



NEWSLETTER

No. 59, June, 2020

Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre
Te Whare Taonga o Ngaa Rohe o Arekahanara

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Lockdown

Covid 19 had major effects on the Centre's operations from mid-March. Initially, we posted notices asking anyone who was feeling unwell or who had recently travelled overseas, not to visit the Centre. The nation-wide lockdown followed soon afterwards and the Centre did not again open its doors to visitors until 20 June.

One effect of the closure was that although we were well-placed to achieve another record annual visitor total, at the end of our financial year on 31 March, we were left eight visitors short of another record. Under normal circumstances, we would have opened on another seven occasions.

Obviously, border restrictions on tourists are expected to negatively affect our visitor numbers in the foreseeable future. So, our Executive Committee has determined that until our circumstances change, we will open only on Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, between 11:00 am and 2:00 pm. The Centre will open at other times by prior arrangement.

AGM

Tuesday 30 June at 7:30 pm

The 2020 Annual General Meeting of the Pirongia Heritage & Information Centre Inc. will be held in the Centre at 7:30 pm on Tuesday, 30 June. As in previous years, it is anticipated that the formal business will be completed in about 30 minutes.

Following the formal business, at about 8:00 pm, Alan Hall will talk to the meeting about:

Some Colonial Cottages in Pirongia.

There are still four colonial cottages in the village, of a type which was common throughout New Zealand in the 19th Century. Alan will talk about this type of house and how they were later modified, making specific reference to what we know about four buildings still standing in Franklin, Beechey and Crozier Streets.



England to Pirongia in 1953 — The Hall Family

On 10 August 1953 Arthur & Violet Hall, with their three children, Colin, Glenda, and Geoffrey, left England on the steamship, *S.S. Otranto*, for Sydney, Australia, via the Suez Canal. After about 5 weeks they arrived in Sydney, staying a few days before travelling to Auckland on the 'Wanganella'. From Auckland they travelled to Te Awamutu by train where they were met by Cyril and Ted Francis on a late September afternoon. The brothers, Cyril & Ted operated the Pirongia Butchery on the site that is now a bakery. It had been pre-arranged with Cyril & Lillian Francis for the family to stay with them at their Baffin Street home at Pirongia until the Halls could buy their own house. Cyril had also arranged for Arthur to work as a cabinet-maker for Macky & Fancy in Te Awamutu. Soon after arriving, Violet started work as a clerk in the accounting firm of Kelly & Bryant. They bought a Bradford truck for transport to and from work.

We guess that there was a shortage of available houses at that time because it was a few months before they were able to buy an old house in Crozier St, formerly occupied by the Bray family. The house was said to be around 80 years old, formerly a bank and a bakery. Arthur re-blocked the house, removed a lean-to bathroom/laundry, and built a new bathroom, laundry, and installed a FLUSHING toilet. The dunny up the garden path was demolished!

Soon after buying the house the Halls bought from Percy Harper six or seven acres of land adjoining their garden. Arthur built a two-bail cowshed in the back paddock and the Halls became farmers with 6 or 7 cows, and two pigs (to drink the skimmed milk). They have great memories of borrowing a bull from Percy Harper, taking our sow across to 'play' with Bob Hitchon's boar and of topdressing, standing on the back of the Bradford and throwing shovels full of superphosphate onto the paddocks.

In June 1957 they part-exchanged the house with the Preston family for a farm on Te Tahi Road. Arthur continued his job in town to support the family for a few years, with Violet & Colin running the new farm. During the school holidays Glenda & Geoffrey were conscripted to help clear the gorse. Hard work but a good family effort!

From a memoir, written in 2014, by the late Colin Hall.

Thanks for Support

- **ALAN WALTER** who provided sand for concrete work around the wagon shelter.
- **MCGUIRE CONTRACTING** who provided and delivered metal to complete the base of the wagon shelter.

Thank you Patricia

Patricia Grierson, who has been a longstanding supporter of the Centre and member of our Executive Committee since its earliest years, stepped down from committee membership last year.

In February, President Marilyn Yeates and a small group of committee members visited Patricia at her home to personally thank her for her service, and to present her with a floral arrangement.



Patricia will be remembered for her work with the duty roster, her home cooked treats and the floral arrangements that she frequently provided.

For your diary

30 Jun at 7:30 pm. Heritage Centre AGM.

Speaker: Alan Hall on
Some Colonial Cottages in Pirongia.
Bring a friend.

Annual Subscriptions Due

A reminder that annual subscriptions are now due. They are:

Individual	\$20
Family	\$25
Organization	\$35
Business	\$50

Please note that Kiwibank has advised that it is no longer accepting cheques. This means that payment must be made either online by internet banking, or in cash at the Centre. It will be possible to pay subscriptions on the evening of the AGM.

Disclaimer:

Views expressed in items published in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Heritage Centre.

From the Committee

- Although the Covid 19 Lockdown meant that there was no ANZAC Day commemoration in Pirongia this year, the Heritage Centre, still arranged for a wreath to be laid.



- Paula and Robert McWha have indicated that they plan not to seek re-election to the Executive Committee at the AGM. However, they will continue to serve as volunteers.

Their contributions to the committee will be greatly missed, but it is good to know that Paula will still manage our Facebook presence and that Robert will continue to look after maintenance.

Annual BBQ

This year, the annual barbecue was attended by 25 members at the War Memorial Hall, after the previously-closed building had received a revised National Building Standards rating of 50 per cent, making it again available for use. Those who were there enjoyed meeting to celebrate the re-opening of the hall and to commence a new year of activities which were sadly curtailed soon afterwards by the Covid 19 Lockdown.

New & Improved

The traditional wagon, on loan from Nick van der Sande is now on display in its wagon shelter. The completed shelter with the wagon in place is a tribute to the organizational and practical abilities of Brent Mealing and Robert McWha. It is a job well done!



The Heritage Centre again has a web page. You may remember that last year, the Executive Committee closed down the website because the Centre did not have anyone with the skills needed to develop and maintain it, and the costs involved in getting it done professionally were excessive. Since then, new member Richard Jones, who has the skills and extensive knowledge about websites, has resuscitated the old website and is in the throes of re-developing it. He will be the webmaster. You can see what he has done so far by going online to:

www.pirongiaheritage.org.nz

Our Facebook Page continues to be maintained by Paula McWha who reports that during the lockdown her posts about historical sites visited on daily walks around the village had a strong following by both locals and historical interest groups in the wider district.

Welcome New Members

- Natalie Gavin
- Ian Sanders
- Richard & Hanna Jones
- Gis Hagen
- Karin Burgess
- Dr Mark Haywood

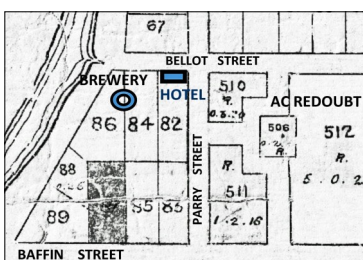
A Brewery at Alexandra in 1866

We have known for some time that there was a brewery in Alexandra in 1866-67 run by Charles Innes of Ngaruawahia. Short reports in the *Daily Southern Cross* newspaper tell that in May 1866 Innes had purchased two sections where a brewery was to be located. By August, a "large, substantial and well-constructed building" had been completed, and was in production by the beginning of September. However, in May of the following year, it was announced that the partnership between Charles Innes and James Morton, brewers and soda water manufacturers of Alexandra, trading as C. Innes & Co, had been dissolved, and in the aftermath, when Innes was in serious financial trouble, the business ceased to trade. Thus, the brewery appears to have operated for little more than a year, and until recently, there was no indication of where it was located.

In 1865, Innes had moved from Hamilton to Ngaruawahia where he successfully established himself as a manufacturer of cordial drinks and ginger beer. In the following year, he invested his modest capital and borrowed extensively to purchase three separate 50 acre farm lots near Harapepe, plus the two acres at Alexandra where his brewery was established. Eventually, by 1867, his land-holdings in the district totalled 232 acres for an outlay of £123 (\$246). About the same time, he also became the owner of the 30 foot steam canoe, *Gymnotus Electricus*, the first screw-propelled vessel on the Waikato which was highly suited to work in restricted water. It was operated for Innes on the Waipa River between Ngaruawahia and Alexandra, and on the Waikato between Mercer and Cambridge, but incurred heavy losses in 1867 and 1868.

Between 1866 and 1869, Innes became heavily indebted to his solicitor, Weston, an Auckland brewer named Whitson, and his business partner, Morton. In the difficult financial circumstances of 1867, when there was a major exodus of militia families from the Alexandra district, the dissolution of his partnership was followed by the transfer of ownership of his properties which had been mortgaged to Weston and Whitson who promptly sold them for what they could get in partial fulfilment of his debts. Inevitably, by 1869 he was declared bankrupt by the Supreme Court, although he was soon discharged and permitted to re-engage in business.

In improving economic circumstances, Innes then pursued business interests at Ngaruawahia where he established a soda-water factory, a brewery and a malting house, whilst also becoming the owner of the Delta Hotel in settlement of a debt. Between 1871 and 1874 he was chairman of the town board and in 1874 married Mary Jane Lewis who was 20 years his junior.

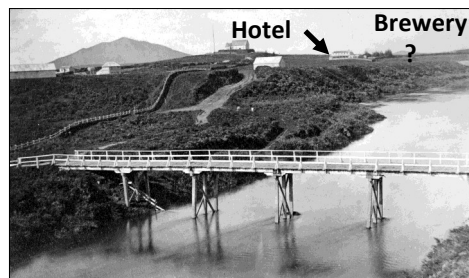


The brewery site was between the hotel and the river

However, he was again heavily mortgaged and when his lenders foreclosed in 1875, he lost the brewery.

Later that year, the couple moved to Te Awamutu where Mary Jane invested her inheritance to finance another brewery in her husband's name. Although this one was initially successful, in the economic depression of the 1880s, it again became heavily indebted with the result that in 1888, Innes became bankrupt for a second time and, as a result, was not permitted to re-engage in business. Mary Jane Innes then became the owner of the Te Awamutu Brewery where Charles remained as the brewer whose products continued to be renowned for

their quality. Soon afterwards, Mary Jane, who was proving to be an astute business-woman, also became the owner of the Waikato Brewery in Hamilton East, and ran both breweries for a time, before allowing the Te Awamutu plant to run down. Following a fire in the Hamilton East plant in 1897, the family re-developed the Waikato Brewery in new premises on Bridge Street, near the western end of the Victoria Bridge. Charles died in 1899 and Mary Jane continued to manage the business until 1912 when she retired to Auckland leaving it to her sons.



This 1871 photograph shows no building between the Alexandra Hotel and the river.

Recent investigations in the Archives New Zealand Deeds Index has revealed the locations of the two town sections purchased by Charles Innes in 1866 for the Alexandra Brewery. They were lots 84 and 86, located on what is now the paper road extension of Bellot Street, between Parry Street and the river. They lay between Lot 82, where Finch's original Alexandra Hotel opened in July 1865, and the river. Nothing has been discovered about the fate of the brewery building which an 1871 photograph indicates appears to have been demolished by that time. Miss Miller's house, *Sedgemoor*, now renamed *The Maples*, stands on the site of the original Alexandra Hotel, and Lots 84 and 86 became parts of her estate which, until 1930, included all the land across to Baffin Street.

Can you help us?

We are sometimes asked about the camellia tree on the AC Redoubt site. Have you heard any stories about who planted it and when? If so, please let us know at the Centre.