

BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE

— SOCIETY INC —

✉ P O Box 34419, Birkenhead, Auckland 0746

f www.facebook.com/historicbirkenhead

🌐 www.historicbirkenhead.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

■ **March – 8,9,10th The Heritage Event- Celebrations at Birkenhead Primary School for the School Centennial over the weekend.**

■ **March 10th and 24th Sunday 2-4pm: Farrington House Museum open, 44 Mahara Ave, Birkenhead**

■ **March 16th Saturday – Beach Haven Gold Rush and other stories... listed next column, Beach Haven Hall 2-30pm.**

■ **April 13th Saturday – St Andrews Hall 172 Hinemoa Street 2-4pm: David Verran: Speaking on Major Isaac Rhodes Cooper – early Birkenhead land owner, and Orewa resident.**

■ **May 11th AGM St Andrews Hall 2-4pm**
Early Notice: Guest Speaker – Richard Coote, Retired Principal, Birkdale Intermediate; Speaking on visiting the sites of the Passchendaele battle and the Great Escape

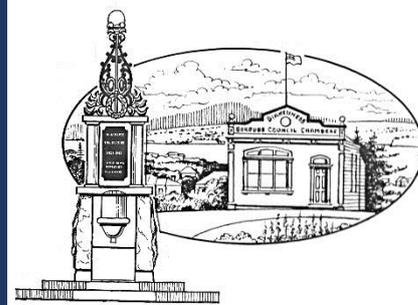
Our appreciation for sponsoring printing to

Trish Love trishlove@premium.co.nz

09 558 4518 or 021 22 66 099

*Premium | On The Points
142A Hinemoa St.*

*Premium Real Estate Ltd.
MREINZ. Licensed REAA
2008.*



March - April
2019
Newsletter

■ **Upcoming events in Beach Haven, Celebrating Communities month in March.**

1. **Beach Haven Photography Competition** in Beach Haven Hall on Fri 15th from 7-9pm & Sat 16th March from 10am to 2pm. For more info & to enter see: <http://www.beachhaven.org.nz/index.php/meetings-and-events/photo-competition-2019>

2. **Art in the Garden - Upcycled Garden Sculpture Competition on March 16th** from 10am to 4pm in Opaketai Beach Haven Garden. Open to all BH and Birkdale residents. Create a garden sculpture using recycled/upcycled materials. Bring to the garden from 9am to 9.45am. Prizegiving at 12pm. Sculpture must be safely freestanding, and able to be easily moved by 2 people.

3. **The Beach Haven Gold Rush and other stories** of Beach Haven & Birkdale – 2pm to 3.30pm in BH Hall – 3 long term residents share their fascinating stories of the history of our area and community. Followed by afternoon tea. Entry to all events is free.

Beach Haven Placemaking Group, local volunteers who work for the benefit of the Beach Haven Community and the local environment. To find out more: phone Lisbeth 021 214 1469 or email: bhplacemaking@gmail.com Or see <https://www.facebook.com/Beach-Haven-Placemaking-Group>

■ CONTENTS

P2-4 The Two John Courts

P5 Birkenhead Primary School Memories

P6 Opening of War Memorial Park 1958

CONTACT US

President – Marcia Roberts 418 0397

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

The two John Courts

John William Court was a business man who bought land on Birkenhead Point, he built a large home and lived there with his family, taking an active part in the areas development. He is mentioned several times in McClure's *The Story of Birkenhead*.¹ His father also John Court, 1846 - 1933 brought the family out from England. Research revealed an interesting background - the restrictions on his education and early lifestyle so different to life in New Zealand today.

John Court Snr. was born at Bradley Green, Worcestershire, England, on 21 January 1846. The 4th of nine children of Jane Boucher and her husband William Court, a farmer, later an innkeeper in the nearby village of Feckenham.²

The village dates back to Roman times. It became a centre in a former Royal Forest covering large areas of Worcestershire and Warwickshire. The forest Courts and gaol were located there. In earlier periods the King had legal rights over game, wood and grazing. Land was granted as royal or political favours from William the Conqueror down, the builders and owners of various manors have been well documented. There were revolts in 1629 when the traditional *Rights of Common* was abolished and enclosure of the common lands occurred. By the 1790's during the industrial revolution needles and fish hooks were manufactured locally, but agriculture remained the main industry.³

John was educated at the local Feckenham charity school. At age 14 the school trustees apprenticed John for six years to Henry Jackson, a draper in Walsall, Staffordshire. Court's indentures forbade him to marry, frequent taverns or absent himself day or night. Henry Jackson was responsible for educating Court and bringing him up in the religion of the Church of England. He subsequently worked in the drapery trade in Birmingham and Rugby.

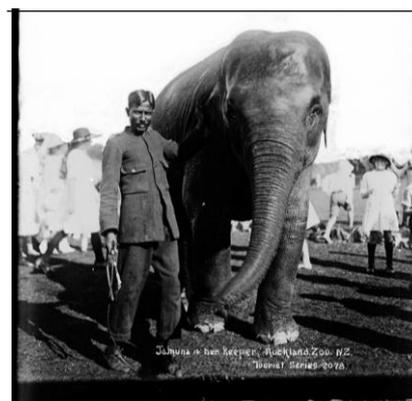
He was married on 30 November 1871 at St Nicolas, Birmingham, to Sarah Babington, the daughter of a bootmaker. The couple were to have four daughters and four sons.

John and Sarah Court and their eight children emigrated to New Zealand in July 1889, John was now aged 43. Two of John's brothers, George and Frederick, had established a drapery shop in Auckland in 1886.

By the time John joined the partnership in September 1889 the business had expanded to a second store. Frederick retired about two years after John's arrival. The firm continued to trade as Court Brothers, drapers and clothiers, in Karangahape Road and Queen Street. By 1902 George and John Court were operating three shops, and with their older sons entering the business they decided to dissolve the partnership and establish separate firms. It was an amicable arrangement: George remained in Karangahape Road and John took over the two Queen Street shops.

John Court Snr. was involved with the Auckland Council, he served on the Grafton and Ponsonby school committees and his continuing concern for the children of the community was further manifested in the provision of playground equipment at Grey Lynn and Victoria parks. He was a generous benefactor of the Community Sunshine Association and its health camps.

He lived with his family in Hamilton Road, Herne Bay, where many social events and tennis was enjoyed. In 1922 he donated funds for the purchase of the elephant Jamuna for the Auckland Zoological Park, and when the Auckland Zoological Society was formed in 1929 he was elected its first life member in recognition of his continuing support.²



Jamuna arrived in Auckland with her keeper in 1923

John William Court

John William Court was born around 1878, and died in 1966 aged 88 years, one of the sons of John Court, he joined the family business and by 1905 was a manager at John Court Ltd.

J.W. Court bought a large home in Marama Terrace, (formerly Northcote Terrace, from 1967 named Maritime Terrace). The Courts lived in the house for a few years before they had it removed up to the beginning of Harbour View Rd. (from 1967 named Bridge View Road). The new, two storied home of beautiful kauri, and plastered blocks was built by Mr Marmaduke R. Souster. 4

Locally John W. Court was a member of Zion Hill Church. The Sunday School grew in the early 1900's with 150 members and 15 teachers. Out-stations at Northcote were under John Court's leadership, and at Birkdale with John Levesque. The leaders took their educational purpose seriously, teachers were 'on trail' before accredited, and inspectors appointed to report on teachers and progress of the children.

There was a Sunday School library of 700 books, and the popular Sunday School picnic in January. Zion Hill was a centre for many activities, including the Mutual Improvement Society, an annual musical show, and encouraging education and debates.

John W. also served on the Birkenhead Borough Council from 1911 to 1913. By the end of 1918 Birkenhead was recovering from the aftermath of the 1st World War and the influenza epidemic. John Court was one of those who used his car to deliver blankets to stricken households. A photo in *The Story of Birkenhead* 3 records three automobiles and their male occupants outside Northcote School with the emergency helpers.

Various social changes came about in the 1920's, the boroughs first regular refuse collection began. . In 1921-1922 Northcote parishioner John Court, was elected Mayor of Birkenhead.5 However he resigned in 1922 after the borough's vote against his loan proposal by a large majority.

The local population disapproved of borrowing for civil amenities, drainage, telephones, electricity, footpaths, and other services.

The Birkenhead Progressive League inaugural meeting was held in the Foresters Hall on Mach 14th 1921. Mr. J.W. Court was appointed President, with 12 members on the committee. They sought to improve local facilities, such as Hinemoa Park, and bathing facilities at the Needles Eye.6 They opposed the council, founded The Tatler and clamoured for basic services. Discussions occurred on the ferries amongst regular travellers, however their criticisms published in the paper alienated many in the borough.

J.W.Court was an Auckland City Councillor from 1925 to 1929.

Alec Utting quoted Zion Hill reminiscences of Cliff Utting "From 1926 until about 1930 I did the circuit driving on Sundays." "When feed got short (for the horse) in Birkenhead he was taken down to John Court's place in Marama Terrace, he had to be ridden, bare back, to the church so he could be harnessed to the gig."7

Beyond his civic responsibilities, John Court was a successful businessman, the John Court's department store, on the corner of Queen and Victoria Streets was an Auckland landmark into the 1960s.2 . His home was a part of the social life in Birkenhead. and many a garden party and social event was held there. 7

J.W. Court also owned a small farm, looked after by George Burgess. He ran quite a few cows there. A rifle range was built on ground that belonged to him. By 1947 Birkenhead Borough Council had purchased 45 acres of land and a dwelling from Mr. J.W. Court, 7 acres from Mr. C.J. Utting, and a further 12 acres for sports grounds and amenities. This became the Birkenhead War Memorial Park. 6

Opposite Farrington House Museum John Court Street runs off Mahara Avenue, across land formerly owned by John Court.

What happened to John Courts store?

Foot Note: From Dictionary of New Zealand. The company continued to prosper and expand. By 1909 it had three shops. In 1910 it purchased the three-storeyed Direct Supply Company (DSC) store on the corner of Queen Street and Victoria Street East, and two of the smaller shops were closed. The new store opened for business in the DSC building on 11 July 1910. The other shop was later sold and by 1920 the remaining premises had been rebuilt and enlarged to eight storeys.

John Court Limited became one of the leading firms in the city, catering for all the clothing and household needs of the family. It had a tradition of good service, quality merchandise and reasonable prices. The JCL corner was a landmark and favourite meeting place for citizens and visitors to Auckland. In 1966/7 John Court Limited was purchased by an Auckland-based syndicate, and in 1972 it was sold to Cornish Investments Limited of Wellington. ²

Resources:

- 1 Margaret McClure *The Story of Birkenhead* 1987 Birkenhead City Council
- 2 Janice C. Mogford. 'Court, John', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* published in 1996.
- 3 History of Feckenham: Wikipedia
- 4 Back Then oral history interviews 1989 Birkenhead Public Library (Vol. 3 p84 with Noel Verran) (Vol.2. p31 with Neville Paterson)
- 5 J. Brown-Haysom *Being the People of God in this Place* Memories of Birkenhead Parish 1880-2005 (Zion Church)
- 6 Muriel Fisher, Wenman J. Hilder, *The Kauri Suburb* 1969 Birkenhead Borough Council
- 7 Alec Utting *History of Early Methodist Worship in Birkenhead, Northcote and Glenfield*, 2003 for Birkenhead Historical Society

Photos::Auckland Council Libraries Collection



John Court's home located in Marama Terrace, renamed Maritime Terrace in 1967
The house was later taken down and Peregrine Place developed.

Photographer Jasper, Alfred George, 1895-1951

Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections B0417

Birkenhead Primary School Memories

Starting School

I started school at a time when there was one intake at the beginning of the term. I went to school with my father, mother stayed home with my younger brother then about 7 months old. I remember a long queue outside the infant/ primers block. In the end Father left me in the care of Joy Brown, mother of Jocelyn, and went to work. Jocelyn Brown and I shared a birthday. The Browns lived next door to the school. Mr Brown was the founder of Brown's Pharmacy.

Polio Epidemic Closure

I remember the day schools were closed. It was a Friday evening, mother was taking us to see Santa, the first opportunity as she was expecting her third child. As the ferry arrived, we were greeted with the news that schools and many other places were to be closed.

The next year, while school was still closed, I recall going with father to see the teacher, Mr Boyd, in a large classroom in the primary block. I remember a small man in a big room. Mr Boyd's father was, at that time, the Presbyterian minister.

Promotion from Primer 3 direct to Standard 1

On our return to school at the beginning of the year we went into Primer 4. I think this would have been 1947. The teacher was Miss Frew, who was feared by the students. After lunch four of us, Jocelyn Brown, Gary Moller, myself and one other whose name escapes me were called up, taken out and promoted to Standard 1.

School Cocoa

In the winter there was hot cocoa, prepared and served by mothers from a room at the end of the primers block. We took to the school our own mug, most of us had an enamel mug.

Standard 3 – 8 teachers in one year

Standard 3 was the year when we had eight teachers. The last one was Miss Edna Steel, who had just returned from overseas and was a good friend with my parents. Father advised her of the vacancy, she applied for the position and was appointed. In her first week I developed the six-month relapse of whooping cough. Miss Steel sent me home as she did not like my coughing, she also felt she knew enough about me that she did not need me in the class as she got to know the other pupils.

Miss Steel was a gifted teacher. She had us playing the Three Little Pigs, building houses out of brown paper and we blew them down. She also ran a competition each week and took the winning team to the beach. Miss Steel's mother owned the Victoria Hall in the Crescent, now Mariposa Crescent.

New headmaster – Mr Turner

Towards the end of my time at Birkenhead Primary father joined the school committee. There was a new headmaster, Mr Turner. When the committee members realised that Mr Turner was staying back for the evening meeting, he was invited on the night of the meeting to share an evening meal with various families.

Brian Fitzpatrick, Student 1945 – 1950

Prepared for the School Centennial 2019 and shared with Birkenhead Heritage Soc. Inc.

Cobham, Charles John Lyttelton 1909 - 1977
Governor General (Governor General 1957-1962) and
Mayor of Birkenhead Cliff Utting (Mayor 1953-1959) at the opening of
the Birkenhead War Memorial Park in 1958.



Historical note:

Acquisition and development of the War Memorial Park was initiated after World War II. The land was purchased from J.W. Court and C.J. Utting with government subsidy and fundraising activities e.g. active canvassing and a Queen Carnival with responses from local firms, individuals and organisations such as the R.S.A.

The approved plans included playing fields, a grandstand, tennis and bowling pavilion and a hall near the Mahara Road entrance and to the north of the playing fields a motor camp. The park was officially opened in 1958.

The Motor camp plans were abandoned and the War Memorial Hall was built and opened in 1969.

Source: War Memorial Park Management Plan - Birkenhead City Council - 10 October 1989. (1.2. History)

The view above shows the stand alone War Memorial at the Mahara Avenue entrance to Birkenhead War Memorial Park, as it was originally built.

Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections B0403