

DESERVED SUCCESS FOR MAORI YOUTH CLUB

Staff Reporter

OPOTIKI.—The road to success is often rocky and that has proved no exception to the Waioeka Maori Youth Club, based at Opotiki.

Success has come to the club this year after many, long hours of patient practice. First it gained a second placing at the Ohope competitions, followed by a third at Tauranga, which carried £25 prizemoney. Then came the crowning success — first placing at the Coronation celebrations at Ngaruawahia, which earned the club the coveted Hira Trophy and another £25 in prizemoney.

FRUSTRATION

The club was first formed in 1956 and, till it was re-formed in 1963, it was a tale of frustration and mixed fortunes with, at times, its very existence at stake.

The present club membership is 36, but, at times, this figure has dropped to below 20. The youngest member is 12 and the average age is between 17 and 18.

Some of the members live up to five miles from Opotiki, which has meant a considerable amount of travelling for weekly practices. And practices mean an hour and-a-half to two hours of hard and tedious work.

For the past five years the club has been coached by Mrs Jane Parkinson, who has also composed some of the items, including the winning item at Ngaruawahia. Lately, she has also added the teaching of Maori to club members.



The full membership of the Waioeka Maori Youth Club

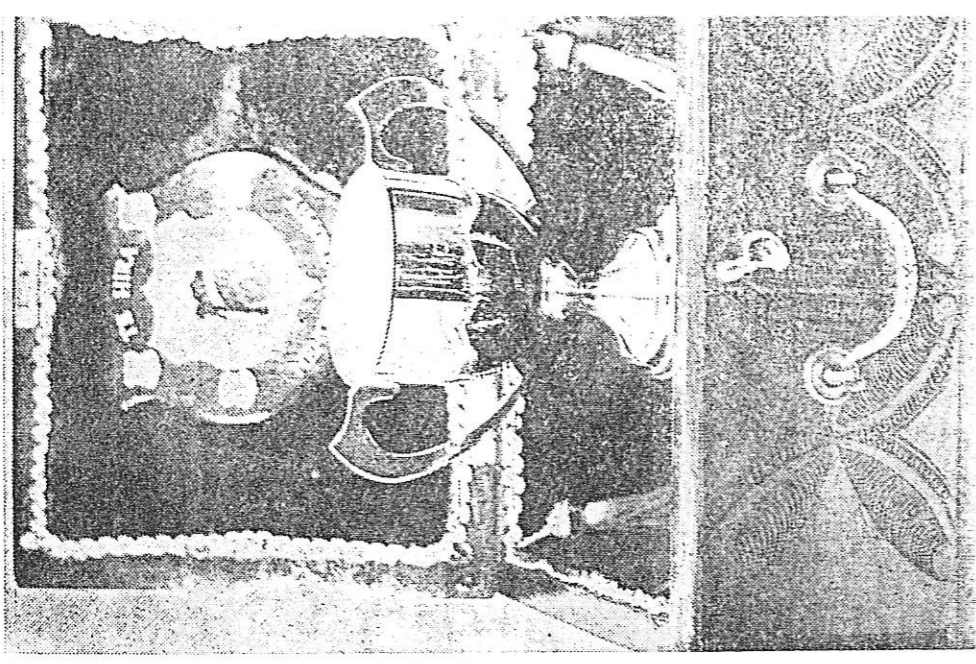
Club members have also raised their own travelling expenses. Last year this amounted to £250, with a further £216 for equipment. The chief source of income for the club last year was from concerts and dances. The club travelled as far

afeld as Tikitiki, where two appearances were made. More than £550 was raised in this manner. As well as buying some of their gear, club members spend several weeks making cloaks and headbands.

The club recently received an invitation to make two appearances at the Tauranga Highland Games next February. In the same month it has been requested to entertain members of the National Roads Board during a tour of the East Coast area.

At the annual meeting of the club last week, the following officers were elected.

—Patron, Mr M. Mio; president, Mr B. Huriwaka; secretary, Miss K. Tai; auditor, Mr L. Clark; committee, Messrs W. Peka, J. Watson; Mesdames, N. Peka, J. Parkinson, H. Matchitt, B. Powell; club captains, T. Tawhara and B. Poihihi.



Pictured above is the Te Hira Trophy won by the Waioeka Club last weekend. The picture top left shows the beautiful top to the box. Inset left is the most important member team, Jane Parkinson, coach.

THE OPOTIKI NEWS, FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 1966.

Waioeka Youth Club Invited To Australia

The performance of the Waioeka Youth Club so impressed Australian visitors to Rotorua on Wednesday that the Mayor of Toowoomba, Mr. J. F. McCafferty, invited the club to entertain at his city's Carnival of Flowers in September.

Mr. A. M. Linton, the Mayor of Rotorua, said that, if the club accepted the invitation, he would accompany it to Australia.

No decision can be made until the club has held a meeting. As a member told the "News" this morning, "Five months is a very short time to make all the arrangements at this end, but Mr. McCafferty will write and let us know the extent of his arrangements as soon as possible."

The members are all very excited at this invitation following

so closely on that to entertain the Queen Mother in Rotorua on April 30th. All hope that it will be possible to finance the trip.

They received a great ovation from the Australians at the Tamatekapua meeting-house in Ohinemutu, most of them armed with cameras and some with movie cameras.

A group of Kawerau school children, believed to be those who took part in the Delamere Cup competitions in Opoitiki last year, have also been invited to Toowoomba.



WAIOEKA TOPS N. ISLAND

The Waioeka Youth Club topped North Island Maori concert parties when it won the coveted Te Hira trophy at Ngaruawahia last weekend.

Members of the club were among the 2500 people who lived on the Turangawaewae marae during the annual celebrations at Ngaruawahia. They competed against clubs from Wellington to Northland in action sang, poi, haka and taraha.

This is the cup that was held for three years from 1960 by the well-known Gisborne Waikare Concert Party, in 1953 by Wellington and last year by the Ohau Youth Club of Rotorua.



This has been a proud week for Mrs. Jane Parkinson, pictured above, for she has coached the Waioeka Youth Club to what promises to be fame.

REVIVAL OF MAORI ARTS LARGELY DUE TO YOUTHFUL GRANDMOTHER

To Mrs Rawinia Rangī goes the major credit for the revival of Maori culture in Opotiki after a lapse of over 40 years. She initially trained every existing group in the town, except St Joseph's, and is now working with the Waioeka and Ngapotiki clubs, both prizewinning groups; with the College group; with Ashbrook school, holders of the Delamere Cup, and with an adult group in Kawerau. She devotes many hours a week to this voluntary work and also teaches the Maori language at adult evening classes where she hopes to teach plaiting also next term.

Mrs Rangī, a full-blooded Maori, handsome and most active woman, is the daughter of Mr Dick Wehi. Many a younger person would envy her energy as she leaps and himself a skilled performer. He sings with the group she trains, as adept in the men's haka as in the poi and action songs, yet with never a hair out of place.

Inspired by her enthusiasm they follow her through repetition after repetition — for she is satisfied with nothing less than perfection.

RESPECT AND AFFECTION

Firm teacher that she is, she is yet regarded with respect and affection and is far from a relentless taskmaster for there are frequent breaks for fun and laughter. The Ngapotiki, which has its own orchestra, often intersperses a twist or waltz session with its Maori work.

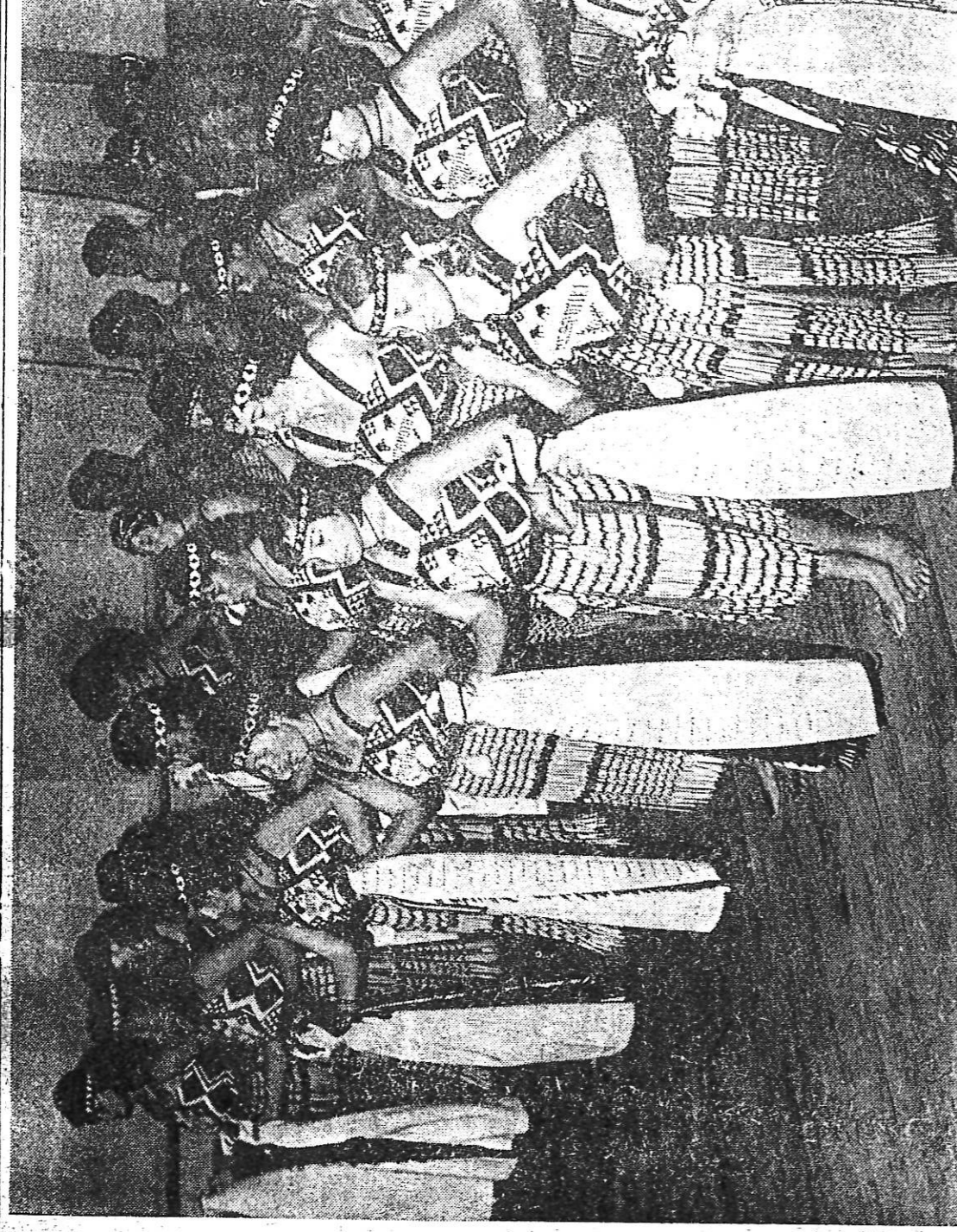
It is not only in her own race that she is awakening a love for this culture for, particularly in the school groups, many Europeans are also learning the grace, skill and harmony of the traditional Maori art. "I really enjoy teaching them," Mrs Rangī says, "for they are so keen to learn."

Mrs Rangī's influence has even extended to America through the special training she gave American Field Scholarship students, Gwen Roe and Heather Young. Both girls made good use of this knowledge to the delight of their American friends and received several requests to be taught Maori songs. Gwen said that, during her bus trip in America, the students gave talent quests at every stop and she performed Maori action songs wearing a costume loaned by Mrs Rangī.

PAKOWHAI HALL

The opening of the Pakowhai Hall was the inspiration for this revival of Maori culture and on that cold, wet March day in 1960, it was Mrs Rangī who led the reformed Waioeka Youth Group and the old Maori songs were heard once again in Opotiki.

The following year Mrs Rangī was asked by Mr Mate Taki to train his new youth group, the Ngapotiki, and, with her coaching, the Maori culture groups in the town have gone from strength to strength. At present she is training both the Ngapotiki and the Waioeka clubs for the Maori festival in Hamilton next weekend and also the Kawerau group for a week's festival in Australia, also to be attended by the Waioeka club. As a gesture of appreciation for the considerable time she has devoted to them members of the Kawerau club have paid her fare to Australia so that she may enjoy the trip with them.



The Ngapotiki Youth Club pictured above as it practices the major Maori Arts Festival in Hamilton next weekend. This gained first place in the competitions held by the Presbyterian Synod in Otago earlier this year. A few members are in their early twenties, but most are teenagers.



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