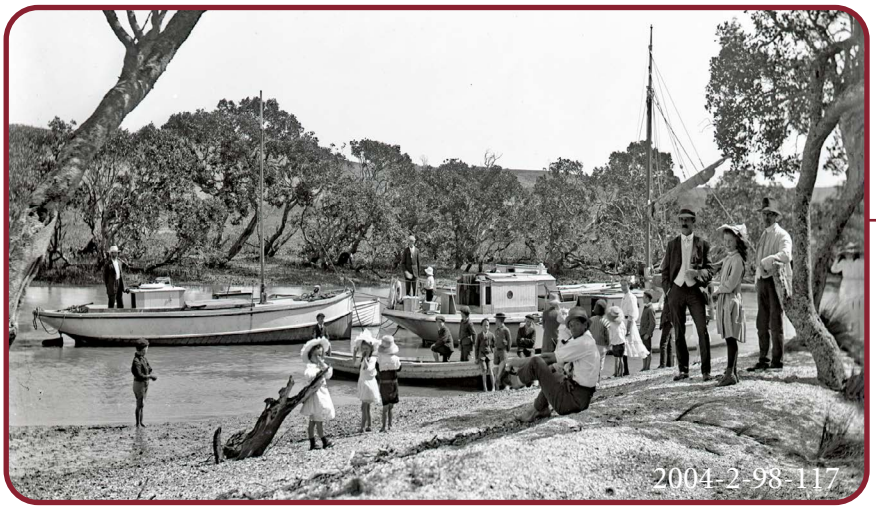
The Albertland Gazette



Patron:
Mr Richard Te Haara



Picnickers at Oneriri

October 2026

Open Hours

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

Contents:

Wellsford's Early Garages Page 2-3

A New Steamer Page 4-5-6

Around The Kaipara Harbour Page 6-7-8

Pic of the Month
What's On Page 9

AGM Guest Speaker - Sean Harris Page 10-13

Quotation Page 13

Pakiri Church 100yrs Service
Birthday Wishes Page 14

2027 Calendar is now on Sale - Township to Town
60s In Review at the Museum - Poster
Poem - Our Own River - Ōruawharo Page 15

Editors Message:

After feeling inspired by Sean's talk at our recent AGM, I found myself thinking about the Oruawharo River and just how significant it has been, not only to Māori, but also to the Albertland Settlers and our community today.

The river is very much the lifeblood of our district. We have all seen it in its many moods – during wild storms, on frosty winter mornings, under beautiful sunny skies and as the sun sets, casting its colours across the water. It never ceases to amaze me, and I'm sure many of you feel the same.

It got me thinking that it would be fitting for this edition of The Albertland Gazette to turn our attention to the river, particularly as it would have been for the Albertland Settlers after their arrival here in 1862.

Imagine their first impressions as they stepped ashore and looked out across this magnificent stretch of water. What did they think? Was it everything they had imagined, or perhaps something quite different from what they already knew?

They didn't have cameras to capture the scenery as we do today. Instead, they relied on their sketchbooks, drawings, paintings and written journals to record what they saw and experienced. Through those early accounts, we can catch a glimpse of the river as it was in their time and perhaps share a little of the wonder they must have felt.

So, in this edition, let's take a step back in time and revisit the Ōruawharo River through the eyes of those who first made their home alongside it.

Warm regards,
Rose and Rob

Our Calendar Story this Month

Wellsford's Early Garages and Motor Businesses

Wellsford has always had its fair share of garages which is more than likely due to the high rate of vehicle ownership that comes with living in a rural town.
It is also hardly surprising that Wellsford once supported no fewer than six major motor companies with local franchise holders.

Morris and Nuffield were represented by Harrison's Motors, later known as Payne Motors; Ford by Noel Kelly Motors Ltd; General Motors by Rodney Motors Ltd; the Rootes Group by Sellars' Service Station; and International Harvester by D. G. Andrew Ltd. Just three miles away, at Te Hana, Fiat Tractors Ltd was represented by Moore and Heaven Co. Ltd.
Alongside these franchise holders were other local garages, including Wellsford Motors, operated by Reg and Herb Long, Gordon's Garage, Sellars' Garage and Graham Shaw Motors Ltd, all specialising in vehicle servicing and repairs.



Wellsford Motors

About 1928, a man arrived in Wellsford who would play a significant part in the development of the little town. Archibald Sidney, known as Sam Long, initially joined the Civil Bros firm as an employee. Before long, however, he purchased the business, taking over the freehold in 1936. Thus, Wellsford Motors, the town's first garage, passed into the hands of the Long family.
Sam Long had a strong sense of community which proved invaluable to Wellsford. He initiated many projects ensuring that others would later carry through to completion. The fire brigade, water supply and street improvements were all causes close to his heart, but above all, he worked towards establishing a practical system of local control suited to his little town. During his lifetime, these ambitions became reality, forming a lasting monument to his efforts.
Sam came from Somerset, England, and spent several years in Canada before coming to New Zealand with his family. On arriving in Wellsford, the family found temporary accommodation in a small house behind the garage.
His two sons continued to run the business. Herbert Douglas Long, known as Herb, married Joyce Moore, daughter of Wellsford's wartime postmaster. His brother, Reginald Whitworth Long, married Eva Anderson of Northern Wairoa. Their sister, Dorothy Frances Long, married bank officer Tom Gatwood, and the couple spent many years living in Fiji.
Sam Long died in 1965, having given many years of dedicated service to his community.



Gordon's Garage

Another of Wellsford's earliest garages was Gordon's Garage, established in 1935. Young Walter Harrison, who had come from Christchurch, arrived in Wellsford to work for Colin Gordon. Ernie Mann and Ron Hale, an apprentice from School Road, were also associated with the business.
Sometime later, the garage was destroyed by fire during the night. Young Ron Hale, who had been out for the evening and was not yet sound asleep, managed to escape the building. The fire was accompanied by a tremendous explosion, which almost drove the compressor through the wall of Gorby's Pharmacy.
While matters were being sorted out, Walter, known as Wally, found work with J. P. Kelly, a sawmiller at Port

Albert. Colin Gordon and Wally then set about rebuilding the business, establishing the premises that became known as Gordon's Garage and later the site of Harrison's Garage.

Around the time the rebuilt garage resumed operations, war broke out. Colin Gordon served in the Air Force at Whenuapai and Ohakea, leaving Wally to manage the business. At the end of the war, Wally became a partner in the firm.
Unfortunately, another fire damaged the garage, and it was only partly rebuilt. In 1958, Wally bought out Colin Gordon's interest, negotiated a new railway lease and constructed the garage premises that would later be owned by Payne Motors Ltd.

The site's redevelopment required the removal of several buildings. The Gordon house and the garage occupied by Mr and Mrs Sadler were removed, along with New Zealand Railways houses that were relocated to Bellevue Avenue. Colin Paul's house was also removed by the County Council. These changes allowed the site to be developed on two levels, with adequate provision for the footpath.
In 1966, a fine modern building, known as Harrison's Building, was erected on the second garage site.
Wally Harrison married Doris Reid of Christchurch in 1937, and they had nine children: Roger, Jocelyn, Rosalie, Marie, Gary Walter (Jnr), Kathleen, Bruce, Clare and Paul.
In 1967, Wally sold Harrison Motors Ltd, together with its Morris-Nuffield franchise, to Peter Payne (Payne Motors) of Wellington.

Like Sam Long, Wally was a public-spirited member of the community. He served for many years on the County Town Committee and was chairman of the Wellsford Urban Fire Authority. He also contributed his time to the Public Library Committee, served as a Cemetery Trustee and was a member of the Memorial Park Committee.
His contribution to Wellsford extended well beyond the motor trade, and he played an important role in the town's development.

Sellars' Garage



Captain George Sellars, one of the pioneer skippers of the Kaipara, was the father of five brothers who went on to establish businesses in Wellsford.
Edward Sellars, known as Ted, qualified with an L.L.B. from Auckland University College and began an independent legal practice in Helensville. He soon found himself travelling by train to Wellsford to attend to business matters. Eventually, he decided to settle in the town.

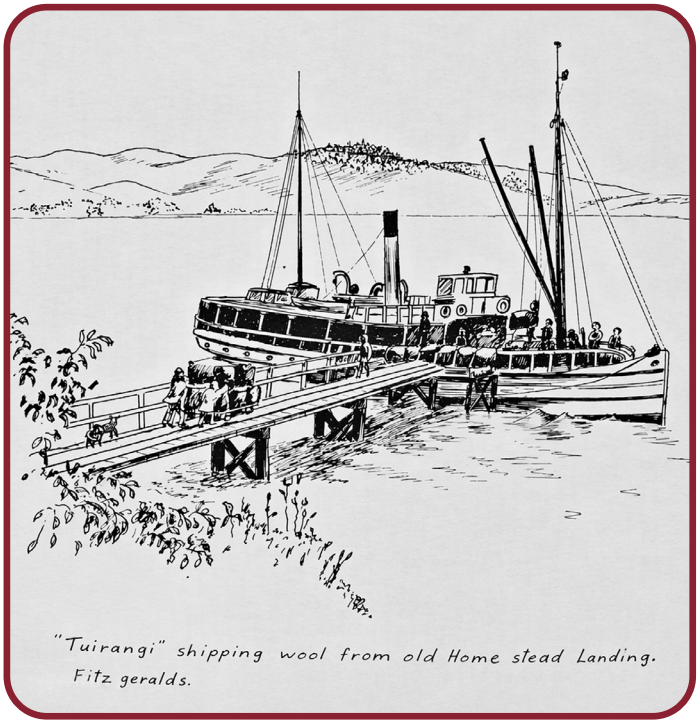
Ted took over Arthur Gorbey's shop in the old Wellsford Chambers after his six months of free tenancy came to an end. He married Eileen Phillips of Helensville, and had three children. Ted became Wellsford's first resident lawyer, establishing an important professional service for the growing community.
Sometime after Ted had settled in Wellsford, his mother, Isabella, moved to the town with four of her other children. They occupied the upstairs accommodation of a service station built by Edward's cousin, Chris Sellars, in time for the family's move in 1936.

The petrol station, situated on the corner of Station Road, was operated by Ross Sellars and his younger brother Jack. Ross was an outstanding athlete who represented North Auckland in rugby.
In 1949, Tom and Jack took over the garage portion of the business, which had recently been reunited with the service station.

Jack married Ina Smith, daughter of the late Syd Smith, a well-known Wellsford identity.
The youngest son of Captain Sellars, George, established a successful panel beating and car-painting business in Station Road after completing his apprenticeship in Auckland.
Another brother, Tom, was also well known in the district, particularly for his work as manager of the Theatre Royal.

A New Steamer

A newspaper report in 1908 described the first sea trial for the Tuirangi which went on to become one of the most well-known boats on the Kaipara.
Successful Trial Trip (New Zealand Herald, Volume XLV, Issue 13893, 29 October 1908, Page 6)
This official trial trip of the new steamer Tuirangi took place yesterday afternoon (Wednesday 28th October 1908), and proved most successful.



Sketch by Cyril Halfpenny

The Tuirangi, which was built by Mr. Chas. Bailey, Jun. to the order of the Sellars-Allen Steamship Company, Kaipara, is 92ft long, by 18ft beam, with a draught of 6ft 6in. She is capable of carrying 65 tons of cargo, and has passenger accommodation for 150 persons. She is built of heart of kauri throughout, with the exception of the keel and keelson (kelson), which are of ironbark, and the stem of Pohutukawa. The planking has two skins, built diagonally, and also one fore and aft. She is copper fastened throughout.

The furnishing contract has been carried out by Messrs. Winks and Hall, everything being of the best material. The engines consist of a set of triple expansion, capable of developing 150 horse-power. The boiler is 8ft in diameter by 8ft 6in long, with a pressure of 160lb. Messrs. H. P. Taylor and Co. have supplied the whole of the machinery. The steamer is fitted with electricity throughout. The ironwork was carried out by Messrs. J. B. Massey and A. Bailey, and the electric light by Mr. W. C. Edwards. Seating accommodation has been provided on the main and upper decks, while the sanitary conveniences have received careful attention.

From the end of Queen Street Wharf to Bean Rock, a distance of three knots, the Tuirangi developed a good speed of nine knots and a-half on the run down against the tide, but with the wind, and on the voyage back a speed of 10 knots was attained. At the conclusion of the "spin," which was most enjoyable, a number of toasts were proposed and duly honoured, including the builder (Mr. Chas Bailey), the owners, the furnishers, the engineers, etc. The new steamer is regarded as the most up-to-date vessel ever turned out in Auckland for her size.

Captain Sellars, late of the Aotea, of the Kaipara S.S. Company, has been appointed the master of the Tuirangi, which will trade between Helensville and Dargaville. Messrs. H. P. Taylor and Co. are the local agents for the steamer.


Tuirangi at Fitzgeralds

The Tuirangi and the Kaipara Steamers

The years before and after World War One brought significant economic changes to the Kaipara region. As timber and kauri gum supplies dwindled, improvements in farming, particularly the dairy industry and cream separation, enabled settlers to earn a living from their land. The region gradually developed into an important farming area.

Sheep numbers had been increasing since 1880, and

by 1920 the Tuirangi was loading wool at Okahukura, which had the largest flock in Rodney County. Farmers built woolsheds close to the water, making it easier to load wool onto vessels bound for Helensville.

Thomas Ross (1856–1935) became known for commanding more Kaipara vessels than any other captain. His ships included the Lily, Kina, Minnie Casey, Orphia, Ruawai, Sterling, Tuirangi, Wairua, Gosford, Ethel and Bellbird.

Around 1927, the Tuirangi was also carrying apples from Te Komiti, an area once used by Māori as a stopping place when travelling across the Kaipara Harbour. Following the purchase of the land by a fruit-growing company around 1912–1913, it became known as Tinopai Fruitlands. A wharf was built in 1917 to handle the produce, which included Delicious, Graven stein, Sturmer and Granny Smith apples, as well as peaches and apricots. The Tuirangi transported apples to Helensville until 1927, when the Te Tui took over the service.

Farming and Soldier Settlements

In 1913, the southern half of the 13,000 acres known as Fitzgerald's Landing was sold to A. E. Harding, who accidentally drowned while stepping ashore from the Tuirangi. His son continued farming at Seaview.
Land development expanded considerably during the 1920s, when returned World War One servicemen began farming much of Albertland's poor gum land under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act 1915. Soldier settlements were established at Kaiwaka and Okahukura.

Following both World Wars, further land was set aside for returned servicemen. During the 1930s and 1940s, the Lands and Survey Department took over large areas of unproductive Crown and private land for development and subdivision. Many of these settlements were established after World War Two, including farms at South Head, Tapora, Kaiwaka, Omamari and Mahuta.

Competition on the Kaipara

The Kaipara waterways were once busy with competing steamship companies. The Kaipara Steam Ship Company faced competition from Captain George Sellars and Woolsey Allen Junior's Sellars-Allen Steamship Company.
When the Tuirangi was launched in 1908, the steamers Awaroa and Baroona operated on alternate days between Helensville and Dargaville. The Aotea ran twice weekly to Otamatea, Maungaturoto and Port Albert, travelling on Wednesdays and returning on Thursdays.

Competition intensified with the arrival of the Tuirangi, prompting the Kaipara Steam Ship Company to slash fares. Despite the price war, Sellars-Allen customers remained loyal, recognising that fares could rise sharply without competition. In 1909, an agreement was reached allowing Sellars-Allen a share of the trade at similar rates, following a difficult period marked by falling timber, gum and flax prices.
The arrival of the railway in 1909 gradually reduced the demand for steamship services. By 1912, the Kaipara Steam Ship Company had gone into liquidation, and George Nichol purchased it in 1913. In 1921, the Sellars-Allen and Kaipara Steam Ship companies eventually amalgamated.
By 1930, the Kaipara Steam Ship Company's vessels included the Wairua, Ruawai, Bellbird and Tuirangi. The Tuirangi was sold in 1935 to the New Zealand Refrigeration Company in Christchurch and was finally hulked in 1947.

Port Albert's Coastal Service

Port Albert continued to receive supplies by water through the launch Ivy, which operated until the late 1920s, around the time roads to Wellsford improved. Ted and Archie Curel owned the Ivy from 1910 until the early 1920s, after which it passed to Ernie Farr and Bill Moffat.
During the 1920s, Bennetts of Port Albert also used their own boat, the Belle, to carry goods to their store.

The Sellars Family and the Last Passenger Steamer

The late Alf Sellars was the last passenger steamer captain on the Kaipara. In November 1941, he took the S.S. Ruawai on its final trip between Dargaville and Helensville.
His father, George Sellars, had spent 25 years on the Kaipara and founded the Sellars-Allen Shipping Company in 1908, operating the Tuirangi and Waitangi. Following the agreement with the rival company, the two businesses eventually amalgamated in 1921.

Alf began his working life aboard the steamers as a brass boy, polishing the brass and collecting meal money. He later became ship's mate on the Wairua, where his brother Tom was appointed master in 1925. Alf earned his skipper's ticket in 1926, aged 21, and spent the next 15 years as a captain.
In 1932, Alf was master of the Ruawai, which carried a crew of 11, including the captain, deckhands, engineers, a steward and a cook. Dinner was served aboard at Dargaville, followed by breakfast before arrival at Helensville, where passengers could connect with the train to Auckland.

His brother Tom Sellars also received his master's certificate in 1926, aged 21, and commanded the Ruawai, Wairua, Bellbird and Tuirangi at various times. Another brother, Daniel, worked as a steamboat engineer.
Together, these vessels and the people who worked aboard them played an important part in the development of the Kaipara, carrying wool, fruit, supplies and passengers between isolated settlements long before improved roads made travel by land easier.

With so many of us out enjoying our lakes and rivers these holidays it is fitting that we look back at this excerpt from a story penned on July 28th, 1893 found in Papers Past (Clutha Leader, Issue 992, Page 3).

Written under the pseudonym of 'Senex,' denoting an 'individual of advanced age or wisdom' this story comprises his reflective musings and first-hand chronicles of his expedition as he entered the Kaipara Harbour and journeyed around its upper reaches. 'Senex' was the non de plume for a sporting (horse racing) correspondent in The Press newspaper in Christchurch from the 1880s. His real name was E.G. (Edward George) Griffith who died in 1889, aged 58 years. He was an Englishman, more commonly known as Ned Griffith, who came to NZ in 1850s and, amongst other enterprises, bred and imported racing horses, and was Secretary of the Canterbury Jockey Club for a time.

He was quite a colourful character who had travelled the world in his early life as a seafarer, and was a keen cricketer and chess player. With the help of this information, I have also found a lovely tribute to 'Senex' in the Avonside Anglican Parish Cemetery booklet (his place of burial) where it describes "One plot, bright with flowers, contains the remains of one who was, all round, hard to beat. Son of an eminent art collector living on the road between London and Brighton, Edward George Griffith was a man of varied attainments and wide experience gained in many countries and in almost every imaginable phase of life. Through it all a gentleman and a staunch friend. Sailor, station manager, sheep dealer, journalist, gold digger, stud farmer, sporting editor, in each character he seemed at home. As a sporting writer he was unsurpassed for the gentlemanly purity of his style and for the general correctness of his views, as all those who remember the contributions of 'Senex' to the local press will vouch."

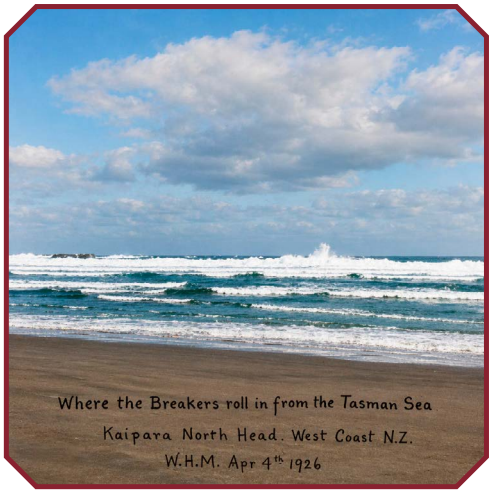
Kindly be aware that this account has been condensed slightly, and efforts have been made to ensure its accuracy.

AROUND THE KAIPARA HARBOUR IN 1893

Part One: The Adventure Begins

Sailing up the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand one passes many inlets on the way, and greatest amongst these is the Kaipara Harbour, which is little known to southern readers. This harbour for many years has been a great resort for timber vessels, as the kauri pine in all its beauty grows to a great size in the bush around its shores. The great drawback to this harbour is its bar, which is one of the worst in New Zealand; one

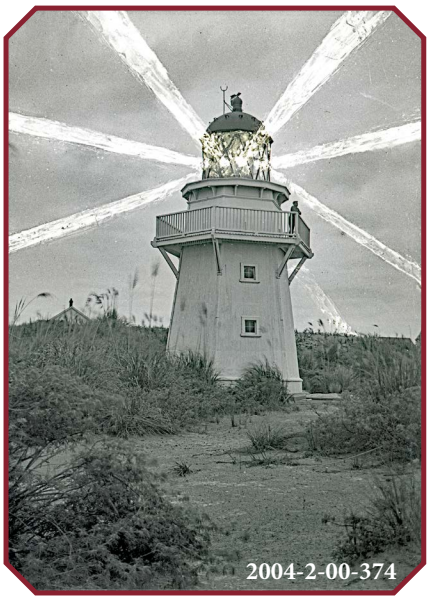
captain told me it was the worst in the world, but I won't go so far as to say that. At one time a signal station was placed on the north entrance or not far from it, but now a splendid lighthouse rears itself about the surrounding country flashing its light to the watchful mariner out at sea.



A great number of wrecks have taken place in and around the entrance. Among these were the Lotus, schooner, wrecked near the north spit; Melanie, barquentine, below the lighthouse; Feronia, barque near north spit; Prairie, brig, below the lighthouse; Strathaven, schooner, capsized on the bar; James A. Stewart, brigantine, on the north spit – all hands lost; Vindex, barque, near north spit; Mathiew, barque, near the lighthouse; Annabel, brig on Tory Shoal; Rona, schooner, capsized on bar – all hands lost, Sophia R. Luhrs, barque, near north spit. There are few harbours in New Zealand which have such a record as this, and I have no doubt there are a good many more ships that I have missed. Most of these wrecks happened years ago, very few having taken place in late years owing to the services of a towboat, which belongs to the North Union Steam Boat Co., and is always at the command of vessels for the purpose of towing in or out. Besides these wrecks near the bar, several have taken place inside which I will mention as I go along.

The first glimpse of the land from the ocean was got from the deck of the North Union Steam Boat Co. towboat Durham which is well-known in the harbour. I think I can't do better than describe this well-known tugboat and her crew. The captain, of course, being head was the first to draw my attention. He is a tall weather-beaten sailor with his genial face tanned with the exposure to many suns, his nose slightly aquiline – whether by accident or by nature not known – his hair tinged with grey caused I suppose by the many worries he has had to undergo, a voice like a lion which sounds like music to the mariner as he roars out 'are you going to tow captain?" His body is in proportion to his voice, and therefore I have no doubt he would be a rough customer in a free fight. The engineer is what we call a 'new chum' in New Zealand, that is to say, he is only a short time out.

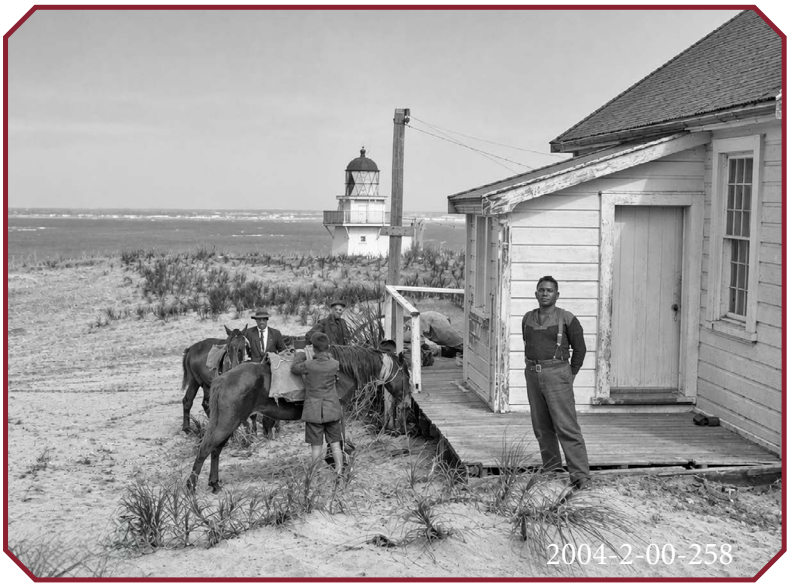
However, he is by no means new to his work, for I believe he has held high positions in the home country, and can always get a sport out of the engines when required. The mate is an old man-of-war's man; that is to say, he served in the navy at some former time. He is thoroughly up to the work and is one of the best men the company have got. The rest of the crew consisted of two stokers, a deck hand, a cook, and a boy, who looked after the cabin. The Durham itself is a tight little boat well fitted for towing; she has also accommodation for travellers, and can run at a fair speed, being very narrowly built.



From this small steamboat, I got from the sea my view of the Kaipara Heads, as we had been out to sea for the purpose of towing in a vessel. As we approached the bar the long roll of breakers on Tory Shoal might be discerned on the right, giving one an idea what must be the fate of a vessel touching this rocky shore. On the left, jutting out from the shore, lay the north spit, where the vessels have left their bones. This place is best known as the graveyard because so many vessels lie there; their timbers being piled up high and dry on the beach by the high spring tides.

The bar, once over, the vessel is headed for the beacons – three wooden trestles built up on the land, offering a good landmark on a fine day. To the left of these and along the coast the country is swampy with small lakes here and there dotted about among the ti-tree scrub. These lakes are the homes of black swans, wild ducks, and eels, which here grow to an enormous size. Several of these lakes or lagoons are tidal, being filled up by the sea at high tide, and are literally teeming with mullet, which, unlike those of the south grow to the length of a foot or more and weigh several pounds. I have seen the locals take over 200 with a net in about an hour and a half, and beauties they were as fat as butter and as rich as trout.

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



He has, I am told, a thorough knowledge of signalling, so I expect that is why he is kept so long in the one place. At one time the vessels used to get their orders from him where they were to go. The signalling is done by means of flags. A vessel came in one day that was to go to Helensville, so he ran up the flags meaning 'Go to Hel,' and then got his glass – which is very powerful – to watch the skipper's face as he translated. I suppose the skipper must have taken the literal meaning out of it at first, as his face was a study, but gradually it dawned on him what was meant, and he sailed away for that port rejoicing. The lighthouse has a flashlight every 10 seconds, and needless to say, the machinery and inside parts are spotlessly clean. The houses are well built and commodious, though on a foundation of sand, and a telephone connects with the harbourmaster's house at what is known as the North Head, so that the captain of the tow-boat may know whether any vessels are in sight or how the bar is.

Steaming up past the lighthouse towards the North Head, better known as Pouto Point, the splendid flat beach catches the eye, and here also may be seen the remains of one or two ill-fated vessels, for along this part the Hercules, brigantine, and the Midge, schooner, left their bones to rot. High-sloping sandy banks rise from the beach with green shrubs growing here and there, affording a delightful relief to the sand which meets the eye everywhere.

Pouto Point is an oasis in a desert, for trees of several years' growth shelter the houses of the harbour master, engineer, and boatmen from the fury of the northeast gales, which are felt there in all their force. To the right, nestled in a hollow, stands the Māori school, post office, and telephone station, which is connected with Te Kōpuru, 30 miles distant. A small launch lies at her moorings, swaying backwards and forwards by the motion of the tide, and used by the harbour master for the purpose of laying down buoys and in the usual discharge of his duties.

A boatshed built on the beach contains a cutter used in a case of any emergency. At the back of the boat shed rises the remains of a Maori pa, surmounted by a flag-staff. Away to the rear of that rises higher hills, where the local māori people run about a thousand sheep and mobs of small, stunted horses. Behind these hills, and net to the sand hills is a string of lakes both small and large, filled with clear fresh water, which affords drink to the various animals wandering about. These lakes in summertime are lukewarm and are thus splendid bathing places to those who like a dip in freshwater. They are also alive with teal duck and an occasional swan may now be sailing along their surface.

The two largest are named, one being called Whitehorn's Lake after a gentleman once residing here' the other Huma-huma, which has an island in the centre with several peach trees growing thereon, which are covered with fruit in the season. The run belongs to the local māori, and at one time they used to run mobs of cattle and horses; but they have done away with the cattle and have gone in for sheep. As the steamer glides up the harbour, one gets a view of the settlement – the first known as Waikāretu, which is close to the seashore. Here are a few houses, and a hall which is used for dancing.

Join us again next month for Part 2 of this tale by 'Senex' ....

Did you know?
The Tory Shoal is a shoal south of North Head, at the Kaipara Harbour Entrance

PIC OF THE MONTH

A Snapshot of Local History - Kotare on the Ōruawharo River at Port Albert - June 2023 - Rose Reid - Photo



What's On

07th November 2026 – Tapora School Agricultural Day 9 – 3 pm. Raffles, Auctions, a range of animals, rides, baking competitions and photo competitions. The school is located on the Okahukura Peninsula, about 33 kms west of Wellsford. A fun day for everyone.

08th November 2026 – ***Port Albert Community Church Service – 1.30pm at Church Hill Road, Port Albert.*** Please bring a plate. Everyone welcome.

14th November 2026 – Armistice in the Park – Warkworth Showground 10 – 4 pm Interactive military vehicle display.
https://www.localmatters.co.nz/history/armistice-brings-history-to-life/

15th November 2026 – The Settlers Market at Port Albert Hall 9 – 1 pm.

05th December 2026 – Wellsford Santa Parade.

Current Display at Albertland Heritage Museum - ***'The Sixties: Breaking News!'*** This display will take you back in time and you will discover how influential this decade was in shaping the world as we know it today. ***Museum opening hours are Wednesday – Saturday 11 – 3 pm and Sunday 1 – 3 pm.***

Friday Night Dinners at the Wellsford RSA (1 Olympus Road Wellsford). Starts at 5.30 pm and dinner can be ordered after ***'The Ode'.*** Weekly specials and salad bar available. See Facebook page for options and prices.

Our Recent AGM Guest Speaker – Sean Harris (Museum Committee Member and Volunteer.

As guest speaker at our recent AGM, Sean Harris shared his lifelong fascination with steam engines and the historic vessels that once worked the Kaipara Harbour. His presentation combined his engineering knowledge, personal stories and a real affection for these remarkable old boats.
Sean grew up in South London, where his father drove double-decker buses. As a child, he would travel on his father's bus to visit some of London's finest museums, particularly the Science Museum. He was captivated by the beautifully made working models of ship engines displayed in glass cases. His love of museums and machinery began at a very early age.

After immigrating to New Zealand, he finished his schooling before beginning an apprenticeship as a fitter and Turner with Lucas Industries which led him to 20 years of service with Fisher & Paykel.
A Saturday morning visit to the Maritime Museum in Auckland with his young son changed everything. They arrived just as the old steamer Puke was getting up steam. Sean began talking to some of the volunteers, and, as he explained, the 'steam virus' took hold. He has now been involved with Puke since 2001.

https://www.maritimemuseum.co.nz/

Sean modestly describes himself as no expert on Kaipara Steamers, explaining that steam engineering is such an enormous subject that anyone can only know a small part of it. His enthusiasm and practical experience, however, made for a fascinating journey through the history of several vessels at our AGM.

The Minerva


Minerva about 1911

Built by Charles Bailey & Sons in Auckland in 1910, the Minerva was originally designed for the shallow waters around Clevedon and Whitford. She was 59 feet long, 5' 8" wide and drew 5' 8" deep. She had a shipboard derrick (lifting apparatus consisting of a stationary vertical mast and a movable angled boom which relied on a network of ropes, blocks, and winches to lift heavy cargo off the docks and swing it into the ship's hold). Her flat-bottomed hull allowed her to navigate rivers where deeper-draught vessels could not go.

She moved to the Kaipara in 1915 and became involved in the timber trade. Remarkably, she was the last steam vessel to carry kauri logs from the Kaipara rivers, including the recovery of heavy, waterlogged logs known as "sinkers."
Now more than a century old, the Minerva is undergoing restoration. Sean showed many photographs of the work, including the restored cabin and the engines being prepared for installation. The replacement engines are considerably more powerful than the originals. He commented that while some modern additions may raise eyebrows among traditionalists, he believed that if they make the vessel easier to operate, they have their place.



Gordon Hendricksen with two of his model boats now displayed at the Albertland Heritage Museum

The Settler

The story of the Settler was less fortunate. Built before the Minerva in 1905 again by Charles Bailey & Sons she worked in the Kaipara dairy trade. She was 50 foot long. Her engine had a very interesting history, having already served another purpose on a rather unusual torpedo boat called the Ponaki which was used to defend the Wellington Harbour from invasion during the Russian Scare of the 1880s. These were spar torpedo boats and had torpedoes that could launch from a long spar that stuck out in front of the ship which would be used to drive into an enemy ship in the hope that the spar was long enough to enable the boat to back away after the explosion. Sean described them as looking absolutely fantastic while being absolutely ridiculous!



Unfortunately, on New Year's Day 1993, a navigational error saw the Settler run aground on rocks in Tairua Harbour. The boat remained there through more than one tide, suffering serious damage. Although she was eventually bought ashore, she will never return to the water.
Her original engine was salvaged and is now on display at the Maritime Museum in Auckland, preserving an important part of her story.

The Swann

This is Sean's own restoration project. Built in 1900 as a small steamer for the Kaipara dairy trade. At 35 feet long, she is a beautiful example of traditional boat design.
Over the years, the Swann was altered, converted to diesel and fitted with additional accommodation. Sean and co-owner, Daniel Hicks, hope to restore her to something closer to her 1920 appearance.
After spending ten years deteriorating on a mooring at Plummers' Point, she was fortunately brought to Port Albert. Sean reports that the hull is in remarkably good condition, despite the half-tonne of mussels that had accumulated on its bottom!
We will eagerly be watching the restoration of this gem that currently sits in Sean's front yard.

The Puke

The Puke is the vessel that Sean knows best. At just 24 feet long, she is believed by the Maritime Museum to date from 1872, making her one of the oldest working steam boats in the Southern Hemisphere.
Originally built as a tender for the logging industry, she is a fine example of traditional wooden boat construction which Sean talked about in depth using a partially complete scale model of the hull made by Chief Petty Officer Stuart John. Despite having only, a five-horsepower engine, her large propellor gives her enormous pulling power.



The Puke has had a colourful life. In 1988, the Union Steamship Company sponsored her trip to Brisbane for the Brisbane Expo, where she spent a year carrying numerous passengers on the Brisbane River. She also won the inaugural Brisbane Steamboat Race, a title she still holds today.

Sean has spent many years maintaining and improving her engine, which was assembled from parts donated or salvaged by members of the Auckland Steam community. His knowledge of the very unusual reversing mechanism known as the Fink Link (designed by Pius Fink for locomotives in America back in the 1840s) likely places him as the only expert in the world on how these are set up. He has only had one passenger in all his time with the Puke who actually recognised this system.



Sean explained to our gathering how steam engines work and why they have gradually disappeared from everyday use. Although ingenious and often beautifully made, they are relatively inefficient compared with modern engines. Nevertheless, steam power has not disappeared altogether. Steam turbines still drive some of the world's most powerful vessels, including nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines.

What stood out throughout Sean's talk was his belief that these old engines and boats are worth preserving. They represent not only engineering ingenuity but also the working lives of the people who depended going on to point out that a steam engine is never really yours to own forever, but that you are simply its custodian for a time, before passing it on to someone else.

He finished by saying that there is hope for both the Swann and the Minerva, currently being restored, and that the Puke will continue steaming for as long as Sean is able to keep her going.
Thanks to people like Sean, these fascinating pieces of our maritime heritage have a future as well as a past.

Footnote: We haven't been able to include all the fascinating details of Sean's wonderful talk here. If you would like to know more, please get in touch with us at ***albertlandmuseum@gmail.com***.

A $20 Find with a Fascinating Naval History

As we draw close to Armistice Day, commemorated each year on 11 November, we remember the end of hostilities on the Western Front during World War I. The Armistice was signed between the Allies and Germany at Compiegne, France, on 11 November 1918, with the ceasefire taking effect at 11 am — the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.
It seems a fitting time to share a fascinating story about a little piece of naval history discovered in the most unlikely of places.

As Sean was finishing his fascinating talk about Kaipara boats, he shared some of his nautical treasures with those attending. Among them was a slide rule he had found in an op shop in Waipu. Sean already owns several slide rules, but this particular find was surrounded by mystery and intrigue, and he simply had to investigate further!
This meant spending some time on a computer, something Sean is not particularly fond of. However, even his dislike of computers couldn't stop him from trying to uncover the story behind this intriguing little piece of history.
So, what caught Sean's eye about this $20 slide rule? It had an additional piece with extra engraving, revealing that it was a torpedo-calculating slide rule. Devices like this were used to calculate target interception courses, torpedo lead angles and firing solutions, helping submarines and surface ships aim torpedoes at moving enemy vessels.



Even more exciting was the discovery of the name of its original owner: Cyril Eltringham Lowther, born in the United Kingdom on 8 March 1890.
Cyril was a First Lieutenant serving aboard the J-class submarine J2. He was aboard when the submarine was involved in an encounter with a German submarine in 1917. We can only wonder whether this very slide rule played any part in that action!

Following the war, the British Admiralty decided that a force of submarines and cruisers would help protect the Pacific region. The six surviving J-class submarines were offered to the Royal Australian Navy, and J2 was among those transferred to Australian service in 1919. The flotilla sailed for Australia on 9 April, arriving in Sydney on 10 July after a long voyage that left the submarines in need of refitting.
Cyril Lowther continued his naval career and was promoted to Lieutenant Commander on 15 August 1923. He retired from service on 8 October 1924, but his naval experience was called upon again during World War II.

In January 1940, the Tuscarora was converted into an anti-submarine training ship. Lieutenant Commander Lowther took command on 16 October 1941. Operating from Campbeltown on the west coast of Scotland, the vessel served as a floating tactical school. Throughout the war, it conducted anti-submarine warfare detection and attack exercises, training British, Allied and Dutch submarine crews and escort vessels.

And so, a simple $20 purchase has opened a window into a remarkable piece of naval history.

But one big question remains. ***How did Cyril Lowther's slide rule cross the Tasman and end up in an op shop in Waipu, New Zealand, decades after his death in 1949?***

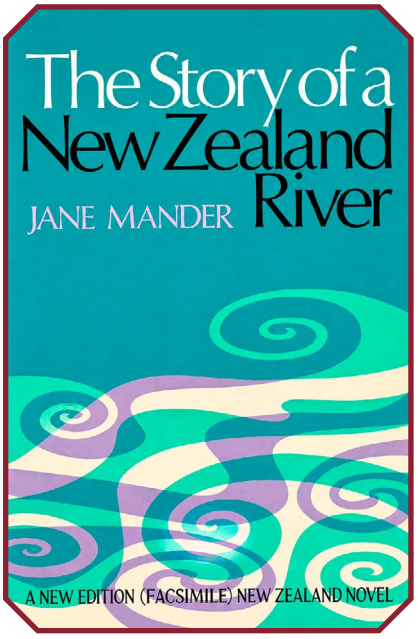
Did it travel with him during his service, pass through the hands of another sailor, or make its way to New Zealand through some other connection?

For now, the trail remains a mystery. Perhaps Sean will yet uncover another clue. One thing is certain: you never know what treasures might be hiding on an op-shop shelf!

Quotation for October

"The biggest cause of her uneasiness was that she had begun to question the verities. If you live beside a river sooner or later you have to. You can't help sitting beside it, and listening to it, and watching the water go by. And then you wonder idly where all the water comes from and where it goes, and when it began to run and why, and if it will ever end and why. And your thoughts run with it and change with it. And you go out at night to look at the stars reflected in the dark depths of it, and then you look up at the stars themselves, and you ask when and why again. And little by little you wonder if all that men have said about them is true, and who the first man was who said it. And you would like to be quite sure that he was inspired by God."

Jane Mander, The Story of a New Zealand River



Jane Mander was bought up around the shores of the Oruawharo River and attended the local school. Her father, was part of the Raekau Mill partnership of Mander & Bradley. Although the family moved around a lot during her childhood she never lost her love of the Oruawharo River and returned to the district in her late teens to work as a pupil-teacher at the Port Albert School under the guidance of headmaster, George Bellis Reid. In 1920 she wrote the book "The Story of a New Zealand River" telling the story of a well-to-do British family who had left England and were living in the middle of a dense New Zealand Kauri Forest. There are a diverse range of personalities in the cast of characters and many political, social and moral issues were addressed in the story. Well worth a read!

Pakiri Church Celebrates 100 Years



A special milestone was celebrated at Pakiri Church on Sunday, 18 October, as the community gathered to mark 100 years since the church was built in 1926.

Our museum treasurer, Rob Lennon, was at this special community celebration.
The service was led by Rev. John Marsden, bringing together those keen to celebrate the church's long history and its place in the local community.

The building has served more than one purpose over the years, doubling as a school classroom for two years. Recognition was also given to the early families who played a part in its establishment, including the Harris, Witten, Rennie and Wyatt families.

Gifted to the local community in 2005, the former Methodist Church has been cared for and restored through generous donations and countless hours of volunteer work. Its centenary is a fitting tribute to the people who have worked hard to preserve this little piece of Pakiri's history for future generations.

Happy Birthday wishes for October

October is certainly a busy month for birthdays! We'd like to take this opportunity to send our very best wishes to some of our wonderful museum volunteers, supporters and friends who are celebrating their special day.

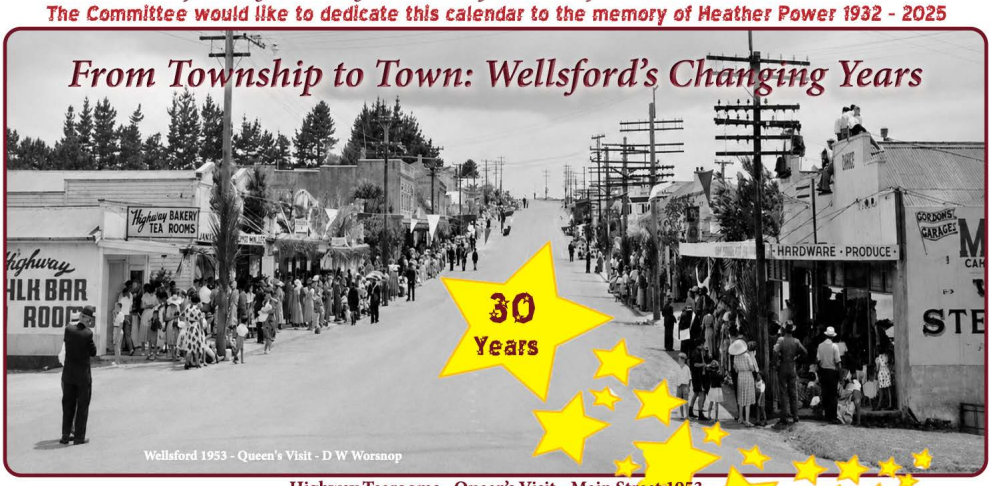
A special birthday shout-out goes to Pat Bennett and Barbara Lane, and we also remembered Barry Shepherd, whose birthday was celebrated at Port Albert Church.

So, from all of us at the museum, Happy Birthday to you all! We hope you enjoyed your special day and were thoroughly spoilt!

2027 Calendar

"This special edition celebrates 30 years of the Albertland Heritage Museum Calendar, honouring three decades of preserving and sharing the rich history and stories of Albertland and Districts."

The Committee would like to dedicate this calendar to the memory of Heather Power 1932 - 2025



Highway Tearooms - Queen's Visit - Main Street 1953

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

The 2027 Albertland Heritage Museum Calendar '**Township to Town, Wellsford's Changing Years**' is now available for purchase.

Cost: $25.00 at the Museum

Cost Posted: $35.00

The calendar is also available through our website https://albertlandmuseum.co.nz/product/2027-calendar/



OUR OWN RIVER—ORUAWHARO!

There was heard a song on the chiming sea,
A mingled breathing of hope and glee;
Voices unbroken by sighs were there,
Filling with gladness the sunny air;
Of fresh green lands, and of pastures new,
They sang, while the bark thro' the surges flew:
Oruawharo! Oruawharo!
They sang, they sang, those voices so glad & free,
And the sound rang aloud o'er the chiming sea.

Away, away, o'er the foaming main,
This was the free, and the joyous strain,
There are plains whose verdure no foot has prest
And whose wealth is all for the first brave guest,
We will give the names of our fearless race
To each bright river whose course we trace.
Oruawharo! Oruawharo!
They sang, they sang, those voices so glad & free
And the sound rang aloud o'er the chiming sea.