



BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.



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Newsletter January/February 2016

Coming Events:

Guest Speaker: Phil Sailouie

Will present a talk on 'New Zealand Place Names'

Saturday 20th February 2.00pm at St Andrews Church Hall, Hinemoa Street.
Phil presented this topic during the Auckland Heritage Festival in 2015 in other areas, and he has lead Heritage Walks sharing his research and interest in historical features.

Bus trip to Mangawhai Museum

Saturday 19th March

"The Mangawhai Museum is a new and modern museum that celebrates life around our harbour from building ships to building sandcastles. The stories are told with a wonderful collection of graphics, displays and videos that will keep you interested and engaged."

There are 11 stories featured – about battles during the Maori Wars, ship wrecks and gold, World War II and recent work to save the local Fairy Terns nesting places.

A Café serving Devonshire Teas.

There are also plans for a guide to join us on the bus in Mangawhai.

Bookings: Contact - Mavis Throll 483 - 7230, paying in advance ensures a seat.

Cost: \$35-00 including Museum entrance fee.

Times: Bus will leave Verran's Corner 9 am, final pick up from Farrington House 9.30am.

Return: Expected return time 4.15pm.

Stories Day

Saturday April 9th Saturday 2.00pm at St Andrews Church Hall

Please note: this is the 2nd Saturday in the month, the change from the third to the second Saturday will continue as a trial for the rest of 2016.

Advance notice of the

NZ History Federation conference & AGM 2016 at Auckland

29 April to 1 May. – proposed draft programme

Friday evening gathering at Kinder House Parnell; on Saturday Conference at Alberton in Mt. Albert; Saturday night Dinner and a movie at the old Ryder's Theatre, and a Sunday morning visit to the Port. More details will follow nearer the event.

Farrington House Museum

Opening on the second and fourth Sunday: 2.00pm - 4.00pm, 14th and 28th February

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Past Events

We hope members have enjoyed the Christmas festive season, and summer activities.

Brian Potter, Vice president visited Whitianga and reported an enjoyable visit to the Whitianga Museum, where there were items from the Buffalo Wreck and information about Zane Grey the American author who came to New Zealand to experience deep sea fishing activities.

Marcia Roberts took a tour of the Mining School in Thames, a fascinating collection of rocks found locally and from overseas, and heard information about a Birkenhead resident who made a great deal of money during the initial gold rush in Thames. The Maritime Museum close to Paeroa also provided glimpses into the past river transport on the Waihou River by paddle steamer, and connections with Royal Naval vessels. We learnt Captain Cook's Endeavour had anchored off the Waiomu Stream just north of Thames and his long boat was rowed part way up the Waihou River. Cook gave the name Thames to the river, however after being called Shortland and Grahamstown, the name Thames was later given to the nearby developing gold mining town, and the original Maori name remains for the river.

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A browse of Auckland Weekly News Obituaries 1915-1918 provides some amazing glimpses of the life of some of the early settlers in New Zealand 100years ago.

HUNTER, Peter

Aged 75years, born Scotland. Arrived Auckland on the *Devonshire* 1863. Served in the Maori War with the Waikato Regiment. Member of the Auckland Telegraph staff and later postmaster at Miranda and Collingwood. Retired in 1907 after 40 years service and has lived with his family at Birkenhead. (A.W.N. 22-07-1915)

KING, Mrs Philip

Centenarian, one of the very oldest settlers in NZ, whose lifetime dated back to the days before the country became a British possession, has just passed away at Waiuku – Mrs Philip King, relict of the late Mr Philip King, one of the pioneer missionaries to the Maoris. Mrs King was a daughter of Captain FISKE, an officer of the East India Co's service and was born in Tasmania on 11 January, 1816. In the early part of 1840 she arrived at the Bay of Islands in the brig Falcon which, on its way from Sydney, had sighted HMS Herald, bearing Captain Hobson on his mission to take possession of NZ in the name of the British crown. A few months later Miss Fiske was married at Russell to Mr Philip King, still an earlier colonist, for he had arrived in 1814 with his father, Mr John King, one of the staff of the Rev Samuel Marsden*, of the Church Mission Society. During the Heke war of 1845 Mr & Mrs King had to take refuge in the then infant town of Auckland and stay there for some 12 months. In 1854 they left the Bay of Islands and settled in Parnell. Mr King acted as a native interpreter during the Waikato war and at the close of the hostilities he settled in Waiuku where Mrs King has lived for (aprox.) the last 50 Years, latterly with her son. Mrs King lived in the reign of six British sovereigns, from George III (George IV, William IV, Victoria, Edward VII) to George V and she leaves six children living, 40 grandchildren, 45 great-grandchildren and several

great-great-grandchildren. Several of her descendants are now fighting for the Empire in France. The old lady was in full possession of her faculties up to the time of her final illness and at the celebration of her 101st birthday in January she received congratulatory telegrams from all parts of NZ and from Australia. [AWN 01.03.1917] * A correction the Rev. Samuel Marsden was appointed Asst. then the Vicar to the new colony at Sydney, he liaised with the Church Mission Society and encouraged the Mission to the Bay of Islands but he was not employed by the Mission Society.

MAYS, Mrs Mary Jane

Another of the fast diminishing band of NZ's pioneers passed away suddenly on Thursday at Devonport in the person of Mrs Mary Jane Mays, widow of the late Mr Oliver Mays, one of Auckland's best-known public men. Mrs Mays arrived at Auckland from England in 1860 and joining her husband here went to reside at Woodside near Papatoetoe. The advance of the rebel Maoris into the Lower Waikato, however, necessitated the hurried removal of all the women and children from the outlying districts into Auckland. Mrs Mays and those in the same conveyance with her were fired upon and pursued by the natives and escaped with difficulty. She resided at Devonport since 1863 and was closely identified with the progress of that suburb. Her name has been long associated with many kindly acts and benevolent movements. Mrs Mays had just entered upon her 83rd year and practically to the end appeared to retain the vigour and good health which characterises the early colonists. She is survived by her one sister, four daughters and four sons. The youngest son, Mr Arthur Mays, has been at the front for the past three years. Another son, Mr J P Mays, was killed in the Boer War whilst serving with the NZ Field Artillery. Other sons are Mr Selwyn Mays of Auckland, Mr T C Mays of Te Aroha and Mr H Mays, Mt Albert. [AWN 15.08.1918]

NORTON, Dr Frederick

The death occurred last week, in his 71st year, of Dr Frederick Norton, at his late residence, Tainui Rd, Devonport. The deceased was born in Northampton and came to NZ in 1863 in the Helvellyn. He obtained a position in the Government service and in 1868 was appointed dispenser and house surgeon at the Auckland provincial hospital. The latter position he retained for nine years. Then he removed to Dargaville. He became chairman of the Dargaville Town Board, judge for the local racing club and chairman of the school committee. The deceased was a justice of the peace for very many years and he was one of the founders of the Masonic Lodge in Dargaville. He married a daughter of the Rev Thomas Brown Brady, Co. Clare, Ireland, and his widow survives him. He also leaves two sons and one daughter. [AWN 04.11.1915]

O'LEARY, Mr James Edward

Who has died at the age of 68 years, was a well known and highly respected colonist. With his parents he landed at Russell in 1840 and during the Maori war they were driven from their homes and sheltered on the warship Calliope. They came to Auckland and Mr O'Leary's father bought land. Mr O'Leary is survived by his sister, Mrs M J Gregory, Stanley Bay, and his only son, Mr James O'Leary, who is on active service. [AWN 20.07.1916]

MANNING, Nurse Maud

Whose death took place at Narrow Neck on Monday, was a sister of Dr L S Manning of Christchurch. She was trained as a nurse at the Christchurch Hospital ten years ago and had been engaged as a mission nurse among the Maoris ever since. She was stationed most of the time at Paeroa. When the epidemic broke out she volunteered for service at Narrow Neck where she contracted the complaint herself. [AWN 21.11.1918]

Amongst other notices in the Auckland Weekly News one of the men mentioned had seven nephews away serving in the First World War. Another survived a fire at sea 19 days out from England, it must have been slow burning as they were taken off by a passing ship 3 days later. It seems a number of men who were early settlers had served throughout the British Empire in various battles. A different life to the one we now lead.

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As Christmas is still fresh in our recent activities – here is a local story.

Nita Parke nee Fordham wrote in 1995 - Christmas Dinner at the Fordhams 1919.

‘I recall with vivid memories our Christmas dinners – especially this one in 1919 under the Macrocarpa trees in Fordham Street (then known as Manuka Road).

My father’s only relatives in New Zealand always joined us – they lived in Devonport - owned a large drapery business at Fordham’s Corner, Devonport. They travelled to our place on Christmas morning by horse drawn cab – owned by a Mr. Marshall and hired for the day. We were all dressed in our Sunday best. A large trestle table had been erected – benches made from two kerosene boxes and a plank – starched white linen cloth and serviettes – the best silver and of course my father at the head of the table carving.

Our menu was – two large hens especially fattened for the occasion – killed by my father – scalded in a large oval tin tub – plucked – cleaned – stuffed and cooked to perfection in a coal range – luscious green peas and new potatoes from the garden. Desert was always made by my father’s sister – a large very rich (even heavy) plum pudding – boiled in a cloth in the copper for hours – duly hung for weeks in our “wash house” to mature. Christmas Day the cloth was removed and it was decorated with holly and blanched almonds – served with jugs of fresh cream provided by our two house cows. Paper sweets (McIntoshes from memory) muscatels and dried figs followed this.

Presents were very modest and few, but greatly appreciated and valued – so much so that I still have the doll I received that day – the only one I ever had!”

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It would be lovely to receive more Christmas Day stories to go in our Newsletter. I grew up in a house with a coal range, and a copper in the wash house and chooks in the back yard, a round concrete animal trough was bought for our sandpit. In summer the sand was emptied out and it became our great ‘swimming pool’ – just right when you are only small. The story above reminds me of my father relating that as a young lad he and his younger twin brothers, or maybe his cousins used the hanging Christmas puddings in the washhouse for target practice - I wonder how many holes were found in the cloths? I remember a few threepences were boiled and placed in the puddings before boiling, if you were very lucky a sixpence might be found!

Marcia Roberts, Editor.