



Farewelling their deputy principal, Te Rawhiti (Boysie) Paerata, are (from left) Lisa Meredith, Sue-Allen Sadlier, Te Wairua Chatfield, Hana Chaffey, Naiki Pohe-Lomax and Melina Paiere, pupils at Tokomaru Bay's Hate-a-Rangi School. Picture by Paul Rickard

Leaving the chalk face for the great outdoors

by Duncan Gillies

BOYSIE Paerata won't have to fit farm work around school hours any more.

After 33 years of primary school teaching, 32 of them in Tokomaru Bay and the other at Tikitiki, Te Rawhiti Paerata, better known as Boysie, believes it is time to concentrate on running two family farms.

The 55-year-old deputy principal of Tokomaru Bay's Hate-a-Rangi School was up at 4am yesterday sorting out sheep for shearing. He had been up until 11 the previous night getting them into the shearing shed so they would be dry for the following day's work.

It's a heavy load trying to manage family farms and help run a rural school. But he does not believe he will have any more free time on his hands when he retires from teaching next week.

"There's always something that needs to be done when you're working on a farm," he said. "There's a lot of scrub I have to clear and plenty of fencing waiting for me."

Hard work is nothing new to him, though. He has been doubling as deputy principal and manager of family farms Paerata Station and Paerata Trust since the 1990 death of his father, Te Arawhanui-a-Tane (Kaiser) Paerata. He was brought up farming and has been working on the family

The biggest changes he has seen in Tokomaru Bay happened when the freezing works closed in 1953. The school's roll fell from 400 to 150 "almost immediately".

"The community quickly lost such things as its two banks, accountant's office, bakery and picture theatre. Sheepfarmers, the Post Office and the chemist hung on for a bit longer but eventually went also."

But Mr Paerata was never likely to follow. When he entered teaching he was not sure how long he would stay in the profession. But when he returned to Tokomaru Bay in 1965 he was confident he was home for good.

"I didn't really know what I wanted to be. Teaching was just something to do," he said.

But the profession has given him a career "full of highlights".

"You can't really single anything out as highlights. There has been so many of them — the top town competitions, the cross-country races, the socials, they've all been highlights."

While he was officially farewelled by the school's students last night, Mr Paerata is likely to be a visitor to the school. He will relieve in Tolaga Bay, Tokomaru Bay and Te Puia whenever needed.

But he has no fears of wanting to make a full return to teaching.

Even if he did, his commitments on the farm probably would not allow him to stay away for too long.

farms throughout his teaching days. But concentrating on farming was something he knew he would eventually have to do.

He takes with him more memories than would fill an assembly hall but leaves with no regrets.

"All the paper work involved in teaching nowadays has made it easy to leave," he said. "Teaching is now more for the paper work than for the children."

He may find it easy to walk away from teaching, but it may be harder for the folk of Tokomaru Bay to get used to their school without him.

There's an African proverb that says when an old man dies, a library burns down. Mr Paerata's retirement could be viewed similarly.

He is an encyclopaedia on Tokomaru Bay. Part of his knowledge comes from spending most of his life in the district. His involvement in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has helped him research the area and its characters.

He points out the various sites occupied by schools in the district as if they were clearly signposted. He talks of a Tokomaru Bay that was home to high schools, a public school and a "native school" all at the same time.

He has seen the roll at the primary school fall from 400 to its current 100 and has studied alongside and taught students who have gone on to represent New Zealand in sport.