

# Favoured Wairarapa sons farewelled

## JOHN LOUISSON



THE Hadlow principal who was described by staff as "Lucky Louis" has died in Christchurch at the age of 83.

John Louisson was headmaster at Hadlow from 1962 to 1977 and saw the school through the transition leading to the formation of Rathkeale College.

The school was then predominantly a boarding school, with 70 boarders and only 30 day pupils.

He also saw the advent of co-education at the school, with girl pupils being enrolled for the first time in 1971.

Mr Louisson was born in Christchurch and educated at Waihi Preparatory and Christ's College.

Employed at an accountant's office at the outbreak of World War II, he enlisted in the Army and served in Crete, Greece and in the Desert campaign, coming home a sergeant.

He undertook teacher training and in 1947 joined the staff of Medbury, in Christchurch.

Mr Louisson worked at several schools before accepting the position at Hadlow in 1962.

In an interview for the school's golden jubilee, Mr Louisson said: "There was a very pleasant and friendly atmosphere in the school.

"The first major change was the decision to acquire the Rathkeale Homestead to form a secondary school and Hadlow was asked to

carry a third form for 1963 in order to give Rathkeale a third and fourth form to start with."

That year Mr Louisson also oversaw the start of sporting exchanges with Medbury and later with Hereworth.

Long-time Hadlow teacher Ian Harper said the school was an "uncommonly happy place" during Mr Louisson's tenure.

"Above all else, John was Hadlow, coaching the rugby XV, outrunning all his hockey players, leading the staff to victory against the boys in the annual soccer match, playing basketball against the girls," he said.

"His smile, his famous disappearing trick when a curly question seemed likely to arise, his absent-minded approach over appointments, his French accent in the classroom, his patter in marks assembly, dubbing his wife Helen on my bicycle, the list could go on forever.

"Perhaps nothing very serious could go wrong in an establishment where such a mutual affection existed between staff, children and headmaster."

Mr Louisson was farewelled at Christchurch's Westpark Chapel on Tuesday.

He is survived by his wife Helen and four children, Michael, Sue, Simon and Jane.