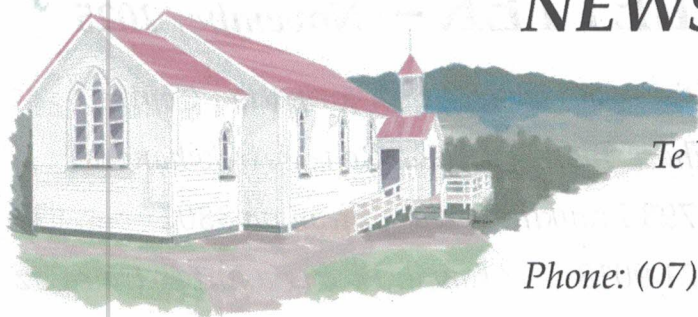


NEWSLETTER — November 2025



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

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The Howard Connection with Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre

It all began with Garry Howard, who on retiring from teaching computers at high school in 2005, found his way to PHIC a few years later to volunteer in the archives and also on the committee.

Then came Karen, Garry's wife, who became an archivist with Ros Empson, sorting out and working with the huge number of materials and objects which had in some cases sat in the archive room for many years waiting to be sorted. This is an ongoing task!

The next to help was Brooklyn, Garry's grandson, who, as a Year 13 student studying photography, came out to PHIC and photographed every item and object on display, plus some items from the archive room, so there is now a digital record of them.

The latest to spend time here is Amy Howard, Brooklyn's mother. Amy needed a practical placement for her Batchelor of Applied Management, for which PHIC seemed to be a perfect place. She has completed the project, which included 200 hours of work placement applying, identifying and analyzing theories, and problem solving. This had then to be presented showing the problems arising at her placement.



New volunteers: we are grateful for the help of Angus and Jan Smith, plus Felicity Campbell, who will improve our ability to open the Centre the six days a week. Occasionally we have no volunteer available, and these times we just have to close, leaving a note on the

front door. We are always looking for extra help, so if anyone is interested in being a volunteer (even for a few hours), please let our administrator, Jenny, know. The Smiths, being fairly new residents, were asked if they had any Pirongia connections. And yes indeed, Angus does... his ancestor Neil McLeod was one of the first policemen in the area in 1880s.

AGM report

Our AGM was held on June 2025, with Robbie Neha. Our guest speaker. Robbie is a committee member, the nephew of Tom Roa, and a filmmaker. Robbie and Tom have collaborated on a series of publications, published by TeKotahitanga Marae in Otorohanga, on important Maori history stories. His presentation as interesting, informative and enjoyable, which included excerpts of a number of story-telling mediums, about Orakau and Rangioawhia, including snippets from Haywood's 1935 film on Orakau.

The business of the AGM covered elections for office holders, plus discussion and voting on the revised Constitution for the Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre. This was required under the new Incorporated Societies Act, to be passed by a general meeting of our organisation before mid 2026. Our Office holders are little changed, with Marilyn Yeates continuing as President, Ros Empson as her deputy, and Charlie Coles as Treasurer. We said goodbye to Nick Van der Sande, who has been a committee member for several years, and welcomed Hamish Hamilton onto the committee. Minutes of the meeting were taken by Jenny Mortland, and will be available to read at the Centre if required.

Our evening finished with the usual socialising supper; it is always good to see the support from our members, especially as it was a cold, wet evening!

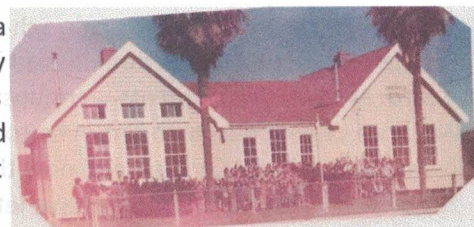
Membership dues are used to run the Centre, and although we get grants from various organisations, these are tagged for specific items. To help the Centre's running costs consider being a member - our treasurer, Charlie, will appreciate being able to balance the books! \$25 single/\$30 family

Web: <http://pirongiaheritage.org.nz>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pirongiaheritage

Pirongia Annual Craft Day

It all started in 1977, the Pirongia School Infant block (the original Pirongia School), was to be demolished by the South Auckland Education Board. Many older residents were upset, and had said.. first the original Anglican Church has been removed to Waikeria (since returned to become the Heritage Centre), and now the original school will be lost from the district. What will Pirongia have left to identify with its historical past?



The school had just celebrated 100 years, five years earlier, in 1972. Marilyn Yeates and Barbara Walter called a public meeting for people interested in tendering for the building, to return it to the village as a Playcentre. The meeting voted overwhelmingly in support, and donations were received that night from many locals. Time was limited to raise the funds... so a golf day was organised, manure, twine and firewood sold. A woodland garden was opened to the public. Pottery, wool crafts, cane, and knitted goods were sold. A Patsy Eyre painting of the school building was raffled. And the money came rolling in.

The Pirongia Playcentre Building Committee won the tender. Waipa County allocated the land, the craft people of the district fund-raised, and one morning in February 1978 just two years after it was first mooted, Johnsons Transport (or was it Jack House Removals?) from Tamahere transported the building in two pieces to its present site. \$7000 was needed to bring the building up to standard. The committee had nothing to start with and finished with \$66.33 profit in Nov 1978. And today the Playcentre is still very much in use, and the Craft Day which had its beginning back then, is a much sought after annual event that people travel from afar to visit.



From the Archives: Map collection

On receiving an armful of documents from Alan Hall, our Archives team started the process of indexing and accessioning all the maps in our archives. We are working towards having an index of these available at the Centre and also on our website. In the long term future, we will get these maps digitised, but this is a big project.

Much of this information comes from maps former member, the late Mary Hurst collected in the early years of the Centre's existence and from Alan Hall's recent gifts.

Our collection covers Military sites, Maori sites, Alexandra township and surrounding areas e.g. Harepepe, Te Rore land-ing, swamp lands, and a couple of old NZ maps. About 230 maps are held, some subject areas being shown on multiple maps. There are also more recent maps of this part of Waipa District, including aerial photos. Some early maps are sketches, e.g. early military maps. Recently we received a map book, published in 1864, of Hocksetter and Petermann maps.

If anyone wants to view a map in our collection, please contact either Karen Howard or Ros Empson through the Centre.

IDEAL

Moving Pictures

Will Show at

PIRONGIA, SATURDAY, 4TH.

KIHIKIHI, 6TH AND 7TH.

PIRONGIA, 8TH.

STAR Programme by special arrangement with N.Z. Pictures Co. Change of programme each evening.

Great Drama, "Guiding Light"; "Secret of the Iron Safe," Comics and Educational.

Special Engagement of Mr J. Mel-ford, Australian Elocutionist and Singer.

Prices as Usual.

J. MATHELSON, Proprietor.

Moving Pictures in 1914

Allan Webb's collection of newspaper references to moving pictures in Te Awamutu and its surrounding districts between 1911 and 1915 tells that moving picture shows were held at Pirongia as early as April 1914, seven years before reticulated electric power became available in the settlement on 30 December 1921. Ideal Moving Pictures was a company said to be well and favourably known throughout the Kawhia district which extended its showings to Kihikihi and Pirongia for a short time. They showed a drama, Guiding Light, Secrets of the Iron Safe, Comics and short educational films. Because there was no electricity supply, the projector would have been powered by a generator in a vehicle outside the old public hall where the shows were held.

In 1915, Premier Pictures, which was showing moving pictures in the Te Awamutu Town Hall, showed some movies under similar arrangements at Pirongia, such as the comedy romance The Girls and the Explorer, although again the initiative appears to have been short lived.

The opening of Te Awamutu's Empire Theatre with its own generator in March 1916, with the Te Awamutu Theatre Company contracted to show movies, appears to have spelled an end to moving picture shows by small companies in and around Te Awamutu.