

BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE

— SOCIETY INC —

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UPCOMING EVENTS

**Under present Covid 19
Alert Level 4 precautions
11th September Meeting
cancelled,**

we need to continue safe
distancing until advised further.

**Saturday 9th October 2-4 pm
St Andrews Hall 172 Hinemoa St.
Meeting ONLY if permitted.**

**On the 2nd & 4th Sundays
Farrington House Museum Opens 2-4pm
44 Mahara Ave., Birkenhead – or by appt.
when out of current COVID Lockdowns**

*Our appreciation for sponsoring printing to
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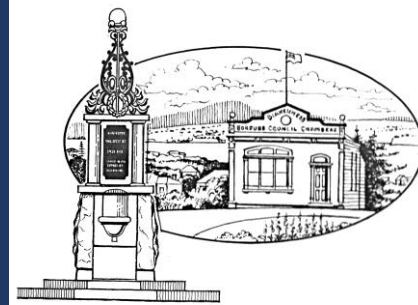
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September
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Trip Report

Our MOTAT visit on 14th August was most successful, sharing cars enabled our party to assemble in the Telecommunication section. Brian Potter has deep knowledge of the equipment, and pointed out the changes that took place over the last century. He explained the workings of equipment which enabled the wonders of communication by Morse-code, via teleprinter, then later voices carried long distances on telephone wires and cables.



**Members at MOTAT shown equipment
adapted for those with impaired speech.**

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describes a journey across Upolu Island
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CONTACT US

President – Marcia Roberts 418 0397

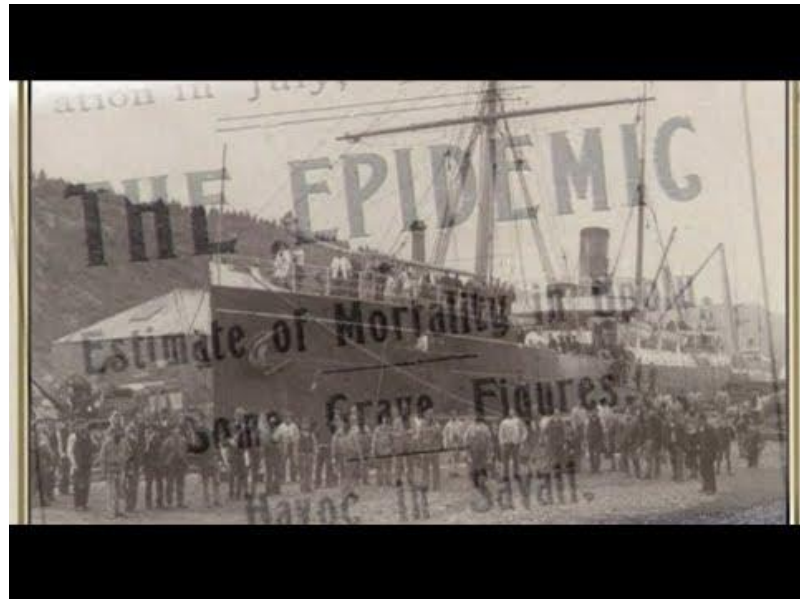
Vice President – Brian Potter 483 3400
Vice President – Colleen Durham 483 4001

Cables from Samoa

In Nov. 1918 – Cables and S.O.S. were received in New Zealand.

Within a week “influenza had spread throughout the main island of Upolu and to the neighbouring island of Savai'i. ... Approximately 8500 people – more than one-fifth of the population – died.”

[Influenza hits Samoa from nzhistory.govt.nz/media](http://nzhistory.govt.nz/media)



Island trader, the *Talune*

Apia – 1914 (Unknown
photographer - out of copyright)

New Zealand was mandated to administer Western Samoa, a former German Colony - by the League of Nations following WWI.

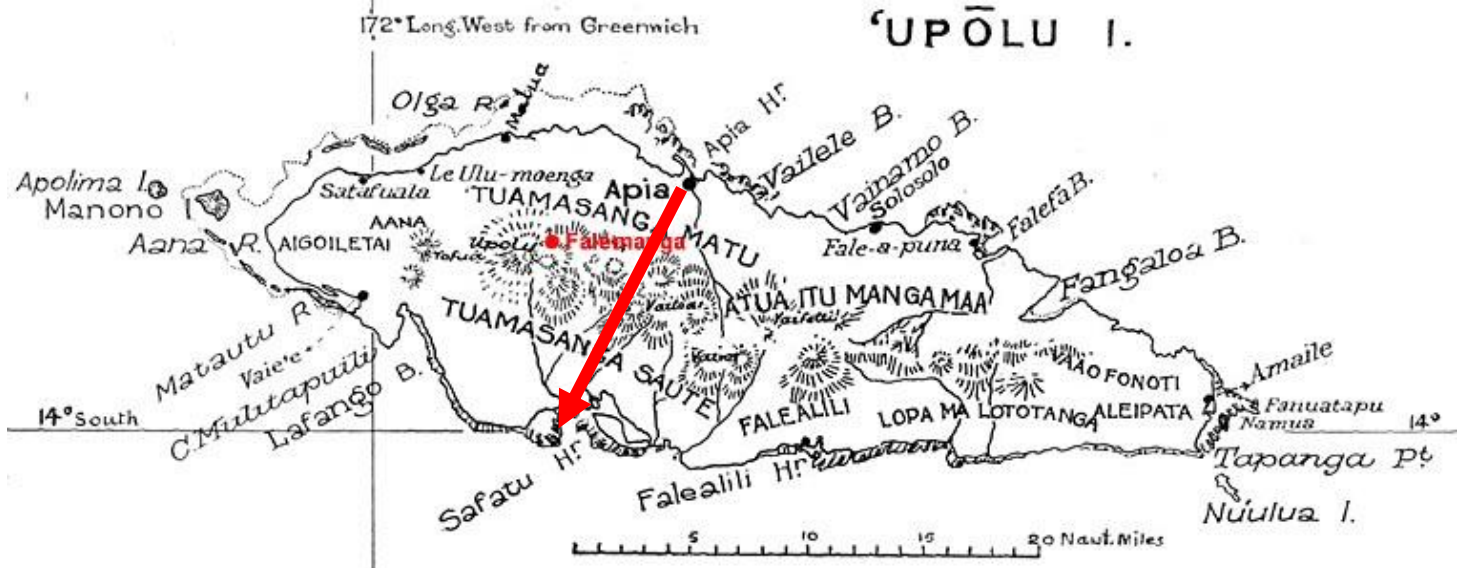
The second wave of the global influenza pandemic came to Western Samoa on board an island trader, the *Talune*, on 4 November 1918. The acting port officer at Apia was unaware that there was a severe epidemic at the ship's departure point, Auckland. As a result he allowed passengers ashore, including six who were seriously ill with influenza. Within a week influenza had spread throughout the main island of Upolu and to the neighbouring island of Savai'i. Approximately 8500 people – more than one-fifth of the population – died. Responsibility for the pandemic clearly lay with New Zealand.

In 1918 Western Samoa was still occupied by New Zealand forces that had seized the German colony at the beginning of the First World War. In addition to not placing the *Talune* under quarantine, the New Zealand Administrator, Colonel Robert Logan, did not accept an offer of assistance from the Governor of nearby American Samoa which may have reduced the death toll. It was only in **2002** New Zealand's Prime Minister Helen Clark made an official apology to the Samoan people for the actions of the New Zealand authorities.

A letter from Samoa describes a journey by horse and foot, by a young lawyer T.V. Fitzpatrick to his parents V. & A. Fitzpatrick living in Harbour View Road in Birkenhead. Contributed by his son and member B. Fitzpatrick.

Apia. 28th June 1937

Dear Dad, I promised to tell you about my trip across the Island. First it will be well to describe the topography. **Upolo Island** is about 47 miles long with the greatest breadth of about 15 miles, the cross island track runs in its widest part. About the middle of the north coast is situated Apia, a wide sweeping reef encircles a shallow lagoon. Down the centre of the island - a range of mountains, the greatest height is some 3600 ft. From Apia west to Mulionua runs a good motor road which extends to the east some 16-17 miles to Falefa. Good roads extend inland from Apia some 6 – 10 miles. All other 'roads' are tracks more or less passable to horses.



Directly behind Apia and on the South coast is Safata bay – also a shallow reef enclosed stretch of water. On this bay is a place called Sataoa where Burns Philp have a trading station. Except in Apia there are no regular shops. The native purchases are simple, tinned foods, cloth for lava-lavas, kerosene, tobacco and similar goods. They produce mainly copra with occasionally a small quantity of cocoa beans. The firms pick out a likely locality man or in a village and establish a trading station. A trader is put in charge being paid a small salary £5 - £6 a month and given a commission on copra bought and goods sold. A stock of £200 - £300 worth of goods is carried and is replenished at approximately 6 weekly intervals by a launch which also removes the bought copra to the head store in Apia. Copra loses weight as it dries, an allowance of up to 10% between bought weight and Apia's weight is made to the trader to allow for this. Any excess shrinkage in weight, or shortage in a stations cash or goods is charged to the trader.

We act for the firm owning the station at Sataoa and it was recently reported to us that an inspection (a station inspector takes stock from time to time and checks on the trader) had disclosed a shortage of about £85. There the copra shed is close to the beach with the station some 20 yards inland but absolutely clear in between. The trader alleges that he bought copra to that value but some person had stolen it and then tried to burn down the shed. He himself had gone to the shed and pulled from under it, on the seaward side a charred smouldering sack.

Letter from Apia ctd.

The case has not yet come on so the evidence is not complete. The police made enquiries and as a result preferred charges of theft and attempted arson. The case is adjourned until another staff member returns.

Tom decided to work up the brief and insisted me to accompany him over. As the firms representative I took a very passive part in the proceedings.

We left Apia about 9.20 AM by car and proceeded past Vailima (4 miles South. of Apia) to Chas Fellowes place where Tom and I were provided with horses. Our man accompanied us while the accused, about 23 years old, and two boys followed after, carrying our gear. Apparently - learnt from the Chinese coolies - the natives use the balance pole to carry their burdens. We climbed steadily over a rough cart track to Maldoli and Apiamalo. Past a rest home the Government used to maintain, where inhabitants spent a week or two and recuperated from the heat. Now only a chimney remains. At Apiamalo P.C. Fabricus has a bach. From here the road became a bush track and no habitation was seen until we reached the other side of the island.

We passed several banyan trees. These are peculiar in that the tree grows up, and from its branches drops long trailers. As each trailer reaches the ground it takes root but the top remains part of the original tree. An old tree will have a thick main trunk, about forty or fifty feet up the branches will begin. Going up to the branches and into the trunk will appear a whole host of props or stays. The stays cover a fair part of ground and the effect of the thick main trunk with the props conveying at the top is that Indian tepee surrounded by a growing tree.



Local Birkenhead variety of Bunyan trees. Photo Editor

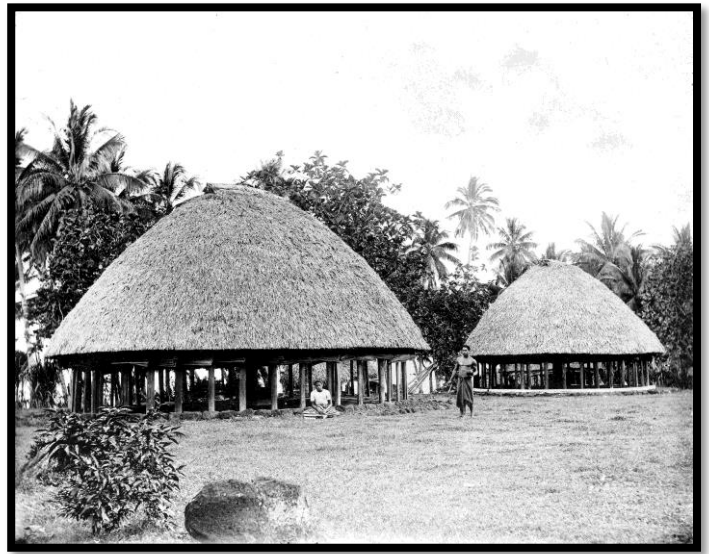
About half way down a track struck off to the right. This was a direct track to our destination but we kept on as we wished to see a waterfall said to be the highest in Samoa. Unfortunately the rain was so heavy that we could see nothing. We came out high on the edge of what must have been a large valley and a blur about a mile and a half away indicates the position of the fall. It must be a magnificent sight normally. The trail now was really a bush foot track. A little further on we had sandwiches which we had bought with us. Time was now about 1pm and we had been in the saddle since about 10.20.

Letter from Apia ctd.

We began to feel cold and look forward to seeing coconut trees as this would mean nearness to the sea. Finally we came out into a clearing and after riding through some bananas came into coconuts. There we halted while some coconuts were brought to us to drink. The effervescing milk of the nut is very good as a thirst quencher. On again through coconuts until at last we crossed a small stream and emerged to the beach. The priest has built a wall to stop erosion.



Copra Plantation. Source: Alfred Tattersall, Samoa, c1918, Te Papa Museum, Wgn. NZ.



Samoa houses – fales c1930s
Wikipedia commons. Photographer unknown

The village we had arrived at was Mulivai, I think it is mentioned in the Maori accounts of their voyaging to New Zealand. We came out at the East end of Mulivai and proceeded to the West end. Then we crossed a stream and was soon at our destination Tafatoala. Just on the stream O F Nelson & Co. have a store and their trader rushed out as we passed and demanded to know why our guide had gone to Apia and not paid him 14/- which was owing to him. I was already ahead of Tom at the time so missed hearing the argument.

We arrived at the station run by a Mr. Ortquist wet through at about half past three. We soon changed our clothes while a cup of tea was being prepared for us. Before we could have the tea some five or six chiefs arrived and squatted on the porch. They brought some kava roots as a token of friendship. It was necessary to have their roots crushed and have a drink at once. Every hut has a kava bowl. The kava is crushed, at one time it was chewed but not now, and placed in the bowl with water. A maiden then stirs it and strains it through fibre. A chief takes it upon himself to call the order of serving which must be done in strict order of rank. As the recipient's name is called a young man takes a full bowl and with appropriate gesture hands it to drinker. The drinker murmurs 'manuia' (good luck) and drinks. Sometimes 'safua' is used.

After lunch we talked until tea time. The chiefs came back, this time with the stem kava for another bowl. The same etiquette is followed but this time it was a formal welcome to us so speeches were made thanking God for our safe journey and everything else. Our host bought out a pound of sugar and a pound of rice which represented our gift to the chiefs. You must return every gift at once or you will be called upon later several time for sundry small things.

Potter Cottage at MOTAT

Birkenhead Heritage members also visited Potter Cottage, relocated there in 1969.

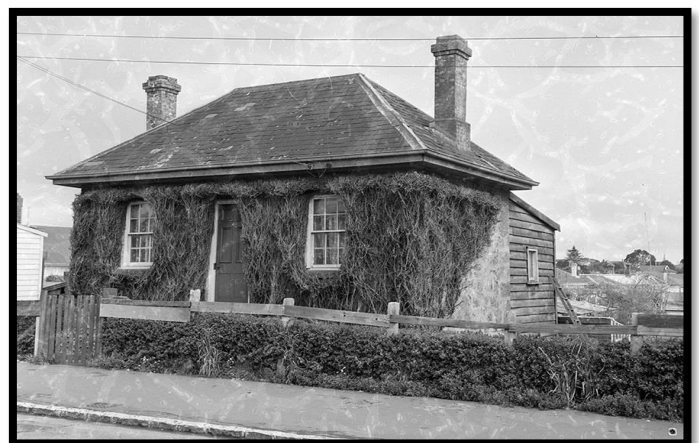
Newspaper records of Potter Cottage are mixed with that of the Epsom Hotel - located next door, and the large farm referred to as Potter's Paddock owned by William Potter, direct ancestor of Brian.

In 1835 William Potter came to New Zealand with his wife from Australia, where he had been transported by the British authorities. William Potter became a hotel-keeper in the Bay of Islands about the time the Maori chief Hone Heke was active. By the time Kororareka, (Russell) was destroyed on 11 March **1845** Potter had relocated to Auckland, purchasing land there, directly from local Maori a 50 acre block at Epsom.

Three acres of his land was purchased for the Epsom Costley Home for the Aged Poor site by the Auckland Hospital and Charitable Aid Board around **1850**. Known later as the Costley Block, with Greenlane and National Women's Hospitals added to the site. More of Potter's original land became the site of the showgrounds and racetrack.

Potter Cottage was built by William beside Manukau Road, using large blocks of basalt rock for the front wall. It was not occupied by him or his family. Many meetings were held in the Epsom Hotel's parlour next door, including in **1851** the founding of the Agricultural & Pastoral Association. Some first A & P shows had been underway earlier, by 1843. In **1887** much of the Potter Paddock property was sold to the City of Auckland Tramways and the Suburban Land Company for use as a depot, and grazing on the Auckland - Onehunga route.

In **1901** the show ground land was renamed Alexandra Park to commemorate the visit of Princess Alexandra. The Greenlane Hospital site became the Greenlane Clinical Centre from **2004**.



Potter Cottage, with the Epsom Hotel next door 1919

Potter Cottage in 1960 B. Beattie

James D Richardson: *Sir George Grey Special Collections, Akld Lib. 4-150*

Editor: Marcia Roberts



Members listen to Brian outside Potter Cottage

Photo Colleen Durham