



# NEWSLETTER

No. 4: May, 2006

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

## Visitor Numbers Double

The numbers of visitors to the Historic Visitor Centre during the 2005-2006 financial year (April to March) have more than doubled. Records show that 1579 people visited the Centre, although there was a considerable variation from month to month. In part, the fluctuation appears to be seasonal; the months with the smallest totals were during the winter, and numbers burgeoned during the improved weather of spring, summer and autumn. However, the difference was also probably affected from February, 2006 when we began opening on four, rather than two days a week.

Local special events which attract visitors, such as the annual Craft Day, were also influential. There has been a noticeable increase in visitor numbers on the fourth Sunday of each month since the Farmers' Markets began in February.

Sundays and public holidays remain the most popular days.

A further boost to numbers was given by some group visits (including schools) and family reunions. On several of these occasions, the Centre was opened by special arrangement.

## Auckland War Memorial Museum Visit

In the last Newsletter, members were advised that the Historic Visitor Centre had become an institutional member of the Auckland Museum Institute and a visit by our members was proposed to enable us to find out about the War Memorial Museum's services and resources which may be used in the development of our own archives and displays.



*Planning for the combined visit to the Auckland War Memorial Museum*

The visit is now scheduled for **Saturday 27, May**. We will be hosted by members of the Museum Institute Council who are arranging a tour to show us their library, archives, catalogues and system for locating resources. Lunch will be provided by our hosts and there will be time to view the current displays. Together with people from Kawhia, some members of our committee and volunteers will travel by bus, leaving Pirongia at 8:00 am and returning from Auckland at 4:00 pm.

Any member who is keen to take part in the visit and who has not already said they will attend should contact Glenyss Hall urgently (Phone 07 872 8088) .

In February, we were visited by committee members of the Kawhia Museum which is also a corporate member. Knowing that we were planning a visit, they suggested that we go at the same time and share a small bus. After discussion by the two committees a date was suggested for a Saturday in April.

However, the visit was postponed because the Museum Library, whose services we wish to explore, was closed for renovation.

## Thanks for recent support ...

**Murray and Barbara Walter** who, with **Charlie Coles**, cleaned the exterior of the Visitor Centre and the spouting in preparation for the presentation to the Pirongia Community of a plaque by the NZ Historic Places Trust

**Len Styles** who donated a small circular table for the kitchen, where volunteers can eat lunch.

**Audrey Henderson** of the Rotorua and District Historical Society, who is a Mary Scott fan. Following a visit to the Centre, Audrey donated copies of three Mary Scott novels: *Board but no breakfast*, *No sad songs*, *The White elephant*, and two by Mary Scott and Joyce West: *Who put it there?* and *Such nice people*.

**Pirongia Service Station** for routine photocopying.

**Tony Hodgson** who donated a large aerial photograph of the store in the 1950s.

**Una Connon** (nee Chappell) for the donation of original photographs of Pirongia, including the opening of the Memorial Hall.

## Welcome New Members

Malcolm and Shelagh Williams.

## Annual General Meeting

The 2006 Annual General Meeting will be held in the Visitor Centre at 7.30 pm on Tuesday, 27 June.

Following the business part of the meeting, Dr Neville Ritchie, who is the Department of Conservation's Waikato Conservancy archaeologist, will be the guest speaker on the topic: *The Waikato War 1863-64: A pictorial review*.

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

## AGM Guest Speaker

Dr Neville Ritchie will be the guest speaker at the Visitor Centre Annual General Meeting on 27 June. He is an archaeologist employed by the Department of Conservation in Hamilton, and the author of *The Waikato War of 1863-64: A guide to the main events and sites* which is sold in the Centre.

Neville is a member of the Waipa District Heritage Council and a member of its working party on the preservation of the site of Matakita Pa.

In recent years, he has spent periods at McMurdo Sound, Antarctica in a continuing involvement in the recording and preservation of historical buildings, including Shackleton Hut.

At the AGM, he will review the Waikato Land War 1863-4.

Come along. Bring a friend. Neville will be worth hearing.

## Since January

**10 February:** A familiarisation visit to the Centre by members of the **Waipa Senior Council** accompanied by Mayor Alan Livingston.

**25 February:** A visit to the Centre by members of the **Rotorua and District Historical Society** en route to Kawhia. They would like to come back to join us when we hold another archaeological tour.

**25 February:** Four members from the **Kawhia Museum** and five from Pirongia met with Owen Ormsby of the Auckland Museum Institute to discuss a possible combined visit to the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

**3 March:** A minibus load of **French tourists** arrived in a state of excitement at having seen the French flag flying outside. Of course, this was the bargain basement flag which Shirley Scott acquired to signal when we are open!

**22 March:** A visit by teachers and 21 pupils from **Te Pahu School** finding out about the history of their district.

**25 March: Presentation to the Pirongia Community of a NZ Historic Places Trust Certificate of Merit** for its 'support for and services to heritage' in relocating and preserving the former St Saviour's Church as the Historic Visitor Centre. The Certificate specifically acknowledges the activities of the Pirongia Ratepayers and Residents' Association.



*The presentation of the Certificate of Merit was made by Heather Garrett, Waikato president of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, to Waipa District Mayor Alan Livingston who received the award on behalf of the community. In the picture (left) Residents & Ratepayers President, Alison Guy, Visitor Centre President Sabina Owen (holding the Certificate of Merit) and WDC Mayor Alan Livingston.*

## Old photographs are a great source of information

Old photographs are a great source of information about local history and the Centre is keen to add to the photographs in its archives. They are most useful when they are dated and when the occasion and/or the people in them are identified. So, anyone donating photographs should include with them any details that can be provided about when, where and who is depicted. However, even if some details are unknown, someone else may be able to add to them.

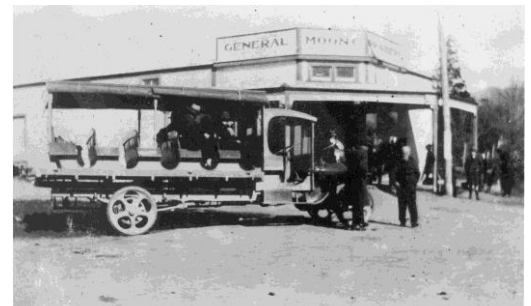
Original prints are the most valuable, but modern techniques of photographic reproduction mean that originals are not essential. They are required only long enough to have a good quality reproduction made.

Only copies of photographs in our archives are used for displays. This means that any photos donated will be stored under conditions to preserve them and we will scan and print images for display.

## Useful detail in an old photograph

Last August, Alan and Glenyss Hall updated our display on the Bell family, adding material and details which had come to hand since the original display was assembled. Soon afterwards, Tony Hodgson, who owned the Bell Store after it passed out of the hands of the Bell family, visited the Centre and donated an aerial photograph of the store in the 1950s, when it was owned by the Bell brothers. The ownership is confirmed by the sign. However, Tony said that when he owned the store he came across some old receipts from before World War 1 which made it appear that someone named Moon had owned the business.

Recently, Una Conon a former Pirongia resident, donated some old photos to the Centre. One is clearly the Bell store on the corner of Crozier and Franklin Streets in its early years. However, its sign reads 'Moon & Co'. Further investigation unearthed a photograph of the Pirongia Hockey Club in 1913 where one W.G. Moon was the Vice President. Leighton's 1930 Auckland Business Directory lists Walter Moon of Pirongia as 'Accountant'.



*A 'bus' outside the Moon & Co store.*

Clearly, there is more of the story to be unearthed, but it illustrates the usefulness of photographs as pieces of evidence when assembling the jigsaw of the past.

## Toilet upgrade

Some pointless vandalism in March created the need for a new wooden panel in the door of the Visitor Centre toilet. At the time, it was suggested that the floor surface needed improvement to facilitate easier and more effective cleaning. Tiles were suggested and when the Te Awamutu Tile and Carpet Court was approached for a quote, the proprietors, Darren and Angela Davis, offered to supply and lay the tiles free of charge providing the Centre covers the costs of some levelling of the floor and edging around the top of the tiles. The work is proceeding and we look forward to a properly-finished facility, thanks to the generosity of the Tile and Carpet Court.

## New Members?

May signals the beginning of duck shooting. But it is also the time when subscriptions for our 2006-07 year are being collected, and new members recruited.

Why not invite someone you know to take out a membership of the Historic Visitor Centre as a financial supporter?

Our draft budget for the coming year forecasts an increase in our operating expenses and one way to offset these is to recruit more members.

Sometimes potential members are reluctant to join because they think that they will be expected to work as volunteers. While volunteers are always welcome (and we need more if the Centre is to be open more frequently), financial supporters are equally welcome.

Membership for an individual costs \$10-00, a family \$20-00 and an organization or business \$30-00.

We remain in contact with our members by newsletter and they can expect to be invited to special events.