

NEWSLETTER

No. 9, August, 2007

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

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The New Zealand Forest Rangers: 1863 -1866

The pleasing attendance at the AGM reflected the interest of members and some members of the public in an illustrated talk by Richard Stowers about the Forest Rangers who were associated with military activities in the area during the Waikato Land War. Later, members of the No.2 Company received land grants in the Harapepe area and a few continued as members of the Armed Constabulary in the area.

Richard Stowers is a military historian who wrote a definitive history of the Forest Rangers. His detailed knowledge of the subject was reflected in his ability to talk not only about the weaponry and tactics of the Rangers but also of the relationship between these volunteer soldiers and the British Military commanders of the Land Wars campaigns.



Richard Stowers displays an axe from the time of the Forest Rangers.

He made observations about the relationship between Major Jackson who formed the unit and commanded No.1 Company, and Major Von Tempsky who commanded No.2 Company, when it was formed, and eventually assumed command of the Forest Rangers before it was disbanded in 1866.

Richard illustrated how the legacy of the Forest Rangers was continued in the bush campaigns of the Armed Constabulary.

He showed examples of badges, equipment and weaponry and medals of the Forest Rangers, together with an interesting collection of relevant photographs and paintings, many of which were new to his audience.

At the conclusion of discussion following the presentation, Waipa Mayor Alan Livingston, who now farms at Harapepe, thanked Richard on behalf of those attending for an informative and interesting talk.

Annual General Meeting

At the AGM, held in the Historic Visitor Centre on 19 June, President Sabina Owen reported to 40 people on a wide range of accomplishments during the 2006-2007 financial year. These included maintenance and improvements to the buildings, progress with finalising a long-term concept plan for the development of displays, some new publications, and a pleasing programme of events. Treasurer Glenyss Hall presented a healthy financial report which reflected significant financial support from the Waipa District Council, Trust Waikato and the New Zealand Community Trust. Thanks were expressed to members of the hard-working Executive Committee and the volunteers who open the Centre on four days a week. Inaugural President Sabina Owen made it clear that she would like to step down from the presidency, although she was happy to continue to support the work of the Centre.

The following members were elected to the incoming committee. President: Marilyn Yates, Vice-President: Sabina Owen, Treasurer: Glenyss Hall, Committee: Robin Astridge, Patricia Grierson, Alan Hall, Garry Howard, Sue Scott, Clare St Pierre, Nick van der Sande, Barbara Walter, Murray Walter. Sally Uerata and Haupai Puke will be the nominees of Purekireki Marae and Te Kauhanganui respectively. Stephanie Lambert of Te Awamutu Museum is an ex-officio member. It will be noted that the position of Secretary remains vacant.



Outgoing President Sabina Owen and new committee member Robin Astridge.

Thanks for support:

Peter Robertson who applied sealant to the base of the belfry in the ongoing attempt to seal a persistent leak in the foyer.

Pat Randell for donating a file of documents and newspaper clippings about events leading to the creation of the reserve area around the East Redoubt.

Richard Stowers (Hamilton), for an informative and interesting illustrated talk about the New Zealand Forest Rangers, at the AGM.

Layne Kerr of Bailey Ingham, Otorohanga, who again undertook the review of the Centre's annual financial report to the AGM.

Ngairé Phillips who donated photographs from the opening of the Methodist Church in 1925 complete with a list of names.

Murray Walter for updating the RDX and Golf Club displays.

Marilyn Yeates for re-organizing the Craft Day displays.

Don Horne who donated electronic images of some spectacular photographs of botanical phenomena in the Walter Scott Reserve.

Len Styles for strengthening the castor base on the new brochures unit.

Stop Press

The New Zealand Community Trust has awarded us a grant of \$1100 for the installation of sun filters on windows on the northern, eastern and western sides of the building. This will make a significant improvement to our ability to conserve wall displays and artifacts. We are most grateful for the generosity of the Trust.



Don't forget

Visit the Centre on the Pirongia Craft Day (September 22nd).

Don't miss the display of **Maori carving** and traditional tattoo.

Enjoy the **Bohemian band** which will play on the deck, outside the Centre after lunch.

In Committee

Visitor numbers were down in July, compared with the two previous years. This is hardly surprising, considering the difficulty that visitors must have in even seeing the place beyond the fences surrounding the street-scaping, which seems to be taking forever.



Find the way in!

Coming Events

The Executive Committee on the following programme of events for the year:

September: Pirongia Craft Day (22 Sep) with special attractions at the Centre.

October: Archaeological Tour 2. (13 Oct)

Panel presentation on the Visitor Centre's Resources. (23 Oct).
Members of the public invited.

November: Archaeological Tour 1 (17 Nov). A repeat of the tour run twice previously.

January: Barbecue for members.

February: Saturday Motor Tour of the Path of War (Pt 1): Tuakau to Ngaruawahia. A repeat of last year's tour. Date to be advised.

March: Saturday Motor Tour of the Path of War (Pt 2): Te Rore to Orakau. Date to be advised.

April: Evening Speaker or Panel on a topic to be advised. Date to be advised.

June: AGM followed by speaker.

Details about events after November will be advised in future Newsletters.

Members will receive publicity material in advance of each tour and evening event.

Archaeological Tour 2

Keep Saturday, 13 October free to join a long-awaited tour of archaeological sites to the south of Pirongia, leaving the Centre at 9:00 am. Arrangements are being made to obtain access to the mission sites at Mangapouri and Te Kopua as well as Maori Pa sites at Hanning Road, Mangatoatoa and Puketotara. Along the way, we will pass other sites such as Kaipiha where Turner first settled. Details of costs and booking arrangements will be sent to members.

Our New Logo

Recently, graphic designer Katherine Quin completed a new logo for the Historic Visitor Centre which will have a wide variety of applications. We have used it for the first time in the masthead of this newsletter.

It happened here — in 1873.

On New Year's Day, 1873, Alexandra held its annual sports which included running races, hurdles races, a running long jump, hop-step-and-jump, running high jump, and putting the stone. The running races were over 100 yards, 200 yards and 1 mile, and the hurdles races over 500 yards and 250 yards. There were open events, and restricted events for boys under 18, boys under 12, and married men. The only event for female competitors was entitled a 'wahine race' where those placed all had Maori names. The programme also included a three-legged race and a quoits match competition. Most events were for prizes of £1, although some races for boys had a prize of 10s. One event was for a trophy. This was the 250 yards hurdles race for boys under 18, where the prize of a silver cup, presented by Mr Thos Finch, was won, coincidentally, by his son, George Finch.

The mile race was won, unexpectedly by one Daniel Hardcastle, a white youngster who had been brought up by a Maori family. Running from a 25 yards start, he easily beat Hughes from Te Kopua who was regarded as the local champion. The *Waikato Times* tells that Hughes then backed himself in a scratch race against Hardcastle for £3. Many wagers were placed on the outcome. 'The white boy again ran in a most astonishing manner, talking away most unconcernedly while Hughes was very much exhausted. Just before coming to the winning post, however, down went the boy and in came Hughes the winner. It was the most palpable sell! I ever saw on a race-course – the thing was so plain that the stakes holder was compelled, by public opinion, to refuse giving the stakes, Hughes receiving only his own money back.' (*Waikato Times*, 4 Jan, 1873).

In the evening, we are told that a ball 'concluded the amusement'. About 40 couples attended the event which was probably held in the Doncaster Arms Hotel which had a 'large room for concerts and balls, on the ground floor' (*NZ Herald*, 7 July, 1865).

Find out about the Centre's resources

On **Tuesday, 23 October at 7.30 pm**, at the Historic Visitor Centre, a panel will talk about the growing range of resources held by the Centre and how these may be accessed. This session will be of particular interest to volunteers and other members interested in finding out about people and events in the past of Alexandra / Pirongia. Interested members of the public will also be welcome. Reference will also be made to other resources available at other locations. Come along and bring a friend.

Breaking News

As this Newsletter was being compiled, the Centre was advised that Trust Waikato has approved a grant of \$1200 for the construction of two wooden disability ramps and the installation of grab-rails in the toilet.

We are again grateful to Trust Waikato for its continuing support of the development of the Centre.

New and Improved

Have you seen the new brochure display stand and noticeboard in the now water-tight foyer?

We await delivery of a few more display racks to cope with the extensive range of brochures available for visitors.



Paula McWha and Glynys Hall are doing a great job in systematizing the replenishment of supplies.

New Members

A warm welcome to new members ...

- Tim and Sue Wright (belatedly),
- Neil Denize,
- Alan Livingston.



AGM guest speaker Richard Stowers with Mayor Alan Livingston and Volunteer Olive Clements.

On the Internet

Another useful online source of historical information is *New Zealand History online*. Select from pages on Culture and Society, Politics and Government and War & Society.

Try: www.nzhistory.net.nz

Navigate the site using the useful Quick-links at the bottom of each page.