



Hokianga Historical Society Inc.

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Incorporating
Hokianga Museum

NEWSLETTER (AT LAST) - May 2011

The Historical Society is definitely still alive. We mounted a display at Waimamaku's Wild West Fest in February and one of our members really thought we'd died a natural death. Understandable, but it's not so! We have a building to prove it.

For months since we finally got our building consent and Ethel Pickering heroically turned the first sod on the site (it's solid clay), a newsletter has been increasingly needed and urgent. Somehow the lack of a functional headquarters (the old museum, where we often saw each other between meetings) has slowed activity down terribly. The executive has met monthly as the constitution says it should, and at each meeting someone says, "We need to get a newsletter out, we have to tell people what's going on." Then it becomes a matter of who writes it, and everyone looks at everyone else, and of course the whole thing gets left.

So what is going on? On 12th January the building was actually started, although its concrete floor had been laid late last year. Like all buildings it progressed in fits and starts but finally, on 25th February, the key was handed to us. It is still a 108 sq.m. shell, but it's ours and it is entirely debt-free. However, our bank balance is a shadow of its former self now, so to make it a finished, habitable building is likely to be a longer road. All further stages (electric wiring & fittings, lining & insulation, painting, floor-covering, carpark and paths – and so on) have to depend on successful applications for funding. So far we've had one success (Pub Charity, for plumbing) and one failure (Lion Foundation, for electricity connection) with about three others still to come. Of course it is probably the worst possible year to be applying, with so many needs for available money. It is a big plus that we have a great community with all sorts of offers of practical help coming in, and some unexpected and very welcome financial help too. The Lions included us in their Art Auction in February, although it was mainly for the Hospital, and our share was very worthwhile - \$595.

Until the very last day the Easter weather was warm and wonderful and we were kicking ourselves that we didn't manage an event or two to take advantage of it. The Alma trips are still very much missed and we have been talking to Peter Clarke, whose bigger boat is licensed for 44, about reviving our history trips on the harbour. We missed our chance this time, though, thinking that with Easter being so late this year, the weather would likely be against it. How were we to know! Now we're thinking about Queens Birthday, and have put it to Peter that if it's good weather on the Sunday afternoon – the 5th June – we could have an hour on the water, and if it's rough and windy he could come to us and talk about the harbour changes he's noticed in his time. He's still thinking about it, so it could be a last-minute rush.

Other plans afoot, but not yet dated, are: an old-time dance in the Opononi hall...a session looking at school classrooms past, present and future...some of our more dramatic shipwrecks....and of course our annual dinner which is usually somewhere in early November. In addition, the local Lions have offered to organise a Garden Safari as a fund-raiser for us, as long as we provide the refreshments. This is a chance we can't refuse! So it will be on a weekend somewhere in September or October.

Our apologies that all this is so vague, but now that we have collected a good file of email addresses for about two-thirds of our membership, we can step up the frequency of news bulletins (yeah right, I hear you say) with a minimum of fuss – and let you know as soon as there are definite dates for anything. The other 1/3 will still get print-outs but if you do have an e-mail address we'd be glad to have it. Subs aren't due until the beginning of July, but the reminder that goes out then will definitely have space for it.

Hot news! We have a fundraising raffle on the go. How would you like a new shed in your garden? We have a brand-new Versatile product, a garden shed which is 2.3 x 1.56 x 1.84 m. when made up, to be raffled in mid-July. Tickets are on sale now at \$5, made up in books of 20 & some 10s, and we're expecting that at least some of our members will take a book or two to sell at home, among their friends, or to anyone they meet on the street. This is purely a fund-raiser towards completing the museum building so it is a very good cause! You would like a ticket or two? You would like a book? John Metcalfe (ph. 09 405 8890) is the one to contact, and you would make his day. Plus, there's a \$100 prize for the person who sells the most tickets.

We are wondering whether anyone living in the Broadwood / Herekino area in the 1930s would remember a McKenzie family farming there, and particularly a son Gordon who worked in the Broadwood Store in 1940. He has just self-published a book which, as he says, "Takes you back over the pathways I have trodden so many times in my youth so long ago," with particular affection for the bullock-teams of the past, the 'Gentle Giants' which make the title of his book. It's a good read with a lot of stories, interspersed with many practical 'how to' details out of a by-gone life. – I think we'll just have to add it to our Books For Sale collection when we open again, but we'll need to negotiate that with him first.

Coming back to our building: this week a formidable local team of Mark Ambler with his digger & truck, Garth Rogers, Garth Coulter, Hiku Cherrington and Thomas Rogers with a fleet of trucks / tractors / trailers, plus John Metcalfe on the end of a shovel, excavated the space in front designated to be car-park. Our grateful thanks to all of those, plus to Wayne Baker who transported the digger.

In photo #1 you see the end-of-February view, a completed building with a bit of the container behind, and school buildings in the background. Suggestions for brightening that front wall?

In Photo #2, the current work in progress: Mark on the digger, John Metcalfe supervising. Note the pou waiting sadly on the grass along the fence, and the blue plate in the foreground – that's our new water-meter, one of the slightly unforeseen expenses.