

BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE

— SOCIETY INC —

✉ P O Box 34419, Birkenhead, Auckland 0746

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 8th May 2-4pm

- **St Andrews Hall 172 Hinemoa Street -**
- **Annual General Meeting; Time for Reports, elections, and Annual Subs. \$25/\$35 Presentation; A local member will share some of their life's story.**

Saturday 12th June 2-4pm

- **Stories Day at above venue; plus share 'where did our N.Z. ancestors come from?'**

ANZAC Day 2021 –



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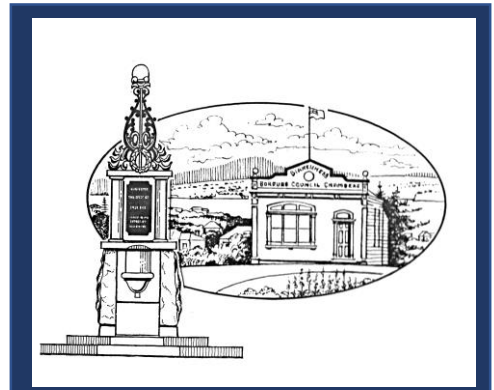
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CONTACT US

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May - June 2021

Honouring our Servicemen & Women



Endell Hospital in London run by two amazing women doctors during WWI.



Farrington House Museum opens

2nd and 4th Sundays 2-4pm

44 Mahara Ave., Birkenhead

Entry – donations appreciated.

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Vice President – Brian Potter 483 3400

Vice President – Colleen Durham 483 4001

Meeting Report

13th March: Giuseppe Galina presented

The Italian Campaign - N.Z. 2nd Division in World War II.

Giuseppe illustrated his talk with maps and historic photos, and explained how Italy, under Mussolini had been seeking to return Italy's former Roman Empire glory by expanding into Ethiopia. Following a border dispute the Italians invaded Ethiopia in 1935, providing land for unemployed Italians and acquiring mineral resources. By 1941 they had lost their gains, but remained in Eritria & the Horn of Africa.

Further reading suggests *“Mussolini did not immediately become involved in WWII but after France's fall hoped to gain some territory by aligning with Germany. Italy's economic situation was entirely tied to the Germany's war machine. After the Allied invasion of Sicily, Mussolini (Fascist dictator of Italy 1925-1945) was unable to obtain sufficient support from Germany against the coming invasion. 1943 saw the fall of Mussolini, he was arrested on orders of the King and a secret armistice with the allies was agreed, and on October 11th 1943 Italy declared war on Germany.¹”*

Giuseppe explained Mussolini, after a dramatic airborne rescue by German paratroopers, continued with Hitler's troops to resist further advance in Northern Italy. Germany needed to delay the allies advance as their troops were still actively involved on the Russian front. Delaying advance through Italy delayed the allies entry to France, and access to the Western Front. Joseph Stalin, Russian dictator also wanted to delay the allies approach, through his socialist supporters, as ongoing action in Italy tied up German troops.. The American, Canadian, Indian and New Zealand troops advance North through Italy were halted by German troops in positions behind the Gustav Line, and by their advantage in the mountains. The prime position of Monte Cassino overlooked the important railway access and roads below.

Giuseppe reported the mistaken belief that the Cassino Monastery was occupied by German troops lead to the devastating bombing of the Monastery by the American command. Once the monastery was destroyed it was now no longer a building of significance and the remains were able to be used by the Germans to their advantage, defending the high point. Many New Zealand and Allied troops were killed or injured during the battle of Casino in March 1944. There was a delay before the final offensive took place – May 11th 1944. He explained the New Zealand troops were well respected and welcomed by the Italian people after the Allied success.

1) *New Age Encyclopaedia* Volume 15 Bay Books

By Marcia Roberts



Monastery of Monte Cassino -



Remains of the Monastery 1944 (Wikimedia Commons)

Meeting Report

10th April: Matt Elliott presented

Strawberry Growing in the Birkenhead Area

At the height of strawberry growing in our local area between 1.5 and 2 million plants were grown each year. The photos Matt Elliot showed us illustrated the extent of the strawberry gardens and how they were gradually covered over with infill housing.

We also learned about the Kahikatea boxes developed by Mr Levesque which were used for transporting strawberries. Kahikatea wood has special properties which make it ideal for food storage. The boxes were manufactured at the Blind Institute. There are some original light wooden strawberry “chips” on display at Farrington House. Strawberries were sold in these chips.

Matt quoted figures from the census to show how many people were involved in fruit production of various kinds around the Birkenhead area. There were many familiar names in the list he read out, including Mr Verran who transported strawberries and other fruit down to the ferry wharf. Birkenhead strawberries were sought after as they were considered the earliest and tastiest strawberries available. Captain Cook and Duke of Edinburgh were two particularly tasty varieties.

Two of our members, Coral Malcom and Margaret Payne, described their childhood experiences picking strawberries. In Coral’s case this involved the fruit grown on her father’s orchard .Coral also described her experiences as an adult picker and expert packer.

Birkdale Primary School used to finish the term a week early at the end of the year so that children were available for strawberry picking. While school was still operating children would pick strawberries before and after school. A very long day.

Matt also described the water sources that were used from creeks and rivers in the area. Horse manure made great fertiliser. There was quite a problem with too much artificial fertiliser being used in the 1930s. Organic gardening information was needed way back then. Birds were also a problem with lots of ingenious bird scaring methods being used.

It was very interesting hearing about part of our agricultural heritage in Birkenhead.

By Dorinda Duthie



Fruit Growers
Of Birkenhead
From our
Birkenhead
Heritage
archive of
photos.

Book Review

Endell Street: The Trailblazing Women Who Ran World War One's Most Remarkable Military Hospital By Wendy Moore

Louisa Garrett Anderson (daughter of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first female doctor in England) and her companion, Flora Murray, were the two doctors who set up and organised the only hospital in WW1 staffed entirely by women. The hospital was in London and received wounded soldiers straight off the trains and boats from France. Louisa Garrett Anderson was the chief surgeon and Flora Murray was in charge of the administration of the hospital.

Prior to setting up the hospital in London the pair has been responsible for setting up from scratch two First Aid units in France.

The book outlines the medical achievements of the hospital staff, provides an insight into the difficulties and prejudices faced by female doctors and provides some interesting background material about ANZAC soldiers in London after they had been injured at Gallipoli.

Prior to the onset of WW1 many of the staff at Endell Street Hospital had been involved in the suffragette movement. It is worth noting that ANZAC soldiers expressed surprise that women in England did not yet have the vote. This book is available in a Large Print edition from the library.

By Dorinda Duthie

Doctor Louisa Anderson, chief surgeon.

Doctor Flora Murray was in charge of the hospital administration, which treated thousands of soldiers.



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