

Albertland Heritage Museum Inc



Patron:
Mr Richard Te Haara



Harold Marsh
2004-2-00-80



“Koolamo” - Japanese Performer with his pet Koala at Marsh’s farm

October 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:

Every month we sit down with a blank slate for the newsletter and wonder — where do we begin? There’s always that moment of hesitation before the stories start to take shape. Often, something memorable happens that sparks inspiration — like our story about Bullen’s Circus, which brought back vivid memories for our volunteers, Rob and Grahame. Other times, our stories follow the rhythm of the seasons or events happening around the district, and before we know it, the newsletter begins to find its voice.

Once the stories are drafted, I send them off to Rob. Sometimes I include photos, but more often he dives into our vast collection to find just the right image to bring each story to life. After plenty of back-and-forth discussion, Rob trying to catch me out with spelling mistakes, and a few proofs later, the newsletter is finally ready to be shared with our wonderful mailing list.

It’s a lot of fun to put together, and we truly hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoy creating it. Remember — we love hearing from you! If you have a story, photo, or idea you’d like to see featured, please send it our way.

And if you’d like to help keep these stories alive, consider becoming a Museum Supporter. Memberships are due for renewal on January 1st, and for just \$20 per person per year, you’ll be helping to preserve and share our local history.

Enjoy the longer, warmer days ahead, spend time in the garden, and cherish those family moments — because before we know it, it will be Christmas!

Warm regards,

Rose and Rob

Remembering Heather Power

07th August 1932 -:- 19th October 2025

It is with sadness that we report the recent loss of our wonderful museum volunteer and friend, Heather Power (nee Curel).

For the past few years, Heather volunteered at the museum on Fridays with Pauline, Pat, and Allan — a team known for plenty of banter and laughter. An hour or two spent with Heather often turned into a history lesson, as she recalled the town's stories, people, and places from her childhood through to her early married life with local dry cleaner Mick Power, and later years living close to town where she could walk easily to the shops and chat with friends and neighbours.



Recently we launched our 2026 Calendar, a project Heather was deeply involved in. She helped provide information and choose photographs of Wellsford's shops and businesses that shaped the town following the arrival of the railway in 1909. Heather's remarkable recall of shop owners, names, and local details was invaluable to our team, helping us produce a wonderful record of our town's history. Heather was a founding member of the Hospice Shop, which opened in 1986, as well as a keen knitter and gardener and a friend to many. She greeted everyone with a warm smile, always ready with a cup of tea and a plate of biscuits for her visitors.

I was fortunate to interview Heather as part of my training in Oral History — a fascinating conversation in which she reflected on her childhood in Port Albert, her parents Cath and Laurie Curel, and her early working years in local businesses. She shared a close bond with her sisters Glory, Laurel, and Veena, all now passed, and greatly missed her regular chats with Veena, whom I had the privilege of meeting at age 99 — still sharp and full of stories when she visited Albertland Heritage Museum while staying with Heather.

Heather will be missed terribly by her many friends, fellow volunteers at Wellsford Hospice, her weekly knitting group that met at the Wellsford Library every Monday, and of course, by her museum family. Heather chose to have a private cremation but if you would like to leave a tribute for the family please go to:-

<https://www.jasonmorrison.co.nz/tributes?funeral=V9liR>

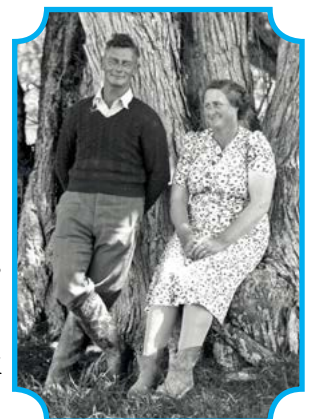
Our sincerest condolences to Heathers' brother, Sonny and his wife Fay, Wayne & Pam and her many nieces and nephews.

QUOTATION FOR OCTOBER

(This comes highly recommended)

Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time.

~ John Lubbock



It's Christmas Cake Time!

Yes, it's that time again — when the secret family recipes come out of hiding and the kitchen fills with the smell of spice, fruit, and a dash of Christmas magic!

Making a Christmas cake is one of those old-fashioned traditions that never loses its charm. A whole day spent measuring, mixing, and maybe sneaking a few currants on the side — it's all part of the fun.

Then comes the big question... to add alcohol or not? Some say it's the secret to keeping the cake moist for months to come, if it is lucky enough to last that long!

We've found a special recipe you might like to try — but if I were you, I'd dust off those old recipe books and stick with your tried-and-true favourite. After all, this recipe may just land you in serious trouble.

BEST FRUITCAKE EVER

1 cup butter	1 tspn baking soda
1 cup sugar	1 tspn salt
4 large eggs	lemon juice
1 cup dried fruit	1 cup brown sugar
1 tspn baking powder	nuts
1 – 2 litres whisky	

Before you start, sample the whisky for quality. Good, isn't it?

Now go ahead

Select a large mixing bowl, measuring cup, etc. Check the whisky again as it must be just right. To be sure the whisky is of the highest quality, pour 1 level cup into a glass and drink it as fast as you can.

REPEAT. With an electric mixer, beat one cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl. Add 1 tspn thugar and beat again.

Meanwhile, make sure that the whisky is of the finest quakity, cry another tup. Open second litre if necessary. Add 2 arge legs, 2 cups fried druit and beat til high. If druit gets stuck in beaters, just pry it loose with a drows-criver. Sample the whisky again, checking for tonscisticity.

Next, sift 3 cups of salt or anything, it doesn't really matter.

SAMPLE THE WHISKY.

Sift 1 pint of lemon juice. Fold in chopped butter and strained nuts. Add 1 babblespoon of brown sugar, or whatever colour you can find, and wix mel.

Grease oven and turn cake pan to 350 gredees. Now pour the whole mess into the coven and ake. Check the whisky again and bo to ged.

Best of luck with your Christmas Cake!

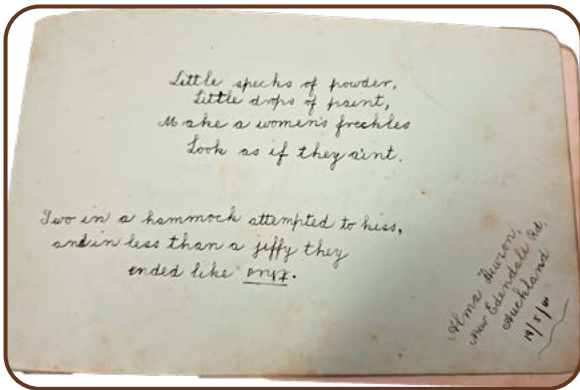
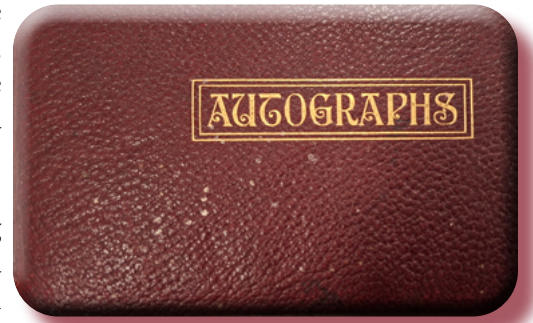


The Curator's Chronicle

A Treasure from the Past — Hazel Davies' Autograph Book

Something truly interesting surfaced among the many boxes in the museum this month — an autograph book belonging to Hazel Davies, dating from around the time of the First World War. Inside its delicate pages are connections to her family and friends, each leaving behind a special message or picture for her to treasure.

Autograph books were once a cherished pastime, especially during Victorian times, when it was fashionable for ladies to keep albums filled with inscriptions from “one’s circle of acquaintances.” These books often featured fancy embossed covers and pages alive with humour, sentiment, and artistry — the handwriting ornate and the ink now gently fading with age.

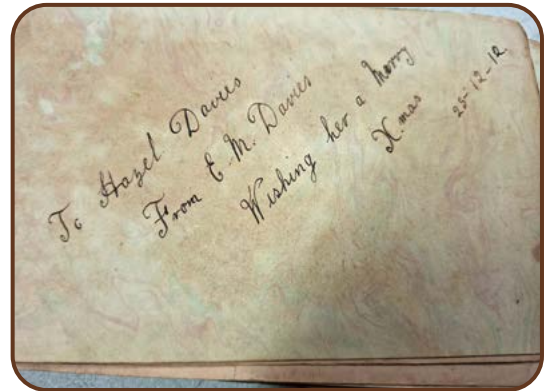


Often, such a book might have been received as a birthday gift, wrapped in tissue and embossed with the word Autograph in shining gold on the leather cover. Opening it revealed pastel pages — pink, yellow, green — inviting friends to write something memorable. The first page might begin with a simple line like, “Dear friends, please write in my book.” From there, it would travel to school, dances, and gatherings, collecting poems, sketches, and puzzles that reflected the personalities of its contributors.

Some verses still echo with the writer’s voice:

One ship goes east,
One ship goes west,
With every wind that blows;
It's the set of the sail,
And not the gale,
That decides where the good ship goes.
Others offered playful advice:
When you grow up and learn to cut hedges,
Remember the one who wrote 'round the edges.
(And of course, that rhyme was written right around the edge of the page!)

Make new friends, but keep the old,
The latter are silver, the first are gold.
If I were a cabbage,
I'd cut myself in two.
My leaves I'd give to someone else,
My heart I'd give to you.



Over the years, reopening such a book would bring back a flood of memories — names and faces long unseen — and the inevitable questions: “I wonder where they are now?”

The tradition of autograph albums actually began much earlier, in 16th- and 17th-century Europe, when university students asked friends to sign their Bibles upon graduation. The earliest known example belonged to Claude de Senarclens, an associate of John Calvin (a French theologian and leader of the Protestant Reformation), dating to 1545. From these modest beginnings grew the Album Amicorum, or “Book of Friends,” filled with signatures, poems, and miniature drawings. The custom later crossed the seas with German and Dutch immigrants in the 18th century, spreading its charm across North America.

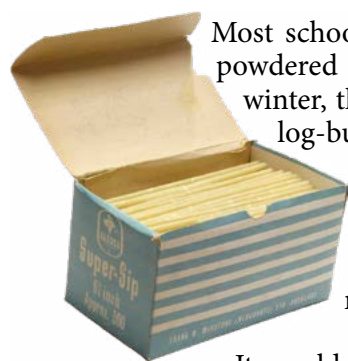
By the 1950s and 60s, autograph collecting had taken a new turn — fans eagerly chasing celebrity signatures on photos, clothing, and souvenirs. The “autograph hound” was born.

Among the pages in Hazel's book, the messages are simple and timeless. Each entry — whether heartfelt or humorous — reminds us that friendship and memories are treasures worth keeping.



Milk Time at School – A Taste of the Past

Many of us can still picture those little glass bottles of milk lined up in wooden crates by the school gate. From 1937 right through to 10 February 1967, every New Zealand primary school child received a free half-pint of milk each day. It was a big effort to make sure every youngster got a healthy dose of calcium after the tough years of the Great Depression.



Most schools enjoyed fresh, pasteurised milk — though in the far-off corners of the country, powdered or malted milk sometimes made the trip, occasionally arriving in milk churns! In winter, the lucky ones had their milk turned into hot cocoa, warmed in tins on the classroom log-burner stove.

By the 1960s, some clever kids brought along flavoured sachets from home — strawberry, chocolate, or caramel — to make that plain milk just a little more exciting. And who could forget those summer days when the bottles sat too long in the sun, the milk warming (and sometimes curdling!) before morning tea?

It would appear that the milk wasn't entirely free after all — the cost of freight and delivery often fell to the schools themselves. We found a newspaper article from September 1963 noting that the Wellsford School Committee was to vote on a motion to discontinue the free milk supply due to the growing financial strain of delivery costs.

The milk arrived by train from Auckland, and a local carrier conveyed it to the school — a service paid for by the committee. At that time, 432 children were receiving milk daily, and while the supply itself was perfectly satisfactory, the cost of cartage certainly wasn't! For many, it's a memory of childhood in a simpler time — of bottle tops flicked at friends, creamy moustaches, and the clink of glass bottles that marked the start of another school day.



Photo of Auckland school children drinking the free issue of a daily half pint of milk. Unknown photographer circa 1939 Ref MNZ-2461-1/4-F. We acknowledge the National Library of New Zealand.

2026 Calendar



From Tracks to Township : Wellsford's Early Years



Opening of the Wellsford Railway Station 15th February 1909

Albertland Heritage Museum Inc, Library Plaza, 15 Port Albert Road, Wellsford. 0900
www.albertland.co.nz - email: albertlandmuseum@gmail.com - Ph : +64 09 423 8181

Our 2026 Calendar – From Tracks to Township – Wellsford early years --- is here!

Celebrate the first 50 years of Wellsford's growth following the arrival of the railway in 1909. Discover the people who shaped the town, see how it looked in those early days, and learn what brought about another wave of change in 1955.

This special edition calendar is a wonderful keepsake and a perfect gift. Be quick—copies are selling fast! \$25.00 from the museum or \$37.00 online delivered.

This Calendar is proving very popular and going out the door very quickly.

Website address link: <https://albertlandmuseum.co.nz/product/calendar-2026/>

Birthday Wishes for October



What a busy month October has been, with so many birthdays to celebrate! First up was our Patron, Richard Te Haara, who enjoyed a wonderful day celebrating with his family. Joining him in the October lineup was Barry Shepherd, our local historian who always delights in sharing stories about the people and events that shaped our district. Two of our dedicated volunteers, Pat Bennett and Barbara Lane, also celebrated birthdays this month, along with museum supporters Ron Reid, Tayler Stables, and Vicky Sherriff.

A very Happy Birthday to you all!

And don't forget — if you know someone who has celebrated their birthday in October, let us know so we can add them to our list. Or maybe it's your own birthday — don't be shy, we'd love to include you too!



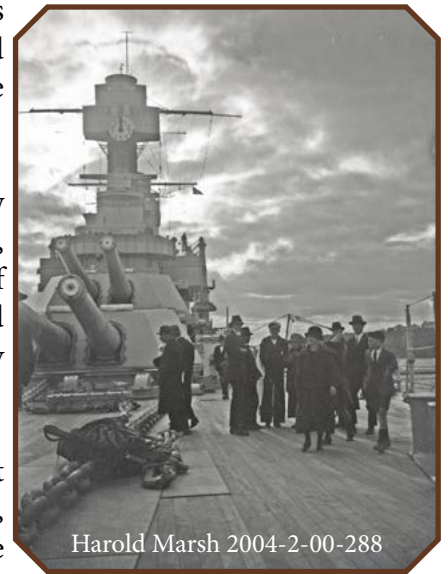
Anchors Aweigh in Aotearoa — 100 Years On

Looking back at Auckland's grandest harbour spectacle, August 1925

It was the winter of 1925 — cold, bright, and unforgettable. A century has passed, yet those who stood on Auckland's waterfront that August would never forget the thunder of the horns, the sight of grey hulls gleaming on the Waitematā, and the cheers that rolled across the city like surf.

The newspapers called it “the greatest naval display ever seen in New Zealand.” Eleven American battleships, supported by destroyers and tenders, swept into our harbours — over 12,000 sailors strong — a floating city of steel and ceremony. To see the USS California, Colorado, West Virginia, and their companions gliding past North Head was to glimpse the new century taking shape before our eyes.

At the time, New Zealand was still firmly within Britain's orbit. The visit of the mighty HMS Hood the year before had stirred imperial pride. Yet, as those American ships dropped anchor, something quietly shifted. The Pacific was changing, and New Zealanders, watching in awe, could feel it.



Among the crowd that day was Albertland photographer Harold Marsh, who had travelled up from Wellsford with his bulky glass-plate camera. Determined to find the perfect vantage point, he talked his way onto the rooftop of the Seamen's Mission at Emily Place. From there, he captured seven photographs — the fleet arriving in stately procession, and the throngs of people below, packed shoulder to shoulder, waving handkerchiefs and flags. His images, still preserved today, shimmer with the excitement of that moment — a nation gazing outward across the Pacific, meeting a new friend.

The welcome was unlike anything Auckland had ever seen. Eighty thousand people crowded Queen Street to watch the sailors' parade. The New Zealand Herald wrote, “For once, Aucklanders came out of their shells and cheered.” Bands played, flags fluttered, and even the most reserved citizens joined in the celebration.



For many, it was also a time of connection and romance. Harold's niece, Daisy Farmer, was working in the city and wrote home breathlessly:

“The fleet has been here and the time was short and precious... a fortnight doesn't give you much time to get acquainted, does it? But most of us girls managed the trick.”

Daisy and her friends befriended sailors from the Colorado, who showed them around the ship — the heat of the engine room nearly unbearable, the vast machinery awe-inspiring. When departure day came, the farewells on the wharf were tearful.

“Every one of the sailors busted out howling,” Daisy confessed, “and most of the girls followed suit. They arrived in the sunshine and departed in it, leaving a lot of broken-hearted girls behind.”

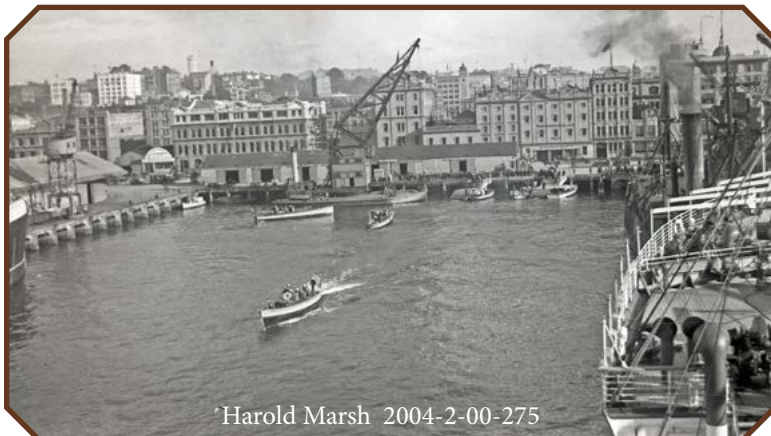
For two enchanted weeks, Auckland became a city transformed — alive with music, marching, and laughter. Ferries bustled with visitors heading to the anchored warships, while the shops, hotels, and dance halls did a roaring trade. When the fleet finally steamed out into the Hauraki Gulf, the city felt oddly hollow, as if a great tide had gone out.

Yet that visit left more than memories. It marked the beginning of a quiet understanding — that across the vast Pacific, America was becoming a power and a partner that New Zealand could no longer ignore.

What began with parades and picnics would, within a generation, grow into wartime alliance and enduring friendship.

Now, a century later, the photographs of Harold Marsh and the letters of young Daisy Farmer remind us that history is not just made by admirals and presidents, but by the ordinary people who watched, waved, and felt the stirrings of a changing world.

The ships are long gone, but their echoes remain — in the harbour waters, in the glass plates of a careful photographer, and in the hearts of those who remember when Auckland greeted America with open arms and anchors aweigh.



"Anchors aweigh" is a nautical term that signals the moment an anchor has been fully lifted off the seabed, and the ship is officially underway. The phrase is also the name of the official march of the U.S. Navy, which was composed in 1906.

What's On

Sunday 9 November

Port Albert Church Service

Community-run service at 1.30 pm — bring a plate for a shared afternoon tea.

Sunday 16 November

The Settlers Market

Port Albert Hall, 980 Port Albert Road, Wellsford (variety of stalls and food and drink available)

9.00 am – 1.00 pm

Saturday 22 November

Wellsford Santa Parade

9.30 am – 1.00 pm

See the Wellsford Plus Facebook page for full details.

Saturday 13 December

Wharehine Community Hall Variety Show

See the Wharehine Hall Facebook page for more information.

Sunday 28 December

Minniesdale Chapel Anniversary Service

See attached flyer for details.

Exhibition (on until 30 November)

Couldrey House, Wednesday to Sunday, 1.00 – 4.00 pm

Entry: \$7 adults | 16 & under free

Check their Facebook page for event updates.

From Recipe Books to Family History

Discover the personal connection between Brenda Couldrey and the iconic Edmonds "Sure to Rise" brand. Explore treasured Edmonds recipe books, vintage advertising, and memorabilia, while uncovering the shared story between the iconic Kiwi brand and Couldrey House.

Home



Minniesdale Chapel

Shegadeen Road, Wharehine

2025 ANNIVERSARY SERVICE

The next Anniversary Service in our historic Chapel will take place on Sunday 28th December 2025 at 1.30 pm.

We remember the original settlers on this day who paved the way for the generations that have followed.

After the service all are invited for afternoon tea at Wharehine Hall. In true country tradition please 'bring a plate' with something to share at the table.



The Greatest Show on Earth — The Story of Bullen's Circus

Ladies and Gentlemen, children of all ages — the circus is about to begin!

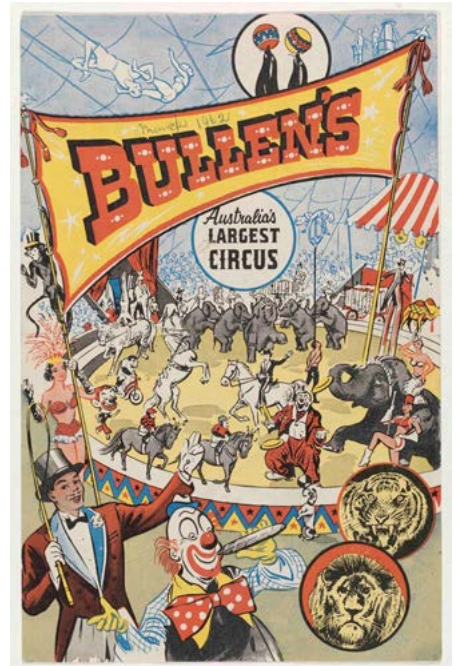
While our on-duty volunteers were thumbing through some old scrapbooks, they came across a newspaper clipping about Bullen's Circus, which visited Wellsford in 1962.

This famous circus toured both the North and South Islands by special train, and when it pulled into town, crowds would gather at the station to watch the animals being unloaded. The train, specially hired for the job, cost around £30,000 for the full tour — quite a sum in those days!

For two of our volunteers, Rob and Grahame, the discovery sparked a wave of memories. They recalled the excitement of the train's arrival, the sight of elephants hard at work, helping to pull the heavy circus gear and animal cages to the nearby park.

Tickets went on sale early Monday morning from a mobile ticket office at 10 a.m., ready for the first performance later that day at 3:30 p.m.

There was, however, a touch of controversy at the time — the £30 per day hire fee for Centennial Park was considered steep compared to £10 per day at Western Springs in Auckland, where the population was far larger. But the local councillors stood firm, pointing out that two earlier circuses, Sole Bros and Worth's, had happily paid the same fee.



Behind the Big Top

That 1962 visit to Wellsford would turn out to be the least of Bullen's Circus controversies. As I dug a little deeper into the life of this famous travelling show, the story of its founders and performers came vividly to life. Mr Alfred ("Pop") Bullen, who died in 1974 aged 78, had started the circus with his first wife, Lillian, in their hometown of Kiama, a coastal settlement 73 miles south of Sydney. Together they built one of the best-loved circuses in Australia and New Zealand. Alfred began his 50-year show business career giving pony rides along Kiama Beach, while Lillian — remembered as one of the most colourful and forceful personalities in Australian entertainment — helped shape the circus into a national treasure.

Children across the country would be beside themselves with excitement as the circus train rolled into town with its nine elephants, forty horses and ponies, five Bengal tigers, seven Himalayan and grizzly bears, five lions, two leopards, and countless other animals — not to mention the 105 performers and staff who made up the Bullen's Circus family. From the train, the animals would parade through the streets to their temporary home in the local park, drawing delighted crowds along the way.

Under the big top, audiences were treated to dazzling acts. Carl Antoine thrilled spectators with his group of five performing tigers — the only act of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. Then there was the strongman Otto Acron, whose extraordinary feat of strength involved carrying a horse up and down a ladder!

Of course, circus life wasn't always smooth sailing. During one Melbourne performance, two brothers — both trapeze artists — began quarrelling high above the crowd. What the audience first took to be part of the act soon turned real when the pair started throwing punches! Screams rang out as a fellow performer scrambled up to separate them. Neither the somersault nor the trapeze act went ahead that night, and the incident later found its way to court.

Gregory Paul Bullen faced charges after what Gregory described as "a family squabble" with his brother Stafford Bullen. He was fined £10 for his part in the fight. Outside the courthouse, Mrs. Lillian Bullen addressed reporters with trademark flair, declaring, "I'm the proprietress of this outfit — and what I says goes, even with the Bullen boys!" She reassured everyone that the disagreement wouldn't break up the circus, adding, "We're just a happy

family — maybe a bit boisterous and touchy at times!”

During their 1959 New Plymouth visit, Bullen’s Circus was marred by a series of serious accidents — three in one week.

Ken Bullen was rushed to Waimarino Hospital after a terrifying fall from the top of a balancing pole high in the great marquee. He fractured both arms and was taken to hospital in a circus vehicle, preceded by a traffic officer’s patrol car clearing the way.

Soon after, disaster struck again. During a performance in Te Awamutu, animal trainer Jules Bullen was severely mauled by a black Himalayan bear in front of a horrified audience. Hundreds of spectators watched as Jules balanced on a see-saw inside the animal cage with two of the circus’s six bears. Suddenly, one bear jumped off, sending the other crashing down and throwing Jules to the ground.

The first bear, flung across his legs, immediately began biting and clawing. Children screamed as circus hands, armed with pitchforks, rushed into the arena to save him. Jules suffered deep bites and gashes to his legs, requiring surgery.

Tragically, this same troublesome bear had attacked another trainer, Carl Knuoblock, before the night performance at Ōtorohanga, leaving him hospitalised as well.

Treasure in a Tea Chest

As if the Bullen’s Circus hadn’t already had its share of excitement, yet another controversy made headlines — this time involving a small fortune found in a tea chest.

At the circus’s Sydney yard, a group of schoolchildren stumbled upon £40,000 in cash hidden inside a caravan. Word of the discovery spread quickly, and soon as many as thirty children returned to the site — some taking handfuls of the money. Eventually, about half of them were prosecuted in the Children’s Court.

The story only grew stranger. Once the case became public, nine people came forward claiming the treasure, including Mrs Lillian Bullen, who insisted the money rightfully belonged to her since it had been found on her land. The quarter-acre block where the tea chest was discovered was used by the circus as a parking area for caravans when not on tour, though the full company hadn’t been there for some five months prior to the discovery.

In July 1963 a Brisbane judge ordered the winding up of Bullen’s circus. After troubled relationships, including an allegation that Alfred Bullen had gone to Lillian’s caravan with a revolver and threatened to shoot her, everyone agreed that they didn’t want the family row to go on in public and the best thing to do was to wind the company up. Before the judge was Alfred (Pop) Bullen and his two sons Stafford and Kenneth who alleged that Mrs Lillian Ethel Bullen, as governing director had acted in her own interests rather than the interests of the company’s members as a whole.

Alfred and his two sons, Stafford and Kenneth, went on to establish two lion parks and an animal park at Wallacia, on the outskirts of Sydney.



From daring performances and dazzling animals to family feuds, near disasters, and buried treasure, the story of Bullen’s Circus truly has it all. It captures the magic, danger, and drama of a travelling show that once thrilled audiences across Australia and New Zealand — a reminder that behind the glittering lights of the big top were real people, wild adventures, and more than a few surprises.

Record ID JTD-14K-01105-1

Collection Name John Thomas Diamond 1912-2001

Date 1957

Acknowledgement Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections JTD-14K-01105-1

Home

A Big Thank You from the Museum Team – You helped us to Reboot!

It's never easy to ask for help — but on 22 August, we did just that! We reached out to our loyal supporters through a Facebook post, explaining that our old computers (still running Windows 10) were soon to be unsupported by Microsoft.

Each morning, we'd wait patiently while they slowly woke up — and with a large new accession arriving, we were feeling a little daunted about how we'd manage.

We suggested we would need \$5000 to fund some new computers — and what an amazing response we had! Thanks to your generosity, we raised [\$5,000.45], enough to buy not one, or two, but three brand new computers!

They've now been unpacked and installed by Rob Lennon, and after a few final tweaks, they're up and running beautifully. What a transformation!

Please accept our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to this project — and to all those who continue to support the museum in so many other ways. We, the museum volunteers, are truly grateful to be part of such a wonderful, supportive community that stands behind us every day.



Footnote: We think the excitement (and perhaps a touch of stress) of installing three new computers may have gotten to Rob — he was last seen trying on a beautiful 1950s ladies' hat that had just been donated!