



NEWSLETTER

No. 66 : May 2023

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

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Stonyford

In *Te Pahu: A History*, Alan Livingston notes that Henry Southey's house, built on Harapepe Lot 96, which was in use in 1866, "was the only house of substance in the village and thus was used for meetings, church services and even coroner's inquests."

Stonyford, as both the house and the property became known, was originally a three-room dwelling, with a veranda on three sides. Later occupants enclosed sections of the veranda to create additional rooms and extended the building to the rear.

Southey sold it to his neighbour E.G. McMinn who lived there while he accumulated and developed the largest farm in the district with an area of 733 acres by 1882. After McMinn's premature death in 1883, it became the home of the Corcoran family, the Bollards from 1930, followed by their share milkers, and the Livingston family from 1953 to 1962 when a new dwelling was built.

No longer occupied, Stonyford continued to stand on what later became Alan Livingston's farm until c.1968 when, aged about 102, the building was pulled down.



In its later years it stood near the wicket for local cricket matches which took place in the paddock. The frames leaning against the building in the photo were used to keep cows off the wicket. The nearby cowshed building served as the pavilion.

Thanks for Support

- WDC Discretionary Fund for Wagon repairs \$2,070
- Rev Buddle—book
- Brent Mealing—laying Centre wreath at ANZAC Dawn Service

And we welcome new volunteers

- Christopher Corkery, John Biddle, and Tia Ormsby

Alan Hall

Alan has researched Pirongia and Districts people and places, and compiled our quarterly newsletter for the past eighteen years (65 issues). He has now handed over the role of editor to his successor Paula McWha, although he assures her he will continue to provide stories that he considers to be of interest.

Thank you Alan for your valuable research, and for providing us with interesting newsletters over the years.

Road Closure

Today we're used to our bridges being open at all times, until recently that is, when the bridge over the Mangapiko Stream was closed for road repairs to all traffic for two weeks, and a stop/go system for a few weeks prior to that. This caused some inconvenience to locals in particular, who needed to travel over the bridge to and from the north, to school, or work, requiring a lengthy detour.

In 1864 the Waipa River separated Alexandra East from Alexandra West and the settlement of Harapepe, but there was no bridge.

For four years soldier-settlers relied on a ferry, and if no ferry was available they had to cross the river at best they could or make a circuit of about eight miles to Alexandra.



The opening of the Mangapiko (Matakitaki) Bridge October 1905

Several bridges were built over the Mangapiko Stream from the 1860s but were flood prone and tended to rot. It was not until 1905 that a more substantial and robust structure was built.

During the 1800s Alexandra had many bridges over different parts of our rivers, the Centre has photographs and stories to tell, so just ask when visiting.



For your diary

- Annual General Meeting—7.00pm Tuesday 27th June Guest Speaker Tom Roa
- PHIC celebrates 20 years in August 2023—more information at a later date

From the Committee

- Copies of 'Footprints of History' held at the Centre have been replenished and a full set is available
- Centre Library records have now been computerised
- A new Māori Display Panel on King Tawhiao, Whanau and Te Pucua is currently being worked on
- AA maps & travel guides are to be discontinued by AA from September 23. Unsure if there will be a replacement service
- DOC hut charges update now displayed at the Centre (tickets sold online)
- DOC maps for Mt Pirongia are now available (have been out of stock for awhile)
- Mayor Susan O'Regan, Deputy Liz Stolwyk and Pirongia Councillor Clare St Pierre, called at the Centre while visiting other places of interest in Pirongia.

Steamer Erin at Pirongia in 1912



We have long understood that this photograph was of the steamer *Puke*, moored at Pirongia. However, this was recently called into question by information associated with the original image in the collection of the Hamilton City Libraries which said that the photograph was taken at Ngaruawahia.

Member Bruce Kilham who has done extensive research on steamers plying on the Waikato and Waipa Rivers investigated the matter, and from his files produced illuminating information. His transcription of notes on the back of the original, apparently not recorded when the photograph was accessioned, says that it was the "Steamer *Puke* at Pirongia c. 1912, bringing metal for the road between Whatawhata and Frankton, as Raglan coaches were being bogged down. Metal from Hodgson's Quarry at Te Rore at cost of 5/- per yard, delivered to Whatawhata." The metal would have been towed in barges.

Bruce also noted that in 1912 the name of the steamer at that time was the *Erin*, not *Puke*. The official register of steamers makes it clear that this vessel was originally registered as the *Erin* when launched in 1904 and bore that name until 1921 when she was registered as the *Puke*. It is likely that the caption on the photograph was written by someone who knew the steamer as the *Puke*, after her name had been changed.

It is interesting to note that this little steamer had the distinction of reaching the furthest point south by any steamer on the Waipa. In August 1917, Rosa Daley took a photograph at Searancke's farm at Te Kopua where seed and manure were being unloaded from the *SS Erin* piloted by Captain Leathart.

Reverend T Buddle

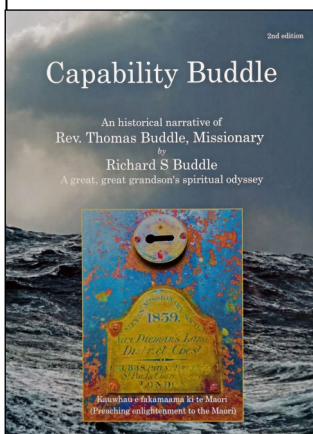
Our library was recently given a copy of *Capability Buddle*, a commentary about the life of the Reverend Thomas Buddle who, with Sarah his wife, was the first resident missionary at the Te Kopua Wesleyan Mission between 1841 and 1844. It is a comprehensive, detailed, well-researched and lavishly illustrated account by Richard Buddle, the great-great-grandson of Thomas.

When Buddle and his wife Sarah came to Te Kopua in May 1841, they established the mission. Thomas travelled extensively as an evangelist, south as far as Mokau and east as far as Taupo.

In 1884, George and Jane Buttle came to Te Kopua, and the Buddles were transferred to Auckland where Thomas headed the development of what became the Wesleyan Training College for Māori missionaries, before serving the Wesleyan Church in a variety of other important roles which involved service at Christchurch, Wellington and Nelson.

The family then returned to Auckland where Thomas died in June 1883.

We are indebted to his great-great-granddaughter, Lindsey Dawson (nee Buddle) for donating the book.



Pirongia School - 150 years

Celebrations - Labour weekend
Friday 20th-Sunday 22nd October 2023



Building is now the Pirongia Playcentre

Our Richard and Thorne Seccombe

A recent enquiry by a descendant drew our attention to the fact that between 1873 and 1920, men from two generations of the Seccombe family, Richard Seccombe and his son Richard Thorne Seccombe farmed a property adjacent to the Alexandra East town belt.

The 450-acre property was sold to Richard Seccombe in 1872 by Capt. William St Clair Tisdall, formerly the adjutant of the 2nd Waikato Militia, after he had moved to Auckland in 1870, following the disbanding of the Militia. It consisted of the 300 acres granted to Tisdall as a captain, plus a further three 50-acre blocks adjacent to his allotment which he purchased from other militiamen. This meant that by 1870 he owned 350 acres between Penny Road and the main road from Alexandra to Te Awamutu, as well as a further 150 acres on the south side of Penny Road.

Richard Seccombe was an established businessman from Auckland who, with his two sons, William and John, had founded the Great Northern Brewery in Khyber Pass from which Lion Nathan was later to develop.

Richard moved to Pirongia in 1872, aged about 70 years, while still a partner in the brewery business and a widower. He invested in the development of his new property, using local labour to fence, subdivide and sow it in grass to establish a desirable working farm where stock was grazed. It had access to the Te Awamutu Road immediately beyond what was known as Seccombe's Bridge where there is a culvert today. He also had a 10-room dwelling and other farm buildings built on the farm.

Two years after his arrival, at age 72, he married Christina Annie Allan, the 29-year-old daughter of John and Margaret Allan who lived on the northern side of the Te Awamutu Road. Richard and Christina had two children: Richard Thorne Seccombe, born in 1879, and Dorothea Christina Seccombe three years later. Both attended the Alexandra School before the family moved to Auckland in 1888 when Richard was experiencing health problems. We know little about the schools they attended in Auckland although it is known that Thorne was eventually a student at Auckland Grammar, and when Dorothea re-enrolled at Alexandra in 1894, following her father's death, she transferred from a school at Epsom where the family lived. Although the Alexandra farm continued to be owned by Richard it was leased following their move to Auckland.

Richard died in Auckland in 1893, aged 89. Following his death Christina moved back to live with her parents at Alexandra where she died in 1894 aged 46. She lies in the Alexandra Cemetery at Pirongia, alongside other members of the Allan family.



Soon after 1900, electoral rolls show that Thorne Seccombe was farming at Pirongia where he appears to have inherited his father's farm. Newspaper accounts indicate that he took part in the activities of the farmers union and in 1910 was elected to a committee of five farmers managing the Pirongia Saleyards. In 1917, he served in the NZEF in France. Returning to his farm, he became engaged to Alice Evelyn Beet in 1919, sold the farm and married Alice early in 1920, before moving to a new farm on Dinsdale Road near Frankton. They later moved to Auckland.

Ngaire Phillips remembers meeting Thorne Seccombe in 1973 when, aged 93

and still living in Auckland, he attended the Pirongia School Centennial where, as the oldest surviving former student, he helped Daisy McGruther cut the centennial cake.

Ngaire also recalls the high regard for him expressed by some local men who had worked for him on his farm. He passed away in 1974.



The BBQ Cooks

Methodist Church

The Heritage Centre committee hosted its annual BBQ at the Pirongia Community Centre in the former Methodist Youth Hall, recently, and we were reminded of its history.

The following is taken from information gathered by Mrs Edna C Johnson of Mangapiko - April 1979.

On 19th March 1908 Mr John Thomas Johnson arrived from Masterton with his wife and family of four sons and a daughter to reside on the Te Awamutu-Pirongia Road, where a son and daughter were born.

The Methodist services had lapsed at Piongia so in September 1908 Mr Johnson re-organised services, which were held in the old Public Hall, that was used as the Town Hall (approx. where EnviroCentre is now)

The Pirongia War Memorial Hall was built, and opened in 1921, and the Methodists purchased the old Town Hall building for £150.00. It was used regularly for church services, Sunday School, and social events until deemed unsafe, and was demolished in 1958.

Work had begun on building a new Methodist Church, on the corner of what we now know as Ross and Crozier Streets (but described in the day as being nearer to Kawhia Road), with the Laying of the Foundation Stones on 16th December 1950 by Mrs J T (Rosa Annie) Johnson and Miss Greatorex Ann Pearson. Sadly Mrs Johnson did not see the fulfillment of her labours of love for the Church in completion, as she passed away 18th February 1951.

The church building is of concrete blocks and rough-cast, erected by volunteer labour with advice and help from qualified tradesmen.

The Pirongia Methodist Church opened, free of debt, on Saturday 26th April 1952.

The opening of the Methodist Youth Hall (next door) was on Saturday 29th November 1958.



Miss G.A. Pearson laying a Church Foundation Stone

Visitor Numbers

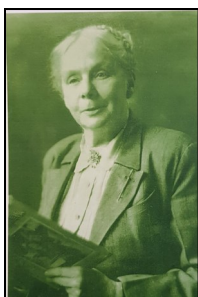
You never know who will come through the Centre's doors. Back in February we had two couples from South Australia who had left their cruise ship in Auckland to do a campervan tour down through the country, before joining the ship again in Wellington. They had intended to do the Waitomo Caves, however that plan was cancelled due to the floods, so they spent a good hour at the Centre, before heading off with new plans.

Then we had a couple from Auckland going south for a reunion. They were strolling around the village, waiting for their car to be charged at the Four Square, when they came across the Centre, and was pleasantly surprised with what they found.

And a lady from Melbourne, on her way to the airport from New Plymouth, was ready for a break and popped into the Centre to get out of the heat!

During the month of April we had visitors from Germany, UK, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Denmark, Utah USA, Uruguay, and Chile, as well as Kiwis—329 visitors in total.

Mary Scott—author



The Centre has an informative display on novelist Mary Scott, we also have a good number of visitors who are delighted to see the display that brings back memories of her books. And while her story has been posted before, we have a much wider following now so let me share Mary's story again.

Mary Edith Scott (Marten Stuart) Teacher and Novelist 1888-1979

Mary's first novels were penned under the pseudonym Marten Stuart - the first was *Where the Apple Reddens* in 1934.

She would often settle down at her Remington Junior typewriter on the kitchen table, with a kerosene lamp on one side and a candle elevated on a couple of books on the other, to type.

Later novels under her own name were set in contemporary King Country and were realistic and humorous.

Mary was a prodigious author producing more than thirty books from 1953 to 1978.

She wrote in 1954: I took an MA degree at Auckland University College. Intended to teach; did so for eighteen months, married, and went to the back blocks. Real back blocks - clay road for 25miles to the nearest township, everything done by horses and 'buggies'. I've done all those things like packing stores on horseback, and ride 350miles on my honeymoon. Have lived in the country ever since, brought up a family, written a good deal for New Zealand papers, published three books of stories and several one-act plays. At various times I have done a lot of talks for National Broadcasting Service - two or three were subsequently done by the B.B.C. Home Service...

Mary moved from Gisborne to Pekanui Road in 1927.

For a taste of the bush and a feel of Mary's isolation, visit the Walter Scott Reserve on that road - administered by Forest & Bird Society.

On display at the Centre we have Mary's Remington typewriter, a memorial cross presented on behalf of her New Zealand Swiss overseas admirers and a large collection of Mary's novels

- We accept unwanted copies - duplicates we sell for Heritage funds. Members are also able to borrow Mary's books

Month	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Apr	0	458	329	
May	0	214	195	467
Jun	97	220	161	
Jul	238	319	177	
Aug	173	103	155	
Sep	221	103	160	
Oct	456	44	270	
Nov	231	80	166	
Dec	237	105	92	
Jan	297	196	252	
Feb	303	173	226	
Mar	174	175	265	
Totals	2427	2190	2448	467

Library Books - available for lending to members only.
Just ask at the counter

The Centre has an extensive library, with books covering historical events, people, and buildings - both Māori and European— e.g. *Te Pahu* - a history; *Kawhia South* - Kinohaku, *Te Anga*, *Marakopa*, *Kiritihiri*; *Capability Buddle* (promoted on page 3); *Behind the Reins*; *Landmarks of Tainui*; *Māori* by Michael King; *Tide of Kawhia*; and more.

Books for Sale:

- Salute to the Past—Boxing Day Races
- Behind the Reins
- Te Pahu—a History

Black and dark green coolie bag left behind at the annual BBQ
Pickup at the Centre