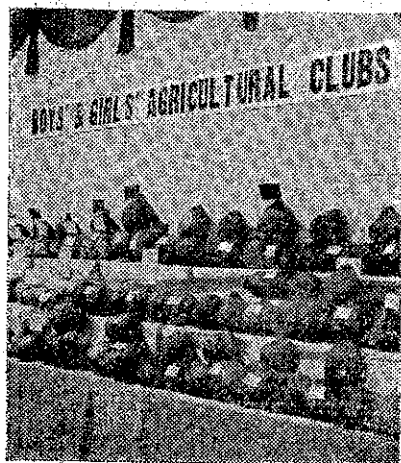




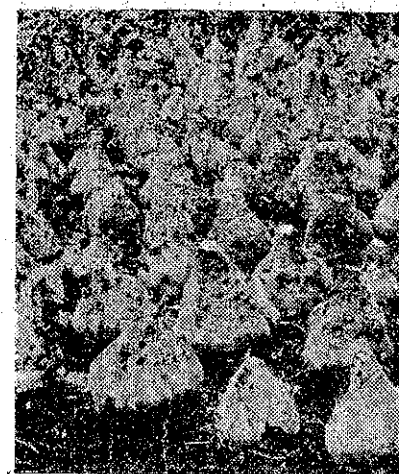
Roots grown and shown by Club members.

BOYS and GIRLS AGRICULTURAL CLUBS

A 2YA Talk

by

W. STUART WILSON



Part of a champion mangold crop

THE subject of my talk to-night is the Boys' and Girls' Agricultural Club movement in New Zealand.

At the outset let us realise that we are living in an age of science, and the industry which does not carry on with scientific methods is going to be hopelessly beaten in competition in the world's markets.

In agriculture, scientific application is absolutely necessary if we are to meet our competitors in overseas markets on at least an equal footing. Practical work is a natural corollary to scientific theory. Therefore there is full justification for the systematic and up-to-date practical training of our youths in agricultural pursuits embodied in the aim of the Boys' and Girls' Agricultural Movement in New Zealand. This organisation was founded in Otago in June, 1918, and has since spread throughout New Zealand. Mr. Healy, late agricultural instructor for the Education Department, and a colleague of his, Mr. R. S. Green, in conversation with me one morning, stated that we should start Boys' and Girls' Agricultural Clubs in New Zealand. Mr. Healy was exceptionally enthusiastic over the proposal, and his death during the influenza epidemic of 1918 was an irreparable loss to the agricultural community of New Zealand.

My suggestion that it was a commendable movement for the Otago Expansion League to foster, had their prompt endorsement. I brought this proposal before the League, of which I was a foundation member, and it was immediately adopted. The first competition was then inaugurated by the Otago Expansion League, under the supervision of Mr. R. S. Green, who conducted the first Boys' and Girls' Agricultural Competition in Otago, very ably supported by Mr. W. B. Steele, secretary of the Otago Expansion League. These competitions were devoted to the culture of potatoes. On this occasion entries were received from two schools—Beaumont and Momona. In the following year, 1919, three schools competed, and this number was increased to six in 1920. These potato crops were generally laid out in the school grounds, or on some secluded area. Each competitor's crop was grown side by side with another. In South Taranaki, similar competitions were given considera-

High Appreciation of Officials

In connection with his talk on Agricultural Clubs, Mr. Stuart Wilson read some telling letters from high officials in the Department of Agriculture, expressing their admiration for and appreciation of the good done by these clubs.

In his address Mr. Stuart Wilson spoke most appreciatively of the great assistance and esteemed co-operation given the scheme by some 25 officers of the Department at different points throughout the country, and particularly by Mr. W. J. Deem, Fields Instructor, Palmerston North.

tion during 1919 and 1920, and it was in August of the latter year, at a meeting at Hawera called by the Taranaki Provincial Executive of the Taranaki Farmers' Union, that it was decided to hold competitions known as Boys' and Girls' Club Competitions. The committee conducting the competitions comprised representatives of the Farmers' Union, primary school teachers, education and agricultural departments. The field work was undertaken by representatives of the two latter departments.

AT the outset these competitions were restricted to root growing and calf rearing; but it was found to be too late for calf competitions and the first year's work was applied to root growing—mangolds and swedes. Entries were received from no fewer than 19 schools. In distinction to the competitions held in Otago, the competitions for the root growing plots were held on the parents' farms. This was considered more conducive to individual effort. The results justified the Taranaki system.

The success of the movement resulted in 1921 in its extension to North and Central Taranaki, Wanganui and Feilding districts. In North and South Taranaki, calf competitions were included.

During 1921 54 schools took part in the root growing competitions and 18 in the calf clubs. During 1927 the competitions were taken up in the Main Trunk district (Huntville and Taihape) and in the Wairarapa, where root growing clubs were inaugurated. In 1928 similar competitions were extended throughout Southland and Otago. Calf clubs and root growing clubs were started during 1929 and 1930 in Hawke's Bay, Palmerston North, Levin, Canterbury and Auckland. Southland then inaugurated a pig club, which was highly successful.

The competitions grew in numbers from 30 in the first year to 3499 in the 1931-32 season. This extraordinary increase is a tribute to the worthiness of the movement and the enthusiasm of the country juveniles.

The record of the winning performances since 1918 that have won the Challenge Cup presented by myself shows that particularly good work has been done. In the case of potatoes, the yields per acre established by various (Continued on page 22.)



A group of enthusiastic members of an Agricultural Club, showing some of the pedigree livestock reared.

—Photos courtesy Dept. of Agriculture.