



## New Exhibition Opening Mid February

### **Mission on the Kaipara** *William and Marianne Gittos*

We explore the life of the Reverend William Gittos, including his time along the Ōruawharo and Ōtamatea rivers as part of the Methodist Māori Mission, his involvement with the Albertlanders across the river and his later years in Auckland. We also introduce his wife Marianne Gittos nee Hobbs, as an important and greatly respected Kaipara woman and show a glimpse of the lives of some of her boat loving descendants in Devonport.



Reverend William Gittos

2004-2-2007-1138 - W H Marsh Collection

## Newsletter January 2024

### *Open Hours*

**Monday, Tuesday - Closed**  
**Wednesday - Saturday - 11am to 3pm**  
**Sunday - 1pm to 3pm**  
**The Museum is open for visitors**

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### *Message from the Editor*

Welcome back to 2024! We trust that your summer break has bestowed upon you fine weather and good health. While the museum has remained open, many of our dedicated volunteers took the opportunity to unwind, whether it be through camping trips, visits with grandchildren, or hosting friends and family. Our hearts go out to those who have experienced recent losses, and we extend our warmest wishes for a swift recovery to those who underwent surgeries.

As schools resume and normality returns, we find ourselves preparing for the year ahead. It is time to plan and look forward to upcoming events! Building on three successful years of commemorating Anzac Day, we are excited to continue the tradition. Mark your calendars for the 25th of April, and join us after the Dawn Parade for a cup of tea or hot chocolate and an Anzac biscuit (home made by our volunteers), followed by an exploration of our fascinating displays.

Another noteworthy date is the 29th of May, commemorating the day the 'Albertlanders' set sail from England on the first two boats to their new settlement. We will be celebrating on the 25th and 26th of May, so keep an eye on our Facebook page, website, and newsletter for detailed information.

A heartfelt thank you to all our 'Friends of the Museum' who have diligently paid their membership fees. Your support is invaluable, contributing significantly to the museum's operation and maintenance. Lastly, we encourage you to pay our volunteers a visit – you are all part of the 'museum family,' and we would love to forge stronger connections with each and every one of you!

*Rose and Rob*

# Whakapirau to Wellsford – A Tale of Resilience and Renewal

Nestled within the expansive landscapes of Albertland, the story of Wellsford's origins unfolds, intricately woven with the aspirations and challenges of its early settlers. Originating as Whakapirau, a district along the upper reaches of the Oruawharo, the community initially comprised Hanover passengers who built their homes near the creek bank, just above Port Albert. However, dissatisfaction with the name, which translated to "rotten canoe," prompted a transformative meeting among the residents.

In the 1870s, Wellsford emerged as a distinct community, carving out its own identity with a Post Office at Mrs Rushbrook's, a branch store managed by Mr. Armitage, and a versatile school doubling as a hall and church. The decision to change the name was not arbitrary; it was a collective effort to redefine their individuality. The name Wellsford was born from the initials of the settler's surnames, reflecting a harmonious blend of identities such as Worker, Watson, White, Edger, Levet, Lester, Simpson, Scott, Stark, Stewart, Foster, Oldfield, Ramsbottom, Rushbrook, Rishworth, Dibble and others.



This story then takes us on a journey into the life of the Reverend William Worker, born circa 1817 in Toddington, Bedfordshire. In 1840 he began work as a local preacher before spending time as a Methodist Home Missionary, he played a pivotal role in religious revival at St Austell in Cornwall where church seating was always full to overflowing. His adventurous spirit led him to Kent, where he transformed a debt-ridden church into a magnificent gothic structure. His marriage to Jane Esther Howse (born in Poulton, Wiltshire in 1830) resulted in the births of their seven children, William Howse Worker in 1849 and who later died in 1852, a second William Howse Worker (1852), Frederick George Worker (1854), Jane Emmeline Worker (1857), Mary Nina Worker (1859), Newton Arthur Worker, (1860) and Susan Gertrude Worker (born 1862). With his growing family, William's path eventually led him to Auckland, New Zealand, as a part of the non-conformist Albertland Special Settlement Scheme after suffering painful encounters with the Reform Movement causing him to seek police protection. Suffering from declining health, he was seeking a new, freer life, William and his family set sail from London on the "Gertrude" a 950-ton, two-masted, 217-foot sailing ship bound for Auckland in 1863. Under the Special Settlement Scheme each family member was eligible for a land grant of 40 acres, so the Worker Family had some 320 acres allotted to them.



Rev. William and Mrs Jane Esther Worker (nee Howse)

Settling in Albertland, the Worker family faced initial challenges, instead of going to their land at Whakapirau when they first came to the district, they remained camping at Patoka Point (now known as Port Albert wharf). Some time elapsed before Mr. Worker could take his family to their future home, which was then a dense forest and out of reach of any regular communication with adjoining settlements, except by boat and by journeys on foot over bush tracks, and many of these almost impassable through the want of bridges over steep creeks and rapid rivers. However, after the sale of the Government Reserve in 1864, the family made preparations to move to their future home one Saturday afternoon in a large punt, with all their worldly goods on board. Reaching the nearest point on the creek to their property late in the day, Mr. Worker decided not to unload the punt – the next day being the Sabbath the goods could not be conveyed up to the new abode. Inexperienced at river work, the newcomers had not allowed for the shelving bank of the creek and when the tide receded, the boat, which contained among other things half a ton of flour, a stove, and the reverend gentlemen's library, was swamped, and all the goods greatly damaged.

Reverend Worker, a resilient soul, combined farming on week days with ministerial duties, traversing the primitive wilderness on foot and by boat to preach in distant local circuits. After some 15 years of this free but strenuous life, his health being so much

improved, he again entered the Church's itinerant ranks and for nine years travelled to serve Methodism in the Christchurch, Leeston, Rangitikei and Sandon circuits. While he was at Sandon, his daughter Mary Nina Worker met the 26-year-old Reverend William George Parsonson who was then in the nearby Fielding circuit as its first minister. In 1883, Reverend William Parsonson was appointed to Auckland's Grafton Circuit and contact with Mary Nina would have been severely constrained, so their marriage in 1885 in William Worker's home in Marton must have been a welcome time indeed. After their marriage ceremony, Mary Nina and William Parsonson travelled to Wellington to board the ss Ringarooma for a voyage to Onehunga, and then to the Grafton Road Church. By then, in his mid-seventies, Reverend William Worker having had sixty years in his chosen calling, finally retired and returned to Wellsford.

In the twilight of his life, Reverend William Worker returned to Wellsford and passed away in 1900, leaving an indelible mark on the community he had helped to shape. His newspaper obituary tells of how his labours among the people were carried out under circumstances of great difficulty, happily unknown to the present generation of preachers and hearers, but amidst it all he cheerfully pursued the even tenor of his way, walking great distances and in all weathers to minister to the spiritual need of the people. Many there are who still remember how often he kept his appointments when people thought it too stormy to venture to the house where service was to be held. In those days tea-meetings were a great institution, distances to be traversed rendering refreshment a necessity, and it was at these gatherings that the scattered settlers met and discussed all subjects pertaining to 'life and godliness'. His enduring spirit remains a captivating chapter in the rich tapestry of Albertland's history.

## EDITOR'S PICK

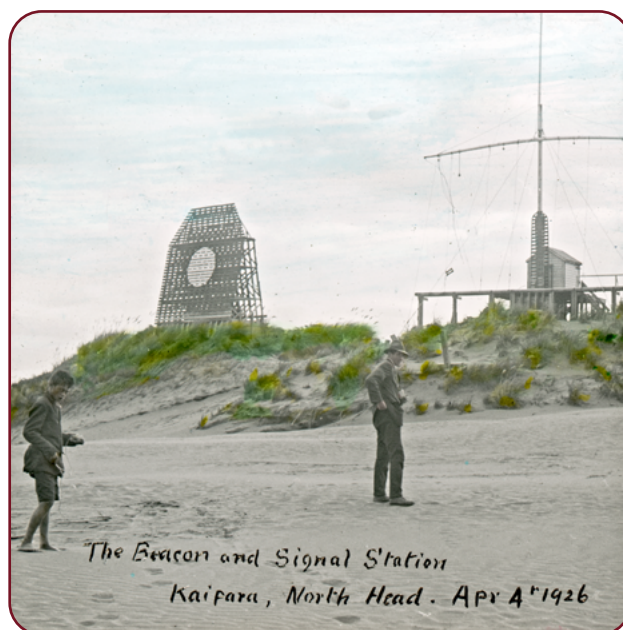
Embarking on a captivating journey through time, we delve into the eloquent narrative of Edward George Griffith, a seasoned mariner whose tales transcended the constraints of mortality. Presumed to be published posthumously, his musings found a home in the Clutha Leader newspaper in 1893, penned under the guise of 'Senex' – a pseudonym carrying the weight of advanced age and wisdom.

In the timeless waters of the Kaipara Harbour, Griffith's maritime exploits unfold like a rich tapestry, weaving through the very fabric of the district we hold dear today. A master of the seas, he navigates the serene expanse by boat, unravelling the secrets hidden within its undulating waves and picturesque shores.

Within this enchanting odyssey lies a delightful interlude – a moment that beckons smiles and laughter. 'Senex' recounts the whimsical escapade when the mischievous signalman played a prank on the unsuspecting skipper of a vessel bound for Helensville. We find ourselves transported to the heart of the story, eager to relish every word as we become voyagers in our own right, sailing through the currents of humour and camaraderie.

*"As we steam along, we get close underneath the lighthouse, which is built as is usual high up. Unfortunately, there is nothing but sand round about, and the keepers have to proceed some distance away to find enough soil to make a garden. The present head lighthouse keeper has been there eight years, which is a long time to put in this lonely and barren spot – barren of everything but clumps of ti-tree scrub.*

*He has, I am told, a thorough knowledge of signalling, so I expect that is why he is kept so long in the one place. At one time the vessels used to get their orders from him where they were to go. The signalling is done by means of flags. A vessel came in one day that was to go to Helensville, so he ran up the flags meaning 'Go to Hel,' and then got his glass – which is very powerful – to watch the skipper's face as he translated. I suppose the skipper must have taken the literal meaning out of it at first, as his face was a study, but gradually it dawned on him what was meant, and he sailed away for that port rejoicing."*



Harold Marsh Collection - # 2004-2-2007-959  
2nd North Head Easter Trip 1926 Signal Station and Beacon

## SALE

2024 'Children of Albertland'  
Calendars

for Sale

\$20.00

Effective from 1st February 2024

## Membership Renewal

Thank you to all those members who have renewed their membership for 2024

Membership fees are from

January 1 2024 to December 30 2024

For just \$20.00 per year helps us to preserve the history

Membership can be paid directly into the Heritage

Museum account 12-3094-0077415-01

Please use your name as Reference

Code - Membership



## **BULLOCK TEAMS AND MAN POWER PREVAIL – A FEAT OF THE ‘SEVENTIES’**

The story of the barque ‘Examiner’ and its remarkable salvage operation in 1872 is truly intriguing and showcases the determination and ingenuity of Captain Yabsley and his crew. The detailed diary entries provide a fascinating insight into the challenges they faced and the step-by-step process of rescuing a vessel from the sand at the Heads of the Clarence River in Australia.

It is even more remarkable how the vessel, despite going aground, proved to be so strongly built and that it didn’t leak a drop after the salvage operation. Captain Yabsley’s decision-making, self-reliance, and the teamwork of his sons and crew are highlighted through the story.

This 3-mast, wooden barque built in 1870 by William Yabsley from Richmond River, NSW, in Australia was initially built as an auxiliary steamer fitted with a 35hp auxiliary steam screw which was removed in 1875. This vessel had a gross weight of 266 and 181 net tons. Its dimensions were 139.6 x 29.7 x 9.8 m and it was registered to several owners before ending its life as a coal hulk in 1910.

In this abridged historical account meticulously recorded by Captain Yabsley at the end of each day he chronicled the salvage operation of this sturdy boat built from hardwood timber sourced from Coraki, Australia. Captain Yabsley, the owner and master had gone to the Clarence with a load of pine from Richmond for D.B. Selman (mill owner) and endeavouring to sail out, with no tug available, the ship went ashore. From the 1st of May, 1872 until October 9th, 1872 the Captain, his four sons, William, Henry, Charles and Thomas and his brother John as well as 18 other men (three of whom were original crew members) worked tirelessly to free the boat.

### ***May 1 – The vessel hard and fast in the sand. The crew working hard to refloat the vessel, but made no headway.***

During the month of May, with the vessel stuck in 8 feet of sand, Henry Yabsley bought a team of bullocks from Coraki to help with the salvage while the men began cutting logs in scrub about a mile away for blocking under the vessel which the bullocks hauled back to the vessel. Longer trees were sourced to use as levers for lifting the vessel, 40 in total all about 50 to 65 feet long and 24 inches in diameter at the big end. The crew began to square logs on two sides, some for blocking under the vessel and some for putting under the screw jacks and the levers. A saw pit was dug for sawing cleats for bolting to the side of the vessel for the end levers to grip under. These cleats were 6 feet long and 8 inches wide and 6 inches thick and bolted on with three bolts ½ inch thick.

### ***May 25 – Queen’s Birthday. All hands squaring logs. Passenger steamer came from Grafton with a number of passengers to look at vessel.***

As June approached work continued to dig sand away from under the vessel and getting the screw jacks in and logs were placed under the vessel to put the screw jacks on. With all hands working, screw jacks and 40 levers (20 on each side of the vessel) managed to lift the vessel 8 inches.

### ***June 11 – Raining, the cook left, John Ford took on the cooking.***

In mid-June disaster struck the team ...

### ***June 13 – All hands commenced to get the rudder off the vessel with a lever, which broke. One piece flying up and striking T Yabsley on side of head, knocking him about three yards across the deck, insensible for some hours. John Robinson, John Yabsley and P Hyland started to Grafton in a boat for a doctor. Dr Houson came.***

Fortunately, Thomas made a full recovery and work continued laying ways to launch the vessel inland to get clear of the breakers while other vessels like the s.s. Agnes and s.s. Ballina continued to safely cross in and out. Two sailors from nearby Grafton were taken on to help after they had received free lodging (in gaol) at Grafton for refusing to work on the s.s. New England. Sadly, sacrifices had to be made to feed the hardworking team.

**June 21 – Killed old ‘Jinker’ for beef; about 15 years old. Good old fellow. Seen his last days on the beach.**  
Towards the end of June progress was made and with the help of the bullocks and tackle the vessel was launched 15 feet towards the land and this progress continued steadily for a few more days.

**June 30 – A stray sheep came along the beach. Don’t know where it came from.**

By July all hands were jolting planks together for launching the vessel on and large tackle blocks were made. A large dingo often came at night to have a look at the vessel and the men caught it in a snare, however, it managed to get free. More sand was cleared and four large and four small tackles were rigged to hook on the larger tackles for the bullocks to haul.

**July 17 – Commenced to haul the vessel towards the river with four teams of bullocks. Only removed her two feet. The anchors would not stand the strain.**

Unfortunately, an easterly gale and heavy seas washed the logs from under the vessel and let her down in the sand so the men had to once again lift the vessel with levers and screw jacks. As they hauled the bow inland to get clear of the breakers, the large cable (1 and ½ chain doubled) broke but by the end of July good progress was made which continued into August with the vessel being moved from 162 feet to 215 feet each day. Early in September the bow was lifted with levers and screw jacks ready for launching into the river.

**September 24 – Day of joy to see the vessel plunge into Clarence River. Tight and sound. Did not leak a drop. Pilot Freeburn, his crew and other visitors to see the vessel slide into the river.**

Over the next 11 days all the hands were setting up spars and sails and finishing the rigging. Charles and Thomas Yabsley started home with the bullocks bidding good-bye to the sand and the salt water.

**October 9 – The barque ‘Examiner’ laying at the Clarence Heads, ready for sea.**

It is understood that Captain Yabsley never asked advice from anyone, he always carried out work with his own judgement: and the cost was about £1400 and the insurance company was more than satisfied as this was estimated to be only a third of the actual cost they were expecting.

This account offers a vivid picture of maritime life in the late 19th century detailing not only the challenges of sailing and salvaging a ship but also the personal and family dynamics involved in such adventures, a testament to the resilience and resourcefulness of sailors during that era.

Additionally, this snippet from the Otago Daily Times adds another layer of mystery to the ‘Examiner’ when it was voyaging in our own Kaipara Harbour in 1893.

“During the passage of the barque ‘Examiner’ which arrived at Sydney on the 27th July from Kaipara, a small bird made its appearance on deck with a piece of linen tied around its neck, upon which was written the following:- “Vapeur (steamer) ‘Fiado’, July 21, 1893, lat. 29deg, long. 154 deg 18min east, C. Bouret, Noumea via Australia.” The ‘Fiado’ arrived at Newcastle from Noumea, and left again for New Caledonia. The bird flew on the ‘Examiner’s’ deck on the 22nd ult., in lat. 34deg 3min south, long. 159deg 21min east, and must therefore have travelled several hundred miles in the 24 hours. The bird was not detained on board

the barque, being set free soon after the message, which Captain Johnson of the barque has in his possession, had been taken from it.



A full account of the salvage effort can be found at <https://www.smythe.id.au/kinny/magdalen/newspapers.html>

Sailing ship Examiner in Port Chalmers graving dock, 1893. De Maus, David Alexander, 1847-1925 Shipping negatives. Ref: 1/1-002137-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

## Historical Albertland Birthdays



Alice Mabel Dudding  
1884 – 1912

In January we celebrate the birthdays of two local girls both born 140 years ago in 1884.

07/01/1884 Alice Mabel Dudding born in Wairoa, was the daughter of William Dudding (1846 – 1923) and Mary Ann Nicholson (1849 – 1903). Alice married Edgar James in 1906.

On January 20, 1884, Florence Ivy Irlam Becroft was born in Port Albert to parents, David Becroft (1860-1942) and Florence Mary Bradbury (1861-1932). Florence, a teacher in North Albertland, married George Hugh (Geordie) Smith (1876-1953) in 1908.



Florence Ivy Irlam Becroft  
1884 - 1966

Their journey led them back from Waikeikie (near Whangarei) in 1913 to Florence's roots in Port Albert, where Geordie Smith assumed the role of Headmaster. In 1918, the couple ventured into a new chapter, acquiring land in Te Hana and dedicating weekends and holidays to establishing an orchard. This marked the inception of the Smith family's role as orchardists in Te Hana.

### *Friends and Supporters of 'Albertland Heritage Museum' birthdays in January*

16th January – Glenda Berg

21st January – Karen Lennon

22nd January – Val Hegh

A special mention to Ann Shepherd who celebrated her 99th birthday at the Heritage Rest Home on 25th December. We hope you enjoyed this day with family and friends.

And a special Happy Birthday to any of our friends and supporters we have missed.

## Celebrating a Century and Enduring Bonds in Albertland

### ***Norma Dorothy Neal – born 7th November 1923***

While many descendants of our Albertland pioneers have dispersed from the district, the threads of connection persist. In our close-knit community, we are continually updated on the lives of those who have moved away. These updates bear both sombre news, such as the unfortunate instances of illness, and joyous occasions, including significant milestones. Recently, our hearts warmed by the news of a momentous birthday celebration for Norma Dorothy Neal, who recently reached the remarkable age of 100.

Unfortunately, we did not receive this information in time for our November or December newsletters. However, during the Christmas break, we reached out to Norma's daughter, Nelsa, who generously shared intricate details about Norma's extraordinary life and the jubilant festivities surrounding her centennial celebration at the Dargaville RSA.

Norma's lineage traces back to the pioneers who arrived on the Matilda







Wattenbach in 1862, making her a fourth-generation 'Albertlander.' Born to Jack and Nell Davies (nee Western) on November 7, 1923, in Port Albert, Norma attended Port Albert Primary School before continuing her education at Wellsford District School. During the war years (1939-1945), Norma served in the New Zealand Army, driving trucks, before marrying Wes Neal in 1945. The couple spent several decades farming in Te Hana, raising their two children, Nelsa and Wayne. Remarkably, Norma now boasts 8 grandchildren, 19 great-

grandchildren, and 2 great-great-grandchildren. In 1988, Norma and Wes relocated to Wellsford, where Wes sadly passed away in 1999. Following her daughter Nelsa and husband Maurice's move to Bayley's Beach Holiday Park in 2009, Norma joined them by living next door and assisted at the park during the bustling summer months. Unfortunately, a fall in 2018 prompted Norma's move to Norfolk Court village in Dargaville, where she continues to pursue her love for playing bowls, albeit now preferring carpet bowls. Singing has also been a lifelong passion for Norma, who sang with the Methodist Church Choir and the Wellsford CWI Choir while residing in Port Albert.



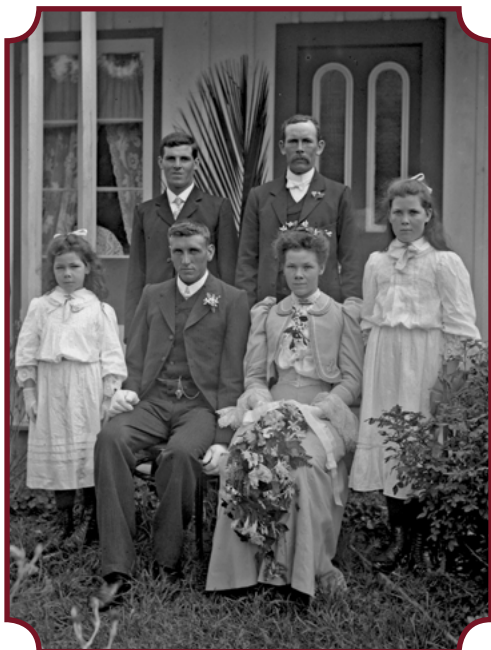
## Concluding 2023: A Celebration of Dedication and Milestones

On December 12th, 2023, we extended warm invitations to our dedicated volunteers and esteemed guests, gathering for an enriching afternoon of friendship and reflection as we bid farewell to the year. Recognising and appreciating the hard work and unwavering commitment of our volunteers throughout the year is an important aspect of our committee's values.

Moreover, amidst the festivities, we uncovered that December was a month teeming with significant birthdays within our modest volunteer community. Notably, there were milestone celebrations, including a 70th, an 80th, and a remarkable 90th birthday for Ivan Tomas, a cherished long-time volunteer and founding member of the Albertland Heritage Museum. In a heartwarming gesture, Terry Blakemore from the Wellsford RSA presented Ivan with a meal voucher before the unveiling of a surprise cake in honour of this momentous occasion.



## HISTORICAL ALBERTLAND MARRIAGES



### *January Wedding Bells: Hannah Martha Treadwell and John (Jack) Patterson (2nd January 1907)*

In the warm embrace of a sunlit January day in 1907, a wedding took place at the Treadwell homestead in Wellsford. Hannah Martha Treadwell, the firstborn daughter of Joseph Treadwell (1843-1938) and Clara Evaline Buckton (1861-1927), married John (Jack) Patterson, from Tairua on the 2nd of January 1907. Born in Tauhoa on the 2nd of April 1884, Hannah's life somehow intertwined with this young man, and they set forth in marriage to create their new life together. After their wedding, the couple returned to live in Roturua, where they nurtured and raised their family of three girls and two boys together. Their partnership lasting thirty-three years ended when John (Jack) Patterson died at Roturua Public Hospital on the 17th June 1940 leaving Hannah a widower until her death nearly a decade later on the 15th of July 1950.

Harold Marsh Collection # 2004-2-96-90

John Patterson & Hannah Treadwell  
Wedding 02/01/1907

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### *It is with much sadness ...*

It is sad to lose loved ones at any time of the year, however, around the Christmas/New Year break is particularly hard for families of those who have departed. Sadly, January 2024 has meant that we have lost some very valuable members of our community and we extend our condolences to all their families.

1st January – Jeffery (Jeff) Thorvald Hansen (a service for Jeff to be held at Wellsford RSA, February 4th at 1.00pm)



15th January – Valda Ruth Busbridge



16th January – Shirley May Pictor

Continued next page



## Richard William Vincent Izard (CNZM, OBE)

2nd January – Richard William Vincent Izard (CNZM, OBE)



Richard Izard was the visionary founder of 'Izards,' a prominent circular saw blade company in Wellsford during the 1980s and 1990s, emerging as the leading employer in the town for an extended period, with a workforce of 500 at its peak. Specialising in tungsten carbide-tipped saw blades, the company thrived in the global market, with the United States serving as its largest company.

In 1991, Richard made the decision to sell the company to the Irwin Company of Wilmington, Ohio, marking the end of his association with the district. He bid farewell to Wellsford selling his expansive 382-hectare farm 'Springhill' and moving south to Taupo.

Unfortunately for Wellsford, the new owners struggled to sustain the business, leading to its permanent closure in 2009.

Despite the company's closure, the enduring memories of Richard Izard persist among those who were fortunate to work under his leadership in those formative years. Richard, affectionately known as Dick by many, initially sought to uplift a struggling rural town, providing employment and opportunities that seemed unattainable otherwise. Many remain deeply grateful for the chance he afforded them.

For some of our dedicated volunteers who have devoted decades to the museum, Richard's generosity towards the Albertland Heritage Museum is etched in their own recollections. One noteworthy instance involved his substantial purchase of calendars, distributed generously to friends, family, and possibly even his employees.

As we collectively reflect on the legacy of this remarkable man, we extend our thoughts to his children, Bill and Phillipa, as well as his cherished grandchildren and great-grandchildren during this time of loss. Richard Izard's impact transcends the confines of the workplace, leaving an indelible mark on the community and the lives he touched.



2021 Sawmills to Sawblades

display at museum with Izard story

## Raffle Result

Capturing oral history also demands top-notch equipment – sophisticated digital recorders, each carrying a price tag of approximately \$1500.

The sum raised towards this equipment was \$323.00.

Your support in being a part of this captivating endeavour to preserve our towns vibrant history.

Winner was Dave from Cambridge.

