

# NEWSLETTER

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Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre

Te Whare Taonga o Ngaa Rohe o Arekahanara

798 Franklin Street, Pirongia 3802

Phone: (07) 871 9018

Email: [pirongia.hvc@xtra.co.nz](mailto:pirongia.hvc@xtra.co.nz)



## 2010 AGM

The drawcard for this year's AGM was carriage driving expert, and executive committee member, Nick van der Sande who talked about traditional carriage horse driving and the development of Pirongia Clydesdales. Nick, who was the driver of the much photographed DB Clydesdales and Jill, who was a member of staff when they were based at Paterangi, and their family continue the traditions at Pirongia Clydesdales. Nick explained how the equipment used on horse-drawn vehicles works and demonstrated the driving techniques which simply become more complex, but do not change as the size of the team grows.

Assisted by daughter Samantha, Nick used a Powerpoint show to illustrate his talk which was followed by a number of questions from an interested audience.



Samantha and Nick Van der Sande at the AGM.

## A change of President



Sabina and Robin in harness at the AGM

Long-standing President, Sabina Owen, did not stand for reelection this year. She was replaced by Robin Astridge who was secretary to the previous Executive Committee. Robin comes to the position with excellent credentials. He has executive committee experience in a number of historic societies, as well as a long association with the New Zealand Federation of Historical Societies. In 2000, he was awarded a QSM for his services. Although he lives in Te Awamutu, Robin worked in Pirongia for a number of years and has a deep interest in the history of the district.

Sabina has given stalwart service to the development of the Centre. She was heavily involved in having the building returned to Pirongia from Waikeria and has been associated with most initiatives over the 7 years since the Centre opened. We owe her a debt of thanks. However, her association with the Centre will continue as Secretary.

## A change of name

The AGM officially changed the name of the Centre which has become the *Pirongia Heritage and Information Centre: Te Whare Taonga o Ngaa Rohe o Arekahanara*. The change was recommended to the meeting by the Executive Committee which has become increasingly aware that many local people see the old name as implying that the Centre is for visitors rather than local people. The Maori part of the name which translates as 'the house of treasures of the districts of Alexandra' has not changed.

The meeting pointed out some possible technical problems which may occur when an organization changes its name. It was decided that for the first year, both the old and new names will be used and that the matter will be reviewed at the 1011 AGM.

## The new Committee

Those elected by the AGM were: President – Robin Astridge; Vice-President – Marilyn Yeates; Secretary – Sabina Owen; Treasurer – Murray Walter; Committee – Debbie Courtney; Basil Coles; Patricia Grierson; Garry Howard; Gloria King; Clare St.Pierre; Nick van der Sande; Barbara Walter. Sally Uerata and Haupai Puke were again appointed to represent Purekireki Marae and Te Kauhanganui respectively.

## Thanks for Support

**Norma Graham** who donated a new district map for use in the Centre. It is a vast improvement over the old one.

**Robert McWha** who took photographs and compiled information about the Hihikiwi access track to Mount Pirongia which was opened last year and **Paula McWha** who edited them into a very useful information booklet.

**Murray Walter** who installed brackets to secure the top-heavy library bookshelf unit to prevent it from toppling in an earthquake.

**Waipa District Council** for a Pirongia Ward Discretionary Grant of \$500 which was used to pay for a cabinet to house the Mary Scott book collection.

**Julie Karsten** who has photographed all the headstones in the Alexandra Cemetery.

**Paula McWha** who handled the bookings for both Path of War tours.

**Barbara Walter** and **Marilyn Yeates** for re-developing the Mary Scott display.

## Put it on your Calendar

### Monday 14 Feb. Members' BBQ

Join us at **Pirongia Clydesdales at 6.30 pm** for a Heritage & Information Centre BBQ to get the new year under way.

Bring meat to cook on the barbie, an accompanying dish to share and your favourite tippie.

There is no charge.

## An apology

*Circumstances beyond the control of the Executive Committee meant that the Heritage & Information Centre did not produce a Newsletter in August.*

*For this, we apologise.*

*This double edition provides some compensation.*

## Membership

Welcome to new members:

- Gloria King
- Judith Devaliant
- Nikki & David Samuels
- Bernie Nel
- Tony & Shirley Brown
- Peter & Coral Shaw

It is pleasing to report that we now have over 100 members. About half are family memberships, four are for groups and the remainder are individual.

**If you happen to talk with anyone about becoming a member**, don't forget to point out that although we are keen to recruit more volunteers to help staff the Heritage and Information Centre, that is not a necessary requirement of all members. Members can support the Centre simply by paying an annual membership fee.

**If you know someone who might be interested in helping at the Centre**, encourage them to talk with Sabina Owen (Phone 871 9992) about ways in which they might volunteer. We have volunteers who do a day a week. Others help on a day a month, and some a day, or half a day occasionally, when asked.

We would love to be able to open the Centre more frequently - but that will require more bodies.

## Path of War tour makeover

A new venture this year was an historic tour run during the winter and on a weekday. All previous tours took place on Saturdays between early summer and autumn. The Path of War tour was chosen because in the event of inclement weather, most of the sites could still be seen from the road. It was also decided to include a soup and a roll lunch. As a result the cost increased to \$35 a head.

The tour leader and driver, Robin Astridge, reported that "The outcome surprised us. All 11 minibus seats available were oversubscribed and a waiting list was created."

All participants enjoyed the day, together with the bonus Clydesdale horse and cart ride at the Little Clydesdale Cafe during the lunch break.

In view of its success, a second Path of War tour was held on Thursday 7 October 2010, during the school holidays. It too was fully booked.

## Visitor Numbers

At the end of November the total-to-date of 1560 is exactly the same as the total at this stage last year.

The first few months suggested that we were in for another boom year, but modest numbers in August and a rainy Craft Day in September meant that we are now just holding our own.

Some good attendance numbers over the summer months may help exceed last year's total.

In general, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays generate more visitors.

## 1865 Land Grants

It was recently discovered that the Hamilton office of Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) has an index of land grants made to Waikato settlers following the land confiscation in 1864. There are separate lists of individuals to whom acre town lots were allocated in Alexandra East and West, Harapipi (sic) Kihikihi, and Te Awamutu. There are also lists of farm lots allocated in the various land district parishes – Pirongia, Mangapiko, Puniu, Ngaroto, Tuhikaramea, etc.

A lot of work has already been completed by the Centre in identifying which soldier-settlers were allocated the various town acres in Alexandra East and West, using an old map where names were recorded and various other assessment and rating lists. However, our knowledge of where the same militiamen were allocated farm lots was extremely fragmentary. Our best resource was limited to two maps of Mangapiko Parish held by Te Awamutu Museum.

The LINZ Land Grants Index has proved useful in clarifying unreadable town lot allocations on the old maps. It also makes it possible to identify both the town acres and the farm lots allocated to most members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Waikato Regiment.

At this stage, the lists of land grants made in each settlement and parish have been transcribed, and work is under way compiling a list of 2<sup>nd</sup> Waikato Regiment militiamen together with their town acres and farm lots. That is a big job, but it is expected that the Centre will have a first draft before Christmas.

These lists will be particularly helpful for the steady trickle of visitors to the Centre seeking information about ancestors who lived here in the early years of settlement.

## Heritage Buildings

The Waipa Heritage Council is an advisory committee established by the Waipa District Council to advise it on heritage matters. It consists of representatives from the various communities in the Waipa Council District.

For some time, the Heritage Council has been helping Council to identify significant heritage buildings to be listed for recognition in the Council's 10-Year District Plan which is currently under review. Sabina Owen has been a member for many years and has now been replaced by Robin Astridge. Alan Hall, who is also a member, has compiled background research on some 15 buildings in and around Pirongia which are being considered for inclusion.

The buildings proposed for listing are:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| • 80 Beechey Street    | Walter & Adele Bell's cottage                 |
| • 121 Beechey Street   | The former St Joseph's Church.                |
| • 258 Beechey Street   | Sid & Sally Waite's cottage                   |
| • 532 Bellot Street    | Flat-fronted villa — formerly Foster's        |
| • 164 Crozier Street   | Cottage — The BNZ in 1876                     |
| • 378 Crozier Street   | Bromell's cottage                             |
| • 661 Franklin Street  | Rosel — The Bell Homestead                    |
| • 700 Franklin Street  | Alexandra/Pirongia Library                    |
| • 702 Franklin Street  | Original Alexandra School building            |
| • 798 Franklin Street  | The second St Saviour's Church                |
| • 815 Franklin Street  | Alexandra Hotel                               |
| • 997 Franklin Street  | Pirongia Memorial Hall                        |
| • 1219 Franklin Street | Te Awamutu Railway Station Master's House     |
| • 839 McClure Street   | Auburn — the Tisdall Villa                    |
| • 220 Parry Street     | The Maples — formerly Sedgemoor (Miss Miller) |

It seems that two problems must be overcome in order to have these listed. Some of the buildings have been moved, and some experts appear to question the heritage value of re-located buildings, although there are examples of such buildings which are considered to be of regional and even national significance. The other is that many of these buildings are of local, rather than regional or national significance.

We argue that heritage values are not frozen in time. Buildings are changed and moved, and the changes often add to their heritage value. Thus, the heritage significance of the second St Saviour's Church is added to by the relocations and changes to the building which have given it three different "lives".

We also argue that the District Plan list of heritage buildings should include structures of local significance, and should not be restricted to those of regional and national significance. That is the territory of the NZ Historic Places Trust.

Sabina Owen has presented a submission to the Council on behalf of the Centre and the Community, requesting that all these buildings be listed in the 10 year plan.

## Military Deserters

It is widely recognized that after members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Waikato Regiment were allocated land when the settlement of Alexandra was established, many either found substitutes to take their places in the frontier garrison, or simply walked away, leaving their town lots and farm blocks. Even today, nearly 150 years later, it is not unusual to have a visitor come to the Centre to find out about an ancestor, telling us, in a hushed voice, that he is believed to have deserted. There seems to be little appreciation of the circumstances which led to such an action.

The men of the Waikato Militia were recruited by the New Zealand government in 1863, in Auckland, Otago and Australia to support the British Army in its 1863-4 campaign against Maori Kingites defending their Waikato lands. The militiamen understood that they were being recruited not only as soldiers, but as potential military settlers who, when the British regiments had succeeded in occupying the contested territory, would become eligible for grants of land which would become theirs when three years of military service had been completed. The grants would consist of a town acre plus a block of farmland, the extent of which would vary with the military rank of the militiaman. A private, for example, would receive 50 acres, a sergeant 80 acres, a subaltern 100 acres and a captain 300 acres. The land was to be allocated by ballot for each rank, around settlements of at least 100 allotments, each with a military stockade. Each man would be entitled to pay, rations and allowances until he was allocated his land, and rations would continue to be provided for 12 months to allow him to break his land in. He would be provided with military equipment and would be required to continue to train and exercise as a militiaman until his 3 years of service had elapsed. At that stage, his allocated land would become freehold. The agreement entitled militiamen to relinquish their land entitlement to any other person approved of by the government.

After the Battle of Orakau in April 1864, and the last encounter of the Waikato campaign near Maungatautari a few weeks later, the Kingite forces were pushed south of the Puniu River. The Waipa Valley, as far as the Puniu, was occupied by the Government. However, it was not until December of 1864 that the government formally confiscated the captured territory. In the meantime, military settlements were established at Alexandra, Kihikihi and Cambridge and that at Harapepe was to follow in the new year. Surveyors immediately began to survey the town acres for the new settlements and the farm blocks on the surrounding land. In late 1864, land allocation ballots began by rank in descending order. This meant that the first allocations went to those of highest rank with the result that the best land tended to be allocated to officers who were also entitled to the largest allocations. However, that was within the rules of the agreement under which militiamen were recruited.

At that stage, the militiamen were still living under canvas in primitive conditions, anticipating that when their land was allocated, they would receive substantial back pay for their military service which would provide them with resources to develop their town acres and farm allotments. As time went by, however, many became increasingly resentful of the restrictions imposed upon them. Although the first civilian stores had been set up at Alexandra, storekeepers were prevented by the military authorities from selling beer in what appears to have been a somewhat ineffective attempt to make the settlement teetotal. Leave was almost impossible to obtain, which was particularly hard on married men whose wives and children were living in Auckland. Harsh military discipline did not help. So, at the time when land allocations were made and the recruits were taken off pay, the first indication that the cash-strapped government had decided against paying the anticipated back pay added to the feelings of resentment. Protest meetings resulted and petitions were submitted seeking their entitlements.

The general economics of the time did not help. Nor did the government's next decision to halve the rations entitlement to settlers. Prices in Alexandra were higher than those for the same commodities in Auckland.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that from quite an early stage, militiamen elected to walk away from their land entitlements. In the face of duplicity by the government over back pay and ration entitlements, many feared that having cleared and developed the land allocated to them, they might never be given freehold ownership. Some obtained substitutes who agreed to take their places in return for payment and their land entitlement. The Waikato Regiment nominal rolls record a substantial number of men who enrolled at Alexandra at that time, as substitutes. Many appear to have been young men who came here in search of adventure and opportunity. Others were men living in the settlement who saw the opportunity to obtain land at minimal cost. For example, storekeeper John Aubin enrolled in 1865 as a substitute for a man who enlisted in October 1863, making Aubin eligible for land after just 3 months in the Militia.

Others simply walked away – effectively deserting. Prospects elsewhere, in places like the Thames goldfields were far more attractive.

The last straw appears to have been an economic downturn in 1867 when the exodus from all the Waikato military settlements reached epidemic proportions. One newspaper report records 25 people leaving Alexandra on one sailing of the riverboat *Gymnotus*. It is hardly surprising that it was about this time that the government made the decision to form the Armed Constabulary.

There was an important difference between 'desertion in the face of the enemy' and desertion prompted by the economic circumstances of the later 1860s.

## Those Old Photos

Recently, when preparing materials to support the listing of local heritage buildings on the new 10-Year Waipa District Plan, we have been reminded of the value of old photographs. It was a coincidence that around the same time, Dick Singleton from the Hutt Valley, who is a descendant of the Aubin family, donated a DVD disk of photographs from Reg Bell's photo album, and Joy McGregor who, as Joy Harper lived at 220 Parry Street (formerly Miss Miller's house) when her father farmed a number of properties in that area, also brought in a number of photos. Both sets of pictures are invaluable, particularly when people and/or buildings can be identified.

Sometimes people have old photos which are far from works of art, but are excellent archive material. Even if you do not know all the people involved, there may be other, older residents of the village who may be able to identify them.

Before you throw such photos out, let us see them. We will tell you if they are likely to be appropriate for our collection. If they are, you could choose to either donate them or allow us to make copies.

## From the Centre's Diary

The Heritage & Information Centre regularly hosts groups. If they book in advance, we will arrange a talk, if asked and lead a walking tour of selected sites.

- 15 Jul Robin Astridge led a re-vamped mid-week Path of War Tour which was booked out.
- 05 Aug 29 visitors from Ngaruawahia Schools visited Matakītaki Pa and the Centre, followed by a guided tour of the East Redoubt and the AC Redoubt with Alan Hall. This the third year such a group has visited.
- 13 Aug Visit by Mrs Grace Shaw who had earlier gifted Mary Scott's typewriter to the Centre. *See article on page 4.*
- 27 Sep Two busloads of WINTEC early childhood students visited Matakītaki Pa and the Centre in two separate groups.
- 02 Oct Alan Hall hosted a visit by 20 members of the Riley Car Club.
- 07 Oct A repeat of the mid-week Path of War tour led by Robin Astridge which was again fully booked.
- 20 Oct Visits to the Centre by groups of Pi-rongia School pupils to view the art displays.
- 10 Nov Robin Astridge hosted a group of mature students from Te Wananga o

## A philosophical question

Discovered in an 1872 newspaper:

*To the Editor: Sir,*

*Will any of your readers solve the following question in dispute at this place, Coromandel. "Does one spot constitute a spotted dog, or does it require two spots, or more?"*

*Yours etc., Alpha.*

## Those first rugby games

It is widely known that the first local game of rugby football was played at Alexandra on 2 September 1876 when an Alexandra team, selected and captained by an armed constable named Forbes played a Te Awamutu team. However, it is often not recognised that the game played at that time was very different from the game of today.

The game was played in four 30 minute spells, with a change of ends after each spell. It was won by Te Awamutu, and the score of 2 goals to nil indicates a different scoring system. At that time, points were scored only for kicks over the goalposts. A touchdown over the opposition's line yielded no points, but gave the scoring team the right to a kick at goal ("a trial at goal") from a position in line with the touchdown; more-or-less like a conversion kick in the present day game. Te Awamutu scored two touchdowns, each converted to points by a successful goal kick. The newspaper account also relates that at one stage, an Alexandra player attempted a drop-kick which was blown back by a stiff SW wind. Drop-kicks at goal and penalty kicks were the other ways by which goals could be scored.

Two weeks later, a return match was played on a field set out "on Mr White's paddock" in Te Awamutu. That game was again won by Te Awamutu by 1 goal, 3 touchdowns and 6 forcedowns to Alexandra's 4 forcedowns. This meant that Te Awamutu touched down beyond Alexandra's line 3 times, but were successful in scoring only one goal. They had also forced Alexandra to touch down behind their own line 6 times. In reply, Alexandra was able only to force Te Awamutu to touch down in its own goal area 4 times. At the end of the game, however, the score was simply 1-0. The reporting of touchdowns signalled a desire for them to earn points. Eventually, such scoring practices followed in the 1880s.

Other major points of difference in the early games resulted from the off-side rule of the day. Any player ahead of the ball was off-side, even in a "scrimmage" which loosely covered the equivalent of rucks and mauls where players were obliged to kick or drive the ball forward rather than heel or pass it back because that would put them offside. The same rule also meant that a player in the clear who caught a kicked ball ("on the bound") could run with it and perhaps touch down, or kick it ahead, but he could not pass it back to another supporting player because that would place him off-side. This meant that at that time there were no set scrums or systematic passing. These did not eventuate until after 1888 when there was a general change in the off-side rule.

Because the set scrum had not come into being, there were no specialist forward positions — simply "forwards" to muscle the ball forward. It is hardly surprising that a Wellington report of a game from this time described it as a "fellowly fight". Other accounts of games at that time reveal that positions of half-back (often more than one), three-quarter backs and full backs existed.

The rules governing games such as the 1876 encounters between Alexandra and Te Awamutu were played under rules agreed to by the clubs involved. It was not until the 1880s that provincial unions of local clubs established regional rules which varied from one union to another. Eventually, following the establishment of the New Zealand Rugby Union in 1892, national rules for the games were agreed upon.

## Burglars captured in Bell's Store

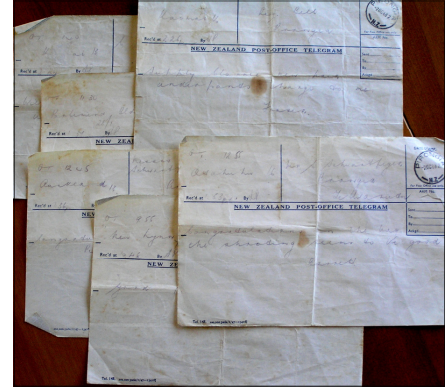
In October 1948, Pirongia was in the news when two escaped prisoners were captured in Bell's Store, on the corner of Franklin and Crozier Streets. The sound of breaking glass in the evening, when the shop was closed, alerted the Bromell family, living nearby, that something was amiss. Bernard Bromell got on his bike and rode to the house of Clarrie Schwartzfeger who worked at the store and had a key. Mr Schwartzfeger brought his shotgun, and the two men hurried to the store where they opened the door to confront at gunpoint two hungry, escaped prisoners from Auckland. Clarrie Schwartzfeger guarded the prisoners while Bernard Bromell went to a telephone to call the Te Awamutu police.

A newspaper account tells that when the police arrived 40 minutes later, the two prisoners were being closely guarded in the building by their captors, backed up outside by "several residents who had arrived with picks, axes and other weapons of a similar nature".

It transpired that the burglars were two Auckland prisoners who had escaped from the Auckland prison quarry several days earlier. Initially they had travelled north to the Kaukapakapa area where they eluded capture by stealing a car, which was how they eventually arrived in Pirongia.

The Heritage and Information Centre was reminded of the incident a few weeks ago during a visit by John Williamson, Schwartzfeger's grandson. More recently, John's sister, Heather Morris, came during a visit from Australia, to give the Centre a set of telegrams received by Clarrie Schwartzfeger after news of the capture appeared in the news papers. This material will form the basis of a future display.

In the meantime, if you are interested, ask at the desk to read a copy of the *New Zealand Herald* report of the incident published on 7 October, 1948. As one family member commented "They don't write reports like that any more".



*The telegrams gifted by Heather Morris included one of congratulation from Waikato MP Geoff Finn and another from a former resident reading "Congratulations on the bag. The shooting must be good."*

## Mary Scott's typewriter

Have you seen the Centre's new Mary Scott display which was developed by Barbara Walter and Marilyn Yeates? A number of our older members remember Mary Scott from when she lived in Pekanui Road and know that she was a prolific writer who, in the 1930s wrote regular newspaper columns about country life to supplement her family's income. Later she turned to writing novels about life in rural New Zealand. In total she turned out 35 novels, some of them co-authored by Joyce West.

As a writer, one of Mary's most valued tools of trade was her typewriter. Initially she used a bulky office machine which was replaced by a Remington Junior portable model. Eventually, other more up-to-date typewriters followed. The centrepiece of the new Mary Scott display is her first portable typewriter which she later gave to her friend Susan Dassler with whom she had been at school and who lived at Te Rau-a-Moa. Mary Scott's daughter, Sylvia, remembers riding with her mother from Pekanui Road to Te Rau-a-Moa to visit her.

Grace Shaw, Susan Dassler's daughter, tells that her mother had been writing poetry for some time but was unsuccessful in having her hand-written pieces accepted for publication. Mary Scott, advised that typed copy would be more acceptable and gave her the Remington Junior. Using it at the age of 80, Susan had poems accepted for publication. Two were re-printed in the Ngutunui School & District Jubilee booklet.

The portable typewriter was kept by Grace Shaw when her mother died. Recently, she presented it to the Centre where conservation of it included freezing it to kill borer in the baseboard. It is still as used by Susan Dassler with sticking plaster labels on some of the keys where the insignia had worn off.

Come in and enjoy the display which includes the Centre's growing collection of Mary Scott novels. Copies of many are available to be borrowed by members.



*Grace Shaw visiting the new Mary Scott display*