

Polly Matthews



Polly Matthews was born at Aohanga in 1924. Her mother, Charlotte Holes (née Power), is the fourteenth child of James and Pani Power. Polly is the second eldest of Charlotte's children. Along with her six siblings, Ellen, Eileen, William, James, Peter and Philip, Polly lived her early years at Aohanga before moving further south to Masterton for schooling.

Polly has vivid memories of her childhood spent at Aohanga with Granny Pani. She recalls the wool bales being put on drays to be carted down to the sea and loaded onto boats. She remembers the stream behind the old marae, the vast countryside that was an open playground to explore and gas coming from a hole in the hill that you could ignite with a lit match. She also recalls the birth of her brother Sonny (William) on her birthday in 1927. "He was my birthday present," she says with a smile. And she recounts her youngest brother, Philip, being dux of Aohanga School. "He was the only one there," she chuckles.

At twenty-four, Polly married Kingi Matthews. Together, they have ten children, all of whom were born in Greytown, twenty-nine grandchildren, forty-one great-grandchildren and eighteen great-great-grandchildren. In 2008, Polly and Kingi celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary. At the time of Kingi's passing in 2014, Polly and Kingi had been married for sixty-six years: a true testament to their commitment to each other and their family.

Polly was a keen hockey player; however, it is rugby that she was renowned for. Throughout the years, Polly and Kingi were greatly involved with rugby in the Wairarapa, including running the Wairarapa Māori Rugby Club out of Greytown Rugby Club. Both are well regarded for their selfless contribution to the sport. Kingi, a talented rugby player, was a Māori All Black and Ranfurly Shield winner. Both Polly and Kingi were also very involved in the 28th Māori Battalion Association.

Polly Matthews, Auntie Polly to many, is a taonga to the descendants of Aohanga. Auntie Polly, we are forever grateful for your extensive knowledge, wisdom, stories, laughter, support and guidance.