

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

Website: <http://www.pirongiaheritage.org.nz>



Special Visitors at the Annual Barbeque

The Annual Barbeque, hosted by the van der Sande family at Pirongia Clydesdales on 27 January was an enjoyable occasion to initiate the Centre's activities for 2016. The occasion was attended by 30 members who enjoyed good food and excellent company. Of special interest were two visiting couples with family connections to Pirongia who had visited the Centre a day or two beforehand and happened to be staying in mobile homes parked at Pirongia Clydesdales. They were invited to join us.

Graeme Miller is a descendant of Edward Miller who farmed at the top of Te Tahi Road at a property known as *Dunholme*. He married Bernice Berry from Pirongia and later moved to Te Awamutu where *Heworth*, their distinctive family home, still stands on College Street. Graeme is Edward's grandson. He talked to the gathering about his uncles who also farmed on Mount Pirongia and his great aunt Emily Miller whose striking house, originally named *Sedgemoor*, and now known as *The Maples*, is at the junction of Parry and Bellot Streets.



Miller boys during World War 2

Graeme Ginn is a descendant of the owners of Ginn's Sawmill who had a concession to mill timber on Mount Pirongia, beyond the end of Mangati Road, between 1946 and 1949 (See *Newsletter 31*). Graeme was a child at the time and lived on the site with his family. He talked to the gathering about life on the isolated mill site and recalled coming to Pirongia for supplies from Bell's Store.



Children at the Ginn's Mill settlement in 1948.
Graeme Ginn, second from left.

We are again indebted to Barbara Walter and Marilyn Yeates who made the necessary arrangements for the barbeque, to the van der Sandes, and to Leeanne Unkovich who leases the premises, for again making the Coachhouse café available to us for the evening.

Books from our library:

Te Puea — A Life by Michael King

Born Whatiwathioe - Pirongia - 1883. Died 1952, aged 68 years.

Te Puea was a very dominant child who was used to getting her own way. She was 15 years old when her mother died. Te Puea had a rather wild adolescence which she deeply regretted in later years. She did not enjoy good health throughout her life - she suffered from the 'family curse' - tuberculosis.

Te Puea displayed many moods depending on whether her demands were being actioned. They could change from sheer joy to anger. She befriended all who had the power to help her achieve her goals. These contacts included Government Officials and Members of Parliament.

Te Puea's achievements were huge. She brought her people together by establishing meeting houses, restored their system of rural based families, their communal style of living and cultural activities. She earned European acceptance of the Kingitanga Movement and helped to obtain compensation for the confiscation of land. She continued to care for her people as recorded throughout this book. Each of these and many more reveal her strength and tenacity.

Te Puea was a force to be reckoned with. She was a law unto herself and she did not forgive and forget. This remarkable woman deserves to have this book read. It is not a bedtime story.. — Barbara

The Land Ballot by Fleur Adcock

Fleur Adcock is an internationally recognised New Zealand poet, based in England, who traces her family roots back to Te-rau-a-moa. In this publication she reflects upon her family's experiences in this area through an insightful set of poems recalling events and people, some of whose names you may recognise.

Fleur visited the Centre some time ago while researching her family's story. We received two copies of *The Land Ballot* from her. Borrow it from the library. It tells history in a refreshingly different way. — Alan

Thanks for Support

- **Fleur Adcock** who donated a second copy of *The Land Ballot* to the Centre.
- **Robert McWha** for repairs to the deck outside the front door of the Centre.
- **Charlie Coles** who is helping with the duties of treasurer until the end of the financial year.
- **Nick and Jill van der Sande** who again hosted the annual barbeque.

Errata

Apologies for two errors in *Newsletter 41-42*. On page 3, Rae and Maisie Cameron had three (not four) children, two of whom were born when he was teaching at Te Kopua Native School. On page 4, Mary Ann Harper was 67 years old (not 58) when she died.

Another family reunion

In December, we hosted a well-attended and lively session for a reunion of a branch of the Finch family and took them for a walk around the village before they had dinner at the Alexandra Hotel. As always, the occasion produced new information for our archives.

They don't run dances like this any more.

After the Memorial Hall was opened in 1922 it was used regularly for dances sponsored by local organisations as fund-raisers. The following is a report from the *TA Courier* in 1943 of a dance run by the Kowhai Club that was possibly a patriotic organisation. Events such as this were important in the social life of the community.

"The Pixies of the "Kowhai Club" held a fairly well-attended dance on Saturday night last in the Memorial Hall. Excellent dance music was supplied by Mr Fred Beet. Cards were played by non-dancers, and a Monte Carlo waltz was won by Mr and Mrs McNaughten. Competitions were won by Mrs P. Bell (honey) and Mrs Rastrick (fruit)."

If you know anything about the Kowhai Club, please let us know at the Heritage Centre.

For your diary

3 April Join the Community Association in the Memorial Hall at 2:00 pm for the unveiling, by Waipa Mayor Jim Mylchreest, of panels interpreting the Roll of Honour from World War 1. Afternoon tea will follow.

From the Committee

- Visitor Statistics for this financial year are pleasing. At the end of January, when the monthly total of 383 was within 14 of our best month ever, the total for the year to date was 112 ahead of 2014 which was our best year to date.
- Ian Poole has resigned from the role of Treasurer. In his place, Charlie Coles is assisting the Executive Committee with the treasurer's duties until the end of the financial year.

Kiwi Road

The most likely explanation of the name of Kiwi Road so far came from Glenda Bell who heard that the road gave access to a number of rehab. farms on Maori Affairs land, that were allocated by ballot to Kiwi servicemen returning from World War 2. The men included Peter Daniels, Charlie Lingman, Jimmy Nelson and Wilson Tamaki. The name of the road is said to commemorate their presence in that area.

The Butchers Jones

A recent inquiry for information about a butcher named Jones at Pirongia early in the 20th Century has led to the discovery that there were, in fact, two butchers with this family name who were probably not related, but who both lived at Pirongia between at least 1911 and 1918.

One was **Archibald Hubert Ashton Jones**, who may have been known as Arch Jones. The other was **Alfred William Henry Jones**. However, distinguishing between them in newspaper reports and school enrolment records is not easy because each was sometimes referred to simply as "A. Jones".

Archibald Jones died of influenza during the 1918 epidemic and was buried in the Alexandra Cemetery at Pirongia. We know little about him.

Alfred Jones came from Tasmania to Pirongia with Rhoda Rockliffe before 1911 when both were listed under the family name Jones, although they did not marry until 1917. Later, he bought a farm at Pokuru and was a land agent in Te Awamutu. In August 1925 Alfred was killed in an unfortunate accident when he was crushed against a bank by his own car. Rhoda lived at Pokuru and in Te Awamutu until her death in 1964.

If you can add anything more about either of these men, please contact us at the Centre.

An old steam engine

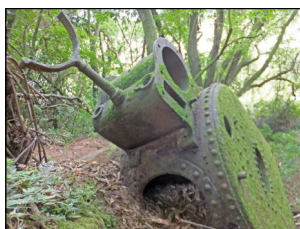
Recently the Centre was given the maker's plate from the boiler of an old stationery steam engine lying on the river bank below Matakitiki Pa where it appears to have been dumped. The plate, which was collected by John Fryer, was given to us when he left the district. Robert McWha and John Kelly visited the site to take photographs and their evidence



The maker's plate

piqued the interest of a steam engine expert who believes that it is an early portable engine. If the boiler number can be discovered, he may be able to tell us about its manufacture, owners and use.

The investigation continues, but information about when the engine was dumped there would be helpful.



The remains of the engine

The First Whatiwhatihoe Bridge

The present concrete Whatiwhatihoe Bridge is the second bridge across the Waipa River at this location.

The original bridge was a one lane timber structure constructed in 1882 by the New Zealand Government in response to a request by King Tawhiao after his declaration of peace in Alexandra in July 1881. Tawhiao wanted unimpeded access from Alexandra to the new Kingitanga settlement at Whatiwhatihoe, to the west of the Waipa, without having to ford the river, and Native Minister Bryce saw it as a move towards opening up the King Country at a time when he was seeking the cooperation of the Kingitanga and Ngati Maniapoto to create a railway route south beyond the Puniu River. As a result, there was little of the politicking to obtain government support that had delayed the construction of the Whatawhata and Te Rore bridges until April and August 1881.

Construction began in April 1882 with King Tawhiao ceremonially driving the first pile, and naming the new bridge *Tawhara-Kai-Atua*, although it became known generally as the Whatiwhatihoe Bridge. It was completed and in use late in October, when Bryce, visited Whatiwhatihoe.

The structure consisted of "six 24 foot [7.3 metres] spans [three at each end] and three 40 foot [12.1 metres] trusses [in the middle], a total length of 264 feet [80.5 metres], the height being 42 feet [12.2 metres] above the ordinary river level". It was completed at a cost of about £1800 [\$3600].



The original Whatiwhatihoe Bridge

To the west of the bridge, the road travelled along the line of present-day Ormsby Road for a few hundred metres and then turned sharply right to the Whatiwhatihoe settlement before present-day Mangauika Road. By 1890, however, the Kingitanga headquarters had moved to Waahi, Whatiwhatihoe was reverting to farmland, and from the bridge, present-day Ormsby Road led towards Puketotara, Ngutunui, Te Rau-a-Moa and eventually Kawhia to where coach services ran from the early 1900s. By then, the bridge had become an important link with communities to the west of the river and from the turn of the century, it was particularly important to those families milking cows in the Kaipahi area who conveyed their milk to the Creamery at Pirongia daily.

In 1919, the Public Works Department, which had become responsible for the standards of all highway bridges, responded to questions raised by the Farmers' Union about the safety of the 37 year old structure that was carrying increasingly heavy traffic. The Department was sufficiently concerned about its condition to recommend that the old structure, that probably had little maintenance, should be replaced by a new concrete bridge.

This prompted questions about which local body authority or authorities were responsible for the maintenance and eventual replacement of the existing structure on the boundary between Waipa and Otorohanga Counties. It also provided an essential service for Kawhia County. The PWD suggested that Otorohanga County Council should have control over the bridge and bear 50% of the costs, and that the Waipa and Kawhia Councils should each contribute 25%. The Department would contribute £125 (\$250) towards the immediate costs of repairs.

Using this cost-sharing arrangement, the aging one-lane bridge was maintained during the depression to the 1930s. By 1938 its decking was three planks thick, new decking having been laid over old, and motor transport was making increasing demands on it. Eventually, in 1938, the Otorohanga County engineer considered that the life of the bridge would be no more than a further five years. He recommended that planning for a new bridge should commence, and that a limit should be placed on loads crossing the old bridge. Plans to replace the bridge were then thwarted by restrictions on public expenditure during World War 2, but load limits on the bridge were finally imposed in 1941. The need for a concrete replacement was acknowledged, but its construction was deferred until after the war.

Nevertheless, further deterioration of the dilapidated structure resulted in the decision that the bridge had become so dangerous that in January 1943 it was closed to all traffic whilst remediation to its structure took place. The closure posed immediate problems for residents at Kaipahi, Puketotara, Ngutunui, Te Rau-a-Moa and Kawhia because to reach the railway at Te Awamutu they now had to follow a diversion via Tihiroa, the Kakepuku District and the Te Kawa Crossroads. Protest meetings followed, but it was clear that urgent measures to ensure the safety of bridge users were necessary.

As a result, significant repairs were made to the old structure which was, by then, one of the oldest timber bridges in the country. We do not know precisely what measures were taken to make the structure safe, but the time required suggests that they must have been extensive. Following closure of the bridge at the end of January, it was reported late in March that large quantities of timber were being delivered to the site and that a workers' camp was being established. The repairs continued for five months until it was reported on 11 August that good progress had been made and that the bridge would open for traffic in about a fortnight's time. On 22 September, the Waikato County Council was advised that the bridge had been opened during the preceding month.

The measures taken extended the life of the Whatiwhatihoe Bridge for a further 11 years, but with load restrictions. However, in June 1950 it was announced that construction of the long-awaited, two-lane concrete structure was to proceed. The cost was estimated to be £45,000 [\$90,000] but the new bridge would not be built for another two years.

To be continued in the next Newsletter.