

Matamata Christmas Carnival Photo Album: Dating Report

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Summary

The album is labelled "Christmas Carnival 1956/57", but its photographs record the first Matamata Christmas Carnival, held over Christmas–New Year 1955/56. The label appears to be one year out.

Four lines of evidence from the Matamata County Mail point to the earlier date:

1. The first photograph, captioned "First Executive 1955", is the committee pictured in the paper on 13 December 1955.
2. The third photograph is Miss Marie Rigney, announced as the carnival hostess on that same newspaper page.
3. The album's helicopter photographs match a helicopter visit planned for 21 December 1955 and reported on in April 1956.
4. The album's formation-flying and Marching Girls photographs match events planned for, and reported during, the 1955 carnival.

Evidence 1: the "First Executive 1955" photograph

The album's first photograph is hand-captioned "First Executive 1955" and names E. Bygrave, Mel Loveridge, T. Atkins, J. Handley, D. Turner and Bert Wrigley. The same six men, in the same poses and suits, appear in the Matamata County Mail of 13 December 1955 under the heading "First Christmas Carnival Committee".



The newspaper caption confirms they were the first committee of the Matamata Public Relations Association's Christmas Carnival. The shop windows behind them show Christmas decorations and a "Greetings" display, which fits a photograph taken in December 1955. Opening the album with the committee of the first carnival suggests the album is a record of that first carnival.

Evidence 2: Miss Marie Rigney, carnival hostess

The album's third photograph is almost certainly Miss Marie Rigney of Tower Road. Her portrait, by Sharp's Studio, appears on the same newspaper page as the committee photograph (Matamata County Mail, 13 December 1955, page 1), headed "P.R.A. Hostess".



The hairstyle, necklace, tied bodice of the dress and the dark curtain behind her all match. The two may well be prints from the same sitting. The caption says she "will be official hostess for all Matamata Public Relations Association functions during the Christmas-

New Year Carnival", which dates her role to the 1955/56 carnival. The April 1956 report on that carnival confirms it: "Miss Rigney was the successful candidate. She carried out her duties admirably whenever called on."

Evidence 3: the helicopter at Bedford Park

The album contains quite a few photographs of a helicopter. The Matamata County Mail of 28 October 1955 reported that a helicopter was planned to fly into Bedford Park on 21 December 1955, as part of the first carnival.

The committee's later report on the carnival (Matamata County Mail, 13 April 1956, page 8) shows the visit went ahead:

"The cost of the helicopter's appearance was £57. This charge was included in the membership fees and no charge was made for admission. A large number of people viewed the machine, many coming from long distances, but we were disappointed with the number who took flights, our commission being only £6 5s, whereas £15 was anticipated.

"We received six entries for the Hostess competition, and Miss Rigney was the successful candidate. She carried out her duties admirably whenever called on.

The helicopter cost £57, and "a large number of people viewed the machine", but the committee was disappointed with ride sales: its commission was £6 5s against the £15 expected. This report, published in April 1956, is looking back on the 1955/56 carnival, and it covers both the helicopter and Miss Rigney as hostess.

Evidence 4: the air pageant and the Marching Girls

The album includes photographs of planes flying in formation and of the Matamata Marching Girls. Both match the programme announced for the first carnival:

The Public Relations Committee also plans a Maori open air concert, an open-air carol service and concert, displays by the Matamata Marching Girls and an air pageant.

The Marching Girls also appear parading down the main street in the Matamata County Mail of 16 December 1955, page 1:



The Marching Girls were closely tied to the 1955 carnival: Miss Rigney was chosen as hostess at the Marching Girls' dance in the Town Hall.

Conclusion

Every photograph that can be matched to a dated source points to December 1955, not 1956/57. The album should be relabelled **"First Christmas Carnival, 1955/56"**, with a note that the original label read 1956/57.

The likeliest explanation is a simple slip when the label was written, perhaps some years later. A carnival running over Christmas and New Year spans two years, which makes an off-by-one error easy.

Points worth checking before relabelling:

- Whether any album photographs show something that could only belong to a later carnival, such as a dated banner or a different hostess.
- The newspaper citations for the air pageant clipping: the notes give Volume XXII, Issue 27, 12 October 1956, which does not fit the other Volume XXII issues from late 1955. It is probably October 1955.
- The issue numbers generally (Issue 51 in December 1955 but Issue 178 in April 1956), against the original pages on Papers Past.

Sources

All newspaper citations are as recorded in the original research notes.

Date	Source	What it shows
13 April 1956	Matamata County Mail, Vol. XXII, Issue 178, p. 8	Report on the carnival: helicopter cost and ride sales, Miss Rigney as hostess
16 December 1955	Matamata County Mail, Vol. XXII, Issue 52, p. 1	Matamata Marching Girls parading
13 December 1955	Matamata County Mail, Vol. XXII, Issue 51, p. 1	First Christmas Carnival Committee; Miss Marie Rigney, P.R.A. Hostess
28 October 1955	Matamata County Mail, Vol. XXII, Issue 38, p. 1	Helicopter planned for Bedford Park, 21 December
12 October 1956 (to check)	Matamata County Mail, Vol. XXII, Issue 27, p. 1	Planned air pageant and Marching Girls displays

Date	Source	What it shows
Undated	The album, labelled "Christmas Carnival 1956/57"	First Executive 1955 photograph, Miss Rigney portrait, helicopter, formation flying and Marching Girls photographs