

Newsletter - December 2024

**O p e n
H o u r s**

Monday, Tuesday - Closed

Wednesday - Saturday - 11am to 3pm

Sunday - 1pm to 3pm

The Museum is open for visitors

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Editors Message

As the year comes to a close, we want to celebrate the incredible efforts of our Committee, Volunteers, and 'Friends of the Museum.' Thanks to your hard work and dedication, our museum continues to share the stories of our early settlers and thrive as a community treasure.

This year, we have made key decisions, participated in training and outreach programs, celebrated our heritage, and welcomed our Tamariki for school visits. This has all been made possible with countless volunteer hours and unwavering support. To our museum friends and followers—thank you for your monetary and family heritage donations. Don't forget to renew your *Friend of the Museum* Annual Membership on January 1st for only \$20 per person or \$30 Family Membership for two adults and two children. A great Christmas Gift idea! Your generosity keeps our story alive.

Exciting news awaits! In January, we'll kick off 2025 with a big announcement. Stay tuned for our first newsletter of the year!

Rob and I have enjoyed bringing you these (mostly) monthly newsletters.

A very Merry Christmas on behalf of our Committee and Volunteers and we look forward to reconnecting with you all in the New Year.

*Christmas in the Old Land, 'Mid the frost and snow;
Christmas in the New Land, Where the roses blow.
Our affections range not, Wheresoe'er we go;
Hearts with climate change not—Still with love they glow.
- J.L. Kelly*

Rose and Rob

A Heartfelt Farewell to Dr. Paul Allen

Last Tuesday, December 10th, we had the pleasure of gathering to bid a fond farewell to our outgoing Chairman, Dr. Paul Allen, who stepped down as Chair of the Albertland Heritage Museum at our AGM last September. It was a special occasion, shared over afternoon tea with volunteers, and colleagues.



Clare Joensen shared an interesting account of how Paul first became involved with the Museum back in 2012. It all began when his neighbour, Lyn Johnston, showed him some historic photos of the very farm he had just purchased. Lyn, with her deep knowledge and enthusiasm for local history, sparked Paul's interest in Albertland's rich heritage.

Paul officially joined the Museum while Peter Marsh was serving as both Chairman and Curator. In 2013, Peter decided to focus on his passion as Curator, and Paul graciously stepped into the role of Chairperson. Beyond his contributions to Albertland, Paul also became an active member of the Northland Museums Association. His dedication and leadership extended to the Waipu Museum,

where he was instrumental in helping resolve significant challenges, encouraged by his good friend Fiona Mohr.

During his time with Albertland, Paul worked closely with his dear friend Ivan Tomas, who shared invaluable lessons about the history of Albertland. Paul also enjoyed many enriching conversations with his neighbour Lyn, often during social gatherings on Marsh Road, alongside Lois Allen, who has since moved from the district.

Reflecting on his journey, Paul shared with us that his time with the Museum had been "enjoyable and relatively stress-free."

Thank you, Paul, for your incredible service, dedication, and the leadership that guided us over the past decade. We are deeply grateful for all you have done and wish you the very best in your next endeavours.



Contact : Shirley
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DON'T MISS OUT – 2025 CALENDARS SELLING FAST!

Get your hands on the Albertland Heritage Museum 2025 Calendar before they're all gone!

A Special Tribute

This year's calendar is dedicated to Linda Casci and the Halfpenny family, honouring their legacy and cherished memories.

Features: Cyril James Halfpenny & Kathleen Mary Hudson (née Biddle), married on 17th November 1920, grace the pages with their inspiring story.

Act now and secure your piece of history!



Caption This!

We often have some light-hearted moments amongst our volunteers, and Barbara and Roger have kindly agreed to share this photo that sums up one of these moments perfectly! Think you've got the perfect caption for this snapshot of fun?

Let's see who can come up with the most clever or creative caption—we're looking forward to your ideas!

Email your suggestions to

albertlandmuseum@gmail.com



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

We're giving our wonderful volunteers a break, from 25th December to 8th January.

**RE-OPENING IN THE NEW YEAR
on Wednesday 8th JANUARY,
2025**

Thank you for a wonderful year!

Contact Museum Secretary
Email: albertlandmuseum@gmail.com or
Phone: 09 423 8181

Tucked away on a dusty shelf, I discovered a beautiful old book with a title too intriguing to ignore. *'Enquire Within Upon Everything'* beckoned me, its aged spine whispering of forgotten wisdom. As I pulled it down, along with its neighbours, and cracked open its timeworn pages, I realized I was holding a fascinating relic: a how-to guide for 19th-century domestic life.

First published in 1856 by editor Robert Kemp Philp, this remarkable book was a treasure trove of Victorian knowledge. Over the years, it was continuously updated, with new articles added and outdated ones discarded. Inside its pages, one could find everything from etiquette tips and parlour games to cake recipes, laundry hacks, holiday preparations, and even first aid advice—a true encyclopaedia for the home.

What a delight to uncover these glimpses of Victorian life! But what truly caught my eye were the charming, and often amusing, old sayings scattered throughout its pages...

“Despise school and remain a fool”

“A blunt knife shows a dull wife”

“Mind that your seeds are not of weeds”

“A wife’s art displayed in a table well laid”

“Who never tries cannot win the prize”

“A spark may raise an awful blaze”

“The healthiest feast costs the least”

“Windows opened more would keep doctors from the door”

“Too much bed makes a dull head”

“Observation is the best teacher”

On the whole some pretty sound advice!

The last little gem I discovered in this wonderful book was most fitting with the prospect of blackberries, ripening from November to March, on our wild roadside plants in the district ...

“Blackberries are very beneficial in cases of dysentery. The berries are healthful eating. Tea made from the roots and leaves is good, and syrup from the berries excellent.”



BIRTHDAYS

Volunteer Birthdays

As we approach the end of 2024, we take a moment to celebrate the birthdays of several dedicated museum volunteers and cherished 'Friends of Albertland Heritage Museum.' It is fascinating to consider whether those born under the December star signs of Sagittarius (November 22–December 21) and Capricorn (December 22–January 19) possess qualities that make them such outstanding volunteers.

Sagittarius, a Fire Sign ruled by Jupiter—the planet of expansion and wisdom—is known for its adventurous spirit and thirst for new experiences. Sagittarians are often optimistic, open-minded, and philosophical, traits that align beautifully with the curiosity and enthusiasm required for volunteering.

On the other hand, Capricorn, an Earth Sign ruled by Saturn, embodies discipline, resilience, and ambition.

Capricorns are renowned for their steady and responsible nature, their hard work, and their strong sense of duty. Their practical, grounded, and reliable characteristics make them exceptional contributors to any cause.

With such admirable qualities associated with these star signs, it's no wonder our December-born volunteers shine so brightly. A heartfelt thank-you to all of you for the invaluable support you bring to the museum throughout the year!

12th December – Pauline Stables

16th December – Paul Allen

17th December – Jill Earley

24th December – Ivan Tomas



Pauline Stables

Jill Earley



Paul Allen



Ivan Tomas

All of these volunteers have taken key roles in running the Albertland Heritage Museum over the past 30 + years, serving as key members on the committee at one time or another. Their collective involvement spans decades and Pauline in particular is well-known for her exceptional efforts in selling the bulk of our fundraising calendars, year in and year out! Ivan and Jill served on the committee, both holding key positions in the very early days and today are still very interested in the successful running of the museum. Paul has recently retired as Chairperson and we wish him all the very best for his retirement from community volunteering. Happy Birthday to all of these wonderful people!

We'd also like to take a moment to celebrate **Laurel Becroft**, who will be turning **93 on December 21st!** Laurel (née Levet) married Don Becroft, and together they raised their five children on their dairy farm on Silverhill Road. Laurel moved away from the district some years ago and now enjoys life in Warkworth.

The Levet and Becroft families have contributed immensely to the rich history of the 'Albertlanders.' Extensive research has been conducted by family members, with knowledgeable storytellers like Steve Levet, Leonie Farr, and Adrienne Brewer keeping these fascinating family histories alive.

A Century of Memories and Milestones!

As we wrap up this year in grand style, we're thrilled to celebrate an incredible milestone: **Ann Shepherd (née Witheford)** will be turning **100 years young on December 25th!**

Ann, now a cherished resident at the Heritage Rest Home, has lived a life rich in experiences. Two years ago, I had the joy of sitting down with Ann to hear her fascinating stories of growing up in Port Albert and Wharehine. She recounted a happy childhood, surrounded by the love and laughter of her large family of brothers and sisters.

With a passion for sewing, Ann's talents took her to an Auckland embroidery factory, where she worked on creating high-end suits for the iconic Milne & Choyce. Her life journey is beautifully captured in her written account, *'Annie's Story'*—a delightful and entertaining read that showcases her remarkable life.

Even at 100, Ann's creativity and spirit continue to shine. At the monthly church service held at the Port Albert Church, Ann often graces the congregation with a heartfelt poem or story when she's able to attend.



Ann Shepherd with Val Martin

Let's celebrate with Ann this truly extraordinary achievement. Here's to a century of memories, wisdom, and inspiration! **Happy 100th Birthday, Ann!**



Ann Shepherd with Lynnette Gubb

This is a great opportunity to remind everyone that the Albertland Heritage Museum holds an extensive library of family histories and is always eager to expand it. If you've written a family history or know someone who has, we'd love to add it to our collection!

Finally, a big Happy Birthday to all our volunteers and friends of the museum who celebrated birthdays in December. If you or someone you know would like to be included in our birthday announcements, please contact us at albertlandmuseum@gmail.com.

Too Good to Be True!

It began as a planned visit to the Warkworth Museum. Jenny and I had been invited to observe the Maritime Museum Digitisation Team's efforts as they worked through an extraordinary clothing collection at the Warkworth Museum. We'd barely settled in—not even an hour into our visit—when we were introduced to two visitors from Auckland Council: Aline Curtis, a Conservator, and Paul Chapman, a Digital Archives Imaging Specialist. At first, it was just a polite exchange of introductions, but the conversation quickly turned to Albertland Heritage Museum and our extensive archive of hand-drawn maps, letters, and books in the Marsh and Halfpenny collections.

Curiosity sparked, and despite their packed schedules, Aline and Paul were coerced into thinking that there was no time like the present to see what Albertland had to offer. So off we went, navigating the infamous Dome Valley roadworks, 'stop and go' signs on our journey back to Wellsford. They were understandably concerned about their tight schedule, but once we reached the museum, those worries evaporated.

The collections captivated them both. Aline and Paul were engrossed and fascinated by the treasures tucked away within our walls.

Just days later, an email from Aline arrived in our inbox. She wanted to return—not alone this time, but with a team of archivists, and of course, Paul. It was an offer too good to refuse. December 3rd was chosen as the date, far enough away to give us time to prepare but close enough to keep the momentum of their enthusiasm.

As the day approached, Aline provided more details: she would be bringing a team of eight experts (yes, eight!) to work directly with our volunteers. Their plan was ambitious but exciting—tasks would include cleaning, archival storage, and database organisation. Feeling a mix of excitement and mild panic, we worked to ensure we were ready. We prepared priority items for their attention and braced ourselves for what promised to be an extraordinary day.

The morning of December 3rd dawned bright and full of promise. True to their word, the team arrived with beaming smiles and arms laden with tools, equipment, and supplies for the day's work. Joining them was Dr. Tracey Wedge, a renowned fabric conservator. This was the perfect opportunity to tend to one of our museum's most treasured artifacts: the silken banner flown on the mast of the Matilda Wattenbach in 1862. Locked securely in a case since its restoration nearly three decades ago, the banner would finally receive the expert care it deserved.

From the moment they arrived, the museum buzzed with activity. Each expert paired with an Albertland Museum volunteer, tackling tasks that ranged from cleaning cases to safely storing paper archives, from fabric conservation to refining our databases. The energy was infectious. By 9 a.m., the museum had transformed into a hive of activity, and it stayed that way until the final minutes of the day.

In the Marsh Gallery, Paul worked tirelessly alongside a team member who ferried maps from the back storage room. Together, they managed to digitise nearly 40 hand-drawn and historic maps—an astonishing feat that would have taken our team months, if not years, to achieve on our own. Meanwhile, in another corner, Tracey meticulously cleaned and cared for the silken banner, bringing new life to this irreplaceable piece of Albertland's history.

By the end of the day, the results were nothing short of transformative. We had gained so much more than a day's worth of work. Knowledge had been shared, systems improved, and our collections better prepared for both future use and unforeseen disasters. The experience left our volunteers energised and equipped with new skills and confidence.



The right tools for the job!

Reflecting on the day, it's hard to overstate its impact. What began as a chance meeting at Warkworth evolved into a collaborative triumph that bolstered our museum in ways we hadn't imagined. We are deeply grateful to Aline, Paul, and their incredible team for their time, expertise, and enthusiasm. Their generosity has left an indelible mark on our museum and its dedicated volunteers.

Recommendations received from Auckland Council Team:

Preserving our shared history is at the heart of what we do at Albertland Heritage Museum. As we care for the priceless heritage entrusted to us, we are now looking closely at the recommendations made to us after the visit from seeking ways to ensure it remains safeguarded for future generations.

From this visit, we have identified key needs that will help us enhance conservation efforts and improve the environment where our heritage is preserved. To achieve this, we will need support in acquiring:

- Dataloggers: These devices will allow us to monitor temperature and humidity throughout the year, helping us understand seasonal changes and the risks they pose to our collection.
- Ventilators and Dehumidifiers: These tools are essential for maintaining optimal environmental conditions, ensuring the safety and longevity of our artifacts.



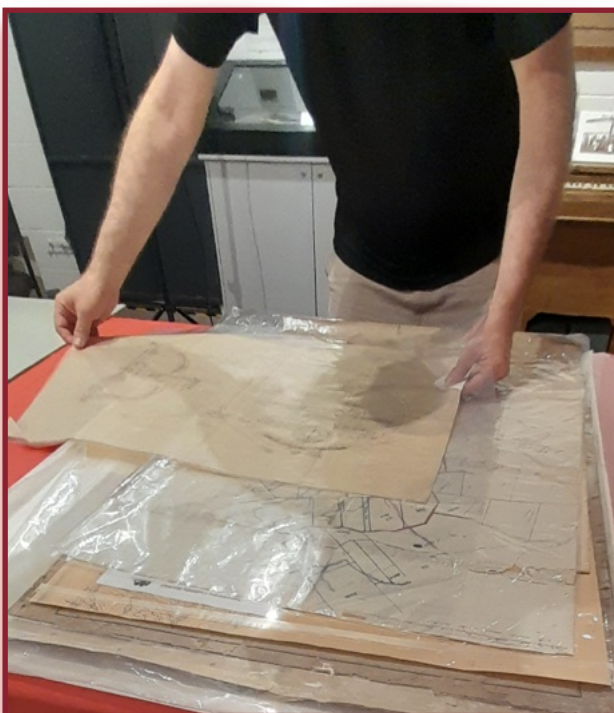
Dr. Tracey Wedge
cleaning the silken banner

Environmental monitoring and regulation are vital to

reducing risks such as mould, warping, and decay that could damage our precious collections. By addressing these challenges, we can continue to share our rich history with you and future generations.

We are now exploring ways to obtain these items, and we'd love to partner with our wonderful community. Your support—whether through donations, sponsorships, or spreading the word—can make a real difference.

If you'd like to contribute or have ideas on how we can achieve this goal, please get in touch with us at albertlandmuseum@gmail.com. We'll also keep you updated on our progress and ways to get involved in the coming months.



Preparing the maps for digitisation



Makeshift Digitisation Studio



Auckland Council Corporate Archives team with our own volunteers

Thank you for being a vital part of our journey to preserve the past for the future. Together, we can make a lasting impact!

A Triumph of Community Spirit:

The Art and Industrial Exhibition of Albertland, December 1889

Albertland hosted a significant event in December 1889 — held at the Temperance Hall in Port Albert the event carried the somewhat lengthy title “*The Port Albert Juvenile Temperance Art and Industrial Exhibition.*” Despite unfavourable weather, which impacted attendance, the exhibition was declared a genuine success.

Exhibits were submitted on Wednesday, December 4th, and the doors opened to the public on Thursday, December 5th. The exhibition ran until 10 p.m. on Friday, December 6th, 1889. Heavy rains during the two days turned the roads into muddy tracks, making travel unpleasant for both humans and animals. Still, the hall remained comfortably full, with some attendees traveling over 20 miles to see the displays. Many visitors commented that the exhibition far exceeded their expectations.

Mr. E. S. Brookes played a pivotal role, contributing numerous paintings from his time as a student at the Nottingham Art School in England. He and Frank Hartnell, who formed the executive committee, carried out their responsibilities admirably. Mr. Brookes also provided special prizes: £1 for the best boys’ drawing, another worth 15 shillings, and a few smaller awards in the same category. These were listed as “E.S.B. Prizes” in the program, and he also served as a judge for the art submissions.

Other notable contributions came from Mrs. Richards of North Albertland, who displayed six oil paintings showcasing her skill and dedication. Additional artworks were loaned by Miss Becroft, Mrs. Utting, Messrs. Hartnell, D. Becroft, T. Inger and others, while the hall itself was beautifully decorated with evergreen garlands.

Miss Hardwick, Mr. Waters, Mr. A. Steventon, Mr. T. Ward, and others added a unique touch with exhibits of curiosities and artifacts from Eastern, European, Zulu, and Chinese origins. One standout was a hat crafted entirely by Miss Boldero of North Albertland using nikau palm, a piece so finely made it could have been displayed at the prestigious Dunedin Exhibition earlier in the month.

Other exceptional displays included a lady's workbox and reel stand by Mr. Powell, an inlaid desk by Mr. T. Grice, miniature tinware by Mr. Witheford, hand-knitted items by the E. Hartnell Knitting Company, intricate lacework by Mrs. Stott, and even a live native lizard submitted by Willie Shepherd.

Among the competitive exhibits for individuals under 21 were kauri gum ornaments by G. and H. Dudding, a well-crafted hanging cabinet by Frank L. Hartnell, an intricate wooden picture frame by Denny Linton, and many excellent maps created by students of Port Albert School. Other highlights included illuminated texts framed by the Farrand family, Band of Hope card frames, opal paintings by F. West of Helensville, and albums of pressed ferns by Ellen and Kate Cameron, also of Helensville.

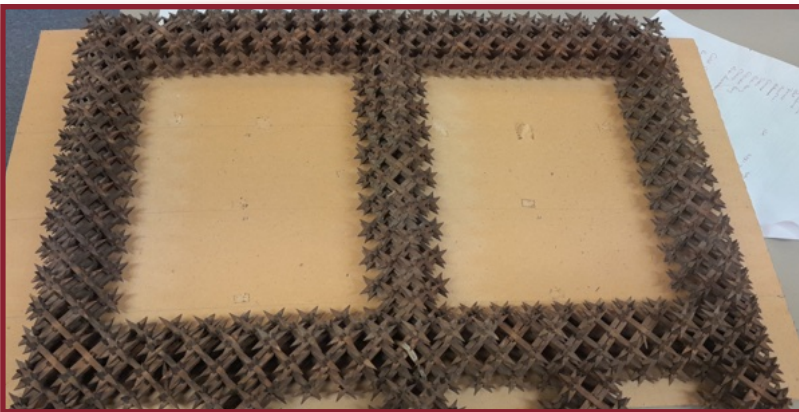
Needlework featured prominently, with children submitting clothing items that reflected a dedication to the vanishing art of plain hand sewing. Competitors were divided into three-year age groups to ensure fair competition, and boys and girls competed separately.

In total, there were 235 prize entries, with 178 awards given across categories such as bouquets and flowers, cooking, homegrown vegetables, art, drawings, maps, and more.

Refreshments were provided by Mr. G. Thompson, offering tea from 4 to 8 p.m., as well as oranges, strawberries, bananas, and temperance drinks throughout the evening. On the first night, Mr. G. T. Hartnell presided over the meeting and announced the prize winners, while Mrs. Waters, Miss Slator, and other musicians from Wharehine performed excellent vocal and instrumental pieces. Mr. T. Day of Hoteo North also entertained the younger audience with a half-hour magic lantern show featuring comic and other scenes.

Though some wished the exhibition could have been extended to a third day, the committee chose to stick to the original plan. Many were disappointed, especially since the weather cleared on Saturday. However, there was widespread enthusiasm for hosting a similar event the following summer. Young people of the district were already brainstorming their exhibits, while organizers reflect on lessons learned to make the next exhibition even better.

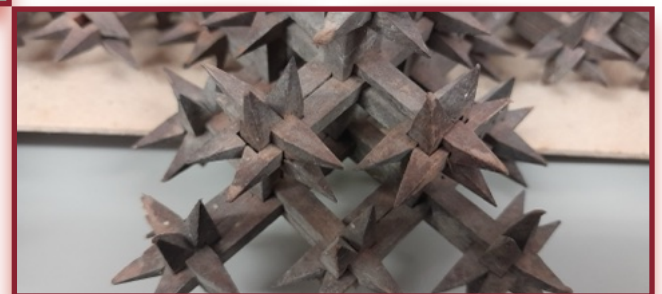
Dennis Cook Linton, commonly known as Denny, was born in 1872, making him 17 at the time he created a remarkable picture frame which won him First Prize in the Picture Frame Category and was described as being "fashioned out of some hundreds of bits of wood locked together." While Albertland Heritage Museum does not hold Denny's original frame, our collection includes a similar piece that likely reflects the craftsmanship of his work.



The double frame in the museum's collection (Accession #1982.17.1) was moved from under the grandstand at Port Albert where the district's museum was originally housed. It was crafted by the James Brothers who were working on the renovations of the Port Albert Wharf. Like Denny's frame, this masterpiece was created without the use of nails, glue, or hidden mechanisms—an impressive feat of skill

and precision.

Take a look at the photo above and right to appreciate the incredible effort and detail involved in constructing such an intricate design.



“THE ALBERTLANDERS.”

AN INTERESTING PUBLICATION.

As a Christmas present a copy of “The Albertlanders.” a fascinating story of the pioneers in the ‘sixties and ‘seventies, by the late Sir Henry Brett, Kt., and Henry Hook, is worthy of consideration. About 240 interesting illustrations are contained in the publication, which can be bought at the “Star” Office, from Leslie Haines, Dargaville, or from Mrs. E. Flowers, Bank Street, Whangarei. The price is £1, or by post £1 0/9 (cash with order), from R. Hames, secretary, Albertland Records Association, Paparua Railway, North Auckland.

Get your copy of *The Albertlanders* Today!

Discovered in *Papers Past* (Auckland Star, Volume LVIII, Issue 298, 17 December 1927, Page 14):

Who would have imagined that this book, first published nearly a century ago, would remain one of our bestsellers 97 years later?

Secure your copy today for just \$90 at the Albertland Heritage Museum or order online at www.albertlandmuseum.co.nz (postage and packaging additional).

