



NEWSLETTER

No. 5: August, 2006

Pirongia Historic Visitor Centre
Te Whare Taonga O Ngaa Rohe O Arekahanara (Inc)
798 Franklin Street, Pirongia 3802

Auckland War Memorial Museum Visit

The last newsletter forecast a combined visit to the Auckland War Memorial Museum by members of the Pirongia Historic Visitor Centre and the Kawhia Museum Society. The visit took place on 27 May when 15 of our members travelled to Auckland on a Kawhia bus to spend the day at the Museum.

Those who went enjoyed a great day. After being officially welcomed, we were given a tour of the Museum, guided by members of its Council who visited the Kawhia Museum and our Centre last year, and treated to lunch. After lunch we were taken behind the scenes where we heard about some of the museum operations and saw something of their storage arrangements (in the process, appreciating some of the difficulties with which the staff are cope during building extensions).



Visitors and hosts at the end of the visit.

to be absorbed in a short time, but many of awareness of the vast range of resources enthusiasm of the staff and members of the Museum Council who went out of their way to make out visit worthwhile.

Don't forget that as a Corporate Member of the Auckland War Memorial Museum, the Visitor Centre holds a membership card which gives two free passes to any of our members who happen to be visiting Auckland and have time to spend at the Museum. It is well worth a visit. To borrow the card, ask at the Visitor Centre enquiries desk.

It was a long day, but a rewarding one. There was much us came away with new ideas, available, and touched by the



A Great Turnout for the AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Visitor Centre, held on 27 June, was attended by 39 members and members of the public. Clearly, the drawcard was the speaker, Dr Neville Ritchie, DoC archaeologist for the region, who presented a pictorial review of *The Waikato War 1863-64*.

Those present enjoyed the presentation of images of the most significant fortifications and battle sites in General Cameron's military campaign into the Waikato which ended at Orakau. The combination of historical and contemporary images, together with Neville's commentary, were sufficient to stir some interest in a future motor tour of some sites by the Visitor Centre, including possibly the other Alexandra Redoubt (an earlier one) near Tuakau and the Queen's Redoubt at Pokeno which is being re-constructed.

Prior to Neville Ritchie's presentation, President Sabina Owen reported on a successful year's activities noting a doubling of visitor numbers and the successful completion of a number of projects.

The financial report showed that the Centre is in a sound financial position despite its tight budget. The election of officers returned all who were willing to stand again. Foundation committee-member Steve Rasmussen stood down and was replaced by Barbara Walter. Secretary Julie Karsten also stood down, and has not been replaced at this stage. The Executive Committee has the power to co-opt when a suitable volunteer is forthcoming.

Thanks for recent support ...

The New Zealand Community Trust for a grant of \$3,300 for borer treatment of the building.

Angela and Darren Davis of Tile Court, Te Awamutu, who donated materials and labour to tile the toilet.

Pirongia Service Station for routine photocopying.

Steve Rasmussen who did not seek re-election at the AGM, for service on the Executive Committee. Steve was a foundation member of the Executive Committee and his contribution was greatly appreciated. We look forward to his continuing interest.

Julie Karsten, who was unable to continue as Secretary, for her service to the Committee. Her contribution has also been greatly valued and we look forward to her continuing involvement.

Murray Walter, who worked out a way to free up the movement of the display panels on the circular unit, and implemented it, with the assistance of his wife, Barbara and brother-in-law, Charlie Coles.

Len Styles, who devised an ingenious gadget for volunteers to put up the flag without using a ladder.

Welcome New Member

June Bright, who is also volunteering to help staff the Centre.

President: Sabina Owen
550 Kane Street
Pirongia
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Our New Committee

Sabina Owen (President)
Marilyn Yeates (Vice-President)
Glenyss Hall (Treasurer)
Sue Scott (Deputy Treasurer)
Patricia Grierson
Alan Hall
Haupai Puke
Nick van der Sande
Clare St Pierre
Sally Uerata
Barbara Walter
Murray Walter

The committee is currently establishing sub-committees and plans to delegate some responsibilities, possibly involving other members in some of its executive duties.

Since May

Since May, we have experienced the same seasonal downturn in visitor numbers experienced in earlier years.

However, a surprise was that although the July numbers were low compared with the summer months, they were significantly up on 2005. The difference seemed to occur particularly during a period of clear, sunny days which also coincided with the final few days of the school holidays.

27 May: Fifteen of our members joined a similar sized group from Kawhia to visit the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

2 June: Genealogists attending the national conference in Hamilton visited the Centre.

1 August: 39 members of the Matamata Walking Group visited the Centre.

Borer Eradication

Most people associated with the Centre know that we have tried to manage a problem with borer in the building with limited success. Recently, the Centre received a grant of \$3,300 from the New Zealand Community Trust for borer eradication.

Smith's Pest Control Services were awarded a contract which involved injecting chemicals into borer holes, spraying the wall cavities through holes drilled in the weatherboard and treating the floor from beneath.

At the moment, the building is infused with the smell of kerosene, the solvent used. But that inconvenience, which will dissipate quite quickly, is a small price to pay to be rid of a pest with potential to destroy the building.

An honour for Mary Hurst

At the AGM, a change to the constitution made it possible for the Centre to award an Honorary Life Membership for outstanding service. At the same meeting, it was resolved that the first Honorary Life Membership should be awarded to Mary Hurst who has made significant contributions by researching and recording local history, and also played an important role in helping to secure the site when the old St Saviour's Church building was relocated from Waikeria to Pirongia in 2000. Mary has continued to make valued contributions to the work of the Centre.

The presentation of the Honorary Life Membership to Mary will occur at the first of our Special Events to be held in the Centre on 12 September. On that occasion, Alan Hall will speak about W.G.Mair, who was a significant figure in Alexandra in the 1870s and who returned here in July 1881 as the government official to whom King Tawhiao and more than 500 followers from the Māori King Movement chose to lay down their arms to signal the end of hostilities following the Waikato Land War in 1863-64.

Mair is a figure in whom Mary is greatly interested. She triggered Alan's interest, and although the research is far from complete, sufficient has been unearthed to be of general interest and worth sharing on this important occasion for the Historic Visitor Centre. All members and members of the public will be welcome.

Some Benefits of Membership

One initiative by the new committee has been to develop a modest annual calendar of events for members and in some cases, members of the public. The draft plan for the forthcoming year, which has been accepted in principle at this stage, includes two meetings involving speakers, an archaeological tour of local historical sites, a panel on investigating family histories, and a motor tour of some of the sites talked about by Neville Ritchie at the AGM.

It is proposed to hold events at roughly two-monthly intervals and to make at least some of them available to members of the wider public.

The schedule is not onerous and has the potential to be sustainable in future years. If you have ideas for future events, pass them on to someone on the committee. If this works as we hope it will, we will be looking for new ideas about this time next year.



From the AC Redoubt in the early 1900s, with the Masonic Lodge in the middle distance.

Those Old Photos

We are keen to get copies of old photographs of past life in Pirongia. The following are of particular interest:

- The Buffalo Lodge building which stood where the present Persimmon Tree Café is located. It was still standing in 2000.
- The original teacher's house in Kane Street which was there until 1967.
- The old gaol building near the cemetery, which was still standing in the 1940s.
- The Post Office on the corner of Franklin and Crozier Streets.

Useful photographs may not be just of the building in question. Even if the building is in the background the picture can provide useful information.

Remember that we can have such pictures copied so that it is not necessary to donate them, although the donation of originals is always welcome.

Don't forget to visit the Centre on Craft Day (September 23rd)

This year, the Craft Day organizer has arranged to leave two clear stall sites in front of the Centre so that visitors (and members) can find the place. Last year, we were rather cut off.

This year, as a special event, Ben van der Sande and a fellow blacksmith will be operating a forge outside the building and inside, traditional weaver Garry Grace will again demonstrate cloak weaving. This demonstration was highly praised by visitors last year, and we know that many who missed out then are keen to see this important traditional craft.