



Hokianga Historical Society Inc.

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Incorporating

Hokianga Museum

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2012

Our Annual Dinner is fast approaching and I'm getting a hurry-up from its organiser Grace Wilkinson to remind you about it, as she has all these tickets just waiting for people to want them. So, to remind you: The dinner is on the evening of **Friday, 16th November, 6.30 for 7 pm, at the Opononi Resort Hotel.** The speaker will be **Professor David Williams** of Auckland, a lawyer, a theologian and a long-standing member of the Waitangi Tribunal who has a strong attachment to Hokianga. (If you Google him you'll find out more) We think he'll spend some time talking about the work of the Tribunal, but he says he will range more widely than that. And the cost? **\$30** per ticket, obtainable from Grace at 09-405 8665 or c/- the postal address above – she's not an email fan. For local members, there are some available through the museum as well.

This will be a really worthwhile evening and we do hope for a good crowd.

Harbour cruises: We have pencilled in an 'Islands' trip for **Friday, Dec. 28th, 10.30 – 12 noon**, and also an hour-long evening cruise for **Friday January 11th. The first will cost \$30, the second \$20.** Both will of course be dependent on the weather – it's always a gamble, and especially this year it couldn't be much more unpredictable. At this stage, expressions of interest are all we ask of you as we don't have to confirm till later. You could email to me, or phone me at home -09-4058 641 – or leave a message at the museum (phonenumber in the heading above) If there's no interest we can't confirm the booking.

Alert: Doug our Treasurer reports that 36 membership renewals are still to come and he is sending out final reminders. I hope you think it's still worthwhile to keep it up, and we'd really like suggestions for things we could do, or do better. If we still don't hear from you, this could be your last newsletter!

Our Patron: Our much loved and admired Patron of the last few years, Mrs Ethel Pickering, has indicated that after many years she'd be quite grateful to lay down the responsibility. Her husband Adam had held the office before her and when he died in 2009, we asked her if she would be willing to assume the mantle – which she did with humility and grace. She has been gently supportive through the worst and best of times and her home in Whirinaki has always been a warm and loving place to visit. While we are sad that the relationship is changed, her warmth and graciousness still remain.

In her place, we have approached **Mrs Heather Ayrton** who has always had Hokianga's interests at heart and has supported us in all our projects. In spite of a life full of many and differing concerns, she has agreed, saying, "Mrs Pickering is such a special lady of great Mana. Her dignity and the respect in which she is held cannot be compared. So in accepting the invitation, I do so mindful of the very great honour as well as the responsibility involved."

Mrs Ayrton has our grateful thanks, and we hope to be able to welcome her into the position at our dinner on November 16th.

Valedictory: This week many of us attended the funeral service for one of our Honoured Members – and at 94, one of our most venerable – George Nichols. George and Pam have been members of the Society almost as long as it's been going and until very recently, attended every meeting we held. George was an enthusiast for Te Reo and for learning the stories surrounding all the landmarks of Hokianga; he did not hesitate in button-holing anyone who could tell him more or fill in missing facts. He deposited two large files of these stories, in Te Reo and English, under the title *The Spring of the World of Light* in the museum's book-collection. Then he tackled the translation of Karanga Hokianga (with permission from the compiler) and that translation too is deposited with us. He went on to photograph and tell the stories behind all the carvings in the Waiwhatawhata marae Te Kaiwaha (we have that too). After that, he turned his attention to recording the route of the original road from Waimamaku to Whirinaki as it was before Transit NZ straightened it out and sealed it. This involved various forays over paddocks and lots of private land clutching his camera – not all landowners appreciated it, but we have the result in *The Old Road*, another one-off file.

But for many of us, the most telling memory goes back to the days of the old museum's creeping erosion. George read about, ordered and donated two special trees guaranteed to hold sandbanks from slipping, and then (at 90) climbed halfway down the cliff, spade in hand, to put them in. Thereafter he appeared weekly to go down to water them. Never any mishap, but those on duty each time could hardly bear to watch his progress.

Thank you, George, for all you did for us.

Calendars: Local photographer **Andrew Martin's** 2013 landscape calendar is now on sale and is even better than 2012's - well worth the \$17 it's going for. We have them for sale in the Museum, but those further afield could contact Andrew directly by email : www.northlandscapes.co.nz . He is also producing prints (framed or in tube), Christmas cards and postcards, all based on his amazing photographs round Hokianga. A struggling artist who is well worth supporting!

The Opo Statue situation: Restoration of the Russell Clark memorial has been completed, so Opo will be returning to Hokianga about the middle of November. Miraculously, the Opo Committee has been granted funding (by Pub Charity) for a bronze replica, so a mould is to be made before the real one is sent back here. The question now is, which goes where? The Committee discussed it at length and finally decided (1) that the bronze replica should be sited in the familiar area in front of the Opononi Hotel, and (2) that the Russell Clark original, now purely a work of art, should be offered to the Historical Society for safe keeping. The Historical Society naturally jumped at the offer and accepted straightaway - who wouldn't! But now we are realising what we have ahead of us and what a limited time-frame it is. Is there room for it inside? And if not, how do we create a see-through, attractive and secure enclosure for it to be outside, in a couple of weeks? This will take even more of a miracle than the above funding. All suggestions welcome.

From the Museum

We are looking forward to seeing the early aerial views of Hokianga (1937-1948) which Ken Baker is bringing with him on October 30th. These will be mounted as a major display over the summer holidays, and should prove quite a draw-card. When you consider all the changes to the harbour and its surrounds since those comparatively far-off days - the roads, the river traffic, saw-milling, dairying, housing, electricity reticulation - we will almost be looking at another country.

The recent school holidays boosted our visitor numbers quite a lot. Over the winter there have been many days when those on duty had to record no visitors at all and that is quite depressing. Being off the main road is part of the problem, though we have signage up and the I-Site is very good about giving directions to what visitors there are. There haven't been many travellers coming this way through the winter but that has always improved with the weather in the past.

Donna Washbrook has attended her first meeting of the Northland Museums Association, this one at Mangawai, a long morning trip for anyone from here (and it was a wet blustery morning on 28th September). Mangawai is just completing a large and impressive building and were pleased to have the chance to show it off. These meetings only happen twice a year and as they are really the only times people from all the other museums can get together, it's a good chance for finding common problems and solutions, airing successes and so forth. Liaison officers from Te Papa usually attend too, very helpful in their networking contacts - though their job is so huge (liaising with the whole of the North Island, a lot of travel) that they never last long, you find they've gone off to some more settled position just as you've got to know them. This time there was a talk on Fire Danger in Museums which we are fairly well clued up on, but you can always learn more.

We have recently had a session with Wong Liu Sheung about the **Ventnor Project**, her massive research into the whole story of trying to return the remains of Chinese gold-miners to their native villages and families in China, where they could be laid to rest permanently. Then the foundering of the Ventnor off Hokianga in 1902, the burial of the bones that were found at Kawerua and Mitimiti, and all the rumours that surrounded the story subsequently. Liu Shueng has gathered a great file of information covering the miners' background as well as the details of the preparations throughout NZ for the voyage, the voyage itself and the aftermath here, and the international context (the same thing was happening in other goldrush areas, but more successfully) All this she proposes to deposit with us, with a copy also in the Auckland City Library; and she wishes to link it with a 'Ventnor Trail' from Te Roroa in the forest, through Omapere/Opononi, Rawene, Kohukohu to Mitimiti, with plaques acknowledging those who lie here. Liu Shueng being the dynamic person she is, will make it all happen eventually. But she is asking for our cooperation.

That's all, folks! Don't forget **FRIDAY 16TH NOVEMBER, 6.30 IS OUR DINNER NIGHT** - Alexa Whaley.