



Picton Historical Society (Inc.)

ESTABLISHED 1958

Newsletter Number 117 – June 2021

President's Message

Over the last six months John Welch and I have been in contact with our local Councillors and the Marlborough District Council asking and confirming their thoughts on the Resource Consent extension. The council's answers led us to make the decision not to apply for the Resource Consent.

The committee met with Dean Heiford – Cultural and Heritage contact at Marlborough District Council and David Oddie, Picton Ward Councillor who attended our meeting to clarify why the Resource Consent was not renewed.

Dean explained that the partial raising of funds does not show “action” but the digging of the ground (so to speak) does. The Council had also reviewed the development of the foreshore area as part of the previous Foreshore Management Plan. Dean explained that we would effectively have had to apply for a new consent as the current one had been extended once and could not be extended again without “progress”.

Any extension plans need political, and staff support and some on the Council are opposed to any further structures being on the Foreshore. Council cannot force property owners to adopt their ideas and follow through but do have significant say regarding building on council owned land.

With the consent lapsed we need to decide what we want to achieve.

Our museum is here to keep our history safe for future generations. Our constitution states that the key objectives of the Picton Historical Society are:

- To encourage an interest in the study of history in the broadest sense.
- To manage, expand and improve the operations of the museum.
- To hold or provide permanent preservation of chattels, records, or relics of historical interest, to protect our heritage for future generations.

The history of Picton is not only whaling, and with the consent lapsed, we need to balance the “old school” museum with enhancing the exhibits and space we already have in place so that the younger generations are interested in visiting and keeping the museum and PHS alive and relevant.

To this end, our recommendation is that we do not pursue the extension, at this point in time, and focus on the achieving the objectives of our constitution. I know this will be disappointing to many members and would like to thank everyone who spent so many voluntary hours working towards getting the Resource Consent in place originally.

The AGM date was set at the May committee meeting – Saturday, 21 August 2021 at 1.30 pm

An AGM is a time of reflection, it also marks an opportunity to set a direction for the year ahead. It has been an extraordinarily challenging year and there is much to celebrate in the resilience and innovation demonstrated by our committee, staff, and members.

Resignation

On the 22 March 2021 I received Carol Dawber’s resignation from the committee. Carol remains a loyal member of the Picton Historical Society and is available to advise and assist on request. The committee have sent Carol a thank you card for all her voluntary work for PHS.

Volunteers

I would like to thank the volunteers who come in regularly on Sundays to operate the museum. If anyone else is available to volunteer I would love to hear from you. Please contact me bowers@xtra.co.nz or 5736885.

I hope to see you all at the AGM - Beryl Bowers

Curator's Report

COVID-19 has brought about many changes to many people's lives and organisations, including mine – it is unlikely I would have had the opportunity to work at the museum without the changes that the pandemic brought about in my previous job and for the Picton Historical Society. It has been a challenging, stimulating, and never boring ten months since the team and I started working for you, so I thought I'd let you know some of the things we've been doing during this time.

There is the day-to-day administrative stuff like ensuring staff have first aid training, the security and insurance is up to date and covers what is needed (we had to replace the door locks to meet current fire regulations) and upgrading the till and computer systems.

The more interesting things we have done are to work on enhancing the displays in the museum, 'resting' some older exhibits and rearranging others. One of the most satisfying changes has been the introduction of the Bellingshausen exhibit, which has been of great interest to most of our visitors. While this was planned to be a temporary exhibit, elements of it will be kept and incorporated into the permanent exhibit. We are now working on the next major exhibit which will look at life in the Sounds after whaling ended. Given it is nearly 60 years ago that we stopped commercial whaling, I think it is now a part of our history that we need to talk about! We will let you know when we are ready to open the exhibit – we are just at the start of the process.

In line with the purpose of the museum, we are also trying to build on our relationships with the local iwi. Amongst other things, we are working with Te Ātiawa to temporarily care for the taonga they hold, while they find a permanent display area that all iwi members can access. Representatives of both Ngati Kuia and Te Ātiawa attended and participated in the launch of the Bellingshausen exhibit, and Sir Tipene O'Regan (Ngai Tāhu) came in for a special out-of-hours viewing. We are fortunate in being able to show the documentary that he and Moana Maniapoto made about the taonga the Bellingshausen expedition traded for and which are held in various museums in Russia.

We are also looking to expand and enhance our relationships with local schools, developing a programme for various age groups that relate to the school curriculum. The aim is to help foster a real interest in history (especially in our local area) and to get children coming in – and regularly returning – to the museum, making it part of their lives.

One of the other major things we have done is look at our social media activity and update the museum website. Nina has been working on keeping a presence on Facebook and Instagram – some of you may not be active in either of these areas, but they are both great platforms to reach a market that is already interested in our ‘product’ and at no cost to us to do so.

Research requests continue to be in strong demand, and Odelia is kept very busy with them. We are also starting to get back into recording oral histories, with Odelia just about to complete a course on how to do this in accordance with library protocols.

These are all just a short snippet of some of things we have been up to over the past year! Our volunteers have been really helpful to four part-timers who have all come from non-museum backgrounds, and we thank you for all the support you’ve given us.

Thanks to you all – Philippa, Jenny, Odelia and Nina

Bellingshausen Exhibition – Opened 20 March 2021 - Report by John Welch

Over a year ago one of our members, Stuart Eyes, reminded us of the Russian Antarctic expedition that visited Queen Charlotte Sound in 1820.

In July 2020 the Picton Museum and Historical Society hosted a whaikōrero by Sir Tipene O’Regan (Ngāi Tahu) to mark the bicentennial. Representatives from local iwi and from the Embassy of the Russian Federation attended the event. It was hugely successful. We then decided to mount an exhibition at the Museum to commemorate the visit.

We were very grateful for the assistance of Jake Yocum from Te Papa and he came with a grant which we were able to dedicate towards the cost of mounting the exhibition. Carol Dawber worked on the Bellingshausen storyboards with local iwi as well as some input from Dr Olga Suvorova who is familiar with the taonga in Russian Museums and has read original Russian accounts of the 1820 visit.

Early on we commissioned local artist Murray Sparrow to build a diorama of the area around Motuara Island where the Russian encounter took place. Lewis Smith of Ngāti Kuia donated a patu made from the same materials and in the style described by the Russians. Sergey Permutin donated a framed picture of the Russian sailors meeting local iwi.

It was exciting for all of us to mount our first ever professionally done exhibition. Olga came over for the weekend as well as representatives from the Embassy of the Russian Federation. We showed the documentary film “The Russians are Coming”, courtesy Toby Mills and Moana Maniapoto who also sent a recorded message for the opening.

The opening ceremony was everything we had hoped for with a great crowd, some nice finger food and Beryl organised some wine from Johannesburg courtesy of Warwick Foley who also hosted our visitors the next day.

The successful exhibition has greatly strengthened relationships with local iwi and the Russian community. There has already been a request from iwi to use the story boards for some school visits. If you have not yet seen the display, please make sure you visit soon.

Philippa Turley (Curator) and I would like to thank Jake Yocum, Murray Sparrow and Rex Green (Picton Menzshed) for their input into this exhibition. Also thanks to Te Papa for their Helping Hands Grant.



Exhibition on opening day



L to R: Dr Peter Meihana, Lewis Smith and Hamuera Robb.



Guest Speaker: Dr Olga Suvorova

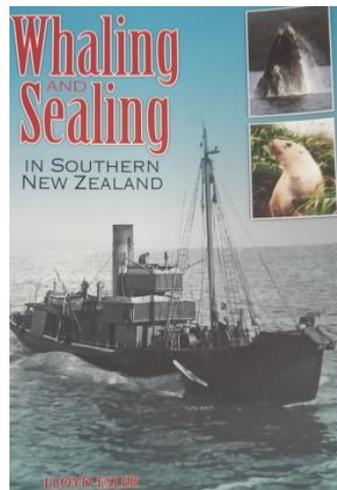
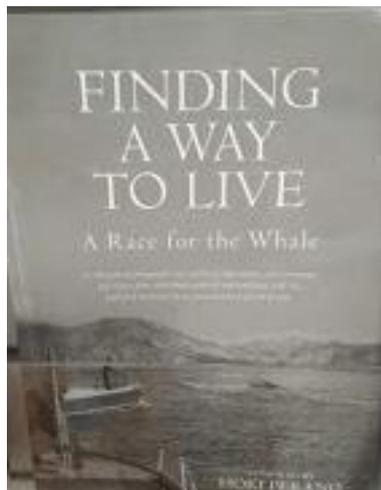
ANZAC Exhibition

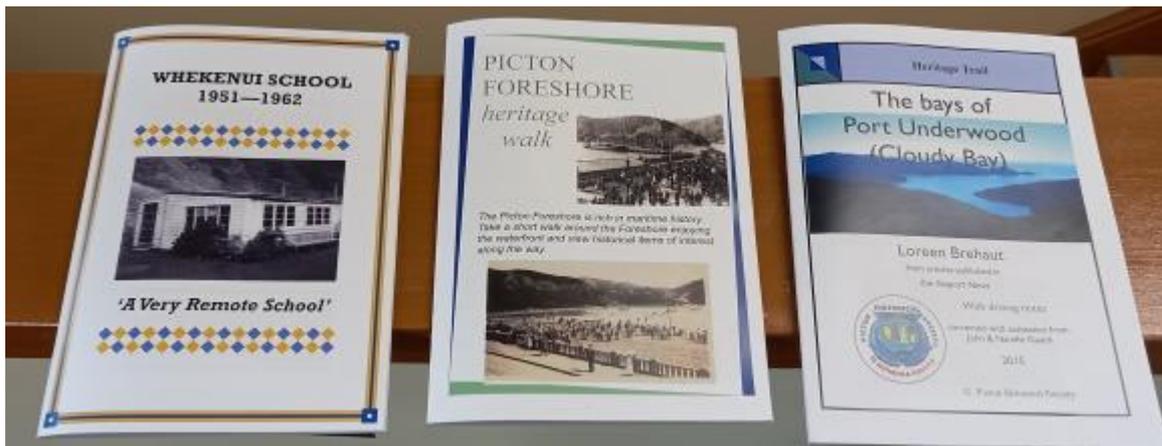
We had a successful ANZAC Exhibition.



Books

Hoki Perano's book is selling well. There is a new book Whaling and Sealing in Southern New Zealand. It covers the whaling in Cook Strait. Our small booklets have also been updated and are available.





Family History

The Museum Library has the following family histories: Abraham and Lucy Hart, Maria and Martin Foote, Edward and Sarah James and Thomas and Sarah Roil, Blaymires, Gledhills, Heberleys, Peranos, Teschemaker, McIsaac, McManaways, Braggs, Jones, Godsiffs and Allports as well as many others.

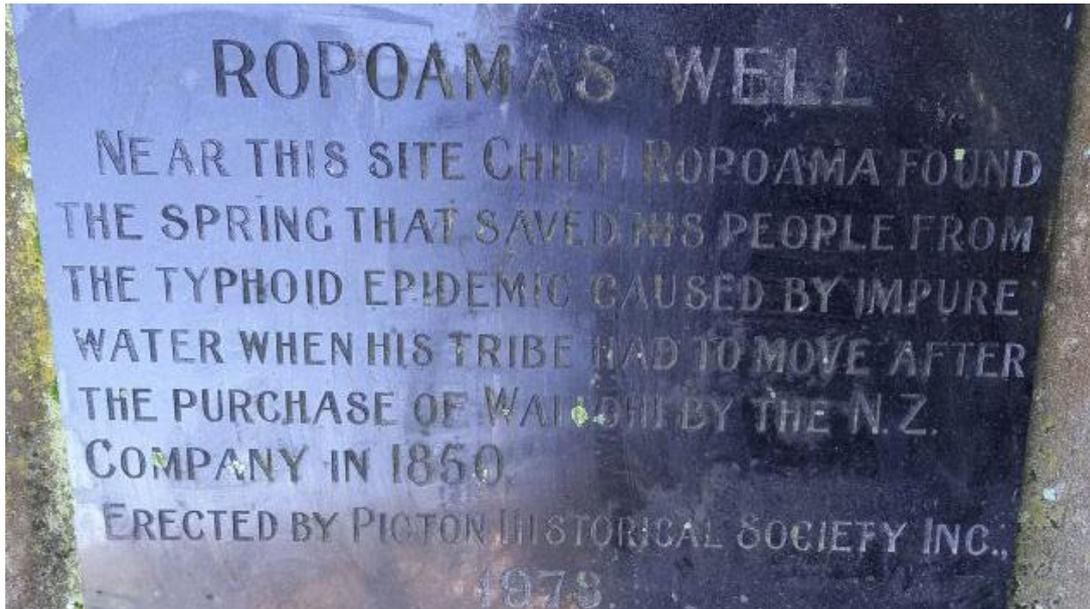
As a school holiday activity, we plan on giving local schoolchildren (who will have free entry to the Museum during the school holidays) the chance to chart their own family history back to their eight great grandparents. If you have children who might like to do this, please prime them up with all the information on their ancestors that you know!

Research

A reminder that Odelia is happy to do any research for you. You can contact her at: research@pictonmuseum.co.nz

Typhoid Epidemic – Picton/Waikawa

Have you read this plaque by the side of Waikawa Road which details how Ropoama saved his people from typhoid by directing them to drink water from a spring – hence Ropoama's Well – and wondered about the information on the plaque?



Marlborough was subject to bouts of typhoid from about 1874 through to 1920 as can be seen from the following excerpts from a document on typhoid sent to me by our Curator. Val Kenny tells me that although Alymer Kenny died, his daughter Daisy survived. Val was told that the Waikawa Stream was used for washing and likely sewerage disposal.

The Press says there is an appalling number of cases of typhoid under treatment. Over forty are in the hospital alone, and a thorough scheme of drainage is imperative at any cost,

18 March 1892

Typhoid fever is an infectious disease. That it is contagious through neglect of ordinary sanitary conditions, such as proper disposal of excreta, is well known, but mere personal connection will not render the uninfected liable to disease - Ed.

19 December 1892

Mr Aylmer Kenny, second son of the Hon. Captain Kenny, and Government Ranger for Marlborough, died in the Picton Hospital on Thursday morning from typhoid fever, of which there is the usual outbreak at Waikawa. Mr Kenny had lately removed to Waikawa from Torea with his family. One of his daughters is ill also with typhoid.

The article further details a spat in the newspapers about how Picton spread the disease to Blenheim through its oysters. It also goes on to mention the occurrence of typhoid amongst the troops involved in the First World War.

Loreen Brehaut, an Honorary Life Member of the Picton Historical Society, has given me permission to reproduce an article she wrote some years ago on Ropoama's Well.

Ropoama Te One, a rangitira of Te Ātiawa, was one of the signatories to the Treaty of Waitangi, and one of the main signatories to the Waitohi Purchase, by the New Zealand Company, in 1850.

After the latter the Māori resident in Waitohi (Picton) moved to Waikawa, and it was soon after this that typhoid broke out amongst them. Māori oral history tells that Ropoama found a spring of fresh water and encouraged his people to use it, so ending the spread of disease. We do not have a date for this particular epidemic, as there were few written records of the Māori population at the time, and the Marlborough newspapers did not start publication until the 1860s.

Ropoama himself died in 1868, so we know the typhoid outbreak was before this time. However, an event does not have to be written down to have occurred, and it remained strong in the memories of the kaumatua and was passed down to their children and grandchildren.

In 1978, when there was a strong Māori presence in the Picton Historical Society and its President was Meteria (May) Horrey née Tonga Awhikau, the Society decided to mark this unscripted past event with a monument. At that time most people knew from their elders what had occurred, and the Society Minutes of 2 May 1978 record:

"After a discussion in Committee it was decided that subject to the approval of the land owner and the Elders of Waikawa the Society would erect a plaque on or near the site of Ropoama's well in Waikawa where fresh water was discovered and broke the Typhoid epidemic that occurred when the Maoris shifted to Waikawa after the Waitohi purchase."

This plaque cost the Society \$257 that year, a considerable sum for a small voluntary organisation.

It is believed that the actual site of the spring was on the other side of Waikawa Road from where the plaque was placed. The monument remains as the only solid reminder of the episode.

This story recently featured in the newspaper at the time of the Pou being erected outside the new Picton Library. Do stop and have a close look at the Pou.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/pou-tiaki/122163007/pou-whnua-in-picton-tells-story-of-spiritual-ancestor-tribal-chief-and-whaling-history>



New Members

We have a number of new members whom we would like to welcome to the Museum. Lynda Williamson, Ross Crump and Rose Dryberg, Jill and Terry Schwass, Brian and Alison Kerr, Nigel Perry, Noeline Young and Campbell Currie. Apologies if I have left anyone off the list of new members. Thank you to them and all our existing members for their annual subscriptions. Your subscription will be due for renewal after the AGM.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This will be held on Saturday 21 August, 2021
at 1.30 pm at the Picton Museum.