



Hokianga Historical Society Inc.

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Incorporating
Hokianga Museum

NEWSLETTER – September 2013

It's Spring! And the sun is shining (for now at least) but oh, it's a cold wind and obviously winter is still hanging around somewhere close. Visitors from south at the museum are saying accusingly "You're supposed to be the winterless north!" How do you reply!

Fortunately it was a fine day for our **AGM** so we had slightly more attending than usual – twenty-three which is probably about a quarter of our membership. Since most of you live Elsewhere, that's not too bad. For those who didn't come, a brief summary would be, that it's a matter of Steady As She Goes. We did enlarge the Executive Committee to bring it up to ten members, but there aren't really many changes - the officers remain exactly the same and most of the members were either the same or had served on the Museum Committee last year. They are: Chairman, Hiku Cherrington; Vice Chair: Barbara Coulter; Secretary, Alexa Whaley; Treasurer, Doug McKenzie; Museum Curator, Donna Washbrook; Members: Jean Garriock, Diane Hunia, Val Ryan, Jackie Walker, Grace Wilkinson One disappointment was losing John Metcalfe from the Executive; after all his work on the building he says he wants to enjoy his retirement properly and anyway he hates committees. Thank you for those years of doing what you hate, John! I don't think we could have got here without you. He is replaced by one new face, Valerie Ryan who travels from Horeke to attend, and again to do duty as a volunteer. This shows real dedication because it must be upwards of 100kms for each trip.

Under the 'Trial Constitution' it is this Executive who now appoint the sub-committees which master-mind all the things we do. At the moment this is nearly complete, except for the Museum Committee which has been left until all volunteers are consulted over who they want. We are all hoping for smoother running this year...

Other highlights – the Financial Report was a positive one; we left the membership subscription the same as it was; Heather Ayrton agreed to remain as our Patron; nobody complained about anything; the museum volunteers were given Certificates of Appreciation, and finally **Mita Harris** talked about the Historical Places work he is involved in – including the ongoing development of the walkway. Then we had a large and well-deserved afternoon tea.

Apart from Hiku as Chairman and Doug as Treasurer, it's an all-female committee. Is this a good thing?

If you'd like fuller details of the meeting than this I'm happy to send you copies of the chairman's and Curator's reports, and the unratified minutes from it, on request. It would be a lot of paper to send everything out whether wanted or not, so I'm being frugal. I understand that with Doug's subs-reminder he has included the basics of his financial report so I needn't include that – but please ask if you want the whole thing.

Enough about the AGM; it's receding into the distance now anyway.

The **Opo Saga** is next on the list as it is finally reaching completion – after not quite two years! Our Real Opo, in the museum, has been sitting on its naked pink (tanalised) plinth framework long enough now for us to get almost used to it. But now (today 6th

September 2013, in fact) the finished casing and interpretation-rail was brought in, and after a couple of hours of preparation, neatly dropped from on high over the top of statue, framework and all. It fitted beautifully! The interpretation wording itself has still to be done; that will be Stage Two and will need to be equally professional to live up to the plinth workmanship.

As for the Bronze Opo, that too has been completed, although still in Auckland and due to be brought up and placed (it's hoped) this weekend. It will remain covered until everything is ready for the great unveiling - And that is scheduled for **Saturday, September 14th at 11 am.** It should be quite a grand occasion with invitations going out, musical entertainment going on, everybody there, and lunch to follow. We really hope that after seeing the bronze copy, people will also want to visit the real thing along at our place.

While on the subject of statues, the museum had a visit recently from a couple wanting to know the history of a statue "up a road just along there, on top of a hill, in the middle of a paddock." "Never heard of one," we said. But nothing loath, we followed their directions and went looking – and just as they described, there it was.



Statue at the top of Kokohuia Road

And here it is (above), for you to see – to the left as you come from the top of Kokohuia Road, on a high point in the middle of a paddock. It's been there long enough for birds to have discovered his head is good for perching on, but not long enough for grass to have grown over the stone he's kneeling on (which is huge, and must have been very heavy to put in place) I think he could be a depiction of St. Francis of Assisi. So – who put him there? Whose is it? Whose land is it on? I wouldn't ask Why – it's a wonderful position.

Plans for a **WW1 centenary publication** commemorating Hokianga's participation in 'the war to end all wars' are slowly taking shape, though we have a long way to go. Another enterprise is being carried out on our behalf by Ken Baker in Brussels, who has committed to photographing all of the Hokianga war graves in Europe and leaving a memento on each one – a card, and a flax flower made from Hokianga flax. Ken is going to be in NZ briefly later this month and will be in Omapere for the weekend of 14-15 Sept., so we have arranged for him to speak to interested people at **2 pm on Sunday 15th Sept. in the Museum.** I'm hoping he will have time to describe the preparations going on in other countries towards August 4th 2014, and maybe enthuse us a little more to do the same. All welcome.



Kumara tree, symbol of the Hokianga.
Streptocaulis emulans

HOKIANGA REMEMBERS

Private Joseph Iraia Morgan, No. 16/344

Killed in action: Sunday July 29, 1917

THEY DID NOT GROW OLD. AS WE GROW OLD
WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM

Hokianga Historical Society, Inc.

The next event on our calendar comes soon after this: the last of our 'Sunday Afternoons in the Museum' The speaker this time will be **Stephen King**, who knows more

than most about the state of the kauri of Waipoua Forest. We've asked him to give us an update on Kauri die-back and what is known or not known about it, and he says he will have aerial photographs to back up his information. This was going to be on Sunday 29th September, but we found rather late that this – the last weekend in September - has belonged to Hokianga's Country and Western Festival for years and we had a clash. Well, ours is not quite set in concrete, so at the risk of upsetting those with extremely busy calendars, we're changing to **Sunday the 6th October instead**. Still at **2 pm**, and still in the museum.

Finally – for now – comes our **annual dinner**, except this year it's a **lunch**. This suits a number of our members who prefer not to come out at night, and others who aren't allowed night-driving. So instead of a Friday night at 6.30, it's **Saturday, 16th November, at 12.30**. The speaker will be **Dr Tony Birch**, Rawene Hospital's long-serving though recently retired head (and one of our recently added members, though you don't have to retire to be that) He doesn't know but we have a photo in our files of him as a very hirsute young locum, back in the early 1970s.

Grace is as usual masterminding this lunch, and will have tickets available from 20th Sept. onward. You can phone her (Grace Wilkinson, **09 405 8665**) otherwise email or phone through the museum (hhs@ourhokianga.com or 09 405 8498) The cost: as usual, \$30.00. And the venue, which I nearly forgot, is the Opononi Hotel.

A rather sad event in this neighbourhood has been the decommissioning and sale of the **Waimamaku Methodist Church**. After 82 years on Taita Road, with regular services, the prevailing climate both physical and social has caught up with it. Maintenance has become more than could be coped with as it has been used less and less; people just don't go to church much any more. So it was decommissioned last Sunday, 1st September, with the biggest crowd it had seen for a long time. Cars lined both sides of the road, and the road was filled with families walking to church – everyone who could, came back to say goodbye. With a lunch to follow in the Waimamaku Hall, and a great many reminiscences and tearful greetings, it was an emotional and fitting end.

There is a small ulterior motive here, or maybe two. Although there have been expressions of interest, the church is still not actually sold. And there are a number of pews to be sold as well – not many, and a borer content is likely, but they came from Rawene, genuine Donaldson construction. If you are interested, contact Doug McKenzie (09 405 8068, or dlnk@xtra.co.nz) He's not only our treasurer!



The restored Russell Clark statue of Opo the Dolphin in the Omapere Museum

On that note, I'll leave you with the latest sighting of Opo.

Have a happy spring Alexa.