

BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE

— SOCIETY INC —

✉ P O Box 34419, Birkenhead, Auckland 0746

f www.facebook.com/historicbirkenhead

🌐 www.historicbirkenhead.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 9th February 2019

Topic: Sugar Works Talk and our anticipated visit to the new Cafe

Arriving by bus : 2pm Meet At Zion Hill Methodist Church by entry door for a lift by car.

Arriving by car : 2.15pm Park in pink marked spaces close to *Sugar*, the Chelsea Sugar Works Café –far end of Colonial Road. Meet at signed ‘Assembly Point’ at entrance, 2 bench seats are nearby. If wet in cafe foyer.

A talk by Brian Potter, viewing heritage photos before enjoying afternoon tea in the café – at own expense. (No Factory tours at weekends). (Cost – tea/coffee \$4.50 – depending on size, selections of scones and cakes are available).

March – The Heritage event this month is the Birkenhead Primary Centennial.

**Sunday 10th March 2- 4pm
Farrington House Museum will be open**

Our appreciation for sponsoring printing to

Trish Love trishlove@premium.co.nz

09 558 4518 or 021 22 66 099

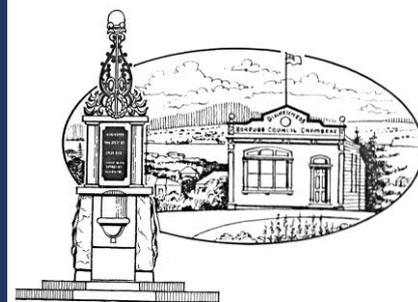
Premium | On The Points

142A Hinemoa St.

Premium Real Estate Ltd.

MREINZ Licensed REAA

2008.



January February 2019

8th 9th March – Birkenhead Primary School Centenary Celebrations

This special occasion will be attended by a number of our committee and members. Photos are being prepared for display at the school.

The Programme:

Friday 8th March: 11.30am Open School
2pm. Centenary Assembly 2pm. – free
6.30-11pm. Natter and Nibbles – Ticketed
Saturday 9th 12.30-3pm Celebrations free
– official centenary photographs (1-2.15pm)
2.30 Planting tree & time capsule.
3-5pm High Tea and entertainment –
Convened by Suzy Cato TV Producer and
entertainer, Ticketed.

Tickets for the 2 events: School office or
www.birkenheadprimary100/events
info@birkenheadprimary100.nz.

Phone: 09 480 7365

CONTENTS

- P2 1920s Stories from Chelsea Village**
- P3 Photos of Chelsea Village and houses**
- P4/5 New Zealand’s Long Finned Eel**
- P6 1900s Kerosene stoves**

CONTACT US

President – Marcia Roberts 418 0397

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

1920's Stories from Chelsea Village

The old Chelsea village as told by a Miss Hammond to the Birkenhead Gazette in 1927.

Many years back there existed a compact village, where now stands the stately brick houses. Many old timers would tell of the good old days, especially on Saturday nights. It was claimed by those who knew, that there never were more enjoyable dances than those held in the single men's barracks where the bunks were gracefully hidden by sheets borrowed from the more fortunate married men. Fun ran riot and everyone had a glorious time - good old fashioned dances every time. Sometimes a scrap or two with the resulting blackened eye. Everybody got all the fun out of life possible in those days. What better music than that supplied by Jack Taylor on his accordion. Surely none.

A row of quaint cottages, practically all alike. Difficult for a newcomer to distinguish from the other. Sometimes a man made a mistake as to his own home. A general Store and Bakery established by Mr. Gee. The store continuing until the village was dismantled. The single men's barracks had a cookhouse run by Mrs Cope, then Mrs Poole. St Peter's small Anglican Church was built inside the gate, supervised by Mr. Hammond, money collected locally now located in Tramway Road Beach Haven. There was a reading room, and a private school, Mrs J. Clow was one of the teachers.

Mrs Woodhams as a child lived in # 7, her father Frederick Farrington was Time Keeper and Paymaster at the works, employed there for 26 yrs. from 1912 to 1936, and later her brother Edward took over the same job, employed for 38 years. We lived in the uphill half of the bottom brick house. There were two bedrooms upstairs, and two downstairs. the larger bedroom later divided into two. The lounge in the front, with a fireplace, the brick walls plastered and painted - no wallpaper then, and my bedroom above looking out towards the lovely view of Chelsea Bay. The houses were built without verandahs, these had been added when we lived there.

There were pressed steel ceilings, with a rosette in the middle, where the kerosene lamp hung. When wires were installed ready for electricity, it was impossible to go through the pressed steel, so the lights were off centre, and the wires unable to be concealed. There was a beautiful wooden staircase to the upstairs.

A little area out the back, called the washhouse, with a copper and tub for doing the dishes. Hot water carried outside in kettles from the coal range in the living area. Water was boiled in the copper for our baths, father carried it into the bath in 4 gallon kerosene tins, made into buckets with a wooden handle. Later a chip heater added next to the bath. The coal range went all the time, keeping the house cosy. The washing aired on a wooden rack in front of the fire at night. Irons heated up on the range to iron the clothes. A little galvanised iron safe hung in the little porch outside by the washhouse. We lost a Sunday roast and a leg of pork to Bailey, an escaped prisoner who hung out in the bush for a long time.

The rent was 7/6d a week, and up to 12/6 in 1928. We had flush toilets because the total area was water catchment area for the dams for processing sugar. So they had a sewerage system for the houses. We had tank water - two 600 gallon tanks out the back. There was a baker who came with his open basket of bread. My mother found it more convenient to take the 10 am ferry from the Chelsea wharf to the city and come home with all the shopping about 3pm. We walked everywhere up to school at Birkenhead, down to Birkenhead North for meat and the chemist. Rough formed tracks covered in Sugar Works' ash lead down to the works jetty, past rusty old machinery, and where the horses passed to their nearby grazing.

My father received a loan from the Sugar Works for our new house we had built nearer Highbury and we moved there when my young brother, Edward was 3 years old.

1880s to recent years.



An early photo of the original 1886 wooden cottages at Chelsea (Chelsea Archive photo)

The brick duplex houses were later built for those engineers and staff required for on-call at the sugar works



Photo from 2006 after further upgrades of the brick houses – the verandah are now a feature.

Birkenhead Heritage Society Inc. Archives

New Zealand's Long Finned Eel

While recently camping with others near Coroglen one in our group was very knowledgeable about the New Zealand long finned eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachia*). One evening we stood in knee deep clear water watching a long finned eel with a slight prominent bulge on its head, and a smaller eel appear out from under a dark bank, identified as a larger female, and smaller male, tempted by some morsels of meat. The long fin we are looking for ripples along the eel's back, extending from the tail more than half the eel's length towards the head. The lower long fin extends beyond the anus to the tail on the underbelly. We were told their skin feels slimy to the touch, and they have loose wrinkles on the skin when twisting and turning. The short finned eel (*Anquilia australis schmidtii*) is common in the North Island, and overseas.

Eels, called tuna, were a valued food stock for early Maori. They recognised some of the older eels grew very large, up to two metres long and weigh up to forty kilograms. The habitat of the large eels was avoided, known as taniwha they were best left alone and a tapu, a restriction on the area allowed them to live undisturbed. You are unlikely to meet these large eels, unless diving in dark lakes such as Lake Rotoiti, in the Nelson Lakes. Scientists believe they are the world's largest eels.

European settlement has not been favourable for the unique species. Anglers preferred imported trout in our lakes and rivers, there were efforts to catch and destroy eels.

Historical Facts;

1930s the Acclimatisation Society claimed eels were adversely affecting imported exotic sport fish stocks. Bounties were given to rid waterways, masses of eels were caught and killed. Later trout stocks were found to be smaller and in poorer condition after exterminating eels in rivers.

1950s Commercial eel fishing established.

1960s thousands of tonnes of eels were processed to feed the hungry European market. Commercial catches rose steadily.

1975 Eels were the most valuable food export after rock lobsters, - no quota system, any size was taken.

1980s the repercussions of exterminating the big eels began to be understood, it was known they spawned only once, at the end of their life when adult size. Scientists discovered that it can take 80 to 100 years to reach that size.

More recently the Eel Enhancement Company has worked to improve the survival of young eels and to protect their environment. Although a commercial enterprise, with Iwi involvement, the focus on eel's habitat must be better for all eels. On their website it is stated

"New Zealand has always had natural obstructions to eel passage. Maori have a long history of using a 'kete' (flax basket) to carry elvers over these obstructions and thereby allowing tuna (eel) to access the habitat above the obstruction and thrive."

Hydro dams, turbines, sluices, weirs, culverts, perched culverts, drains, flood gates, flood pumps and all manner of obstructions, plus water pollution and destruction of habitat all hinder freshwater fish in their quest to find a place to live.

2014 Our native eel is ranked as 'At Risk - Declining' in the New Zealand Classification System listings.

Long finned eels are only found in New Zealand, but they do not breed here. At a certain stage, usually from 60 years of age, males around April and the stronger females in May swim down towards the sea. With well stocked body fat they stop feeding, and their skin darkens. Via rivers and estuaries the eels head for the ocean and warmer seas, they swim in deep water, possibly following the seas currents.

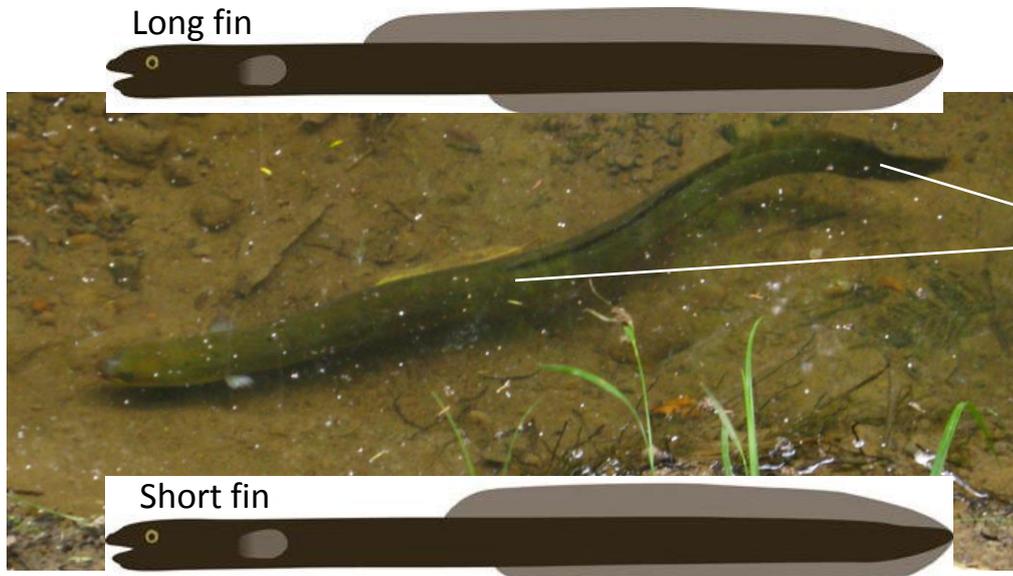
New Zealand's Long Finned Eel ctd.

A more common short finned eel seen in a local Birkenhead stream.

Jan .2019.

Photo M. .Roberts

Diagrams: DOC



The back fin runs to the tail from the middle of the photo.

The eels are believed to reach somewhere near Tonga, the females lay their eggs, which are fertilised by the males before both the adults die, completing their life cycle.

Eels start life as tiny, toothed larvae called leptocephali, which form part of the plankton. No one has ever identified longfin leptocephali in the wild, they are assumed to resemble those of other eel species: flat, transparent and shaped like a leaf. They are wafted by waves; computer simulations suggest they actively swim and navigate to the south. After seven to nine months in the open ocean, leptocephali reach the continental shelf, where they transform into translucent glass eels. They arrive between July and December, with numbers peaking in spring—the time of whitebait migration. Under the cover of night, the wriggly little tiny eels gather and ride the spring tides in to shore. Once in fresh water, glass eels develop into darkly-pigmented juvenile eels, or elvers, which congregate in summer and begin a mass migration far upstream.

Elvers navigate inland, wriggling up waterfalls, and are able to cross land between waterways, until they reach a favourable environment, feeding and growing over the next decades.

Their sex is not determined until the eel is about 10 to 12 years old and reached a length of 30 cm. They have well developed 'horns' on their upper lip which support a large folded nasal cavity giving them a hyper- sensitive sense of smell.

Eels have feeding tactics similar to a crocodile, clamping onto a carcass or food source with their rows of small sharp teeth, spinning and tearing a mouth-sized morsel away. They feed until gorged with food. Anyone who has caught eels in the past will remember the chaotic tangle of lines resulting from an eel strike.

The eels near Coroglen live in clean fresh water, our knowledgeable visitor said they were very lucky as many eels do not have direct passage to the sea when they are ready to reproduce. Our eels need to be respected, allowed to live and mature, they clean the water, their presence signifies a healthy waterway, for the present time.

References;

New Zealand Geographic Issue 105 Sept.-Oct 2015, Article by Claudia Barbita

Department of Conservation website (DOC)

The Eel Enhancement Company (EECo) website.

(The EEC represents the interests of North Island eel quota owners, including individuals, private companies and Maori entities. Iwi control or hold approx. 50% of the North Island eel quota.)

Marcia Roberts

1900s

In Farrington House we have on display an old free-standing cooker with a place for bottles or a fuel source to be located. Was it fuelled by gas or a liquid? A search for information came up with some photos of remarkably similar models in the U.S.A. Our stove was most likely fuelled by kerosene.

The Primus stove, the first pressurized-burner kerosene (paraffin) stove, was developed in 1892 by Frans Wilhelm Lindqvist, a factory mechanic in Stockholm.

Portable kerosene stoves became popular for the outdoors. It has the advantage of fast cooking when the kerosene is under appropriate pressure. Kerosene is first converted to vapor and then mixed with air before the burning. The tank contains the kerosene and is also sealed. Air is pumped through and creates a pocket of compressed air on top of the kerosene. Then it burns into a blue flame which is typical of complete combustion. A blue dye is added to the colourless kerosene to prevent accidents or poisoning.

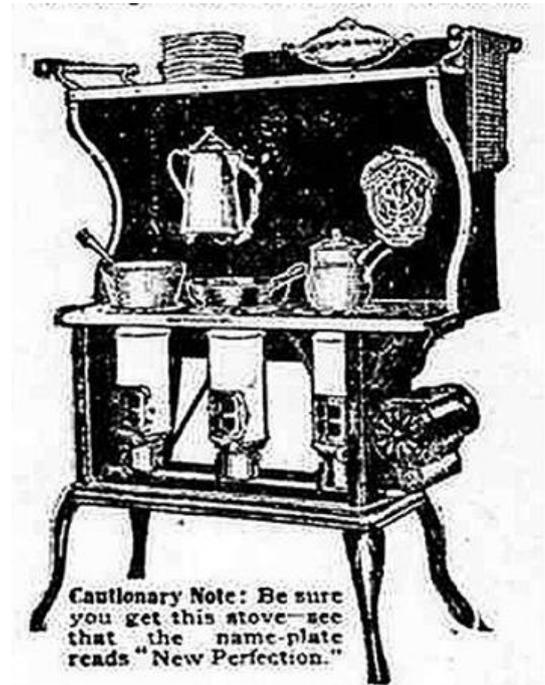
Further searching revealed these stoves are still available, with a similar name to the model (top right) - see advertisement below.

PERFECTION KEROSENE COOKSTOVE - THREE BURNER

Far and away the best kerosene fuelled cook stove in the world. Originated in the early 1900's with the help of John D Rockefeller, it's been continuously refined and improved since then. Today, it's made by the Amish for daily use by large Amish families. It's the only USA-made kerosene cooker available!

(Source: Google search and 'antique stoves' websites).

Editor; Marcia Roberts



New Perfection WICK BLUE FLAME **Oil Cook-stove**

Do you really appreciate what a New Perfection Oil Cook-Stove means to you? No more coal to carry, no more coming to the dinner table so tired out that you can't eat. Just light a Perfection Stove and immediately the heat from an intense blue flame shoots up to the bottom of pot, kettle or oven. But the room isn't heated. There is no smoke, no smell, no outside heat, no drudgery in the kitchen where one of these stoves is used.

