

# Electricity pioneer

TAURANGA was a pioneer in the electrical supply industry, building its own Omanawa Falls station in 1915 and McLaren Falls 10 years later.

Mr Eric Faulkner remembers Lloyd Mandeno, the borough engineer who upgraded Omanawa, built McLaren Falls and created the concept for the Tauranga Joint Generation Committee's string of three modern stations.

"He was a terrific engineer," Mr Faulkner said. "He was still involved with the joint generation project when he was 80.

"He had a sense of humour and would try anything on. He was still a bit of a rascal in his 80s."

Mr Mandeno, an individualistic engineer, produced the first all electric house in New Zealand, designing the water heater for it.

He also ran a retail shop in Devonport Road, installing a generator so he could demonstrate the electrical appliances.

Mr Faulkner was involved with the joint generation project, a composite of the Tauranga Borough Council and the Tauranga Electric Power Board, from the beginning.

He said it was envisaged by the then mayor, Dave Mitchell, who hounded the Minister of Works, Stan Gooseman, into giving permission for Tauranga Borough to remain a generating authority.



MR MANDENO

"It was one of his final acts as Minister of Works, granting a generation licence on condition there would be equitable distribution of power throughout the area," Mr Faulkner said.

"The scheme has had its problems, but will be a money spinner."

The McLaren Falls station had been of great benefit to Tauranga borough, not only producing some of the cheapest power in the country but financing many civic developments.

"It provided the civic building debt free, provided money for the Queen Elizabeth Youth Centre — many projects in the town would not have been possible without it," he said.

In the early 1960s the McLaren Falls power station was flooded in a storm which also destroyed the adjoining road bridge.

"The machines were taken out and sent to AG Price's for refurbishment," he said. "One, which had been going since 1925, needed nothing done to it.

"It was a beautiful piece of engineering."