



NEWSLETTER

No. 68: June 2024

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

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We were saddened by the news that three of our members and volunteers have passed away during the summer of 2024.

Sally Uerata

Sally Uerata was a foundation member of our Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre, having initially been on the committee in 2000, with Lady Mahuta, to negotiate the land and naming of Rangimarie Reserve, on which our building now stands.

Sally was born Sally McOnie, and as a child lived in Robertson Road, Ngutanui and attended Pirongia School. Sally married Sonny Uerata, who was a shepherd for Wyatt Shepherd, and the family lived on Mangati Road for many years before moving into Pirongia village.



Through her mother Kate Dunlop, Sally had knowledge of many Pirongia Maori sites of significance. She campaigned for the old Pirongia School building to be preserved and relocated, working to make flax kono baskets to help with fundraising for this. She had been a foundation member of Pirongia Playcentre, which started life in the supper room of the Memorial Hall in 1973.

Sally, along with Purekireki Marae members and Haupai Puke, had a big challenge in keeping Matakītaki Reserve as a special historical reserve to be recognised and

valued by the village and local Council.

She has also been very involved in the development of Te Ngahere Reserve on the corner of Belcher and McClure Streets. We are very grateful for her hard work for the community undertaken over a long life!

Patricia Grierson

We remember Patricia with great fondness as a committee member and volunteer for 15 years (2004-2019), and especially for her generous contributions, her wit, her sense of humour and her bright red winter coat!

We also remember in particular the lovely coffee cups she supplied for the 15 AGMs she attended. Patricia took part in many of our historic Waipa trips, beginning in November 2005.



Haupai Puke

There is a full description of the contribution Haupai Puke made to our Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre in Newsletter No 67, which recorded the awarding of a Life Membership to Haupai.

Much of Haupai's life work has been in the service to her community, her family and her work in education. We are truly grateful for the work she did in keeping our centre communicating with Purekireki Marae and Te Kauhanganui, from the very start of our organisation in 2003. Haupai was farewelled at Purekireki Marae and Hukanui Marae.

AGM:

26 June 2024, 7.30pm

Its that time again, when we meet to discuss the year we have had, elect the committee we want, and set the path ahead for another year. As an incorporated society we have a few legalities to see to during the year ahead, and as always we are looking for the help of volunteers in any part of our Society.

The speaker will be **Alan Hall**, his topic is: **Investigating Stories of Local Heritage Buildings. Some insights from the Te Awamutu CBD project**

We welcome you to come and support Alan and your Heritage and Information Centre.

Newsletter Editor:

Alan Hall has been our editor for many newsletters, but in 2023 Alan requested a change, and Paula McWha took over for the last issue. Owing to changed circumstances, we are now looking for help with editing and putting together our newsletters. Please call our President Marilyn Yeates or Administrator Jenny Mortland at the Centre if you are able to help.

Margaret McQuillan has kindly stepped in to get our **Facebook** page back into action.

Memories magazines:

We have been gifted a collection of Memories magazines, which we have boxed up and put in the Centre for all to enjoy. These are not specifically about our area, but they do give a good description of past eras, and have wonderful photographs. They are to be found under the display panels on the River traffic.

Waipa District Council Heritage Fund

A grant has been received from the Heritage Fund, to cover part of the repainting of the exterior of our building.

The cleaning of the building exterior has been completed in May 2024, funded by part of the Te Papa Hardship Grant, and the exterior painting work is to be carried out in July 2024. Only those areas of the exterior which are badly in need of paint will be covered, and we will use our own funds as required to complete the work. The roof, which is Color-steel, will not be repainted in this round of maintenance. Repainting of the archive room will not be covered by the Heritage Fund grant.

Our Archives: Sherwin Collection

Work has been continuing on a collection of documents and photographs received from the family of the late Margaret Sherwin. This adds to our knowledge of the Daleys, Nabbs and Pearson families. Margaret's mother, Rosa Daley, was an accomplished photographer, and her album of early Pirongia photographs are a wonderful resource.

Look for the panel on the Daley/Sherwin family next time you visit the centre.

Mary Hurst Collection

Karen Howard has started collating documents that have been in our collection for many years. Mary Hurst, an early Life Member, left maps, documents and booklets which are all useful for research purposes.

Alan Hall has been our go-to person for research, but as our collection grows, we hope more people will become interested in learning to research. We are starting to index what we have, and our digitisation project is still continuing in the background, although slowly!

We are also in the midst of producing a library catalogue. Our library has grown so much, not all books may be easy to find on the shelves.

Upgrading the Waggon

The waggon, displayed out the front of the Heritage Centre, is generally in reasonable condition. It was fully restored many years ago, but an inspection in 2023 showed that the metal components of the structure were deteriorating and the timber parts needed painting. Another grant application was made to the Waipa District Council Discretionary Fund (2023), and this has enabled us to carry out repairs.

Brent Mealing has kindly offered to take on the task, and has removed the affected parts, cleaned them up, and sent them off for galvanising. We are also checking the shelter structure is sufficiently protecting the waggon

50 years of Playcentre in Pirongia

On 11th November 2023 past and present members of the Pirongia Playcentre family met to celebrate 50 years of Playcentre activities in Pirongia area.

Pirongia Playcentre was first established in 1973, by a small dedicated group of parents and using the rear of the Memorial Hall. Facilities were basic, and all the equipment needed to be packed away under the stage at the end of every session! The first supervisor was Violet Turner.

When part of the original Pirongia School building became redundant in 1977, the opportunity arose for the local community to support the moving and re-siting of the building to use as a permanent Playcentre. The site chosen was a Waipa County Council site, leased to Keith Wing as grazing land, and sited behind the old Public Library building on Franklin Street. Keith agreed to relinquish the lease, and a committee was formed to manage and fund raise for the project, with Barbara Walters at the helm.

This committee started with \$0 in mid 1977, by the time the project was completed ready for occupation in late 1978, it had raised the required sum of \$7,000 and had overseen the project through to completion on time and underbudget! They had \$66 left in the kitty on completion, an amazing community effort! Part of this included getting approval from the South Auckland Education Board, who wanted the school site cleared with the building removed promptly, and this was completed by mid October 1977.

The Department of Education and the Playcentre Association both had a list of requirements for the building, including reroofing, new foundations, new electrical work and the installation of all plumbing services. The building also had to be repainted inside and out, and all doors and windows repaired as the building had been allowed to deteriorate on the school site. Warwick Kellaway of the Education Board provided sketch plans and elevations of the proposal.

The part of the building being moved appears to be both the original small room that had connected the classrooms (this room built 1878 by William Blencoe, CT Rickit and George Wilkinson), and the western classroom (built in 1905 by F H Grayson and N McMillan).

Jack House Transit uplifted and relocated the building and Adams Builders worked with Playcentre family volunteers to carry out all the associated building and painting work. Te Awamutu Electrical were the electricians for the project. Many locals gave generously their time and labour, including Sally and Sonny Uerata plus Marilyn and Les Yeates doing the lengthy task of sanding back the old paint!

Fundraising included gathering used baling twine (for use by Foxton Mills in carpet backing), raffles in the Alexandra Hotel, a Tug of War competition, Flea-market sale, bottle drives, a golf tournament, a garden ramble and an afternoon tea for past school pupils.

A group of craftspeople helped pre-

serve the oldest part of the building, keeping the original unpainted Kauri lining boards to be used as a display for sale goods twice a year. This grew eventually into the huge Pirongia Craft Market we celebrate every year! Numerous alterations and improvements have been made to the building over its life on the Franklin St site, but the original building envelope has been retained. The continuing operation of Playcentre in our village is an impressive feat for a volunteer driven organisation and the building looks as good as ever.



Trucking the building onto the new site in two loads

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