

Albertland Heritage Museum Inc



Patron:
Mr Richard Te Haara



In Memory of Elva Reid (nee Curel) --- 6/8/1925 --- 15/4/2025



August 2025

Open Hours

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

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Editors Message:

The Power of Collaboration and Generosity

One of the most rewarding aspects of our work at the museum is witnessing the incredible spirit of collaboration and generosity that surrounds us. From volunteers dedicating countless hours to preserving our history, to local families and community members sharing their treasured stories and artefacts, we are constantly reminded that a museum is far more than a building—it is a living, breathing reflection of the community it serves.

Every gift, whether it be time, expertise, or donation, adds a new thread to our shared history. The generosity of our supporters allows us to care for our collections, bring history to life for visitors, and create programs that inspire future generations. Likewise, collaboration—between volunteers, descendants, researchers, and local organisations—ensures that our stories are accurate, meaningful, and inclusive.

In these pages, you will read about the achievements made possible by people working together with a common purpose. We hope that these stories inspire you to continue sharing your knowledge, time, and heart with our community.

Don't Forget!

Join us on Sunday, September 21st for our Annual General Meeting (AGM)! The formal meeting will be followed by a guest speaker, so it's a great chance to catch up, hear something interesting, and get involved.

Everyone is welcome! Please RSVP to our Museum Secretary at albertlandmuseum@gmail.com

Together, we keep history alive.

Rose and Rob

Remembering Elva Reid (nee Curel) 06th August 1925 – 15th April 2025

Earlier this month would have marked the 100th birthday of Elva May Reid (nee Curel), who passed away just four months shy of this milestone.

Elva was born on 6 August 1925, the daughter of Clarence Irvine (Irvine) Curel and Margarette Louise Grice, who married in 1921. She grew up in Port Albert with her siblings—brother Kelvyn Irvine, and sisters June Annie and Noreen Margaret. On 11 February 1947, she married a local man, George Forrest Reid, beginning a happy life together in the community.



Elva and George Reid, Wedding - 1947



George and Elva Reid - 1947

As a young woman, Elva worked as a teller at the BNZ in Wellsford before devoting herself to marriage and family.

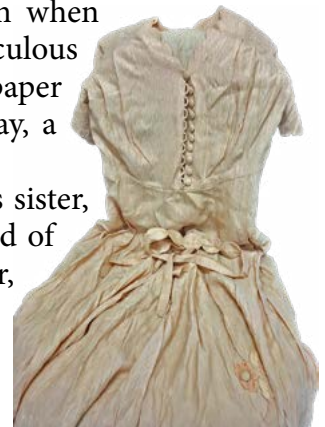
She also nurtured a lifelong passion for history.

A true historian at heart, Elva authored several books on family and local history, and devoted many volunteer hours to the Albertland Heritage Museum when it opened in Wellsford. Her meticulous notes and carefully preserved newspaper clippings remain in the archives today, a

lasting memory to her dedication to recording and protecting the past.

Recently, the museum received a donation of items that once belonged to Elva's sister, Noreen Margaret Curel. Among them was Noreen's wedding dress and the maid of honour dress that Elva wore at her wedding in 1951. A threadbare teddy bear, treasured since Noreen's birth in 1928, was also included in this precious accession.

Elva's love for history was no doubt shaped by her own family's remarkable story.



Wedding of Noreen Curel and Brian Williamson
- LH Matron of Honour Elva Reid

Her grandfather, Edwin Curel, born 26 April 1844, went to sea at just 16, signing on at Dartmouth in 1860. Over the years he sailed at least 40 voyages to Australia, the West Indies, the Mediterranean, Mauritius, Madeira, and beyond, before eventually arriving in New Zealand. In 1882 he left the sea behind to become a Pilot/Signalman at Pouto, Kaipara, receiving his Pilot's Certificate in 1885 from Governor Sir William Francis Drummond Jervois. He and his wife Annie (née Grant) raised 12 children at Pouto, many of whom formed lasting ties with many Albertland families through marriage, including the Neal, Gubb, Davies, and Lipanovic families.

After George's passing in 1986, Elva continued to live independently, spending her retirement in Mangawhai. In February 2022, Elva moved to Amberlea Rest Home, where she passed away peacefully on 15 April 2025, and will be lovingly remembered by her children, Neil, Desma, and Raewyn, and their families.

At the Albertland Heritage Museum, we treasure the memory of historians like Elva—people who dedicate their spare hours to piecing together the past. A rare few, like her, go further, preserving those stories in written form so that future generations can understand and cherish their connections.

Elva Reid is deeply missed, but her legacy continues to inspire.

Neddy the Rocking Horse Comes Home

On the 2nd of August 2025, we proudly welcomed back Neddy the Rocking Horse to the Albertland Heritage Museum. Many of you will remember the story of Neddy's arrival in July 2024, thanks to the generous donation of Ngaire Hopwood of Warkworth. At that time, he was a rather sorry sight — a 3 out of 10 at best — with flaking paint and borer damage, not the sort of horse that children were drawn to climb on.



Neddy before his transition



Ngaire, Victor Hopwood & cousin Amanda & husband Brendon
His transformation was made possible through the generosity of the Lions Club of Wellsford, who funded a full restoration by a talented rocking horse specialist, Stuart Saigeman of Ashhurst. Neddy's journey took him from Wellsford to Stuart's workshop, where Stuart quickly fell under his spell. More than once he asked if Neddy might be for sale, but thanks to the Lions' funding and

particularly their then-president, Roger Farr, it was decided that the best future for Neddy was to be restored to his former glory and proudly displayed at the museum.

The restoration itself was a labour of love. After weeks of careful sanding and applying layers of gesso to rebuild his body, Roger had the honour of choosing Neddy's new look. He selected a classic dapple grey coat with striking black forelegs, finished with finely detailed stirrups, buckles, and a flowing mane. The result is nothing short of magnificent — a true 1925 Ayres rocking horse brought back to life.

Once the restoration was complete, Stuart and his wife delivered Neddy back to Wellsford. Until the unveiling could be arranged, he was hidden away in Roger's music room, where he kept Roger company during many a cowboy song practice session. Only a handful of people knew the secret,

as the museum was busy preparing for the New Zealand History Federation Conference and other events.



At last, on 2nd August, the grand unveiling was held. Ngaire and her husband Victor, along with her cousin Amanda and her husband Brendon, were the very first guests invited. They were joined by around 30 others — Lions volunteers, museum volunteers, and friends — all eager to welcome Neddy home. He made a fitting entrance, arriving in the back of Roger's horse float. Our Patron, Richard Te Haara, blessed him, and speeches

were made alongside a slideshow celebrating his incredible journey. Sadly, Stuart couldn't be there on the day, but his craftsmanship shone through every detail of Neddy's proud new stance.

Now, Neddy holds pride of place at the museum, ready to greet both young and old. And while he looks every inch a showpiece, he's still strong enough to carry a child who asks ever so nicely.



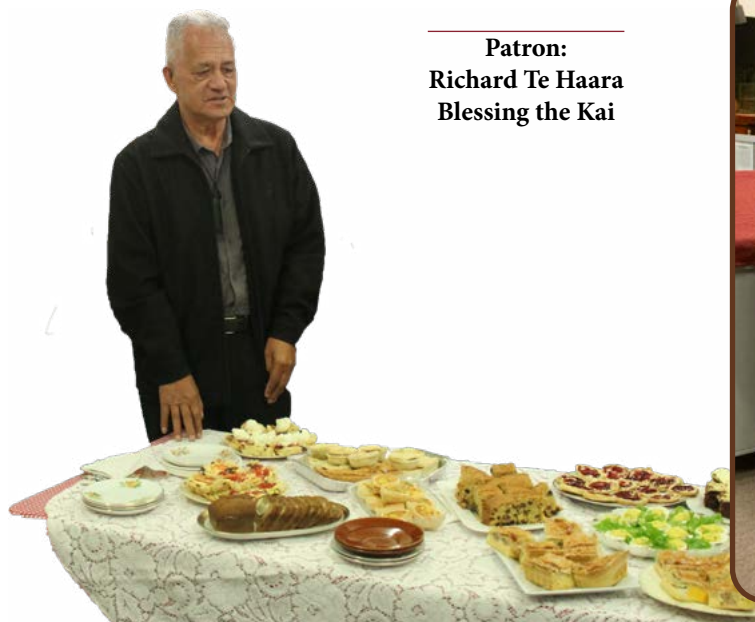
Roger Standing With Neddy

One of Neddy's very first visitors was Rhona Olesen, who came with her great-granddaughter on the 16th of August. That day was especially memorable, as Rhona was celebrating her 102nd birthday. After hearing about Neddy from her daughter Dawn, she decided to come and meet him for herself.

It was a magical sight — Rhona at 102 and Neddy at 100, celebrating a century of memories together.



Rhona with Great Granddaughter Lena



**Patron:
Richard Te Haara
Blessing the Kai**



**Front: Victor, Brendon, Amada & Ngaire
Back: Richard Te Haara, Roger Farr & Steve Levet**

Quotation

Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.

Helen Keller

The Curator's Chronicle

With spring just around the corner and heat pumps finally getting a rest, we've been admiring a little blast from the past in the museum.

This 1930s Valor paraffin heater has had a recent transformation. Mass-produced in its day and built to last, these heaters are still turning up in antique shops and online nearly 100 years later!

Not exactly safety-approved by today's standards... but you have to admit, it's a beauty
The Valor Company was founded in 1890 in Erdington, Birmingham, originally producing oil storage containers for the Anglo-American Oil Co. In 1902, the company expanded into oil heaters, designed to warm draughty Victorian homes, before later developing a wide range of paraffin heaters.

In 1936, The Valor Company Ltd was floated on the London Stock Exchange. To comply with new U.S. anti-trust laws, its American parent company was forced to sell its interest. Just three years later, in 1939, Valor contributed to the war effort, turning its expertise to manufacturing ammunition boxes and fuel cans alongside its usual products.



Showing Bullet Hole

Birmingham—continues to operate today, more than 130 years after the company was first founded.

Our Valor heater, Model No. 525-R, has been part of the museum collection since 2007. For years it sat quietly in a corner, largely unnoticed, until our talented volunteer Sean spotted it and decided it deserved some TLC.

After a careful restoration, it came back almost unrecognisable—its rust removed

and a fresh coat of shiny black paint bringing it back to life. But Sean also discovered something remarkable during the process: the heater bore the scars of target practice, with a bullet hole cleanly passing through its body.

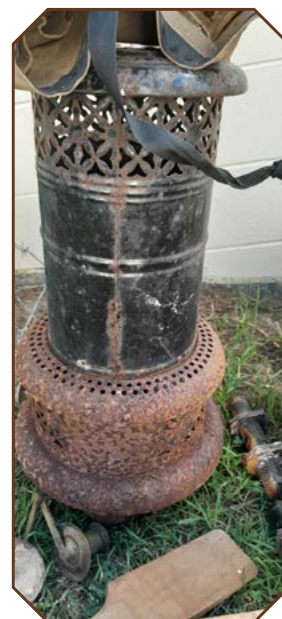
This unexpected detail adds a fascinating—and rather dramatic—layer to the story of an object that has already stood the test of time.



December 1933



December 1934



Before Restoration

By the early 1960s, Valor was heavily reliant on paraffin heaters. When this market collapsed, the company faced serious financial difficulties. To diversify, it acquired new businesses and expanded its product lines to include oil heaters, boiling stoves, oil filters, transport cans, fire extinguishers, sanitary and engineering brassware, and even furniture. At its height, the company employed 974 staff. In 1965, Valor Engineering Ltd was incorporated to continue the oil heating equipment side of the business.

Innovation remained a hallmark. In 1966, Valor introduced Inca, the world's first wall-mounted gas radiator, meeting rising post-war expectations for modern living. The company changed its name to Valor Heating Ltd in 1971 and, in 1972, built a new factory for gas cooker production.

In 1987, another transformation came with a name change to Yale and Valor. Their gas-fired space heating business—still based in



After Restoration

PORT ALBERT MARKET

With the return of the modern and highly successful Settlers' Market on October 5th, it's fitting to look back at the Port Albert market of 1863 — held not long after the first settlers arrived in the district.

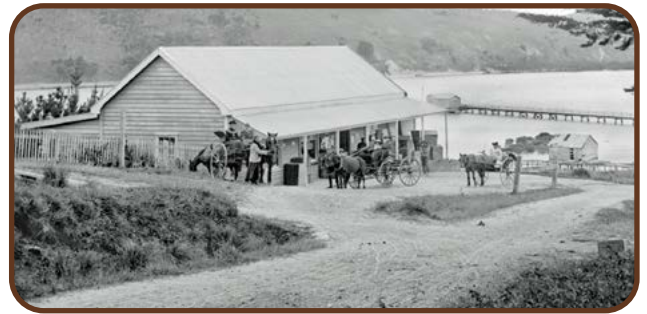
On May 29th, 1863, the settlers marked the first anniversary of their departure from England with a large community gathering. On this occasion, the principal street was white. Just two days later, the first market was held there, where two heifers from Mangawhai sold for £12 each, and a bull fetched £10.

The following month's Market Day proved to be a true red-letter occasion for the young township. Three vessels lay in the river, including the Progress, and new weatherboard houses stood proudly along either side of the street. Among the notable new buildings were the Co-operative Store run by Henry Marcroft, Judd's Drapery Store, Isles' Boarding House, and Sam Johnson's impressive two-storeyed house, which also housed the post office, printing office, and family dwelling.

The market was a monthly event, well known and well attended by many of the older settlers in the area. On Wednesday, July 1st, Mr. Marcroft slaughtered a bullock and sold it off in convenient joints at 8d per pound. No doubt the settlers of the time thought the price outrageous — just as we do today. Still, as their circumstances slowly improved, hopes grew for a regular supply of beef at future markets.

Self-sufficiency was a key goal, and alongside livestock, settlers were planting fruit trees. One enterprising seller brought between 300 and 400 varieties from Auckland and Te Arai, which sold quickly at good prices. Potatoes, however, were scarce. Local Māori brought some to market, fetching between 1½d and 3d per pound.

The market was more than just a place to buy and sell; it was a hub for community life. Neighbours gathered to exchange news and discuss matters of public business. On that July day, settlers debated how best to dispose of town lands, clear roads in different directions, and strengthen ties with Albertlanders who had not yet arrived. There was a growing sense that it was time to put aside differences and unite for the good of the settlement.



That first winter brought its share of hard lessons. Frost ruined potato crops, heavy and persistent rains washed away others, rats consumed stores of wheat, and unfenced cattle helped themselves to settlers' gardens by night. Inexperience showed, yet gradually they began to adapt to the Kaipara climate.



Despite these setbacks, progress was being made. Still, the first reports published in the Albertland Gazette were said to stir more sympathy than excitement for the settlement.

(Information sourced from Papers Past, Daily Southern Cross, Volume XIX, Issue 1889, 6 August 1863, Page 3 and Centennial of Albertland 1862 - 1962)

Sept

21

Save this Date!



YOU'RE INVITED

TO OUR AGM

Everyone Welcome
At the conclusion of the AGM we will
have our Guest Speaker followed by
afternoon tea

Venue: Wellsford RSA
Date: Sunday 21st September 2025
Time: 1.30 pm

Email: albertlandmuseum@gmail.com
Phone: 09 423 8181

Make sure you mark your calendar with this date

Events: Port Albert Church --- Sunday 14th September 2025 @ 1:30pm

Birthday Wishes for July

While August is typically a quieter month for birthdays, we cannot forget the huge milestone reached by **Rhona Olesen**, Wellsford's oldest resident who turned 102 on the 16th August 2025. This day was celebrated by her family and closest friends with a visit to Albertland Heritage Museum to see our rocking horse Neddy. An earlier celebration was held at the Port Albert Church where Rhona shared her cake with **Brian Becroft** who also celebrated his birthday. A big happy birthday to **Nella Allen** who also celebrated her birthday this month.

We hope that everyone with a birthday in August enjoyed their special day!

If you've recently celebrated a birthday or have one coming up, please let us know — we'd love to celebrate with you too!



Some historic birthdays to remember are **Zoe Grice** on 09th August, 1924 and **Ethel May Grice**, 21st August 1885 at Port Albert.

Pouto v Albertland

Reading a newspaper article from 1907, long before television and radio, you notice how richly descriptive the language is—leaving little to the imagination.

In the Rodney and Otamatea Times of 14 August 1907 (Page 2), their correspondent reports on a much-anticipated match between the two undefeated teams of Pouto and Albertland. Great interest surrounded the game, and the visiting Pouto side even brought with them a loyal band of supporters.

The reporter begins his summary in dramatic fashion:

“The first few minutes of the game was of cyclonic speed and the visiting team scored a try which was nicely converted. From this to the end of the first spell Port Albert kept the ball well in the visitors’ ground, scoring three tries and by converting two the spell ending Pouto 5 points and Port Albert 13 points.”

Of the second half, he writes:

“The unusual feature of no scoring was the result of the second 40 minutes. The game was mostly kept in the centre of the field – both sides straining every effort to get away with the ball, but being in like manner either pulled down or tripped in their onward rush. The absence of Browne, Heywood, and W. Booth from Albertland was felt very much. No doubt the game would have been won easier with their assistance.”

With the final score standing at Pouto 5 and Port Albert 13, the evening celebrations began. The visitors were treated to a dinner at Bennett’s, followed by the customary football speeches and a lively social in the hall.

During the social, comrades of Mr. Lionel Littin—who had recently moved to Warkworth—presented his wife with a silver teapot and Mr. Littin with a case of pipes, as reminders of his football days in Port Albert and of their many friends in the district.

The gifts were presented by Mr. George Nicholson, who spoke warmly on behalf of the A.L.F.C., with further words from Mr. George Reid.

Mr. Littin replied briefly but with feeling, remarking that he “liked best to play with the old boys of the Club.”



Rugby - Pouto v Albertland

Harold Marsh - 2004-2-99-135

PORT ALBERT CUCUMBER SEEDS

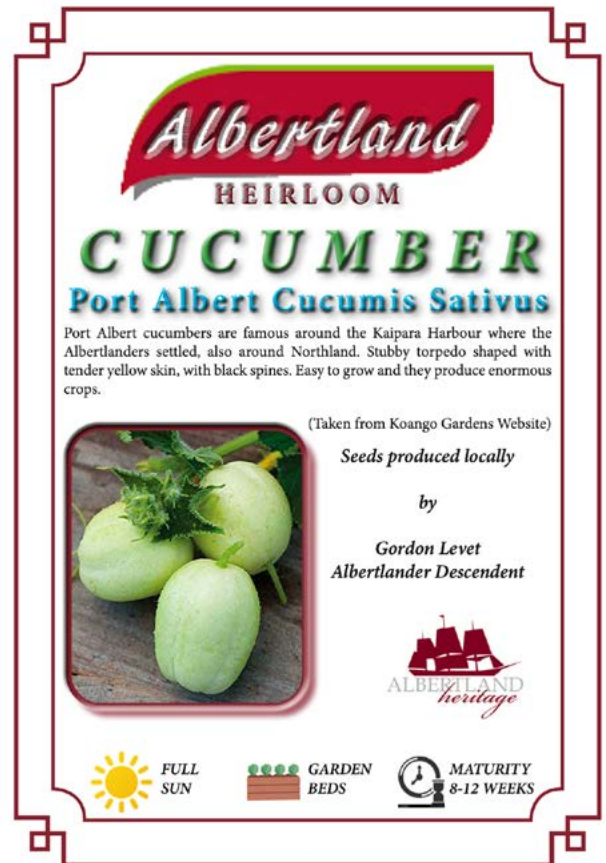
HURRY – ONLY A FEW PACKETS LEFT!

We still have a limited supply of Port Albert Cucumber seeds — originally brought over with the Albertland Settlers.

These small white cucumbers are crisp, refreshing, and can even be eaten just like an apple — a must-have for every spring garden!

Locally grown by Gordon Levet, these seeds were a real hit at our recent NZ History Federation Conference. Now, the last remaining packets are available as a museum fundraiser. 5 seeds for just \$3.

Call in to the museum today and grab your packet while stocks last



LOOKING BACK AT THE WEATHER IN 1908

North of Auckland, in Wellsford (August 1908), we can only imagine the state of the roads and how difficult travel must have been without the benefit of a 4WD. A report published in the New Zealand Herald on 4 August 1908, titled “The Sorrows of Settlers – Difficulties of Traffic Taking to Sledges,” paints a vivid picture of those challenges.

Today, after a week of rain and mud, we might grumble while still being able to throw our clothes into a washing machine and navigate the roads in a Toyota ute or Ford Ranger. For the settlers of Wellsford, however, things were very different.

The Herald’s special correspondent began his piece with dry humour:

“Wellsford, just now, is not ‘at home’ to visitors. It isn’t exactly at its Sunday best, not by a long way. When visitors do struggle through over the clay banks and slips of the railway route, or risk being left out till summer to dry by taking the coach, Wellsford extends a grimy paw and raises the visitor’s spirits by such a greeting as: ‘How are you, stranger? Hope you have got webbed feet — if you haven’t, you can’t go far. No, the coach don’t go no further than this; if you want to go on you’d better take a boat. Well, just plunge through and come inside. Don’t trouble scraping your boots, it’s no use, and you’ll have to take us as you find us.’

This report was written around the time the Wellsford Railway Station was erected, intended as the new centre of the township. The station boasted a stationmaster’s office, a large goods shed, and a small settlement nearby, which included a store, a boarding house, the residence of the engineer in charge of the line works, and even a blacksmith’s shop.

Surrounding all this progress, however, was mud—vast, treacherous slush that dragged pedestrians in up to their knees with every step. Attempts to make the roads passable with bundles of fascines, logs of wood, and sods of turf proved futile, as the mud swallowed them all and demanded more. The railway platform itself lay six inches deep in mud. There was not a single house near the railway that wasn’t surrounded by it, and it was

said the only dry spot in the settlement was the floor of the blacksmith's shop.

A number of men camped nearby managed to cut drains around their tents to keep the earth floors from becoming puddles, but everywhere beyond was deep, sucking slush. The roads to Wayby, Port Albert, and Warkworth were all but impassable, and across the Kaipara district the same story was told — “road metal is the crying need of the North.”

One dray became so deeply stuck just outside Wellsford that screw jacks had to be requisitioned, along with a team of horses yoked to the back, to haul it free. Even the Wellsford–Wayby coach, a light spring vehicle, required six horses to pull it through the short distance, both coach and animals continuously smothered in mud.

Everyday life was equally treacherous. One lady attempting to cross the road near the station became stuck fast midway and had to be rescued by several men who hauled her out of the mire. Farmers, cut off from civilisation, often abandoned carts altogether and turned to sledges, which could carry heavier loads with less strain on the horses.

For Aucklanders, safe in the shelter of the city during winter, it was hard to imagine what country people endured for months on end. The most surprising part, the reporter observed, was the indomitable cheerfulness of the settlers. In fact, he claimed it would be difficult to find more good-humoured folk anywhere in New Zealand. The people of Wellsford, it seemed, were almost proud of their mud.

As one man, standing in slush well over his boots, remarked with a grin:

“Muddy! This muddy! Oh, bless you, no! This ain’t nothing. You come with me, and I’ll show you a road near my place where you can lose a team of bullocks — and not even see their horns.”

Despite the mud, the impassable roads, and the endless toil, life in Wellsford went on. The settlers trudged, hauled, and sloshed through their days with remarkable perseverance—and often a wry sense of humour. As one local quipped, the mud wasn’t something to complain about; it was simply part of the adventure, a test of stamina, and a handy excuse for a chat with neighbours while getting stuck.

By all accounts, Wellsford’s inhabitants wore the mud like a badge of honour. Horses, drays, and even the occasional unlucky visitor were swallowed by it, but the people themselves remained upright, cheerful, and quick with a laugh.

It seems the mud might have slowed them down, but it never dampened their spirits—or their storytelling. And perhaps, for anyone brave enough to visit back then, it was all part of the fun.



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