



NEWSLETTER

No.2: August, 2005

Pirongia Historic Visitor Centre
Te Whare Taonga O Ngaa Rohe O Arekahanara (Inc)
798 Franklin Street, Pirongia 2450

New Sign Unveiled

On Sunday, 15 May, 2005, a new sign for the Historic Visitor Centre, carved in a traditional Māori style, was unveiled in a ceremony performed by kaumatua of Purekireki Marae. The ceremony began with a karakia by Tom Roa. He then pointed out how the Māori and English names for the Historic Visitor Centre complement one another by including the Māori transliteration for Alexandra, as the settlement was first known, before it was changed to the present Māori name for the mountain which dominates the area.



Mrs Jean Bell unveils the new sign assisted by her son, carver Mac Bell, under the watchful eye of Kaumatua Tom Roa.

Mrs Jean Bell, unveiled the taonga which was carved by her son, Mac Bell, who spoke about the symbolism in the carving. He discussed its significance for Pirongia, particularly for those with long associations with the village and the mountain. He pointed out how the carving incorporates the pre-European Māori history of the area and the deep significance of Mount Pirongia for Māori by including figures representing Rōtū and Hia-roa.

Mac Bell talked about his bi-cultural heritage and pointed out how fitting it was that the sign should stand outside the former St Saviour's Anglican Church with which many residents, both Māori and Pākehā, have lasting associations.

Later, in the warmth of the Visitor Centre, President Sabina Owen welcomed as guests Waipa Mayor Alan Livingston, Councillor Diane Sharp, Mr Peter Richardson from the Sky City Hamilton Community Trust which funded the project, four generations of the Bell family who had gathered for the occasion and other friends of the Centre.

Thanks to Supporters:

Pub Charity for funding to purchase a laminator which is proving useful in upgrading the displays. Laminating up to A3 size can now be completed for local people at a nominal charge.

Sky City Community Grants for a \$1000 grant for outside signage which is now in place.

Trust Waikato for a recent grant of \$4,000 to develop a long-term concept plan for the Centre.

The Department of Conservation for funding the provision of an interpretative panel to be mounted beside the old Mount Pirongia Trig Station outside the Centre.

Coming Events:

24 September: Pirongia Craft Fair. The Historic Visitor Centre will be open. Call in for a cup of tea and view the refurbished displays.

1 October: Visit by the Auckland Railway Enthusiasts Society. Two busloads of visitors from an Auckland train will stop off in Pirongia en route to Kawhia and Raglan. They will have the opportunity to look around the village and to come to the Historic Visitor Centre which will be open. The visit is seen as a taster which might be extended in the future.

15 October: Visit by Auckland Museum Institute Council. Representatives of the Museum items Institute Council plan to visit the Historic Visitor Centre, mid-afternoon on 15 October. Your committee is to decide whether or not to establish a formal link with the Auckland Museum which holds many items relevant to the local area.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM on 28 June was attended by 15 people. In her report, President Sabina Owen spoke of a year of achievement, noting that resources and display materials are slowly being accumulated, training is being undertaken and that the work of the Centre is supported by a hard-working group of members who were thanked and congratulated on their achievements. She reported that the Centre is now open on two days a week.

The Election of Officers resulted in the appointment of two new members to the Executive Committee. Those elected were: President: Sabina Owen, Vice-President: Marilyn Yeates, Secretary: Julie Karsten, Treasurer: Glenyss Hall, Committee: Patricia Grierson, Alan Hall, Steve Rasmussen, Sue Scott, Nick van der Sande and Murray Walter. The appointed members are: Clare St Pierre/ Karen McCulloch, Sally Uerata and Haupai Puke.

Following the AGM, Noel Sandford of the Te Araroa Trust gave an interesting talk, illustrated with a Powerpoint presentation, about the development of walkways on Mount Pirongia as part of the national walkway system. He reported good progress, but explained that the western part of the route is yet to be completed.

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Out and About

The Old Mount Pirongia Trig Station has been on display outside the Historic Visitor Centre for some time. Like many other trig stations, this one was made redundant by the introduction of Global Positioning which revolutionized surveying methods. Recently, Murray Walter and Keith Ormsby edged the area beneath the trig with concrete and Barbara and Murray Walter planted it with native grasses. An interpretative panel, funded by DOC, has now been completed by Sonia Frimmel and awaits installation beside the trig station.



Have you seen the daffodils flowering beneath the tree behind the Historic Visitor Centre? Our thanks to the **Women's Institute** members who planted them last year.

Walk on past the daffodils to the site of the **Alexandra East Redoubt** in Aubin Close where the Waipa Council is making some significant improvements. The shape of the redoubt is now outlined in pavers and the locations of buildings within it are clearly marked. Interpretative panels have been installed, and a fence on the street side of the reserve is now under construction.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU to **Mary Hurst** and **Ros Empson**, two Visitor Centre stalwarts who stood down from the Executive Committee at the AGM. Each made significant contributions to the establishment of the Historic Visitor Centre which are greatly appreciated. Fortunately, both plan to continue their support.

Refurbished Displays

A number of displays in the centre are currently being upgraded. In the process, more consistency of presentation is intended to make them more durable and easier to rotate in the future, whilst also making the contents easier to interpret. Many of the changes were prompted by comments made by volunteers and visitors.

When you come in to see the new displays, you will also notice that the work area, behind the reception desk has been re-organised and expanded a little to incorporate another work station, kindly donated by Sabina Owen, all of which makes the area more functional.

New Books

Who Planted the Tree? A Story of Waikato, Taranaki and the King Country, by Christine Chaplow. The story of Government Surveyor Wilson Hursthouse, Mere Te Rongo Pamaomao, Whitiui Joseph and Maori chief Te Mahuki Manukura: four people caught up in events in the Waikato, Taranaki and the King Country during New Zealand's tumultuous years between 1840 and 1900. And it all started with a pohutukawa tree. Members who have read this recommend it as worth reading.

Other recent acquisitions include:

A History of Kawhia and its District compiled by Peg Cummins from material collected by Corbin Ward and many others.

Tracing Family History in New Zealand, by Anne Bromell. (Donated by the Bromell Family).

Local Directory

Recently, copies of a Pirongia Local Directory were delivered to mailboxes in the village. Copies are available at the Historic Visitor Centre and the Craft Shop for collection by people living outside the village. The directory was compiled by the Visitor Centre and printed with the financial assistance of the **Lions Club of Mount Pirongia**. If it is considered a success, the directory will be printed annually as a money raiser for the Visitor Centre.

Three Bell Women



Sisters-in-law **Jean Bell** (nee McGruther), **Iney Bell** (nee Beet), and **Girlie Quin** (nee Bell), all grew up in Pirongia. They enjoyed their time together at the Centre when the new sign was unveiled. A display on the Bell family history, compiled for the occasion by Marilyn Yeates was of great interest to all four generations of the family who attended.

Tourism?

Owen Ormsby is a descendant of the local family who works for Auckland University of Technology and is an active member of Tourism King Country Maori which is attempting to attract more overseas tourists to travel to local attractions, including those of Kiwi rural life.

He regularly brings overseas students to visit the Historic Visitor Centre as a part of trips to Kawhia.

A month ago, the Centre hosted a meeting where he met with a number of local people who are interested in exploring tourism opportunities further. They formed a working group which will meet again on 21 October.

New Members?

We are always interested in recruiting more volunteers to help staff the Centre.

However, it is important to recognise that while some people may not be able to support the Centre in this way, they can become financial supporters simply by paying an annual membership fee.

If you know someone who might be willing to be a financial member, encourage them to contact Sabina Owen, or to call in to the Centre. To increase the number of our financial members would be of great assistance to our finances.

The Roster

Patricia Grierson has accepted responsibility for managing the roster of volunteers who staff the Centre. This means that she may contact volunteers about helping from time to time, and it is important to let her know as soon as possible (Phone 871 9342) if you are unable to get there.

Seen the Flags?

Volunteer Shirley Scott thinks that many potential visitors simply do not notice the Centre. So, she set out to make the place more visible when it is open. She created a couple of hand-painted pennants to draw attention to the place. More recently, a colourful sewn version has appeared flying from the noticeboard by the footpath.

When you see the flags flying, you know that we are in business.

STOP PRESS

The Centre has just been advised that the **Waipa District Council** has agreed to take over the maintenance of the section on which the Historic Visitor Centre is located. The Executive Committee has been negotiating for this for some time.

Thanks to Peter Druce, who has mown the lawns since the Centre was established, the Council takes over well-maintained lawns.