



Hokianga Historical Society Inc.

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Incorporating
Hokianga Museum

NEWSLETTER MAY 2015

This newsletter has been nagging away at me for the last six weeks or so without anything being put on paper. When I read through the last one (always a bad idea) I'm reminded of so many events that should have been reported on ages ago, and that turns it into a real guilt-trip. Waitangi Day – the Mangungu signing commemoration – the Wild West Fest – Anzac Day – they've all come and gone more or less unrecorded as far as this Society goes. Nor has anything been said about our planned 2015 programme, although in my own defence getting that finalised is one of the reasons this newsletter is late.

Now the last bits are nearly in place, so here is the programme for this year:

First, our winter programme of **SUNDAY AFTERNOONS IN THE MUSEUM:**

Sunday, June 28th, 2 pm: popcorn, jaffas and celluloid – Hokianga remembers: another sampling of our acquisitions in the way of films / documentaries.

Sunday, July 26th, 2 p.m. Learning about sailing: Paul Bowker describes the development and ups and downs of the **Sailing School at Rawene**.

Sunday, August 30th, 2 p.m. Who was St Isaac? And what goes on at the place called **St Isaacs**? We've asked Sister Anne to fill us in on what we don't know.

I hope that this time we've managed not to clash with the Country and Western weekend – or anything else terribly popular, for that matter.

Apart from that programme, on **Sunday, 12th July**, we're attempting again to have a **Museum Volunteers' mid-winter lunch** – an informal get-together where (with luck) we manage to meet all the people who keep the Museum open and useful, but who are often just names on the roster. Working in pairs, we're familiar with our usual partner, and that can extend to those who willingly fill in for emergencies - but beyond that – well, it would be nice to meet the personalities that go with the names! This will be held in the Schooner Cafe, and Brenda has promised that no matter what is happening there she will have it open for us, so with almost two months' warning we're trusting that all volunteers & partners will be able to come. You'll get a more personal notice later though.

Then in **August**, probably the **15th**, **our AGM** & annual election of officers.

And on **20th November**, our usual **end-of-the year dinner/lunch**, at a place to be announced and with an as yet unknown speaker

Finally, in **late December / January 2016** we'll be on the harbour again; we usually try for two trips to suit maximum visitors, while crossing our fingers for good weather.

That's all we've got on the list so far, though if anything unexpected crops up we'll be on to it. A few more suggestions would be very welcome as we seem to be falling into a cosy pattern of sameness which is a bit unexciting for everyone. It probably needs some new blood with radical new ideas.

At this point – welcome to **new members**: Tima and Peter Janes of Rawene, also Hohepa Leaf and Ann & Bill Rawiri who have become Museum volunteers.

It has been very hard to say goodbye to Glyn Fell, who died last week at nearly 91. He was the most community-minded man I've ever met: you name it, he's helped with it. He and June were workers in the museum for years and he could be relied on to give accurate information - with his prodigious memory that wasn't hard anyway. But you could always take a sticky question to him and be sure that what he told you was correct in every detail.

The other day Owen, who is De-Cluttering (or trying to) found a piece Glyn had written at the time the museum had featured an exhibition on the Hokianga Dairy Company. I am sure it's on file in the museum but it's worth spreading a bit further. Thank you, Glyn.

MOTUKARAKA FACTORY

A couple of things I remember

1. The first ice cream I ever tasted was at a factory picnic for suppliers and their families. Picnics were an annual affair held at the factory probably in the May school holidays, and the Dairy Co. when they had installed refrigeration were good enough to make ice cream for all the children.
2. Buttermilk which was a by-product of the butter-making process still had lots of nutrients in it and was used to feed pigs. There was a piggery (which I visited on one occasion) built on stilts about eight feet high amongst the mangroves, just up the north side above the factory, owned by a Mr Dunning. At the end of a walkway about 50 or 60 feet long, a number of pigpens were built and the buttermilk was pumped from the factory directly to the pigs. My cousin Allan R. Fell worked for Mr Dunning for a season, feeding the pigs and sluicing out the pens straight on to the tidal flats below.
3. Cream received at the factory was graded by taste and suppliers paid according to quality. There were three grades: 1. Finest 2. First 3. Second. Second grade cream had a much lower payout to encourage farmers to produce only good quality. Grades were always contentious, it being felt that a grader's taste-buds would find it difficult to tell the difference after hours of tasting – and anyway the cream all ended up in the same vat.
4. My next-door neighbour had a can of cream returned, with a note attached saying "Rat in cream." So he took the rat out and sent it back with a note saying "Rat out of cream." It went through. But after that they would put Condyl's crystals in to colour the cream and make it worthless.

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I know Condyl's crystals is in fact potassium permanganate, but does anyone know who Condyl was? (Google it, Alexa)

I also wish I'd asked more about the refrigeration installed by the Dairy Co. At that time (about 1930?) it would have needed a generator to run it, so surely it couldn't have been in use all the time? Anyone know any details?

Another person currently spending a lot of time 'decluttering' is our Patron, Heather Ayrton. After a lifetime of community activity and keeping records of everything she's been involved in, she knows it's imperative that her various files are sorted and go to the right places, so any spare time she has goes on doing just that. The reason I'm telling you this is that she's passed on a copy of the four-volume Bretts Early History of New Zealand (1870 ed.) to the Society. We do have a copy on microfiche but this is the real thing, much more user-friendly, though at present it needs some TLC to be entirely usable. (I see there's a copy of a 1890 ed. on TradeMe just now at \$115) Thank you very much, Heather.

While still on the subject of books, we were contacted recently by the son of a Methodist minister who was here 1937 – 1941 (Rev. H.A. Cochrane) He – the son, Graham, had found his father’s memoirs written just before he died, and thought they were worth passing on at least to the parishes where he had served. He typed them up, added relevant photographs, and produced ring-bound booklets to offer each centre, including South Hokianga. Rev. H.A. seems to have been a man of enormous energy, coping via motor-bike with about five services on a Sunday around his wide-spread parish while still studying to become a full-fledged ordained minister, a stringent programme of reading, study and interviews. He was also newly married, although officially in those days students-in-training were forbidden to marry. – they went ahead anyhow and were reprimanded. It’s a very readable account of a period we really don’t have much on, so I’m glad to report that his booklet has just been added to the Museum’s book-collection.

In the February newsletter I made mention of a new book about Hokianga and John Webster – At the Margin of Empire ; John Webster and Hokianga, 1841-1900, by Jennifer Ashton. At that time we were still waiting for its launch, but a copy has arrived now and is on the museum bookshelves. It is described as a biography and yes, it follows the facts of Webster’s life: beyond that, it’s a study of a Victorian gentleman/astute businessman and his ramifications of coping with trade relations in a developing bi-cultural context. It began as a PhD thesis and still retains the meticulous attention to references throughout; the level of her research towards it is awesome. She has an interpretation to present and has left no stone unturned to validate it - I do wonder though whether she is sometimes rather selective in what she chooses to use. I would have liked to see more about his family relationships, especially Emily, and a little more indication of his warmer side. It’s a concentrated read, and somewhat depressing in its conclusions for Hokianga-ites, but - There’s a second **book-launch**, a Hokianga special, to be held in Kohukohu on **Saturday 13th June, 2 p.m., at the Village Arts Gallery.**

Still more on books (it’s stormy weather outside, what better than being holed up with books!) I’d mentioned Ken Baker’s Hokianga Remembers in the last newsletter as well – his moving account of visiting the WW1 graveyards of Europe in search of Hokianga’s fallen sons. At that time he had left a small number of the first printing with us for sale. These are nearly all sold now, but he wasn’t very happy with their assemblage - some page-edges cut too close, some words half-missing – so he has recently done a second, larger printing; this one with an ISB number so orders can be made by booksellers etc. The problem he has now is to get them from Belgium to NZ without breaking the bank. Watch this space on that one.

From the Museum: The last few months have been busy with Ventnor activities. Plans in the NZ-Chinese Society for creating a ‘Ventnor Trail’ for Chinese visitors to follow (especially, it’s hoped, those who might be related to the migrants of the 1800s whose bones went down with the ship) – these plans are starting to look as though they’ll come to fruition. There’s now a permanent exhibition space for the volumes of background newspaper articles, the photographs, some artefacts, a video – and we are warned to be available if a group is arriving. A very friendly group from Hamilton was hosted as a first experience in March – that was at 9a.m. on a Sunday morning when we’re usually closed, but oh well! – then at the beginning of this month, the real thing: a large group from Auckland to carry out their Ching Ming ceremony in Hokianga. How often this will happen we don’t know, but it’s all good experience ...

A Matariki display is currently going up and we’ve offered a competition to the school kids for artwork on the theme. It’s partly a bait to get them through our doors as they seem to regard the place as alien territory.

Finally, but not least, we congratulate our **Curator Donna Washbrook** on her successful completion of her **Museum Practice Certificate**, level four, earlier this month. It has taken a lot of hard work.

Looks like that has to be all. I’ll try not to take so long next time!

All the best,
Alexa Whaley.