was a problem: the settlement at Mourea was only 11 miles from Rotorua but the Sunday school teacher had to travel six to eight hours by launch.

From 1912 to 1924 there were a number of Māori assistants at the Mission House, but little is known about them. **Emily (Emera) Kaa** of Rangitukia, who assisted in several Mission Houses, **Mawera Taiaroa**, **E Kingi**, **Eva Wikipa**, who had some nursing training, **Susie Cooper**, and **Ema Te Kahu** were probably all former Hukarere girls who worked for the Mission between leaving school and marrying. **Mrs Wikiriwhi**, a daughter of Guide Sophia, was a 'dear friend of the Mission' as was **Mrs Taikata** at Te Ngae. Also associated with the Mission were **Taku Moika** and **Nini Waaka** who both became welfare workers. **Miss Miria Paul (Paoroa)** started her training at Whaka in 1922, was assistant at Ruatoki Mission House 1925-27 and later served the Māori Mission in Wellington diocese for a number of years.

Until 1928 there were fairly frequent changes in the Pakeha staff at Whaka. **Miss Maud Price**, educated at St Margaret's School, Christchurch, began in 1922 and went to England on furlough in 1925. From 1927 she was Superintendent of the Manutuke Mission House for ten years before retiring to Christchurch. **Miss S Jamieson**, also from Christchurch, was a nurse who worked

briefly at Whaka 1923-24. **Miss Mary Lila Summerley**, an assistant since 1924, became acting superintendent in 1925 and when Miss Seth-Smith did not return, she was appointed Superintendent. She resigned at the end of 1927 to test her vocation in the House of the Good Shepherd. Auckland, and became a professed sister in the Order in 1932. In 1925 **Miss Hilda Kenworthy**, an 'earnest, strong Christian girl', transferred to Whakarewarewa from Ruatoki where she had been for two years. A Māori woman, **Mrs Pouraumatī** (also spelt **Pauramiti** and **Poraumiti**), became an assistant in the same year and stayed till 1935 while Kenworthy left after two years to join the NZCMS staff and work with Miss Sybil Lee at Otaki.

In 1925, Bishop Sedgwick informed the Waiapu Synod that the ladies at Whakarewarewa held Sunday schools in eight centres and daily classes for children at the Mission House four days of the week. He noted that all the Mission Houses in the diocese were under the direct control of the bishop and the only way of making their valuable work known was by reporting on them each year in his synod address. In later years a brief report from each Mission House, and still later a combined report, was included in the Synod Proceedings.

In 1928, a new era began at Whakarewarewa with the arrival of the **Misses Bulstrode** and **Miss Grace Snoad**. The two Bulstrode sisters came from England to take charge of Hukarere School after **Anna Maria Williams** retired in 1899. According to tradition they replied to an advertisement in the Church Missionary Society Journal for a principal and teacher by going to the London office of the Society and asking, 'Do you think we'd do?' **Jane Helena Bulstrode**, born in 1862, was the elder by five years. A qualified teacher full of missionary zeal she arrived first and was principal of the school from 1900 to 1919. **Emily Mary Bulstrode** trained as a nurse then followed her in 1901. After Jane resigned on account of her health, Emily was principal from

1920 to 1927. After leaving Hukarere both sisters took up work for the Māori Mission at Whakarewarewa, Jane serving as Lady Superintendent 1928 to 1933 with Emily as her assistant while from 1933 to 1938 they were joint Superintendents. They were assisted by **Miss Grace Snoad** who came from England in 1928 as a 'King's Worker' and, till 1935, by Mrs Pouraumatī.

Improved roads and the acquisition in 1929 of a cars driven by Miss Snoad, enabled the mission staff to hold regular Sunday schools and classes in Māori settlements throughout the whole Rotorua district. They visited Rotorua Hospital regularly and also sick people in their homes. Special services and retreats were conducted at the Mission House for Māori clergy and mission workers of Waiapu and other dioceses. Girl Guides and Brownies flourished under Miss Snoad's leadership.

Bishop William Sedgwick, who led the diocese from 1914 to 1929. was a keen advocate of Mission Houses and made frequent appeals for more women workers. In 1924 he told the diocesan synod that 'I cannot possibly speak too highly of the silent and devoted work that goes on from year to year in these Mission Houses - work that is known only to the few ... I am more and more convinced that these Houses are the best witness to our Māori brothers of the power of Christianity; and the best way of lifting them up is not by standing aloof, but by going to them and living the Christ life among them.' One of the problems was the lack of a pension scheme for lay workers, few of whom had any private means and who could neither save for old age out of their slender stipends nor afford to pay a high premium for a small pension. In 1928, the Bishop appealed again for women mission workers: 'All who know these Mission Houses can bear testimony to their spiritual influence and usefulness. There is splendid scope for women who wish to take up direct work for God, and where can they better find it than in working

amongst the women and children of our Māori people.’ Again, he addressed the need for a pension scheme for those self-sacrificing workers: ‘who are giving up so much and are receiving so little in return of this world's goods.’ In fact, the two Bulstrodes worked without salary.

In February 1934, the front half of the Mission House was completely destroyed by fire but fortunately the cost of repairs was covered by insurance. The next year, Jane Bulstrode reported that classes had been carried on regularly, with good attendance. Miss Snoad was ‘in wonderful sympathy with the people ... holds numerous classes throughout the week; on Sunday morning she motors us and teaches at some distant village school, and in the afternoon, at Ohinemutu, has a most promising class of lads who are devoted to her.’ She also continued to lead Girl Guides and Brownies. A large Whaka choir practiced in the Mission House and a ‘play-night’ was held every Thursday. A new church had been opened at Ngapuna with past pupils of Hukarere and their families forming a large part of the congregation. She and her sister were ‘full of gratitude to our Heavenly Father for allowing us still to carry on. We long for more signs of spiritual growth amongst our people.’ In 1936, **Miss Heni (or Heeni) Brown**, a young, keen Māori woman came as a trainee, having previously spent some months at Manutuke. The women held 6 Sunday-schools and 5 day-schools, took confirmation classes and visited the hospital twice a week but the congregation had thinned, and the beautiful choir had almost vanished as many young people had been drafted off to work in distant camps where there was little spiritual help for them.

In 1937 **Nurse Jamieson** came to assist for 6 months while Grace Snoad, who had been unwell, was on furlough. Without a chauffeur the mission workers could no longer visit Murapara, 44 miles away, but they went twenty miles to Rotoiti once a month and continued to visit the

hospital twice a week, and homes whenever possible. At Whaka nearly 200 children attended classes, held after school, resisting the temptation to run off and make money by doing hakas and diving for pennies. **Captain Dansey** of the Church Army and **Mr Denham** had started an English club for young men. Heni Brown took infant classes and she and Nurse Jamieson ran the Girl Guides and Brownies. The Bulstrodes, now in their seventies, were planning to retire, hoping that ‘younger and stronger ones take our place.’ They felt that there was much neglected ground, that many had drifted to heresy, and that the ‘English’ gave a bad example. With so much to contend with, their prayer was that ‘this noble race may be won and held for Christ.’

In 1938 the Bulstrodes retired. At a farewell in the Mission House local Māori presented them with a radio and a carved clock and caskets as tokens of their aroha and appreciation. Grace Snoad, after being an assistant for ten years, became Lady Superintendent, continuing in that role till 1946. Heni Brown went to Tokomaru Bay and Snoad was assisted for two years by **Miss Seymour** from Te Kuiti and for a short time by **Miss Clapson** from Canada, who was unable to get used to the chemical laden atmosphere of Rotorua. Heni Brown returned 1940-42 and was then transferred to Manutuke. After she left, Snoad was on her own without an assistant. Lack of workers was a problem throughout the Mission. Older women were retiring and there were no new recruits. In 1937 there were 18 women working in seven Mission Houses but by 1941 there were only seven women in five houses. At Whaka however the Bulstrodes, though retired, continued to give valuable help to both the Mission and the parish. In 1941 Snoad reported that 600 children were given regular religious instruction. The annual sale of work, organised by the Mission staff, had once again been instrumental in balancing the pastorate budget. In 1942, work went on steadily in spite of the shortage of help and also of petrol. Snoad

became agent for a number of Social Security pensions, which entailed a good deal of work. In 1944 **Miss Mere Hall**, principal at Hukarere School since 1928, retired and went to Rotorua to join other members of the 'Hukarere Whanau.' She worked as a volunteer for the Mission House, running Bible classes and playing the organ.

Jane Bulstrode died in March 1946, but Emily continued to help Miss Snoad until the end of the year. Snoad reported that over 500 children were receiving religious instruction through Sunday-schools and Bible classes, confirmation classes were held, the sick were visited in Rotorua hospital and in their homes and parish visiting was done whenever possible. Twenty- three Girl Guides and 20 Brownies met weekly, and she continued to be responsible for a number of Social Security pensions. Over the years Snoad had suffered various health problems, including surgery in 1939, and had struggled with staff changes and shortages. She had now decided 'with real regret that after almost twenty years it was time to leave the work I have so loved and enjoyed ... and I hope and pray that it will be carried on.' The Māori Mission Committee of the diocese passed a resolution thanking her and in

recognition of her faithful work a special grant (amount unspecified) was made. Snoad went to England with Emily Bulstrode in 1947 but returned to NZ in 1948 and went to Manutuke Mission House as assistant to **Miss Constance Grant**. In 1949 she replaced Grant as Lady Superintendent and remained there until her retirement in 1954. Emily Bulstrode died in 1960 and Grace Snoad sometime in the 1970s.

From October 1946 it proved impossible to find staff for the Mission House and it was used as the vicarage for the Te Ngae Pastorate. By 1951 a new vicarage had been built and it was decided that in view of the inability to attract lady mission workers the house should be let. In 1956 the Waiapu Synod resolved that the Mission House should be moved from Whakarewarewa to Te Ngae to be used as the central building of a diocesan youth camp but in 1957 the old building was deemed not fit for removal. In 1960 however, the transfer was successfully completed and the building, now Te Amorangi Youth Centre, became the scene of many diocesan and some provincial meetings and conferences. Today, a century after it was built, it is used by Taapapa ki te Manawa o te Wheke.

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