

# BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE

— SOCIETY INC —

[www.birkenheadheritage.org](http://www.birkenheadheritage.org)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2-4pm**

**Farrington Museum House 44 Mahara Ave.**

**Next to War Memorial Park entrance**

Recent events has brought a new topic

**Laurie Wesley: Our local semi retired geotechnical engineer and university lecturer will review**

**Slip's in Le Roy's Bush,  
and some history of the recent  
upgrade work.**

**Sat 8<sup>th</sup> April – Easter No meeting**

**Farrington House Museum Opens 2-4pm  
44 Mahara Ave., Birkenhead**

March: Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> March

April Closed Easter Sun 9<sup>th</sup> / Open 23<sup>rd</sup>

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**Trish Love** [trishlove@premium.co.nz](mailto:trishlove@premium.co.nz)

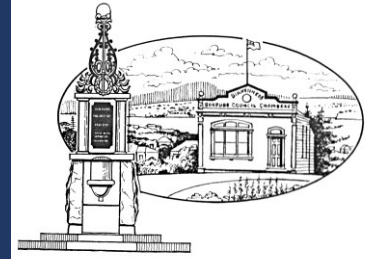
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March - April  
2023

**January 27<sup>th</sup> 2023 Historical event:**

Heavy rain fell over Auckland – causing coastal slips, widespread flooding in low lying areas, some local homes damaged and red stickered. Soon followed by severe floods in the East Coast Eskdale Valley near Napier and the region by Cyclone Gabrielle. In the past a large slip fell blocking access to Birkenhead wharf in the 1890's and Rawene Reserve car park slip in October and November 2017.



Recent local slips included one above, which tossed the wooden bridge over on a Kauri Point Centennial Park track. Photo: David Roberts

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## CONTACT US

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## Some history of beds

The structure of beds have remained remarkably consistent - raised frames with mattresses were being used in Malta and Egypt by 3000 B.C., which means people have been using them for over 5,000 years.

Around 1000 BCE wealthy Romans began using raised metal beds that held feather or straw-stuffed mattresses. For those less fortunate, wooden bed frames with wool strings held up a mattress. The truly poor simply used a mat on the floor. For all levels of wealth, woollen blankets were common.

Early Egyptian used a rectangular wooden frames with legs, and leather or fabric sleeping platforms. The upper end was often angled slightly upwards. .

But one thing that has changed is who has occupied the bed. For most of human history, people thought nothing of crowding family members or friends into the same bed.

The 17th-century diarist Samuel Pepys often slept with male friends and rated their conversation skills. One of his favourites was the “merry Mr. Creed,” who provided “excellent company.” In September 1776. John Adams and Benjamin Franklin famously shared a bed in a New Jersey inn with only one small window. Adams kept it shut, but Franklin wanted it open, complaining he would suffocate without fresh air, Adams won.

Travelers often slept with strangers. In China and Mongolia, kangs – heated stone platforms – were used in inns as early as 5000 B.C. Guests supplied the bedding and slept with fellow tourists/travellers.

Bedding down with strangers could lead to some awkwardness. The 16th-century English poet Andrew Buckley complained of bed mates who “buck and babble, some commeth drunk to bed.”

The ‘Great Bed of Ware’ – a massive bed kept in an inn in a small town in central England. Built with richly decorated oak around 1590, the four-post bed is about the size of two modern double beds. Twenty-six butchers and their wives – a total of 52 people – are said to have spent a night in the Great Bed in 1689. (Google search)

‘History of metal beds goes back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century due to technological advances of the Industrial revolution, and the Victorian passion for hygiene. The ability to make cast iron in large quantities, and affordable prices, and the desire for “vermin free” from the ever present and hard-to-eradicate bed bugs in wooden frames.’

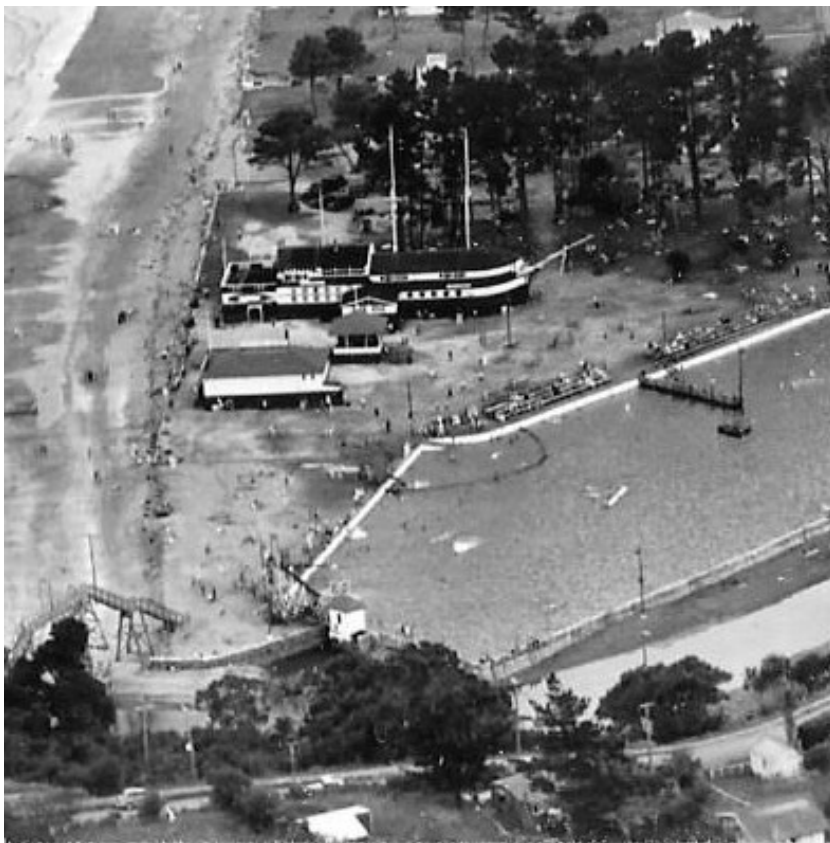
‘The heyday of production was around the time of the Crimean war (1853-56), when Florence Nightingale influenced the British nation with her new ideas of cleanliness. By 1875 around 6,00 iron bedsteads were being produced a week. The process is still in practice in Par, Cornwall, high-quality British steel tubes are cut to size, the ends crimped laid out across a set of moulds. Zinc is heated to 500°C and the molten zinc ladled into the moulds cavities – to form the joints, which are later smoothed, hung for powder coated spraying, pass through an infra-red oven for a smooth hard finish, before cast brass balls or other decorative features are added.’

Inner-sprung mattresses were manufactured from the 1800’s, foam mattresses as late as the 1950’s. Some Roman Emperors were laid on a cradle of warm water, then lifted to another cradle with mattress and rocked to sleep, predating the waterbeds of the 1980’s. Metal beds joined by nuts and bolts were ideal for early transport by sea by early settlers, **and one is set up in the bedroom at Farrington House.**

*Source: This England Autumn 2020*



Ye 'Olde Pirate Shippe' at Milford



After the success of Milford's Picturedrome opened by Laurie Speedy in 1922, local businessmen formed Milford Amusement Co. With capital of 10,000 pounds, (\$20,000) they employed James Fletcher's Fletcher Construction in 1928 to build a proper dance hall. It was opened in January 1929, with a dance hall, tearooms, sweet shop, a penny arcade and restaurant. Shortly after opening the swimming pool was constructed; very popular with school children with its high slide into the water testing their bravery. Ownership changed many times, including the Devonport Steam Ferry Company, then abandoned, - and finally demolished in 1957.

Photo. Purchased in a Milford store some years ago – no identifying inscription. (Ed.)

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February Meeting

Held at Farrington House Museum, Brian Potter provided an informative demonstration of the uses of old agricultural tools, and various implements from our collection. Some would have been adapted for New Zealand conditions or made by blacksmiths. It is interesting one of the early small businesses located above the early Birkenhead wharf was a blacksmith, no hardware stores or super warehouses in those days. It was noted some people's seat did not allow a good view of the speaker – and this will be reviewed to ensure people do not miss out – however the feedback and interest in the rearranged displays was very good. Plenty of afternoon tea for all, with a number of local visitors present. Total attendance estimated at 32.

Please note new www website on page 1, a welcome initiative from our President Erica.

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An article from the Past:

The fire that destroyed Birkenhead's first Forester's Hall

New Zealand Herald, Volume XLI, Issue 12657, 10 September 1904, Page 4

**THE BIRKENHEAD FIRE.**

**ADDITIONAL PARTICULARS.**

FURTHER particulars regarding the fire at Birkenhead on Thursday night, whereby the Foresters' Hall was destroyed, reveal the cause for the outbreak. The hall had not been used in the evening, and was locked up as usual. There is suspicion of incendiarism, not only because of the lack of any other apparent origin of the fire, but because the hour was one peculiarly suitable for the purpose of anyone desiring to set the place on fire. The fire appears to have broken out about ten minutes to eleven. Mr. H. M. Shepherd, whose house overlooks the hall, states that he looked out of his window before retiring at a quarter past ten, and there was then no sign of fire. The fire broke out just at the time when the last pedestrians on the way to the wharf would have passed, and some five and twenty minutes ahead of the time when passengers by the incoming boat from town would pass on their way home.

Miss Henrietta Tizard, who, with her sister, held a day school in the hall, left it locked at four o'clock in the afternoon, and the locks of the outer doors have since been found all with the bolts shot. The fire, according to the statements of two of the early arrivals on the scene, broke out in the supper rooms, underneath the hall, and soon had a strong hold.

The hall (including furniture and fittings) cost £750 to erect, besides which it contained a 45-guinea piano, scholastic materials in connection with Misses Tizard's day-school, and the regalia of the Foresters' Lodge. The total loss would, therefore, be close upon £900. The building was insured in the New Zealand office for £500.

The hall, which was built of first-class material, was quite a new one, and had only been erected for a few months. A few days after the formal opening of the hall some of the windows facing the street were smashed, and this had been apparently done intentionally, and a reward was offered by the Foresters for information leading to a conviction in connection with this matter, but so far the offenders have not been traced.

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