

PIONEERING MOERA KINDERGARTEN

URNS 90 THIS YEAR

The Moera Kindergarten, birthplace of the Lower Hutt Free Kindergarten Association, celebrates its 90th year in 2018 and the Lower Hutt Free Kindergarten Association wants to mark it in style in November.

They are seeking anyone connected with the Kindergarten – particularly in the early days – and are looking for photographs down the decades anyone may have, as well as games and toys of the era today's children may be able to play with.

The Kindergarten started about the same time as Moera became a suburb. It had previously been known as simply "Mandels Block" but in June 1928 the new Moera Post Office was officially opened and a new Community Hall was finished soon after, as first home to the Moera Kindergarten. It was described at the time as being "substantially built and well ventilated with an abundance of natural light, which is most essential to healthy children".

Moera Kindergarten opened for business in early August 1928, and was officially opened by Lady Alice Fergusson, the wife of the then Governor-General on Saturday, October 27, 1928.

Although there were about 300 children under five in the district, it was only able to take 65 children.

The kindergarten was always "in need of funds" and things got harder as the Depression started to bite. But they organised many successful fundraisers, including Flower Shows, exhibitions of Home Industries (sewing, knitting, preserves and jam making), 'paddy's markets', fairs and dances and "monster joy nights" involving dancing – and streamers, balloons and confetti!!

#Anyone who has any memorabilia they would like to share with the Association for use during the 90th celebrations can contact Engagement Officer Melissa Zgomba on 567 0196 or email marketing@huttkindergartens.org.nz

FOUNDING PRINCIPAL

This photograph of Nettie Riley [pictured right], Moera Kindergarten's founding principal and founder of the Lower Hutt Free Kindergarten Association, hangs today on the wall of the association's Naenae Headquarters.

Nettie Birkenhead Riley, who had made her home in Normandale, Lower Hutt, died in Sydney, Australia, on September 27, 1934, following an illness. She had been granted leave of absence to visit her brother, a Sydney doctor, when she died. Sydney trained, she worked in that city and then as Director of kindergartens in Sydney and Brisbane. She came to New Zealand in 1913 and for the next nine years she worked for the Wellington Association, before coming to Moera in 1928 to head the first Lower Hutt Kindergarten, at Moera. (Petone was a separate area then and already had a kindergarten.)

This photograph was originally unveiled as a tribute to her at a large ceremony at the Moera Hall in November 1934 by the former Mayor of Lower Hutt W T (Billy) Strand. He was also the first President of Moera Kindergarten and said Nettie Riley's "good works would follow here, as many homes had been, and still would be, brightened by the valuable training she had given to the little



ones and the wise addresses she had given many times to mothers".

MP for the district, Walter Nash added his own tribute: "She accepted the hardest work anyone could undertake – that of laying hold of the child's mind."

The then current Mayor JW Andrews said Nettie Riley's greatest characteristics were "her geniality, her love of flowers and her love of little children".

He said the greatest tribute anyone could pay to her memory was to "ensure the successful continuation of the works she had started".

And the people of the area have done just that, with Moera Kindergarten continuing to "train the little ones" to this very day.

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