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Incorporating
Hokianga Museum

NEWSLETTER & NEWS IN MAY – JUNE 2014

After blithely saying in April that we'd be in touch again soon, I'm ashamed to note what a long time it's taken to do that. We were a bit misleading about dates at that stage too. It may seem like inefficiency but circumstances do tend to take hold and mess up perfectly good plans. For instance, we never did manage the Easter boat-trip. It rained like crazy – didn't have enough bookings – were advised to cancel so we did – spent the afternoon ringing people to let them know – it cleared up. However, that's the way the ball bounces sometimes. Better luck next time we try. The last few days have warned us that winter is finally here so we are about to launch this year's programme of **Sunday Afternoons in the Museum.** This is when we call on locals with an interest, a passion, a hobby or a lifetime of dedication, to tell people about it – any people who want to spend a Sunday afternoon in a warm and stimulating environment. Mind you, having said that, the first in the programme isn't like that at all. We think it's time people discovered the range of films the museum has, so we're showing some of them. (We promise that Opo will be out for the day – the film that is, not the sculpture).

So here is our 2014 winter programme for 'Sunday Afternoons in the Museum' – all to be in the museum, at 2 p.m., finishing with tea/coffee and a biscuit (gold coin donation for that, please)

1. 29th June: A **Film and Soup afternoon**, organised by Grace Wilkinson. What films will be on show? We're not telling you in advance. (Actually Grace is still viewing and choosing her programme: it takes a while, even though most are quite short)
2. 27th July: The rapid development of **photography** and where next? Described by Bill Keir of Wekaweka. Bill has been the museum's photographer and caretaker of negatives for as long as we've been building our photograph collection, and has been coping with all the changes as best he can.
3. 31st August: How and why did we get our **Area School**? From John Askew, who had chaired the Omapere School Committee and then the Planning Committee for the new school.
4. 28 September: **Dr Smith's legacy.** Because it's a century since Dr Smith took up his work in Hokianga, we've asked Gwen Freese who has lived alongside and within the health system he founded for Hokianga, to give an outline of its development into the service we have now – and her own view of our situation if it was taken away.

After that it will be spring, unless the seasons remain as haywire as they have been lately.

However, alongside all that, we still have **members' meetings.**

The first sort of grew from an attempt to cheer the mid-winter life of all the museum volunteers with an afternoon tea for all of them and their spouses / partners / families. Apart from the person you work with regularly there's not much opportunity to get to know all the others. Then it seemed sensible to throw it open to members as well, for much the same reason – to get acquainted with all those who keep our museum running. Therefore –

Saturday, 19th July, at 2.30 pm, MEET THE VOLUNTEERS at an afternoon tea in the Omapere Church Centre (more space, better kitchen than the museum has) A plate with something on it, please, from those who are able to.

About a month later comes our **AGM:** that is likely to be on **Saturday 23rd August, 2pm,** also in the Omapere Church Centre. There will be an official notice and nomination papers sent out

The **museum** is still struggling a bit with a dearth of volunteers: on paper the list looks quite healthy and what are we complaining about, but the fact is we're all, or nearly all, in the second half of life (for some like me it's more like the final quarter) and always there are one or two looking after grandchildren, or travelling, or in hospital, or recovering from an operation. That's life! In common with the rest of NZ, though, we are asking more and more Where is the younger generation? However, apart from being a constant headache for the roster manager, we are in good heart. The quiet part of the year has arrived but visitors still drop in especially on wet days, and the website is bringing a number of enquiries to work on, the building is well insulated and warm (what a change from the old place!) And cheerful sounds drift over from the school during the week.

Some cheerful things have been happening in the community as well.. The Rawene Hospital, or rather the Health Trust itself, had a quick visit from the author Alexander McCall Smith who had just been in Auckland for the Writers Festival. He was taking the chance to catch up on the activities of his renowned grandfather, Dr G.M. Smith. "I never knew him, of course," he said. "He had gone off when my father was just a boy. But I do have memories of his brother, my great-uncle." After the powhiri, the showing-over, and meeting some of the remaining ex-patients of his grandfather, he was whisked down to the Boatshed Café for lunch with members of the local Book Club, then was very quickly off again. We had hoped there would be time for him to visit the museum and view at least some of the two hospital films we have, but no.

And a happy birthday to Glyn Fell, who turned ninety last week. Glyn used to be a regular volunteer (his wife June still is in our back-up team) and he remains our most reliable backstop for curly questions, with the lifetime of accurate memories he has to call upon. And a good lot of common-sense in his advice too. Many happy returns, Glyn, we hope you can beat Bill Tuckey in the age-stakes! (Bill turned 102 earlier this year)

I see I've gone on to three pages which was not intended, but it does mean I can put in a plea aimed specifically to Olive Harris. Please, please, Olive, would you consider a reprint of your Remember the Hokianga? So many people have found it useful and asked if we have it on sale, and all we can tell them is that there aren't any left. Even if your Volume Two never sees the light of day, a reprint of Volume One would be welcomed by us all. We've photocopied bits out of the copy we have in the collection until it's suffering from overuse.

The same goes for Jack Lee's Hokianga, our copy of which is so well-thumbed that it should be put out to pasture (apology for mixed metaphor) But we just can't, even second-hand copies are hard to come by. Current publisher doesn't seem at all interested in a reprint but perhaps by a concerted nagging programme their minds might be changed?

With space to spare, I'm throwing open a search-request we had a while ago in the hope that someone, somewhere, might have a fact or two to offer:

" I am trying to find out about William Colenso's son Wiremu (Willie, Wi) born 1851 to Ripeka Meretene b.1830. He was taken by Colenso's wife Elizabeth to Auckland at age 2, but was unacceptable to white Auckland society, so he was sent to Northern relatives. According to Colenso he was taken at age 10 (1861) from the Hokianga to Hawkes Bay, with his mother Ripeka, her eldest brother Hamiora and his maternal grandmother. Ripeka had married in 1850, before Wiremu was born, her husband being Hamiora Te Nehu. [Question: two Hamioras? Or is it the same one?]

Elsewhere Colenso records that Ripeka's mother was a Ngati Kahungunu woman who had been captured in Hawke's Bay by Ngapuhi and taken to the Bay of Islands where she became the wife of a chief named Panapa ...He mentioned more than once that Ripeka was a gift to him from her parents and she became a household servant. Do you have any record of any of these people?

I leave you with our problem. As they say, a problem shared is a problem halved - I think the word is really 'trouble' and I'm sure poor little Willie or Wi did feel just that many times. I hope someone knows what happened to him.

That's all for now, I'm sure you'll agree. Keep warm, everyone!

Alexa Whaley.