

And they are kept in order by the Maoris themselves. Where once the meandering Whakatane had to be forded in all weathers if the suppliers were to get their milk to the factory, a £10,000 bridge now spans the river. Water, essential to every dairy-farm, was once a problem. Now two large dams built in the hills supply every house, *marae*, and cow-shed. And the deplorable housing conditions that existed when the scheme started have been considerably improved. Where a unit has proved a good worker and his loan account is in a sound position, simple three- and four-roomed houses have been built, and many of these are well furnished and surrounded by tidy gardens. Some of the older shacks are not so attractive, and you wonder how they house the large families that are the rule in Ruatoki. One hundred and thirty new cottages and houses have been built, but still more are needed to house adequately the population of about two thousand.

Yes, there have been changes in Ruatoki in the last fourteen years, and expensive changes, too! Yet to-day almost one-third of the settlers who have been financed by the Native Department have paid off their loans and are securely settled on the land.

Seeing the Settlement

Coming into Ruatoki you see first the store which, with a smaller edition, serves the shopping wants of the community. Beside it is the cheese-factory, whose staff, including the key operators, is predominantly Maori and on whose board of directors sits one of the local farmers. On a large grassed *marae* behind the store are two meeting-houses. You may be lucky enough to see a *hui* in progress. Perhaps a welcome home to one of the many Ruatoki boys who are serving with the Maori Battalion. You may hear one of the *rangitiras* orating in Maori as he walks up and down in front of the meeting-house brandishing his *taiaha* while the smoke from the ground ovens drifts lazily across the *marae*. Don't be surprised if everyone is crying. It is merely an indication of joy at the soldier's return.



These *maraes* (there are eight of them—one for each *hapu*, or sub-tribe) are the centre of the Maori community life. The meeting-houses, carved, carpeted with mats, the walls hung with photos of chiefs long dead, serve as halls, temporary homes for those who have no house to go to, and Courts of Justice where the Tribal Committee periodically meets to discuss the affairs of the village and try those charged with anti-social offences.

There is legislative authority for these tribunals, who have power to inflict considerable fines. They usually deal with drunkenness and minor social offences and straighten out marital difficulties. The fines go to the upkeep of each *marae*, and the books are audited annually. Here, too, the women organize monthly "bring and buys" or *hangi* dinners at half a crown a time to collect funds for parcels for Ruatoki boys overseas.

The martial spirit of the Tuhoes was shown in the enlistments for the Maori Battalion. In Ruatoki itself a Home Guard battalion was raised and none could surpass its members for enthusiasm. In its early days when a new R.S.M. was being tried out there was some uncer-