



Incorporating
Hokianga Museum and
Archives Centre

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CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2019

Kia ora everyone

I've been delaying this as long as I could in the hope of getting some dates for events to pass on to you, but with not much luck so far. However, if I don't send it soon, Christmas and the New Year celebrations will be merely memories and it will have no relevance at all.

So, first of all, and on behalf of all of us here, may I wish you all a very happy Christmas wherever you will be, and a peaceful, prosperous, tragedy-free 2020 to come. Emphasis I think on the 'tragedy-free': we've definitely had enough killings and misadventures.

Our last newsletter went out just in time to give you details of the Historical Society visit to the Waimamaku Garage and all the treasures it's accumulated over the years - and then the visit had to be cancelled at the last minute with the death of Bruce's brother. We're still going to get there, but now their busy season is upon them so it won't be until late February / early March. Probably a Sunday afternoon, but it's hard at this stage to pin down a definite date. There will be another newsletter when we're back to normal (or what passes for normal) before the end of January and that will definitely have all the details. I'm sorry though that I can't give you something to put in your 2020 diary now.

Six years ago, courtesy of the Ambler family, we made an **excursion to the top of Piwakawaka**, the highest hill between Waitotemarama and the Tasman Sea. From there you have a breathtaking view in every direction - once you're up there, that is. Well, in spite of being six years older, we plan to do this again, as our membership has lost and gained considerably since 2014 and there were also a number then who were regretful that they missed it. The Amblers are willing, and have offered transport to the "halt and lame" as needed.

Again, we can't give you a firm date yet though we're hoping for the Saturday of Anniversary Weekend (25th January). Obviously, this hypothetical January newsletter will have to be well in advance of that, to publicise both these events in good time. It will be short and to the point - but we will let you know as soon as we know ourselves, I can promise you.

Just a week after that garage non-visit, we held our end-of-year Historical Society dinner. As always, there was the week-to-go panic that the numbers were far short of the fifty we'd arranged with the hotel, and the usual frantic phoning round and coercion of friends and relations swinging into action. But we got there, and everyone had a fine old time and a very nice meal. Our Speaker, Dr Aroha Harris, was excellent as she always is. We can't send you a copy of her talk as it was very much based on readings from her family letters, back and forth between the young ones newly gone to Auckland and their parents back in Motukaraka / Mangamuka: in fact, her future parents writing to their parents and their return letters. My immediate reaction was: what a good thing they managed

to collect and keep them all; another member was thinking, what a great standard of literacy existed fifty years ago! Will texting and emails be able to produce the same stories in 2070? Or allow such an analysis as this was?

Much has been written about the Great City Migration of the 50s and 60s and its sociological effects, but Aroha's focus was to show how a close family relationship could be maintained at a distance through constant letter-writing and replies, and still survive in spite of the distance, employment and so many new experiences. They were simply conversations, open and relaxed, describing occurrences as they came along, the whanau already working in Auckland, new friendships, having money to spend - and the parental loving but firm reactions. The two had come from different areas: one was Catholic, the other Ratana; their acquaintance developed as it does in the Auckland setting until eventually there was a baby on the way. So back at home their parents observed the recognized, traditional courtship arrangements, visiting formally and sorting out the religious and other differences, leaving the way clear for a joyful family wedding to take place.

It was a masterly presentation which Aroha I'm sure will enlarge into a full-scale academic study, but for us oldies who have lived through those decades it was quite an emotive experience, arousing many memories and some regrets for the passing of a simpler, somewhat slower way of life. I think everyone went home with plenty to mull over. All I can say is, Keep your letters if you can!

Most of our Society members live Elsewhere and we're grateful for your support, but we don't see you very often. If you are planning a holiday visit here you will be relieved to know that the work on the Opononi / Omapere sea wall is almost finished, it seems. The road surface still has to be resealed after heavy machinery has done its worst, but there is a little more space for extra parking without potential side-swipes threatening, and one set of steps for beach access. Above, the Manea Footprints of Kupe building is also fast taking shape with more heavy machinery busy landscaping the grounds. Having got their enormous grant, they are making the most of it.

On the other hand, Rawene and Kohukohu, you will find, are alive and flourishing by their own unaided efforts with lots of little shops and imaginative offerings. Plus, good food, which makes an all-day visit possible.

A brief word to our local members as well. Please, the museum does need more people to keep it open every day, as we've lost quite a number over the last while and although we hoped the Thursday closure would be temporary, there's no way we can go back to a six-day schedule. AND, a look at the list of subs that haven't been paid shows up a number of local names we don't want to lose permanently...what can we do to keep you interested?? Please let us know.

A definite date we can give you is in this notice from Donna and Tony Washbrook:

Anthony Washbrook

Son of Tony and Donna

Unveiling of his Kohatu will be on 4th January 2020,

11 am St Lukes Church Pakanae,

Baptisms followed by short Service

Pakanae Cemetery at Midday.

That's all, folks. Enjoy your Christmas and unwind when and where you can! - Alexa.