

ended within a few years; Kirkbride is recorded as sole proprietor of the Marton paper, while Leary kept control of the *Manawatu Times*, changing editors several times before selling the paper in 1878 to John Boulger Dungan, but retaining the job-printing side of the business in his own hands.

John Dungan had been a compositor at the *Times*, and in charge of its 'literary columns' for the previous six months. Contemporary accounts indicate that he was extremely popular in the township; after his death the Court was adjourned for two hours and the whole of the business premises of Palmerston North closed down so that people could attend his funeral.³ According to Leary, he was 'fond of the genial glass (in the plural)'⁴ and sometimes incapable of getting the paper out, but this may have been the reaction of a staunch Methodist proprietor. Despite this, once he owned the paper Dungan used it to promote his plans for a public library for Palmerston North—a reading room had been established in June 1876 but had languished for want of subscribers. A new reading room had been set up in 1877, and two years later the great leap to a lending library was made. Dungan

not only joined the committee and canvassed for support but also promoted the library's cause in his editorial columns... [and] the paper... launched an appeal to its readers to donate books to the library. The services and runner boys were offered to collect the volumes from each household and *The Times* regularly published their titles and the names of donors under the heading 'Roll of Honour'.⁵

As a result Palmerston North had a lending library with control vested in the Borough Council by June 1879. At the same time, the *Times* was carrying advertising for 'J.P. Leary, Stationer', and was supporting Leary's stand for the Council.⁶ It was Dungan himself, however, who was elected to Council the following year.

It was into this rather cosy scene that Alexander McMinn intruded in 1880. An Irish journalist sent out by one of the London papers to report on the Anglo-Maori Land Wars, he had arrived in Auckland in 1863. After the fighting was over he had turned his hand to teaching, for a short time at Wanganui Grammar School, then in 1866 at Turakina. On being sacked by the school committee for insubordination, he promptly set up a rival school and took away almost all the pupils.⁷ But at some time in the 1870s he turned back to journalism and joined the *Wanganui Herald*, then owned and edited by John Ballance. In the course of his work McMinn made quarterly trips to Wellington, passing through the Manawatu, and in 1875 he moved to Marton as editor of Kirkbride and Leary's *Rangitikei Advocate*. During his term he took the paper from biweekly to triweekly issue.⁸

He also came into editorial conflict with John Dungan over the