



# NEWSLETTER

No. 60, September, 2020

Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre  
Te Whare Taonga o Ngaa Rohe o Arekahanara

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## Another Successful AGM

An easing of the Covid 19 Lockdown restrictions allowed the Heritage & Information Centre to hold its 17th AGM in the Centre on Tuesday 30 June at 7:30 pm. It was attended by 30 members.

President Marilyn Yeates reported on a successful year of activities marred only by the Lockdown which caused the Centre to be closed from 22 March until 20 June when it re-opened initially on four days a week. Until the lockdown, visitor numbers were very encouraging. Marilyn highlighted a number of developments including some new displays and the housing of a traditional horse-drawn wagon under a shelter beside the Centre.



Treasurer Charlie Coles reported that the Centre is in a sound financial position.

The Election of Officers returned Marilyn Yeates as President, Ros Empson as Vice-President, Charlie Coles as Treasurer and Executive Committee members Garry Howard, Brent Mealing, Nick van der Sande, and Barbara Walter. Sally Uerata continues as the nominee of Purekireki Marae and Haupai Puke as the nominee of Te Kauhanganui.

Following the AGM, Alan Hall gave an illustrated talk about four colonial cottages in the village, showing how the traditional four-roomed houses were often extended to accommodate large families, adding utilities such as bathrooms, taken-for-granted by later generations.

Discussion was followed by supper.



## Thanks for Support

• **WAIPA DISTRICT COUNCIL** for a discretionary grant of \$2,000

• **THOSE VOLUNTEERS WHO STAFFED THE CENTRE ON 6 DAYS A WEEK DURING THE 2019-20 FINANCIAL YEAR:**

June Bright, Glenda Bell, Charlie Coles, Ros Empson, Alan Hall, Lyn Jackson, Joy McGregor, TESS McGruddy, Paula & Robert McWha, Keith Ormsby, Barbara Walter, Mary Wilton, and Marilyn Yeates.

• **BRENT MEALING, ROBERT MCWHA & CHARLIE COLES** who prepared the site for a new storage shed.

• **KEITH ORMSBY, PAULA AND ROBERT MCWHA** who stepped down from the Executive Committee at the AGM, after several years, but who continue to fulfill other duties for the Centre.

• **LIFE MEMBER BARBARA WALTER** for her continuing contribution as a member of the Executive Committee following lengthy service as President and Vice-President.

• **JOAN & TONY HODGSON, BUCK MACKY AND RICHARD JONES** who are now on the duty roster, together with **LYN JACKSON** who is also once again on the list.

## Alternative Newsletter Delivery to You?

It has been pointed out to us that many organizations now circulate their newsletters as email attachments, and already we deliver our newsletter to a couple of Heritage Centre members who requested that arrangement.

We know, however, that some of our members are not computer users and many still like receiving the printed version.

Please advise the Centre if you would like us to send our newsletters to you as email attachments.

## Country Roads in the 1920s

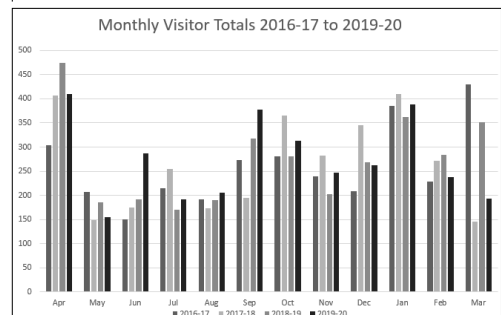
"The Minister of Public Works, Mr J G Coates, was engaged today in strenuous journeys over some of the "famous" Waikato roads which recent rains have not improved. He apparently left the train at Hangatiki, near Te Kuiti, at 11 o'clock this morning with Mr R V Ballard MP, and two others, and motored to Waitomo. It is considered that motoring past Waitomo is impracticable, so that continuance of his trip to Te Anga and Kawhia must have been by horse or vehicle.

"The Minister is to remain in Kawhia tonight and will probably return to Pirongia tomorrow afternoon for dinner.

"Particular interest attaches to the road from Kawhia to Pirongia on account of a story relating to Sir William Fraser four years ago, greatly cherished by the Pirongia Chamber of Commerce. It is authentically recorded that when in a happy moment Sir William trusted himself in that locality, the driver of the vehicle received explicit instructions to give the Minister all the bumps and twists possible at every gully crossed. It was a severe ordeal, and when speakers at a subsequent dinner appealed to Sir William for pity owing to the shocking state of their main road, he granted it without hesitation, together with a £4000 (\$8000) loan, and the road was metalled three months later. Mr Coates will at least be indebted to Sir William Fraser for improved travelling, but what other wiles await him in that centre of political devices, is uncertain."

## Nearly, but not quite

On 22 March, when the decision was made to close the Centre because of the Covid 19 pandemic, we expected to be open on eight more occasions before the end of the 1919-20 financial year. At that stage, our visitor statistics indicated that we needed to host only 12 more visitors to equal the previous record total of 3277 for the financial year. We were confident that we would set a new record over the forthcoming eight days when we expected to be open. Unfortunately, the Centre remained closed and the anticipated new record failed to materialise.



## Disclaimer:

Views expressed in items published in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Heritage Centre

# The Changing Landscape of Mount Pirongia

Mount Pirongia is the largest basaltic volcano in the North Island. Over a period of one million years, it grew from numerous vents to become what must have been an impressive stratovolcano that eventually stood at least 1200 metres above sea level.

The million years of volcanic development was followed by more than a further million years of erosion. Sector collapses, lahars, mass movement and erosion by water resulted in the loss of vertical height to its present 959 metres. Previously sub-surface volcanic rock structures were exposed on the ridgelines to produce the present jagged set of summit peaks such as Mahaukura, with streams flowing in radial valleys separated by thin ridges of volcanic rock. Soils developed, supplemented by later ash showers from central North Island eruptions, to sustain the growth of vegetation in a mild climate with high rainfall. It clothed the mountain over time in a richly varied forest of podocarp and ferns, with sub-alpine plants on its summit peaks, and rich birdlife.

Thus, Mount Pirongia became an imposing geological remnant of the original stratovolcano. However, what we see today has since been heavily influenced by human occupation.



## Tangata Whenua

The first occupants were people of the Tainui canoe who settled on the coast more than 700 years ago. During the following 500 years, sub-tribal groups of Tainui, such as Ngāti Mahanga, Ngāti Apakura, Ngāti Horotakere and Ngāti Hikairo, established territories around the forest-clad mountain where berries and plant products were collected and birdlife was hunted as a food source. However, the mountain was regarded as having its own mana and was treated as tapu. It was believed to be occupied by a spirit people, Patupaiarehe, who came out at night and were effectively its guardians. In turn, the hapū had obligations of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) to respect the mountain's mana and conserve its resources. Initially, they knew it as Paewhenua (The Land Barrier), a name used when their earliest explorers, travelling up the Waipā river, first saw its jagged summit peaks. Several generations later, Paewhenua became known as Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu (The Scented Presence of Kahu) in honour of Kahu-peka who is said to have travelled through the area on a later journey of exploration. Other features on the geological map also have traditional Māori names, many of them associated with a rich legacy of traditional stories.

## Changing Land Ownership

A dramatic change in the ownership and use of the land resulted from government-imposed surveys between 1864 and 1890 which defined specific land blocks and identified their legal owners. Land confiscated from Māori ownership was surveyed following the Waikato War, including that part of Mount Pirongia east of the confiscation line running from the mouth of the Puniu Stream to the peaks of Mahaukura and Tahuani. The bush-covered land was divided into farm blocks for private ownership by mainly soldier settlers. This facilitated the clearing of land and the establishment of farms on the lower volcanic slopes and ring-plain to the east of the mountain. Twenty years later, following King Tawhiao's declaration of peace in 1881, further government surveys were made of the remainder of the mountain as a part of the survey of the King Country. Large blocks of land on and around Mount Pirongia, initially in Māori tribal ownership, were then purchased by the government, allowing land on the lower slopes and ring plain in the King Country to be subdivided, sold and cleared for farming. Thus, by the early 20th Century, the mountain was surrounded by cleared, privately-owned farmland. The state owned most of the more mountainous and forested upper sections not in private ownership, encircled by a fringe of privately-owned sections of forest, on the upper slopes yet to be cleared.

## A State Forest

Today, the greater part of Mount Pirongia lies within the 12,919 hectare, Pirongia Forest Park area, surrounded by developed farmland. However, the Forest Park, as we know it, was not constituted until 1971. Sawmilling, which was under way on privately-owned blocks of forest in 1914, continued in different locations until 1959, and after World War 1, some forested blocks to the north of the park were allocated to be cleared by returned servicemen who later walked off properties around Wilson's and Taylor's Clearings, leaving them to revert to forest.

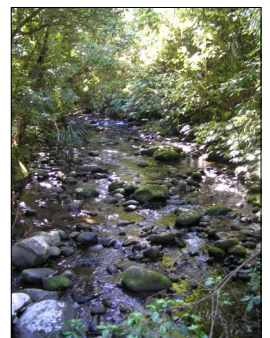
At the same time, concerns were being expressed by councils, chambers of commerce, farmers and others dwelling within view of the landmark, about the possible loss of its grandeur and scenic beauty if forest clearance continued. Others warned of the loss of water catchments for town supplies and the possibility that rainfall patterns might be affected. The government response was to make a number of its surveyed blocks state forest reserves, managed by the State Forest Service, and others became scenic reserves, managed by the Department of Lands & Surveys. From time to time, other small blocks were added before they were all combined in 1948 on condition that no further milling or logging would be permitted within the state forest.

## A Forest Park

The Pirongia Forest Park was formally constituted in May 1971, under new legislation granting public access to forest parks for recreational use. Since that time, the NZ Forest Service, and since 1987 the new Department of Conservation, focussed on catering for a wide range of recreational users. This is reflected in the development and maintenance of today's extensive system of walks, tracks, and routes, together with the gradual development of other facilities for visitors such as camping and picnic areas, viewing platforms and the 20 bunk Pahautea Hut near the summit. The development of a section of the New Zealand Te Araroa Trail via the Tahuani and Hihikiwi tracks in 2009, included eight kilometres of boardwalk constructed to improve travel over higher-level swampy sections of track and protect threatened vegetation. Local councils, trusts, landowners and eight Waikato secondary schools provided tangible support for the development; it is estimated that half the \$400,000 cost of the Te Araroa trail cost was contributed locally.

A continuing focus on conservation of the forest resource has been reflected in initiatives to control goats, possums and other species that threaten both the flora and fauna. Since 2001, these initiatives have been supplemented by a continuing, intensive pest control programme over 1000 hectares by the voluntary Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society. Its success led to the more recent re-introduction of two native bird species, pitoitoi and kōkako. The Te Pahu Landcare Group also continues to be involved in planting and maintaining native vegetation along the Nikau walkway. These initiatives are supported by Māori who remind us that the maunga continues to have a life of its own, noting that the rivers and streams are its arteries, feeding the mountain's essence and purifying it. But it is humans who provide the being's consciousness, the centre of feeling and responsibility.

Today, the forest park which encompasses the single largest area of native forest in the Waikato, attracts up to 40,000 visitors a year.



## Twice a Prisoner

Ray Taylor was a contractor and farmer in the Te Pahu area after World War I. Alan Livingston notes that Taylor has the unusual distinction of having been a prisoner of war in both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> World Wars.

Taylor was an Aucklander when he enlisted for service in World War I in 1917, after working as a bushman in Gisborne. He became a member of the Reserve Battalion in France in January 1918, but in his first action at Hébuterne (France) on 28 July he was wounded and taken prisoner to spend the rest of the war in a PoW Camp at Limburg (Germany) from where he was released after 4 months when the war ended in November 1918. He was then returned to the UK and repatriated to New Zealand.

In the 1920s, Ray lived and worked near Te Pahu where, in 1923, he was the secretary for a sports meeting run at Harapepe by the Waipa Valley Athletic Club. He also played rugby football for the Pirongia club. Around this time he became the owner of a farm comprising mainly the abandoned town lots and streets in the old village of Harapepe where he milked a small herd, supplemented by contract work.

In the late 1930s at age 43 years, Ray again enlisted for military service in World War 2, arranging for someone to work his farm and leasing his house to the Te Pahu School Committee for use as its principal's residence.

He went overseas in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Echelon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> NZEF but in the disastrous 1940 Battle of Greece, with many other NZ servicemen, Ray was again taken prisoner, spending four years at Stalag 383 at Hohenfels, Bavaria. In January 1945, over a three months period, and in severe winter conditions, the prisoners were marched westwards for hundreds of kilometres to avoid the advancing Russian army. After four years of confinement, *the March*, as it is known, took its toll on Ray who was by then 47 years old. Nevertheless, at the war's end he was returned to England and repatriated to New Zealand.

Ray Taylor returned to his home and 44 hectare farm at Harapepe on which he then ran dry stock. He maintained his interest in sports including the Pirongia Football Club. With his fellow Corcoran Road bachelor farmer friend, Jack O'Hara, he attended the Rome Olympics in 1960, the Perth Commonwealth games in 1962 and the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. He is remembered for enjoying a pint at the Alexandra Hotel.

Ray Taylor, who died in Hamilton in 1978, aged 80, may have been the only New Zealand serviceman to be a prisoner of war in both World Wars.



Ray Taylor, centre-front, with others who played rugby football with him for Pirongia in the 1920s.

Rear L-R: H. Mabbet, J. Berry, Joe Sterritt, B. McCarthy, Reg Bell, Jackie Wilson.

Front L-R: Ray Johnson, H. Grace, Ray Taylor, Eric Bell, H. Singleton

## Edward Waddington

Dr Edward Waddington was an important member of the Alexandra community in the early years of settlement, from late 1864 until about 1880. He was a surgeon in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Waikato Militia until it was disbanded late in 1867.

Ed Waddington, as he signed his correspondence, arrived in New Zealand, aged about 45 years, after the Waikato War when the Kingitanga was sequestered in the Rohe Potae (now the King Country). This was not long after the military settlement of Alexandra had been established by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of the Waikato Militia, to which he was assigned as a Surgeon. It is likely that he was living at Alexandra soon after he was commissioned in late November 1864.

Dr Waddington was well qualified as a surgeon and medical practitioner, having completed degrees at the Universities of London and Edinburgh. He married Julia Bristowe in London in 1849 and by 1851 they were living at Epworth, Lincolnshire, where Waddington was a general medical practitioner.

Between 1854 and 1856, he served as a military staff medical officer on transport fleets during the Crimean War, and was posted at different times to Gibraltar and Corfu. By 1861, the Waddingtons were living at Wakefield, Yorkshire, where their family included two sons: Rowland Evelyn, born in 1856, and Edward Horatio, born in 1860. At that time, their father was practising as a civilian surgeon and general practitioner and was sufficiently affluent to employ a cook, a housemaid, nursemaid and groom.

Three years later, however, he had left his wife and sons in England and migrated to New Zealand, arriving at Auckland in November 1864. The reasons for this change in the family circumstances are not known. UK census records show that by 1871 Rowland and Edward Horatio were residential scholars at St John's College, Hurstpierpoint, Sussex, and Julia was living at Hastings on the south coast of England. In 1873, the boys, by then aged 14 and 11 years, came to live with their father at Alexandra. However, Julia appears to have continued to live on the Sussex coast.

As a military settler with the rank of Surgeon, Dr Waddington was granted a one acre town lot in Alexandra and a 400 acre farm lot, both of which he could occupy immediately, but which would become freehold only in 1867 after his completion of three years service. His town acre was Alexandra East Lot 28, on the north-eastern corner of the intersection of today's Franklin and Crozier Streets where the Alexandra hotel is now located. His farm allotment consisted of eight 50 acre lots to the west of Te Awamutu (Magapiko Lots 237 – 244), between today's Goodfellow Street and the Fonterra dairy factory.



Edward Waddington

In his roles as medical officer to the community, Dr Waddington was valued for his urbane and gentlemanly conduct as well as his professional skill and attention. He served as superintendent of the Alexandra Hospital, as coroner, and was also a JP who occasionally sat on the bench of the Resident Magistrates Court. In March 1866, he was commissioned by the government to report on the state of the Waikato militia settlements at a time when settlers were protesting about their treatment by the government. The community was confident in him to the extent that in 1866 he was asked to stand for parliament, although he did not comply. Nevertheless, later in that year, like other militiamen who had been granted land, he was struck off military pay, although he was still required to complete three years service to become its freehold owner. It is likely however, that he continued to be paid for his other public duties.

Development began on Waddington's farm allotment which was fenced, and early in 1867 he imported Lincoln ewes for the production of wool. However, later in that year, his 400 acres near Te Awamutu, plus two other adjoining 50 acre blocks which he appears to have also purchased, were sold to the Goodfellow brothers who by 1869 had accumulated 700 acres in that area. About the same time, Waddington purchased the 400 acre allotment previously granted to Capt Freer, quartermaster of the 2nd Waikato Militia, at the junction of the Puniu and Waipā Rivers. About the same time, he also sold his town acre in Alexandra to William Appleyard who opened the Doncaster Arms hotel there in 1870, and purchased two other town acres (AE 3 & 4) at the junction of Franklin and Kane streets, where a residence was built on Lot 4 and where he lived before moving to Hamilton about 1878. [To be continued.]

## Can you help us?

This photograph from our collection was taken in 1957 at a St Saviour's Church Centennial gathering.

On the left is Mrs Mary Berry, and on the right are Mrs Julia Ahier and Mrs Mildred Moeller.

Can you help us identify the other two women?



## From the Committee

The Heritage Centre Archive Room in the former DoC garage was created to facilitate research activities, the storage of archives and the preparation of new displays. However, over time, in the absence of other space, it has also become used to also store chairs, spare furniture and maintenance materials when they are not required in the main building, in the process, cluttering the work space in the archive room. The Executive Committee has now decided to erect a small storage shed, next to the archive store to free up space in the archive room.

Flood lighting has been installed to automatically illuminate the wagon shelter area at the front of the Centre when it is approached after dark. This means that the only remaining work required in this area is an interpretive panel.

## AA Traveller Publications

Members will be aware that for many years, in keeping with its I-Site status, the Centre has stocked free AA traveller brochures and useful road maps which are regularly collected by visitors. The AA keeps our stocks up-to-date with their latest editions. A recent addition to their publications is an informative brochure about popular walks throughout the country, varying from from 30 minutes to multi-day treks. It also includes maps, safety tips, things to see and do, and places to stay. This publication will be of interest to local people planning holidays in other parts of the country.

## Wartime Memories

Heritage Centre member Ngaire Phillips recently completed recording her memories of what life was like when, as Ngaire Johnson, she attended school in Te Awamutu during World War 2.

Ngaire's family lived at Mangapiko, but in 1939, when the Mangapiko School closed, she travelled to school on a Hodgson's Bus to attend school as a standard 3 pupil in Te Awamutu. Her family had strong associations with the Pirongia community, particularly through the Methodist Church and she recalls many familiar family names.

Ngaire records memories of her classes between Form 1 and Form 6 which are accompanied by class photographs complete with names, as well as staff photographs. Also included is a rich recollection of life in the wartime years as reflected in the songs and popular culture of the day.

The memoir concludes with interesting brief accounts of what became of Ngaire's sixth form contemporaries later in life.

If you would like to read this interesting and well-illustrated memoir, we have a copy available at the Centre. Alternatively, if you are a computer user, download it from the Centre's website and print your own copy. You will enjoy it.

## Welcome new members

- Joan & Tony Hodgson
- Sarah Haldane
- Andrew Clark
- David Macky

## When was it built?

The extended cottage building at 341 Franklin Street, next to the Pirongia sports complex, is owned by the Waipa District Council, but is no longer occupied and is rumoured to be destined for removal to allow further development of Matakaitaki Park.



*The cottage taken over by Mounseys in the 1920s.*

Investigation of the history of the site reveals that Lot 7 was originally the town acre granted to William Nankivell, a militiaman who became its freehold owner in 1867, after he had completed three years' service in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Waikato Militia. By 1875 it was owned by George Codlin of Onehunga, whose son-in-law, Vernon Roberts, became the Alexandra postmaster and telegraphist from 1875 to 1877 when he and Rowland Francis Lacon leased J D Hill's store in Alexandra which they ran until 1881.

During that time, the Roberts family must have lived somewhere other than in the accommodation for the postmaster, and it may have been on this property. This may explain why it was mortgaged around that time, and why ownership later passed to Roberts in 1882. Roberts again became the postmaster in 1884, when his family probably lived in the new post office building. He was transferred from Alexandra to Mercer in 1890.

Charles Henry Prince (see *Newsletter 52*) became the owner of Lot 7 in 1906. Prince and his wife, who came to Pirongia from Cambridge in about 1895, had a family who attended the local school, and the fact that he took out a mortgage suggests that either they built a new dwelling on the site or rebuilt/extended an existing one.

Following the death of his wife in August 1920, Prince sold the property to Emily Ingleby Miller and the Mounsey family rented the house for which they were paying 12 shillings and 6 pence (\$1-25) a week when Miss Miller died in 1930. It is most likely that the house occupied by the Mounsey family, which appears far from new in the 1920s photo, was that built or extended by C H Prince about 1907. It became the property of Mrs Mounsey in 1932, and it was then that alterations, shown in photographs, were made to the building by Mounseys. Ownership of the property passed from the Mounsey family in 1944.

It is not known who lived in the cottage after the Mounseys, when Butler Bros and Flemings Transport took over Auriel Mounsey's business based between the cottage and the tennis courts, but in 1958 it became the property of the English migrant Sibley family who incorporated a bathroom in the building and extended it at the rear to give internal access to toilet and laundry utilities. They lived there until the death of Frederick Sibley in 1991 when the Waipa District Council, which had taken over the responsibilities of the Pirongia Domain Board, bought the property for the possible extension of Matakaitaki Park and leased the house which was occupied until 2019.

### Some Implications

As we understand the matter, this information makes it evident that Lot 7 is associated with pre-1900 human activity, which means that in the light of the *Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014*, it is an archaeological site for which Council must obtain authority from Heritage New Zealand before commencing work which could modify the site.

In anticipation that such authority may be granted (possibly with conditions) it would be desirable, before the building is removed or demolished, for a description of it to be made, recording evidence of alterations over time. Such a record should be supported by photographs. Providing the Council is agreeable, Ros Empson, who is an experienced heritage architect and a member of the Heritage Centre, has indicated her willingness to undertake such a project and deposit the record in the archives of the Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre. Of course, a copy would also be provided to the Waipa District Council.

In an information paper for consultation about the site, the council estimated the house to date from the 1940s. However, the Heritage Centre has information from the late Roland Mounsey that his family lived in the house from the 1920s when his father Auriel established a carrying business on Lot 7. He allowed us to scan photographs of the building which show that at that time it was a typical colonial cottage which was first extended by enclosing two rooms in the verandah space, at the front. Further extensions were later added at the rear of the building. It was occupied until 2019.



*Two rooms were added in the 1930s by enclosing a re-constructed verandah.*



*Further extensions followed when Sibleys were the owners between 1958 and 1991*