

# CUMMINGS DRAPERS

## PART 2.

On her marriage, Catherine Mildred CUMMINGS disposed of her business, The Value House, to her brother John Edward (Jack) CUMMINGS.

He had (from the electoral rolls) been her assistant in the business with the exception of the war years, when as part of the 18th Draft, he served overseas from late 1916 until his return to New Zealand in early 1919.



A letter received in Matamata this week from Rifleman W. G. Wilkinson states that he is still well after two and a half years service. He stated that he has just met "Jack" Cummings, who had recovered from his wounds, in France. Private Cummings had been transferred from the infantry to the 2nd Machine Gun company.

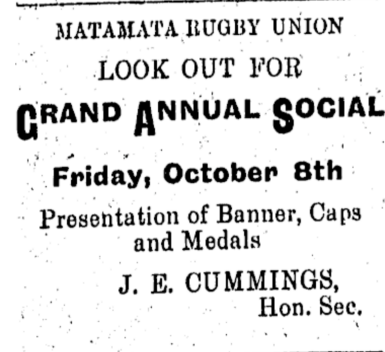
Matamata Record 16 May 1918

On his return to Matamata 'Jack' threw himself into the affairs of the town. Firstly being part of the movement to form an association for returned soldiers, the R.S.A., as well as paying attention to his business.

In view of the coming of spring and summer, Mr J. E. Cummings announces a grand show of new goods on Tuesday and Wednesday of next week, when ladies of the district are especially invited to inspect.\*

Matamata Record 30th Sept 1920

At the same time he was helping organise the Annual Social of the Matamata Rugby Union.



We are not privy to the nature of his war injuries, but perhaps his lungs were compromised. In 1923 nothing was secret and we learn he suffered from pneumonia.

We regret to record the illness of Mr. J. E. Cummings. Mr. Cummings is a patient at the Braeside Private Hospital suffering from pneumonia.

Matamata Record 11 Oct. 1923

He must have been seriously ill, nearly six weeks later he is finally convalescent and ordered to have a change of climate. Thames should be just the ticket!

Mr. J. E. Cummings, who has been very ill in the Braeside Hospital for some time, is now convalescent, but has been ordered a change of climate. He will visit relatives at Thames and afterwards go to another health resort.

Matamata Record 19th Nov 1923

The store has good systems in place, and seems to be functioning perfectly without him. No doubt with the aid of his sister Annie, who is at this time recorded on the electoral rolls for Matamata.

## A BRIGHT DISPLAY. AT THE VALUE HOUSE.

One of the most enterprising businesses in Matamata is the Value House, Mr. J. E. Cummings' drapery, men's and children's wear and fancy goods emporium. This year the arrangements for the Christmas and summer season are on an even more elaborate scale than last, when all previous records were eclipsed. Satisfied customers on that occasion have added to the business of the year and consequently stocks have been largely augmented. Everything necessary for city, country or seaside wear is contained in Cummings' premises and goods are ticketed at the lowest prices. Shop early at J. E. Cummings', where the service and good values are.\*

Matamata Record 29th Nov 1923

After his recovery, he continued in his role as secretary of the Matamata Rugby Union and took up golf.

## GOLF.

### SATURDAY'S RESULTS.

The Matamata club's medal match on Saturday resulted:—S. A. Puckeridge, 98—26—72; E. W. Wright, 108—36—72; W. T. Walker, 97—24—73.

The Rocky Downs Club's medal match held in conjunction with the second qualifying round of the senior championship was won by J. E. Cummings, 114—34—80.

Matamata Record 28 July  
1924

It was about now the Cummings siblings staged the financial intervention for his sister Mildred, (see CUMMINGS DRAPER part 1)

He was also a member of the chamber of commerce. In 1925 he stood down as secretary of the Matamata Rugby Union, due to the demands of his business but it is clear they aren't going to let him go easily.

*"However, there may be other ways in which Mr Cummings' knowledge of the game and the workings of the union may be utilised"*

Matamata Record 2 April 1925

Later in the month he is the president!

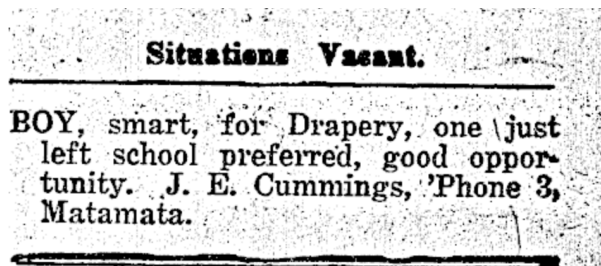
## FOOTBALL.

### MATAMATA UNION.

#### Meeting of Committee.

The weekly meeting of the committee of the Matamata Rugby Union was held in Mr. F. E. Lark's rooms on Tuesday night, the president (Mr. J. E. Cummings) being in the chair.

Matamata Record, 30 April 1925



Matamata Record, 23 April 1925

In June 1925 he was re-elected to the combined role of secretary & treasurer of the Chamber of Commerce. (*Matamata Record* 18th June 1925)

Unfortunately even in a town as small as Matamata in 1925 burglaries occurred.

## BURGLARY AT MATAMATA. DRAPER'S SHOP ROBBED.

When Mr. J. E. Cummings, the well-known Arawa street general draper, came along to his shop on Friday morning, he saw signs that eventually disclosed the loss of between £50 and £60 worth of drapery, the premises having been burglariously entered during the night.

Matamata Record, 31 May 1926

But he didn't let that stop his holiday plans. He travelled with Mr R. McCabe to Australia.

Mr. J. E. Cummings, of Matamata, left on Wednesday on a holiday visit to Australia. Mr. Cummings will leave Auckland by the Maheno on Friday.

Matamata Record, 14th Oct 1926

His staff are wonderful! He was away for about 6 weeks. And was there at the time of the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

## ACROSS THE TASMAN. AN ENJOYABLE HOLIDAY. Matamata Men's Tour.

Messrs. J. E. Cummings and R. McCabe, of Matamata, who recently returned from a holiday in Australia, had a most enjoyable tour. Interviewed, Mr. Cummings said they had a good trip over from Auckland to Sydney in the Maheno. One of the things that struck him particularly was the vast amount of building going on in Sydney. The new bridge across the harbour was going to be of gigantic proportions, being of one span of threequarters of a mile long and under which the largest boats would be able to steam. The cost was estimated at 3½ millions. Extensive street reconstruction was going on, and houses were being cleared away, not singly, but in streets, to make approaches to the bridge. One seven or eight storey building was being demolished for rebuilding in George street

Matamata Record 20th Dec 1926

He was annually re-elected as president of the Matamata Rugby Union. While in 1928 he was Clay Bird shooting at Okoroire, and in December that year Messrs J.E. Cummings, C.E. Barry, L. Mehrtens, B. Hawes & P.J. McNamara were appointed to a committee to organise the building of a training shed for the rugby club.

In January, Dan Hay, the dentist, Jack Cummings the draper, and Guy Philpott (who later married Annie Cummings) the jeweller, camped at Mercury Bay and caught a 10 foot Mako Shark (*Matamata Record* 24 Jan 1929)

He went on a driving holiday the following summer.

Mr. J. E. Cummings, of Matamata, returned last week after a month's motoring tour of both Islands. In the course of the journey, Mr. Cummings did the East and West Coasts as far south as Invercargill. In Dunedin he looked up Mr. Spencer Bolt, formerly of Matamata, and spent several days with him. Mr. Bolt is now holding a responsible position with a big firm at Port Chalmers. Mr. Cummings states his long journey was carried through without trouble of any kind.

Matamata Record, 3rd Feb 1930

In July the men of the Rocky Downs golf club were playing for a trophy presented by Mr J.E. Cummings.

From various newspaper articles it is clear that he lived, along with many others of the single men & women, at the Grosvenor Hotel, more popularly known as Black's Boarding house. In September 1930 this wooden building was destroyed in a fire, just after Ivan Black had reduced his insurance cover. J.E. Cummings managed to move his motor-car away, but by the time he got back was unable to save any of his personal belongings.

Late in the summer of 1929/1930 the Matamata Swimming Club was formed. At their first Annual General Meeting in November 1930 J.E. Cummings was elected one of the Vice-presidents. (there were 12 of them!)

The men of Matamata were an active bunch. The following week was the meeting of the Citizens Committee appointed to "*deal with the Rest Room and Plunket Rooms*" J.E. Cummings was there. He later presented "two fine garden seats for the rest room grounds."

And in signs of the depression, he was appointed to a Matamata committee of the Unemployment Board.



J. E. Cummings 1928

An offer from the Unemployment Board of £5 to relieve any distress over Christmas on a £1 for £1 basis has been received by the Matamata Town Board. Following the receipt of this communication a local committee consisting of Messrs. J. Buchanan (chairman), Rev. C. W. Turner and Mr. J. E. Cummings, has been set up. Mr. D. V. Saunders, town clerk, will act as secretary, and Mr. H. E. Schofield as assistant secretary.

Matamata Record 24 Dec 1930

I imagine there was great excitement at the donation of Bedford Park to the town. The deed of gift stipulated that there be four trustees. Two representing Cricket, and two representing Rugby. J.E.Cummings was appointed as one of the Rugby representatives.

## GIFT TO DISTRICT. PLAYING AREA FOR ALL SPORTS.

### Part of Fitzgerald Estate Donated.

### Bedford Park Within Town District.

A magnificent level sports ground, comprising about seven and a-half acres, has been donated to the public of Matamata and district by Messrs. Bowler Bros., two of the original settlers of the Matamata Estate, which was opened for selection in 1905. The new playing area is to be known as Bedford Park, and the deed of gift vests control in four prominent local men, who are to act as trustees. The ground is to be held available for all time for sport.

Matamata Record 19th March 1931

But they still find time for recreation!

A party consisting of Messrs. C. E. Barry, D. Hay, E. Johnston, S. Stockdale, J. Gilmore, J. E. Cummings and B. Cudby leave Matamata to-night for Galatea on a deer-stalking expedition. The party intend to camp about five miles from the Galatea homestead and will return on Tuesday.

Matamata Record, 2 April 1931

And to be on the jury for an inquest into a fatality at a railway crossing.

Business is doing well enough to expand the shop (not forgetting he had an inheritance of about £1000 from his sister Mildred in 1929).

## MATAMATA'S GROWTH. NEW BUILDINGS ERECTED. Old Firms Expand.

The steady growth of Matamata has been maintained for some time

now and is exemplified in the regular issue of building permits at each meeting of the Town Board. The bulk of these permits have been for houses, though a considerable number of business premises have also been erected, showing the faith of business people in the town. Further big additions are in contemplation, among these being a big extension of the premises of J. E. Cummings, one of the oldest business firms in Matamata, which was started by Miss M. Cummings over 20 years ago. The alterations to these pre-

mises have been contemplated for some time, but owing to circumstances beyond the control of the firm they could not be carried out until now. It is proposed to add to the width of the present shop by 15 feet to a depth of 50 feet and to remove the existing frontage and erect in its place a modern one with overhanging verandah and overhead lighting. Additions and improvements will also be made to the inside of the shop.

Next door the old-established firm of Edward Jones contemplates erecting at an early date a modern shop on a frontage of 18 feet. This firm is also extending its own premises at the rear for a further 20 feet. The new shop is to be let, and already several prospective tenants, including Auckland firms, have inspected the site.

Matamata Record 6 July 1931

Separate tenders will be received until 3 p.m. WED., SEP. 16, for:—

1st Contract: Extensive alterations and additions (in reinforced concrete) to business premises at Matamata. 2nd Contract: Erection of a New Shop in reinforced concrete at Matamata. Plans may be seen at the Office of Mr. J. E. Cummings, Matamata. Edgecumbe and White, Regd. Architects, South British Buildings, Hamilton.

Matamata Record 7th Sep 1931

A contract has been let for alterations and additions to Mr. J. E. Cummings' Arawa street premises and for the erection of a shop next door for Mr. E. Jones. Erection is to commence almost immediately.

Matamata Record 28th Sep 1931

He donated a handsome shield of dark polished wood with a gilt raised flower on the centre to the Horticultural Society for annual competition between districts - The Cummings Shield. For this he was made a life member of the society.

Then the men went deep sea fishing again, chartering a launch and fishing down the East Coast from Mercury Bay to Mayor Island. J.E. Cummings caught a good marlin (bigger than the one caught recently by a man from Waharoa!) and at some point decided they needed an aero-club.

## MATAMATA AERO CLUB. GREAT PROGRESS MADE. Machine Already Secured.

The Matamata Aero Club, which was only founded in April, has made great progress in the few weeks of its existence, and now has 20 pupil members, 13 of whom have received lessons. There are also 15 associate members.

The active members comprise: — Messrs. D. N. Hay, E. Rowe, L. R. Higgins, B. Rowe, J. M. Mercer, J. C. Reid, H. Sanson, G. Sutherland, R. L. Hetherington, L. Campbell, F. W. Hutchison, R. J. Take, L. H. Brake, R. J. Bell, A. McLeay, R. Clark, P. Catchpole, Dr. Laurenson and Father Silk. Also on the list of active members is Miss D. Egan, who has earned the distinction of being the first lady pupil. The following are associate members: — Messrs. F. R. Gibson, H. McKean, E. R. Worth, A. E. Davis, C. E. Barry, G. Story, W. McNab, W. T. Walker, John Moir, Jas. Corbett, C. H. Selby and J. E. Cummings.

Matamata Record 23 May 1932

Also in 1932 he was elected a vice-president of the Matamata District Boxing Association.

In December 1932 a new station for the St John Ambulance Brigade was opened in Tainui Street. Described by the district officer from Hamilton as a handsome little edifice. J.E. Cummings has presented a silver cup, to be competed for quarterly among members to provide an incentive towards efficiency

Through the 1930s a Deep Sea game fishing trip, and a Deer Stalking camp are at least annual events.

In 1934 he donated another cup. This time to the Matamata Basketball Association for Intermediate play. The teams draw for the Intermediate grade published on 14th June 1934 was Business Girls v Walton (ref Miss Mapp), Okoroire v Waharoa (ref Miss Watson), High School v Old Girls, (ref Mr Sorrenson).

After several more episodes of pneumonia, 1937 was a good year. "All Records" were broken at the Matamata Racing club meeting. In particular takings at the totalisator. J.E. Cummings was yet again an official. And in July he married.

The wedding took place at Auckland, quietly, on Monday, of Mr. J. E. Cummings, of Matamata, and Mrs. Willis, of Matamata, sister of Mrs. G. B. Cutter, of the Braeburn Hotel. It is the intention of Mr. and Mrs. Cummings to make an extended trip to the Old Country and France.

Matamata Chronicle 29th July 1937

The extended trip to "the Old Country & France" began almost immediately. They arrived at Tilbury docks in London on September 23rd 1937 aboard R.M.S. Orford. J.E. Cummings had a big send off, with presents including a camera.

The tone of the report suggests he had relinquished all his positions and may or may not return to settle in Matamata.

## SPORTSMAN DEPARTS

### MR. J. E. CUMMINGS

#### Trip to Europe

A large gathering of sportsmen assembled in the Matamata Club on Friday evening to bid farewell to Mr. J. E. Cummings, who for about 25 years has been associated with Rugby football as player, referee, secretary and president of the Matamata Rugby Union. Mr. Cummings has also been chairman and secretary of the Board of Trustees of Bedford Park since it was given to the district by Bowler brothers. The large attendance testified to the esteem with which Mr. Cummings was regarded in sporting circles, and sincere regret was heard on all sides that ill-health has compelled him to relinquish his various offices and to take an extended holiday.

Mr. J. Downie presided, and remarked on the pleasure it gave to all to see such a large and representative attendance, although all regretted that they were to lose "Jack" for some time at least. Everybody envied him, however, so far as the trip Home was concerned. Mr. Cummings, although not a foundation member, had been a member of the club for many years, and at one time had been president, when there had been a struggle to keep the organisation going. Members offered congratulations on his marriage, and wished him a happy and prosperous future.

Mr. L. H. Little supported Mr. Downie and assured the guest of the evening that he would be travelling with the very best wishes of members. Mr. Cummings had proved it was never too late to start and they offered sincere congratulations on his marriage. "Jack" had been one of the club's best members, and had taken charge when the club was at a low ebb with much success. In travelling over the old battlefields in France he had no doubt "Jack" would be able to recount many things as to what "Daddy did in the Great War." They hoped he would be speedily restored to complete health and would enjoy every minute of the trip.

On behalf of club members Mr. Little then presented Mr. Cummings with a solid leather travelling bag.

Speaking on behalf of the Matamata Rugby Union, Mr. J. E. Barker (vice-president) remarked that Mr. Cummings' place would be really difficult to fill, and that Bedford Park would not seem the same place without him, so great had his influence been in Rugby circles. Mr. Cummings had been secretary of the union for about 12 years and president for a similar period, and it was largely the result of his wise guidance that the Matamata Rugby Union had earned such a reputation throughout the Waikato in regard to management. He was sure that Mr. Cummings' association with the game in Matamata constituted a record, and his place would be very hard to fill. They wished him every happiness, a speedy restoration to health and a safe return.

On behalf of the Rugby Union, Mr. Barker presented Mr. Cummings with a camera.

Mr. Steve Stockdale, one of the oldest of Matamata business men, supported the previous speakers, causing amusement by reference to war-time associations.

In reply, and speaking with deep feeling, Mr. Cummings thanked all for their good wishes. He intended to visit England and the Continent, and revisit old familiar spots. If he could be of any assistance to those who had loved ones resting there he would be only too pleased to regard it as a duty to be fulfilled. He was sorry to sever for the time being his associations of which he had very pleasant memories, and he wished club members every success with their new venture. Regarding the Rugby Union he had been keen on the game and anything he had done to foster New Zealand's national pastime had given him the very greatest pleasure. He intended to return after an extended holiday and might settle again in Matamata, where he had made many true friends. It was very hard to part and he thanked them sincerely for their kind remarks and the presents given.

Matamata Record 2 August 1937