



BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.



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Newsletter November/December 2016

This Month – Next Event

Christmas Party Saturday 12th November 2.00pm

St Andrews Church Hall

Every Christmas we remember past times and so we invite members and friends to hear

Brian Potter present a tale of a trip through the Orchards and gardens of Birkdale and Beach Haven

Please bring a small plate of Christmas fare to share.
No entry charge, some Christmas raffles will be available.

Coming Events:

Bus trip to Wellsford Museum Saturday 11th February 2017

Bookings: Contact - Mavis Throll 483 - 7230, paying in advance ensures a seat.

Cost: \$30, including entrance fee. (By chq., cash or Electronic Transfer

Account Number 12 3035 0511576 00 – need to add ‘name’ and ‘bus trip’.)

Times: Leave Verran’s Corner 9:30am., Farrington House 10:00am. **Return:** 4.15pm.

Saturday 11th March 2pm.

St Andrews Church Hall

Guest Speaker

Jim Young – boatbuilder

**A talk about the early boatbuilding industry and his own company based at
Birkenhead Wharf.**

Past Events

Helensville Pioneer Museum and the Railway Museum Bus Trip

What a glorious crisp sunny day we had on Saturday 10th September, looking back over recent wet spring weather how fortunate the sun shone for our bus excursion. Brian Potter shared his knowledge of history along our route, we saw new subdivision's being prepared beyond Whenuapai Airport, and learnt about the little school that was located at Waitoki. Our bus Driver recounted his time there as Head Master in earlier years, and some memories of the local community.

Helensville Railway Museum displayed a miniature railway set representing the local railway as it was in the 1930-40s, plus various memorabilia, a ticket office, waiting room and Station Master's office. An interesting system of bell rings and discs was used to ensure only one train on the track, requiring the engine driver to place his disc in a collecting point on arrival at his destination.

After lunch in town we visited the Pioneer Museum at the Helensville River Reserve, from the website we learn "The Helensville & District Historical Society (Inc) has invested over \$350,000 since mid-2003 in relocating the Museum from its former position behind the War Memorial Hall to the current one hectare site, its boldest move since the Society was formed in 1968.

Five buildings are featured - Helensville's original and only courthouse, built in 1864 and in use until 1979; Hedley House (1910-1912), now restored to its original use as a typical Edwardian villa; Helensville Primary School's original schoolhouse (1883), and the Hector Nicholls Barn, which houses farming, fishing, milling and other similar equipment, and a 2011 addition is the former Waitoki School 'Sunshine' block. The next addition will be an Archival and Research Centre; work on this building is currently underway. ." ¹

Local History informs us Maori knew the district as Te Awaroa - "The Valley of the Long River". The small settlement of Helensville was created beside the Kaipara Harbour at its southern point by pioneer John McLeod and his wife Helen from Nova Scotia who built a single-storey kauri home in 1862, overlooking the mill established by John and his brother Isaac. This home was called "Helen's Villa" - a name which was quickly adapted and adopted by the town.. ." ²

The Kaipara area was a great source of kauri logs, making the local mill and wharves busy supplying ships with logs. Next came an increase in dairy farming prior to the First World War and the visitor potential of the natural hot springs at Parakai, 5km west of Helensville. The Kaipara Dairy Company was established in 1911, becoming the town's largest employer, the thermal springs attracted thousands of visitors between the two world wars. The closure of the dairy factory (late 1980s), and the associated general decline in farming, meant changes for Helensville. With visitors attracted by attractions and 'things to do', and a growing appreciation of Helensville's special historic ambience, the town now looks to tourism to as an important part of its future. ²

We also learnt the move of the old Museum to a new larger field was a request by Council as they wanted their former site for Council purposes. The new location (as above) has worked well, the old Courthouse, the Villa, Schoolhouse and School room, and a large barn full of interesting farm and agricultural equipment are well placed. These included a Dutch Tilbury carriage with smart leather seats, and a 'dog cart', shown beside it a photo of one with a large dog - the large wheels suggested the cart we saw was actually pulled by a horse. It is always interesting seeing the treasures that turn up, I saw many unusual items and a tiny China bell that I had been given as a child, bringing back instant memories. There were photos on display showing local identities, and much history to be told. There was also ample space for children to run around outside. Together the two Museums make a great place to take children and grandchildren.

References

1. *Helensville Pioneer Museum website.*
2. *From Helensville Online*

The Auckland Heritage Festival

Birkenhead Heritage Society Farrington House Museum was open as advertised in the Auckland Heritage Festival programme and in the Newsletter for three Sundays 25th September, 2nd October and 9th October from 1.00pm to 4.00pm. This unfortunately occurred during wet and cold showery weather so numbers visiting were down on the previous two years. Afternoon tea was appreciated by those who visited on the Sunday 9th October which was offered to members and visitors instead of the usual Saturday meeting.

Living History Walks – two guided tours of Birkenhead Village were held on Wednesday 28th September, at 11am and 1pm meeting outside the Library by the War Memorial in Nell Fisher Reserve. Again numbers were down due to threatening rain however visitors enjoy seeing our Art Deco facades on a number of buildings, and the three historic churches and learning about early Birkenhead. The new viewing platform *Kaimataara o Wai Manawa* located at 35-41 Birkenhead Avenue is popular with visitors and well protected from southerly breezes.

“Kaimataara means both the purpose of a space as a lookout, and to be watchful.

Wai Manawa is the historical name for this part of Birkenhead. Wai Manawa meaning the "source of the water" refers to the basin nature of the Le Roys Bush area, alternatively Wai Manawa (maanawa – mangroves) refers to the collection of water in the mangroves at the base. Together it translates as "the Lookout of Wai Manawa.

The 10-month long construction project was a part of the Birkenhead Centre Plan. Underneath is a storage tank for recycling collected rain water.”³

Reference

3. *North Shore Times* 8th September 2016

Looking Back

The outbreak of Typhoid at Chelsea

(In a letter ‘To the Editor’) From Papers Past, dated 3rd. March 1890

Sir, - I am surprised that there has been no allusion in the papers to the outbreaks of typhoid at Chelsea. I was over there yesterday to see a patient, and found that during last week five supposed cases of typhoid had been sent to the Hospital, and I sent one myself yesterday, the child of one of the patients who had been previously sent. I examined the water that is supplied from the Sugar Works to the house at Chelsea, and although extremely thirsty, I would not venture to drink it, except a small quantity that had been boiled. It was discoloured, and had copious organic sediment.

The inhabitants of Chelsea are very much agitated about this outbreak, and are naturally surprised that nothing has been done by the local Board of Health. Will you allow me to suggest through your columns that none of the water should be drunk until it has been boiled for ten minutes, and that no cooking utensils, plates, dishes, cups, knives, forks or spoons should be washed in water that has not been boiled. What is the Board of Health about? Surely the example of Wellington ought to warn our local boards that prompt and decisive action is required. I forget whether it was Sir William Jenner, M.D. or the late Sir William Gulf, M.D. who said that for every death from Typhoid fever someone ought to be hanged. Typhoid is just as much the result of human will and action as a crop of wheat is - I am etc., R.H. Bakewell M.D. Hobson St. Monday.

(Dr. Bayntun informs us he had to send a typhoid case to Hospital from Chelsea on Saturday. He is of the opinion that the disease was due to bad water. The Local Board of Health ought to see to this matter at once. Ep. E.S.)

Drastic action called for by Dr. Bakewell suggests why the Chelsea workers left the cottages in favour of new villas and cottages built above Chelsea Bay, closer to Highbury in the 1890s.

From our collection of local stories.

The Highway Holdup in Birkdale.

When Wally Archer, a local builder, built a dine and dance Ranch House in Ranch Avenue Birkdale in 1959, his first obstacle to enticing clients to his new establishment was the narrow dusty metalled Lancaster Road. Most Roads in Birkdale were still unsealed with no footpaths either at that time and residents were forced to walk to the bus stop in old shoes, change into good ones and leave their old shoes in the bus shelter before boarding the bus to the ferries en route to town. Sadly, in more recent times, their shoes may not be there upon return!

Old Wally approached me one day and suggested that the local residents in lower Lancaster Road could join him in a campaign to have Council update the road. His plan was to invite the Mayor, Cliff Utting and all his councillors to a Sunday afternoon tea and to share the fruits of his overburdened fruit tree on site. For our part, we were to wait until the guests were ready to Leave the Ranch House and then Wally would have someone down there phone us and have us out on the road in an apparent angry mood to have Mayor and Councillors "run the gauntlet" of residents, so to speak.

The first cars slowed down to allow us to ask when the Mayor was coming, just to let them know we were there on official business. One Councillor remarked. That the Mayor was "still up the pear tree." This caused a laugh. "That's where he should be" replied one wit. However, the Mayor eventually did arrive, stopped his car and climbed out to meet a most unexpected delegation. After some heated discussion about the state of the road, the Mayor conceded that something must be done to update Lancaster Road as some mothers also complained at having to push their prams into the blackberries and cover their babies to protect them from the dust from passing cars.

However, not until a change in Mayoralty and a new Council who raised a loan, did Birkdale get its new sealed roads and footpaths. The Auckland Star described our protest with the headline "Highwaymen Holdup at Birkenhead".

Written by Percy Allison 1991.

From the story above it appeared the Ranch House was not the first venue for locals to celebrate. A further search revealed the following information.

The Beach Haven Cabaret

In the Beach Haven - Birkdale Saint Philips Union Parish History it is recorded early services were started in the only available Building, the Cabaret behind the General Store near the Beach Haven Wharf. The owners of the Cabaret, Mr. and Mrs Blennerhasset were sympathetic and afternoon services were held on the first and third Sunday's of the month commencing from August/September 1934. The decor of the Cabaret with its huge Bruce Bainsfather pictures showing lighter moments of life in the trenches during World War I was entertaining - for dance patrons, but hardly conducive to Worship. This gave urgency to get a church built.

This lead to another amazing story of a community that came together to erect in just one day in May 1939 the Beach Haven-Birkdale Union Parish on the corner of then Kiwi Road and Pururi Avenue – now Rangatira and Beach Haven Roads.

Marcia Roberts: Editor

**Come to the last meeting and celebration for 2016 on the
12th November 2pm at St Andrews Church Hall in Hinemoa St.
Have a happy and safe Festive Season everyone.**
