

BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE

— SOCIETY INC —

✉ P O Box 34419, Birkenhead, Auckland 0746

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Current Covid 19 restrictions limit meetings to 10 participants –
No September Meeting.

Saturday 10th October 2-4pm
St Andrews Hall 172 Hinemoa Street
If restrictions reduced – **Stories Day** –
sharing events from the past or recent experiences in lockdown.

Saturday 14th November 2-4pm
St Andrews Hall 172 Hinemoa Street
Guest Speaker: President of the
Toroa Preservation Society,
Robert Brown will present
“Restoration of the Toroa”
the Auckland harbour ferry.

Sundays 2nd & 4th When Covid 19
Allows; Farrington House Museum opens
2-4pm 44 Mahara Ave., Birkenhead

Our appreciation for sponsoring printing to
Trish Love trishlove@premium.co.nz

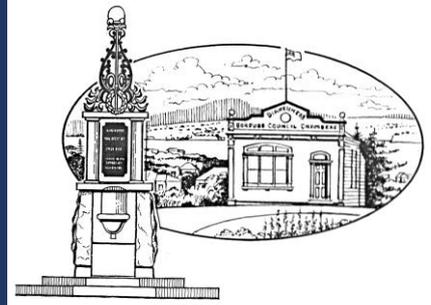
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September
- October
2020



Mask-up

< WWII gas mask
for Home Guard.
✓ Masks now in use
against an unseen
virus - Covid 19



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CONTACT US

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

President's Report 11th July 2020
**41st Annual General Meeting of
BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.**

A warm welcome to everyone, a big thank you for coming out in winter weather.

Farrington House Museum: Following the 2019 May AGM, when we made a slight addition to our rules to meet requirements for a Tax Exemption, the Committee considered and passed 2 motions to apply for funds:

We then reapplied to the Lion Foundation and Birkenhead Trust for repairs and painting of Farrington House, supplying required additional information, and updated quotes for the work.

We also applied to the Kaipatiki Local Board for a grant to upgrade/replace computer equipment, so we have reliable equipment for Farrington House, and for our meetings for members.

Both were successful.

In July leaking spouting was replaced, a broken water pipe leaking under the Museum repaired.

In December repairs to the timber on the outside of Farrington House Museum commenced – a new side door was fitted to replace the leaking door through rotten wood in the panels.

Completed 5/1/20.

8th January, the painter commenced – however there have been a number of delays – complicated by the COVID 19 Pandemic, and subsequent lockdown commencing in March. At this point the undercoating has been mostly completed, some of the pale grey top coat has been applied. We had areas of loose window putty replaced by a Glazier. The front door painted a bright blue.

Ongoing work.

We have maintained servicing of Fire Safety Equipment, the Dry Powder and hose reel at the Museum, and annual Insurance of the facility.

Tony McCracken and a member representing the Glenfield Historical Society attended a Committee Meeting to discuss a possible merger by the remaining members with our Society. There were no objections and a welcome extended to the group – the Glenfield Society indicated recently they intended to organise more meetings with their members in the interim.

Our Monthly meetings:

May 11th; following the Annual General Meeting **retired Principal Richard Coote** shared videos and spoke about his visits to War Memorials from WWII in Belgium and France. Including the sites of some well-known 'Great Escapes' by P.O.W.

June; Stories Day, members shared their earlier experiences, always very interesting.

July; David Verran presented the 'Thorne Georges', the story of Seymour Thorne George who married in 1872 Annie Matthews, the half niece of Sir George grey – with historic photos.

August; Heritage Gardens, John Adams presented his research on plantings as War Memorials.

September; Brian Potter presented Chelsea Sugar Refinery, Building a Community.

October Auckland Heritage Festival 2019 - Theme 'Journeys':

October 12th; **Megan Hutchings** presented her 'oral history interviews'. Stories from war brides, young families, single women seeking jobs, new life after WWII. 'Journeys through time and place'.

Two Heritage Walks were led in Highbury, and one to overlook and tell the story of Chelsea.

Children's activities at Farrington House: providing samples of toys and games from the 19th and early 20th Century, the types of activities played while on the long sea journey to N.Z. – these were well attended and very popular.

October 26th; **Visit from Papakura Historical Society to Farrington House** – we provided morning tea, a talk on our Museum and area history, and local information for their bus tour, 26 visitors.

President's Report 11th July 2020 ctd.

November 9th; Sharing 'Memories of childhood entertainment', and end of year afternoon tea.

February 8th: Prompted by a request for information by the current Librarians, an interesting session of recalled memories, correcting dates and adding names to create a more detailed and accurate history of Birkenhead Library. Our member, librarian Greer Nordstrand delighted with the result.

March 14th; Member Barbara Wesley presented North Shore Sculptures and War Memorials – you will have read about these in our last two Newsletters.

The Pandemic: One week later March 20th we went into lockdown as the World Pandemic brought the 1st few cases of COVID 19 Influenza across our borders. The Pandemic and Alert 4 lockdown resulted in Farrington House closed, April, May and June meetings cancelled.

ANZAC Day cancelled for 2 consecutive years – (Mosque attack 2019 – then COVID 19 in 2020)
A day when many visit Farrington House after the service, impacting on our visitor number totals.

Once Alert 1 was reached in May we have been liaising with our Painter, ensuring the work will be finished. Painting has been sporadic and the work at Farrington is not yet completed.

Additional liaison and response to queries; such as - a grave location in the Birkenhead Anglican Cemetery- information supplied. Auckland Council Heritage requested information about the Hellaby building in Hinemoa Street. A query from Te Aroha Museum to check a photo of a Hinemoa Café.

People have sought information about their ancestors, Farrington House opened for a UK couple in June. Our 'school desk' lent in 2019 for Birkenhead Primary School Centennial reunion.

Some facts and figures: Our Members 36 + 3 Life Members = 39

Visitors to Farrington House: 57 + Papakura Historical Society Visit: 26 = 83

All Saints Cub Pack, a Girl Guide Group, and Senior Scouts Group. Aprox. 30

CATZ Inc. (Cat show organisers) have 6 meetings a year with 8 attending 48 Total 161

BHS Website page visits since May last year: **8,852**: Page views **4,809** 'unique visits'.

On **Facebook**: **243** people following our page, with **218 Likes**.

Last month (June) 996 people made contact - the count only covers the previous month.

The bi-monthly Newsletter continues to be printed by **Premium Real Estate**, this sponsorship is greatly appreciated, reducing our expenditure, and an efficient method of providing quality copies.

No Committee can function without volunteer members, our loyal group oversee all decisions and together make sure things happen in the best interests of Farrington House and our members. Colleen and Stuart Durham, Erica Hannam, David and Susan Verran, & myself rotate opening F.H. Jenny Goodwin, Treasurer /Secretary keeps us focussed, and assisted at the children's event, along with Colleen. Erica, Anne and myself. Ray Johansen continues to provide advice and supports our efforts. Anne Farrington provides expertise with documentation, hospitality & signing off the Financial Report. I particularly want to thank Brian Potter who has responded to various requests for assistance, be it technical, or to do with the repairs and painting, and took over liaison with the painter to assist a plan for completion of the work. We hope the coming 12 months will be free of more drastic events – however as we all know COVID 19 overseas is still spreading, our borders remain closed to tourists and non-New Zealanders. Thank you to everyone for their support of the Committee, and the events we hold for you. It is also a time to thank long standing member **Coral Malcom** for her support over many years. We wish to present an Honorary Life Membership to her, in appreciation for her long years of membership and participation on the Committee, until she moved to Albany before last year's AGM.

Signed Marcia Roberts President

Date: 11th July 2020

Amy Maria Hellaby 1864 – 1955

“Why did Hellaby’s close their local butcher’s shop in Hinemoa St?” led to an amazing story.

Amy Maria Briscoe was born in Birkenhead, Cheshire, England, on 3 February 1864, the fifth of six children of Elizabeth Bishop and her husband, John Briscoe, a master cabinet-maker. By February 1868 her mother and all her siblings had died. (Cholera epidemics struck around this period). Her father remarried and some time later emigrated with his new wife, Isabella Alexander, and Amy to the Chatham Islands, arriving by 1872. He bought a small ship and traded between the islands and the New Zealand mainland. Amy was sent to board at St Mary's Convent in Ponsonby, where she received a good all-round education, developing high moral standards and a refined taste.

On 20 January 1885, aged 20, Amy Briscoe married 36-year-old Richard Hellaby, a butcher, at St Mark's Church, Remuera, Auckland. Over the next 17 years she supported her husband while he established a large business in the meat industry, and cared for a family which eventually comprised three sons and three daughters. In late 1900 Richard's brother William, and his wife Rosina, both died unexpectedly, and Amy and Richard assumed responsibility for their five children. Then in June 1902 Richard himself died suddenly of a heart attack. Widowed at 38, Amy found herself responsible not only for the two families but also for the business. She was not totally unprepared; aware of his heart condition, Richard Hellaby had encouraged Amy to take an interest in the running of the family firm.

R. & W. Hellaby Limited at the time was said to be the country's largest private company, employing over 250 people. It was the largest exporter from New Zealand of frozen meat to Great Britain and tinned corned beef to the Pacific islands. A syndicate immediately tried to buy the substantial assets. Amy refused to sell, being determined to keep Hellabys until her sons and nephews were old enough to decide their future. It is said that the strain of taking over the business caused her hair to go white in the first few weeks.

. The day-to-day affairs were run by Richard's two trustees, but Amy made the major financial decisions. During the next 12 years assets were sold in an effort to consolidate the company. In addition, the abattoir was moved from Westmere to Westfield, in Queen Street a six-storeyed company office was erected.

Amy also had to supervise the completion of Bramcote (now Florence Court, Omana Avenue), an imposing and elegant family residence surrounded by large gardens and horse paddocks, in Mountain Road, Epsom. She looked after her father here when his second wife died. Acting on the plans she and Richard had made, she took her children on regular trips to Europe to broaden their education.

When war broke out in 1914 all the young Hellaby men joined the army. Amy Hellaby sold Bramcote and took her two younger unmarried daughters to London for three years, buying a house in Bayswater to provide a home for the men when they were on leave. During her absence business declined, but profits nearly quadrupled in 1919 after her return. Around this time she built and moved into a smaller home in Remuera Road. After family discussion her son Fred took over from the trustees in 1921, with his brother John and cousin Arthur in support. (It is around this time the Hinemoa shop changed hands.)

Amy gradually retired from active participation while they carried out an extensive rebuilding programme. Under Amy's control the firm had been an efficient enterprise, ready to take advantage of economic opportunities. The next generation of owners benefited from her careful management.

Amy was of medium height and build and stood very erect. Her penetrating gaze suggested severity, but this was belied by her warm and loving personality.

Amy Maria Hellaby ctd.

Amy Hellaby was a generous but not always compliant benefactor to Auckland Anglican churches and schools. A son and a nephew had been educated at King's College when it was in Remuera, and initially she would not support the school's move to the flat land at Otahuhu: she believed firmly that pupils should look out to distant horizons from their classrooms.

In later years her commanding presence was accentuated by the ever-present black velvet ribbon round her neck and voluminous lace shawl round her shoulders. She was a courageous and independent woman and a natural leader. She would listen and learn from those she trusted, but had no patience with the foolish. Amy Hellaby remained healthy and active and was regarded as the head of the family to the end. Loyal household staff attended her in her last years. She died at Mater Misericordia Hospital, Epsom, in her 92nd year, on 7 April 1955.

Source: Angela Caughey. 'Hellaby, Amy Maria', and photo *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 1996. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand,

Amy Maria Hellaby in the 1890's.



Copy of a 1910's photo of Hellaby Butcher shop on the corner of Hinemoa Street & Rugby Road.

(George Grey Special Collection)



A recent photo found on Google.

(More interesting information about the building and subsequent uses will follow next issue.)

Royal Spoonbills at Chelsea

Established in New Zealand after flying across the Tasman from Australia.



Known to the Maori as kotuku ngutu papa, the 'board billed kotuku' had visited New Zealand before European recordings. They are also found in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and some S.W. Pacific Islands.

Editor: Marcia Roberts

Recent History: First sighted at Castlepoint in 1861, and only six sightings recorded prior to 1930. Since 1942 seen yearly, and the first pair bred alongside white herons at Okarito, South Westland in summer 1949-50.

In 1977 an estimated 52 birds in New Zealand, and in 2012, 2360 birds. They have since extended their breeding to Kapiti Island near Wellington, then Parengarenga Harbour near North Cape. Sightings in Manukau Harbour noted since 2005.

Facts: They tend to breed near Kotuku – White Heron, or shag and gull colonies. They nest in trees and start assembling at nesting sites, and courting about October. They start displaying a crest of long white feathers grown at the back of the head, and yellow breast feathers. When feeding, they sweep their spoon bill like a scythe in an arc, often in knee deep water. They feed on aquatic insects, shellfish, small fish and frogs whenever the tide is right.

Source: NZ Birds Online: The encyclopaedia of New Zealand birds.

Heather, B., & Robertson, H., *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*, 2000. Oliver, W.R.B., *New Zealand Birds*, 1955.digital encyclopaedia of New Zealand birds.



Photos: Chelsea Aug. 2020 – p1 Melton Canning Stranger with WW1 gas mask, maternal grandfather, and current masks - Editor.