***LONG SERVICE.***

*Article published in the “Auckland Star” on 8 November 1937 on Arthur’s retirement as head gardener at Government House Auckland*

***SEVEN GOVERNORS.***

***HEAD GARDENER RETIRES.***

***MILKED VICE-REGAL COW.***

Service under seven Governors was ended to-day by Mr. Arthur J. Creasy, custodian and head gardener at Government House, Auckland, when he loaded his belongings on to furniture trucks and moved from the little cottage at the Anzac Avenue end of the well-known grounds to begin retirement on superannuation at Howick. Sixty-five years old, Mr. Creasy had spent 22 years in permanent service at Government House and for the last 15 years had been head gardener.

Once he used to milk a cow for Lady Plunket in a paddock which is now part of the grounds of the Auckland University College; once he rescued a Governor’s small son from the top of a macrocarpa tree that still stands in the beautiful surroundings of the home — for it was natural that through all those years he should have had intimate associations with the lives of his vice-regal employers during their periods of residence in Auckland. Highlights of his service were the occasions of two Royal visits —the tour of the present King, then Duke of York, and the more recent visit of the Duke of Gloucester.

It was as a young Yorkshireman— later to become familiarly known as "Yorky"—that Mr. Creasy, with only a "bob" in his pocket, landed in New Zealand. His service at Government House was not unbroken, since before and between times he successively worked in the Waikato, at Mount Albert, in Portland Road, in the King Country and on the waterfront. This last experience was at the time of the strike in 1913, when the farmers themselves organised the loading of their produce. For some time he was gardener and coachman to the late Sir George Fowlds.

**Tunneller in War**.

Later he took a trip Home and, in his own words: "I came back with 7/6 in my pocket, engaged to be married, £30 in debt and out of work." He chuckled at the thought of that experience. Three years war service, as Sapper A. J. Creasy, 1st Reinforcements of Tunnellers, followed.

The seven Governors during whose terms Mr. Creasy worked at Government House were Lord Plunket (who took up his duties in 1904), Lord Islington, Lord Liverpool, Lord Jellicoe, Sir Charles Fergusson, Lord Bledisloe and the present Governor-General, Viscount Galway. It was about six months before the visit of the American Fleet in 1908 that he began as a gardener there, and the naval visit swept him into one of the busiest times he experienced. For the reception an avenue of nikau palms, set in half casks as if they were growing, had to be placed in the main hall.

"In my spare time I used to milk a cow for Lady Plunket," he recalled. "It was kept next door—the metropolitan paddock, I think they called it—where the University now stands. And I remember how I rescued one of her sons from the top of that macrocarpa tree you can still see in the grounds. I was fetched to get him down, and he clung to me till I nearly choked as I climbed out of the tree."

**Tennis for the Duke.**

Recollections of the visit of the Duke of York, the present King, reminded Mr. Creasy of a rather dramatic achievement by the augmented gardening staff. “We had to take down the iron posts and netting from the tennis court for a garden party to be held,” he explained. “We were told that the party would be over at half-past four and that we must have the court ready again by five o'clock so that the Duke could have a game of tennis. Well as soon as the last strains of the National Anthem were dying away we were standing ready with our tools—one man with a barrow, some with poles, others ready to pick up the cigarette butts – and we came forward and worked feverishly. By ten to five the court ready for the Duke to play his match.”

Vigorous, sharp-witted, Mr. Creasy talks laughingly of his war service, in which he found plenty of fun and also plenty of seriousness. He remembered how he landed in France after brief training, and being “eager to see what this war was like,” unsuspectingly became a batman. He soon saw what the war was like, and was disillusioned when he found that one of his duties was to wash another man’s clothes. It was bad enough washing one’s own.

The war over, he returned when Lord Liverpool was in office, and it was not long before he took up a position at Government House again. Fifteen years ago he was appointed custodian and head gardener. The character of the lovely grounds of the house has changed from term to term, since many of the vice-regal families have taken a keen interest in the gardens. Few people perhaps know the scope of the gardening activities that go on throughout the year within the limits of the grounds; vegetables and flowers are raised there, and at the moment a desert melon is being successfully grown in the glasshouse.

Now Mr Creasy is ready for a well earned rest, and for it he has chosen a pretty place, named by his wife “Littlehood” just above the sea at Howick.