



Incorporating
Hokianga Museum and
Archives Centre

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Alexa Whaley, Ōmāpere

Queen's Service Medal for services to historical research and heritage preservation

Alexa Whaley has lived and breathed Hokianga history for more than 30 years.

The 86-year-old was a key member of the volunteer group which breathed new life into the Hokianga Historical Society in the 1990s.

She was the driving force behind the new Hokianga Museum and Archives Centre which opened in Ōmāpere in 2010 after the old building was claimed by coastal erosion. She developed the layout, applied for grants and raised money for its fit-out.

She has been the society's principal researcher for 30 years, an executive member for 28 years and the museum's curator for 20. She is a life member of the society and has been writing its newsletters for two decades.

Whaley said she had agonised for a week before accepting the honour.

It really belonged to everyone in the "wonderful team" that reinvigorated the society in the 1990s — in particular Alec and Shirley Griffiths and her late husband Owen — but she was the only one left.

Whaley's connection with Hokianga started on her honeymoon. Later, while working in Auckland Library's New Zealand and Pacific Room, she immersed herself in the area's history, "and it just went from there".

The couple bought land at Ōmāpere in the 1970s and moved north in the 80s. The history of the Hokianga was underplayed and unknown compared to that of the Bay of Islands but had "just so much more going on", she said. Whaley has also been a member of Hokianga Rural Women for 17 years and secretary of South Hokianga St John from 2005-2011. She is a St John caring caller for the elderly and a support person for the Mainly Music programme for pre-school children.