

The Founding Years: 1894-1903

On the 24th March 1894, the New Plymouth Cricket team travelled to Hawera by train to play against Hawera. Hawera won the match, scoring 155 to New Plymouth's 107. Afterwards the Hawera Star reported "at a meeting of cricketers held on Saturday evening [24th March] in the Egmont Hotel, an association to be called the Taranaki Cricket Association was formed, its object being to look after the interests of cricket in the province. Major Tuke was elected president and Dr Westentra, Dr Valentine, Messrs.J.Sarten, W.T.Rowlinson, H.Southey and A.W.Budge vice presidents. Mr G.W.Harden was elected hon. Secretary and treasurer and the subscription was fixed at 1.1.0". the formation of provincial and national bodies was in the air; Wanganui clubs had held a similar meeting on 7th March and the selection of the first New Zealand team to play New South Wales by Canterbury officials in February was the impetus for the creation of the New Zealand Cricket Council on 27th December 1894.

By September 1894, the Taranaki Cricket Association had formally come into being with its rules and championship rules. The founding clubs were Clifton, Hawera, Hawera Star, New Plymouth, Opunake United, Stratford and Unity (New Plymouth).

For the next nine years the association staged representative matches, conducted the club championships, struggled to maintain the interest of clubs in its affairs and to balance its books, engaged in disputes with clubs and finally, sundered apart due to rivalry and distrust between Hawera and New Plymouth.

The highlights of the 1894-95 season was the match against Fiji, being the last one of their eight match tour. The Hawera Star commented on the planning for the match, down-playing a suggestion that the match be played at New Plymouth on the grounds that the visitors would prefer to look at something of the district outside cricket. The Fijian team arrived at Hawera by train from their previous match against Hawkes Bay at Napier, being met at the railway station by members of the Taranaki Cricket team. They were then 'taken to town in Mr Faber's drag and put up at the Commercial and Egmont Hotels where they partook lunch'. Play began at about 3pm on the Friday (22nd February), concluding on the Saturday. In a very close game Fiji won by two wickets, though when the visitors were 75 for 7 and required 128 to win 'Taranaki [were] quite expecting to win'. Their captain, Hon J.S.Udal, Attorney-General of Fiji and W.O.Groom saw them through to victory, about which the Hawera Star wrote "the visitors were the victors amid great cheering. It was throughout a very pleasant game". Ratu W.Tuivanauavou, who took five wickets in each of the Taranaki innings was the leading wicket taker on the tour, capturing 54 at an average cost of 8.94 runs.

The selected Taranaki team was; A.Bayly (Stratford), G.Bayly(Hawera), W.Mills(Hawera), H.W.Moore(Hawera), F.E.Moore (Hawera), Heenan (Stratford), R.B.Lusk (Stratford), T.Campbell (Star), P.M.Pratt (Hawera), Gillespie (Stratford), B.McCarthy (Star). Neither Heenan or Gillespie appeared at the game, being replaced by Haggett (Star) and G.Syme. G.Bayly was elected captain.

William Mills, a member of the Mills cricketing family from Auckland, was employed as the groundsman at Bayly Park Hawera where this match was played, and had turned "the Hawera ground into one of the best cricket facilities in New Zealand at that time". Though he did not score

with the bat in either innings, he more than compensated by capturing six wickets in each of the Fijian innings.

In the more leisurely style of cricket touring in the 1890's, the visitors were driven around the Hawera district on the Sunday with a trip up Mt. Taranaki on the Monday, leaving for Auckland by steamer on Tuesday night.

The untimely death of the association's first President Major Tuke, who had played against Lillywhite's All England XI in 1877, resulted in a meeting of the association being held on the Saturday evening of the match and the election of Captain Cornwall as his successor.

The 1895 annual meeting (the first) was held at Cottiers (Criterion) Hotel New Plymouth since the association had "no fixed head quarters on account of the scattered nature of clubs in the province – last year met at Hawera, this year New Plymouth".

The annual report commented "the association is still very young, but it has a real live secretary and despite the scattered nature of the district, will, we have no doubt, greatly benefit cricket in Taranaki for not only in the first year of its existence was a match undertaken with the Fiji team but an eleven was sent across to Napier at Easter, but unfortunately bad weather caused the projected game to be abandoned". It may, perhaps, be placed on record that Major Tuke was the first president, but died during his year of office. The report also commented that "we regret that some of the Taranaki Clubs have been so excessively modest about their doings as to omit forwarding their statistics in time for publication. However we hope that next year they may have such a successful season that all occasion for reticence may be removed".

The Hawera Star's cricket correspondent Na Te Rekehana (aka Sam Dixon) had been more blunt during that season, commenting upon the apathy of clubs as exemplified by the lateness of games being called off, as evidence Unity's action against Hawera Star.

The sole representative match of the 1895-96 season was against Nelson at New Plymouth. The match had originally been set down to be played at Hawera however Nelson had requested the change to New Plymouth so as to reduce their travelling and accommodation expenses. Nelson were welcomed on arrival by the Mayor of New Plymouth, J.B.Roy, who was an old Nelsonian and made reference as to how Nelson had welcomed [the New Plymouth] refugees from the native wars. On a low scoring match Taranaki won by 59 runs with W.Mills once again dominating the bowling with 8 wickets for the match and B.McCarthy giving evidence of his bowling skills in capturing 4-6 in Nelson's second innings. The outstanding bowler was however Nelson's Cole, who claimed 15 wickets in the match.

The 1896-97 season commenced with three new clubs affiliating- Bell Block, Kaponga and Tariki. To provide sufficient matches during the season it was agreed that senior and junior teams could play together, with junior teams being permitted to play 15 men. The sole representative match was against Hawkes Bay at Hawera and for once the ball didn't dominate. W.J.Crawshaw who, in the course of his employment with the Bank of New Zealand had played for Otago, Canterbury and Wellington, opened the batting and scored 106, hitting nine fours, the first recorded century for Taranaki – and with P.M.Pratt, who made 85, put on 114 for the third wicket. Hawkes Bay could not match Taranaki, and lost by an innings and 45 runs. Spearheading the Taranaki bowling was Cole –

one of three brothers, E, L and W, who had learnt their cricket in Nelson but the family moved to Taranaki where they were to be a force in Taranaki cricket for the next 30 years.

The importance of cricket in the social life of (South) Taranaki can be gauged by the Hawera Star's report of the match arrangements. "The ground [Bayly Park] was in first class order, and the wicket was a credit to caretaker Pratt (who scored 85), being practically perfect. The Hawera Band, under Mr Brunette, played selections during the afternoon; there was a capital lunch furnished by Messrs Keen & Co. and the ladies dispensed afternoon tea (on the 2nd day) play resumed..., and under arrangements made before starting the game, Hawkes Bay chose a fresh wicket (since their two innings were 101 and 100 this could have had little effect!). Mr Riddiford umpired for Taranaki throughout, Mr R.Foster for the Hawkes Bay the first day and members of the team the second day. Mr Braithwaite managed for the visitors and Mr S.Dixon had charge of the scoresheets.

[Because of the early finish to the match, the teams] in the afternoon drove out to the Mounted Rifles camp and had a very pleasant time". In the evening a smoke concert was given in honour of the visitors at Foresters Hall. The Hawkes Bay captain in his speech asked that the New Zealand "Cricket Council in choosing representative teams should not forget that country cricket had ambition".

1897 saw the arrival at Hawera, as caretaker, of G.Gudgin, a left arm leg break bowler with English cricketing experience. He gave added variety to the Taranaki bowling attack and posed constant challenge to newspapers as to the correct spelling of his name.

As if spurred on by their successes against Nelson and Hawkes Bay, the 1897-98 season saw Taranaki play three representative matches, but not with the same degree of success. Playing Hawkes Bay at Napier, on Christmas and Boxing Days, there was a reversal of the previous season's results, whilst Canterbury, at almost full strength, were too strong in the match played at Hawera at New Year. In late January the first match against Wanganui was played at Hawera, with Taranaki leading by 197 runs on the first in the first innings. W.J Crawshaw scored 174 not out (which would remain the highest score by a Taranaki player until 1989), sharing in two century partnerships – 116 for the first wicket with P.M.Pratt (59) and 141 for the third wicket with B.B.McCarthy (66).

In the Wanganui team, the names of Cave and Marshall feature – as they were for the next 60 years.

But then in 1899 came the first crisis which was to challenge the existence of the association. On 26th November 1898, the annual meeting of the association was finally held, a previous meeting being adjourned because of lack of members present. With thirteen people present the President Riddiford challenged the meeting to decide whether the association should go on; there was a deplorable lack of enthusiasm in cricket – this being reflected in the financial straits the association found itself in, with only four affiliated clubs – New Plymouth, Eltham, Hawera and Star. The past season's receipts had been 17/11/-; comprising subscriptions 11/11/-; match takings Canterbury 2/15/-, Wanganui 2/5/-; lunch money 1/-/-; and the payments made totalled 16/11/3. Comprising New Zealand Cricket Council 1/-/-; ball 1/2/6, travel 2/12/6, hire of brakes 5/1/-. Advertising (for 1895 [Fiji]) 3/12/-, post, telegrams 1/13/3. Interest on overdraft 1/1/-. The association had no assets but did have liabilities of a bank overdraft, 12/18/- and unpaid luncheon expenses 12/4/6/

Comment was made that the energy put into the association's affairs and the money spent had not been commensurate with the results (whether this meant playing or financial was not stated). The Albion club (previously United) were willing to join the association (again) if there was a trophy for competition. Dr. Westera (one of the original vice-presidents) then moved that the association be wound up, which was seconded by F.McGuire who was the M.P (opposition) for the Hawera electorate.

G.T.Bayly, who was still playing for Taranaki in 1898, for he had played against Lillywhite's team in 1877 (he was also one of the selectors, a post he held throughout this era) castigated the meeting, stating that it would be a crying shame to carry such a resolution – a disgrace to Taranaki. He personally would pay half the liabilities. The apathy of different clubs today was in sharp contrast to the self reliance of the cricketers in Taranaki in the past. B.McCarthy took up Albion's comment and thought that a trophy would induce more enthusiasm amongst clubs. The idea of purchasing a set of championship caps at 27/6 a dozen was then mooted. Riddiford who, like Bayly, had played in the 1877 match, responded in similar vein, offering to pay the other half of the liabilities and gave the present generation a stir-up – "he could not help thinking the players these times wanted too much help. When they started years ago they had no more players than they had now and each was waning to help in the matter of expenses when visiting teams came along".

With such forthright comments and actions from the games senior statesmen the motion was eventually defeated.

Reflecting the geographic location of the affiliated clubs, New Plymouth was allowed to play against unaffiliated clubs so as to keep cricket alive in North Taranaki.

Only one representative match was played in the 1898-99 season, with Wanganui at home defeating Taranaki outright.

At the 1899 annual meeting, the President, W.G.White of Hawera, who was to hold that office for the balance of the era, spoke forthrightly on the financial issues which had, and were still facing the association. "This was the first time the association had ever started with a clean sheet and [he] hoped it would never again have to face a deficit". He hoped cricketers in the Northern end of the district would manifest a warmer interest in the game, and added that of the whole 18/1/- subscribed towards the Association, only 3/1/- came from the Northern end. This did not speak well for the district claimed to be the leading end in sport, and he hoped the delegates would convey this opinion to clubs in the Northern end". These views were endorsed by G.T.Bayly. The affiliated clubs in that season were Eltham, Hawera, Inglewood, New Plymouth, Normanby and Star (Hawera). It was decided that two rounds of matches would be played, with two points being gained for a win and one point for a draw (a win was an outright result).

The 1899-1900 representative season was one of three matches, all being played in January – two away fixtures against Nelson and Marlborough, and a home game at Hawera against Wanganui.

In a low scoring match at Nelson, Taranaki, batting last on a wet wicket and needing 57 to win could only score 44. L.Graham secured twelve wickets in the match, six in each of Taranaki's innings, with B.McCarthy similarly capturing six in Nelson's first innings.

To add to Taranaki's woes, Coutts "got measles at Nelson". A comprehensive defeat of Marlborough, on the two following days, concluded this southern tour with B.McCarthy once again dominating the bowling, gaining nine wickets in the match.

The Hawera Star, commentating on the tour, reported "that the players spoke in high terms of their good reception and the pleasantness of the trip".

The Wanganui match at Bayly Park resulted in the visitors winning outright by 47 runs, with H.B.Cave and Boyes being the main wicket-takers. The Hawera Star commented that the "continuous drought and the want of water at Bayly Park had taken their toll on the wickets, and the fielding ground was rough, with the result that neither batsmen nor the field could be expected to show the best form".

Three Taranaki players, W.Crawshaw, B.McCarthy and P.Pratt, were subsequently selected for a West Coast team to play Victoria at Wanganui. McCarthy had a fine all-round match, achieving the distinction of bowling the Australian test player, H.Trumble, for a duck.

For that season's senior and junior competitions, the teams had been split into two divisions; North and South, with the divisional winners playing off for the provincial championship at the completion of two divisional rounds. On 28th April 1900 Hawera travelled to Tariki for the senior provincial final. As reported in the Hawera Star "because of the showery weather only eight Hawera men turned up, several of them being juniors and G.Bayly being amongst the absentees... Tariki scored 70 (extras 26, Earl 20, Coppard 17) and 41 for 6 in the second innings... Hawera's fast bowling rising a long way over the wicket". Hawera scored 33 (Pratt 25no). Tariki became the 1900 Taranaki champions.

But the matter did not end there and then. At the 1900 Annual meeting of the Association, held on the 18th October at the Egmont Hotel in Hawera, the Tariki club moved that the headquarters of Taranaki cricket be shifted to Tariki. The Association retorted by requesting that, in the light of the Tariki clubs letter of 4th August that, the club apologise or be suspended (the content of the letter was never stated but it can be assumed that it related to the senior final and Hawera's attitude to it). At a committee meeting of the association on 23rd November it was reported that Tariki had not replied and that the committee members, having all read the letter, believe that Tariki should be suspended. "It was an improper letter – much too strong" was a quote in the Hawera Star. The committee then decided that the Tariki club and all its members be disqualified from playing. If however, individual members resigned from the Tariki club and repudiated the clubs actions by writing to the association they would be cleared to play for other clubs (such as Inglewood). But the disqualification did not end there. At a public meeting held at New Plymouth on 27th March 1901 and attended by representatives of the Carrington Road, New Plymouth, Tariki, Unity and Waitara clubs the affair continued. Mr Coppard, from the Tariki club, gave a history of the affair showing the lax way in which the association had been managed and the scant treatment afforded the Tariki club. The meeting recommended the disqualification be removed, Tariki having suffered the loss of a season's cricket. It was noted that no one from the Taranaki Cricket Association was present at the public meeting. Afterwards there was discussion on the advisability of forming an association for the northern clubs of Taranaki with the headquarters in New Plymouth.

The Tariki issue finally disappeared from public gaze at the 1901 annual meeting (26th September 1901) when it was resolved that a letter regarding Tariki's disqualification lie on the table.

The sole representative match of the 1900-1901 seasons was against Wanganui at Wanganui. In a match dominated by bowlers – the highest innings total was 97 – Taranaki won outright by 58 runs. For Wanganui Stewart captured five wickets in each innings, whilst B.McCarthy was the dominant figure in the match. He scored 21 (second top score) and 27 (top score) and took 11 wickets (7 for 22 and 4 for 26).

A further representative match was sought with Nelson but was not able to be arranged so as a replacement game North Taranaki played South Taranaki, with the South winning outright by nine wickets. In the senior provincial final, Star (McCarthy's Club) defeated Waitara outright in a low scoring match. New Plymouth defeated Kaponga by seven runs in the first innings to win the junior provincial final.

At the 1901 annual meeting, which only nine attended, the report referred to the wave of depression experienced in cricket throughout the colony. Owing to complaints that visiting (club) teams arrived too late to play matches to a definite conclusion it was proposed to amend the rules to meet such cases. The matter of trophies was raised again, with a proposal that senior teams be levied 15/- and junior teams 10/- to enable the purchase of trophies for competitions. G.Bayly gave a donation of 2/2/- to assist the purchase.

Wanganui was the only representative opponent for the 1901-02 season. At Hawera, Taranaki won outright by 162 runs, with B.McCarthy taking ten wickets in the match. Wanganui cricket must have been in a far more depressed state than Taranaki – they began the match one short and there were four substitutes in their second innings. Braund [Taranaki] did not turn up on the second day deciding that a match at Inglewood had more appeal for him!

B.McCarthy was chosen to play for the North Island against the South Island that season.

South Taranaki again defeated North Taranaki outright in one day – McCarthy capturing 11 wickets and Hawera won the senior final against New Plymouth.

The 1902 annual report noted that association had a credit balance at the bank of 3/19/-, but the focus of the season, and of the association, was upon the forthcoming tour of New Zealand by Lord Hawke's team and the strong possibility that a match would be played against Taranaki.

W.G.White, who had been President of Taranaki since 1899, was also the president of the New Zealand Cricket Council for the 1902-03 season. Reporting on the 1902 Annual Meeting, held at the Egmont Hotel Hawera on 16th September, the Hawera Star informed its readers that "at a meeting of the New Plymouth Cricket Club it was decided that if the Taranaki Cricket Association fixes Hawera as the place at which the match with Lord Hawke's team is to played, an invitation be given to the Englishmen to also play a match at New Plymouth, a guarantee being forthcoming. One of the speakers thought there should be a Northern Association".

The annual meeting was informed that the New Zealand Cricket Council was asking each association, staging a match against Lord Hawke's team, for a 100/-/- guarantee to cover the tour

expenses. The meeting decided to accept this requirement, provided New Zealand allocated two days for the match. The leading residents of Hawera and New Plymouth were to be approached, seeking each town to put up 50/-/- towards the guarantee, though final arrangements would depend upon the chosen venue. The meeting was cautioned that in addition to the guarantee, a further sum would “be required to entertain the visitors in a befitting manner”. The choice of venue was then made – Hawera. It was convincingly argued that it “was not fair to ask a first class team to play on an inferior wicket (New Plymouth). A concrete wicket was not, and never would be, so good as a grass pitch. If the gate was to be less in Hawera, it had to be borne in mind that the Domain Board (New Plymouth) deducted 25 per cent of the takings (there). This would bring the takings (at Hawera) down to about level”.

To soften the blow for New Plymouth cricketers, it was agreed to apply for a second match to be played at New Plymouth, which would also require a further 100/-/- guarantee.

The Hawera Star of 17th November 1902 reported “there is again talk of forming a Cricket Association for North Taranaki. Surely Taranaki is not so strong that it can afford to divide its forces. Hawera, quite loyally, stuck to the association when the headquarters were at New Plymouth, and New Plymouth should maintain the association taking its turn in due course in managing affairs”. It was noted that there were six senior teams in North Taranaki. During the months of November and December 1902, the Hawera Star regularly reported on the planning for the match against Lord Hawke’s tea. Privilege tickets were to be issued to the visitors gaining admittance to the baths, institute and bowling club’s greens. Fifty nine business people of Hawera requisitioned the Mayor of Hawera, B.C.Robbins, for a half holiday on the 30th December, being the first day of the match. This request was granted. The charges set for the game were 1/- for ground admission and another 1/- for seating in the pavilion.

The excitement for the match, and the tour, came about for this was the first visit solely to New Zealand by an English team. Lord Hawke was a redoubtable captain of Yorkshire, P.F.Warner, B.J.T.Bosanquet and F.Fane were well known county cricketers on the verge of test selection (Warner and Bosanquet were to feature prominently in the 1903-04 MCC tour of Australia). The party of twelve cricketers (ten amateurs and two professionals) were undefeated on their eighteen match tour of New Zealand, Thompson and Hargreave, the two professionals, taking 177 and 121 wickets respectively on the tour. Such was the dominance of the tourists that Auckland advised Taranaki to play 18 against them, which was done.

The selected XVIII were: G.T.Bayly (Hawera), J.Campbell (Hawera), T.Campbell (Patea), Cole (Eltham), W.Crawshaw (Eltham), H.Elliot (Hawera), V.Elliot (New Plymouth), Glasgow (Hawera), Gudgeon (Inglewood), Hasell (Rovers), Lightband (Wanderers), B.McCarthy (Hawera), P.Pratt (Hawera), Perham (Carrington Road), Frank Robertson (Wanderers), Fred Robertson (Wanderers), Weston (New Plymouth), Whittle (Rovers).

On the day of the match McCarthy was elected captain (he was also the secretary of the association and co-selector with G.Bayly and V.Elliot). G.Bayly had played against Lillywhites England team in 1877; Cole was to play a prominent role in Taranaki’s winning of the Hawke Cup in 1926-27.

The Taranaki XVIII (but only fielding 15) held their own with the visitors for the first innings, scoring 146 to Lord Hawke's XI 157 but collapsed dismally for 38 in the second innings, losing by 9 wickets. Hargreave captured 16 wickets in the match and Thompson 14.

The Hawera Star wrote glowingly about the visitors batting; "what was particularly noticeable about the batting were the beautiful leg glides and glances and the vigorous carpet drives".

P.F. Warner, in his story of the tour "Cricket across the seas" explained the evenness of the first innings thus; "we left Auckland in a small coasting steamer and after a very rough passage arrived at New Plymouth early the next morning. Several members of the South Taranaki committee met us on the wharf and almost immediately we took the train to Hawera.... the wicket was very slow and dead and after a nights voyaging we were not feeling very strong..... after luncheon the sun came out strongly and on the drying wicket... disposed of the remainder". "The wicket on the second day suited Hargreave and Thompson to a nicety (9 for 10 and 8 for 19)". The Hawera Star was more generous "...with their precision in pitch and phenomenal breaks, from both sides, they were simply unplayable."

Warner regarded this match as being against South Taranaki, though the selection was clearly from all of Taranaki. The tour, to Warner, was also an opportunity to promote the improvement of colonial cricket. In his speech at the luncheon "he would urge the cricket authorities to get out a few professional cricketers, not necessarily the best players, but good men, of whom there were plenty and in time there was no reason why cricket should not flourish, as it did in Australia". At New Plymouth he exhorted the local players "to exercise perseverance and trouble, but the pleasure to be derived from being a good cricketer was worth any trouble that might be gone to".

Did Sir Pelham Warner recall these words when, in 1950, he penned a personal note of congratulations to Martin Donnelly (of Eltham Primary School and New Plymouth Boys High School) on his scoring 206 against England at Lords.

The subsequent match at New Plymouth was affected by the weather, though 800 attended, which was won easily by the visitors. Warner describes the Recreation Ground (Pukekura Park) "and a prettier spot for a match can scarcely be imagined. The cricket-ground itself, which looks as if it had been cut out of the side of a hill, lies in a hollow, while all around and above the players rose tier upon tier of smooth grassy terraces". The game was played "on a matting wicket stretched on clay – for though there is plenty of turf it is of too coarse a nature to allow of a grass pitch".

After New Plymouth the visitors travelled to Wanganui by train – a six hour journey!

With the excitement of Lord Hawke's XI match past, attention focused upon a match against Auckland at Hawera in mid-January 1903. Taranaki won this game by 154 runs, Pratt batting well, with 63 in the second innings, and McCarthy having once more an outstanding match – 46 and 33 with the bat and 5 for 31 and 7 for 32 with the ball. He was subsequently selected for the New Zealand team to play two matches against Lord Hawke's XI in February-March 1903. To gain selection for New Zealand, whilst not playing first class cricket in the metropolitan areas, was a truly notable achievement. Contemporary description of his bowling stated "of the Taranaki bowlers he

stands easily pre-eminent. He bowls a medium-paced ball, with a considerable off break, and keeps a good length". "By some competent judges considered one of the best bowlers in New Zealand. Being fairly tall and bowling right over, the ball gets up quickly from the pitch. He gets a good off-break on the best wickets and always likes to have a tip top man in the slips when bowling. Bats left handed". Statistically in this era he played fourteen matches for Taranaki, scoring 509 runs at an average of 21.21, with a top score of 66 and captured 86 wickets, at an average 9.98, seven times taking five wickets in an innings and three times ten wickets in a match.

He had been a Taranaki selector since 1899 and secretary since 1901. A solicitor by profession, he attended St. Patricks College, Wellington. He founded the legal firm in Hawera, which still has members of his family practising therein and was well respected in South Taranaki for his knowledge and humanity. He was described as being of the "old school of family practitioners at law", becoming President of the New Zealand Trotting Conference and was also deeply involved in the Cancer Society. In 1925 he was to become the first President of the revived Taranaki Cricket Association and played a key role in the negotiations which led to this.

One of the attractions in staging the Auckland match was that the revenue obtained would help reduce the cost of the Lord Hawke's XI match. But attendances were poor, not being helped with the match clashing with the local swimming sports. The gate for the overseas match was 70/1/3, with expenses coming to 31/1/6 which left only 38/18/9 to go towards the 100/-/- guarantee payable to New Zealand.

Then in February 1903 the tension between North and South Taranaki cricket, which had been simmering for some time (such as the Tariki incident of 1900), came out into the open.

The Hawera Star, quoting from the Taranaki Herald, of 14th February, informed that "Elliot, the Northern Division delegate on the Taranaki Cricket Association sprang a mine on the meeting of cricketers (in New Plymouth) on Wednesday night (4th February). He had just returned from a meeting of the Association at Hawera on Tuesday and announced that the meeting had decided to come down on the Northern Division for 10/-/-, being a fifth of the deficit on the match against the Englishmen at Hawera. Some straight talking was indulged in at the action of the Southern men, who had a local guarantee list of 300/-/-, in demanding 10/-/- towards their deficit from this end, which had already put its hand in its pocket for the New Plymouth match. The guarantors for the match here have paid 5/- in the pound to clear the local deficit. If Hawera had called up 4/8 in the pound on the guarantors it would have wiped off their shortage; instead of that they are calling up 4/- (in the pound), and demanding 10/-/- from this end. Several speakers declared that it was time North Taranaki split off from the South and managed its cricket affairs itself".

The Hawera Star then put the counter argument, "assuming that the foregoing truly represents what the New Plymouth cricketers said in their haste, they will probably feel a little ashamed of themselves on reflection. That match at Hawera was against all Taranaki, the North had as many men playing as the South, and the guarantee of 100/-/- had been arranged on the basis of half from the North and half from the South. Owing to the successful agitation of the Northern men for a second match, quite of a local character, in which not a Southerner was invited to take part – this second match, by the way, no doubt mitigated against the financial success of the representative match – it was necessary to raise another guarantee in the North, and in consequence they asked for an abatement for their share of the guarantee of the Taranaki match.

The Association Committee acceded to the request and decided that to make up for a shortage of 66/-/- the South pay 56/-/- and the North 10/-/-! We should say it is the Southern guarantors who have a grievance. As for the talk of separation, were it not in the interest of cricket there should be one association for so small a province, the South would, we suppose, hardly be likely to raise any objection to the selection of a body of men who are dissatisfied because the South did not bear the whole cost of the All Taranaki match. The financial help from the North was certainly very small and the hubbub now being made about paying it is certainly not very sportsmanlike”.

It was not until September 1903 that further public comment on the unity (or lack) of Taranaki Cricket reappeared.

On 17th April 1903, Star (Hawera) (91) defeated Rovers (New Plymouth) (65) for the Taranaki senior championship and thus became the first holders of the championship shield presented by the Taranaki Cricket Association.

On 24th September 1903 the Hawera Star reported that the annual general meeting of the Association was not held, as only four delegates from Southern teams put in an appearance. It was intended to hold the meeting at a future date. On 30th September the item appeared that the “Northern clubs have decided to form an association of their own”. On 1st October the annual general meeting of the New Zealand Cricket Council agreed to pay half the losses sustained on the tour by Lord Hawke’s team. The bone of contention was now 5/-/-. On 5th October the Hawera Star commentated in conciliatory manner – was this an indirect offering of an olive branch? “The movement in New Plymouth to start a Cricket Association for North Taranaki is greatly regretted by cricketers in this part of the district. Taranaki is not so strong either in men or money that it can afford to divide its forces. The agreement to the proposal lies with the Cricket Council. Hawera cricketers, though they possess the best ground for years carried the whole burden of Taranaki Cricket on their shoulders, are well qualified to claim the headquarters should be at Hawera would, we believe, rather surrender that claim than see the district weakened by division”.

On 31st October there was further conciliatory statement in the Hawera Star, tinged with acceptance that the North was determined to become separate. “Since the meeting of the Association fell through for want of a quorum, not much interest has been taken in cricket at this end of the district. Everybody appears to be waiting for the verdict of the New Zealand Association as to whether the North end is to be allowed to split off. Every well wisher of the game in the district hopes that some compromise will be arranged. New Plymouth has always been jealous of Hawera’s cricket and since last season has been eager to separate”.

The association had prepared a club draw, with only Eltham, Hawera, Opunake and Star participating.

On 5th November it was reported, “The adjourned annual general meeting was held, but for want of a quorum subsequently lapsed. This was to be the second attempt. The want of interest shown by the Southern clubs is much to be deplored, only local (Hawera) clubs being represented. It was not expected that the northern delegates would attend in view of their action in attempting to form a northern association, although until they are recognised by the New Zealand Council they are members of the Taranaki Association and no mention was made of the new association at the New

Zealand Council annual general meeting". On 4th December it was reported that "The New Zealand Cricket Council have approved to affiliate the North Taranaki Association".

A sense of the deep feelings this split engendered was revealed in 1927, when in a supplement of the Hawera Star recording the 50th Jubilee of the Hawera Club, a paragraph read "it is worth notice that the Taranaki Cricket Association was till then (1903) located in Hawera and went on its way still as Taranaki, while the North formed North Taranaki and are still so designed. But the difference is that the two were separate – Taranaki here and North Taranaki in New Plymouth. It subsisted until the amalgamation a couple of years ago, when Taranaki continued with the North and South as subsidiaries. But actually the South had not changed through the whole piece. Whatever change has been made is the action of the North. This is added because the Hawera Club is inseparably associated with the Association and in order to show the continuity of policy and institution".

Thus in 1903 ended the first years of the TCA. It was brave attempt to achieve provincial cricket unity, and revealed that in Taranaki there were cricketers of outstanding ability.