



NEWSLETTER

No. 8, May, 2007

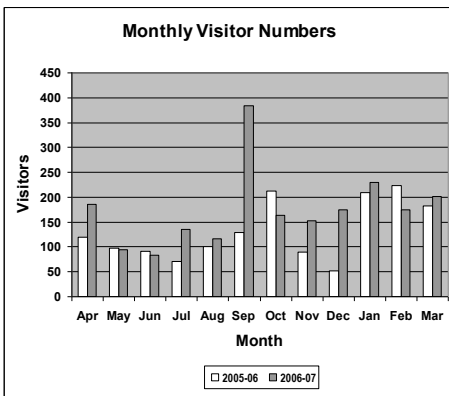
Pirongia Historic Visitor Centre
Te Whare Taonga o Ngaa Rohe o Arekahanara

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Record visitor numbers



We have done it! Visitor numbers for the financial year to the end of March exceeded the previous annual total by more than 500. The total reached 2094, compared with 1579 last year. More people seem to be choosing to visit the Centre, rather than finding it by chance, and it is increasingly common for people to come to give and/or seek family information.

As this newsletter's thanks list shows, some give us old photographs which are particularly welcome.

Our thanks and congratulations to our volunteers who allow us to open on four days a week and make such achievements possible.

Thanks for support:

Frances Rawlings, the daughter of Dick Craig (former owner and editor of the *King Country Chronicle*, for donating copies of two books by her father about the history of the King Country.

Dick Singleton from Lower Hutt, a descendant of John and Anne Aubin, for photographs of the village.

Audrey Henderson (a Mary Scott fan from Rotorua) for donating another three copies of books by Mary Scott.

Mary Hurst who donated a copy of *Illustrated Maori Place Names* for the Library.

Aileen Gabelich (Hamilton) for the donation of three Maori adze heads found on Handley Bird's property on Bird Road.

Ann Benson (Te Awamutu) for the gift of the keys to the old Pirongia Post and Telegraph Office.

Sharron Williams (Hamilton) who donated a copy of a petition sent to the government by military settlers at Pirongia and Kihikihi in 1865.

Jan McBeth, Karen & Garry Howard and Paula McWha for their contributions to the evening on *Tracing Family History*.

Barbara and Murray Walter for various maintenance jobs including re-oiling the carved sign and (with **Charlie Coles**) moving the bell to make way for the latest large photographs.

Linda Samson (Hamilton) for a photograph of the first teacher's house and copies of photographs and documents about the Yeates family.

Ngairé Phillips for two copies of *A Short History of Mangapiko School and District*.

Glenyss Hall whose persistence has raised the refurbished toilet to Superloo status.

Tracing Family History

The panel discussion on *Tracing Family History*, held on 17 April, attracted an attendance of 22, including a number of members of the public. Jan McBeth from the Te Awamutu Genealogy Group, set the scene with an informative powerpoint presentation about tracing the history of her family. She highlighted resources which had proved helpful.

Members Garry and Karen Howard reinforced a number of points made by Jan. They noted other resources available and emphasized the need to focus on primary sources of information and seek confirmation before accepting online reports by other genealogists at face value. Some useful discussion followed about apparent inconsistencies which may occur in primary data, including the repeated use of first names in the same generation. These highlight the need to use multiple records such as birth and death records to verify key facts.

Karen showed some of her work which was developed using a diary maintained by her father, together with family photographs. Paula McWha spoke further about using photographs to record family history and made useful suggestions about organizing and storing old photographs.

Thanks are due to the panelists for their contributions to the evening, and to members of the audience who contributed to a very useful discussion.



Jan McBeth in action.



Panel discussion.

Annual General Meeting:

The AGM of the Society will be held in the Visitor Centre at 7:30 pm on Tuesday 19 June.

At 8:00 pm, Richard Stowers from Hamilton, who is the author of a book on the topic, will give an illustrated talk about *The New Zealand Forest Rangers*. At the time when Alexandra was established, a unit of the Forest Rangers, under the command of Major Von Tempsky was located at the Alexandra West Redoubt and members of the unit received land grants at Harapepe, near Te Pahu.

Members of the public will be welcome.

Subscriptions

With this newsletter members will receive a Membership Renewal Form.

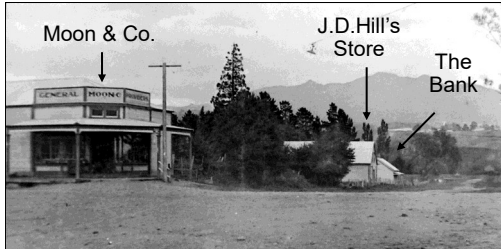
We hope that you will continue to support the Centre with your annual subscription.

Those Old Photos

We continue to be delighted by donations of old photographs. Recently, Dick Singleton from Wellington gave us a dated copy of a shot taken from Franklin Street looking west, down Crozier Street. It shows clearly what was the building of J.D.Hill's store in the 1870s, showing that it was still standing in 1923.

The same photograph also clearly shows the name *Moon and Co.* on what became Bell's Store.

It is surprising what can be discerned from some seemingly ordinary pictures.



The Moon & Co. store and Crozier Street — 1923

For next year

After the AGM, an important task will be to establish a programme of activities for the next financial year. If you have ideas about an event which you would like to see considered, make a suggestion either to a committee member, or leave a message on the answerphone at the Centre or send us an email.

Your input will be greatly appreciated.

The programme for the year will be included in Newsletter No.9 in August.

New and Improved

Indexes to the ten volumes of the *Journal of the Te Awamutu Historical Society*, published between 1966 and 1975, and the 29 issues of ***Footprints of History*** published between 1988 and 2005. Cost \$10.00 at the Centre.

Historic Alexandra: A guide to historic sites in Pirongia Village. This 13 page booklet replaces the old *Historic Walks* booklet. Cost \$2.50 at the Centre.

Have you seen the two enlarged **photographs of Alexandra** which now hang behind the reception desk? They were reproduced with the permission of Te Awamutu Museum which holds the originals, and paid for from the remainder of a grant by TrustPower.



The enlarged picture of the Post & Telegraph Office built in the 1870s.

It happened here — In Pirongia!

In March and early April, 1883, nearly two years after King Tawhiao had declared in Alexandra that the hostilities of the land war were over, the town again featured in the national news.

From the government's point of view, the declaration of peace and the symbolic exchange of arms between King Tawhiao and Major William Mair was a breakthrough which made it possible to obtain permission to construct a railway through the King Country, connecting Auckland and Wellington via New Plymouth. Te Wahanui, a Ngati-Maniapoto leader who had been Tawhiao's spokesman when peace was declared, was instrumental in obtaining permission from Ngati Maniapoto for surveys to commence.

However, not all King Country hapu welcomed the idea and news papers of the time tell how surveyor Charles Hursthouse and his companions were captured, held prisoner and maltreated for two days by Te Mahuki and his Tekaumarua followers at Te Uira, 16 miles beyond Otorohanga. Te Mahuki had earlier been a supporter of Te Whiti at Parihaka and was a prophet who was less pacifist in his practices than his mentor. On this occasion, the *Hursthouse Incident*, which the papers referred to as a *native outrage*, was resolved by the intervention of Kahu, the brother of Te Wahanui and Te Kooti, recently pardoned by the government and living near Otorohanga.

Nevertheless, on 27 March, there was a lively scene on the streets of Alexandra, when Te Mahuki led a party of 24 young followers over the new bridge at Whatiwhatihoie and into the settlement on horseback. They were not armed but believed that the power of God would allow them to take over the settlement to protest against the railway. One citizen in their way, after they crossed the bridge, was Aubin Ahier who was tied up and left in scrub at the side of the track.

The settlement had been forewarned of possible trouble and the *Waikato Times* tells how 40 members of the local Armed Constabulary and 50 members of the Te Awamutu Volunteers, who were hidden in the disused building which had been Duffus' Store in Crozier Street, were able to contain and arrest Mahuki and his followers without a shot being fired.

Those arrested were dispatched to Auckland by special train where they were charged on 29 March with assaulting and robbing Hursthouse and Newsham, and assaulting Wetere Te Renga at Te Uira on 20 March, causing a riot at Alexandra on 27 March and four of them with assaulting Aubin Ahier. Following a trial conducted on 5 and 7 April, the prisoners, who presented no defence, were sentenced to imprisonment for periods varying between 12 months (the two leaders) and 3 months.

Native Minister Bryce, who was in the Waikato when the original incident occurred, met with Wahanui at Te Kopua on 30 March, and the survey for the rail route to Taranaki continued, accompanied by Mr Bryce with Wetere Te Rerenga acting as an intermediary with local people along the way.

New Members?

Now is a good time to suggest to someone you know that they might become a financial member of the Historic Visitor Centre. Tell them about what we do. Invite them to the Centre and to our events. Tell them that they will get regular newsletters to inform them about what is happening. Stress that while further volunteers are always welcome, so too are members who simply support us through their subscriptions.

Wanted: A Minutes Secretary

The Executive Committee desperately needs someone to fulfill the roles of Minutes Secretary. This requires simply taking the minutes at monthly meetings and typing them for distribution. Other members of the committee can do other secretarial jobs such as the correspondence, to avoid making the job onerous.

If you feel that you might be able to help, or know someone who might be willing to do so, please phone or email the Centre, or talk to a committee member about the possibility, and we will follow it up.

Odds & Ends

A visitor from Mt Maungau, who is a descendant of the Bells is interested in finding a book by William (?) Dell about William and Mary Leakey, which she read as a child. If you know anything about it, please let us know.

We have acquired a copy of *Maori Settlement in the Waikato District* by J.B.W. Robertson. It was published in 1965 as Bulletin 2 of the Te Awamutu Historical Society. Ask for it at the desk.

The Committee is currently working on a new letterhead and logo for the Centre.

On the Internet

Another useful online source of historical information is the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* containing more than 3000 biographies of people who made their mark on this country. No living New Zealander is included.

Try: www.dbnz.govt.nz

Enter a name and see how it lists both the biography of the person (if there is one) and other biographies which refer to them.