

# BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE

— SOCIETY INC —

✉ P O Box 34419, Birkenhead, Auckland 0746

f [www.facebook.com/historicbirkenhead](http://www.facebook.com/historicbirkenhead)

🌐 [www.historicbirkenhead.com](http://www.historicbirkenhead.com)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

A year focussed on COVID 19 – now Level 1  
it is time to join

### Our End of Year Celebration

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2-4pm

St Andrews Hall 172 Hinemoa Street

Guest Speaker: Robert Brown,  
Toroa Preservation Society President,  
on “The Restoration of the Toroa”

(Previously postponed due to Pandemic)

Followed by our special afternoon  
tea and raffles – visitors welcome.

Sat. 13<sup>th</sup> Feb – to be advised.

Sundays on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> each month

Farrington House Museum Opens 2-4pm

44 Mahara Ave., Birkenhead

- Closed summer school holidays –

or Visits by arrangement ph. 418-0397.

Our appreciation for sponsoring printing to

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

**09 558 4518 or 021 22 66 099**

Premium | On The Points

94 Hinemoa Street, Birkenhead.

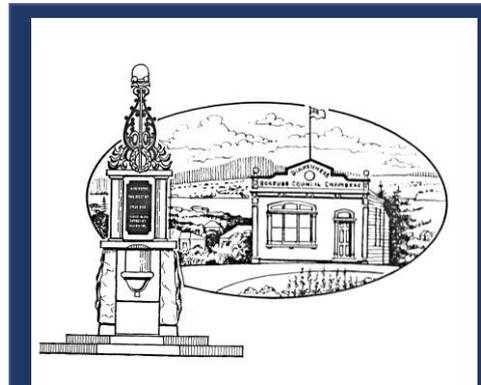
Premium Real Estate Ltd.

MREINZ Licensed REAA 2008



## CONTACT US

President – Marcia Roberts 418 0397



November  
- December  
2020

Nearly there – Labour Weekend



Final painting of Farrington House almost complete. Here Committee members Erica and Stewart, with assistance from Richard are working on the fence.

## CONTENTS

P2-3 The story of Richard Hellaby

P4 Construction of Hellaby House

P4 Rose Hellaby – Education fund

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

## Richard Hellaby 1849 - 1902



### Richard Hellaby 1890s

Richard Hellaby was born in Thurstaston, Derbyshire, England, according to family information, on 5 January 1849, the son of William Hellaby, a farmer, and his wife, Eleanor Audenwood. After minimal schooling Richard was apprenticed to a butcher before setting up his own butcher's stall. In 1867 he followed his older brother, William, to New Zealand in the *Arvion Queen*, arriving at Bluff Harbour early in 1868.

Hellaby started goldmining in Otago, but after losing his few possessions in a flash flood returned to butchering. In May 1868, when he saw a message for him inserted by William in a local newspaper, he left his shop and set out to join his brother at Thames. He walked most of the way, doing odd jobs for food and shelter. After the reunion with William, in late 1868 or early the following year, Richard Hellaby moved on to Auckland where, he had heard, there were opportunities for hard workers to prosper.

By 1873 he had saved enough to buy out his employer, a butcher called F. H. Hammond, and with William's financial help he opened the butcher shop of R. & W. Hellaby.

---

**F. H. HAMMOND** wishes to intimate to his Friends and the Public in general that he has taken over the Business lately carried on by W. J. YANDLE, and trusts by strict attention to Business and the supplying of a superior article to meet with that support which his predecessor has received.

Note the Address:—

**F. H. HAMMOND,**  
**FAMILY BUTCHER,**  
Junction of Grey and Queen-streets. ..

---

AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME V, ISSUE 1315, 25<sup>TH</sup>  
APRIL 1874

Richard Hellaby's great strength allowed him to perform any task he set his workers; he worked exceedingly long hours and expected them to do the same. Yet he knew all his employees by name and would unobtrusively give them generous financial assistance without expecting repayment. They were also provided with a large, free breakfast each working day. During hard times, destitute townspeople were given hot Bovo – a by-product of the meat-canning process – if they came to the works. On cold days, the same hot drink was sent to operators at the nearby telephone exchange.

A tough buyer at the saleyards, Hellaby selected only the finest beasts and paid the keenest prices. Yet he would allow competitors to choose from stock he had purchased, and trusted them to pay their share of the price.

He rested cattle in barns with water and hay bales before they were slaughtered; refused to buy stock at depression prices, aware that Hellaby's profitability depended on that of the farmers.

## Richard Hellaby ctd.

He paid cash for stock the day after arrival, giving credit for usable parts of the carcasses, even if stock arrived injured or dead. He built a reputation for fair and honourable dealings.

Farmers from all over the country bypassed the sale yards to send him stock directly. As the business grew Richard Hellaby gradually assumed the leading role, but the two brothers remained close colleagues and friends. They offered a wide variety of goods, and a delivery service to town and country customers alike. The firm prospered, despite competition from other butchers.

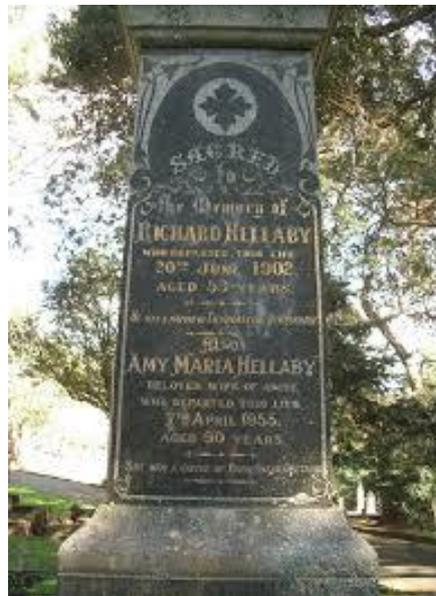
Hellabys' expanded into the frozen-meat trade in the 1880s; growth remained steady despite the depression and by 1898 it was the largest butchering firm in New Zealand. In 1900 the brothers doubled their capital and formed a limited liability company: they were poised for further years of profitable growth.

When the New Zealand Frozen Meat and Storage Company was liquidated in 1889, Richard Hellaby acquired a number of the assets, sold some and invested the profits in the Northern Roller Milling Company. He became one of its largest shareholders and remained a director for the rest of his life. The remaining assets – freezing facilities at Westfield – were left for future development.

Richard Hellaby had married Amy Maria Briscoe at St Mark's Church, Remuera, on 20 January 1885. They were to have three daughters and three sons. When both his brother William and his wife died suddenly in late 1900, Amy and Richard had to assume responsibility for their five nephews and nieces. Richard also shouldered the task of turning the derelict meat company works into a useful adjunct to his business.

He worked even longer hours than usual, until his heart, weakened by the rheumatic fever which had cut short his schooldays, failed him, he died suddenly in Auckland on 20 June 1902.

He and his wife had been poised to move into Bramcote (now known as Florence Court), a large house they had built in Omana Avenue, Epsom. Their youngest child, Freda, was only three months old. Amy Hellaby outlived her husband by 53 years. (Her story in Sept.-Oct. issue)



Memorial at  
Purewa of  
Richard  
Hellaby  
Died 20<sup>th</sup> June  
1902  
aged 53years.  
and his wife  
Amy Maria  
Hellaby  
Died 7<sup>th</sup> April  
1955  
aged 90 years.

**Richard Hellaby** was tall, heavily built, be-whiskered, friendly and outgoing. He acted as a judge of fat stock and sheep at the Auckland agricultural shows, and always drove fine horses in smart traps. He did not involve himself in politics, community groups or the church, but was active in any movement aimed at the progress and development of Auckland. His funeral cortège was over a mile long – testimony to the esteem in which he was held. He had built up one of the largest privately owned businesses in New Zealand, and had shown that honesty and humanitarian principles were not incompatible with success and wealth.

\*\*\*

## Construction of Hellaby Building

98 Hinemoa Street was part of a large plot of land situated on the corner of Great North Road and Palmerston Road (later Hinemoa Street and Rugby Road), purchased by Mrs Maria Hellaby, widow, as an investment in 1903. In 1909 Maria sold the land to her sons R. & W. Hellaby who set about creating **Hellaby Building**, which was to become the first tiled walls to ceiling butcher shop in Australasia. With scaffolding erected in the front room, the tillers lay on their backs Michelangelo style, and individually plastered each tile into place.

The land included the two storey butchers building, stables out the back, spare land beyond and down Rugby Road, plus the land where Dils funeral services are now located. The building took 2 years to complete. The wooden sash window was perfectly weighted to hold itself up when opened to sell the meat through.

Nothing better than Italian marble was bought for the counter which provided a drain line to the sawdust covered floor. 1911 the Hellabys Butchers Building was opened and a grand site she was.

Beasts from the slaughter house in Albert Street were collected by horse and cart, and taken onto the ferry. From the Birkenhead Wharf up the road to the butchers where the horses were guided into the loading bay on steel girders, where the kitchen was later located. A hoist unloaded the carcasses which were hung on metal rails and taken into the room next to the shop (now a dining room). Under the stairs in the dining room the mincer was located. In the front shop an original gas pipe was visible where the sausage making machine was kept.

Editor: Marcia Roberts

The gas light was a permanent fixture on the ceiling. Older locals would reminisce about free sausages when they were little. Hellabys Butchers ‘ruled the roost’ for many years, but later moved to Highbury.

In 1946, when Crocombe and Russell bought the building they started to produce Wolfes pure apple juice in the dining room. The front room became **Roses Lime Juice Factory**, and next door **Fielders Cornflour Factory** which had big hoppers towering through the ceiling. Into the floor above the internal staircase was an elevator which was used to transport the sacks of flour. Upstairs housed the staff room as well.

Mr Raymond Russell at 85 years old in 2002 recalled having to come in and stoke the boiler every morning at 5am.

(Copied from Birkenhead Historical Society Inc. (1979)  
Newsletter March/April 2011.)

This heritage building is now Ravenhill Café,  
Flavour Café and Premium Real Estate.

\*\*\*

**Rose Hellaby** a descendant of the Auckland meat dynasty created the **Rose Hellaby Māori Education Fund**, just one of a number of family trusts established by the philanthropy – minded **Hellaby family**.



The entrance to Rose Hellaby House,  
Waitakere Ranges

Photo from website “My Guide Auckland”

\*\*\*