



PADDLEWHEELS

Journal for The Whanganui Riverboat Restoration & Navigation Trust Inc. May 2008 - June 2008

They say that winter doesn't get started in Wanganui until after the shortest day, and this was certainly true this year. Winter started with a vengeance after the solstice and the weather has been poor ever since. Up until that time throughout all of May and early June we have had a great run of fine mild weather. This has enabled staff and volunteers to get P/S Waimarie's annual refurbishment well underway. We have made excellent progress this year with all the cabin tops having been sanded down and given at least 2 coats of varnish before the weather broke. A big thank you to all those involved. Work on refurbishing the vessel will continue through the winter months with weather permitting and the major survey works will be carried out during August with the Waimarie being out of service from the 1st of August until the 5th of September. This will include a full boiler survey and an underwater survey. Any members who are available to help out please contact our Skipper Murray Greathead or Dave McDermid at the Riverboat Centre Ph. 06-3471863. Once again a big tank you to all our Sponsors, Trustees, Staff, Members and Volunteers who have worked so hard to keep P/S Waimarie and the Whanganui Riverboat Centre open & operating.

Launch of "Landings"
at the Whanganui Riverboat Centre
The Wanganui District Council realising the importance of Jenny Patrick's new book "Landings" to the Whanganui Region hosted a civic launch at the Council Chambers on Friday the 13th of June. On the following day Random House Publishers in conjunction with Poppies Bookshop held a public launching here at the Whanganui

Riverboat Centre. This was well supported with over 100 people attending, some traveling from as far away as Wellington. The book is continuing to be popular with readers and is selling well.

Te Ara:
Online Encyclopedia of New Zealand

Also launched in June was the Wanganui entry to Te Ara – the online Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Wanganui's entry was written by Diana Beaglehole. P/S Waimarie and the Whanganui Riverboat Centre appear in the places section along with our No 12 Tram. If you want to browse this site for yourself it can be found at www.TeAra.govt.nz

Museum News

During the last week in May Harold Duncan of K.T.K. Designs was on site. Work was carried out to measure up Ongarue to prepare a set of working drawings to be used in Ongarue's restoration. Joining him on site were members Graeme O'Sullivan and Peter Johnston who spent the week crawling all over the vessel taking various measurements that Harold required to produce the drawings. During the course of the exercise we found out a number of things. M.V. Ongarue's rear engine room bulkhead had been moved back towards the stern to make the engine room bigger to accommodate larger engines. The other major thing of interest was how battered and bent the bow section actually is. Harold is now back in Hamilton preparing the 1st draft of the drawings. A big thank you to Harold and to Graeme and Peter for getting this job done.



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Richard Bourne from the Wanganui Collegiate School Museum has also been on site to bring us information from the Collegian (the school magazine) and copies of photographs of the school picnics that were held at Hipango Park and using the Riverboats to transport the participants, The earliest of these reports being of a trip aboard the Tuhua in 1886, this vessel operated before Hatrick & Company was founded and was the first commercial river steamer to operate on the Whanganui River.

Charities Act Registration

The Trust has recently been advised that our application to the new Charities Commission has been successful and we are now fully registered as a Charitable Trust under the new Charities Act. This has involved quite a bit of work preparing the application etc and we have to say a big thank you to Stephen Lace and his staff for all their work and efforts on our behalf. Registration under the new act means that all donations are tax deductible by the donor.

Merchandise

We have all our usual merchandise in stock.

Specials

All our glass effects stock on special

Waimarie Cubes	\$25.00
Glass Cubes	\$17.00
Glass Keyrings	\$ 5.00

From The Museum

There seemed to be quite a bit of interest in the last newsletter article about the main trunk railway line. Here are two extracts from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography on John Rochfort and Robert Holmes. The former surveyed the route for the railway and the latter the alignments and most importantly, the detail of the 600ft climb at Raurimu.

Part One

John Rochfort 1832 – 1893
Surveyor, Engineer

John Rochfort was one of the great surveyors – engineers who explored, mapped and opened up the young colony of New Zealand for European settlement. He eldest of at least three brothers, he was born on 21 May 1832 in London, England to Sarah Button and her husband Frank Rochfort, a silversmith. He was trained by the renowned Victorian engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who discouraged pupils by charging the enormous premium of 1000 pounds and asking each to give sufficient reason to suppose that he will succeed in the profession. John Rochfort must have owed a lot to his mentor for his professional attitudes and zest for the unknown. Certainly he was well prepared to journey abroad.

In 1851, at the age of 19, he arrived in New Zealand with his brother James. He was initially employed by the government, surveying in the Wellington area, he then went with Robert Park and Douglas McLean to Rangitikei to survey native reserves. Discontented with the bad pay of a stingy government Rochfort knocked



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around the Victorian goldfields before returning to England in 1853. The next year the family emigrated to New Zealand and took up farming and saw milling in the Motueka district. However, in the depressed times of 1858, the venture ceased to prosper.

John resumed surveying, his work for the Nelson provincial government taking him on daring explorations into the headwaters of Hurunui, Taramakau and Buller rivers. His discoveries of gold in the Buller and coal in the Denniston area led to Julius Hasst and James Burnett making a detailed mineralogical survey of the locality, in the course of which Hasst named the highest peak Mt. Rochfort.

James Rochfort, who was trained as an architect became an engineer under the tutelage of John, he accompanied him on the early risky journeys but failed to achieve the stature of his brother. In 1865 as district surveyor for the Canterbury provincial government, Rochfort in company with Captain F.D. Gibson examined the port potential of all the West Coast Rivers down to Bruce bay. In the same year he laid out the town of Greymouth and received a New Zealand Exhibition bronze medal for his explorations of the West Coast. He became involved with a soap works at Heathcote in 1865. In 1869 he re-entered general government service and from 1870 to 1871 laid out the line of the Rimutaka railway. In 1872 he worked briefly as a surveyor in charge of plotting and computing for the Canterbury government, but soon rejoined the general government service and surveyed the Buller Gorge railway. From 1874 to 1876 he was engineer to the Timaru and Gladstone Board of

Works and became an authorised surveyor in 1878. In 1883 Rochfort commenced an engineering reconnaissance of the North Island main trunk railway. In spite of strong opposition from Maori, who forced back his party at gunpoint three times, held Rochfort prisoner at Papatupu (near Ohakune) for three days, and would not divulge Maori names for topographical features, the work was completed by 1887. His later years were spent in surveys in Westland and in mining investigations in Nelson and South Auckland.

The record betokens a restless spirit, although there is no suggestion that John Rochfort had a difficult personality. His stamina and stoicism were remarkable. He nearly died of starvation and exposure when, as a 20 year old, he became the first European to cross the North Island from Rangitikei to Hawkes Bay via the Ruahine Range. He made light of the matter. My tinder has become so damp, from exposure, that I could not even get a light for my pipe. I had now walked about forty-five miles without food, and there was no prospect of getting any till the following day. On another occasion, while searching for gold in Australia, he was seized with diarrhoea, and when the disorder had continued eight days I made up my mind to go down to Melbourne. An ulcer also came upon the bottom of my foot and in this condition I walked a hundred miles in the next three days.

Rochfort's first marriage to Mary Elizabeth Hackett on 23 July 1863 at Nelson was tragically brief, his spouse died of inflammation of the lungs just over a year later on 9 September 1864.



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On 16 May 1867 in Nelson he married Amelia Susan Lewis, daughter of fellow surveyor Henry Lewis. The couple were to have two daughters and a son. The marriage brought links with the major explorers of Canterbury, Amelia's sister Eleanor had earlier married Arthur Dudley Dobson, whose sister Mary was already married to Rochfort's fellow explorer Julius Von Hasst.

John Rochfort died of heart disease aged 60 on 8 March 1893 at Kihikihi, while still working. Amelia Rochfort lived to be 97, she died at Richmond on 17 December 1942.

Perhaps Rochfort's greatest talent lay in his unerring instinct for the lie of the country, a sense which took the youth across the Ruahine Range and enabled the man to prospect the line for the North Island main trunk through the uncharted interior. The route he proposed was subject to fierce criticism – there were inquiries and commissions as late as 1900 – but finally it was accepted that there was no other general route superior to that reconnoitered by Rochfort. More than a century later the railway still followed the line John Rochfort had selected.

The records say much of the man but the essence of Rochfort is to be found in the remarkable little book he wrote at 21.

“The adventures of a surveyor in New Zealand and the Australian gold diggings”. It is a rollicking tale from a high-spirited young man who gave two bottles of grog to ferryman to drop the doctrinaire missionary, William Colenso, in the sea, where he lay at full length like a half –tide rock and who described a furious landlady demanding

recompense from him for three wine glasses, an arm-chair and a wash hand basin, all of which were killed or wounded in the last night's engagement. Small wonder that the solemn surveyor gazing from a late photograph retains the hint of a twinkle in his eye.

Part Two

In next newsletter

Robert West Holmes 1856 - 1936