



**BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.**



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**Newsletter  
May/June 2016**

**Coming Events:**

A.G.M.

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2.00pm at St. Andrews Hall –**

Birkenhead Heritage Society Inc. Annual General Meeting  
A reminder that subs are due \$25.00 single \$35.00 family

With Guest Speaker Lisa Truttman:

**The Demolition of His Majesty’s Theatre**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2.00pm at St Andrews Hall –**

Guest Speaker: Keith Sloane

**‘The History of the New Zealand Light Trench Mortar Battery  
(1916-1918) on the Western Front’**

The title and topic of Keith Sloane’s recently published book.

**Farrington House Museum in Mahara Avenue**

**Opening on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: 2.00pm - 4.00pm.  
(Except Mother’s Day, 8th May)**

**Past Events**

Stories Day was a great success in March, commencing with Ken sharing his learning difficulties within the school system, and the programmes that assisted him to gain skills and confidence. I enjoy seeing Ken as a busy and conscientious Trolley Man at the Birkenhead Mall. We learnt of early gold miners, and the soldier settlers, and shared pictures and stories from the past, it was an enjoyable event, sharing information and learning from each other.

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## **Looking Back**

### **The story of Henry John Hayward – resident of Birkenhead**

Henry John Hayward, was born at Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, England, 11 December 1865, second son of Harriett Elizabeth Groutage and her husband, William Henry Hayward, a professor of music and formerly a court violinist to King William IV. Henry was taught to play the violin by his father, but his formal education was limited: leaving school aged 11 years.

Before he was 20 Hayward had organised a costume concert company, The Brescians, made up principally of members of the Hayward and Martinengo families; the latter were originally from Brescia, in northern Italy. His marriage to Louisa Domenica Martinengo at Lancaster on 5 October 1891 was part of a triple alliance between the two families: his elder brother, Flavell, married Bettina Martinengo, and his younger brother, Rudall, married her sister, Adelina. When they were not touring, the members of the company lived on the island of Bute, just off the Scottish mainland, where they established their joint family home about 1894. Henry was the company's manager, organising their touring and business affairs.

In the late 1890s The Brescians teamed up with T. J. West's Modern Marvel Company, which exhibited scientific novelties such as X-rays and moving pictures, and were soon touring England and Scotland as West's Pictures and The Brescians. Hayward acted as advance manager, organising hall or theatre bookings and arranging publicity. After some years they decided to take the show to New Zealand where the Hayward's sister Mary had emigrated.

At the beginning of 1905, three months in advance of the company, Henry Hayward arrived in New Zealand and set about booking a tour, which opened at Dunedin on 10 April 1905. The season of just over three weeks was remarkable and success continued as they moved north, they played to packed houses in the larger centres. They made a profit of £13,000. After a return tour the company left for Australia early in 1906, returning to Christchurch for the New Zealand International Exhibition in 1906–7.

The company's Australasian tours were highly profitable, but Henry Hayward, concluding that cinema would not last, ended his partnership with West and sailed for London to arrange a tour for a magic show, Maskelyne and Devant's Mysteries. After visiting Australia the show began its New Zealand season at Auckland on 9 November 1908. Before the tour ended Henry Hayward was in the moving-picture business again, having observed that the new industry – particularly West's Pictures – had grown in strength. Hayward's first picture show, Pathé Pictures, began at the Theatre Royal, Christchurch, on 13 March 1909. In association with his brother Rudall he purchased the Royal Albert Hall in Auckland and began a permanent picture show there on 26 April 1909. He now decided to make his home in Auckland.

Picture theatres in other towns were added to the Hayward circuit. In July 1910 Hayward's Picture Enterprises, with a capital of £30,000, was formed to run an expanding business of film distribution and exhibition. By late 1912 it controlled 33 picture theatres and had an established film-hiring department. The company had an arrangement with an Australian film combine giving it exclusive rights to screen films from many of the leading film-makers of Europe and America.

By 1913 he was showing Hayward's Pictures in the Foresters Hall in Birkenhead – Every Saturday Night at 7.30 – Admission 2/- and 1/-.<sup>(1)</sup> A year later Haywards had bought Victoria Theatre in Devonport, with Fred Miller as the Manager on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1914. This was not long after the gala opening of the Victoria Theatre by Mr. John Benwell on October 26<sup>th</sup> in 1912.<sup>(2)</sup>

In May 1913 Hayward's joined with John Fuller and Sons (previously their main competitors) to form New Zealand Picture Supplies. Henry Hayward was president and managing director of the firm; his son, Phil, was also a director. From 1925, when it relinquished its declining film distribution arm to Australasian Films (NZ), the main interest of the company was in theatre management; it controlled the largest circuit of picture theatres in New Zealand. The

firm was renamed the Fuller–Hayward Theatre Corporation in 1929 and its capital increased to £250,000. However, it was proving costly to equip theatres for the advent of talking pictures, and the depression of the 1930s resulted in a substantial drop in receipts; Hayward lost heavily. The corporation was taken over by its debenture holders, and he and Phil Hayward left to run their own smaller company, Auckland Cinemas, which they formed in 1931 to operate a number of suburban picture theatres. It prospered until Henry Hayward's death in Birkenhead, Auckland on 21 August 1945. He was survived by his wife and son.

Henry Hayward was a man of wide interests. His recreational activities included tramping, sport and gardening. A freethinker, he wrote many articles and pamphlets for the Rationalist Association and Sunday Freedom League, of which he was president, and was an energetic member of the New Zealand Labour Party. He wrote prolifically on music and on stringed instruments, and owned one of the only two Stradivarius violins in New Zealand. His autobiographical work, *Here's to life* (1944), records his radical opinions on many subjects. His adventurous nature and entrepreneurial drive led him to become a pioneer of a new and highly successful form of entertainment.

Main Source: Clive Sowry. 'Hayward, Henry John', from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 8-Oct-2013  
URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3h11/hayward-henry-john>

<sup>(1)</sup> *Beautiful Birkenhead Auckland's most Healthful Marine Suburb*, 1913 a small publication promoting the suburb.

<sup>(2)</sup> Titchener Paul. *Beginnings A History of the North Shore*, Volume 1 1977.

Further research reveals Henry Hayward started showing black and white movies at the newly built Foresters Hall in 1912. By 1920 after the moving pictures the bentwood chairs were cleared away for dancing. <sup>(1)</sup>

In 1928 the district secretary of the Ancient Order of Foresters (Mr. Robert Darlow) rejected the proposal for a new Birkenhead town hall. He noted the Society had in 1923, realizing that the hall was not adequate to public requirements, enlarged it at a cost of over £6000. The interest returned was around six percent. The building was leased to Messrs. Hayward. The Kiwi theatre opened in the Forester's Hall in the 1960s, renamed Highbury Theatre, soon closed because of low patronage. <sup>(2)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> McClure, M. (1987). *The Story of Birkenhead*. Published by Birkenhead City Council

<sup>(2)</sup> Highbury Centre plan : unlocking Highbury's potential. North Shore City Council 2006.

## **From our Birkenhead Heritage files comes this lovely story:**

### **Birkenhead's Last Picture Show**

In 1911 a large hall was built in Birkenhead. It was called the Foresters Hall and became the centre of our social life for many years. We thought it very grand with a balcony and small party room upstairs. As a small child I was taken every Saturday night to the pictures at the Foresters Hall - those wonderful silent films. At first I never saw more than the "News of the World" for by that time I was fast asleep.

The man at the piano was Tom Coward and Ted Lanigan later replaced him. It was worth the money to see Mr. Lanigan in his collar at least four inches high and his twirled moustaches - watching the film and playing music to meet all situations of the story. When he walked to the piano the applause and stamping from the young locals was deafening. Among the regulars on Saturday night were Mr. and Mrs. Swindail plus their fox terrier dog. This dog occupied a chair between them and never took his eyes off the screen. I often wondered if they paid half or full admission price for him.

Then came World War I, and I remember the Foresters Hall being used for farewell concerts given to the local boys going overseas, my Father being one of them. Who can forget Tom McDowell singing "Till the Sands of the Desert grow Cold" and "Little Grey Home in the West"? Some time later in the same hall he was singing "Land of Hope and Glory" at their Welcome Home, in his beautiful baritone voice.

Then the Flu Epidemic took hold and the old hall came to the rescue as an emergency hospital. Local girls rallied round as nurses and did a great job. Bulletins were put up each day outside the hall giving progress - or death - of the patients. Next in line was the auxiliary school. While waiting for the Birkenhead Primary to be built, classes were accommodated in the faithful Foresters Hall.

Then in the 30's we had the Birkenhead Municipal Band giving Sunday night concerts in the hall. These were very popular - after all, there was nowhere else to go on a Sunday night! But the times were changing. No more did Mr. Lanigan have to play "Melody of Love" or "Napoleon's Last Charge". The talkies were here and Henry Hayward switched over.

The old hall was almost a community centre on picture nights. Huge prams containing sleeping or screaming babies filled the hall, for the only family entertainment was at the Foresters Hall, now renamed "Kiwi Cinemas". Slowly, radio, then television took over. The grand old hall fell into disuse. Several revival attempts failed. In the 1960's it was a junk shop - and then nothing. It was demolished about 1970 so our memories are all that is left of our grand old Foresters Hall.

Alice O'Callahan 1993

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The Birkenhead Heritage Society Museum was open on ANZAC Day. A tall dressed mannequin in Soldiers Uniform stood by the gate, and on the verandah mannequins of a mother and two children waved goodbye, on loan from the Kaipatiki Board Office. The formal Parade was lead in by the Military Band, followed by the ANZAC Service in front of Birkenhead War Memorial, with a large crowd present. A few drops of rain soon gave way to sunshine for the Service.

A number of families and individuals came to see the displays, some were members and others first time visitors, and morning tea was appreciated after the Service. A visit to Glenfield Cemetery showed wooden crosses with an Anzac Poppy marking the graves of many Servicemen. The same did not happen at our closer Heritage Birkenhead Anglican Cemetery and Birkenhead Catholic Cemetery, also under the Auckland City Council. Flowers were laid in memory of Miss Emily Nutsey MBE 1937, Matron-in-Chief of the New Zealand Army Nursing Service who was in the first contingent of nurses to leave New Zealand in 1940, during the Second World War, returning safely to further her nursing career.

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Marcia Roberts, Editor.