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Incorporating
Hokianga Museum

NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2016

It seems a long time since we had a newsletter – well, it is: about five months, to my great shame and embarrassment. But it's been so HOT, and that useful word *mañana* rather took over. However, the day of reckoning has come so here we are. There's a lot to cover, as we go right back to our end-of-year lunch in November. This was held at the Cophthorne, but oh dear!, they had inadvertently double-booked us with a wedding at 3pm. However, they rose to the occasion in a very professional way and did the best they could for us, although it was clear they were rather keen that we would be up and off well before the wedding guests turned up.

We had asked John Klaricich to describe for us his long-held dream of a "Kupe Experience" – this possibility has been hanging about in the wings the whole time we have been trying to get our own building up and running, so we thought we were justified in asking him to give us details about it. His main aim is to provide some much-needed employment for local Maori youth, through telling the story of Kupe's arrival, sojourn here in the harbour, and eventual departure. It does sound a feasible concept given enough imagination and digital manoeuvring, plus a wealth of affluent visitors, although it could be rather dependent on the summer tour ships which come into the Bay of Islands. And now that Waitangi has opened its Museum of the Treaty, that may provide some rivalry – more than we ever could be.

There were two quite unexpected presentations at the lunch as well. One came from Northland Heritage, formerly known as the Northland Committee of the Historic Places Trust. Out of the blue they had put together a Certificate of Appreciation (beautifully framed) for Owen and me for "the collection, curation and archiving of the history of the Hokianga" – highly embarrassing and so very public: we are neither of us any good at being taken by surprise. After all, it has been a team effort all the way, involving a lot more than just us. But thank you, Heritage Northland.

The second presentation took place out in the carpark when the lunch was over, so not many knew about it at the time. Diana (nee Ogg) and Howeth Mountain had brought with them their numbered print of one of Eric Lee Johnson's paintings, a watercolour titled Landscape with Church, to give to the Museum. The church is, of course, St Lukes in Pakanae, and it's a view between fallen tree-trunks that would be impossible to re-create these days. Of course it deserved to have a much more public handing-over, but in the end it became a hurried and almost furtive transfer under its duvet cover from the back seat of one car to the back seat of the car next to it. However, Diana and Howeth, it's now hanging in pride of place on the museum wall, and we can publicly tell you how proud we are to have it and how suitable it looks there. We all are very grateful to the two of you.

I will rush over the **events** planned for the summer – non-events as they turned out to be. We had planned a harbour cruise to Kohukohu but it had to be called off for logistic difficulties. Then there was an evening lower-harbour cruise, all set to go until mid-afternoon when skipper Pete Clark rang to say "It's going to be nasty out there by evening". Called off. And I am never planning a harbour trip again. Someone else can do it, but NOT ME. Then, on Anniversary Weekend, we had a beach-side walk planned round the base of Whiria. It was the hottest weekend of the year (and that's saying something!) and we had only received one intrepid expression of interest. It too was called off – we weren't particularly keen either. So the whole holiday period for us was, you might say, a fiasco. (The museum did get visitors though).

On the other hand, there is something different coming up for Easter Saturday. The **pa-site of Whiria** – everyone knows it, everyone looks up at it, but probably not all that many have spent time up there. So on **Easter Saturday**, fine weather or not, we are planning to climb up to the summit of Whiria, to

sit beneath the memorial and hear its story. **Meet at 10am, at the beginning of Cemetery Rd. Pakanae** and be prepared to climb – it's pretty steep in places.

Olive Harris's latest book Both Sides of the River is selling very well around all Hokianga-ites. We took some out to our stall at the Wild West Fest this year and in spite of their price (\$55 – our most expensive book) and all the other demands there on people's money, we did very well. In case you don't believe me, here's a brief review by Peter Nash, one of our members who had managed to track one down. It starts with a plug for the shop he found it in, but ignore that – you can get it from us just as easily!

"Both Sides of the River is available from Village Books, 12 Klinac Lane, Waipapa, ph 09 4073806. (villagebooks1@gmail.com) which is a lovely second hand bookshop just out of Kerikeri and is well worth a visit if you are in the area and have a few dollars in your pocket.

"Olive Harris has a knack for getting people to write their memoirs of their life in the Hokianga area or giving permission to publish diaries, articles and memoirs of early settlers. This is the third in a series of such books in which she has dug up all sorts of stories which come from both North and South Hokianga. She, with editor Chris Lancaster, self-publish her books which makes them hard to acquire because they do not appear in the chains of bookseller stores.

"This book is a collection of wonderful memories of ordinary settlers in Hokianga. Individually, each memory is too short or unpolished to make a book on its own and this would not get published and thus would get lost when their owners pass on. Olive has preserved so many small articles that, together, paint a vivid picture of how hard life was in early Hokianga. She has done Hokianga a great service.

"If you have any connection to Hokianga, it is well worth purchasing these books."

- Peter Nash PANash@xtra.co.nz

(We still have a small number of copies of Remember the Hokianga available too.)

Our own project, a booklet to look at the effects World War I had on Hokianga, is gradually taking shape. Many people have contributed, but there is still time for others to add their family's story if so inclined. (Sometimes it's hard to get everyone's permission, I know) It hasn't a name yet.

As a Not For Profit organisation we registered with the Charities Commission as soon as it was set up, and have always done whatever they required us to do. They are getting tougher though, and like all NFPs we're now faced with having to supply an annual 'Statement of Performance' – more or less "Are we doing anything useful for the community to justify our existence? If so, what?" It's quite an exercise to look at ourselves like this.

There is one aspect, sort of related, which Doug our treasurer has recently pointed out and thinks all members ought to know about, so I promised I'd mention it in the next newsletter (this one) In the form you might have filled in to become a member it promises, "Members receive newsletters, are invited to join in activities such as boat trips on the harbour and field trips to places of historic interest, attend functions with guest speakers...The photocopier is available to the public with a discounted rate for members." All that is true. And the annual subscription was initially set at an amount to cover the mailing of 4 – 6 newsletters a year.

But with NZ Post hiking up the cost of mailing enormously, and the consequent spiralling use of email which doesn't cost us (only you, if you were to print it out) we are only actually posting about 1/5 of our newsletters.. Therefore, it has become only too easy to email newsletters to anyone interested whether a member or not – and we do. What's more, Ken Baker puts it on our website and into orbit. So everyone, members or not, hears about the events, speakers etc. See them at <http://www.ourhokianga.com/pastnewsletters.htm>

The end result is that the sub. you kindly pay each year is not, in fact, supporting the newsletters much anymore but is subsidising the running of the museum and generally keeping the Society out of the red. It becomes in fact a donation, but being classed as a membership subscription, not one you can claim. You need to know this, and until now we hadn't really noticed ourselves that we're being a mite unethical. When it comes to the crunch, we wouldn't exist at all without members. We do hope that you are not deciding you needn't be one anymore!

A final question: Did Whangarei have a **mounted Home Guard** during World War II? We have received a photograph which I automatically identified as being the Northland Mounted Rifles – but no: on

the reverse it said it was "Home Guard, 1941-2" Very smartly turned out – would anyone remember seeing them in action?

In Memoriam We always hate to lose our members through death but it's inevitable. Among those we have lost recently has been past president Dawn Bridge, who back in 2003-4 in her retirement from nursing administration, steered us through upgrading our standards and rewriting our constitution, hating every minute of it. Go well, Dawn: you are remembered with affection.

I'm trying to keep to two pages for the 1/5 we copy and post, so obviously we end here. With luck, our next will be (a) full of things to come, and (b) somewhat more interesting! -

Thanks, Alexa .