



Hokianga Historical Society Inc.

PO Box 26 Opononi 0445

Ph. 09 405 8498

Incorporating
Hokianga Museum

hhs@ourhokianga.com

OCTOBER 2016 NEWSLETTER

Labour weekend seems to have snuck up on us suddenly and it's on my mind that in last newsletter there was mention of an excursion round the foot of Whiria. This is not happening! For one thing, the tide is not cooperative and the weather questionable (though today is summery and beautiful – but it can't last) Not sure about parking if there are unveilings taking place, either. But mostly, there's a dearth of people able to take part and that rather dampens enthusiasm. So the HHS will just be carrying on with its usual routine of keeping the museum open and being useful to whatever visitors turn up. There haven't been a great number lately!

However, we're looking forward to our next event – the **pre-Christmas lunch** when we welcome **Colin Quincey** back to the area as our speaker. Next year it will be the 40th anniversary of his marathon Tasman Trespasser row. What's more, he has suggested that as his **son Shaun** will be with him for that weekend, the two of them might make a team on the subject of rowing the Tasman – two generations, different equipment, two experiences. This will make it a red-letter day! There are quite a number of people still around from 1977 who were involved in watching (and helping) Colin Quincey's preparations and final departure through the heads = but for Shaun, who rowed the opposite way and made landing further north, we have been dependent entirely on media reports and it would be so good to have an account from the man himself. I recommend that you google the two of them beforehand, as there's a good summary of their lives before and since. So when is the lunch? On **Saturday, 19th November – 12 noon for "mix and mingle" on the veranda, 12.30 for seating and eating – then listening.**

- Where? In the **Opononi Hotel**, SH 12, Opononi.
- Cost? **\$25 p.p.**, paid as soon you book (Direct Credit to 38-9012-0111112-00 LUNCH if you can).
- Numbers? We're limited by the space available to **fifty**, and we really need bookings ahead of time – so if you want to come, be quick. (The hotel says they need final numbers ten days beforehand, they're not joking either) To book, phone the museum 09 4058 498 between 10-2pm, or email hhs@ourhokianga.com or after hours, try Dawn Metcalfe 09 4058 890 (email johnmetcalfe@xtra.co.nz) or if desperate try me at 09 4058 641 (or email) - all before 9th November, remember.

This winter's "Sunday Afternoons" ended on a good note with a very entertaining account by Robin Hoare of his explorations into the history of rolling stock. Not a big crowd, but those who were there went away quite delighted. There is a DVD coming once he's got it all exactly the way he wants it, so I'm hoping it will be available for Christmas. Thank you, Robin, you set a high standard.

What's Happening? In the week following Labour Day there is a booked visit from the senior pupils of Te One School in the Chatham Islands, the furthest distance any school has travelled to visit us! No doubt we are part of a rather larger itinerary for them but it is still something for us to want to pull out all the stops for. (Not that we don't try to do that for all the school visits we know about in advance, said she quickly).

Our **WW One exhibition** changes as the war moved from battle to battle, so of course it has been the Somme that has featured over the last couple of months. Sixteen of Hokianga's men were

lost on the Somme. Following is one paragraph from someone who did survive – from the war memories of Roy Beazley (1884–1969) held by Barbara Gillatt and lent to us for copying:

“ We moved off at midnight to take up a position on Abraham Heights overlooking the position we were to assault in the next forty-eight hours. During the day we had a clear view of Jerry’s position on the slope opposite, but what we didn’t see was the quagmire that lay beyond us, on the way to the assembly point... Zero hour was 5.30 a.m. A few minutes before, I told my lads to fix their bayonets ready for the fray. It was not quite light and I could hear a couple of them having difficulty and muttering “I can’t”. I moved over and fixed the blades for them – they were the two young ones who had just joined the platoon. Ours was to be a platoon in reserve, but when we reached a more forward position and started to engage the enemy I could see that somehow we were the platoon in advance, there was no evidence of any troops ahead of us. We were very fortunate, as we moved up, to strike a ditch sufficient to shelter us from the withering machine-gun fire. We could see the dead lying in the fields on either side of us, victim of that same gun-fire.”

It was in the ensuing battle that Beazley received a head-wound which put him out of the rest of the war and sent him home after several months in hospital in Britain.

Meanwhile, from across in Belgium, we have heard from Ken Baker about the 99th Commemoration of the Battle of Passchendaele, on 12th October.

“Under a leaden sky on the 12th October 2016, much as it was 99 years earlier in 1917, the Hokianga men who fell at the Battle of Passchendaele were commemorated. In the presence of New Zealand Ambassador to Belgium, Gregory Andrews, and other dignitaries and many New Zealanders, flowers were laid, including a tribute on behalf of the Hokianga Historical Society by member, Ken Baker.

The 12th October 1917 has often been called New Zealand’s blackest day. On that day, 845 New Zealanders were killed and countless injured. On that day alone, six of those killed were from the Hokianga. Many more were killed in the preceding battles and in the later stages in 1917.”



Hokianga’s flowers and card beside the NZ Government wreath.

Many thanks to Ken for this. But that must be all for now, folks, it’s still before Labour Weekend – just! Those we post to might receive it a wee bit late, my apologies accompanying. But do remember, please, to be in good and early for 19th November!

Alexa Whaley