



NEWSLETTER

No.3: February, 2006

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

More Days Open

From February, we will try opening the Visitor Centre on four days a week. In addition to opening on Sundays and Mondays, we will be assessing the effectiveness of also opening on Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Monday openings were originally the initiative of Shirley Scott. Unfortunately, other commitments meant that late in the year she was unable to continue. However, the addition of Len Styles to the roster has made it possible to keep opening on Mondays.

Glenyss and Alan Hall will open the Centre on Wednesdays and Fridays. However, we would love to have more volunteers who are willing to provide support on occasions when they are not available.

Volunteering is not all that onerous. It is a great way to find out about the district, and you meet some great people.

Talk with Patricia Grierson (Phone 871- 9342) or Sabina Owen if you are willing to give it a go, even if only on mornings (10:00 to 12:30) or afternoons (12:30 to 3:00).

Auckland Museum Institute

The archives of the Auckland Museum include collections of regional and national importance; it is not simply a museum about Auckland. Thus, it has items of interest to places in the Waikato and the King Country, including the Pirongia district. Recently, for example, when seeking a copy of a portrait of Gustavus Von Tempsky, we were able to obtain a scanned image from the Auckland Museum and it will be of obvious interest to us to find out more about other archived material relevant to our district.

The Auckland Museum Institute is the Auckland branch of the Royal Society of New Zealand which also acts as the organization of friends of the Auckland Museum, maintaining an extensive membership and managing its system of volunteers. Members receive regular information about new displays and enjoy concessions when visiting.

In October, members of the Executive Committee of the Auckland Museum Institute spent some time at the Visitor Centre during a day trip to Kawhia. Over



afternoon tea (Picture, left), Vice-President Marilyn Yeates and other committee members discussed with them the potential benefits for the Visitor Centre becoming an institutional member.

In November, our Committee agreed to apply for institutional membership of the Auckland Museum Institute, which has since been confirmed. This will allow us to find out more about the museum's resources relevant to our district, gain access to expert staff for advice, make reciprocal visits possible, and may allow us to borrow some items of local interest for display.

Membership has also given us two passes which may be used by financial members of the Pirongia Historic Visitor Centre who wish to visit the Auckland Museum, making them eligible for membership privileges during their visit. For access to these passes, inquire at the Centre.

Thanks for recent support

DanzBagz, Otorohanga for sewing, free of charge, the flag which now flies at the roadside when the Visitor Centre is open.

Kevin Farrell of PW Automatic Gates, who supplied the flag holder for the roadside flag.

Pirongia Service Station for regularly doing our routine photocopying.

Pub Charity for a \$3000 grant which allowed us to purchase a new and up-to-date computer system, software and a multi-function printer.

Pub Charity for a further grant of \$1600 to purchase small museum cataloguing software.

The Department of Conservation – Hamilton for funding the interpretative panel on the old Pirongia Trig outside the Centre.

The Auckland Museum Institute and the **Alexander Turnbull Library** for permission to print and display photographs from their collections.

Pirongia Fire Force for helping us to reach new heights to repair a hole in the ceiling.

Welcome new members

Wendy Bain

Robin Wood

Norma Doyle

Pirongia Clydesdales

Gary and Karen Howard

Eve Davidson

Len and Margaret Styles. Len is also regularly volunteering to help staff the Centre.

President: Sabina Owen
550 Kane Street
Pirongia
Phone: (07) 871 9992

Interpretative Signage



Have you seen the new interpretative plaque on the old Pirongia Trig Station, outside the Centre?

The panel, which was funded by DoC, was compiled by Sonia Frimmel and mounted on the trig structure by Murray Walter. It is a very good example of how such interpretative information can highlight, for the uninitiated, the historic significance of apparently everyday objects. In time, perhaps other interpretative panels may be strategically placed around the village.

Weaving Demonstration



A highlight of the displays in the Historic Visitor Centre on Craft Day was a demonstration of traditional Maori flax cloak weaving by weaver **Garry (Joe) Grace** whose family farmed in the area. He is also a direct descendant of Potatau Te Whero-who, the first Maori King. Garry said that he felt honoured to work beneath the photographs of his ancestors. Visitors commented very positively about the inclusion of a live display – something of which we might take note when arranging displays for future special occasions.

Events since the August Newsletter

September and October were particularly busy months, as the Visitor Centre diary shows:

24 September: Pirongia Craft Day. As in previous years, a very busy day, despite the fact that the building was blocked by stalls, making it difficult to find a way in. We will need to do something about the access before the next Craft Day.

1 October: The Visitor Centre made arrangements for a busload of **Auckland Railway Enthusiasts** to see around the village and visit the Centre during a break on their trip when they left the train in Te Awamutu and travelled to Raglan. Many saw the village from a wagon drawn by the Pirongia Clydesdales. Others walked to the redoubts. We were delighted to have the support of Waipa Mayor Alan Livingston who welcomed them to the district. Many said that they would like to come back to enjoy more time here.

9 October: While Franklin Street was lined by **110 hotrods**, the Historic Visitor Centre had more than 30 visitors.

15 October: Members of the **Auckland Museum Institute Council** visited the Historic Centre en route from a day trip to Kawhia. (See previous page).

16 October: A busload of members of the Manurewa Historical Society, on a weekend tour of the King Country, spent time at the Visitor Centre and walked to the East and Armed Constabulary Redoubts before enjoying afternoon tea at the Persimmon Tree Café.

21 October: The Visitor Centre hosted a meeting of Tourism King Country Maori with local tourist initiatives which was chaired by Owen Ormsby. A working party was set up to work on the promotion of tourism possibilities.

27 October: The Historic Visitor Centre hosted a visit by the Chartwell (Hamilton) Golden Oldies.

4/5 December: Staff from Melville primary school visited the Centre and returned the next day with a special interest group of pupils who used the Centre as a resource for finding out about the history of the settlement. They visited the Pirongia redoubts and other selected sites.

11 December: The Tourism King Country working party on local tourism initiatives held its first meeting at the Centre, chaired by Owen Ormsby.

Computer Upgrade

The recent purchase of an up-to-date computer system, complete with office software and a multi-function printer, scanner and photocopier was made possible by a grant from Pub Charity. The old machine which did valiant service was limited in what it could do and had become unreliable.

The new computer setup will allow us to produce our own simple publications, such as this letter. It will also make it possible to archive print material and pictures electronically, as well as allowing us to develop a proper catalogue of the growing collection of archives. This will make it possible to locate information and materials more efficiently.

As this newsletter was being compiled, we were advised that Pub Charity had provided another grant of \$1600 for the purchase of a small museum package which will allow catalogue development to proceed.

The Historic Visitor Centre is very grateful for the generosity of Pub Charity in supporting the development of this information system.

Congratulations

To members Sabina Owen and Berwyn Sterling for the Community Service Awards made in July by the Mt Pirongia Lions Club.

Sabina's and Berwyn's roles in the return of the former St Saviour's Church to Pirongia from Waikeria and the establishment of the Historic Visitor Centre were two projects amongst the many spoken of at the presentation. Well done Sabina and Berwyn.



The Centre was visited on 14 January by a reunion of 200 members of the Ormsby family who held a picnic lunch outside.

At the Visitor Centre, read the new **Garmonsway family history** by member **Julie Fox** in San Diego. It is a carefully researched piece of work. Well done Julie.