

NEWSLETTER

No. 13, August, 2008

Pirongia Historic Visitor Centre
Te Whare Taonga o Ngaa Rohe o Arekahanara

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A memorable AGM

The evening of Tuesday 24 June may have been cold, wet and windy. But that did not deter 42 members and others from attending the AGM and hearing Tom Roa speak about the history of the Kingitanga, and its association with Whatiwhatihoe and Alexandra. Tom's talk, which was entitled Te Kingitanga: He Matapihi [A 'Window'], told the story of the formation of the Kingitanga, the process by which King Potatau, King Tawhiao and others were chosen, and the close association of the Kingitanga movement with our area – particularly Whatiwhatihoe. He concluded by illustrating the growing significance of the movement during the reign of Queen Te Atairangikaahu, and the present King Tuheitia.

One member of the audience commented afterwards how much she enjoyed Tom's delivery as a story-teller, rather than an historian. This was reflected in the willingness of many of the audience to engage in discussion with Tom – even over supper in the dark, when the power supply failed (making the evening memorable for another reason as well). It was an informative and thought-provoking presentation.

It was fitting that a newly-acquired enlargement of an 1884 photograph of Whatiwhatihoe, taken from present-day Hanning Road was on display. It shows interesting details of the extensive development and cultivations at Whatiwhatihoe, and Alexandra can be seen in the distance.



An attentive audience enjoyed Tom Roa's presentation on the Kingitanga.

The garage conversion is almost complete



The transformed garage

The conversion of the garage into a storage and work area is now almost complete. Peter Robertson, the contractor, has draft-proofed the building by installing new doors and replacing a window. The building has been insulated and lined, and a separate room is partitioned off with shelving to store artefacts. New electrical installations include vastly improved lighting and a selection of power points. Following painting, vinyl was laid on the floor.

Steps have been taken to obtain funding for appropriate benches and a desk at which

volunteers may work. We are very grateful to Pub Charity for two grants, each of \$8,000 and to The New Zealand Community Trust (\$1,000) for the finance which made the conversion possible.

A necessary add-on will be a heat-pump to stabilize the temperature and humidity, both important for the conservation of archives. We are grateful for separate donations of \$500 from the Rotary Clubs of Kihikihi and Te Awamutu towards the cost of a heat pump. The Committee is making other applications to secure further funding for the completion of a significant asset.



Storage

Thanks for support:

Murray and Barbara Walter who, with **Charlie Coles** did the final clearance of the garage in preparation for its conversion to a storage and work area and removed the builder's debris on completion of the work.

Local electrician **Rob Quinlan** who investigated the power failure after a blown fuse had been repaired, arranged for things to be put right by Waipa Networks, and did not charge for the service.

Those loyal members who braved the wind and cold to attend the AGM and were rewarded with a vintage presentation by **Tom Roa**, followed by supper in the dark!

Pub Charity for two separate grants of \$8,000 which together funded most of the costs of the garage conversion into a work and storage area.

New Zealand Community Trust for a grant of \$1,000 towards the garage conversion.

The Pirongia Darts Club for a generous donation to the Centre of \$5,000.

Kihikihi Rotary and **Te Awamutu Rotary** for separate donations of \$500 towards the cost of a heat pump to be added following the garage conversion.

John Scott, a Mary Scott fan from Manurewa who, having visited the Centre, donated 11 copies of Mary Scott novels, all complete with dust covers.

Roz Empson who gave useful technical advice and prepared the plans for the garage conversion.

Ngairé Phillips who donated a CD of material on researching Mangapiko History.

Paula McWha who has again agreed to handle tour bookings.

Welcome to new members

- Jim and Jackie Halford
- Nadine Werner
- Ann Benson
- Sharon and Jim Rayner
- Willie and Margaret Laverty

The Ormsby connection

Recently, Owen Ormsby, who has been researching his family history for some time, donated some family artefacts to the Centre.

One was a print of a portrait of Rewi Maniapoto to whom the family is related through Pianika, the wife of Robert Ormsby.

Other objects include a ceremonial sword and



Owen Ormsby with the portrait of Rewi Maniapoto

scabbard from the household of King Edward IV, after whose wife Alexandra was named when she was Princess of Wales. One of the Ormsby family was an equerry to the King.

A fitting is being made to display the sword in the near future. Thank you Owen.

New and improved

The 2008 Pirongia Craft Day will be held on Saturday, 27 September. This year is the 30th anniversary of the first Craft Day held in 1979. President Marilyn Yeates is preparing a special display to commemorate the event.

Also on display for the first time will be an authentically detailed model Maori war canoe on loan to the Centre from the De Thierry family. Who made it is not known, but it has been in the possession of the De Thierry family for more than 100 years.

The Centre is indebted to members Boye and Sharon De Thierry for lending the canoe for public display, and also for providing a handsome cabinet in which to display it. The canoe will be well worth a visit.

Whilst visiting the Centre, don't forget to spend some time examining the enlarged photograph of Whatiwhatihoe, taken from the vicinity of Hanning Road in November 1884. It has been reproduced with permission from the Alexander Turnbull Library and includes fascinating detail of the extensive settlement and Alexandra in the distance.

Visit the Centre and have a look on Craft Day.

The Executive Committee

The AGM, elected the following officers and members of the Executive Committee for the 2008-9 financial year:

President: Marilyn Yeates; Vice-president: Sabina Owen; Secretary: Robin Astridge; Treasurer: Glenyss Hall; Committee: Patricia Grier-son, Alan Hall, Garry Howard, Sharon Rayner, Sue Scott, Nick van der Sande and Clare St Pierre. Sally Uerata is the nominee of Purekireki Marae and Haupai Puke is the nominee of Te Kauhanganui O Tainui.

Butchers past

The recent demolition of the Pirongia butchery has caused us to attempt to record the sequence of butchers in the village.

Newspaper records show that James Thomas Boon, who had been a member of the 2nd Waikato Regiment, ran a butchery on the site of the recently-demolished shop in the 1870s. When he began the business is not known, although other records indicate that by 1879 he had leased the premises to another butcher named James King Pierce who had left by 1882 and was working as a butcher in Cambridge. At that time, Boon was again listed as the Alexandra butcher.

In 1910, *The New Zealand Post Office Towns Directory* listed both A.W.Jones and Geo.Williams as butchers. And in 1930, *Leighton's Auckland Provincial Directory* listed two others: A.R.Chappell and T.R.Mounsey. Were there perhaps two butchery businesses at some stage? Or did Chappell, say, work for or with Mounsey?

It is also known that Richard Slaughter owned the business from about 1975 to 1983 when Greg and Joce Ruscoe took it over. The butcher immediately before Slaughter was named Francis, although there was a period when the shop was empty.

Fred Boggis can recall the remains of a slaughterhouse near the Mangapiko stream, not far from the cemetery. But who used it, and when remains unknown to us.

These fragments of information are enough to begin a timeline of butchers. If you can contribute any other names and/or dates please let us know. Any information would be helpful, as would old photographs.

Annual programme

The Executive Committee has finalised a programme of events for the 2008-09 financial year.

27 September Pirongia Craft Day.

11 October: Archaeological Tour North of Pirongia.

28 October An evening on the Centre's Resources.

15 November Historical Tour of the Te Pahu District.

20 January Members BBQ.

14 February Path of War Tour: Te Rore to Orakau.

21 March Archaeological Tour South of Pirongia.

21 April An evening on Local Maori History.

23 June AGM Speaker (To be advised).

Also under investigation is the possibility of a Saturday on Mary Scott. More on that in the next Newsletter.

Another link

It is interesting how small pieces of information link together to add detail to our pictures of the past. A couple of months ago, a visitor to the Centre told us that she was a descendant of Miss Emily Miller, a prominent member of the community around 1900 who we know donated £100 which was a significant part of the funding to build the second St Saviour's Church on the site of the AC Redoubt.

We have some photographs of Miss Miller, including one outside her house in Parry Street, sitting in a carriage with a companion. Her descendant was able to tell us which figure was Emily Miller, but she knew nothing about the companion.

More recently, another visitor, who was seeking information about family members named Webb told us that Aunt Charlotte Webb had worked for many years as a companion to a local woman. We showed her the photograph of Emily Miller, and she immediately pointed to the companion and said, "That's Aunt Lottie. How did you know?" The truth is that we didn't. But we do now!

Coming events

North Archaeological Tour (Saturday, 11 October). This is a repeat of the popular day tour incorporating Matakitaiki Pa, Paterangi, Cowell's Flour Mill, Cameron's Te Rore HQ, Alexandra Redoubts, Whatiwhatihoe and Waiari Pa. Tour Leader: Alan Hall.

An Evening on the Centre's Resources (Tuesday, 28 October at 7.30 pm). Find out about the growing historical resources available at the Centre and how to access them. The new electronic catalogue will also be demonstrated. A session with particular relevance to volunteers.

Tour of the Te Pahu District (Saturday, 15 November). Member Mayor Alan Livingston will lead a day tour of historic sites west of the Waipa in the Harapepe, Te Pahu, Karamu and Kaniwhaniwha districts. The tour will visit the sites visited by the Te Awamutu Historical Society in April, 2000, which are described in *Footprints of History No.24*.

Contact the Centre for more details.