



Incorporating
Hokianga Museum

Hokianga Historical Society Inc.
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NEWS IN SEPTEMBER 2012

Now that the AGM is satisfactorily over this year, there is a big THANKYOU to be said to all those - near and far - who responded to the plea for nominations. It really made the lead-up to the election so much simpler, and generally worry-free, for that part at least. You will see from the results that the Executive has stayed the same, though this will likely be the last year for some, while the Museum Management team definitely has some new blood. Here are the results in full –

Executive:

President: **Hiku Cherrington** ((Owen Whaley / Jean Garriock)

Vice President: **Barbara Coulter** (Joy Coulter / Jean Garriock)

Secretary: **Alexa Whaley** (Jenny Read / Lindsay Gray)

Treasurer: **Doug McKenzie** (Ngaere Hawkins / Stuart Park)

Curator: **Donna Washbrook** (Valerie Ryan / Joy Coulter).

Member: **John Metcalfe** (Ngaere Hawkins / Stuart Park)

Member **Grace Wilkinson** (Owen Whaley / Lindsay Gray)

Museum Management Committee:

Jean Garriock (Alexa Whaley / Barbara Coulter)

Diane Hunia (Donna Washbrook / Valerie Ryan)

Allan Mountain (Jenny Read / Lindsay Gray)

Bryan Russell (Valerie Ryan / Joy Coulter)

Jackie Walker (Alexa Whaley / Lloyd Walker)

Owen Whaley (Marlene Mills / Barbara Coulter)

Jacque Wogan (Donna Wahbrook / Valerie Ryan)

By office : The Curator - Donna Washbrook

The position of **Patron** is also considered each year. Currently our Patron is Mrs Ethel Pickering who has expressed an interest in stepping down. Hiku Cherrington is currently making soundings.

Otherwise, all those nominated were elected with no stand-up fights, not even arguments, believe it or not. We probably could have done with a few more attending the meeting (17 total) but really, who actively likes sitting through a meeting on a sunny Sunday afternoon? It was a beautiful afternoon tea rather going to waste for lack of eaters, though.

If any would like copies of the Chairman's Report, the Curator's report and/or the Financial Report, we would be only too happy to post copies to you on request. It's a lot of paper and a lot of postage just to send them on spec, so apart from definite requests we're saving the trees and being frugal.

However, those who normally get these newsletters by post will find enclosed a letter from Doug McKenzie our Treasurer, regarding subscription renewals. (You will be pleased to hear they stay the same as last year) Email recipients will have already got their letter, and I know some have paid already.

Since the museum doors reopened, we've had an amazing number of new members! Welcome to these people: Bill Bermingham, Eileen Birch, Hilary Edwards, Steve Heim / Suzanna Duff, Marie Heald, Bernie Hume, Diane Hunia, Carmel and David Keeley, Hera Linter-Cole, Allan Mountain, Terry Newton, Valerie and Denis Ryan, and Jacquie Wogan. We hope your membership is long and worthwhile. Certainly, we're very glad to have you along.

Officially, there's only one more event before the summer busyness kicks in, and that's due on

Friday, November 16th – OUR ANNUAL DINNER

This year, it's at the **Opononi Resort Hotel – 6.30 for 7 p.m. Cost - \$30, with tickets available from Grace Wilkinson (ph. 09 405 8665 – no email)**

The speaker will be **David Williams** of Auckland, a long-time visitor to Hokianga.

There will be more on this in our next newsletter as we're waiting to hear what David's topic is likely to be. In the meantime, though, mark it in your diaries if it's not already there, and start saving so \$30 won't seem like breaking the bank.

Over the summer holiday period we're hoping to manage a trip exploring part of the harbour, but again, more of that later as it's still partly a pipe-dream. How we miss the old scow Alma, able to creep up any of the tributaries we asked for! But we're lucky to have Pete Clark's 'Hokianga Express' willing to take us on whatever route she can manage safely.

Hopes Dashed and Promise of Good Things to Come...

Earlier this year a letter arrived from an elderly lady in Melbourne whose father had been Mate on the 'Joseph Craig', wrecked on the rocks on Niua, the North Head of the harbour, in 1914. She was looking for a home for his 1877 sextant, which he had in his turn inherited from his father, and she had in mind either our museum or the Hobart Maritime Museum. The Hobart curator was away, so we lived in hope for several weeks before he returned and laid prior claim – her father, Captain Doug Bull, had held senior marine positions in Tasmania and had made interview tapes for the museum there. So the sextant went to them. Very disappointing, but fair enough! All we had were the newspaper cuttings of the time of the wreck.

In correspondence with her, though, I'd asked if he had left any record of his own experience of the wrecking. It turned out he did dictate his memoirs, which she had, and this is the extract she sent for us:

"The wind was blowing fresh from the SW as we loosened and set sail from the river. We had only gone halfway through the bar area with breakers on either side when the tow line parted and we commenced drifting towards the bar. Anchors were dropped but she was in a hopeless position and shortly afterwards she bumped heavily on the hard sand. Meantime the tug was in trouble with the towline round her propeller and could not assist us. Each succeeding sea lifted the ship and bumped her hard down on the sand. Soon the upper masts came down, seas were breaking over all, and the life-boat was stove in. The gig was still intact and Captain Airey decided to abandon ship when the tide was suitable. The pilot station advised by signal to leave about 3 pm so an hour before that time oil was cast overboard to knock the breakers off the seas between us and the beach. At 3 pm the gig was launched with all hands (17) wearing life jackets, and got her through the surf safely, with the help of a number of Maoris who had waded up to their necks to steady us in. We came ashore in underclothes mostly, very cold and miserable. The pilot was there with welcome draughts of brandy, then a walk to the beach inside the entrance where a launch took us to the local hostelry where we were dried out, fed and slept that night. A gale blew during the night and we all journeyed to the beach in the morning, found the ship broken up in sections. The bow part was still anchored where they had been dropped and that section was still afloat because the collision bulkhead was intact. Timber and gear was strewn along the beach for miles, all criss-crossed and a terrible mess. We lost everything except that I had put Father's sextant in the boat before launching, unbeknown to others because we were instructed to take nothing but ourselves, and I found out later on that one of the A.B.s had done exactly the same thing with his father's sextant.

We were all sent to Auckland where we got our discharge from the ship and presented with an order of £3.0.0 from the Shipwreck Society to buy some clothes. With this and the money due to me from the Joseph, I got some duds sufficient to set me on my feet once more and to look for another job.”

The “Joseph Craig’ was on her third trip loading timber in Hokianga for Australian ports, her first under new owners Huddart Parker Ltd. She had entered in ballast on 19th July and been cleared to leave with her load of timber on 7th August, 1914. She was an iron vessel of 714 tons gross, with a reputation as a fast sailer [not sure whether that should be ‘sailor’] J.J. Craig of Auckland had owned her only since 1908, naming her after one of the family as all ships of their line had been. She had been built in Glasgow in 1878 as the ‘Dunblane’.

Now for something to look forward to:

We have heard from our Brussels member Ken Baker that he has come by a range of aerial photographs of the harbour which were taken between 1937 and 1947 – early for aerial photography here, and hitherto unseen. They number about 15, and he says they are sharp enough to be enlarged to poster size. After seeing the sample thumbnails he emailed, we’d agree. Not one to waste an opportunity, he has obtained permission from the copyright holder for them to be put on display here, and plans to bring them up to the museum when he next comes to NZ. This is likely to be at the end of October, so an exhibition then will be well placed for the summer season.

And something for now:

The museum’s latest exhibition was mounted last Sunday afternoon while the museum was closed, and will be in place for the next two months - **A Good Yarn**, which features wool and other related yarns such as mohair and alpaca, from the fleece to the finished garments. It has been created by Barbara Coulter with assistance and samples from the local spinning and knitting groups. With ready-mades so cheap and easily obtained, the arts of spinning, weaving, dyeing, felting and garment design were almost disappearing for a while there. But there are signs of a come-back, and with the school pupils right next-door, we thought it was time to enlighten them and encourage more interest. And visitors as well, of course!

Question: Do our members remember much about the years of the **Northern Fashion Fibres** enterprise which occupied the disused Cheese Factory premises in Waimamaku? About the mid-1980s to about 1992? Sue Toorenborg recalls her time working there in 1989; she has a mohair stole made there, and a photograph showing her among the looms which she has let us copy. We’re wondering if anyone else has examples of the mohair made there, or knows of others working there, or can remember – for instance – when exactly the enterprise started? or who bought the machinery when it all turned to custard? It’s become a piece of history that needs reclaiming before it’s forgotten altogether, so we’d love to hear from you.

The **Opo Statue** is still missing from its place in Opononi. Word is that the repair work has been completed and has been very well done; but to save double-handling the statue will stay in Auckland until the community has raised enough money for a mould and a replica to be made. If you feel inclined to make a donation towards this, it would go direct to Ian Leigh Mackenzie of Opononi, who is the main organiser of the whole project. (And no relation to our treasurer)

I think that should be all for just now. Donna will be back with more news from the museum in our next newsletter - but right now she’s attending a workshop and working hard.

Alexa Whaley.