



Incorporating
Hokianga Museum

Hokianga Historical Society Inc.
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NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2012

This time last year, we were flat to the boards getting ready to open our new building on the 14th December – everything to be in place and looking beautiful in less than a week, and still boxes to be emptied, piles to be sorted, exhibits to be arranged, windows & floor cleaned etc. I remember realising very late that we had no broom cupboard so bought one sight unseen over the phone, and discovering when it was delivered the day before opening that it was a kitset. Our wonderful helpers! They took it in their stride and had it assembled in a matter of minutes. And we got there!

This year, all we have to worry about is the lack of visitors. It seems to be fairly general, and this period just before Christmas is often pretty flat so we're hoping that things will look up for the real holiday period. They had better, because -

The **museum's new exhibition** has just been mounted – another reason that things must look up! **Soaring Over the Hokianga** is a gathering of aerial photographs taken before and just after the second World War, of our harbour and its main settlements. Perhaps some people of that vintage may remember – may even have bought – a book of such early photographs taken all over New Zealand by V.C. Browne which was published before the war, called *New Zealand from the Air*. What we have are those taken over Hokianga, twelve amazingly clear views, some dated 1938, and others from a later expedition. All were taken with a plate camera, which partly explains the consistent clarity, out of a small plane piloted by Browne's friend and co-adventurer, Capt. A.J. Bradshaw. We are indebted to Ken Baker for arranging copyright permission for all these, and having them enlarged to poster-size for effective display, and delivering them in person – also bearing all costs himself. We are so lucky to have such a supporter! The exhibition will stay on view from now until the end of January, and will remain as a constant record of the way Hokianga looked before all the changes brought by the leap in technology following the war.

Holiday activities: We are arranging two trips on the harbour this year, using the *Hokianga Express* as we have before. The first will be soon after Christmas, on **Friday 28th December** to be exact. Leaving from Opononi wharf, we go up as far as Motukaraka Island (once known as Galloways Island, later as Donaldson's Island) and hear from its owner, Heather Ayrton, about its history and significance in the harbour. This will be a daytime trip, leaving **10.30 am** on the tide and returning to the wharf by 12 noon. Cost will be **\$30.00** p.p.

The second will be a little more relaxed: it's a Sunset Cruise of the lower harbour (out to the Heads past Omapere, along under the sandhills about as far as Rangi Point, across to Koutu and back to Opononi) That will be on the evening of **Friday, 11th January, 7 – 8 pm**. And its cost - **\$20.00**.

In both cases the state of the weather will govern whether it's on or not, and that decision will be made by the Skipper Pete Clarke. It has been so changeable up to now that we are surely due for some real summer sun! So we proceed hopefully.

There is an absolute limit of 40 on the *Hokianga Express*, so **tickets are available now**, from me or the museum. You've got time to write, email or ring (my home phone -09 4058 641) But a warning: if you decide at the last minute not to go and we have sent tickets, we will still require you to pay, because we have to pay Peter. But if he decides the trip is off, we will happily refund.

Our **annual dinner** was held as scheduled on November 16th and was a decided success. 42 attended, the meal was good though not excessive, and the speaker, Prof. David Williams, was excellent. We should have had a tape-recorder but didn't, and although he had a few notes they looked very brief – so there is no way we could reproduce his talk, couldn't even try. Enough to say it ranged widely, from Syria to Kaihu and back again, drawing in all the threads neatly at the end.

Hiku also presented **Heather Ayrton** as our new Patron, then unexpectedly asked her to speak. As he knew she would, she rose to the occasion like the wordsmith she is – but she had something less polite to say to him afterwards. We are really grateful that she agreed to take the position, as she is involved in so many other affairs – thank you, and welcome, Heather. May we have many years with you watching over us!

Our annual dinner has been a landmark affair on our calendar for a good twenty years now. After talking to a number of the long-standing members, and trying to get the attendance up, Grace Wilkinson has been wondering whether a weekend lunch might attract more people. She would be grateful for your thoughts on this; whether it's the social occasion, or the food, or the speaker that attracts most. We don't have many times when the Society is seen as a whole and the dinner has been one of those times: would a lunch have the same impact? What do you think?

We began with a "This time last year" memory. To end, here is a reminder that goes much further back. On **24th May 2013**, it will be forty years since a group met to establish **The Omapere Branch of the Hokianga Historical Society**. From the Minute Book that starts with that date, here, as written, is a list of those who attended that meeting:

Messrs P. Klaricich, C. Bridge, C. Baxter, A. Bracey, T. Baker, J.Dawson, C. Barry, N.Baker, R.Slack (all of Omapere) W. Leigh-McKenzie, A. Pullen Burry, G. Andrewes, G. Bateup (Opononi) J. Toia (Pakanae), H.Hedger, W.Thompson (Waimamaku) R.Hendry (Rawene).

Mesdames Bridge, Baxter, Bracey, Springett (Omapere) Leigh-McKenzie (Opononi)

Misses M.Prade and S.Riese (formerly of Vancouver, Canada) G. Money, C. Doar (Omapere) Apologies: Mr & Mrs F. Baker, Mrs G. Andrewes, Mrs R. Slack, Mr N. Springett, Mr D. Parlane.

Familiar names! And what marital distinctions! It is interesting that after the decision was formally made to form a Branch, the rules adopted and the officers and a committee elected, the very first motion was: "That the Branch investigate plans and costs of a suitable fire-proof building for a Museum." (Leigh-McKenzie / Klaricich. Carried.)

Did they know what they were starting? But the responsibility has meant that we are still going strong while Rawene, Horeke and Kohukohu branches died quietly years ago. So we should celebrate.

I think that's all for now. It's a busy season and nobody has the spare time to sit and read screeds and screeds. But we all here wish you all there a very happy Christmas and a healthy, crisis-free 2013. And please drop in to the museum when you can!

Alexa Whaley, Sec.



Motukaraka Island, c.1966