

Mouat Family

THE JOURNEY TO MANGAORAPA STATION, PORANGAHAU

The Mouat family origins can be traced back to the hills of southern Italy and the old town of Montalto-Uffugo. It is from this area that the family name of de Monte Alto arose and began to be used by the family around 700 AD after they had migrated north to France. Over the following centuries certain members of the family served French rulers with distinction and in 1066 Patrick, Duke de Monte Alto and his family accompanied William the Conqueror to Scotland where they were awarded land for their services. The first de Monte Alto family lands in Scotland were in the area of Angus. They also owned estates in Caithness, Aberdeenshire and the Shetland Islands. It was during these many years in Scotland that the Mouat and Mowat surnames evolved from the original de Monte Alto family name. It took until the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries before several branches of Mouat/



Mangaorapa Station, new homestead built in 1975 on original homestead site.

Mowat families were recorded as permanent residents of the Shetland Islands.

It was from these distant Shetlands that our family forebears left to embark on their long and unknown journey to a new and equally distant land, at the other end of the world. Thomas and Thomasina Mouat along with their eight children left Gravesend on 21 September 1874 aboard the Blackwell frigate *Clarence* bound for Napier, New Zealand. On 5 January 1875 the *Clarence* anchored off Napier where, after 104 days at sea, the family would set foot on dry land again and start their journey to Waipawa to settle and begin their new life.



W M Mouat (Billy) circa 1946

WILLIAM MARTIN MOUAT son of THOMAS MOUAT

My grandfather William Martin Mouat (grandson of Thomas and Thomasina) was born in Waipawa in 1894 and, after leaving school at a young age, made his way to Takapau in the Central Hawke's Bay region where he began his working life. He started off shearing sheep then moved ahead by obtaining a licence to own and operate a traction engine.

Traction engines were used to drive the stationary threshing mills that processed cereal crops. A by-product of this process was chaff, an important feed for horses which were still an

distribution of chaff lead to an interest in transport, and was followed by the purchase of his first truck around 1925. The truck enabled him to start transporting general farm goods, including chaff, livestock, timber and fertiliser around the Central Hawkes Bay area. As the demand for faster transport grew, further opportunities arose and one of these was in the harvesting and transport of flax from the Takapau area to the flax mills around Foxton in the Manawatu region, some seventy miles away.

Billy Mouat (as he was known) rose to the challenge of this new opportunity and his work habits became legendary in the area. He shored sheep during the day and then drove through the night carting flax to Foxton in his newly acquired American built 1929 Reo Speedwagon truck. At the time the purchase price of this truck was twice as much as any other brand of truck available. In the following years Reo Speedwagon trucks became synonymous with the W.Mouat carrying company business, and it was the foresight and astute thinking around the purchase of these advanced and reliable trucks by the young Billy Mouat that allowed the transport company to succeed and grow to possess at least five Heavy Duty Reo trucks in the company's fleet. The first one being the 1929 Reo Speedwagon Model GA heavy-duty truck, purchased new from A.B. Donald and Co. Auckland, just prior to the Depression.

During the Depression Billy Mouat worked even harder to survive and my father Don Mouat often said that if it had not been for the outstanding reliability and robustness of the Speedwagon combined with the stupendous hard work of his father, the family's future would have been halted at that time, as he could not have afforded any major truck repairs if it had failed. The 1929 Reo did not fail, but still survives in totally restored pristine condition and takes



W Mouat carrying company trucks. Takapau. 1945 Trucks L/R 1929 Reo, 1934 Federal, 1937 Reo, 1938 Reo

pride of place in the Mouat fleet of historic vehicles.

It was during those hard years that the observant Billy Mouat noticed that the many farming clients of the business did not seem to have to work as hard as he did to make a living. He thought that perhaps owning the land and farming would be better than working for the land owner. Besides, he fathomed that if he put as much work into farming as he did into transport, then farming had to be the way forward.

So it was these early thoughts, reinforced during the time alone, late at night, when he was the only truck-driver on the road that sparked the determined drive towards land ownership and the opportunity to secure a better future

for his family. Looking back, it is apparent Billy Mouat had an entrepreneurial spirit and a determined vision. Supported by his wife Amy he embarked on a journey that would see land

ownership and the development of a diversified farming operation become the cornerstone of the family's future. 'Koukonui', the first farm he purchased, was in the Takapau region and consisted of 420 acres of flat and extremely fertile country. Importantly, the property was sited in the outer rain band of the Ruahine ranges which meant it was virtually drought-free. This farm was wonderfully productive cropping country and was also suitable for dairy farming or fattening livestock. The location of this property had been astutely observed by Billy Mouat as he drove the district in those transport years noting that some



WD Mouat (Don) and sons BD Mouat (left) WMMouat (right) beside the restored original Billy Mouat Transport Company 1929 Reo Speedwagon truck.

farms dried out while others did not. Besides this farm was only three kilometres off the main highway to both Dannevirke and Waipukurau. Now, with his sons Don and Max sharing the same attributes of vision and appetite for hard work, the big drive towards land ownership continued. The quest to find a bigger property and a bigger challenge began in earnest. The right block, the right plan, family support and constant hard work was what was needed to succeed.

During their search they were aware of a large unbroken block of land located in the Mangaorapa valley, in the Porangahau area. It was available, but they were persuaded not to look over it as it was thought to be unproductive. It had a run-down reputation and the local farming community considered it to be a lost cause and near worthless. After inspecting a number of properties in the Central Hawke's Bay region, including 'Otoro' which was on the Te Uri Rd not far from Mangaorapa, nothing seemed to be falling into place and presenting as a desirable prospect. Billy Mouat then insisted that they should at least inspect the Mangaorapa block. This was duly arranged and that day is recorded as the most significant in the Mouat business and family history.

From the beginning Mangaorapa seemed right to them. They considered the facts: flat to rolling land with good water; very healthy manuka; kanuka and the sparser tawhini (tauhinu). The block was surrounded by three streams: the Te Uri, the Te Tohe, and the Mangaorapa. (Later it would include the Tangaruhe stream when the Dean Family block 'Tangaruhe' was purchased.)

They inspected the property closely on horseback, and by walking for miles with a spade in hand to dig and inspect topsoil depth and quality. Billy Mouat observed that the stock he did see were healthy enough, noting that important component to the potential purchase of any farm block. Billy had never been taught



Aerial picture Station Circa 1955, original woolshed, homestead and shearers quarters, two new homes built with one being constructed. Te Awaputahi in the background.

how to do this; with his limited farm development experience he and his sons Don and Max were reliant on their natural instincts, their ability to read the signs that mattered, and having the confidence to back their own judgement.

The ownership history of Mangaorapa in the late 1800s was one of crown leasehold. It lay south of and bounded the large Canning holding 'Oakbourne' (40,000 acres), which lay between the equally large Wallingford property to the north and Porangahau Station (which ran to the coast) to the east. The leasehold blocks were gradually released following the government pattern of the times, and the 5000 acre Mangaorapa became one of these freeholded blocks.

After the 1929 Depression and World War Two, the Mangaorapa block had been virtually forgotten about and had deteriorated badly. Subsequent regrowth scrub took hold of any pasture, the natural bush flourished and the land was invaded by rabbits. Wild pigs and large mobs of deer competed for whatever food source was available. This included the cleared grassland that the previous owners had farmed. It was because of this that the local farmers, who were farming the cleared hill country land that surrounded Mangaorapa observed that this block was harsh, unproductive and probably unsalable. According to my father Don Mouat the government land valuation in 1946 for the cleared surrounding hill-country land was more than twice that of the Mangaorapa land, approximately 12 pounds per acre to Mangaorapa's four pounds per acre value.

The land had great topsoil. Billy Mouat reasoned that if it could grow healthy scrub and bush then it would also grow grass. It had great contour, water and most of all, it was an outstanding farming challenge. This was what he had been looking for from the outset and he knew they had the ability to handle it all. The first challenge was how to clear the bush economically, solve

that and he knew they were on their way. He also knew that if the surrounding hill country land was worth twice as much in current value, then cleared productive flat land in the same area would be worth much more than the hill country if they succeeded.

Together, the Mouats had the advantage of their experience and understanding of machinery and an incredible work ethic along with natural stock sense. Stock sense is a special skill and knowing what a good animal looks like is an ability that can be learnt, but it's far easier if someone has an intuitive ability for selecting livestock. Their skills were honed during those transport years when they were handling thousands of sheep and cattle per year, loading and unloading. Don Mouat often commented that you would always know who the good farmers were by the weight of the livestock loaded onto the trucks. As soon as they



Ploughing in scrub, Don Mouat with D4 Caterpillar tractor and specialised scrub plough.

drove the first half-mile in those 1930s trucks they knew whether they were light or heavy stock. In the loading process, where an average of between 80 and 100 sheep would be loaded into five pens, they would literally have to put their hands on most sheep backs, guiding each animal into the each pen in the stock crate. This process allowed them to feel the

condition of each animal and it was this well-developed experience that would prove to be invaluable in their future years as new farmers assessing potential livestock.

The first 2000 acres of Mangaorapa Station was purchased in June 1946 for five pounds an acre. It was a decision that would surprise a number of the locals and one that would be a great focus of interest over the years as they observed the progress being made in breaking this block in. Local scepticism slowly faded.

Mangaorapa Station was bought by W.M., W.D. and M.M. Mouat from R.Q. and H.H. McKenzie. The McKenzies had taken it over from family members Frank Donnelly, W.C.A. and C.F. McKenzie at the beginning of the Depression. The McKenzies had sold the other half of the Mangaorapa block (2800 acres) to Walter Lanky, an agricultural contractor from Dannevirke in 1938. As part of the takeover, the Mouats also purchased 3000 sheep (mainly dry stock), 50 cows, and two dairy cows. The buildings consisted of a rundown woolshed which was Lister engine-powered, and a basic weatherboard house complete with the traditional coal range for cooking and

heating. There was also a simple single-roomed whare, a three-roomed basic shearer's quarters, and a simple two-bedroom staff cottage. At this stage there was no power in the area, water supply was from roof water and it was difficult even getting to the house in wet weather because the clay track off the road would bog up and become impossible to negotiate.

Back in Takapau the W Mouat Transport Company was sold to the Olsen family, a local family already in transport. The sale of the transport company did not quite cover the total cost of the land, with a small amount having to be borrowed. Billy, his wife Amy, sons Don and Max, along with their new wives Pat (Barclay) and Barbara (Tinney), moved to the remote Mangaorapa to take on the massive challenge of carving out a new life in a new place to provide their families with a future. They would need all of their energy, skills, determination and family co-operation to succeed.



Original Homestead circa 1946

DON AND MAX MOUAT sons of WILLIAM

The reality of this enormous challenge was to hit the young Mouat brothers hard a few years after the move, with the untimely death in 1949 of their visionary father William Martin



WMMouat (Billy and Sons WD
(Don) MM (Max) circa 1942

Mouat at the age of 54 years. My father Don thought his early death was in part due to those first unimaginable years of relentless hard work under tough physical conditions, as well as the deep stress of the depression years. Despite the trauma of those tough years my father always spoke highly of the unique and special qualities his father retained at all times; his vision, his principles, and the respect that he drew from within the Takapau community over many years.

The death of their father was not the only event that applied pressure to this new venture. The year (1946) Mangaorapa was purchased, the East Coast had experienced a long and serious drought and pasture recovery proved to be slow. The new partners were still fine-tuning their farm development techniques and the loss of their father created a huge gap, but it also strengthened their resolve and collective vision to make the property work. Don Mouat was far-sighted, he had inherited the special qualities that his father had possessed and this helped him focus on the future. So together with his younger brother Max and their wives, the hard work continued at an impressive pace. The brother's partnership remained successful until it was dissolved in 1958 when Max and Barbara, with their three daughters Lesley, Christine and Maedis, moved to Whare Roto farm Waipukurau to begin their own farming venture. Max and Barbara went on to successfully expand and diversify their interests into a number of East Coast farming properties and other commercial businesses.

PORANGAHAU AND MAORI PEOPLE

Although the development of the land at Mangaorapa was the primary focus, equally important were the people working as employees on the station and the people who made up the community providing the much needed services to the area. Don Mouat recognised early that without the people there was no business, no services and therefore no future. So at an early stage during the 1950s he identified where he could make a difference. He took on leading roles with the Orapa school (Mangaorapa donated the land for the school), Porangahau District Ambulance, Porangahau Country Club, the Mangaorapa Golf Club and was the Deputy Chairman for the Patangata County Council.

The Porangahau village continued to provide the property with casual labour, contract shearing gangs and some permanent staff. Through the development years the local community provided the necessary rural services infrastructure, grocery supplies, the weekly Saturday night picture entertainment in the early days and medical support through the permanent district nurse and weekly doctor's visit by the Waipukurau based Dr Martin Girling-Butcher. As each development year was ticked off by the Mouats, with significant progress being made in land clearing and grass establishment, the new houses being built and livestock numbers increasing, the locals began to realise that this farming operation was succeeding. Within the surrounding district, including Porangahau, the property over time was often just referred to as 'the station', a generic name that was a great compliment as there are a number of

significant stations in the area. To be singled out and identified in that way showed how much interest and focus was on this property during those years. It is still referred to with this title today.

For many years the station was the biggest customer and supporter of many local businesses, including the local L.E. Carr General Store run by Lance Carr, the daily Porangahau-Dannevirke bus service run by E.W.Duthie and the locally based electrical contractor Jack Voak, amongst many others.

From the very early years Mangaorapa Station provided a significant shearing contract for the locally based Henry Petuha and Sons Company. During the years of peak production the total number of sheep handled annually by the Petuha gang, including main ewe-shear, lamb-shear, hogget-shear second-shear and crutching, was in excess of 50,000. Through the Petuhas, Henry, his wife Agnes and later their son, Ashley, came the connection for the supply of station's off-season labour requirements. Casual labour was required for docking, fencing, tree planting and general maintenance and this labour was almost always supplied through the shearing gang association. A number of interesting and fine people worked through these years both as shearers and then as casuals. It would be fair to say that Don Mouat had no greater respect for a local business associate than his respect for Henry Petuha and his family. Henry Petuha was the key shearing contractor from the early 1950s through until the late 1980s. It was the Petuha shearing gang that set a world lamb shearing record in the Mangaorapa Woolshed in the 1970s.

After the retirement of the Petuha family from large-scale shearing runs another local contractor Jim Hutcheson, whose family had past association with the Station, took over the annual shearing contract. Jim's father Hugh Hutcheson (Hutch) had worked as one of the station's carpenters during the late 1950s and early 1960s. It was during the period that the building program was in full swing, everything from houses, sheds, bridges and hay-barns were all under construction. Hutch, along with another carpenter Austin Fraser a qualified draughtsman, were the mainstays of key projects at that time. Jim Hutcheson maintained the highest of professional standards with the huge shearing contract his gang had undertaken, and so between Jim and his father there was a long and valuable association with the Mouat family and a significant contribution to the progress of Mangaorapa Station.

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS – MANGAORAPA

During the 1950s and after the initial establishment phase on the new property was underway, the Mouats started to identify more of the community needs. They saw this as an important part of their responsibility in contributing to their new district. A number of initiatives were implemented by Don Mouat. The first was establishing a nine-hole golf course on their property for the Mangaorapa district. The site for this course was half a mile up the gravel Te Uri road in a paddock called 'the Strip' which was

adjacent to the road. Nine greens were marked out and fenced off to keep stock out. A very modest tin-clad shed was erected for a clubhouse and this was sited right by Te Uri Road for ease of access for the local patrons. The local school teacher, Morrie Forward, got the job of green-keeping and in his spare time he would mow greens with his kick-start 1950s 'Atco' reel mower. Whenever it broke down it would very quickly be despatched to Mangaorapa station workshop for repairs. As a young boy it was great fun on a Sunday afternoon as all the local kids got to visit the club house. We would turn up in the late afternoon on these golf days, when the ladies with plates of home-made food arrived to prepare for the evening's socializing. Sometimes the fellowship would go well into the night and I can still remember the old clubroom filled with cigarette smoke and buzzing with conversation. On a good night upwards of 40 people from around the district including children, would be present.

The local Orapa School, which was situated on Mangaorapa land donated to the Education Board, was an important community facility that Don Mouat focused his energy on. There were two schools in the area; the official Mangaorapa School in the 1950s was actually up Mangaorapa Road behind the station, sited on an elevated site on the Skippers and Mangaorapa Road junction. The station school was then called Orapa (which also happened to be the station's official wool brand title on its wool bales). I started school at Orapa in 1954. There were nine pupils in total and I was followed by my siblings Pauline, Bryan and Trish in quick succession. Our father was head of the school committee and knew that with his plans for Mangaorapa Station the number of children at school would increase quickly, so he promptly got underway with a massive building programme to cater for the ever-growing station staff needs. This meant increased and improved facilities for education and sport in the district but because funding requirements from government would not cover the immediate needs, the small country school had to become self-reliant to a large extent.

Don Mouat and the station infrastructure would contribute positively to the school's governance and in the establishment of its concrete swimming pool, changing sheds, two tennis courts and the enlargement of the playing fields. The supply of water came from the station's spring water, and the supply of petrol and oil for the school bus came from the station's bulk fuel supply. Eventually the two schools in the district amalgamated on the station site, so the Orapa School became the Mangaorapa School.

In 1957 Mangaorapa Station built a large custom-planned eight-stand woolshed that set new standards in agricultural design innovation. It was built to cater for the eventual 40,000 sheep that would be shorn annually in it. The design was testament to the brilliance of Don Mouat's engineering ability and imagination, rearranging the layout of key areas to improve workability in shearing, wool handling and stock flow, as well as substantially increasing the efficiency of the work

In 1957 Mangaorapa Station built a large custom-planned eight-stand woolshed that set new standards in agricultural design innovation. It was built to cater for the eventual 40,000 sheep that would be shorn annually in it.

environment by making it lighter and more open than traditional woolsheds. The design incorporated clear-span steel portal construction. This then required counter-weighted lift and swing gates which meant that gates could be lifted vertically and swung 360 degrees. It enabled the shed to be free from any vertical support uprights so that there were no obstructions to restrict stock flow when filling the shed with up to 1500 ewes with all the gates lifted. This was the first and original lift and swing gate that was adopted in New Zealand and the design is now used as an industry standard. The gate was designed by Don Mouat and Bill and Bryce Easton and manufactured by W.B. Easton Engineering, Dannevirke. (Bill Easton and his son Bryce would become an important part of Mangaorapa Station engineering and bridge-building requirements in the years that followed.)

Another innovation was the shearing board, which was open-plan with each of the eight Lister shearing stands being driven through a common shaft by a single electric motor mounted at one end. Further to that the shed was raised some 1.5 metres off the ground and the grated night pen area was concreted at ground level. Both of these features allowed for more efficient removal of the stock

manure that would build up over a few years. Finally, the shed was designed with a large integral wool storage room able to hold an excess of 100 bales. Considering the final wool clip got up to around 1000 bales, this area could be filled in two days with full wool sheep.

In the non-shearing season the wool room was large enough to host what was known as the Mangaorapa District Social Club. At its peak through the late 1950s and 1960s, more than 30 thirty people would arrive on a Thursday night at seven to play badminton, indoor bowls, and table tennis. Some great evenings were had with people playing competitively under a proper club structure with annual championships held in badminton and indoor bowls. Don Mouat instigated the district social club, co-ordinated the setting up of the space to take a badminton court with two indoor bowling mats down each side of it, and eventually commissioned a 20 metre long by



Shearing shed 1977, Petuha gang, Porangahau.

three metre high striped canvas curtain that was made by E. Le-Roy and Co. canvas makers in Auckland, to fully cover the shearing plants. The end result being that this shearing shed was now transformed into a respectable hall. Many district functions, farewells and annual country balls were held in the Mangaorapa woolshed.

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS – PORANGAHAU

After the local Mangaorapa district needs had been catered for the attention turned to the greater Porangahau district. Starting in the late 1950s, Don Mouat would lead initiatives in establishing a Porangahau-based volunteer district ambulance, also chair and drive the establishment of the Porangahau Country Club and would become an Elder in the local Presbyterian Church. He would be instrumental in organising the construction of a new church of a modernist design for the local parishioners.

In 1958 Don Mouat was approached by Neville Shearer, who had operated the Porangahau taxi service for many years, to discuss the need for a local volunteer ambulance service. Neville Shearer was an active member of St John, trained in first aid, and a man who managed in his spare time to pursue a high-ranking position within the Napier division. After this meeting a number of key local people

were approached to gauge support and the result was a committee set up with Don Mouat as President. Don Mouat, along with his committee raised funds and then set up a group of interested volunteers who would be able to run the service when it began. Before then, they had to find and fit out a suitable vehicle to provide the service. Don Mouat commented that he worked with some very fine people on the original committee, and one of these committee members was Tina Tipene. Tina Tipene was a member of the local Waipawa

Again Don galvanised the locals to come together. He could see it filling the local needs. All that was needed was to convince the current committee that it would work.

Hospital Board and proved to be a significant help in enlisting and co-ordinating the local health board's support of the establishment of this new service. The Porangahau Volunteer Ambulance finally became a reality and in 1959 the successful purchase and conversion of a new Morris Commercial van saw this service begin with the small band of highly dedicated locals. The service continues today under the St John organisation.

During the late 1960s it was becoming obvious the old Mangaorapa Golf club had done its job and it was time to look towards the wonderfully located coastal beach course that was the Porangahau Golf Club. Locals were already travelling

to the club and room to expand on the Mangaorapa course was limited. Don Mouat had been talking to some well-travelled locals from Waipukurau and they had commented on the trend, that they had recently witnessed, towards country clubs in the USA. This sparked an idea and the concept of incorporating a number of community sports in the one location

appealed to Don Mouat. He could see this working at the Porangahau Golf Club.

Again Don galvanised the locals to come together. He could see it filling the local needs. All that was needed was to convince the current committee that it would work. They supported it with one provision, that he become the president of the inaugural committee and drive the project into reality. This he duly did and with a very progressive and supportive committee to work alongside him started the journey that

This he duly did and with a very progressive and supportive committee to work alongside him started the journey that would see the Porangahau Country Club become a reality in the early 1970s.

in time was transferred to the Porangahau Country Club. Any successful negotiations take two people to share trust and agree to acceptable terms that ultimately have to be fair to both parties. Don Mouat had a wonderful, natural ability to respect people from all cultures and walks of life. He was unselfish and inspiring in getting others to see the bigger picture. Tom Tutaki was also a man of great vision and understanding. Although he could see the benefits for all of the local people including the local whanau, his agreement to the land purchase demonstrated his ultimate respect and trust in Don. Without this, the project never would have eventuated. Don never forgot that respect and trust, often spoke about it and said how special that whole experience was. As an additional act of respect Don commissioned two portraits of the local chief Tom Tutaki by Ion Brown, New Zealand's official Armed Services artist and at a special occasion after the Country Club was completed, presented one to him. Even by national standards, the Country Club project was an extremely ambitious and original concept for a rural sports club in New Zealand. The construction of the contemporary clubhouse, designed by architect Len Hoogerbrug in the late 1970s, completed the project and the club continues to function successfully today, providing the Porangahau community with a facility to be proud of.

BILL AND BRYAN MOUAT *sons of* DON MOUAT NEXT GENERATION

I married Johanna Boon in Hastings (1972) and Bryan married Lynn Bailey in Christchurch (1977). Both of us were destined to return to Mangaorapa to continue the progress at the station. After both spending time away for agricultural courses at Lincoln and Massey Universities respectively, we returned home, marrying our respective partners and entering a farming partnership that was set up in 1979 to continue the growth and governance of the business.

As the oldest son I only have the very best memories of an outstanding father whose qualities of, generosity, vision, respect and dignity have only strengthened in my memory over time. All of these qualities were evident and exercised right through

his life and never more so than in the setting up of the partnership between his two sons at an early stage of their farming careers. This was (in his words), "handing the batten on" to continue the Mangaorapa journey, as he had known of other farming families where succession planning was not faced early enough and became a nightmare for the families to resolve. So, as a man with an extremely generous spirit and a broad attitude, he applied lessons learnt from observation and, wanting to action decisions at the right time for the future, he showed complete confidence in his sons by going on to create a forward-thinking and appropriate business structure for them all to continue farming together. We were always encouraged to think about opportunities, to seek better ways to improve our farming practise and to try to make the right decision the first time by researching all aspects of each challenge.

My grandmother Amy Mouat (Ivelyn Army Barrow) and my mother Pat Mouat (Grace Patricia Barclay) were the unsung heroes of the time, playing an equally important role in the enormous challenges faced from day one. Hard working, loyal, mentally strong yet warm and caring, they continued to provide a secure environment where old-fashioned love was the norm. This meant that our childhood and upbringing was a very special one. In my mother's case and in later years assisted by her sister Flo Barclay she would not only have to provide for her husband and family but would also provide meals for up to six single men three times a day. Our single station manager, Laurie Mitchell, ate his meals with us for 17 years. Cut lunches would be provided for the men during the busy times. Stock agents and other agents would arrive at our home for morning tea and were offered tea, with scones and pikelets, followed by lunch more often than not. Further to



ABOVE: Mangaorapa Stations transport fleet 1967

FACING PAGE: Mustering for shearing 1977, approx 2000 ewes and lambs

this, there was endless washing to contend with, both from the dusty working conditions and the growing children who were outside amongst the action, on horseback, in the tractors and playing sport whenever they could. At the same time both my grandmother Amy Mouat and my mother Pat Mouat were important business partners for their husbands. Without their enormous contributions success would not have been possible, and my father was the first to acknowledge this.

In contrast to the first 25 years of spectacular development at Mangaorapa, when many acres of unprofitable scrub-covered land was changed into green productive grassland, the second 25 years, which Bryan and I (along with Lynn and Johanna) were responsible for, was not as visually spectacular. Nonetheless there were many, if not more challenges to solve. This was a period of consolidation, fine-tuning and completing



Mount Family

The station at its peak was wintering in excess of 30,000 stock units, made up of 18,000 breeding ewes, 8500 ewe hoggets and 750 breeding cows. Four-hundred-and-fifty acres of land was cropped annually and an annual tally of 1000 bales of wool set a historical wool-clip record during these years.

including stocking rates, livestock breeds and cropping policies. Along with all on farm costs, labour efficiencies were examined with the result that an investment in larger and more productive machinery was made. Another era in farming had begun.

The 1980s and 1990s continued to be challenging and innovative years for the next generation of Mouats. The remaining 2800 acres that had been part of the original Mangaorapa Block in the 1930s had been purchased from Walter Lankey, in 1953, this was followed by the 700 acre Tangaruhe block, purchased from the Dean family in 1964. An adjacent 180 acre block was purchased from the neighbouring Wakelin family in the 70s and then subsequently, their 700 acre Waimanawa property was purchased from Neil Wakelin in 1992, making Mangaorapa Station a total of 6380 acres.

The station at its peak was wintering in excess of 30,000 stock units, made up of 18,000 breeding ewes, 8500 ewe hoggets and 750 breeding cows. Four-hundred-and-fifty acres of land was cropped annually and an annual tally of 1000 bales of wool set a historical wool-clip record during these years. After the removal of incentives the production focus turned to fostering better performing livestock farmed at a reduced stocking rate.

Family education for our children Katie and Will, along with Bryan and Lyn's children Matthew, Andrew and Tom, was now underway with boarding school being a necessity. Their secondary education was followed by university studies. It was during this period, through the experience of their parents and their knowledge of the indifferent attitude to farming (alongside the lack of farm profitability in real terms), that this generation was encouraged to further their options by attending university and gain

unfinished projects. It was also a time of low wool prices, changing animal genetics and, hardest of all, a changing world demand for what New Zealand agriculture was producing.

One, if not the greatest challenge during the 1980's was the massive adjustment that all farmers faced in meeting the need to adapt to the sudden removal of government agricultural subsidies. Introduced by the government to increase production these subsidies had been factored into annual farm cashflows and represented a significant portion of farming profitability. The Labour government's decision to remove all support, literally overnight, meant that there was an urgent need for Mangaorapa to adapt quickly to prevent the loss of a generation of hard work.

During this time Mangaorapa relied on its history of traditional farming, continuing to farm known and successfully productive livestock breeds but at the same time introducing a major review of all farming policies. Consequently, over a 2 year adjustment phase all aspects of the operation were modified where necessary,

LEFT: Smoko time, cropping, cira 1978. Left to right; Mike Watson, David Wallace, Colin Smith, Bill Mouat (obscured) and Don Mouat



degrees in fields other than agriculture. This option was actively encouraged in all rural families at this time and looking back it cost the farming industry across the country a number of extremely capable and intelligent young people entering agriculture as a profession.

Mangaorapa adapted and survived these difficult years. The growth and change was continued with moves into stud ram breeding, further subdivision and extensive pasture renewal. A facility for large-scale wilted silage storage was introduced to enable a system of bulk stock feeding, and we began a program of crossbreeding both sheep and cattle to improve profitability. During the late 1990s the cattle numbers were dramatically increased by instigating an intensive bull beef fattening program, this was successfully set up within the main Mangaorapa block. The last

innovation, after an extensive research exercise in 2000, was the setting up of a trial block of Pinot Noir grapes on the argillite free-draining soils of an area known as the Prairie block. Subsequently this trial was extended successfully into an operating vineyard.

None of these changed farming policies could have been successfully implemented without the support of the many fine staff who worked with us over the years. Our past Stock Managers, beginning with Rod Swainson and followed by Laurie Mitchell, Alby Gaskin, Guy Newcombe, Silv Eaton, Warren Parker and Kelvin Kelly, all made a very significant contribution to the development of Mangaorapa Station. On the agricultural and transport side of the operation, managers Harry Johnson and Mike Watson were key team members who more than fulfilled their roles. Mike Watson deserves a special mention as his service to Mangaorapa spans some 38 years. For 33 of those years he was employed by the Mouat family, the longest serving staff member ever employed and his contribution to Mangaorapa Station, and the Porangahau community, will always be appreciated and recognised as particularly outstanding.

As a family, we were always proud of our staff and their family's achievements, and we enjoyed our community participation and contribution over the years. Most of all we feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to live and work with the very fine people who

Most of all we feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to live and work with the very fine people who made up the communities of Mangaorapa and Porangahau, people who have collectively worked together to make a difference.

made up the communities of Mangaorapa and Porangahau, people who have collectively worked together to make a difference. The Porangahau and Mangaorapa districts are both fine examples of people living in relative harmony with each other, showing interest and respect for one another and working together for the betterment of their communities.

In a final summary of this story 'Journey to Mangaorapa Station, Porangahau', I would like share this quote from the final paragraph of Peter Newton's 1969 book, *Big Country of the North Island*. He finishes by writing: 'By any standards the Mangaorapa story ranks as one of the greatest farming achievements this country has seen. As an example of what can be done, it could be of tremendous value to the New Zealand farming community'.

'Mangaorapa Station, R.D.1, Porangahau' was my address from birth and although the pastoral operation 'Mangaorapa Station' was sold in 2005, the family connection still continues with the ownership and development of the Mangaorapa Estate vineyard. For me, along with my grandfather Billy Mouat, my father Don Mouat, brother Bryan, his sons Matthew, Andrew, Tom and my own son Will, Mangaorapa remains so much part of us all, it's in our blood, it is our family story, the past and the future. It is also part of the history of the Porangahau area and through this book, and these stories of our local fathers and sons, the past will never be lost or forgotten.

Mangaorapa remains so much part of us all, it's in our blood, it is our family story, the past and the future.



Writer: Bill Mouat (LEFT)

The business of agricultural land development and farming with its challenges of market led production, sustainability and community responsibility shaped Bill Mouat's life from an early age. He currently lives with his wife Johanna on the outskirts of Havelock North on the hills of Te Mata Peak overlooking the Heretaunga Plains of Hawkes Bay. His deep interest in the land is continued with his close involvement in the operation of the Mangaorapa Estate vineyard and the production of premium wines under this label.

Bill Mouat has a strong interest in preserving history in all of its forms and believes that, managing our past is just as important as managing our present and planning the future.

© William M Mouat, 2010. Licence agreement granted for the use of this material and accompanying photographs in the book *Matatoa Fathers and Sons* to be published in 2011.



Restored 1929 Reo speedwagon loaded with Mangaorapa wool heading to the Napier woolstores and driven by Mike Watson

Monat Family