

Restored Carnegie Library with a “New Lease of Life” and a “Treasury of Heritage”

Energy, synergy and the input of many, led by the Coromandel Heritage Trust has seen the culmination of Thames Coromandel District Council restorations to the old Carnegie Free Library in Thames and its opening day. On 12 September 2009 a special celebration was held to mark the occasion of completion of the restorations and the opening of The Treasury to the public. The Treasury is the home of The Coromandel Heritage Trust (covering The Coromandel Peninsula).



Opening Day to the Public of the Treasury in the restored Carnegie Library, Thames, New Zealand

12 September 2009

The Treasury is indeed an apt name for the new use, as a Heritage Archive facility, in what was the second of 18 libraries, built in New Zealand with the generous gift of Scottish born Andrew Carnegie back in the 1900s. Run by the Coromandel Heritage Trust, heritage records and historical archives of the Hauraki Coromandel area will be stored and will provide a facility to those doing heritage or genealogical research. A great facility for those who may be looking for their Scottish Ancestors who came to the Coromandel Peninsula in the early days of European settlement, involved in goldmining, timber milling and coastal transport.



The Archives Research facility of the Treasury in the restored Carnegie Library, Thames, New Zealand

12 September 2009

Heritage of The Carnegie Free Library in Thames, New Zealand

The Carnegie Free Library in Thames, New Zealand was opened on 2nd November 1905. Thames in 1905 was still what was known then as a “gold mining town” It was also home of two large engineering firms of that era – Messrs A & G Prices and Chas Judd Ltd - both engineering firms, specialising in machinery and equipment for goldmining and timber milling on the Coromandel Peninsula. Prices also specialised in rolling stock for railways and locomotive building. (Iron and Steel products) An appropriate town for a Carnegie Library.

This library was established by the then Thames Borough Council with the assistance of a generous £2000 gift from Scottish born Andrew Carnegie. This gift was part of the offer by Carnegie an Industrialist, who had emigrated with his parents to Allegheny, Pennsylvania, America from Dunfermline, Scotland in 1848.

There, Carnegie rose out of the poor circumstances the family had arrived in. With opportunity “shining”, hard work, application and true business acumen, he made a huge fortune in steel, railroads, bridges and oil derricks. The second part of Carnegie’s life was spent giving that huge fortune away to philanthropic causes he believed in. Amongst these the offer of a free public library in any city of the English speaking world. With this offer went a few terms – Councils taking it up had to provide a site for a Carnegie Free Library and a building of good standard, provide ongoing funding and maintenance, with books to remain free to those borrowing them.

Another philanthropic cause that Carnegie believed in and gifted endowments to was World Peace. When Carnegie died in 1919 nearly all of the huge fortune had been given away.



Early days of the Carnegie Free Library, Thames, ,Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand

The contract for building this Library was gained by Lye and Sons. The first foundation stone being laid by James McGowan, the then Minister of Justice and Minister of Mines who was also elected Representative of the Thames electorate in that era.

The building of this library (the design of that of Architect J Currie) also bought a difference, being constructed of brick rather than of timber. Timber was the common resource used in Thames during that era. The decorative facade, common of the 18 Carnegie Libraries built in New Zealand made it distinct. Inside metal ceilings and wide wooden skirting boards, typical of that era in New Zealand. To keep those Library users warm, fireplaces were the means of heating. Another departure from the norm of then, was plenty of large windows, letting the light inside.

Located close to the commercial area of Grahamstown (what this part of Thames was called in the beginning years of the town) it was also not far from the engineering firm of Messrs A & G Price. The Carnegie Free Library operated here until 1990 when the Library then located to new larger premises. However the building

remained in various community usages until Thames Coromandel District Council made a decision to upgrade rather than demolish it. This included bringing the building up to current New Zealand Earthquake standards. (New Zealand is prone to these being on what is known as an Earthquake Belt).

Restoration of The Carnegie Free Library, Thames, New Zealand

Towards the summer of 2008, the restoration project began – the objective to restore this Carnegie Free Library building as closely as possible to the original. A joint project with what was to be the new leasees, The Coromandel Heritage Trust, saw consultation and involvement also of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Architect John Sinclair, consultant with Architectus, and heritage architect Jeremy Salmond.



Restorations begin on Carnegie Free Library Building, Thames, New Zealand Summer 2008

A contract tender was let to Partridge Construction BOP Ltd which saw the next few months “*a hive of restoration activity*” in this building. Every detail of the original had care and attention to restoration – the large windows, wide skirting boards, pressed metal ceilings, floor tiling, original gas fittings, fireplaces, ceramic lights amongst them.

The progress was followed by a community who had grown to love this building that had been an integral part of Thames for so long. What some have said, “a Thames icon”. For those with a passion for Heritage and Family Genealogy, a growing excitement, that here was a Heritage Building being restored. The future home of a Regional Coromandel Peninsula area purpose built Archives Research facility. Run by The Coromandel Heritage Trust, (covering The Coromandel Peninsula).



Restorations completed on Carnegie Free Library Building, Thames, New Zealand 2009



Restorations completed on inside Carnegie Free Library Building, Thames, New Zealand 2009

Public Opening Day for a restored Carnegie Free Library Building and The Treasury

At long last, restorations completed, the Opening Day to the Public on 12th September 2009 of a restored Heritage Building and a brand new Archives Heritage Research facility on the Coromandel Peninsula. Just as there was a Public Opening Ceremony 104 years ago when the Carnegie Free Library was first opened, it was so again. Typical of our Coromandel Community many entered into the spirit of the day. From the Vintage Cars to Thames Lions Club, Thames Citizens Band, The Riverside Jazz Band and a Harpist celebrating with the public – some for the occasion in dress of days gone by. Some bought written records of our place, our families and our Heritage of The Coromandel Peninsula to add to this new Archives storage of Heritage records.



Vintage Truck at the Opening to the Public Celebrations, Thames, New Zealand 2009



Thames Militia Band at the Opening to the Public Celebrations, Thames, New Zealand 2009

In the opening ceremony special guest, Historian author, Dame Anne Salmond, spoke on the relevance of the new archives – The Treasury as being:-

“A place of memory linking the stories to place and landscapes providing a connection with place”

Dame Anne Salmond cut the ribbon signifying the reopening of this restored Historic building, and the new home of The Treasury, run by The Coromandel Heritage Trust. Deacon Harry Dalton blessed the restored building and its new facility. Carnegie Free Library revitalised, now moving into the future with a use that is similar to before. A place where all can visit to read about and research those past Heritage links and family genealogy links that give a connection not just for those on the Coromandel Peninsula, but worldwide.



The ribbon cut and the restored Carnegie Free Library and Archive facility
The Treasury now open to the Public - Thames, Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand
Photo taken 2009

For this new Archive facility offers the written stories and records of the area's past. There are many stories to tell of the hardships, the travel, the industries, the communities of the Coromandel Peninsula. The people who came from other places and other lands (including Scotland), to put new roots down in a new place. The linkages that are here for a connection elsewhere.

The following is but a taste of those stories of the past:-

Heritage of the Coromandel Peninsula (where the Carnegie Free Library building at Thames is part of)

The Coromandel Peninsula – an area of New Zealand that has a rich heritage of settlement stretching back hundreds of years. An area that distinctive landforms today, are a reminder of some pretty serious volcanic activity, millions of years ago leading to the reasons for settlement right up to today.



Castlerock , Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand Photo taken 2009

The volcanic activity, which left behind hard stone, ideal for tool use by the first peoples to this area. Hard stone for pounding flax (harakeke) and food. Also a shiny black glass like substance called obsidium which was ideal for tool sharpening.



View towards top of the Pinnacles , Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand

Photo taken 2008

This same volcanic activity left a coastline of rocky inlets, small islands and some beautiful sandy beaches and harbours. The spectacular scenery enjoyed by many today.



Near Wainui Bay, Coromandel Peninsula photo taken about 1970

The sea surrounding the Coromandel Peninsula offered a bountiful supply of sea food (kai moana).



Surf Beach North end, Tairua photo taken 2009

Over the hills and in the valleys of the Coromandel Peninsula grew luxuriant forests of New Zealand native trees and ferns (our flora). The most majestic of these, known as “the majesty of the forest “Kauri with its large girth and long straight trunks, once in plentiful supply.(later sought after by those seeking timber for ships masts and spars, buildings and the kauri gum for other uses.)

The Coromandel Coastline became a blaze of red or crimson in the summer months with the flowers of our New Zealand native tree – Pohutukawa – what is now known as our “New Zealand Christmas Tree.” Flowering at Christmas time early European Settlers to the area soon gave that name to this tree that is a symbol of birth and rebirth, featuring in the oral stories passed down by the first Maori people who settled here.



Pohutukaws in Flower, Coromandel Peninsula Christmas 2008

To this area with its forests and coastline plentiful with food, came the New Zealand fauna. Amongst these a giant flightless bird – the Moa – now extinct, but with stories and written archaeological studies remaining.



Kauri on the 309 Road, Coromandel Peninsula photo taken about 1979



Moa—Giant Flightless bird now extinct

So to the area came our first people settlers – the Moa Hunters and Maori people. Settlements and Pa were established, particularly along the Coromandel Coasts. The beautiful names of these places, their meanings a description of their place, reminding us today of an awesome area of New Zealand – Kauaeranga, Waiomu, Manaia, Whitianga, Hahei, Whenuakite, Tairua, Hikuai, Opoutere, Onemana, Whangamata, Whiritoa, Waihi, Waikino, Karangahake, Paeroa, Hikutaia, Komata, Puriri, Kopu.

Moa and other birds were hunted, seafood (kai moana) gathered, stone made into tools and obsidium traded. Battles were fought and the general living got on with. The oral stories of these times passed down through the generations – reminding me of the stories passed down to me in my own Scottish family about our ancestors and their place.

In 1769 there came to the Coromandel Peninsula, a different sort of traveller in the sailing ship, H.M.S. *Endeavour*. Captain Cook, Explorer, on his way to Mercury Bay (Whitianga) to observe the Transit of Mercury. On the way up the Eastern Seaboard of the Coromandel Peninsula and experiencing a bit of a wind, hove to overnight in the shelter of an island. Waking up in the morning he gave this island – Tuhua – the name Mayor

Island, because its shape reminded him of the Mayor's hat back home in England. This name "sort of stuck" with this island of volcanic origin and stories of its shiny black obsidium, to modern times today.



Tuhua—Mayor Island—at Sunrise photo taken 2009

Cook kept a diary of his expedition which continued on around the Coromandel Peninsula. Maps were drawn and on board there were the "men of science" of the day collecting, recording and drawing the New Zealand landscape, flora and fauna.

This expedition marked the beginning of a new wave of settlers to the Coromandel Peninsula. They came from Britain and elsewhere seeking the resources of timber, gum and flax initially and then the gold in the minerals beneath the ground. The discovery of gold saw settlements spring up quickly. The first of these being what is now known as the town of Coromandel. Thames, when the Thames Goldfield was officially declared open in 1867 by James Mackay (originally from Scotland) grew initially as two settlements – Grahamstown and Shortland. In those halcyon days of gold mining, towns grew quickly along with the stories and memories of those times.



Thames, Coromandel Peninsula 1870

Some of those early European settlers (amongst them, those of Scottish origins) to the area stayed. Others stayed a few years and moved on to other worldwide goldfields, chasing the "colour of gold" or other occupations. The Coromandel Peninsula was a pretty populated place in the 19th Century and early 20th

Century, what with gold mining, timber milling and logging. The tall Kauri were disappearing from the hills and valleys. Sailing ships and later steamers plied the rivers transporting passengers, equipment and goods.

With the goldmining, timber milling and logging came the Civil Engineers, Mining Engineers and Goldfields Surveyors. In their respective fields of expertise they were involved with the survey, mapping, mining, design and development of machinery used, the tramways, water races, roading, bridges and railways, the lighthouses built on the Thames shipping route and for the boilers and other machinery that powered those “new fangled” steamers.(amongst them Scottish born Charles O’Neill, James Stewart, George Fraser, James Park, Henry A Gordon).



Tramway Waioarongomai New Zealand
12 September 2009

There came too, those “people of science”. They also measured, recorded, drew, wrote books, papers for the New Zealand Institute and other organisations. Information on mining methods, the geology, flora and fauna of the Coromandel Peninsula. Photographs were taken of what things looked like then, what daily living was like then, the people who worked in those gold mines, timber and logging, the coastal steamers. Providing a Heritage record for those of us now and for the future. In 1885 the Thames School of Mines was established. Scottish born James Park was appointed director in 1889. Under his direction the School of Mines activities expanded. He also wrote a large number of papers on the goldfields of the area and over later years, seven educational textbooks on geology, theodolite surveying, hydraulics and assaying. His expertise in the mining field was highly respected.



Although those early days of moa hunting, trading for obsidium, gold mining and cutting down of the tall Kauri have given way to new activities, new settlements and other stories to add to the Heritage treasure trove, there is much still to remind us of our past.

There are the physical reminders of a long heritage of this area of New Zealand, the Coromandel Peninsula. Our beautiful scenery, spectacular beaches with their long stretches of sand. The tales of pleasure of everyday life in the enjoyment of tramping (hiking), fishing, swimming, relaxing with kith and kin or exploring.



Whangamata Surf Beach , Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand Photo taken 2004

Heritage Sites and Relics of those goldmining days, the water races, towns and settlements that sprang up quickly and in some instances disappeared just as quickly but leaving some marks behind.



Gold Mining Shaft , Golden Hills in Broken Hills Area near Hikuai, Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand Photo taken 2009



Battery Remains of Luck at Last near Whangamata , Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand Photo taken 2008



Waitawheta River near the Windows Walk, Karangahake Gorge , Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand Photo taken 2009



Mining Relics Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand Photo taken 2008

Remains of the Tramways and the Kauri Log Dams built originally with hard labour and hard conditions for there were no computers, GPS or mechanical equipment then – just hands to work that pick, shovel or saw.



Remains of Wooden Tramway on track to old Gold Mine, Parakiwai, Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand Photo taken 2008



Kauaeranga Valley, Coromandel Peninsula New Zealand where there are reminders of Kauri Dams and Kauri logging Photo taken 2009

Annual events that reflect the Coromandel Community including one with a Scottish influence from some of the early settlers. The annual Highland Games & Tattoo held at Paeroa. Another, the Annual Heritage Day held at Thames.



16th Annual Paeroa Highland Games and Tattoo Photo taken 2009



Having fun at Thames Heritage Day Photo taken 2009

Heritage buildings, a reminder of settlement.

One of these now reopened in 2009 a Treasury of the Stories and written records of Coromandel Peninsula Heritage and family geneology. A place to find those links and connections.



Thames School of Mines, Thames, New Zealand 2009



Opening Day to the Public of the Treasury in the restored Carnegie Library, Thames, New Zealand
12 September 2009

Article written by Anne Stewart Ball, Coromandel Peninsula, New Zealand
September 2009
21st Century Recent Photographs taken by Chris Ball

Reference Sources for this Article

In the language of my Scottish Ancestors “ Failtie” and in te reo Māori, “Haere mai” or “Welcome” to those looking for more about the Heritage of The Coromandel Peninsula and the links of Family Geneology.

The Treasury. home of The Coromandel Heritage Trust (covering the Coromandel Peninsula)
<http://www.thetreasury.org.nz/index.htm>

Andrew Carnegie - Carnegie Corporation of New York <http://www.carnegie.org/sub/about/biography.html>

100 Maori words to know New Zealand History online <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/culture/maori-language-week/100-maori-words>

About Captain Cooks expedition to observe the Transit of Mercury - Voyage of Discovery
<http://www.transitofvenus.co.nz/schools/14%20Hauraki%20Plains/Final%20Web/index.htm>

A Literal Transcription of the Original MSS. with Notes and Introduction, edited by Captain W.J.L. Wharton, R.N., F.R.S. Hydrographer of the Admiralty. “Captain Cook’s Journal during his first voyage round the world made in H.M. Bark “Endeavour”CHAPTER 5. EXPLORATION OF NORTH ISLAND OF NEW ZEALAND.[In Bay of Plenty, North Island, New Zealand.] 1768-71.”
<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/cook/james/c77j/chapter5.html> (accessed June 01, 2009).

Drummond, Alison (ed). *The Thames Journals Of Vicemus Lush, 1868-1882*. Christchurch: Pegasus, 1975.

Kirk, T. F.L. *The Forest Flora of New Zealand*. Wellington: Government Printers, 1889.

Lawn, C.A. F.N.Z.I.S. *The Pioneer Land Surveyors of New Zealand Part IV*. Auckland: N.Z.I.S., 14 October,1977.

McCollum, M.R., and J.S. Sphinks. *Hikutaia – 2000 ‘ An Interlude In Time*. Paeroa, N.Z.: Goldfields Print Ltd., 2000.

Vennell, C W, and D More. *Land of the Three Rivers- Centennial History of Piako County*. Auckland N.Z.: Wilson & Horton, 1976.

Weston, Fred (compiler). *Jubilee Souvenir –Thames Goldfields-A History From Proclamation Times To 1927*. Thames: “ Thames Star”, July ,1927.

Williamson, Beverley M, Whangamata – 100 Years of Change, Goldfields Print Ltd, Paeroa, 1988