

# NEWSLETTER

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

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## Pirongia Motor Transport

Initiatives by Gloria King and Joy McGregor have unearthed much useful information about the development of local trucking services. Gloria organised an afternoon tea at the Centre where she, Lois Kendall and Cedric Dickinson shared old photographs and talked about their recollections which were used to develop the beginnings of a timeline. A few days later, Joy McGregor arranged for Roland Mounsey to visit the Centre when again photographs were shared and used to explore his remarkably detailed recollections of his father's transport firm which operated here between 1924 and 1944. Further details emerged when Alan Hall talked about photographs with Peter Kendall.

The emerging picture suggests that the earliest motor transport firm was probably that of Fred Parsons who came to the area from Kohimarama, Auckland, about 1922. He was listed as a motor driver in Pirongia in 1922



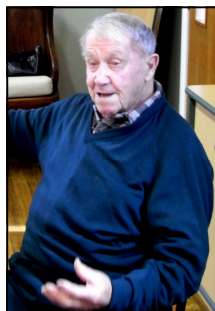
*The early truck with solid rubber tyres at the back and inflated tyres at the front*

and 1923, but by 1924, was operating in Te Awamutu where he ran a trucking firm for many years, later becoming the mayor between 1950 and 1953. However, so far, we know little about Parsons' transport firm at Pirongia.

Auriel Mounsey seems to have filled the gap in 1924, when Parsons moved. But thanks to Roland Mounsey's detailed recollections, we learned a great deal about the growth and development of A.R. Mounsey Carriers which operated from a depot on Franklin Street, next to the present-day tennis courts. The family lived in the cottage where Jo and Dave Evans now live and Roland told us that his father planted the two phoenix palms which now dwarf the house. A photograph of an early

truck shows solid rubber tyres on the rear wheels and inflated tyres at the front. Eventually, the business operated 6 trucks. Over the years, fertiliser was carried to farms, fenceposts were brought from as far away as Ngaroma, wool bales were carried to the railway station at Te Awamutu, sheep were transported in one of the first double level sheep crates in the district, firewood and coal were bagged and delivered and a cream run collected cream for the Te Awamutu dairy factory. Roland tells that at age 12, he often drove the cream run before school.

Auriel Mounsey sold the business to Butler Bros in 1944 who, in turn, sold it to Flemings before it was broken up as Peter Kendall, Jim King and Colin Wilson set up separate businesses, each with its own local depot.



*Roland Mounsey*



*Gloria King, Cedric Dickinson, Marilyn Yeates, Joy McGregor and Lois Kendall talk about local transport*

## Another Successful Year

At the AGM held at the Centre on 26 June, President Robin Astridge reviewed the year's activities, noting that the Centre was visited by a record 2612 people during the financial year, that membership now exceeds 100 members, that a number of successful tours were run during the year and that the Centre is becoming increasingly involved with school field trips. He paid tribute to the roles played by the Executive Committee members and our volunteers who regularly open the Centre.

The election of officers for the 2012-2013 year returned the following officers: President: Robin Astridge; Vice-President: Marilyn Yeates; Secretary: Sabina Owen; Treasurer: Debbie Courtney. Executive Committee: Basil Coles, Patricia Grierson, Garry Howard, Gloria King, Clare St Pierre, Nick van der Sande, and Barbara Walter; Te Kauhanganui nominee: Tom Roa; Purekireki Marae nominee: Sally Uerata.

Following the AGM, Garry Howard talked to the meeting about his interest in family history and heritage matters, stressing the importance of preserving evidence of our local history before it is lost. He made specific reference to displays in the Centre.

## Thanks for Support

- **Waipa District Council** responded to our submission to the 10 Year Draft Plan 2012-2022, that the annual grant to the Centre should be inflation adjusted. The latest Annual Grant was increased from \$6,200 to \$6,400.
- **Pub Charity** for a generous grant of \$600 to purchase a new colour printer.
- **Baillie Ingham Accountants** of Otoro-hanga, who again reviewed the Centre's annual accounts. Baillie Ingham (through Layne Kerr) have provided this service since the Centre was established and their continuing support is greatly appreciated.
- **Les Yeates, Charlie Coles, Nick van der Sande and Sami Lattalainen**, who mounted the old church hymn book cabinet on a wall for use as a display cabinet.

## Elsie Russell

We were saddened, in July, to learn of the death of Elsie Russell, a long-standing member and supporter of the Centre. Elsie's husband, Bruce, grew up in the Pirongia area and after his death in 2004, the Russell family were generous supporters of the Centre, donating more than \$1000 to the library fund over recent years. There is also a kauri tree behind the archives store which was planted in memory of Bruce. Elsie is remembered in her own right as someone who contributed enormously to community life in Te Awamutu where, besides participating wholeheartedly in the activities of a bewildering range of organizations, she also served three terms, with distinction, as a borough councillor. She was awarded the QSM for her community contributions in 1993. She is sadly missed.

## Wanted – Photos of the Pirongia Saleyards

We know that monthly stock sales were held in Pirongia in the 1950s and 1960s. The saleyards were located across the road from the Memorial Hall. The Centre would like to obtain photographs of the saleyards.

If you have a photo or know someone who has one, we would love to make copies for our archives. They do not have to be works of art!

## From the Committee

- The Ministry of Economic Development Companies Office has officially issued a revised Certificate of Incorporation (No 1323304) changing our name to *The Pirongia Heritage and Information Centre – Te Whare Taonga O Ngaa Rohe O Arekahanara*. It is now official!
- The Committee hopes to have the Centre repainted by the end of the summer. Quotations for the work are being processed before grants are solicited.
- A position has been advertised for an administrative assistant to work at the Centre for 5 hours a week. The appointee will support the work of Collections Manager and Treasurer, Debbie Courtney, and Secretary, Sabina Owen.
- Wanted: Additional volunteers to go onto the staffing roster. Even a day a month would be a useful contribution. The work is not onerous.

## A Pub Charity Grant

Recently, the Centre received a further grant of \$600 from Pub Charity to buy a new colour printer which has now been purchased and installed. In our last newsletter we reported that a new laser mono-printer had been installed as the workhorse machine for everyday copying. However, we have a continuing need to print in colour for displays and some publicity material. The new colour printer, which is more expensive to operate, will not be used for everyday copy work.

The Centre is grateful for the grant and the continuing support of Pub Charity whose generosity is greatly appreciated.

## New life for an old cupboard.

A glass-fronted cupboard which was once used for church hymn books has been upgraded and mounted on the north wall of the Centre to display artifacts which include Maori adzes from Paterangi and Hikurangi as well as some hand-made tile drainage pipes found on the Parry Street site of the house built for Miss Emily Miller. The tile pipes were probably associated with the original Alexandra Hotel which Thomas Finch operated on the same town lot from 1865 to 1870.



*Sami Lattalainen, Les Yeates, Charlie Coles and Nick van der Sande position the refurbished cupboard on the north wall.*

## Where was the rifle range?

Annual reports from the Armed Constabulary to the NZ Government during the 1870s indicate that there was a rifle range at Alexandra. The range was used by Armed Constables for musketry instruction and practice. It was also used by the Alexandra Rifle Ranger Volunteers (See Newsletter 19). A newspaper report gives the top 10 scores by members of the Militia and Rifle Ranger Volunteers who shot there for General Government District Prizes in May 1873.

An undated map of Pirongia, on which is recorded information from the early 1900s, shows a Rifle Range Reserve on Frontier Road. The range was located between the present olive grove and across the Town Belt to the base of the Mangapiko Ridge. Presumably, the butts, where targets were located, were sited at the foot of the hill.

Evidence confirming this was provided by a long-time resident, the late Bill Ellis who, in the 1990s, told his neighbour, Tony Roxburgh, that when he was young, he dug lead from spent rounds in the hillside (behind the butts) to melt down for fishing sinkers. He described them as "Snider rounds". Snider-Enfield rifles were used by the AC.

The range was still in use in April 1911 when local volunteers took part in an annual shooting competition for a cup presented by Miss Emily Miller. Each of the 24 competitors fired 7 rounds at 200 yards and 500 yards and the standard was said to be very creditable. Private B Symes won the cup, closely followed by Privates R. Dumbell, G. McDonald and Sergeant R. Kewish. The cup was presented by Miss Miller at a social in the Public Hall that evening.

At present, it is not known when the range ceased to be used, but it is not marked on the map from a survey completed in 1927 and two sections affected by it were sold by the Government in 1931. If you can add to our knowledge about it from family stories, please leave a message at the Centre.

## Te Ataireihia

An entry in the *Evening Post* in August 1913, reported that Mr J.G. Berry, who farmed at Whatiwhathioe, had presented to the Auckland Museum, the carved bow and stern sections of a war canoe which had been left on the land he was farming in the area where the Whatiwhathioe settlement of King Tawhiao had been located in the 1880s.

The Auckland War Memorial Museum has confirmed that it still has these objects in its collection. Apparently, they are the carved sections of a large war canoe named Te Ataireihia, which was one of three used by the first Maori King, Pōtatau (earlier known as Te Wherowhero), when he resided at Ngaruawahia before the Waikato War. Te Ataireihia is said to have been over 80 feet (24.3 metres) in length, and was capable of carrying 140 paddlers and fighting men. According to information from Messrs J.G. Berry and H.H. Reynolds in 1913, it was left, neglected, near the Waikato Heads during the Waikato War, but was subsequently repaired and re-decorated by Major Te Wheoro for the purpose of conveying Sir George Grey, then Premier of the Colony, to a meeting on the Upper Waipa, probably in 1879. Later, it is said to have been made tapu after it was used to convey the remains of Tawhiao to Taupiri.

There are a number of inconsistencies in the information about the canoe held by the Auckland Museum which need to be sorted out. The information to date came from pakeha sources. Maori accounts of the story of Te Ataireihia, and events associated with the presentation of its taurapa (stern post) and tauihu (bow section) to the museum would be particularly valuable. If anyone can help us with information, please contact the Centre.

## Sedgemoor Re-visited

Recently, a small group of heritage experts visited Miss Emily Miller's house in Parry Street, formerly Sedgemoor, and now known as The Maples. The visit was arranged by Alan Hall to find out more about the history of the building which has a number of distinctive features. Historical enquiry indicates that Miss Miller moved into a new house on the site in either late 1897 or early 1898. She was certainly living there in 1900 when the decision was made to build the second St Saviour's Church on the AC Redoubt site. Thus, it has been assumed that the present house was built about 1897.

However, there are a number of features of the building which appear to match architectural styles of 1910 or even the 1920s. These include the clay tile roof, aspects of the casement windows and the Art Nouveau fireplace surrounds.

A family story says that Miss Miller brought the plans for the house from Britain. However, the adaptation of the house to the site suggests that it was designed by a New Zealand architect familiar with the site. Anne McEwan, who writes the weekly 'Memory Boxes' column in the *Waikato Times*, and heritage architect Roz Empson suggest that the plan could have been the work of the Auckland architects Bamford & Pierce who planned buildings constructed in the Waikato. Some features are reminiscent of other buildings planned by them and Bamford is said to have planned a house for someone around Pirongia in 1908.

It is possible that Miss Miller had another dwelling built on the site in 1897, and later had it removed to allow the construction of the present house. Maurice Borland, one of the present owners, heard a story from the late Mrs Schwartfeger that her father had been involved in the removal of a house from that locality in the early 1900s. Thus, it remains possible that the present dwelling was indeed constructed about 1910. The answer to the conundrum may be found in an early edition of the *Waipa Post*. Watch this space!