PDHS

The Papakura Sentinel

Number 83

Contents:

Greetings to all our readers

June already. If years feel the burden of events, 2026 must be weary by now. The battering of Ukraine, Palestine, Lebanon, Iran and its Gulf neighbours, the blundering heavy-handed pronouncements of self-promoting figures acting beyond their competence or democratic control, the seeming endless buffeting of the environment by climate change agents, the cost of living challenges and assaults on community …

But for the Papakura Museum and Historical Society, all is well. Meetings and trips have been well-patronised, funding provided for the Mana Whenua wall, new exhibitions attract interest, with Matariki displays and events planned. There have been good interactions with schools, and your *Sentinel* provides a continuing range of research and commentary. The book on the history of Kirikiri is taking shape.

Don't forget the forthcoming Annual General Meeting on Thursday 27 August. Details will be circulated in advance. And consider joining the team of volunteers in the Museum. (Further information page 17.)

This *Sentinel* Wendy takes us back to the glory days of the Post Office in Artefact of the Month, and then follows the story of an artistic daughter of Papakura, whose father was chemist (doctor by default), school teacher and organist. Edna completes the story of George Gould Walter, another leading figure of the early Papakura village. Alan reflects lightly on the historians' problem of grappling with small and broken glimpses into the past. After wading through flood waters in the last issue, I follow up on a reference by Edna to George Walter as Sub-inspector of Thistles to explore a weedy theme.

So here is our latest offering, for your delectation, continuing education and enjoyment. Read on.

Rob (Ed.)

PAPAKURA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Website: https://papakurahistoricalsociety.org.nz
Monthly Members' Meetings: 4th Thurs, 1pm – 3pm
Regular heritage Trips to places of interest

PAPAKURA MUSEUM

Open: Mon, Tues, Thurs, Friday, 10am—4.30pm,
Wed 10am—6pm, Sat 10am—3pm
Accent Point Building, 209 Great South Road; 09 2982003
Ph.: (09) 298 2003 www.papakuramuseum.org.nz

Digest of Society News and Events.

Recent talks:

Thurs 23 April: Sarah Ellis—Ranfurly Veterans' Trust, home and hospital

Thurs 28 May: Tom Brownlee—Historical town supply milk industry

Forthcoming PDHS meetings:

(Held in Library Meeting Room at 1 pm, followed by afternoon tea—anyone welcome. $2 towards afternoon tea)

Thurs 25 June: Cleone Campbell—History and growth of the Auckland Botanical Gardens

Thurs 23 July: Alan Knowles—Walking tour, historic places in Papakura

Thurs 27 August: Annual General Meeting. Speaker Josie Laird—Miss Bumby's mission

Recent Trips:

Thurs 16 April: Holy Trinity Cathedral, Parnell

Thurs 21 May: Toroa Preservation Society, Henderson

Forthcoming Trips:

Winter recess while the Trips committee plans. Trips will resume in September.

Museum: Exhibitions

Before the drone age—aerial photographs of Papakura over the last decades

No 4 (Ardmore Squadron) ATC—in military gallery

The Kiwi Scorpions (Long range desert group) - by end of June

Matariki display curated by Ngāti Tamaoho with events coordinated between Museum and Library. Saturday performances in the Museum on 11th, 18th, 25th July. Projected Matariki night sky in Museum foyer and on façade. Auckland Council will produce Matariki guide.

For more detailed and current information on events, please check:

***Staying in touch* monthly newsletter**

PDHS Website: www.papakurahistoricalsociety.org.nz

The screen outside the Papakura Museum

Object of the month

Wendy Deeming

Avery Post Office Letter and Small Parcel Scales

Scales became fixtures in post offices in the mid-19th century when the Post Office Act was passed and postal officials tied postage rates to the weight of the mail. Clerks and postmasters measured letters and packages to ensure customers were charged the right amount of postage. Many customers and businesses bought scales to weigh mail before going to the post office.

The most common style were Roberval letter balances. The letter was placed on the flat tray on one side, with weights placed on the other until the pans were level. Some examples of these scales had the postage rates inscribed on the metal. Letter balances continued to be used regularly in New Zealand, and are still used today, albeit in digital form.

These Avery scales are believed to have been used in the old Papakura Post Office on Great South Road. The weights ranged from ¼ oz to 2 lb.

Accession No. 12147

Accession No. 12147

HERSTORY

Papakura and district has had many women, who over time have contributed to the society and structure of the town, the district, or the nation. Their involvement ranges from politics, to sport, to education, to the arts and to the social fabric. Over the coming months we will be featuring different women who have made life in Papakura more interesting, from its beginning to the present.

Alice Fanny Whyte

Alice Fanny Whyte (née Fallwell) was born in Papakura on 14 September 1877. She was the daughter of Samuel Fallwell, a dispensing chemist and Papakura's first school master, and Martha Ann Fallwell (née Wilkinson). The family lived in Papakura, and Alice studied art at the Elam School of Fine Arts, travelling by train from Papakura every day. Alice was a teacher at Elam from 1905 until 1908, when she married Norman Alexander Whyte on 17 March of that year at St Andrew's Church, Epsom. In 1929 she studied at Elam again under John Weeks and became best known as a still life artist specialising in watercolour.

In 1928 Alice exhibited at the Society of Women Painters in Sydney. In July 1930, she was the first member of the Auckland Society of Arts to hold a solo exhibition in Auckland. Alice also exhibited at the Canterbury Society of Arts in 1921, 1927, 1930-1934, 1940-1942, 1945, 1947, and 1951, the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts annually from 1925 to 1951, the Otago Arts Society, and the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition in Dunedin 1925-1926. She exhibited under the names Alice Fallwell, Alice Whyte, and Alice F. Whyte.

In 1936, one of her paintings was awarded the Judkins landscape medal by the Auckland Society of Arts. In 1940, her paintings were included in the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition in Wellington, and the following year (1941) one of her works was awarded the Bledisloe Medal for most typical New Zealand natural landscape. Her work is held in public collections in New Zealand, including the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and the Auckland Art Gallery.

Alice died on 3 July 1952, and was buried at the Mangere Lawn Cemetery.

Source: Wikipedia

GEORGE GOULD WALTER:

From Pit Boy to Country Gentleman (Part 2)

Edna Carson

Unfortunately George Walter's first marriage was of short duration, as Margaret died on 17 February 1863 while he was away at Mangatawhiri. She was only 24 years old and a bad fall two days previously had resulted in fatal concussion. There were two surviving daughters from this marriage, Elizabeth Grace born 30 January 1857 in Papakura, and Harriet born 1860 – her birth was not registered and the year is an assumption—while of the two sons, one born 12 November 1859 only lived a few hours, and the other, George Gould, born 25 June 1862 at Mauku, died 3 months later.

As her husband was away so often, it appears that Margaret's parents, the Munros, had moved to Mauku to help her run the hotel and look after the two girls. Her mother, Elizabeth Munro, was one of the people who gave evidence at the inquest held after the second boy's death. When war spread to the Mauku district, Margaret's parents moved with their granddaughters to Papakura in June 1863, as the hotel was by then a depot for military stores and no longer a safe place to bring up children. It is likely that they looked after their granddaughters at the property on the corner of Walters Place (Don Street).

Although he missed his wife, George Walter had to finish some of his earlier contracts and he also decided to take on further commitments. Among these was the purchase in April 1863 of 136 acres of land, adjoining that of Major Speedy, on which to run a few sheep and cattle. In January 1864 he was appointed Sub-Inspector of Thistles for the Drury and Waiuku districts, another role which involved plenty of travelling throughout this area. Reports in newspapers mentioned him coming across a dead Maori in Shepherd's Bush, being thrown from his horse on his way to Mauku, and later having an accident with his neighbour in Papakura, Captain Pye, when they were thrown from a dog cart on their way home from the Otahuhu cattle sales. This accident resulted in a broken leg, which was not the first fracture he had suffered. Because of his workload, he evidently decided to seek help from his youngest brother William back in Devon. Once arrangements were made, William booked a passage on the *Avalanche* and arrived in the country on 15 May 1864 to take over the job of caretaker at the Mauku Hotel. After a new licensee was appointed for this hotel, he moved to Papakura to manage the Globe Hotel, which had just opened in 1865. William left the country not long afterwards.

George Walter held the publican's licence for the Mauku Bridge Hotel until December 1864, when he willingly transferred it to the then occupier, James Harnett Pike, who operated a flax mill close by. At the licensing meeting earlier in April that year, he had received a stern reminder that the hotel must be kept open at all times for visitors unless there was a danger of war, as it had been found

closed on several occasions. There were no complaints about it being closed during Pike's management. Rather, a visitor on his way to Waiuku in 1866 spoke very favourably about the hotel: 'Its pretensions are not so great as your city hotels, but inside you find the cheerful house-wife, the tidy servant, the household baked bread, the sweet pat of butter, the pleasant fire and clean bedroom, such as to satisfy any traveller'. Pike leased the hotel until 1869.

This was a period when the country's economy was severely depressed and many of the district's population had joined the exodus to the Thames goldfields. Walter found it difficult to get people who were willing to take over the license long-term, as trade had fallen away at what was then known as the Mauku Inn. One of the licensees, Louis Kahn, went bankrupt at his first attempt, while William Shaldrick, a mariner by occupation, found that he could not support his family if he had to manage the hotel full time and keep it open 7 days a week, a requirement of the license. This meant that in between license transfers, George Walter had to renew the publican's license himself. Eventually in 1873, he was able to transfer the license to Michael Daly, who held it for a few years before transferring it to William Richardson.

When Pike was leasing the Mauku Bridge Hotel and the Papakura district had recovered from the upheaval of the Waikato War, George Walter announced in February 1865 that he was preparing a large house for a hotel on the property he had bought earlier on the corner of the Great South Road and Walters Place (Don Street). Later that year he applied for a publican's license for a family hotel, which was to be known as the Globe Hotel. His application was approved by the Licensing Committee on the proviso that he enlarged the building to provide the required number of accommodation rooms. This undertaking was successfully completed by Mr Barrett and other local carpenters, many of them recent and highly skilled immigrants, and 'for size, accommodation and other necessary appendages, will come up almost to any of your city hotels' (*NZH* 5 July 1865). Among the 'appendages' would have been a large stable block for his increasing number of horses, one of which, Balsam, he had bought at a sale after the Auckland races in January 1865. They were his main means of transport between his hotels and other places of business. Unfortunately the following year two of his horses were poisoned and though a reward was offered, the culprit was never found.

Soon afterwards in 1866, he employed architect Richard Keals to draw up plans and supervise the building of a hotel at Point Russell (later Mercer) to be called the Point Russell Hotel. This was a comfortable and well furnished establishment with twenty rooms, which, he said at one of the Franklin Licensing Committee meetings, had cost him £2,000, a considerable sum in those days. When the hotel was due to open, he leased it to William Cornthwaite, who obtained a bush license to manage it. The following year there was some damage to the hotel during an unsuccessful arson attempt but this was soon repaired. The condition of the hotel met with the approval of Governor, Sir George Bowen during his stay there in 1868, as he remarked that 'he was not aware that there was such a commodious hotel to be found at Mercer and that it did great credit to the enterprising landlord'.

A number of other publicans, including Robert Cameron, George Wiles, George Nye, George Grover, nephew of his second wife, James Innes and Roland Robert Campion followed in quick suc-

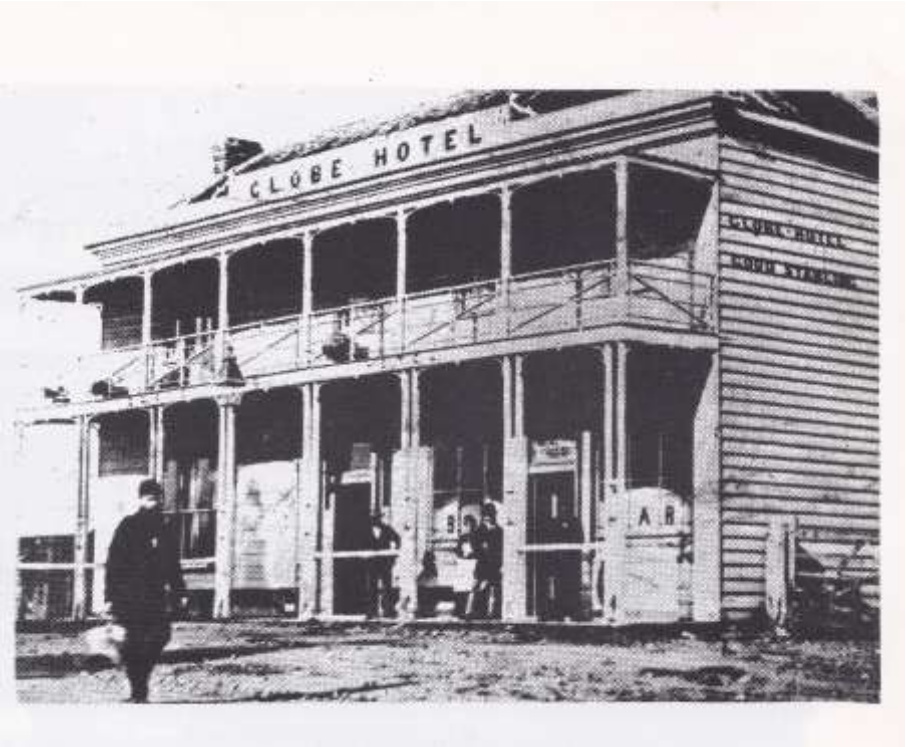
cession before it was sold to Thomas Hancock in 1874. During this period the hotel was widely used as an overnight stay for passengers being off loaded from Cobb and Co's coaches and waiting to embark on one of the Waikato River steamers for destinations further south. Trains replaced coaches in May 1875 when the railway reached Mercer. Not long afterwards when the railway was extended to Ngaruawahia in August 1877, there was not the same need for any overnight accommodation in Mercer and the hotel became unlicensed towards the end of 1880. George Walter had sold it at a fortuitous time!

Point Russell Hotel and wharf at Mercer.

Beere, Daniel Manders. Mercer 1866. Alexander Turnbull Library Ref: 1/2-096119-G

On the 3rd November 1868, he married his second wife, widow Sarah Ann (nee Langridge) Middlemas. Her first husband, Joseph Middlemas, had been one of the most hard working and progressive young settlers in the South Auckland district until he was tragically killed when his cart overturned on his way home from Auckland, leaving her to carry on the store and Post Office at Drury after his death. There was one daughter from George Walter's second marriage, Helen Jane, who was born on 25 May 1869 and was brought up with her step-sisters and the children from Sarah's first marriage. Although he was then still very involved in the Papakura community, supporting the local church, offering funds and labour for the upkeep of the cemetery, providing use of the large iron building next to his hotel if needed for a Town Hall, and advocating for the establishment of a public library for residents, his main interest was now his farm at The Grange. This was the property he had purchased from Major Speedy's estate in May 1867 and was next to the farm he had bought in 1863. On the increased acreage, he bred prize sheep and ran a few head of cattle, no doubt utilising the experience he had acquired in animal husbandry during his early years in Devon.

In early 1869 he bought section 2 Lot 9, Papakura, which had been part of the original Crown Grant to Edward Waters, and moved the Globe Hotel into a larger new building there almost opposite the Papakura saleyards. After a housewarming party to celebrate the opening, he renewed the license himself and managed this Hotel with his wife while running his farm in Mauku.



Globe Hotel, Papakura, late 1890s [Papakura Museum collection]

Life became more settled for him, until in February 1870 a fire broke out in the outbuildings of his Grange estate. The buildings, which consisted of a large barn, coach house, eight-stall stable, dairy, and dray sheds were totally destroyed. Also consumed were over two hundred bushels of grass seed and oats, and a large quantity of farming implements. The property was not insured and this loss together with the fact that the country's economic outlook had not improved, must have left him feeling that his family had no future in New Zealand. The 16 May 1870 issue of the *NZ Herald* advertised all his properties for sale:

> The GRANGE ESTATE, at the Mauku, formerly the property of the late Major Speedy, comprising 240 acres of good Land, all fenced and subdivided, chiefly in good grass, with large Dwelling House and out-houses, 300 first-class ewes in lamb to pure bred rams.
>
> The MAUKU INN, now let to Mr [KEHEAN] KAHN, to 1st September, 1871.
>
> POINT RUSSELL HOTEL, Mercer, now let to Mr INNES, up to 1st July, 1872.
>
> The GLOBE HOTEL, Papakura, now occupied by Mr JOHN HAMILTON.
>
> The PRIVATE RESIDENCE of the undersigned, Papakura House, containing ten rooms, Stable, Coach House, out-houses, and from 5 to 6 acres of land in high cultivation.
>
> A PADDOCK of 13 acres, in the village of Papakura, opposite the Papakura Hotel, laid down in good grass.
>
> If not sold in one month from this date, the whole of the property will be offered at public auction by Mr ALFRED BUCKLAND. GEO G WALTER, Papakura

No buyer was found for any of these properties at the time, though both the Mercer and Mauku hotels were sold later. John Hamilton transferred the license of the Globe Hotel back to him in 1873. By 1874 this was an ever increasing source of frustration, because his main base had been in Papakura for about 18 years and he longed to spend more time on his farm at Mauku. Eventually, in June 1875 he was able to find another licensee for the Globe Hotel, Joseph Scouller, who was there for a short period, followed by Thomas Hollywood, Charles Limmer and Duncan McGregor. He then had to renew the license himself because he could not sell or lease it to anyone. A new

licensee, Thomas Andrew Usher, who took over management of the hotel in 1885 was tragically killed in a railway accident in March 1887, leaving his widow Annie Maria Usher to keep the license current until she could transfer it to Robert John Leeming Benson in June 1889. By this time, the leasehold and license of the hotel itself had been bought by John Carrol Seccombe of the Great Northern Brewery, though George Walter or his wife still owned the land until his death.

Meanwhile in Mauku, where there had been a thriving little settlement near the creek in the early 1860s and 1870s, and the hotel had been used not only by locals but also by workers employed in the flax and gum industries, an improvement in the roads meant that new settlers and small businesses were instead moving into the nearby town of Patumahoe. This naturally led to declining patronage of the hotel at the inlet. George Walter decided that he would need to do something about this and bought from Heywood Crispe an acre of land, which had been the original Crown Grant to Frederick Farmell, on the corner of Kingseat and Patumahoe Roads. In November 1882 he applied to the Franklin Licensing Committee to move his hotel from Lower Mauku to Upper Mauku (Patumahoe). An article in the February 1883 *Observer* noted, 'The old Beau is getting quieter. GG is moving the pub to Patumahoe. As the mountain will not come to Mahomet, he must go to the mountain.'

The move itself was not without its complications. George Walter and his workers removed the doors and windows of the single storey building and placed them on a dray ready to be taken to the new site, while the building itself was lifted on to a series of logs, which acted as rollers, to be hauled by a team of bullocks to its new location 5 km away in Patumahoe. This method had been used successfully in other parts of New Zealand where a building had to be removed to a new site and no problems were expected. However, the road through which the operation was to take place was through disputed 'private' land and this caused a confrontation with Mr Hamilton Quinn, another settler. During the move, there was a collision with Mr Quinn's dray, windows were broken and blows were exchanged by the two parties, resulting in appearances in the local Magistrates Court with claims for damage to property by one party and claims of assault by the other party. After submissions had been heard in court, neither party came out as clear winners. However, the building eventually reached its new location and the necessary repairs were undertaken. It was still called and relicensed as the Mauku Inn after its move to Patumahoe, though the sign on the exterior said 'Mauku Hotel'.

George Walter continued to lease the hotel to a series of publicans, including Robert McVeigh who, having been involved in the initial move, took over the accommodation license in June 1884, then in quick succession to Arthur Deacon and Alfred Caleb Pulleng. In February 1893 when Thomas Kinsey took over the license, he also bought the hotel, which ended Walter's interest in this hotel. After Thomas Kinsey's death on 1 January 1895 and a brief period when his wife, Mary Elizabeth Kinsey, took over the license to become the first female licensee in the district, the hotel was sold to Louis Ehrenfried. He was a Thames brewer, who was buying up hotels as outlets for his increased beer production after his purchase of the old Albert Brewery in Queen Street, Auckland. When Ehrenfried died in 1897, the hotel became part of the large Campbell & Ehrenfried conglomeration, one of the forerunners of the present Lion company.

The Grange homestead, Mauku

[Reproduced with permission of Patumahoe History & Memories]

Once freed from the burden of being a hotel owner or manager, George Walter and his wife became more involved in the Patumahoe community, and he was able to concentrate on farming The Grange until his death on 25 June 1898. When he died, he had not taken an active part in any hotel for many years. Just after his death, there was a notice from the Public Trustee inviting tenders to lease The Grange Farm (*Ak Star* 1 January 1899), as he had no son to carry on the farm itself, one of his greatest regrets. His wife and unmarried daughter, Elizabeth Grace, stayed on in the house until Sarah Ann's death in 1904. All three daughters were involved with the Willis family, who were among Papakura's first settlers and had been instrumental in building the first store in the district as well as the first Anglican Church. Before her father died, Harriet had married Robert John Willis on 21 February 1883 while Helen Jane married Alfred Willis later on 28 November 1899. Elizabeth Grace had been engaged to William Willis, but he died prematurely and she remained unmarried, returning to live in Papakura after her stepmother's death to be closer to her sisters. Descendants of these members of the Willis family are now scattered throughout New Zealand and overseas, still making valuable contributions to the communities in which they live.

George Gould Walter is buried in the old Papakura Cemetery along with his first wife Margaret, his unmarried daughter Elizabeth Grace and his other daughter Harriet Willis by this marriage, while his second wife Sarah Ann is buried with her first husband Joseph Middlemas in the cemetery at St Johns Anglican Church in Drury.

His obituary (*NZH* 29 June 1898) (though it incorrectly says he had built the Travellers Rest), stated that 'Mr Walter was always known as a jolly good fellow by all whom he came in contact with', a sentiment that may not have been shared by one of Papakura's first policemen with whom he came in conflict with on occasions over what he considered unreasonable licensing legislation. However, despite many setbacks and no doubt often hoping that he would have liked to visit his family back in Devon, he stayed in New Zealand and with hard work showed great enterprise in establishing businesses, which supported and helped progress the early settlements in both Papakura and Mauku.

Special thanks to Howard Upfold for access to and help with the history of Patumahoe hotels

Carter, Kay, ed. Patumahoe: history & memories. Patumahoe: Patumahoe History Group?, 2016.
National Library of NZ. Papers Past.

Time Travel for Historians: Finally, Some Answers

Alan Knowles

Historians and curators spend enormous amounts of time trying to reconstruct the past from fragments. And when I say fragments, I mean fragments. A broken pot. A bent nail. Three buttons. Half a spoon. Something described in an excavation report as 'possible ritual object', which usually means: 'Nobody knows what this thing is'. Entire theories of civilisation have been built on evidence roughly equivalent to future archaeologists finding part of a microwave and concluding: 'The people of the 21st century worshipped glowing food boxes'. And honestly, can we completely rule that out?

The entire historical profession is essentially advanced guessing. We dress it up professionally, of course. We use phrases like 'the archaeological evidence suggests…', 'it is possible that…', and 'scholars generally agree…'. But beneath the academic language is a simple truth: we are all trying our absolute best to make sense of incomplete evidence. One broken artefact becomes a theory, then a paper, then a conference, then a documentary narrated very seriously by someone British. Suddenly an entire civilisation apparently based its religious beliefs around what may actually have been a decorative soup ladle.

Written histories are not much better. People assume written history solves the problem. It does not. Written accounts are often biased, exaggerated, political, written years later, or produced by someone with a personal grudge. Historians spend years comparing diaries, letters, official reports, and eyewitness accounts only to conclude eventually: 'The truth is complicated'. Which is historian language for: 'Everyone involved appears to have been lying'.

This is why time travel is so appealing to historians. Not because of paradoxes. Not because of science fiction. But because it would finally allow us to stop guessing. Imagine being able to walk through ancient cities, hear conversations directly, watch historical events unfold, and see objects being used in context. No more: 'This object may have had ceremonial significance'. Instead: 'No. That is a bread holder'. History instantly becomes much clearer. And probably far less dignified.

Imagine the possibilities. A historian arrives in Ancient Rome expecting grandeur, philosophy, and civilisation, only to discover traffic, shouting, administrative confusion, and somebody trying to sell fish in the street. Which, to be fair, makes it feel much more believable. Or imagine finally meeting Napoleon Bonaparte after years of reading historical analysis, only to discover he mostly complains about logistics. You spend decades studying famous historical figures, then realise most of history was probably just tired people trying to organise things badly.

Archaeologists are obsessed with context — and rightly so. Because without context, objects lose meaning, interpretation becomes difficult, and museum labels become increasingly creative. Take a single object out of context and suddenly a spoon becomes ceremonial, a toy becomes sacred, and half a keyboard becomes evidence of 'communication rituals'. Meanwhile the original owner was simply eating soup, entertaining a child, or trying unsuccessfully to connect

to Wi-Fi.

Time travel would ruin so many conferences. Entire academic careers would collapse overnight. Imagine the scene. A time traveller returns and announces: 'We checked. The famous ritual object was actually a portable cheese grater'. Three university departments immediately burst into flames. Someone quietly withdraws a PhD thesis. A museum curator updates a display label while pretending this information was already widely accepted.

Which brings us to the most ridiculous part of all. Because while historians are debating whether time travel is theoretically possible, someone has already started preparing for it. There is genuinely a project called *timetravelfund.com*, and the idea is magnificently absurd. For only ten dollars US, you contribute to a fund designed to sit and accumulate over potentially hundreds — or even thousands — of years. The theory is this: eventually, sometime in the distant future, time travel is invented, the fund has grown enormously, future humans look back through historical records, find your contribution, and come back to collect you.

Yes. Collect you. As though you are a slightly delayed parcel. And then, apparently, you are taken anywhere in time you wish to go.

Frankly, historians should be first in line. Because who would benefit more from time travel than historians? Finally: firsthand evidence, direct observation, proper context, and real conversations. No more arguing over fragmented texts, contradictory accounts, or whether an object was 'ritualistic'. We could simply go and look. Honestly, for ten dollars, it is difficult to think of a better research opportunity. Most research grants do not even provide decent sandwiches.

Of course, there are risks. Historians travelling through time would immediately begin interfering. You just know it. Someone would say: 'I am only making one small correction…' and suddenly entire empires disappear, museums lose half their collections, and somebody accidentally prevents the invention of the stapler. Also, historians would become unbearable. Imagine conference presentations beginning with: 'Well, when I visited 14th-century Florence personally…'

The true tragedy is that even with time travel, we would probably still argue. Because historians do not merely study facts. We interpret them. Two historians could witness the same event firsthand and still emerge saying: 'It represented social transformation'. 'No, it represented economic anxiety'. 'No, it was fundamentally about soup'.

Perhaps that is the real reason historians are so fascinated by time travel. Not because we want to change history. Not because we want to become famous eyewitnesses. But because, deep down, every historian has looked at a shattered fragment of pottery, a contradictory diary entry, or an object labelled 'purpose unknown' and quietly thought: 'I just want to know what actually happened'.

And maybe that is the strange beauty of history. The fact that the past is never completely reachable. It survives only in fragments, memories, objects, stories, and interpretations. We spend our lives trying to reconstruct entire worlds from traces so small they barely seem possible. A post hole becomes a settlement. A bent spoon becomes culture. A broken keyboard becomes a religious artefact.

And perhaps, hundreds of years from now, future historians will do exactly the same with us. Carefully studying the remains of our civilisation and concluding: 'These people appear to have commu-

nicated primarily through small glowing rectangles while consuming large quantities of coffee'. Which, to be fair… would not be entirely wrong.

Weedy Papakura

Rob Finlay

Location deliberately withheld, though not far from where I live. Taiwan cherry, ivy, flannel weed, privet, moth plant pods, ivy, ladder fern amid some respectable plants. I've got some of them too.

Photo R Finlay

No, this article is not about The Weed, as someone suggested: I have no knowledge of it. As a former teacher I sometimes smelled it. I've never grown it.

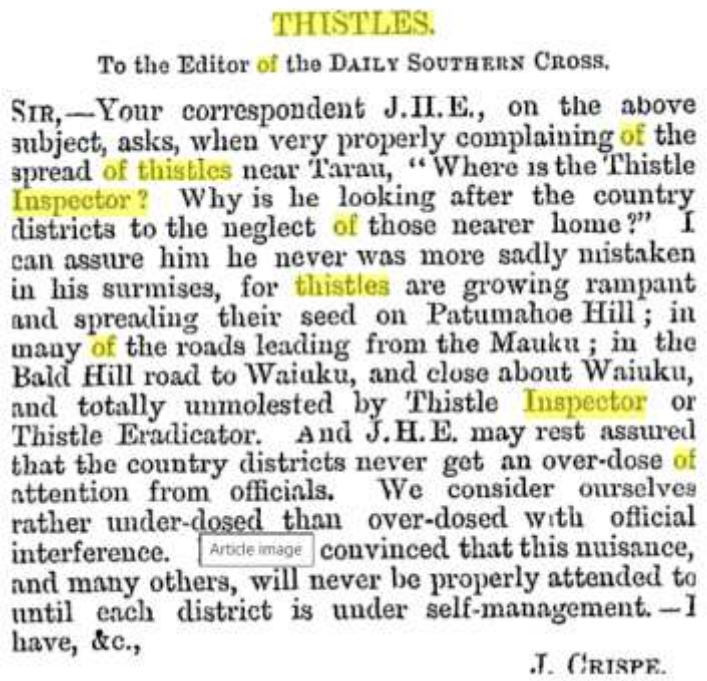
But I am a gardener who regards weeds as the enemy, although I distinguish between those easily pulled and safely composted or mulched and those calling for stronger actions and more careful disposal. (See end.) And I am a volunteer with Friends of Kirks Bush led heroically by Margaret Gane: I have the hi-viz jacket to prove it. When I joined up, I was dismayed to realise how much of our energy is spent on weeding. In Kirk's Bush, if it's not native it is a weed. So we grapple with tradescantia, Taiwan cherry – I can spot a seedling at 10 metres - moth plant, privet, inkweed, lilies. If we catch them early enough it's a careful extraction, otherwise it might involve a pruning saw and some poison. Sometimes the weeds are there because of dumping – mignonette with its ugly and potent nodules and kikuyu for instance – but other plants are just too good at self-propagation, and don't respect fences. Like the rats and possums that are trapped there, and the odd human camper. Don't ask questions.

Many of these plants were deliberately introduced for their appearance. People interviewed on TV in the last two years have decided ruefully that selling and popularising Taiwan cherry with its prolific bold pink flowers had not been a good idea. And now there are competitions to see who can remove most moth plants or their pods. Sadly, travelling north on the motorway, it seems the weeds are most rampant to the south of Auckland.

There've been weeds as long as there have been people. We decide what is useful and what is not, sometimes unwisely. Cultivation creates weeds, by selection and by disturbing the soil, so Māori weeded among the kumara, taro and gourd beds. But their style of farming often involved letting land lie fallow after several productive years. Bracken fern and manuka were the main succession plants, and served over time to restore fertility to the soil. And aruhe fernroot was a plentiful weed

that provided food. Dug, cleaned, pounded to a paste and baked, it was tasty and crusted like bread. Cultivation also meant removing areas of bush, and fire was an effective tool. But the forest was also valued for plants with food and medicinal (rongoa) value, and the birds and other creatures that made it their home. Forest, swamp, fernland and manuka scrub were assets.

Pākehā settlers in the nineteenth century came with different crops and technologies, different expectations and in large numbers. Very often the forest, fern, scrub and swamp plants were seen as weeds to be removed. The axe, saw, spade and fire were very effective at removing the old plant cover, but nature abhors a vacuum, and the desired grasses and crop plants came with— or after— energetic rivals. Sometimes deliberately introduced. In Scotland gorse, also known as furze or whins, betokened spring; the cheerful gold broke the grey clutch of winter and beckoned lovers with its promise. In Cornwall it was cleared by fire each summer. More prosaically, it was seen as a useful hedge plant. In 1863, Peter Lawson and Son Nurseries of Edinburgh and London were advertising whin or gorse seeds in the *New Zealander* newspaper. But in New Zealand furze just spread.



THISTLES.

To the Editor of the DAILY SOUTHERN CROSS.

SIR,—Your correspondent J.H.E., on the above subject, asks, when very properly complaining of the spread of thistles near Tarau, "Where is the Thistle Inspector? Why is he looking after the country districts to the neglect of those nearer home?" I can assure him he never was more sadly mistaken in his surmises, for thistles are growing rampant and spreading their seed on Patumahoe Hill; in many of the roads leading from the Mauku; in the Bald Hill road to Waiuku, and close about Waiuku, and totally unmolested by Thistle Inspector or Thistle Eradicator. And J.H.E. may rest assured that the country districts never get an over-dose of attention from officials. We consider ourselves rather under-dosed than over-dosed with official interference. Article image convinced that this nuisance, and many others, will never be properly attended to until each district is under self-management.—I have, &c.,

J. CRISPE.

Daily Southern Cross, 2 February 1866

In an earlier article in this issue, we read about a Sub-Inspector of Thistles. There was also an Inspector of Thistles, and multiple letters in the newspapers on the subject. Some spoke of the jobs as synecures. Thistles were not deliberately introduced, but the grass seeds brought out to create good pasture came with old companions. Thistles are prickly customers and create prickly relationships. Describing your neighbour as a 'thistle farmer' was not intended as a compliment. These and many other plants found Aotearoa's virgin soils and lack of traditional competitors much to their liking.

And so, in the early days of Papakura and the Kirikiri settlement, in the 1860s, while settlers and paid sawyers were laying low tall forest, the Agricultural Society was organising working bees to remove furze and thistle. I imagine innocent Scottish farmers swearing away at the nodding white seed heads of so-called Scotch thistle. We didna bring these with us. The early Papakura District Board was constantly sending messages out to land-owners, the gentlemen-farmers of Everslie as much as the struggling small-holders, requiring them to clear the roadside weeds, listing native manuka and introduced furze in the same breath. If James Mulgrew, absentee owner, couldn't weed his section himself, could he pay the Council to do it?

Some of the small farmers struggled to keep the land they wrested from the bush weed-free. But sometimes a new weed was greeted like an old friend. Douglas Brown Stewart, whose grandfa-

ther Robert had 10 acres on the Kirikiri (now Willis) road, reported on how Robert reacted when he first saw blackberries on his land:

> When he saw a blackberry bush on his property**,** the first he'd seen since he left Scotland, he took off his hat and put the blackberries into it. When he got home he said to his wife 'Margaret, ye'll nae ken what I hae in my bonnet. Some blackboys! Black boys!'

When Douglas Brown Stewart's father bought the farm in 1896, three years after his grandfather had died, the land had become overrun by blackberry among the stumps of the departed forest. Only one paddock of two and a half acres out of the ten had been cultivated, and even that was mainly blackberry. On all the properties around 'were abundance of pheasants, quail, hares and rabbits. One could shoot anything without hindrance'. That's on Willis Road, and all those named species were introduced. The whole family were put to work removing the blackberry, and then the twitch, before they could finally sow a good crop of potatoes.

Twitch, and later kikuyu are not popular among gardeners. But for people who are passionate about lawns for bowling and croquet greens, twitch is highly regarded. And there are those who loudly sing the praises of kikuyu.

In the last issue, I wrote about the problem of flooding in the Ōtuwairoa valley that flows out of Kirikiri and becomes Slippery Creek in Drury, and the impact on the flow of the stream of exotic willows, which happily self-sow and then block the stream. (Right)

Of course, indigenous plants could also become a pest. 'The toot', tutu, was not friendly to settlers' cattle, especially when they were pregnant. One case before the Resident Magistrate in 1878, 'Nicol vs Nealie', involved neighbours in the Ardmore/Kirikiri hills behind upper Settlement Road, and occupied the court for two whole days.

It involved a claim for £25. Back in September, when Robert Nicol was working in his bush, only separated from the defendants by a road, he heard the barking of a dog and the ringing of cattle-bells, which he recognised as those on his own cattle. Coming out of the bush he saw his cattle being chased by Nealie's dog. They were chased about half a mile. Mrs Mary Nealie and her sons had come out too, but returned when she saw Nicol. She told the court that the cows had been on their grass 200 yards from the fence and she had set the dog onto the cattle, but called them off when they reached the road. Nicol thought the dog, who had previously attempted to bite him, was mischievous. He had thought the cattle were unharmed, but the next day two of them were dead, and the third sickly looking. He valued the cows at £14, as they were fat, nearing calving. They were frothing at the mouth.

The case turned on diagnosis of tutu poisoning, and whether it would have been the cause of death. Various neighbours had been present when the cows had been cut open, testifying that half the contents of the stomach was tutu, along with leaves and flax. William Fulton could not be certain whether tutu had caused death: he (like other witnesses) had had cattle poisoned by tutu, which had sur-

vived. The conclusion reached was that the Nealies had not been responsible for the death of the cattle, and Nicol had to pay costs.

But most weeds were introduced. There were reports of ragwort in New Zealand from about 1902. In the 1930s, ragwort was reported on the Railway Reserve (Massey Park), according to *Franklin Times.* A recommendation was made that demonstration plants should be grown so that people could recognise them. One lady admitted that, attracted to the bright yellow flowers, she had planted one in her garden, not knowing what it was. A dairy farm in Hunua was infested with about 30 acres of ragwort, and there was a risk of cattle being poisoned. Papakura Magistrate F Levien considered a prosecution. (People also talk about 'ragwort farmers'.) As early as 1929, one Papakura farmer who was familiar with the weed recommended heavy cropping of young ragwort by sheep.

FRANKLIN COUNTY COUNCIL

SPECIAL ORDER

In exercise of the powers conferred upon it by the Noxious Weeds Act 1908 and its subsequent amendments,

The Franklin County Council hereby make a Special Order declaring Gorse, Ragwort, and Fennell, to be Noxious Weeds within the Franklin County in addition to Blackberry, Canadian or Californian Thistle and Sweetbriar as provided for in the first Schedule of the Act.

The Special Order will be submitted for confirmation at the next ordinary meeting of the Council to be held on April 15th, 1915.

J. T. STEMBRIDGE,
County Clerk.

Pukekohe, 11/3/15. 088

Ragwort Menace.

The valuable and unique gum tree plantation on the railway reserve at Papakura has been brought under the notice lately of two Ministers of the Crown, who both expressed their admiration of the beauty of the trees in this plantation, and promised their help in [Article image] the reserve placed beyond the power of a Government Department cutting them down for commercial purposes. But a more serious and insidious menace is now threatening the value of this reserve, and that is the appearance of ragwort, which seems to have taken a firm hold. The Town Board is greatly concerned with the appearance of this weed inside its boundaries, as also are the farmers around, and the Railway Department is being urged to take measures to destroy the weed.

Left: *Pukekohe & Waiuku Times*, 12 March 1915

Above: *Auckland Star*, 1 November 1933

In 1931, local property owners were being advised to cut gorse and blackberry twice a year. Oxeye daisy and ragwort were said to be under control. Any complaints of weeds on neighbouring properties would be investigated.

Animal pests have also been a problem. In the late 1880s orchardists and home gardeners followed reports of the northward colonisation of codlin moth on apples after its first appearance further south with grave concern. Today the guava moth invades our gardens, there's war on hornets, and periodically we have an Australian fruit fly threat. In the last few months Pest Free South Auckland have killed more than 70 possums in Kirks Bush. Perhaps more sinister are the microbugs and fungi that threaten our Kauri with die-back and our Pohutukawa with myrtle rust.

Papakura and Franklin County was not so long ago one of the most closely settled rural areas in New Zealand, with tidy and prosperous farms. Today, with virtually unrestricted land banking, one might

be forgiven for thinking that flannel weed, privet, pampas grass, wattles, gorse and other exotic plants are the natural vegetation over large rural areas. Awaiting the sort of weeding that is done with heavy machinery, followed by the establishment of a new crop of asphalt and concrete. The trouble is that developers fail to distinguish between weeds, decorative shrubs, fruit trees and noble forest remnants. One of the most common sounds in suburbia is the chainsaw.

(Wattle Downs is named after plantings once expected to provide a commercial source of tannin).

Weeding can be done with a trowel or spade, mulching and tilling, by barking trees, mowing or using poison. Good gardens and farms, and public parks and bush require it. It's just a fact of life: we do it to maintain a desirable environment and good production, or we don't and the weeds proliferate. But be careful what we buy and release into our environment. That's a lesson from our local history.

[For anyone interested, the weeds that I find difficult to dispose of include oxalis, wood sorrel, lilies (all bulbs), tradescantia, ladder fern, ivy. They are all common round Papakura. On the other hand the Taiwan cherry and privet that once got away on me are useful as firewood. Weed on.]

Annual General Meeting, 27 August, 1.00 pm. Plan to be there, and think about how you can contribute, whether on the Committee or in some other way.

Volunteering for the Museum: If you are interesting in becoming a volunteer for the Museum, drop in and ask Kay or Alan for an application form. New volunteers will be encouraged to complete a Service IQ Museum Practice Course or a Front of House 'Visitor Savvy Award'.

The Papakura Sentinel is a bimonthly magazine of the Papakura & District Historical Society. Your contributions of research or memories (by word or image) are welcome. Please send Word document directly to editor Rob Finlay by email: sentinel@papakuramuseum.org.nz. Any opinions expressed are those of the authors, not of the PDHS. All written material, unless otherwise stated, is the copyright of PDHS Inc.

Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month in the Library Meeting Room opposite the Museum, the talk first at 1pm, then business and afternoon tea provided by PDHS members ($2 coin please). PDHS members arrange interesting speakers. Additionally, **Museum Talks** are held periodically on Saturday afternoons.

Trips are held monthly except in winter. Transport arrangements and cost are notified in advance. (Cost is $5 more for non-members, but anyone welcome on first-come, first paid basis.) Please register early and advise if unable to attend as numbers may be limited. To register, please **ring Dave (09) 2984507**.

Events are advertised here, in the *Staying in touch* newsletter, on the screen in the Museum foyer, and on the PDHS Website: www.papakurahistoricalsociety.org.nz

Visit Papakura Museum on

Website: www.papakuramuseum.org.nz

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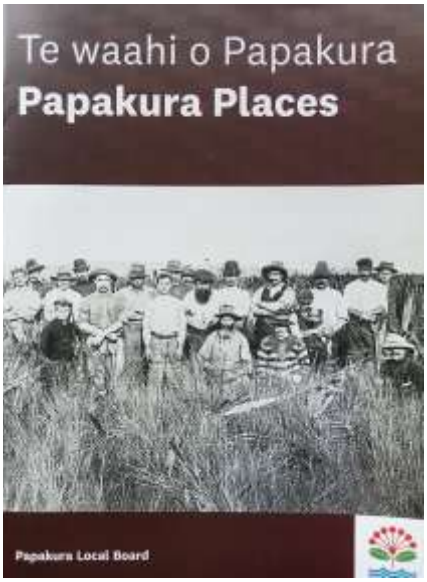

A collaborative project of the Papakura Local Board with the three major local hapū (Ngāti Tamaoho, Te Aakitai Waiohua, Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua), the Papakura Museum and the Papakura & District Historical Society, this free booklet (which can be obtained from the Papakura Museum) describes 14 reserves, spaces or public amenities (such as the Museum) between Waiata Shores and Park Green. It is illustrated, with stories of the significance and some of the history of these places. Organise some summer exploration with this booklet.

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MEMBERSHIP 2025/2026

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..... Signature

Financial year 1 July to 30 June. Membership Fee (2025/2026): $30.00 per member (or $15 if you subscribe between 1 Jan and 30 June.) **ASB 12-3031-0166218-03** Internet payment appreciated - Particulars: PDHS, Code: Subs, Reference: your name. Please pay by direct banking or online or at our monthly meeting. Either email your completed form to pdhs@papakuramuseum.org.nz or give to any Committee Member at our monthly meeting.

Monthly meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of every month (from February to November) at 1pm in the Community Meeting Room (next to the Papakura Library).

You will receive our bi-monthly publication *The Papakura Sentinel*, the monthly PDHS newsletter *Staying in Touch* and other communications via email. Thank you for your support.