

Albertland Heritage Museum Inc



Patron:
Mr Richard Te Haara



The Kauri Industry.
Montage of photos

Newsletter - February 2025

Open
Hours

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

Contents:

Welcome To Our New Patron Mr Richard Te Haara	Page 2
Inferno of 1898	Page 2-3
Curator's Chronicles	Page 4-5
Preserving the Harvest	Page 6
Did You Know	Page 7
Century Apart - Then & Now	Page 8
Wharehine Community	Page 9

Editors Message:

As I attempt to settle back into a routine after the Christmas break, I find myself slipping into some rather bad habits. Despite my best efforts—carefully marking important dates on the calendar—I still manage to miss them! Does anyone else struggle with this? More importantly, how do you pull yourself out of the post-holiday slump and return to a sense of normality? I'm open to all suggestions!

The museum calendar is already filling up fast, and at the top of our list is the exciting task of hosting the New Zealand History Federation Conference AGM in May, aligning with our 29th of May celebrations. This event is our chance to shine—an opportunity to showcase our museum, our dedicated volunteers, and our special corner of New Zealand to visitors from all over the country.

There's plenty to organise, and time is ticking, so it's time to shake off the holiday daze, roll up our sleeves, and get moving. Here's to a productive and exciting start to the year!

Rose and Rob

Welcome to our newly appointed Patron:

Dear Members of The Albertland Heritage Museum

“He whakatoomuri te haere whakamua”

“I am walking backwards into the future, with my eyes fixed firmly on the past”

I am deeply honoured to accept the role of Patron of the Albertland Heritage Museum. Your warm welcome and kind words truly mean a great deal to me and my Maori culture.

The Albertland Heritage Museum holds a special place in preserving our rich history and cultural heritage. It is a privilege to be associated with such a reputable institution dedicated to celebrating and safeguarding our past.

I am looking forward to contributing to the museum’s continued success and growth.

Together, we can further the museum’s mission of educating and inspiring our community about the invaluable legacy of Albertland, the Kaipara Harbour and its sacred mountains.

Thank you once again for this esteemed opportunity and for your gracious welcome.



*Patron:
Mr Richard Te Haara*

Inferno of 1898: The Fires That Tested the Settlers’ Spirit

With many tools at our disposal to combat large-scale fires, we are acutely aware of the importance of monitoring and early warning systems for drought-like conditions. Summer arrives with its long, hot days and little to no rain, a welcome season for many. However, this warmth often turns into a devastating threat, as fires begin to ignite across the landscape. While enjoying the heat of a traditional summer, we keep a watchful eye on the fire risk board just inside our town’s boundary. As it shifts from low to extreme, we find ourselves wondering—when will the rain finally come?

Deforestation has been an ongoing issue since the arrival of settlers. Around 1847, an estimated 28 million acres of forest covered the land, but by 1909, only 17 million acres remained, with an annual loss of 71,000 hectares. In 1853, a settler’s fire, driven by a strong Canterbury north-westerly wind, consumed 40 kilometres of Banks Peninsula



2004-2-02-51 Burn off at Te Whau - the Grange in the foreground

Forest over three weeks. Many fires were ignited by bush workers’ billies, while land-clearing efforts only intensified the destruction.

When John Ackland explored the area that would become Mount Peel Station in 1855, he and his companion crossed the Rangitata River above Peel Forest and started a fire in the tussock and grass. The resulting blaze swept through 20,235 hectares of countryside and was visible from 97 kms away.

In the 1860s, advertisements by the Auckland Provincial Government promised immigrants ‘free farms’ of 40 acres. However, these grants often consisted of dense, inaccessible bushland, leading settlers to clear the land by any means possible. This transformation into farmland peaked between 1870 and 1920, coinciding with a notable rise in devastating fires. Concerns over the impact of these fires, particularly on native bird populations and forests, led Canterbury MP Thomas Potts to advocate for forest conservation, making the first

conservation speech in Parliament asking the Government to 'take steps to ascertain the present condition of the forests of the Colony with view to their better conservation.'

During the summer of 1873–74, Prime Minister Julius Vogel toured the South Island and was alarmed by the widespread deforestation. He tried to introduce laws to control it, but many provinces opposed his plan to set aside 6 million acres of public land. As a result, Parliament blocked his conservation efforts.

In 1874, the Forests Act was passed, focusing on regulating native timber and allowing the creation of State Forests. By 1881, 200,000 hectares were set aside under the 1877 Land Act to protect timber, along with new logging regulations.

Concerns over forest conservation continued, leading to the New Zealand State Forests Act in 1885, followed by regulations in 1886. This law allowed authorities to recruit men for fire fighting and imposed fines of up to £20 for starting fires in or near State Forests.

During January and February of 1898, devastating fires raged across both Australia and New Zealand. In Coromandel, bush fires tore through the district, destroying part of the aerial tram leading to the Triumph battery. Closer to home, massive fires broke out in Te Arai, spreading through both bush and open country.

The district was shrouded in thick smoke, making it impossible to track the direction of the fires. It was later discovered that one fire had started at Haywood's clearing near Maeneenee Creek and burned through the bush in North Albertland, reaching the Te Arai Post Office—covering a distance of eight or nine miles. Another fire ignited in Allen's Bush at Topuni, spreading over the hills to Mangawhai, where it continued burning for days. More fires erupted across the region. One, started by Mr. Fox while clearing land, soon spread to Mr. Brown's property and another thought to have been started by gum diggers in Smith's Swamp at the southwest corner of Te Arai which saw flames run along the timber-hauling road through the Tapu bush, threatening nearby homesteads. For three days, the coastline remained obscured by thick smoke, making visibility nearly impossible. The fires caused widespread destruction in Kaipara, Te Arai, North Albertland, and Omaha. Many settlers suffered severe losses, and several million feet of valuable timber were reduced to ashes.

Accounts from those who fought to save their homes and livelihoods are harrowing. Suffocated by smoke, scorched by flames, and burned by flying embers, they battled relentlessly against the advancing inferno. When they could fight no longer, they faced their losses with a resilience that might be difficult to comprehend today. Everything they owned had been wiped out in an instant, yet they stood ready to rebuild—undaunted and determined.

This courage was not limited to the men. Often, the men were working 20 or 30 miles away when the fires struck, leaving women and children to defend their homes. Armed with nothing but buckets of water, they fought desperately to keep the flames at bay. Even in the face of defeat, they accepted their losses with quiet strength, recalling not only the buildings and belongings they had lost but also the treasured relics of their past.

Their bravery and perseverance in the face of such devastation are a reminder of the pioneering spirit of the time.



2004-2-98-434 Burning off - Grandfather JS Moffatt, Harold Marsh and Hollinger boys



2004.2.99.29 Burn off at Marsh's Point

The Curator's Chronicle

The Journey of Neddy: A Rocking Horse with a Story to Tell

A museum is more than just a collection of objects – it is a keeper of memories, a bridge between past and present. At Albertland Heritage Museum, our curators, Jenny and Rose, take on this vital role with dedication and care. They spend many hours receiving, evaluating, and preserving donations, each one weaving a thread in the fabric of our history.

Some items arrive wrapped in layers of nostalgia, like a suitcase filled with treasures from Veena Halliwell (nee Curel), a gift that speaks volumes about her life and the places she called home. But we will save Veena's story for another day. Today, we want to introduce you to someone else. Someone with a different kind of history – a four-legged friend with a past of his own.

Meet Neddy!

Neddy is thought to be a 100 year old wooden rocking horse, well-loved and well-worn. He arrived at the museum last year, donated by Ngaire of Warkworth. Unlike many of our treasures, he has no direct ties to Albertland's history, and that gave us pause. Should we accept him? Could we justify making space for something without a clear local connection?



Neddy the Horse



Stuart Saigeman Rocking Horse Restorer

But then, we looked closer.

His once-glossy paint now flakes like old parchment, drifting to the floor with every touch. His eyes, though dulled with time, still hold echoes of childhood laughter. His mane and tail, now thin and weary, once danced with the joyful motion of a child's ride. Neddy wasn't just an object – he was a storyteller.

And so, we said yes.

But what next for our beloved but battered steed? Enter Stuart, a rocking horse restoration specialist (yes, there is such a thing in New Zealand!). Earlier this month, Neddy embarked on an adventure of his own – a road trip south. His journey took an unexpected turn when plans changed at the last moment due to the closure of the Desert Road, and he found himself making a pit stop in Taihape. There he was carefully loaded into Stuart's 4WD, which just so happened to be towing a full-sized horse float en-route to an equestrian weekend in Taupō.

With a laugh, we asked for reassurance that if Neddy won any prizes at the event, we would like to be the first to know. And just like that, our little rocking horse was whisked away, off to begin the next chapter of his long and storied life.

Now we wait. The estimate for his restoration is pending, and while it is not something we would usually

undertake, Neddy might just be worth it. Time will tell.

One thing is already clear: during his time at the museum, Neddy has stirred up a surprising mix of emotions. For some, he is a cherished reminder of childhood – an emblem of warmth and joy. For others, he evokes a different response, perhaps a sense of unease. And that in itself, is the magic of history. Objects don't just sit silently on shelves – they speak. They provoke. They remind us of who we were and who we are.

So, as Neddy settles in for his makeover, we will keep you posted on his fate. Will he return to us in all his former glory? Or will time and history leave their mark on him forever?

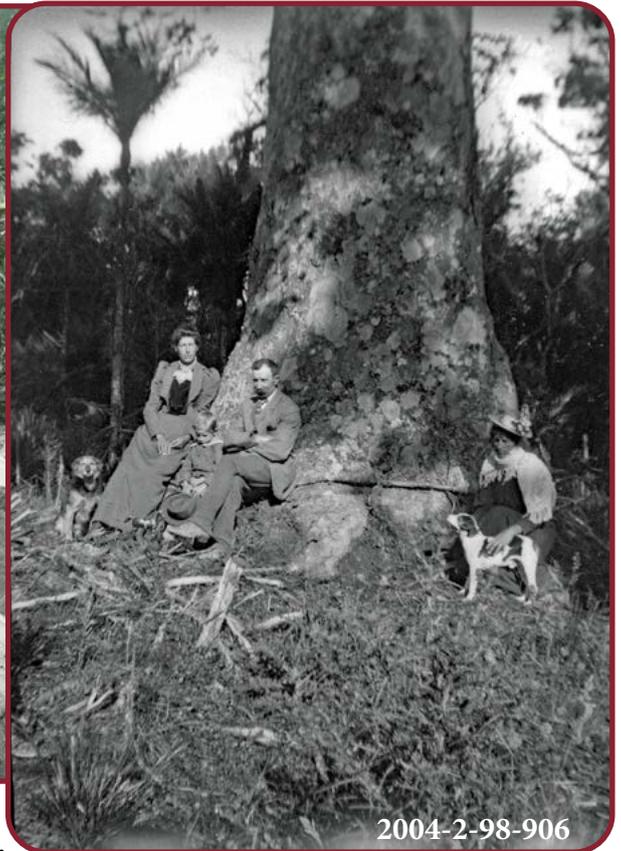
Stay tuned!

Felling Giants: Kauri Logging in the Halfpenny Block



*Hauling Kauri timber from the bush
at Halfpenny's Wharckine
Nov 8th 1904*

2004-2-2007-044



2004-2-98-906

Photo Right: Beside big Kauri tree. Minnie, Jim and Cyril Halfpenny, with Ella Marsh 28 Dec 1901. Halfpenny's bush.

Birthday Wishes

January – Glenda Berg, Karen Lennon and Val Hegh and her sister Rosemary Tobin who turned 80 on 2nd January – a very special celebration!

February – Marjorie Prictor and Allan Peake

Wishing all of our loyal supporters and volunteers a very Happy Birthday from the team at Albertland Heritage Museum!

Preserving the Harvest: A Forgotten Art Making a Comeback

Imagine stepping into a colonial New Zealand kitchen on a crisp autumn morning. The scent of bubbling fruit fills the air as jars of golden peaches and wine-coloured plums line the wooden bench, each one a promise of sweetness for the lean winter months ahead. Outside, the vegetable garden—larger than the house itself—is a hive of activity, with cabbages, potatoes, and onions being carefully gathered before the first frost sets in.

Before the convenience of freezers and supermarkets, self-sufficiency was a necessity. Every household had its own methods of preserving food, ensuring that nothing went to waste. Fruits were bottled in heavy glass jars, sealed tight against the passing seasons. Vegetables were pickled in crocks, layered with vinegar and spices. Eggs, too precious to squander, were carefully coated in preservative to keep them fresh long after the hens had stopped laying.



2004-2-01-214 - Marsh Family Garden



2004-2-98-585 - Port Albert Show

For generations, this rhythm of growing and preserving was a way of life. Families spent long hours in their gardens, their hands in the soil, working together to secure their food supply. Fathers and grandfathers, with quiet expertise, turned surplus fruit into homemade wines, while brewing beer was a skill passed down among men. Women laboured over bubbling pots of jam and chutney, filling pantries with jars that would see their families through the winter. Even children had their roles—gathering firewood, stirring preserves, or helping with the “Dig for Victory” school gardening efforts during wartime.

By the mid-20th century, the rise of supermarkets and modern conveniences shifted food culture dramatically. The once-essential skills of preserving and gardening faded, and by 1956, fewer than one-third of households still grew their own vegetables. The Yates Garden Guide, once a staple in every home, was no longer as widely referenced, and large orchards that had been selling points in real estate ads since the 1860s became relics of the past.

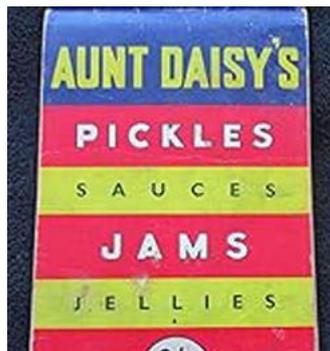
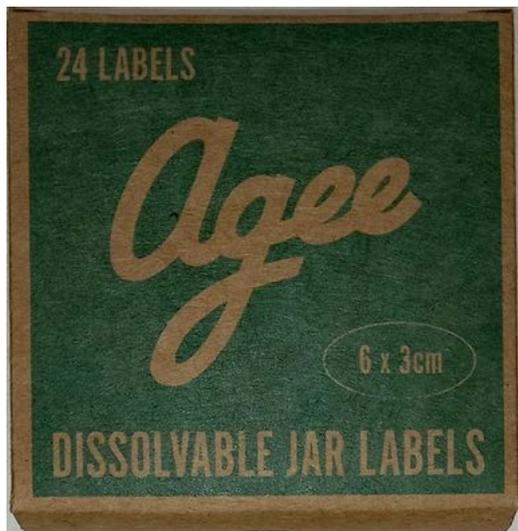
But history has a way of circling back. In the 2000s, a revival began. The allure of homegrown, chemical-free produce, the joy of turning excess fruit into something delicious, and a growing awareness of food sustainability have all contributed to a resurgence in bottling, pickling, and dehydrating. Once-forgotten preserving jars are making their way back onto kitchen shelves and are highly sort after in all the trendy ‘Op shops’ as a new generation rediscovers the skills that kept their ancestors fed for centuries. Perhaps, in our fast-paced modern world, there’s still something to be learned from the past.

What you do today can improve all your tomorrows – Ralph Marston.

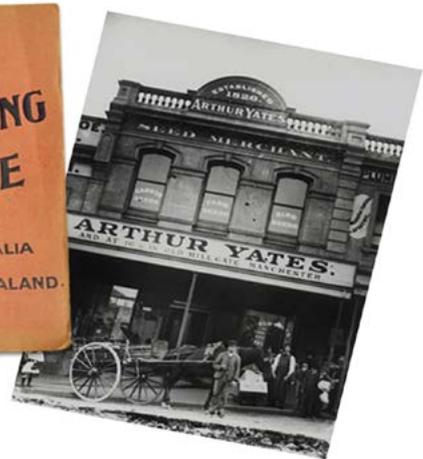
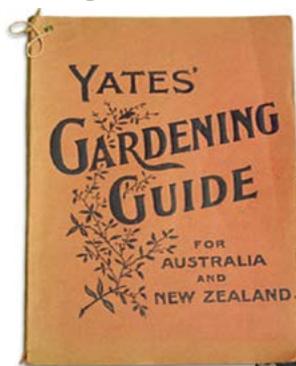
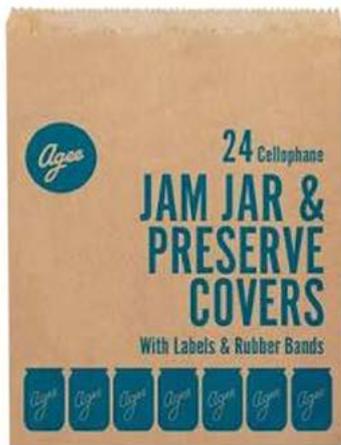
Did you know?

The first AGEE jars were produced between the 1920s and 1940s by the Australian Glass Company, which operated in both Sydney, Australia, and Penrose, Auckland. Initially known as “Queen” jars, these early designs featured a distinctive branded collar neck. A wire band with two clamp-style handles secured a rubber ring (or gasket) and a glass lid, which was clamped down during processing. Once the jars were heated and sealed, the clamps were released to test the seal's integrity.

By the 1940s and 1950s, the original Queen jars began to be phased out in favour of screw-band lids, marking a shift in home preserving methods. During this time, AGEE introduced the Utility and AGEE Special jars, which became household staples for generations of home preservers.



How many of these do you remember?



Important Announcement

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we regret to inform you that the planned Gittos Reunion Weekend on March 22nd & 23rd has been cancelled. However, we are pleased to announce that all going well it will be rescheduled for 2026.

We appreciate your understanding and will share further details as soon as they become available.

A Century Apart – Then & Now

Looking Back

In Papers Past (Rodney and Otamatea Times, 11 February 1925) it was advertised that owing to Health Department's Restrictions, the Wellsford Show has been POSTPONED until Thursday, March 12th, 1925. H. M. SMITH, Secretary. A polio epidemic had gripped the country, beginning in Petone in November of 1924. By December there were 59 cases in Wellington and numbers climbed dramatically to 340 in February and 360 in March. The epidemic had spread rapidly throughout New Zealand, but the highest numbers were in Taranaki, Wellington and Canterbury.

As reported in the Hawke's Bay Tribune on 21 February 1925, orchardists in Port Albert were celebrating the arrival of *Aphelinus mali*, a tiny parasitic wasp introduced to the district in 1924. Wasting no time, this remarkable little insect quickly established itself as a natural enemy of the destructive woolly apple aphid. Originally imported by the Cawthron Institute in Nelson in 1922, *Aphelinus mali* was so small that keen eyesight was needed to spot it darting along the bark of apple trees. Its unusual method of controlling the aphid population was both effective and ruthless—it would burrow an almost imperceptible hole right in the centre of the aphid's back to lay its eggs. This act marked the end for the aphid, putting a stop to its wool-weaving, sap-sucking ways. The Cawthron Institute successfully bred 3,000 wasps from the initial imported population. Before long, they had been released across the country, spreading rapidly and providing a natural solution to an orchardist's long-standing pest problem.

25 February 1925 - The Main Highways Council No. 1 suggested that the port of the Main Highway between Wellsford and Kaiwaka be declared a Government Road owing to its importance and the sparsely populated country along its route. It was estimated that a road 12 ft. x 9 ft. could be made for about £20,000 over a time lasting 4 to 5 years, and the contribution from Rodney County council for this work would be £3000.

Today in the District

The Service at the Port Albert Methodist Church —affectionately known as the Little Church on the Hill—welcomed a few newcomers on the 9th February, bringing fresh energy to the congregation. The service is very informal and as a community-owned heritage building, ongoing support is vital to ensure its preservation for future generations. Everyone welcome.

The next Service will be held on Sunday 9th March at 1.30 pm.

Meanwhile, the inaugural Port Albert Settlers' Market took place at the Port Albert Temperance Hall on Sunday, February 16th, with 20+ stallholders and a fantastic turnout from the local community. The event was a great success, creating a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere for all who attended.

The next Settlers' Market will be held on Sunday, March 16th.

Check out Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61572007720147>



Port Albert Settlers' Market

Wharehine Community Hall

On Saturday, February 22nd, the Wharehine community, along with residents from neighbouring districts, gathered at the Wharehine Hall for a BBQ and shared lunch with committee members and volunteers.

The devastating impact of Cyclone Gabrielle, coupled with the storm that followed, underscored the urgent need for a safe space where locals could seek refuge in times of crisis. In response, funding was secured to establish an Emergency Community Hub—offering essential facilities like showers and communication access to prevent the isolation many experienced in the aftermath of the cyclone, when help was slow to arrive,



and power and key services were disrupted. The Albertland Heritage Museum was delighted to contribute several photographs from its Harold Marsh collection to help refresh the interior of the hall, adding a touch of history to its new look. – with amazing results. Well done to the Wharehine Hall team!



Speeches - Wharehine Hall

Check out Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=473686244792368&set=a.473686218125704>

The Wellsford RSA, 1 Olympus Road, Wellsford provides Friday night dinners for the community. Great choice of meals and a huge salad bar for a reasonable price. Come along and join in – great atmosphere.

Check out Facebook page:

Wellsford RSA inc.

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Wellsford-memorial-RSA-inc-100075853601977/>

Recently the Wellsford Lions Club donated a Steriliser to the Port Albert Hall to make cleaning up after functions a lot quicker and easier. A big thank you to the Lion's club members for this generosity.

Check out Facebook page:

Wellsford Lions Club <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=281233064419430&set=a.281233027752767>

Port Albert Hall

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=409266471368108&set=a.409266451368110>