



## BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.



PO Box 34419  
Birkenhead  
Auckland 0746

President Ray Johanson 483 7160  
Vice President Brian Potter 483 3400  
Vice President Colleen Durham 483 4001

### Newsletter March/April 2016

#### Coming Events:

##### Stories Day

Saturday April 9<sup>th</sup> Saturday 2.00pm at St Andrews Church Hall  
**Please note: this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in the month.**

##### **NZ History Federation Inc. Conference & AGM 2016 at Auckland**

29 April to 1 May. – Programme

Friday evening A.G.M 6-30 to 8.30 at Kinder House Parnell; on Saturday Conference 9.15 to 1230 plus lunch at Alberton, Mt. Albert; Saturday night Dinner/ movie “Woman in Gold” (2015) at the old Ryder’s Theatre; and Sunday morning 11am. visit to Te Toi Uku Ceramics Museum located at 8 Ambrico Place. B.H.S. members are welcome, support the Federation along with committee representatives. \$100 for all events, for single event fees and booking form - ph. contacts above.

##### **Birkenhead Heritage Society A.G.M.**

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

With Guest Speaker Lisa Truttman: Demolition of St Majesty’s Theatre

##### **Farrington House Museum in Mahara Avenue**

**Opening on the second and fourth Sunday: 2.00pm - 4.00pm.**

Recent work completed replacing broken windows from ball damage from the nearby sports ground. Upgrading at the Memorial Park and removal of vegetation means side windows are now vulnerable.

##### Past Events

**Phil Sailouie spoke on his topic ‘New Zealand Place Names’ on Saturday 20th February.** He shared interesting information on the variety of resources used by both the Maori and the early European settlers when they named places. The Maori tended to use longer names describing a feature or action relating to the land. Because there was no written Maori language the spelling or meaning of Maori names was often shortened, or had different names or connections to different ancestors depending on the iwi. The first Europeans officials often named places after someone who had influence in their career, but never visited New Zealand.

Following Phil’s theme here are some examples: Auckland was named by Govenor Hobson: “A foundation ceremony took place at 1:00 pm on 18 September 1840, probably on the higher ground at the top end of present-day Queen Street. Hobson named the new settlement in

honour of George Eden, 1st Earl of Auckland, a patron and his friend. The *New Zealand Government Gazette* announced royal approval of the name on 26 November 1842.”<sup>1</sup>

Cheltenham, Devonport and Birkenhead on the North Shore, from England and further south Dunedin is Scottish: “The **name** comes from Dùn Èideann, the Scottish Gaelic **name** for Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland.”<sup>2</sup>

Cheltenham, was named by William Copley after the town known as a ‘watering-place’ in Gloucestershire. Previously the beach was known as Copley’s beach after William who was an early developer who made his fortune on the Thames gold fields, a partner in the Shotover Gold Mine. From an early article about Cheltenham we learn more:

“At the turn of the 19th Century, Cheltenham Beach was the most favoured beach on the North Shore. Gardens established by William Copley on 40 acres of land in the area were a great tourist attraction, and visitors travelled by ferry to enjoy the gardens and picnic on the beautiful beach. Previously known as Whites Beach, and later Copley Beach, the name was changed again to Cheltenham Beach by Mr Copley’s gardeners who had worked on England’s Cheltenham Gardens.”<sup>3</sup>

I heard this interesting story at the Thames Museum of Mines in January and found a written version: “W. Copley was said to have come back to Thames a few years later, broke. When told there was only a blanket boy's job going, at the Halcyon, he said, ‘The job's all right, the pay's all right, I'll take it’. However, he had not drunk his money, being a strict Methodist. He had helped relatives with businesses in Wales and Auckland, and built fine houses in both places. His brother drank a business in Auckland, and relatives did not drink an ink business in Great Britain, but it failed all the same.”<sup>4</sup>

“**Onewa Road - Birkenhead/Northcote.** It stretches from the Auckland Harbour Bridge to Birkenhead Avenue. Originally part of the Great North or North Road, it was then part named Northcote Road (that portion within Northcote Borough boundaries) around 1911, and that part was renamed Onewa from 6 October 1914. Birkenhead Road was the part within the Birkenhead Borough boundaries until it too became part of Onewa Road from around 1917. However, the part within Waitemata County on 27 May 1925 was known as the Northcote - Birkenhead Road (Oneroa Road), until it also became part of Onewa Road from 17 February 1928”. Maori for a dark grey stone.<sup>5</sup> (No wonder we get confused with history sometimes! Ed. Note.)

#### Sources:

<sup>1,2</sup> History of Auckland in /and *Wikipedia*

<sup>3</sup> “Celebrating 100 years of Cheltenham Receptions.” Published 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Thames Goldfield : Ohinemuri Regional History Journal 7, May 1967 by A.M. Isdale.

<sup>5</sup> Auckland City Council North Shore Place Names.

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### **The Bus trip to Mangawhai Museum on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March**

What a wonderful facility, the Mangawhai Museum was beyond most people’s expectations, a wonderful modern display, from geology to the replica of an old tram, photos of these used as earlier baches. A film showed the 1990’s efforts by locals to open the silting harbour below the northern point, and huge diggers tackling the job to refill the southern entrance created by cyclone Bola and other weather events. There were stories of the early trips to Mangawhai read to us on the bus by Colleen Durham, the Maori history of the major battle related by Brian Potter, and the local tour showing us the old Pub still used as a Tavern. I enjoyed seeing the efforts to restore nesting areas for the Fairy terns on display, the stories of ship wrecks and the search for gold. The laying of mines off the coast brought the reality of WWII, the loss of the lovely Niagara was softened by the rescue of all aboard, except the ship’s cat just off the coast here in 1940. “The stories are told with a wonderful collection of graphics, displays and videos that will keep you interested and engaged” in the flyer was well fulfilled. Many enjoyed the lunch at the Café and the friendly and helpful staff, a comfortable bus ride, and the

welcome company of some members from Glenfield and Mt. Roskill Historical Societies and other guests.

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**Looking Back**

Walking to the Birkenhead Ferry past the bandstand and lovely Pohutukawa there is a lovely view of the harbour and wharf with its new docking platform that rises with the tide, modern toilet facilities, and the glassed in ferry terminus to protect from all weathers. It was not like that for Birkenhead's pioneers. The nearest ferry was at Northcote or Stoke's Point. A long way to walk around Little Shoal Bay, and the muddy stream before tackling the hill up to the small numbers of settlers who had started developing orchards and farms in what was to become, Birkenhead, Birkdale and Beach Haven.

When W.F. Hammond bought property in 1879 and built his home called Raven Hill along what was once called Main Road, (then Hauraki then finally Hinemoa Street), he managed to organize a bridge to be built across Little Shoal Bay Stream. He was an architect and surveyor, contributing much to Birkenhead's early development, including agitating for the Birkenhead Wharf built in 1882.

The Municipality of Birkenhead was gazetted a Borough on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1888, the first Borough Council Building was opened in 1906 on the land now occupied by the present Birkenhead Library. By 1913 water came from Lake Takapuna (Pupuke now). The concrete reservoir had been built in the centre, on the highest point of the district – a holding capacity of half a million gallons. The population of the Borough at that time 2,000.

It was near the wharf the first commercial shops were built. Records show that a wharf store and villa were built on firm land near the wharf. The Wharf was built out over the tidal beach to reach deep water, later the cliffs were dug by pick and shovel to make a road and reclaim the land behind the present stone seawall.

In the 1890's Tom Smith operated a wharf Grocery Store, and he founded Marine Suburbs Bus Company which operated until the 1930's. By 1904 Charles Verran had bought the store and villa from a Wm. McKenzie. A photo is shown in the Birkenhead Centennial Publication 1988 with three large horses in front of a loaded wagon in 1905. The store was the Birkenhead Post Office agency so he was appointed agent, receiving a salary of £50 a year and required to provide a posting box, and pigeon holes plus take over £4.5s worth of stamps.

In 1913 these advertisements were found in *Beautiful Birkenhead Auckland's most Healthful Marine Suburb* a little publication promoting the suburb.

**E. Clark**

Has the oldest Established Smithy in the District.

**The Ferry Forge.**

Horse-shoeing, Coachbuilding, and General Mechanical Work.  
NEAR THE WHARF, BIRKENHEAD.

**E.T. HORTON**

The Wharf Mews, Birkenhead

**Coach and Wagon Builder, General and Shoeing Smith and Farrier.**

Repairs of Agricultural Implements a Speciality.

**First-Class Stabling Accommodation.**

**Leonard and Clow**

**Receiving and Forwarding Agents**

Birkenhead Office: On the Wharf

Daily delivery of Goods, Parcels, or furniture...

The same 1913 publication tells us "the road from the ferry is cut partly from the solid cliff and ascends eventually to the centre of the Borough, to an altitude of 364 feet."

In nearby Awanui Rd in 1910 lived **Clement Lindley Wragge**.

What would Clement Wragge say if he knew his vision for palm lined streets and bight colourful flowers in Birkenhead was fulfilled in Highbury approximately 85 years after his death, only to have a change of policy and the same palms about to be removed from the heart of Birkenhead? Clement Wragge was one of those extraordinary characters who added a touch of glamour and interest to our local heritage stories. A celebrated eccentric scientist, a meteorologist, professional weather forecaster, an authority on Eastern countries, founder of the Wragge Institute and Museum, and the Waiata Tropical gardens, a self-taught philosopher, a widely travelled geographer, an accomplished and fervent speaker and a showman.

At the age of 58 *'I who have travelled in all divisions of the world, chose to settle in "God's Own Country" and picked the shores of Little Shoal Bay, the sweetest nook in Maoridom, for my house.'*<sup>(1)</sup> A sheltered, sunny and private harbour side property ideal for growing the tropical gardens and fruit he planted and the forty varieties of palms. He bought no. 8 Awanui Street on Birkenhead Point in 1910 with his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife Loiusa Emmelie Horne an Anglo-Indian and theosophist. They made their home there, above a well known 'needle in the rock' and a nearby earlier Maori settlement.<sup>(2)</sup>

Clement Wragge was born in England on September 19th 1852. Further research revealed he was the only child of his parents as his mother died when he was only five months old, and his father, a lawyer when he was five years old. He was named William but his name changed to that of his father. A naturalist from a young age, he was encouraged by his grandmother who taught him cosmology and weather forecasting. He was well educated and spent two years studying law. When he was 21 years old he received his inheritance and decided to travel, with a friend first to Egypt, participating in an archeological dig, and then to Palestine and toured the Holy Lands. He then travelled via India to Australia, and to the USA and Canada, including a visit to Salt Lake City. He obviously had wide interests and sought out experts in religion and philosophy during his travels, including Brigham Young of the Latter Day Saints.

Not surprisingly his Uncles were not pleased with his ongoing travels, however his independent nature matched his bright red hair and he left Law and his licence and undertook Nautical Studies. He enjoyed working his passage to Australia, and apart from taking part in geological surveys married his wife the younger sister of the wife of his cousin who was living in Australia. He returned with his wife to England undertaking study and research in weather forecasting, diligently collecting rain measurements both in England and later in Scotland on Ben Nevis. Three children were born. He had set up a weather station on 4500 foot Ben Nevis in Scotland by 1883. He received an inheritance after his rich aunt died and became relatively wealthy, he then moved to Adelaide and set up a private meteorological observatory.<sup>(3)</sup>

Later he was appointed chief meteorologist in Queensland, he became a renowned long-range weather forecaster, especially of droughts. He founded a weather observatory on Australia's highest mountain Mt. Kosciusko. He initiated naming cyclones<sup>(4)</sup> which was discontinued for 60 years, then re-established. He resigned from a position in Queensland in 1903 when his funding decreased following the formation of the Federation of Australia. His eldest son served with the 2nd Light Horse Regiment of the First Australian Imperial Force and died from wounds on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915 at Gallipoli. Clement went to Dunedin, before settling in Birkenhead. Here he continued to lecture, entertain and educate children, and earned a living from tourists who paid to visit his gardens, tea rooms, his fortune telling wife and his museum, to attend his lectures, join his guided tour and enjoy his commentary. He dressed like a tall turbaned bearded scarecrow, adding quirky colour to the sedate streets of Birkenhead Point.

1. Birkenhead Heritage Society story on Clement Wragge by K.D. Adams September 1993

2. Wragge Family Papers Auckland Institute and Museum Library

3. BoM Tropical Cycle Frequently asked Questions at [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) Bright spark. Biographical Entry

4. Newman B.W., Deacon E.L., (1956) A Dynamic Meteorologist - Clement Wragge 1852-1922. Marcia Roberts, Editor.