

NEWSLETTER

No. 24, May, 2011

Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre
Te Whare Taonga o Ngaa Rohe o Arekahanara

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Historic Tours Programme

The Executive Committee has approved a programme of historical tours to be run over the next 12 months.

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|-----|-------------|---|----------------|
| Sun | 31 Jul 2011 | Walking tour of the central village | Alan Hall |
| Wed | 12 Oct 2011 | Northern Tour: Matakītaki, Mill sites, Waiari | Alan Hal |
| Sun | 30 Oct 2011 | Walking tour: Matakītaki to the Cemetery | Alan Hall |
| Sat | 19 Nov 2011 | Path of War: Te Rore to Orakau | Robin Astridge |
| Sat | 18 Feb 2012 | Ngutunui District Tour | Keith Ormsby |
| Sat | 24 Mar 2012 | Southern Tour: Mangatoatoa & Mission Sites | Alan Hall |
| Thu | 19 Apr 2012 | Path of War: Tuakau to Ngaruawahia | Robin Astridge |

Inquire at the Centre for more details about the sites visited on each tour, times and costs.

Bookings may be made at the Centre.

Preference is given to members booking for new tours such as that of the Ngutunui district.

Oral History

Following a successful interview with Mrs Grace Shaw (now aged 100), the Centre has turned its focus to Joe Hughes who, with his brother Tom, started up the Hughes Bros Coalmines at Te Rau-a-Moa in the 1950's.

Joe, who is now aged 86, lives in Hamilton.

This Oral History project, like that with Mrs Shaw, will provide material for a new display in the Centre. Mining items used at Te Rau-a-Moa have been gifted, together with copies of old newspapers and photos which provide an insight into the early days of coal mining in the district. The mine began without electricity and little in the way of safety gear. For 2 years the brothers lived in a tent and washed in the creek.

Two mines were operated in Okoko Road. By 1958 after a number of years of operation, it was reported in the *Te Awa-mutu Courier* that 'they have driven some ten miles of underground shafts and supplied an average of 10,000 tons of fuel a year'.

In the new display, it is hoped to bring the Hughes Bros mining era to life, adding a new dimension to Pirongia's history.



Joe Hughes

Sabina Owen

AGM speaker on 'Alexandra: The first 10 years'

The AGM will be held in the Centre on Tuesday, 21 June at 7:30 pm.

At 8:00 pm, our speaker will be **Alan Hall**, a member of the Heritage and Information Centre, who has been investigating the early history of Alexandra.

Alan will give an illustrated talk entitled *Alexandra: The first 10 years*, about the establishment and early development of the settlement between 1864 and 1874. He will discuss why the original military settler scheme failed, but how local leadership and settler initiative ensured that Alexandra continued to develop during the Armed Constabulary years.

Not to be missed. Members of the public will be most welcome. Bring a friend.

Supper will follow.

Thanks for Support

Debbie Courtney for her workshop for volunteers which involved an introduction to using Past Perfect to access the Centre's growing archives database.

Patricia Grierson who manages the duty roster for volunteers which is vital to the effective day-to-day operation of the Centre.

All our volunteers, no matter what they do. Without their varied contributions, we could not function.

Some advice for Wills

A man who has been married twice to women named Catherine advised his friends against taking dupli-Kates!

Waikato Times, 1877.

A Reminder

This is the time of year for renewals of membership. There is a membership renewal form with this newsletter. Remember that only paid up members are eligible to vote at the AGM.

For your diary

Tues, 21 June 2011:

**Heritage & Information Centre
AGM, 7:30 pm, at the Centre.**

Thurs, 26 January 2012:

**BBQ for Volunteers and Mem-
bers at Pirongia Clydesdales**

Volunteer training

A successful workshop for volunteers was held recently. Particular attention was paid to helping volunteers to complete acquisition forms correctly because the Centre's records stem from them.

Debbie Courtney also patiently instructed a number of volunteers on basic use of the computer. Computer usage will be an ongoing matter as one short lesson is not sufficient to develop confidence in individuals with limited computer experience.

From the Committee



Visually most striking, the four new panels for the notice board outside the Centre are in place. Well done the Residence and Ratepayers Assn on this great addition to the Village. The panels were installed without having to remove the Maori kowhaiwhai panels, which was a bonus for the installers.

A new letter box has been mounted but the numbers are posing some problems by not sticking well. Nothing that a little time and glue will not fix!

Have you seen the new sign as you enter the doorway? Thanks to Sabina for allowing her telephone number to be used as a contact when the Centre is not open. When the old sign was taken to the sign-writer as a pattern, we were asked how long the original had been up. The reply was, "About four years". The sign-writer was amazed as he expected life of the material used to be about six months!

Planning is in progress for a number of "outings" from the Centre over the next twelve months. See the details on page 1. Note also the arrangements for the annual members and volunteers BBQ in January. This will again be held at Pirongia Clydesdales.

In April, Frank Thorne, of Ngati Hikairo, brought the Executive Committee up-to-date about the iwi's work with local authorities on identifying Maori Heritage sites. This is work which we should endorse.

Debbie Courtney has completed the 2009 accessioning and we are delighted that funding has been granted to enable the continuation of this work. Debbie has already commenced 2010 accessioning.

The President verbally supported the Centre's submission for annual funding at the recent hearings by Waipa District Council.

Another year is fast drawing to a close and without naming names I would like to personally thank all involved with running the Centre. They deserve a hearty vote of thanks for their efforts. Without our volunteers the Centre would not be able to function and the Village would be the poorer – thank you all.

Robin Astridge

Wanted

Volunteers willing to help staff the Heritage and Information Centre.

Find out what is involved by talking with Sabina Owen (871 9992) or another volunteer.

Welcome new members

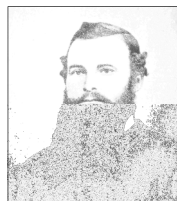
- Rowena Whale
- Audrey van der Hoeven
- Frank Thorne
- Gaelene and Pat Rail
- Jane Lyttle

Two Armed Constabulary Commanders

The New Zealand Armed Constabulary was formed in 1867, and in 1868 a contingent was based at Alexandra to police the confiscation boundary and secure the settlement which had been rendered vulnerable by the Weld Government's decision to pay off the men of the 2nd Regiment of the Waikato Militia. This was followed by a major exodus of settlers from the district which reached epic proportions in 1867.

The Armed Constabulary was a mobile force of Mounted and Foot Armed Constables and the number based locally seems to have never exceeded about 60, only a few of whom were Mounted Constables. The men of the AC were employed on road and bridge building when not engaged in defensive duties, although, as the diary of AC Neil McLeod tells us, they were also regularly sent to Hamilton for musketry training.

When McLeod was first based at Alexandra in 1871, the local commander was Captain William Newland who held the rank of Sub-Inspector. Newland was born in Taranaki and was recruited as a colonial militiaman early in the first Taranaki War when he was recognized as a brave and determined man who made a good officer and was quickly promoted. He served in active roles in both the second Taranaki War and the pursuit of Te Kooti on the East Coast, and his appointment to Alexandra indicates the importance that his superiors gave to the local appointment near the confiscation line, and the main entry point to what had become the 'King Country'. Precisely when Newland left Alexandra to return to farming in Taranaki is not clear, but according to McLeod, his position had been taken over by Captain Morrison in 1874.



Newland

Henry Charles Morrison also volunteered for military duty in Taranaki, soon after his arrival there in 1860. He served in the Taranaki Mounted Volunteers before being commissioned in 1866 to command redoubts in the Patea District. In 1869, Morrison was made a Sub-Inspector in the Armed Constabulary and was involved in the pursuit of Titokowaru in Taranaki, and the Urewera campaign in pursuit of Te Kooti. He was appointed to Alexandra in 1872, probably because by then Te Kooti was in the King Country.

During his time at Alexandra, between 1872 and 1878, Morrison is known to have participated in the life of the settlement. He was an enthusiastic cricketer who was a foundation member when the Alexandra Cricket Club was first formed in 1876. He acted as a judge for the Boxing Day Races and, with Major Mair, judged Maori Exhibits at the Te Awamutu Agricultural Show. In 1874, he married Ellen Tregear in Auckland. She was the sister of Edward Tregear, a friend of William Mair, who was working on surveying and road-making in the Waipa area. The Morrisons, became members of St Saviour's Church where they had two children baptised in 1875 and 1877.



Morrison

In 1878, Morrison was transferred from Alexandra to Taranaki. Later, in 1873 he was posted to Kawhia for two years, when an AC presence was established there, before being appointed to command batteries at North Head, Auckland.

Impediments to upstream navigation

One reason why Alexandra was originally located where Pirongia stands today, is that immediately up-stream, a rapid had been identified by Captain Cadell, Superintendent of River Transport, as marking the upper-limit of steam navigation.

Member Tony Roxburgh, who has navigated the Waipa by canoe and small boat for some distance above Pirongia, tells us that the obstacle immediately upstream is a layer of ignimbrite rock just above where the Mangauika Stream joins the Waipa. That was probably the site of the rapid identified by Cadell.

In August 1882, when the first Whatiwhatihoie bridge had been constructed, a riverboat, the *Lilly* tried to tow a barge to the bridge carrying turf for the approaches. Although the steamer seems to have negotiated the obstacle, she was unable to tow the less manoeuvrable barge over it.

Thus, it is likely that the rapid could be negotiated by a steamer, as on this occasion, when there was a fresh in the river. There was at least one occasion, recorded on a photograph by Rosa Daley, when the same riverboat made it as far as a spot higher up referred to as Te Kopua.

Tony Roxburgh says that there is another hidden ledge of rock further up-stream, beyond the confluence of the Puniu River, which caused serious damage to his outboard motor, and a much bigger ridge near the site of Whakairoiro Pa, where the Moakurua and Ngakoahia Streams join the Waipa. No riverboat would have been able to get above that point.

Newspaper reports tell us that in the 1870s and early 1880s, Maori from the King Country brought grain and other produce to Alexandra by canoe, and that they were dependent on higher river levels to get to Alexandra. On at least one occasion, a laden canoe is said to have been capsized at one of these obstacles, probably that near Whakairoiro Pa.