

Extract from.....EASTHARBOUR SUN, published by the Eastbourne Businessmen  
dated Wednesday, July 26, 1961 Association (Inc.)

LOVED FRIEND PASSES ON....TRIBUTE TO MISS JANET FINLAYSON

The children of Eastbourne lost a very dear friend when Miss Janet Finlayson died recently. For nearly seventy years Miss Finlayson's life has touched the lives of many young children, both in the Bay and in other parts of New Zealand. Unassuming, gentle and truly sincere, Miss Finlayson with her great love and understanding for children has set many young feet pointing in the right direction for future citizenship.

Daughter of a Presbyterian minister, Miss Finlayson was an infant school teacher for many years, and when she retired in the early 1930's, she went for a trip to visit relations in Great Britain. When Miss Finlayson returned, New Zealand was in the midst of the depression years, and in Eastbourne as was the case everywhere else many people were unemployed and struggling to keep their homes and families together. Miss Finlayson soon realised that at this uncertain time, the children of Eastbourne needed a secure place to go.

Before long, the doors of "Miss Finlayson's kindergarten" were opened in the St. Ronan's Church hall - and every child who wanted to could go in. No child was turned away, whether there was money to pay for it or not. They were all welcome....they were all children...and Miss Finlayson loved every one of them. Many years later, this kindergarten was taken over by the Wellington Free Kindergarten, and was later moved to the present premises in Muritai Road. Miss Finlayson's interest in the Free Kindergarten, as well as in the Presbyterian Primary Sunday School (of which she was supervisor for many, many years) remained with her all her life, and she was a popular visitor with children and staff. Many of her ex-pupils called to see her when they visited Eastbourne, often to introduce their own children to her. Christmas mails brought messages from friends in all corners of the world. Once Miss Finlayson had been part of those impressionable, character-forming years of early childhood, she was not easily forgotten.

In her later years, a severe illness meant that Miss Finlayson could not get about as much as she had before. Her three sisters, with whom she had lived, had all died - but still she remained uncomplaining and interested in everyone and everything. At 80 years of age, when the need arose, she taught herself to write with her left hand, so that she could continue her correspondence with her many friends. Miss Finlayson had great zest for life, and even after her stroke, she went on a Milford Sound tour, and another trip to Christchurch and back.

Miss Finlayson's sunny front porch in Muritai Road was a daily port of call for several youngsters who lived nearby - there was always plenty of occupation for little fingers, and plenty of books and stories. One special memory I have is of a group of 40 or so noisy children, suddenly hushed by the quiet voice of a tiny 84-year-old lady with a walking stick, sitting in their midst.....storytime. You could have heard a pin drop.

Miss Finlayson loved her roses almost as much as she loved little children. She had tended all the young 'plants' in her care, with love and kindness, in this garden of Eastbourne.