

THE CHRONICLE

Coach House Museum

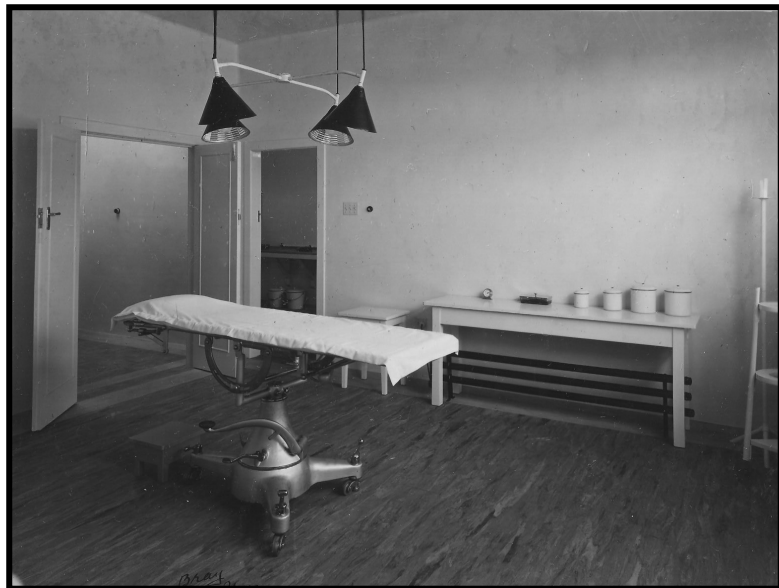
Newsletter of The Coach House Museum

May 2026

In association with Feilding & Districts Community Archive

Ranfurly Private Hospital Surgery Table We have been donated this surgery table from Dr Karl Gilchrist which sparked my curiosity into the hospital. Unfortunately, very little information is available. Once this table has been all cleaned up and we have a few more items, it will be placed on display.

Operating Theatre *Feilding & Districts Community Archive*



Feilding Set High Standard For Hospital Buildings

There is not much detail about the origin of the first hospital in Feilding, although it is known that the hospital was functioning in the early 1900s, when it was run by a Miss Brown. Sister Chalmers later took over the hospital on her return from the war in 1919. The troopship on which she returned was the one on which the deadly influenza epidemic began to rage. Sister Chalmers insisted that all the sick men were to be nursed on the upper decks of the ship, and she undoubtedly saved the lives of many of them through this. The hospital in Feilding, which was taken over by Sister Chalmers, later changed hands. Sister Fisher took over about 1930, until it was closed down.

Article from Feilding Herald's 'A Century of Progress' Paper. 1974

In 1941, it was let as a boarding house and in 1946, turned into flats. The hospital was situated where the Feilding Motels now stand.

The Ranfurly private medical and surgical hospital was an outstanding achievement for the town. The hospital was built in Nelson Street in 1938, and opened on May 26 of that year. It is still operating in the original building. A report at the time of opening called the structure a model of modern architecture, "incorporating features not hitherto introduced in buildings of the kind, so that Feilding can rightly assume every credit for setting a new standard in the medical and surgical requirements of the town and immediate district." An interesting quote:- "It is to be marked also that the hospital is the outcome of private enterprise and in this connection Feilding is to be congratulated in possessing public-spirited citizens ever ready to advance the best interests of the town and surrounding population."

The building has 5,000 square feet of floor space. Much thought went into the design. At the time, the theatre block, the most extensive part of the building, was modelled on the

theatre of what was then called the Aorangi private hospital, in Palmerston North, now the Mater Hospital. The patients' accommodation closely followed that of another well known Palmerston North institution, the Maitland private hospital. An innovation with the design for the Ranfurly building was the staff quarters with the rest of the hospital, making it all a self-contained unit. This was something completely new in hospital design.

Left: *The original staff of Ranfurly Private Hospital, 1938*
Standing: Nurse E.M. Reynolds, Nurse C.E. Corkhill, Sister J.B. Bunny

Sitting: Sister M.R. Barltrop (Matron), Sister Rea

Below: *Ranfurly Private Hospital, unknown year and staff.*

Photos supplied by Feilding & Districts Community Archive



Edith Stanway Halcombe: New Zealand Grown

by Polly Catlin-Maybury *continued from April*

A cow named Jenny In the early 1870s Edith was given a Jersey cow named Jenny. The small caramel coloured cow was destined to go down in history as the bovine that kick started New Zealand's Jersey dairy industry. Over the following years Edith built up a small herd of 20 Jersey cows - the beginning of what was to become New Zealand's top milking breed. In 1876, Edith sold Jenny to William Hulke, who put a halter on the cow and lead her an epoch-making 250 kilometres to his home at Bell Block in Taranaki.

Jenny was the first Jersey to enter the district and quickly became known as the 'champion dairy cow of Taranaki'. When Edith sold her herd in 1879 it was the first step in the dissemination of the breed in New Zealand. She had built up a good reputation, and in 1881 was asked to buy Jersey breeding stock on a trip to Europe. The two animals she bought contributed to the bloodlines of herds throughout the country. **On the move**

Throughout their married life the Halcombes shifted home many times. In 1881 it appears Edith was living in Auckland, joining the Auckland Society of Arts, painting scenes of the burgeoning town and entering in exhibitions. By 1885 she was living near Putaruru at Lichfield where Arthur was working for a land company. Unfortunately the settlement scheme failed - this, and other unsuccessful business dealings put the Halcombe's in financial difficulties for the rest of their lives. In 1886 the Halcombe's retired south to Taranaki - settling on a farm at Urenui which they called Ferngrove. Edith built up a Jersey herd, selling butter and milk. She continued with her painting, moving into working with oils - believed to be among the first work in this medium by a New Zealand born artist. Edith remained a member of the Auckland Society of Arts, and won several awards for her Taranaki artworks depicting local scenes and plant life. In 1890 the artist was asked to join a team of helpers accompanying septuagenarian Sir William Fox on his trip up Mount Taranaki. The former prime minister was convinced his life as a teetotaler made him equally fit as a man of 45. The journey, which was a dismal failure, was faithfully recorded by Edith - both on canvas and in her diary. **A sober experience** By the end of the nineteenth century pioneer settlers had felled much of the native bush in Taranaki and Manawatū, clearing land for pasture. Unfortunately this also destroyed habitats for native bird and wildlife - whose numbers rapidly declined. Seeing the problem, and feeling partially responsible for the cause, Edith set about capturing birds to re-home in other parts of the country. Arthur fell ill around this time, and Edith spent many years nursing him until his death in 1900. Three years later her body was discovered washed up on the beach near mouth of the Waitōtara River. Her death is described as an accidental drowning - but how she got in the water no-one knows.



"Scene in the Mountain Reserve" Part of a series of works by Edith Halcombe documenting Sir William Fox's climb up Mt Taranaki in February 1890



A wonderful Turn out on a beautiful ANZAC Day. Over 70 people gathered at the museum to commemorate all those who served and died in military operations.

