

Council

**Wednesday, 28 May 2003
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

PART B

REPORT OF THE MAYOR

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
TO BE HELD IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, 6 WAIPAREIRA AVENUE, LINCOLN,
WAITAKERE CITY, ON WEDNESDAY, 28 MAY 2003,
COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM.**

PART B - REPORT OF THE MAYOR

SAVING OUR PAST, TODAY

For the last year I have been concerned about the historical significance of the west and its possible erosion by time and lack of facilities or care. This was prompted by some recent reading on the preservation and restoration of historical artefacts. I have spent some time with the Auckland War Memorial Museum looking at their collections with an archaeologist friend, and even though this wonderful institution is embarking on a major rebuilding programme, they are woefully under-resourced for the massive amount of material that they hold.

But at least they have a place to store it, which is more than can be said for this City.

What follows are my thoughts as we start our path down the 21st century, on our heritage, and what we are capable of keeping for the future.

Written History

The history of the west has been served well by writers. The initial written work on the Maori and very early settlement in the area was recorded by Mr John White, a translator to Governor Grey and a resident of Anawhata. White and his brother were fluent in te reo and were able to write and translate both oral history and current events of the time. White's massive nine-volume history *Te Rou; or, The Maori At Home* (1874) of the people of the Waitakere Ranges and Auckland, seems to be one of those literary legends which I am determined to get to the bottom of. This work took him five years under a contract to the New Zealand government. His magnum opus, *The Ancient History of the Maori* only ever had a few volumes completed. Although I have found none, I am embarking on a world-wide internet search.

In the meantime I have to be content with *Revenge*, White's potted history combining a Victorian novel with local stories. My copy of *Revenge* is one of just 350 printed in 1890. White died in 1891, one of our most under-rated early pioneers, almost vanishing from the pages of history. He was very involved in the setting up of the provisional government and particularly as he took the side of the Maori, lost credibility with subsequent governments. In 1874, we find him in Napier, editing a Maori newspaper. White was buried in Symonds Street and his grave vanished with the motorway extension in the 1960s.

It would be another fifty years before Jack Diamond produced his smaller effort *Once The Wilderness*. This book, published locally and including advertisements for local butcher shops and grocers, brought together the known history with some that Jack had heard second and third hand. *Once The Wilderness* is a credible effort, not so much from an historian, but from a dedicated enthusiast. We owe much to Jack Diamond; as a collector, as an assistant to the renowned anthropologist Bruce Hayward, and as an avid fossicker. Jack's glass plate photograph collection is a priceless heritage to this City - his massive and amazing collection of tile and ceramics should also by rights be resting in this City. The Diamond Collection - so generously given by his widow and family to Waitakere libraries, is the beginning of an incomparable heritage collection for this City.

But there is much more than just the Diamond collection.



Our City's historical collections have grown out of passionate family or local communities, keeping alive the past but without a great sense of catalogue or curatorship. This is the problem as well as the challenge, what is junk, and what is priceless - for this generation, or the next?

On a side note, when I met with my Mayoral colleague John Banks in his palatial suite of offices in the Auckland Town Hall, at the far end I noticed an old friend - a glorious, massive wardrobe of New Zealand native timbers that I had last seen in the Auckland Museum. Mayor Banks noticed me admiring this and I told him that my wife's father had given this piece to Auckland City. He replied saying that the Mitchelson Wardrobe was worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. It has stood in the Mitchelson Homestead in Muriwai Beach, now the home of the environmentalist Anna Mason.

This marvellous piece was going to be sent to Walker's Auction House by Mitchelson, a former Minister of Lands and a one-time Mayor of Auckland, when he moved to a smaller house in Parnell. It was one of three pieces and it goes without saying that the other two pieces are lost.

I remember also calling on an elderly gentleman at Span Farm in the 1970's that showed me the bed, dresser and wardrobe originally owned by Governor Grey, which had come from Kawau Island. The owner had a franchise of American motor vehicles, retired, and bought the massive bed in a somewhat grand farmhouse on the rolling land once between Great North Road and Span Farm.

I cite these two examples as a real reminder that our precious history is being lost. We are not signalling that we would like to keep for the future our historical or significant works.

If I might return to our written history, Waitemata County Council commissioned the Auckland Star writer Eugene Grayland to write the History of the County, 1963. Grayland produced two copies for the Waitemata Council, who did nothing with them, and the copies were subsequently lost. One was reported buried with Grayland, and when I became the Mayor I searched for almost five years until I found the last remaining copy of Grayland's history and have retrieved it as a foundation for a bigger work.

The Covic Council also commissioned a work from Mr Gary De Forrest, called simply *A History of Waitemata*. This work, retrieved from the lost archives of old Councillors, is simply a purloined copy of Grayland and Diamond, and adds nothing significant.

When we talk of history at a local level, then the City has been well served by local writers.

I think of Norm Laing and his history of Laingholm (and its older name Roseneath).

Mary Woodward's well written Bethells family history is an outstanding example of history living as it is written. I am pleased to say that she has continued her writing and as a former journalist has produced a major coastal history, fascinating in its research and in its uncovering of new and unknown people and events.

Bruce Haywood last year produced an excellent volume on Whatipu, which has sold very well, both locally and regionally.

We must also not forget the massive amount of work that Thayer Fairburn did over the course of a lifetime - a 65-year commitment to the definitive research on the wreck of the HMS Orpheus on the Manukau bar in 1863. Unfortunately *The Orpheous Disaster*, which sold over 2000 copies, has suffered badly from inferior binding.

Wallace Badham, the son of the boarding house proprietor at Karekare produced in the 1950s the history of Karekare and Whatipu in his *Ironbound Coast*. Again, sadly, unpublished.



Sandra Coney - daughter of local politician, surf lifesaver and prominent rugby player Tom Pearce - published *Piha, A History*, and gave that settlement a past and present.

In New Lynn, HF Batley has done the area proud with a beautifully researched volume focussing on a time period rather than a whole epic historical tale, simply entitled *People and Places New Lynn 1930-1940*.

I would be somewhat remiss not to mention the two publications that I have humbly offered - *The Untamed Coast*, and *Rolling Thunder*, which combine history and photographic tributes to the Coast. In the writing of both of these, and the research that goes with historical events, places and people, I am aware of the enormous amount of time, care and attention that is needed. I might also add that the tyranny of a blank page is often a deterrent to many people who feel that it is time to start a writing career. And yet so many have and do, and with only a small amount of digging and persuasion, family history and letters come pouring out - everyone seems to have a good story to tell or old and faded memories to share.

What is now needed is a Council commitment for all of this in a written publication of our history. If I was writing a brief it would begin from the Whau River and - as we have all done - head west. The Whau is an historical catchment of great significance - mills, very early settlement, early endeavour in art, design and culture. I know that I am supported by many councillors in this desire to see written one or two volumes which will lay out a true record of our past.

As many will be aware, the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society and the West Auckland Historical Society have revived the project of writing an oral history and treatment of the Waitakere Ranges and the coast. This ambitious project is well under way, under the skilful hand of Bruce Harvey.

This major publication has obtained almost half of its funding and will be ready for publication early next year. It will be made up of contributions from all sectors - historians, scientists, Maori, Council officers including our own Chris Ferkins and local personalities. It will be around 500 pages - a serious work.

There can be little doubt even from this brief glance that we have been well served by written history, and it is continuing.

The Artefacts

We recently purchased a Briar Gardner piece for the Council. Briar Gardner is an acquired taste. Her works are strong and bold as the very beginnings of art on clay, breaking from the functional "fire on clay" of the brick and kiln works of her family heritage. I was pleased that the Council was able to make these purchases, and you will see them in the Mayoral Lounge. They and other works we have should, I believe, form the basis of a major commitment to clay and its fired beauty. In the Mayoral lounge you will also see the winning exhibit of the Portage Ceramic Awards 2002. I would wish that this Council would continue the commitment to buy the winning entry of each of the annual awards. Only by doing this can we continue to make a worthy collection.

We now need to seriously consider storage space until we can unveil our plans for a national heritage museum of ceramics. In my December 2002 report I indicated that the magnificent Clark homestead will possibly become available, and this to me is the rightful future home of a ceramic heart of New Zealand. I have since revisited the homestead with Air Force personnel and it confirmed to me that it is a large and wonderful space with land available for additional areas of display and working space. It would be wrong not to consider this as a home for working potters either in residence or in craft.



In the next year, as we are more aware of what the Air Force will be doing, we need to ensure that this resource is not lost to the City. This house stood on the ridge above Limeburners Bay, a bay now irreparably developed for housing that once had almost fifty working kilns producing over a million items a year. The early photographs of Limeburners Bay are staggering, with dozens of kilns and sea craft waiting to take the product down the harbour to Auckland.

In the mangroves and along the foreshore lie the remains of these fire-kilns. Some are not beyond retrieving and restoration although they will never see fire again. The point is that they will not survive without our help. Developers are already encroaching on these precious heritage sites, and we seem either powerless or unwilling to fence them off, or protect them for the future. I know our friend Brian Heron who lives close by is distraught about their loss and is constantly asking this Council for assistance.

I would like to see urgent action with the powers that exist with heritage sites to - if not start a restoration programme with Limeburners Bay - at least make it clear to developers that there is a "line in the clay" that will not be crossed. This reassurance to this City's community, historians and the future needs to be given.

If we turn to New Lynn, there is still much historical work to be done, and it seems that with a new library there should be a sense of history around the clay and the products that for so long came from the earth. I am asking that this Council give more weight and effort as to how this can be implemented.

It would be wrong to ignore the history of New Lynn - of the Crum and Crown Lynn industries - and although we have had some unfortunate experiences with ceramic artefacts, we should not let the past distract us from what is a noble future: to ensure future generations are not deprived of a heritage and a past.

I would like to see a commitment to the west and its relics, artefacts, furniture and buildings brought together under one historic register. This is overdue and vital to knowing what is there and what is at risk. It should cross all boundaries from mill sites to historic houses, from books and papers to furniture. The West Auckland Historical Society has kept the flames alive and I would like to acknowledge with gratitude and sincere respect their commitment to this region's past.

But they have had little support on an ongoing basis from Council. Two significant partnerships resulted in the historic homestead given by the Corban family, and the waterwheel - under-utilised and unseen - are a result of a working relationship. The glorious restoration of the Falls Hotel is also a tribute to community efforts. Soon, with the help of that same Trust, we will see the restoration of the Henderson Railway Station and St Michael's Church. I would like to acknowledge the Trust for their continued active and passionate work that results in our historic buildings being restored.

McLeod Cottage seems to sit waiting for Tui Glen, and the sooner this house is bought to a new site, the better. The Auckland Regional Council's Rose Hellaby homestead now stands deserted, and it is a suggestion that I put to this Council that either McLeod Cottage or Rose Hellaby House be offered as Artists or Writers in Residence. Old and restored residences thrive on occupation.

In our recent past we have seen significant projects such as the Colin McCahon House Trust formed to turn this humble building into an artist's residence. This will be launched at the Auckland City Art Gallery on 13 June - so it is possible for very good projects to be picked up, and pushed through to completion and success.



Another notable example is the restoration - albeit with very significant help from the Council - of the Glen Eden Playhouse, back to use as an active theatre again.

The New Lynn Hotel is also an historic building that cannot be ignored. In a time when funding seems to be ever-decreasing and the number of volunteers also on the wane, we must move quickly to find not only a new life for such buildings as the New Lynn Hotel, but also a group of people who will lovingly care for it and pass it on to future generations. I cannot believe that Council process is so slow that it cannot facilitate an active and willing Trust to scope and start fundraising for the restoration of this marvellous building.

I am conscious that the migrant centre is looking for a home. Perhaps this could be their new home, standing proud again on Great North Road. Similar buildings in London or New York are often given a new future simply by handing them over to groups that would never usually consider older buildings. This City thrives on new ideas, and I would like to think that creative thinking will restore their former grandeur.

I would like also in this report to continue my absolute disappointment at the under-use of the Chapel of Faith in the Oaks. This building, restored originally by the enthusiasm of Judith Creegan and others in the early 1970s, is devoid of an exciting presence. It seems that the current Trust (in which I have no "faith" whatsoever) is unable to use it effectively or efficiently. It is a lesson that great care should be used when a Trust is set up that lacks imagination or the management to think outside the square. I was conscious of this at ANZAC Day when this chapel could have formed a part of a celebration and commemoration. As always, it was locked, cold, and lifeless. Its potential is glimpsed at the annual Going West event, where poetry reading and song fills this beautiful space. I will be meeting with this Trust in June with Greg Presland and other Councillors to tell this Trust of my continued unhappiness at the way it is administrated and under-utilised.

A FEW SOLUTIONS

I have recently met with one of Waitakere's most avid historical researchers, the painter Mary Gilligan. Mary, who I have enormous respect for, has been a supporter of our historic past and advise on how to possibly locate and bring together the lost and forgotten treasures from local families and sites. Together, we talked of possibilities that I now put before the Council at this meeting. I believe that there is a real need to have someone working as a volunteer but with a budget that would simply assist a project to bring together collections and offer storage while this City brings together its future historic exhibition area. Mary has offered with her excellent city-wide contacts to assist with this project. She has been offered a number of significant collections, items that she feels if not recovered and acknowledged will simply be trashed, organically decayed, or sent to auction houses. I have listened carefully to her proposal. I am also conscious of the past and that we must as a City and as a Council be adequately protected from legal and protracted difficulties with owner's families. I believe that working closely with Ms Gilligan and the West Auckland Historical Society and in offering storage space now, we can start a significant base for a collection.

I would like this council to support Ms Mary Gilligan being asked to be our Ambassador for our historic past, and that working with Council officers and a storage facility Mary can actively seek and acquire history that would otherwise be lost.



MILESTONES

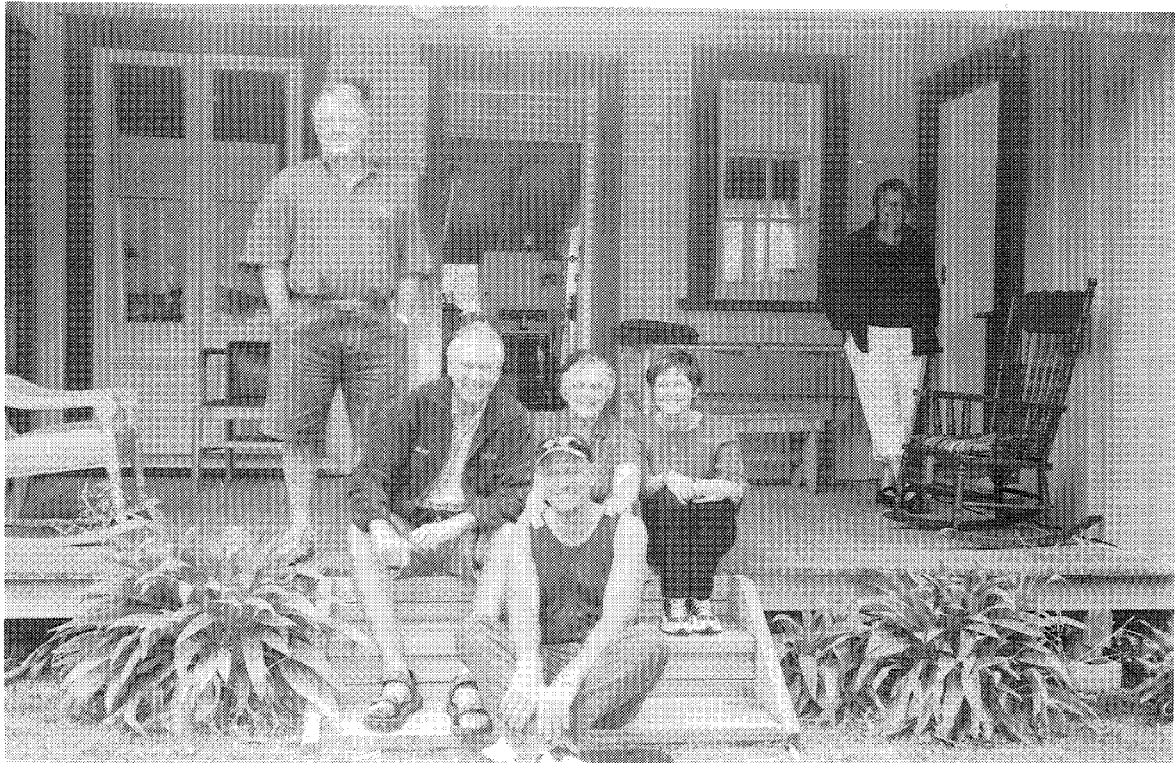
In keeping with our historic past and future, I would like to acknowledge a few milestones:

Bethells Te Henga - Saturday, 26 April 2003

At the kind invitation of the extended Bethell's family, the Minister of Conservation Chris Carter, Member of Parliament for Waitakere Lynne Pillay, myself, the Deputy Mayor Carolynne Stone, and Councillors Hulse and Yates, all went to the Bethell family estate and spent the afternoon looking at this magnificent property that has been in the family for over 150 years. The cottages and grounds have been lovingly tended and cared for. The walls of the cottages and main houses are full of mementos, paintings, and memorabilia of this family's rich past. It was also an occasion to acknowledge the heritage and respect of the Bethell family and myself and Chris and Lynne all spoke of the respect that we had for the family.

This was an historic occasion, as it is well known that the Waitemata City Council and this Council have not had the best of relations with the family. Not everything, it would be true to say, is accepted as practical or workable by the Bethell family and this is to be expected. But it seems that a respect for each other's role and a real willingness to listen and to help a major land owner achieve a positive future that would see their land held for future generations, is a way forward.

I brought as a gift, a fig leaf from Karekare. It came from a tree at the base of Karekare's Zion Hill, and was planted by the patriarch of the Bethell Family, John Bethell, when he ran a coastal butcher shop from that site. On the veranda of the main house, under a sister tree, a massive fig, I gave the leaf as an "olive branch" to this family. Hopefully, a gift of understanding, respect and acknowledgement.





Celebrating Councillor Clews' Great Service

On as auspicious an occasion as her birthday, I felt it fitting to simply note just a little of the record of service of Councillor Clews.

Born in New Plymouth and attending New Plymouth Girls High School and then Avondale College, she has been many things including butchery assistant, cashier, service station attendant, and fruit picker. But while a full time teacher, she was also: a Board Member and eventually Chairperson of the Portage Licensing Trust, the first woman elected to the Glen Eden Borough Council, first woman Mayor in west Auckland as Mayor of Glen Eden Borough Council, highest-polling and foundation member of Waitakere City Council, foundation Chairperson of the Glen Eden Railway Station Restoration Project, on the board of countless clubs particularly those of service to women such as Plunket, and all I can do in this report is but scratch the surface. Janet, you have given so much of yourself and show no signs of slowing down - I can only say sincerely how much this City values what you do, and we always will.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Report of the Mayor be received.

RA Harvey, QSO, JP
MAYOR OF WAITAKERE CITY