

# Author visits old stomping ground



**RIPPING GOOD YARN:** Author Jennifer Somervell joined Takapau School children and teacher Dawn Meredith during her author's tour.

Everyone has stories to tell of events in their life, and as author Jennifer Somervell has discovered, the farm is often a rich trove of anecdotes and adventures.

She recently completed an author's tour of Hawke's Bay schools, including Flemington School and Takapau School, which she attended as a child growing up on the family farm at Otawhao.

Her rural childhood memories have sparked a series of children's books — *Tales from the Farm* — and during her school visits she shared the story of *The New Old Truck* with the fascinated students.

"It was really fun and nostalgic to go back to my old school and the area where writing started for me, so close to where our stories are set."

*The New Old Truck* is the tale

of the 1921 Republic truck that Jennifer's grandfather Gordon Somervell bought in 1938 for use on the farm, and it has been recognised with an international Purple Dragonfly first place book award.

Jennifer says her visits included reading the book to the children and explaining how it was based on a real truck.

She also showed them a video comparing old trucks to the



**FUN VISIT:** Flemington School children enjoyed learning about the book-writing process during Ms Somervell's visit.

trucks of today.

"I don't see my audience unless I go out and hear from them. It's very valuable to see the responses.

"The children were delightful — very engaged, with heaps of questions."

She took the children through the process of writing a book — the multiple drafts and the patience and persistence required.

"They were surprised to see number 15 of 17 drafts with scribbles all over it.

"Children's books have a limit 600 to 800 words so heaps of editing goes into it — not just the text but the illustrations as well."

The book writing process for Jennifer is a family affair — her sister Margery Fern is the illustrator and her niece does

the design.

"We have had to learn to disagree and work through things — you do not agree about everything but we are a team now."

*The New Old Truck* is the second in the book series that began with *The Day Dad Blew Up The Cowshed*, and was followed by *The Eel Hunt*.

The next book in the series is due out in September. Titled *A Very Greedy Tale*. It's about the adventures of two naughty pigs who have escaped and have an argument with an electric fence.

"It brings out the intelligence of pigs and includes an educational component about the innovations with electric fences in New Zealand."

The books are available at book retailers in Central Hawke's Bay.