

Lodge Kaimanawa No.426 Taupo, New Zealand

Once upon a time, long ago, well in 1962 to be precise, Freemasonry in New Zealand was on a high. Lodges were growing apace and new members initiated in large numbers. There was at the time one Lodge in Taupo, Lodge Tauhara No. 307. It had started even earlier, in 1939, by brethren travelling from Hawke's Bay 100 miles southeast for hunting, shooting and fishing. Because of that, they had obtained a dispensation allowing them to be part of the Hawke's Bay Masonic District even though Taupo itself was in the Waikato Masonic District.

In those days Taupo was a very small village with unmade roads, no electricity or piped water. The population was around 300. These days, Taupo is a fast growing modern town of 20,000. It is the commercial centre of the North Island Central Plateau and a popular tourist resort with many activities - skydiving, bungee jumping, para-gliding, scuba diving, skiing, tramping, mountaineering, deer stalking and fly-fishing for rainbow and brown trout with which the lake is stocked. An average sized trout is around 4 to 5 lb and there are 20lb trophy trout for the lucky ones.

Taupo is right in the centre of the North Island, at an altitude of 1300 ft. It is 230 miles north of Wellington, 170 miles south of Auckland. The nearest city is Rotorua, 50 miles to the northeast. Taupo is situated on the east bank of the Waikato River at its outlet from Lake Taupo at the head of Tapuaeoharuru Bay at the northeast corner of the lake.

Lake Taupo, the largest lake in New Zealand occupies a series of volcanic depressions in the Taupo volcanic zone. It is the caldera of the volcano that last erupted in 186AD. It is shaped like Africa, is 25 miles long, 18 miles wide and has a perimeter of 104 miles

Anyway, in 1962, Taupo was growing. The population was then about 5000. The time had come to start a new Lodge to cater for the ever-growing numbers of new Freemasons and on 29 September, the Grand Master, MW Bro. William Martin, constituted and dedicated Lodge Kaimanawa No. 426. Of the 45 Charter Members, 23 were also members of Lodge Tauhara - just over half!

For the first few years, Lodge Kaimanawa paid rent to Tauhara for the use of the Lodge Rooms. Lodge Tauhara, in its Golden Jubilee History published in 1989, explains how it realised that "... collectively it was possible for the two Lodges to push on with and finance a building programme of some substance - but that individually neither Lodge could hope to achieve anything of consequence ..." and agreed "... that Masonry had built the Lodge building and most contributing members had come and gone ...". As a result, in 1966, the two Lodges formed the Taupo Masonic Board of Management, consisting of the Master and three elected members from each Lodge

We work the New Zealand Ritual which is based on Emulation but because of our history has elements of Scottish and Irish workings incorporated. It is compulsory for all Lodges except any constituted before May 1913 and any changing allegiance from another jurisdiction which are allowed to continue their present mode of working unchanged

Lodge Kaimanawa has at present, 32 members of whom 22 live locally and we have an average attendance at our meetings of 16 to 19. Most of the other "country" members live too far away to attend regularly; they are all however also members of Lodges nearer their homes. We have eleven meetings a year, meeting regularly on the 3rd Wed of each month except Jan (the summer holidays). Our Installation meeting is on the 3rd Sat in September. Visitors can vary from as few as 3 or 4 to as many as 15 or 20 - or more. We travel up to 2 hours each way on visits and don't have your motorways. We don't have the formal banquet type dinners common in UK, NZ refectories are usually a light supper which is catered by the Lodges themselves.

The Lodge is named after the Kaimanawa Ranges, the mountain system to the south of Taupo and which lies to the east of the three central North Island mountains of Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro which are between 40 and 60 miles south. Its highest point is Makorako, about 5700 ft

W.Bro Keith Walker. Secretary

