

NEWSLETTER

No. 50, November, 2017

Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre

Te Whare Taonga o Ngaa Rohe o Arekahanara

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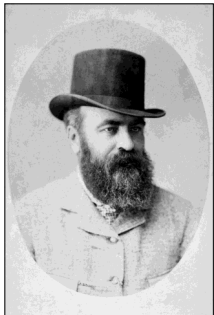
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More about J.D. Hill

In *Newsletter 41-42* in 2015, we wrote about J D Hill, a storekeeper, commission agent and licensed auctioneer who, at various times was Postmaster, Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages, Government Vaccinations Inspector and a JP in Alexandra. He also served for lengthy periods on public bodies including Highway Boards, the Alexandra Township Board, the Alexandra School Committee, the Vestry of St Saviour's Church and for two years in 1877-78 on the Waipa County Council, when he was based in Hamilton. Initially, until 1871, he worked in partnership with his brother-in-law, Franz Scherff in the trading store Scherff & Co until Hill took over the business based in a conspicuous building in Crozier Street, opposite the Public Hall.



J D Hill

It was a matter of regret that although we know quite a lot about Hill before he moved to Mercer in 1890, persistent inquiry had failed to reveal anything about what happened to him after he left Alexandra, apart from the fact that he died in August 1893 at Manakau (sic), which we assumed to be a mis-spelling of *Manukau*. Moreover, we have never been able to find a photograph of Hill or his wife, even from his Waipa County Council years.

Earlier this year, however, we were contacted by Rosemary Haden from Auckland who is a descendant of Hill's wife's family, the Hardens. Catherine Harden married Hill in 1875; her sister was the wife of local man G V C Tisdall and their mother lived with Hill and Catherine at Alexandra until her death in 1890 — she lies in the Alexandra Cemetery. Rosemary Haden is a genealogist who has painstakingly recorded information about the Hill and Harden families which she shared with the Centre. And at the same time, we were able to contribute information about the Hill and Tisdall families from their time at Alexandra. At Labour Weekend, Rosemary and three other descendants spent a day at the Centre and around Pirongia exchanging information with us.



Catherine Hill



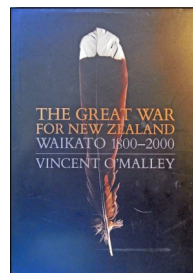
Hill / Harden descendants at the Centre. Rosemary Haden is 2nd from left.

In the process, Rosemary filled several gaps in our records. Firstly, she produced digital images of family photographs of J D Hill and Catherine. And secondly, she provided information about what happened to Hill after he left Alexandra. It seems that his business at Mercer was unsuccessful and that he suffered from a serious kidney complaint. He sold up and went to Australia for medical treatment, following which he returned to New Zealand in 1891 to establish another store at Manakau on the Wellington West Coast near today's Levin. It was there that he died of diabetes and pleurisy in August 1893 aged 60. Catherine lived on in Auckland until she died in 1922, aged 80.

The Great War for New Zealand

Vincent O'Malley's *The Great War for New Zealand: Waikato 1800-2000* is essential reading for anyone wishing to fully comprehend the Waikato War of 1863-4. It approaches the conflict by reviewing the relationship between the settler government and Maori from 1840, and traces events leading up to the military invasion of the Waikato in July 1863. The story of the war is told from a Maori perspective. But this is far more than a war history, because it goes on to spell out events in the war's aftermath, telling of its impact during the uneasy peace lasting from 1864 until the declaration of peace by Tawhiao in 1881. It discusses the land confiscation, the establishment of military settlements like Alexandra, and the work of the Compensation Court. O'Malley then reviews what he calls "the long search for justice" via protests, petitions, legal challenges and political negotiations that culminated in the Raupatu Settlement of 1989. In other words, this is the story of the war and its long-term consequences.

The book which is extremely well-researched and documented, is lavishly presented. Although the 600 page length may appear formidable, it is easy to read and is very well-illustrated. The book is organised in a manner that allows the reader to read sections selectively. It is highly recommended.



Alan Hall

Thanks for Support

- **TRUST WAIKATO** for a grant of \$1,000 for the upgrading of displays.
- **BRENT MEALING** for the construction and installation of the new *Open* sign outside the Centre.
- **ANN OHALLORAN, JAN KILHAM AND BRUCE KILHAM** who have recently stood down from the roster of hosts at the Centre.
- **ALL THOSE WHO STAFFED THE CENTRE DURING THE YEAR.** You are vital to our operations.
- **ROBERT MCWHA** whose tireless attention to maintenance tasks is so important to the Centre.

BBQ for Members

Join us at the Pirongia Clydesdales at 6:30pm on Wednesday 21 February for what has become the annual Heritage & Information Centre BBQ to get the New Year under way.

We are again indebted to the van der Sande family and the staff of the Coach House Café for making their facilities available to us.

Bring meat to cook on the barbie, a dish to share, and your favourite tippie.

There will be no charge.

**WISHING YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

Now we are 50

In case you have not noticed, this is the 50th edition of the Pirongia Heritage Centre's Newsletter.

In order to celebrate this milestone, it has been suggested that we might publish a collection of historical items about people, places and events in the history of the district that were included in *Newsletters 1 to 50*. Some will need to be updated in the light of later research, but many would be as originally published.

If you would be interested in purchasing such a book, let us know at the Centre as an indication of whether or not there is likely to be a market for it.

For your diary

WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY.

6:30 pm PHIC BBQ at Pirongia Clydesdales.

From the Committee

- Visitor numbers for the 2017-18 financial year, at the end of November, suggest that we may be on the way to a record year. At the moment, we are 140 ahead of 2016, our previous best year at this time.
- A group of interested committee members are currently planning to update several displays about early Maori and European settlement in the district. The revised Maori display will probably include the defence of Matakaitaki led by Te Wherowhero in 1822, the declaration of peace at Alexandra in 1881, and an explanation of the Kingitanga at Whatiwhati-hoe in the 1880s, all of which are highly relevant to local iwi at Purekireki Marae. The displays will be funded in part by a recent grant from Trust Waikato.
- Good wishes for a rapid recovery from illness to committee member Keith Ormsby.

Women's Institute re-formed after World War 2

In November 1946, a well-attended public meeting in the Pirongia Library decided to re-form the Pirongia branch of the Women's Institute which, like a number of other local organisations, had gone into recess during World War 2 to help conserve petrol which was rationed, and to boost the war effort. It was decided that the institute would meet in the Library on the second Tuesday of each month. The *Te Awamutu Courier* records that "following the election of officers, a dainty afternoon tea was served and enjoyed by all."

Mrs Scriven presided over the first meeting of the re-formed institute, on 3 December (the *first* Tuesday of the month), where the singing of the Institute Song was followed by discussion of correspondence and a decision to send a donation to the Children's Health League. A social afternoon followed with musical items performed by Mesdames Lynch, Hall, and Barry and two elocutionary items by Miss Lynch. Mrs Papesch then accompanied community singing. The hostesses, Mesdames Bagnall, Bainbridge and R. Bell, served a delicious afternoon tea.

The institute continued to meet monthly for 70 years until 2016 when it again went into recess.

New & Improved

Have you seen the new Open sign outside the Centre?

It is testimony to the engineering ingenuity of Brent Mealing who made it using mainly re-cycled items. The



framework is permanently in place and it is easy for those staffing the centre to add the Open sign and remove it at the end of the day.

Robert McWha helped Brent to install the sign framework.



Welcome new members

- Vicki & Andy Macky
- Bridget Mosley
- Colin Murray
- Jocelyn & John Te Kanawa

The beginnings of the Alexandra Cemetery

A recent find by local woman Lois Garmonsway of a notebook containing Alexandra Cemetery Accounts from 1874 to 1935 adds useful information to what we know about the establishment and development of the Alexandra Cemetery.

When Alexandra was surveyed in 1864, a number of reserves were included in the settlement plan. They included Lot 334, at the junction of Kane Street and unformed McClintock Street, that was designated the burial ground and was probably accessed from Kane Street which went around Cemetery hill to join today's road to Te Awamutu near the first culvert beyond the hill. At the time, Alexandra was run as a military settlement and the first decisions about the new cemetery were probably made by the 2nd Waikato Militia leadership until the militia was disbanded at the end of 1867. In that year, when the first St Saviour's Church was being built on the hill overlooking the settlement, a newspaper report tells that the burying ground (sic) was being fenced, although we are not told who authorized or funded the work. Between 1864 and 1867 we know that more than 14 militiamen died and were probably buried there. However, there are no records of where they were buried and any wooden grave markers had long since rotted and disappeared by 1978 when surviving grave markers were eventually mapped.

An 1872 newspaper report indicates that further land had been set aside for burials. This included a section of a paper road adjacent to Lot 334 and reserve land on the hill beyond, creating a 5 acre cemetery. In the same year, the settlement elected seven cemetery trustees (Rev Brady, Messrs G V C Tisdall, Millar, Aubin, Kinnerney, Allan & Ormsby). By 1875, the accounts show that £42.14.4 (\$98-04) had been raised, mainly by donation, that the reserve had been ploughed, harrowed and sown and that the gates had been painted. At that time, it is likely that the entrance to the burial ground was still from Kane Street.

The present access to the cemetery appears to have been created early in the 20th Century, when McClintock Street was closed off at Beechey Street and Oak Lane was created on Lot 335.

When the trustees were elected, they asked the community to indicate whether it wished the cemetery to have the separate denominational sections common in other burial grounds at the time, but it seems that this idea was rejected.

There are no surviving records of burials at the cemetery before genealogists recorded and mapped the location of surviving grave markers in 1978. One wooden marker, which survived until just a few years ago, was encased in copper sheathing with the inscription punched into the copper. It marked the graves of Edward Watts Garmonsway who died in 1875 and his wife, Letitia Ann who died in 1892.



The wooden Garmonsway grave marker.

The *Alexandra Cemetery Accounts from 1874 to 1935* record dated sales of many plots and payments for grave-digging. However, close examination suggests that many early entries were made some time after the events which explains why some burials appear not to have been recorded.

The Heritage Centre now has a facsimile of the accounts which is available for inspection on request. We are grateful to Lois Garmonsway for allowing us to make a copy of the accounts.

Riding on the Footpath

In 1880, Gordon Tisdall, a local man and JP who sometimes sat on the bench in the Alexandra RM Court, was convicted of riding his horse on a newly defined footpath between the railway station and the centre of Te Awamutu. Gordon Tisdall, who was the brother of Captain William St Clair Tisdall, Adjutant of the 2nd Waikato Militia Regiment when Alexandra was established, became an important land-holder and a significant figure in the Alexandra community and the Mangapiko district. He was a loyal member of St Saviour's Church, and a staunch advocate for bringing the railway south through Alexandra – which may not have endeared him to the town advocates of Te Awamutu.

On the outskirts of Te Awamutu, a footpath, alongside but separate from the roadway, had been gazetted in 1880 under the Public Works Act and on 25 August Tisdall was caught by Constable Gillies riding his horse along it on his way into the settlement. Tisdall was affronted that a man of his standing should be prosecuted for such an offence and conducted a vigorous cross-examination of Constable Gillies when the charge was heard by Resident Magistrate H.W. Northcroft in the Te Awamutu Court on 16 September. First he questioned the authority of Constable Gillies. Then he suggested that the alleged offence had taken place in the Mangapiko Highway District where he had official status, rather than the Rangiaowhia District in which Te Awamutu was located. And then he implied that Constable Gillies had singled him out for attention. Mr Northcroft was not impressed by Tisdall's bluster, saying "Mr Tisdall, you seem to think that because you are a Justice of the Peace, the constable should ignore the offence. I honour a constable who is not afraid of a JP." Tisdall went on to criticise the bad state of the road as a reason for not riding on it, in the process virtually admitting that he was guilty as charged. As a result, he was fined 20 shillings (\$2-00) with costs of 22 shillings (\$2-20).

It seems ironic that Henry Bridgman who was charged with the same offence immediately afterwards, "pleaded guilty, but assured the Bench that he rode on the footpath through ignorance and inadvertence". He was cautioned and ordered to pay 7 shillings (70 c) costs.