

# WHAKATANE & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



## PRESIDENT ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Welcome to the 70<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Society. To reach the milestone of 70 years is a great achievement for a society based in a small town. To still be producing a journal twice a year is an even greater achievement.

However, the continued existence of the Society would not be possible without members willing to serve on the Society's Council, our subscribers and also the contributors to the Journal. Our loyal members are not only private people, but also institutional and public libraries. There are even members from overseas libraries.

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to our Patron, Emeritus Professor Dame Anne Salmond. It is lovely to have you with us.

It has been another busy year for your Council. We have again managed to hold several events.

In June we were fortunate to have Dr Lachy Patterson, Head of Maori & Indigenous Studies at Otago University, give an interesting talk on Te Hau Kainga: Maori Home Front, which is a Marsden-funded project exploring the impact of WWII on the Maori Home Front during and after this conflict. He is one of the project leaders.

His talk focussed on such things as the preparation of food parcels for the troops overseas, Maori women stepping up to work within industry and on the land producing food for export. He commented on the reducing influence of religion especially Ringatu and Ratana during this war period and also the accelerated urbanisation of Maori youth that had started prior to WWII.

Dr Patterson suggested that after researching locally he had found relatively little changes to the local ways of life but was pleased to notice that there had been exciting and significant celebrations of the centenary of the Treaty of Waitangi signing within the Whakatane district during 1940.



In September Society held a field trip to Ruatoki. Members met at the lovingly restored historic Te Kaiwhakaora St Saviour's Church, where we were privileged to join in for the service. The church was opened in April 1914. After the service we were welcomed onto Tauarau Marae with a karanga. We admired the stunning Rongokarae whareniui and learned

the chronological history of the church. After lunch we visited the Ruatoki Mission House which was formally opened in October 1921. It differed from other mission houses in that as well as being a centre for mission work it was also a home where Maori girls, aged about 4-14, were cared for and taught the Christian faith.



In October the Whakatane Historical Society and Whakatane Blue Light held a "Grandma's Picnic" event at Allandale School. We were ably assisted by students of the Whakatane High School Interact Club. It was intended to show children the pastimes and games Grandma would have participated in. The activities included egg and spoon races, sack races, three-legged races and musical statues plus there were board games. Blue Light provided a sausage sizzle operated by Interact students. Two uniformed police also attended and joined in some of the races. The races proved very popular. We would like to thank Allandale School for allowing us to use their field for the event.

In November members visited the Taneatua and Waimana cemeteries where Robert talked about local families.



Emily Savage, wife of Charles and sister-in-law of Frederick Savage - first person buried in Waimana cemetery. They were some of the first settlers.

The initial burials were made in four family groups with relations of the initial settlers, Savage, Bell, Wardlaw and Robinson. Robert gave a brief account of the confiscation of land as a result of the death of Carl Volkner and James Fulloon and development of the Waimana estate and its ballot for small farms. Robert commented on some of the graves. A descendent of William Wardlaw came and was able to share some family history. His home was used during the Influenza epidemic as an emergency hospital. Only Frederick Savage's brother-in-law, Arnold John Ridley, died among the pakeha population and is buried next to Emily. The Bells came as storekeepers from Opotiki and the sister of a daughter-in-law was the first school teacher.

After an initial explanation of the Opouriao Estate and ballot for settlers a few graves of interest were pointed out at Taneatua. Most of the early graves were children.

Our Christmas afternoon tea in December was an enjoyable occasion. Neville Thompson had brought early photographs and maps of Whakatane which had members very interested.



Mei has been actively posting items on our FaceBook and website pages.

I make my usual plea for articles for the Journal *Historical Review*. Glen and I are co-editing the journal.

Glen has continued to do a magnificent job as Treasurer, and has also managed the membership database.

Morley has continued to look after the numerous requests for journal articles, or issues of the journal or copies of Monographs.

Glen and Morley do an enormous amount of work for the Society and I thank them very much.

Robert has continued to be minute secretary, which has made my task easier.

Unfortunately, we are losing Mei Leong and Anne Boswell from Council. We therefore have no one to administer our social media. That leaves us with four members of Council. I sincerely hope we can get more members on Council, otherwise we will not even have quorums for our meetings.

I gratefully acknowledge Matthew Marr at the Whakatane Museum for his assistance with research requests which come to the Society, and with photographs for journal articles.

I would like to thank the Council for their hard work and for supporting me during the year, and Society members for their support.

Tiena Jordan  
President