

# NEWSLETTER

No. 48, May, 2017

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](mailto:pirongia.hvc@xtra.co.nz)

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



## A Great Fund-Raiser

The Heritage Centre was the beneficiary of a great Quiz Night held in the Five Stags Bar at the Alexandra Hotel on 25 March. The quiz night, proposed by Brenda Collins from the hotel, followed an established format that involved Matt Sandy as quiz-master. Barbara Walter and Marilyn Yeates accepted responsibility for the Centre's side of the arrangements that included organizing prizes for a number of raffles run during the evening, items for an auction and volunteers to help run the event. They were supported by other members who donated, or arranged the donation of an impressive assemblage, including an All Black jersey for the auction.



Prizes galore

The result was a great turnout of quiz teams and a well-attended evening

of fun that resulted in a profit of \$2,400 for the Centre.

We are indebted to Brenda, Matt, the Five Stags Bar staff, Barbara, Marilyn and many members, all of whom contributed to its success.



Each team had its own table

## Thanks for Support

- **BRENDA COLLINS** of the Five Stags Bar at the Alexandra Hotel who organized a highly-successful Quiz Night as a fund-raiser for the Centre.
- **MATT SANDY**, the fund-raiser Quizmaster.
- **ALL THOSE MEMBERS** who contributed to the success of the fund-raiser by donating, assisting or attending the evening as contestants.
- **LANCE VERNALL** who provided access to the Kaipahi site where the Turner and Reynolds families lived, and also showed us the view of the area from his home on Hanning Road.
- **PAULA MCWHA** who is currently developing our website.

## A trip to Kaipahi

On the afternoon of 26 March, with the cooperation of member Lance Vernall who now farms the land, 12 members visited the locations of the original Turner and Reynolds houses at Kaipahi. Included in the group were Mary Wilton (nee de Thierry), Keith Ormsby and Norma Graham. Each of them remember the area from their childhood. Mary remembers spending time at what was "Granny Reynold's house" and was very clear about its location because a camelia tree that stood outside the kitchen window is still there. Keith Ormsby, who lived in the vicinity of Mangati Road, spent a lot of time in this locality with his friend Boy de Thierry (Mary's brother). Norma Graham is related to people buried in the urupa on the hill overlooking the site of the Turner and Reynolds houses.



Keith, Mary and Norma pointed out where many families lived in the locality about the time of World War 2. Keith identified the sites of 15 or 16 small dairy units between Walters' farm of today and the Whatiwhathioe bridge, a few of which were still hand-milking when he was young. They all separated cream that was collected daily by truck for the dairy factory in Te Awamutu. This contrasts markedly with today's situation where there is only one dairy unit in the whole area. All the rest of the land is used for meat and wool production.

The names of farming families on both sides of the road included at various times: Robinson, Hines, McGrath, Sims, de Thierry, Beatson, Marx, Loader, Bouma, Poot, Pinny, Payne, McVerry, Turner, Jones, Graham, Knight, Cathcart, Tamaki and Cairns. There was a close sense of community in the area. Families cooperated on activities such as hay-making. Keith recalls working almost continuously during the summer on collaborative hay-making around local farms. The families also interacted socially. Keith talked of dances in McVerry's woolshed, where he learned to dance. The Kiwi Basketball (Netball) team was based here and Stuart Scott taught boxing to local youngsters in McVerry's woolshed.

## Path of War Tours



March tour members at Orakau

Another very successful Path of War tour between Te Rore and Orakau took place on 18 March. It included people from as far away as Auckland, Wellington & Hawkes Bay. A repeat of the same tour, planned for 20 May, was postponed until September because of bad weather, and we are currently discussing a further tour with another group in either July or September.

Clearly, this continues to be a popular tour.

## Maintenance Maestro

The fact that the Centre building continues to look good is a tribute to continuing work by Robert McWha who has repainted weathered parts of the exterior paintwork and is now doing some repainting inside the building. His attention to the ongoing maintenance needs of a heritage building are greatly appreciated.



Robert at work.

It makes us all look good. Thanks Robert.

## AGM Wednesday 28 June at 7:30 pm

The 2017 Annual General Meeting of the Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre Inc. will be held in the Centre at 7:30 pm on Wednesday, 28 June. As in previous years, it is anticipated that the formal business will be completed in about 30 minutes.

Following the formal business, at about 8:00 pm, the meeting will be addressed by **Ann McEwan** who will talk about **Historic Places and Heritage Values**.

Ann McEwan is a heritage consultant, based at Rukuhia, with background as an architectural historian. She is the author of a regular column entitled 'Memory Box' in Friday editions of the *Waikato Times*. Ann is an engaging and challenging speaker who will be worth hearing. Bring a friend to the meeting or invite them to join us at 8:00 pm. There will be an opportunity for discussion, and supper will follow.

## For your diary

**28 June** Heritage Centre AGM at 7:30 pm.

**Ann McEwan on Historic Places and Heritage Values at 8:00 pm.**

## From the Committee

- The **March return of visitor numbers** at the Centre was 430, our best-ever monthly return. It meant that the total for the financial year was 3114, only 8 short of 3122 in 2013-14, our best year to date.  
The **April return of 407 visitors** was the Centre's second highest monthly total.
- Look for the new **Brother colour printer** which is now in service. It was purchased to replace the old Canon printer which was no longer repairable.
- Steve Sharpe of *Sharpe People Solutions* is currently working with the committee on the development of a **Health & Safety Policy** for the Centre.
- Kate Elliot, Regional Adviser at the Waikato Museum visited the Centre on 8 May to give advice about the **conservation of objects on display**.
- Barbara Walter and Marilyn Yeates produced a **wreath for ANZAC Day** that was laid at the Pirongia Dawn Service on behalf of the Centre by members of the Mealing family.
- Keep an eye open for a **new sign advertising when the Centre is open**. Brent Mealing is currently giving it some finishing touches.
- A flyer was recently distributed throughout Pirongia seeking **additional volunteers to act as hosts** at the Centre. A concerted effort is being made for the Centre to open on every day of the week. However, sustaining that will require more volunteer support.
- Letters of thanks have been sent to a number of businesses and prominent individuals who donated **Quiz Night Prize and Auction Items**: VET ENT, MITRE 10, PIRONGIA FOUR SQUARE, PIRONGIA SALEYARDS, HANSEN HONEY, T. KINGSTONE, PRIMM GARDENS, JAMES MCONIE AND BRODIE RETALICK.

## A Regular Centre Host



Lyn at the desk.

Lyn Jackson has been a regular volunteer for about four years. When she is not away from the village, she is usually behind the desk on Sundays.

Lyn grew up in Otorohanga but then lived away from the district until she and her husband Ray chose to retire in Pirongia. She regards her work as community service that she enjoys because she likes meeting people.

The fact that Lyn is not a computer user and did not know much local history when she started has not been a problem. She has learned to use the paper files, is prepared to say "I don't know", and if necessary, to refer inquiries to others who provide ready backup.

In the process, of course, Lyn expands her own knowledge and feels increasingly confident about her role as a host to visitors.

## Hot Off the Press

A new publication, *Where did that name come from? The names of streets, roads and landmarks in the Pirongia district*. Compiled by Alan Hall with the assistance of members Alan Livingston, Joy McGregor and Haupai Puke. Designed by Sonia Frimmel from *What's the Story*. On sale for \$5. The Centre also intends to make it available as a free-of-charge download from the Centre's Website.

## Caveat Emptor (Let the buyer beware)

In August 1883, John Higginson (snr), a farmer of Te Rore, sought damages in the Alexandra Resident Magistrate's Court from Robert T Millar, farmer and seed merchant of Paterangi, in a case said by the *Waikato Times* to be "of considerable interest to farmers". Higginson had sown separately, as animal feed, two pounds of white stone turnip seed and three pounds of white globe turnip seed purchased from Millar. However, although the white stone turnips grew true to type, the white globe variety turned out to be rape, a much less valuable stock feed. As a result, Higginson sought damages as compensation for his loss.

Higginson's case was premised on the fact that Millar had labelled the two seed packages in his own handwriting. Millar, however, argued that it was up to the buyer to discern that one package was not turnip seed, claiming that the difference in the seed types was easily distinguished. Nevertheless, witnesses such as Thomas Goodfellow, who gave evidence, disputed this assertion. It was also noted that Millar had refused to look at the supposed white globe turnip plants when Higginson first thought that they were not growing true to type, and that Millar then began affixing to his invoices a notice that he did not warrant any seed sold by him.

Judgement by Mr H W Northcroft RM, that was delayed to consider legal precedents, eventually awarded Higginson £6 (\$12) damages and £3-4s (\$6.80) costs.

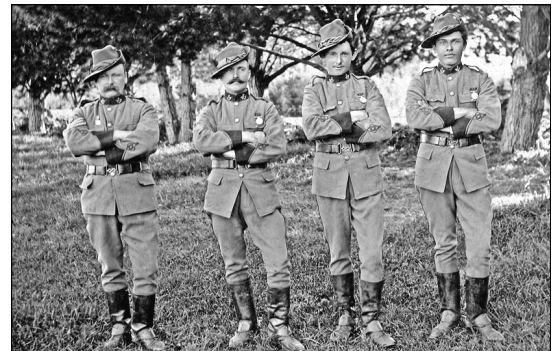
Robert Thomas Millar was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Waikato militiaman who sold his town acre at Kihikihi and land grant farm allotment at Tuhikaramea to purchase 200 acres near the junction of Anderson and Bird Roads where he farmed from about 1870 until 1907. In the early 1870s, he began selling seed to farmers, imported from a Rotterdam seed merchant for whom his father worked. This was not without risk. In November 1874, for example, he lost a 6 ton shipment of seed when the sailing vessel *Cospatrick* burned at sea, south of the Cape of Good Hope, with the loss of 470 lives, 435 of them migrants bound for New Zealand. Nevertheless, he continued to import comparable cargoes of seed for pasture and animal feed. His seed stock was generally well-regarded and he advertised regularly in the *Waikato Times*.

It is an age-old principle in commerce that without a warranty the buyer takes a risk. This assumes that the buyer and seller are on an equal footing. However, buyers typically have less information than sellers. This situation is known as 'information asymmetry'. To overcome it, more recently, many jurisdictions have introduced regulations such as the *New Zealand Fair Trading Act 1986* and the *Customer Guarantees Act 1993* to protect consumers against dangerous or defective products, fraudulent practices and the like, by determining that each commercial transaction *implies* a warranty. There was no such safeguard in the 1870s.

## Rough Riders from Pirongia

Amongst Reg Bell's photographs recently gifted to the Centre by Robin Wood is this photo of four Waikato Mounted Rifles Volunteers. The three men on the right wear medals from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Boer War in South Africa, but without clasps indicating in which phases of the war each recipient fought. Although the medals were awarded soon after the Rough Riders, as they were known, returned home in 1901, the clasps were not distributed until 1903-4. Thus, the photograph was taken probably between 1901 and 1903 when the three Boer War veterans were again volunteers in the Waikato Mounted Rifles. The trooper on the left does not wear a Boer War medal, but wears the three stripes of a sergeant.

The four men in the photograph (L-R) are QM Sgt George Miles, and Troopers Roger Dawson, Chris Berry and Jim Prentice.



Nine men from the Pirongia district served in the Boer War. Amongst them were Trooper Chris Berry (No 1416) who went with the 4<sup>th</sup> Contingent and Gunner James Prentice (No 2397) in the 5<sup>th</sup>. Trooper Roger Dawson, from Te Awamutu, who had been in the Pirongia Troop of the Mounted Rifles before going to war, was in the 1<sup>st</sup> Contingent.

**Chris Berry** was the son of long-time residents James George and Mary Jane Berry. Chris lived in the area all his life, working as a coach driver and farmer at various times. He married Mary McGrath in 1903 and their descendants, the Bromells, were well-known locally. Until two years ago, Chris Berry's house stood on the corner of Bellot and Franklin Streets.

**Jim Prentice** was the son of Matewai Wickham (formerly Prentice) who ran Wickham's Boarding House in the Shamrock Hotel building, across Crozier Street from the Alexandra. He married Ethel Wade and they raised a family here while Jim worked as a farmer. He was also a skilled photographer who took many photos of Pirongia in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1925 he was Vice President of the Pirongia Rugby Club.

**George Miles** was a blacksmith who grew up in Alexandra. His father, also George Miles, was a tailor who lived in Crozier Street. George junior married Marion Wilson in 1889 and worked in Pirongia until 1908. They then moved to Frankton Junction where he worked as a blacksmith before volunteering to serve in the Auckland Mounted Rifles during World War 1. He was a Farrier Sergeant in Egypt until chronic bronchitis caused him to be repatriated in 1916.