

NEWSLETTER

No. 18, November, 2009



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

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Inaugural Historic Walk

On the sunny Saturday morning of Labour Weekend, thirteen people met at the Historic Visitor Centre to make the inaugural Historic Walking Tour of Alexandra/Pirongia. This involved a walk around Pirongia Village, organised by volunteers from the Centre and led by Alan Hall. The easy walk passed sites of military and commercial activities, as well as the locations of residences of a number of prominent citizens — many from the days between 1864 and 1896, when the settlement was known as Alexandra. Stories were told about past events which lurk behind facades and in now-empty sections.

All who took part considered that the tour should be repeated regularly as a part of the Historic Visitor Centre's annual programme.

Several members have intimated that they would like to do the tour, but think that the three-hour walk would be too much. Consideration is being given to running a similar tour using a horse-drawn wagon from Pirongia Clydesdales. If you, or someone you know would like to do such a tour, leave your name at the Visitor Centre.



The walking tour group outside the Memorial Hall

A teacher's reminiscence

Recently, the Historic Visitor Centre received from The Howick Historical Village Museum a scanned copy of a letter about life in Pirongia by Mrs Martha Mawdsley who, as Miss Hattaway, taught at the Alexandra School between late 1908 and 1912. Mrs Mawdsley was 85 years of age when she wrote her recollections in 1973. They are illustrated by a number of photographs.



Ma Wickham (right) & Alice Kay with Moon's Store (later Bell's) in the background

At that time, the school accommodated 60 pupils in one classroom and a porch. The teachers were the head teacher, Miss Arey and Miss Hattaway. There are references to some school activities, concerts, dances, and Ma Wickham's boarding house where Miss Hattaway boarded with Miss A. Woods, the sole teacher at Mangapiko School.

"A real novelty to me was a Basket-Social held in the Hall. The girls each packed special supper baskets, which were auctioned individually, and bought by the young men. A buyer would find the girl's name inside, seek her out, and they shared the supper."

Identified in the photographs are a number of old identities including Ned Garmonsway, then aged 88, Mr Chappell, and Ma Wickham.

The Centre is grateful to the Howick Historical Village Museum for providing us with a copy of such an interesting and relevant artefact.

Tour Postponed

The Kawhia Historical Tour for members, scheduled for 27 February, has been postponed. A key component was to have been a harbour tour of historical sites. However, the tour boat was recently moved to the Waikato River in Hamilton. The Kawhia Tour will be re-scheduled when a suitable tour vessel is available. Members will be advised.

New Signage

Have you noticed the new signage at the Visitor Centre? The new signs: one on the front of the building, and another on the footpath when the Centre is open, are attempts to draw attention to the Heritage and Information services offered. Volunteers expect to have fewer people coming in expecting to find a functioning church.

Thanks for Support

The Department of Internal Affairs for a further COGS Grant of \$2000 for travel by volunteers.

New Zealand Post for 100 post paid envelopes to assist with newsletter distribution.

Charlie Coles, Alan Hall, Barbara and Murray Walter who cleaned the outside of the Centre building before the September Craft Day.

Marilyn Yeates, who spruced up the carved sign with a new coat of oil.

Heather and Les Garrett, who generously provided morning tea for the West of Waipa tour, and for a talk by Heather.

Alan Livingston who took time out from his busy schedule to provide informed commentary on the West of Waipa tour.

Barbara and Murray Walter who arranged the production and installation of the new signage.

Debbie Courtney who obtained some re-cycled display stands from Te Awamutu Museum.

Our Volunteers, and members of the Executive Committee who have contributed to the successful operation of the Centre during 2009.

Gone West

Another successful **West of Waipa Tour** was conducted in mid-November, on a beautiful day, with a larger-than-anticipated group, necessitating an increase in bus size. Heather and Les Garrett provided both morning tea and a talk by Heather about Homewood and Johnny Cowell. Alan Livingston's informed commentary was also greatly appreciated.

Stop Press

The NZ Lottery Grants Board has approved the design for the new Churches Display which the board is funding. This clears the way for the panels to be printed. Material for the panels was researched by the Centre and the presentation was designed by Sonia Frimmel. They should be on display before the new year.

Coming Events

Thu. 14 Jan. Members' BBQ.

Join us at Pirongia Clydesdales at 6.00 pm for a BBQ to start the new year. Bring meat to cook on the barbie, an accompanying dish to share and your favourite tippie. There is no charge. Note that the date for this event has been brought forward from 16 February.

Sat. 23 Jan. Path of War Tour: Te Rore to Orakau. Follow the path of General Cameron's military force in 1864, from an encampment at Te Rore to the Battle of Orakau, which effectively ended the Waikato War. Hear about the bypass of Paterangi, and actions at Rangiaowhia, Hairini and Orakau. 9.00am - 4.00pm. \$25.

Sat. 27 Mar. South Tour. Visit the sites of Mangatoatoa Pa and the Mangapouri Mission Station on the Puniu River. Find out about the early Pakeha settlers at Kaipiha. Visit Te Akarauti Cemetery, Te Kopua Methodist Mission on the Waipa and view the area from Puketotara Pa. 9:00am - 4.00pm. \$25.

Places on each Mini-bus tour are limited to 10.

Payment is required with registration.

To join any tour, inquire/register by contacting the Visitor Centre or Paula McWha Phone: 07 871 9585. Email: mcwharjpk@callsouth.net.nz.

Early registration is recommended.

Down Memory Lane

Recently, the Historic Visitor Centre invited some older residents who grew up in the district to talk over afternoon tea about their memories of growing up here. And they did talk, about people, school experiences, sports and social events, mainly from the era of the 1940s and 1950s.

The gathering was the idea of Haupai Puke who, with Sally Uerata, issued invitations on behalf of the Centre and facilitated the discussion. It is seen as a step towards developing oral histories of life in the village which the Centre plans to develop.

Those who took part were enthusiastic about the opportunity to reminisce and would like to repeat the event. The opportunity to talk with others from their era triggered memories which it is important for us to record.



Volunteers serve afternoon tea to the Centre's guests.

Welcome to new members

- Bruce and Bev Dean

The Market Reserves

When Alexandra was first surveyed in 1864, the sections on the four corners of the Crozier-McLure Streets intersection were identified as Market Reserves. They are clearly identified on the Goodall and Gundry survey map displayed in the Centre. Those who planned the settlement appear to have had in mind English rural towns which had market areas where farmers brought stock and produce from surrounding farms for sale at regular market fairs. Because the first military settlers were given farm lots, as well as town lots, it was assumed that a similar practice should occur here.

The market reserves were never developed as such. However, one (Section 256, where the Impressions Childcare Centre and Time Out are now located) later became the site of a pound for stray animals found wandering in the settlement.

Newspaper reports indicate that unrestrained stock posed a problem for those developing gardens on their town acres because fencing materials were not readily available and most sections were not well-fenced. This meant that horses, house cows, and other stock did not find it hard to get into other properties. This was a source of regular disputes from the earliest days, some of which found their way to the Resident Magistrate's Court where cases were heard alleging that horses and cows had been maimed or killed. In one instance 12 shillings and sixpence damages was awarded to Jesse Sage who had 300 cabbage plants destroyed by turkeys belonging to Mathias Assmus. The nub of the problem seems to have been the law regarding fencing which required landowners to fence to keep other people's stock out, rather than to keep their own in.

There were frequent calls for a pound where wandering stock could be confined. However, another lobby argued strongly that there was a lot of feed available in the streets and unoccupied sections, which it would be criminal to waste.

Eventually, in 1876, a pound was established. Alexander Grant, the Chairman of the Town Board, appointed a Mr Norgrove as Pound-Keeper and J. King Pearce as his assistant. When the assistant impounded a bull which was at large, it transpired that the animal belong to Mr Grant who was duly charged at the RM Court with "allowing a bull to be at large in the village". The *Waikato Times* records that the prosecution failed because the assistant pound keeper could not provide Grant's lawyer with a copy of the legislation under which the charge was brought. Grant then counter-charged the Pound-Keeper, Norgrove, with not giving notice that the bull had been impounded.

In the 1880s, there were regular newspaper notices that animals were impounded. But the existence of the pound remained contentious. In 1889, there was yet another petition calling for it to be closed.

A good question

Recently, a visitor to the Centre who is knowledgeable about horse racing, looked at the Alexandra Racing Club display, and asked an intriguing question about the photograph of the pacer Hal Chimes which won the Pirongia Cup in 1924 and 1925. "Why", she asked, "was a harness racing horse saddled and ridden by a jockey? Where is the sulky?"

We had no answer, but said that the question would be referred to Murray Walter who assembled the display. Murray replied that in the 1920s, when the photo was taken, horses were ridden, rather than driven in harness racing events. In this case, the purpose of the harness was to inhibit this pacer from breaking into a gallop. It was not a harness to pull a sulky. That seems to have come later.



The picture of Hal Chimes ridden by Owner/Trainer L. Booth.

Patupaiarehe

A special display in the Centre for Pirongia Craft Day focused on the Patupaiarehe, the legendary fairy folk of Pirongia Mountain. The display included pottery by Marilyn Yeates and paintings by children from junior classes at Pirongia School.

The display attracted interest, particularly from families of the artists, and especially during October when a record number of visitors to the Centre was recorded.

Sabina Owen and Marilyn Yeates arranged the display with the school.

Special visitors

In October, we were visited by members of local novelist Mary Scott's family: her daughter, Sylvia Fitzgerald and her granddaughter, Julia Castles.

Sylvia has very clear recollections of her parents and life at both Strathallan and Pekaui Road. She told about riding with her mother to Te Rau-a-moa to visit Mrs Dasler who was later given Mary's first typewriter. She identified people in a photograph and told us that Walter Scott's spaniel, pictured in another, was named Barney. He followed Walter everywhere.