



The Story of Sir Lewis Harris

Harris, Lewis Edward 1900 - 1983
Farmer, stock dealer, philanthropist

Lewis Edward Harris was born in Woodville, Hawke's Bay, on 25 March 1900, the son of Mabel Eldridge Lewis and her husband, Joseph Henry Harris, a farmer. The family moved to Napier when Lewis was four, and later to Hastings, where he was educated at the Hastings Central School. He left school at the age of 14 and worked on farms. During the years of the First World War he represented Hawke's Bay in junior rugby, beginning his lifelong interest in rugby administration.

Before he was 20 he was buying stock for town consumption, driving them from the Stortford Lodge sale yards to the Napier abattoir. On 3 November 1920 he married Myra Nicholson Anderson in Napier. The couple settled at Redcliffe station, where Lewis worked as a shepherd. Soon afterwards they moved to Napier, and in 1922 he bought his first land: 200 acres behind the Clive railway station. He later added a further 320 acres at Clive and Whakatu. Harris farmed this land and continued to buy and sell stock throughout Hawke's Bay, Manawatu and Wanganui. He also became a shareholder in the stock firm of W. Richmond Limited, through which he exported meat. He worked a seven-day week, cropping rented land and farming his own, and possessed the first tractor mower and pick-up harvester in the district. During the 1920s the family shifted several times, living in Dannevirke and then returning to Napier. Harris also owned property in Dannevirke and central Hawke's Bay.

The 1931 Hawke's Bay earthquake destroyed the family's house and they moved to Westshore, before buying a house at Wharerangi. In 1932 Harris was elected to the Napier Harbour Board, remaining a member for nine years. He also served on the Hawke's Bay Rivers Board, the Hawke's Bay Catchment Board, and the rabbit board.

In 1939 Harris bought Brooklands station at Puketapu, and moved there 10 years later. He ran 900 cattle and 5,500 Lincoln sheep and employed a staff of more than 40, including young men with police records. The farm became a showplace where Harris entertained many notable people, including Queen Elizabeth II. After the Second World War he bought Mangatutu, 6,000 acres of almost entirely scrub-covered land below the Kaweka Range. Within 20 years less than a thousand acres remained to be cleared. In 1953, while in England, Harris bought four de Havilland Tiger Moth aircraft for a total of £250, and shipped them back to New Zealand for use in aerial top-dressing.

An authority on livestock, he judged Hereford cattle, Lincoln sheep, fat sheep and farmers' classes at shows throughout the country. He was a hard-headed and successful businessman, but was also extraordinarily sensitive to animals and small children. He condemned ill-treatment of animals, and especially denounced the callous methods used in freezing works, where stock were held without food or water over weekends and sheep were washed in freezing weather.

In 1956 Harris joined a group of people seeking to establish a school for intellectually handicapped children, on the principles of Rudolf Steiner. His wife, Myra, offered

them land on Fryer Road in Wharerangi, next to the property where his children had grown up, and with Lewis's financial help a residential school was built there. It was called the Hohepa Home School (after the Maori form of his father's name, Joseph). Within a year the original building had been enlarged, again with Harris's financial support, and in 1959 a farm property was bought at Clive to house older boys. A year later he bought back the former family home adjoining Hohepa, to accommodate older girls.

For the rest of his life Harris was tireless in his care and support of the Hohepa residents and helped financially to set up Hohepa schools in Christchurch. He bought a farm in Rissington, dedicating half of it to settle two returned servicemen, while the remainder became the Hohepa Trust Farm, income from which benefited Hohepa and other charities. Harris was appointed an OBE in 1960 and a Knight Bachelor in 1979. In 1977 he led a reaction by W. Richmond Limited shareholders against a take-over bid by Brierley Investments, when he offered to buy at a 10 per cent premium shares Brierley's had already bought. Brierley's bid then failed.

Lewis Harris was a generous benefactor to Napier, donating to a number of civic projects, among them the Marine Parade's sunken garden, swimming pool and aquarium. In 1977 he was granted the freedom of the city, in recognition of his generosity. The Harris stand at McLean Park in Napier commemorates him. Sir Lewis and Lady Harris died within a few hours of each other at Brooklands on 6 March 1983. They were survived by their two sons and a daughter.

The above By **MARYAN MOSS** Moss, M. *Learning to live*. Clive, 1996 Obit. *Hawke's Bay Herald-Tribune*. 7 March 1983: 2

Hohepa History & Sir Lewis

Hohepa Hawkes Bay was founded in 1957 by the joint initiative of Marjorie Alien, educator, and Lewis Harris (later to become Sir Lew), local farmer and benefactor. It's founding principles were inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner philosopher, scientist and educator who lived from 1861-1925. His development of Spiritual Science, or Anthroposophy, created a picture of humanity which encompassed the depth and breadth of the physical body, the soul life and of the eternal spiritual nature. Steiner elaborated this view through many books, lectures and practical means, and through the development of Social Therapy and Curative Education - this continues to be the inspiration for the work at Hohepa.

HOHEPA provides educational, vocational and residential services based on the educational and social principles of Rudolf Steiner. In 1956 the Trust Board of the Hohepa Homes was formed to establish and maintain Homes, Schools, Farms and Workshops in New Zealand. In May 1957 the first Home School opened in Napier with fifteen children. This was made possible through the generosity of Sir Lewis and Lady Harris of Brookland Station, near Napier.

Today the various facilities in Hawkes Bay, Auckland and Christchurch care for over 200 people from all parts of New Zealand.