

## HAMILTON'S FOUNDATION DAY CELEBRATIONS—24 AUG 1980

**Origin of Proposal** In 1979 the Waikato Branch of the NZ Founders' Society suggested a ceremony on 24 August in Memorial Park near the Rangiriri to commemorate the arrival of the first military settlers and thus create interest in the founding and history of Hamilton.

A sympathetic Hamilton City Council convened a meeting of interested parties on 31 July 1979 in the Municipal Chambers. It was resolved to meet again in March 1980 when Councillor Betty Mowbray presided over representatives of the following organisations:

Waikato Historical Society, Waikato Branch, NZ Founders' Society, Hamilton Council of Churches, Frankton United Friendly Association, Hamilton Senior Citizens' Association, Hamilton Regional Old People's Welfare Council, 4th Waikato Mounted Rifles Regiment Society, Hamilton Maori Committee.

Also present were the Mayor of Hamilton (Mr R.M. Jansen), Councillor IC Davidson, PRO J. Douda and Committee Clerk, L. Ehrler.

At a further meeting on 14 April, a programme for river bank ceremonies, etc., outlined by Mr L.B. Sandford was approved. The Waikato Historical Society agreed to allow its usual anniversary day dinner to be incorporated into the programme.

**Committee Formed** A committee was formed to plan, organise, and make all arrangements. Chairman was Mr P.H. Mowbray (President, Waikato Branch, NZ Founders' Soc. Mr J.C. Nicholls (President, Waikato Historical Society) was appointed convenor of a sub-committee responsible for arrangements for an anniversary dinner for 200 guests. Mr L.B. Sandford (Vice-President, Founders' Society) was given responsibility for the programme outdoors and Mr Douda for publicity. Mr Ehrler kept minutes of meetings and, with Mr Douda, provided liaison with the Council. Financial backing was provided by the Council.

Meetings were held from time to time from April onwards and programme, dinner, bus and other arrangements finalised well before 24 August.

**Publicity** The programme was advertised in detail in the "Waikato Times" during the final week, and also in "The Weekender" and "Hamilton Press" (free weekly papers with large circulations). A front-page news item appeared in the free papers. It was mentioned over the air and at meetings of the societies interested. TV and Radio

were informed. Scenes of the river bank ceremony were later shown on TV and the "Times" published a large photo, and a report.

**Outdoor Programme** About 500 people assembled in Memorial Park, a number in period costume. The Hamilton Citizens' Band, stationed near the Rangiriri, played selections. At 1.45 p.m. the 18 foot cutter 'Hamilton', rowed by four uniformed Hamilton St Peter's Sea Scouts under Mr A. Garside as coxswain left the boat ramp in Commerce Park on its one-kilometre voyage. Its passengers were the Mayor in robes, his wife, and a uniformed aide, Lt-Col T.C. Wallace.

The Citizens' Band ceased playing as soon as the cutter left and the Hamilton Caledonian Society's Pipe Band, stationed beside the river, then played appropriate rowing tunes during the 7 - minute trip. A shore party of Sea Scouts under Mr P. Beavan assisted with berthing beside the Rangiriri. Stepping ashore, the official party was greeted by Mr and Mrs Mowbray and escorted to chairs beside the memorial stone. The master of ceremonies, Mr L.B. Sandford, made the necessary announcements over a public address system which was moved as required from place to place. TV, press and other cameras filmed and photographed proceedings. The cutter, painted red, with its smartly uniformed crew and colourful passengers was a fine sight.

With spectators gathered around and at every vantage point, Lt-Col Wallace in his nineteenth century military uniform and sword delivered a 6 - minute speech about the pioneers and the original landing. He was followed by the Mayor with a 5 - minute address, and the crowd then moved about 200 metres to the Commemorative Steps while the band resumed playing, and there Mr E.R. Doolin, Chairman Waikato Regional Committee, NZ Historic Places Trust, spoke for 10 minutes. Speakers had earlier conferred to ensure they each spoke along different lines.

From the Steps the crowd moved 50 metres to the Cenotaph area where the pipe band rendered two items. Mr Mowbray, as committee chairman, then expressed thanks and presented a kauri sapling to the Mayor for planting by the City Council. Pastor L. Covic pronounced a benediction and the ceremony concluded with "God Defend New Zealand" led by the Citizens' Band and soloist, Walter Muir, at the microphone.

Finally, at 3 p.m., the pipe band marched off play-



The Cutter "Hamilton" crewed by Sea Scouts and containing the Mayoral party.

ing and with co-operation from the Transport Department crossed the traffic bridge into the city.

Timing was important, but effective use of the microphone ensured that there were no delays and that people were able to make their way to Garden Place to fill two buses taking them on 1½ hour tours of Hamilton (\$2) with Mr Nicholls, Mr E.R Morris and Mrs J. Rosoman as commentators. Brochures were distributed to passengers, Mrs L. Garvey, Mr G. Garvey and Mrs J. Cochrane remained behind at the park to escort anyone interested on a bush and river bank walk to New Memorial Park. All three are members of the Waikato Branch of the Royal NZ Forest & Bird Prot. Soc.

**Anniversary Dinner** Hosted by Mr and Mrs J.C. Nicholls, the 190 - guest dinner at 7 p.m. in the Ferrybank Lounge beautifully decorated with prize camellias was most enjoyable and successful, a highlight being the manner in which Dr L.H Barber of the University of Waikato proposed the toast to the Early Settlers. Dress was semi-formal, there was background music, the Hon. V.S Young, Minister of Lands and Forests, was guest speaker, and Mr Sandford acted as M.C. The Mayor proposed the loyal toast and " God Defend New Zealand" was sung at the conclusion.

Waikato Historical Society and Founders' Society members were notified early and about 60 of them

attended the \$10 dinner, supplemented by those on the City Council's official guest list who accepted invitations. Among those present were the Maori Queen, Dame Te Ata, several descendants of the 4th Waikatos, a number of city councillors, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Waikato and the Principal of the Waikato Technical Institute, and many prominent citizens.

Ending at 11 p.m ( there were pre-dinner drinks on the balcony ), the dinner was a fitting and happy conclusion to a well-organised day enjoyed by hundreds of Hamilton and district people.

**Comment** A very pleasant and practical relationship existed between the City Council and organising committee. Both the dinner and the outdoor ceremonies went smoothly after careful planning and full co-operation from the Hamilton Caledonian Pipe Band, the Hamilton Citizens' Band, the Hamilton St Peter's Sea Scouts, the City Council officers and the other people who helped in various ways to ensure success.

Had the weather been impossible, an alternative indoor programme in the Senior Citizens' Centre was

ready, and a switch to it would not have presented difficulty.

Early planning is important — even as early as April. Perhaps next time more people will dress in period costume and newspaper advertising could be supplemented by posters, etc. No difficulties arose with crowd control. The crowd itself could have been larger but there was a strong counter-attraction at the Showgrounds. This time, the first, the programme was deliberately kept fairly simple, but next year perhaps a procession, more involvement by children, and more activity on the river could be introduced.

For the dinner the Ferrybank Lounge is ideal historically. Barely 100 metres distant, across the river, Captain Steele's advance party of nearly 120 military settlers disembarked from the Rangiriri on 24 August 1864. The rusting remains of that stripped gunboat, lying in the river mud for more than 70 years, are just downstream, and the first Hamilton bridge spanned the river a stone's throw away.

— L.B. Sandford.

## HAMILTON HISTORY

**Background** Among the consequences of General Cameron's successful campaign in 1863-64 were decisions to confiscate Maori land north of the artificial line running from the Firth of Thames to the west coast, to establish a string of redoubts, and to use the men recruited for the Waikato Militia Regiments as both a deterrent force and as military settlers on land granted to them in return for service.

It was decided that the 4th Waikatos should be sent to a locality that included an abandoned Maori village named Kirikiriroa, about 12 miles upstream from Ngaruawahia and deemed a suitable place for redoubts. A number of these men had been recruited in Melbourne and Sydney by William Steele, others in New Zealand.

On 23 August 1864 an advance party under Capt. William Steele was transported up the Waikato River on two barges towed by the gunboat Pioneer. After spending the night at Ngaruawahia, they transferred to the more powerful gunboat Rangiriri which then bore them against a strong current to their destination.



Mr Doolin addressing the gathering. Mayoral party in line beyond him, L to R: Mr L.B. Sandforth, Mayor Jansen (party obscured) Branch President P.N. Mowbray, the Lady Mayoress and with parasol Mrs Mowbray.

**Settlement** This advance party, nearly 120 strong, disembarked on the east bank of the river opposite today's municipal swimming baths on 24 August 1864. These men in effect founded Hamilton the name given to the settlement in memory of Capt. J.C Hamilton a naval officer killed at Gate Pa. When the balance of the unit and wives and children arrived, the population swelled to about 1,500 before the end of 1864.

**The Steps** Decades later a memorial consisting of red brick steps, a landing and a suitable plaque was built on the bank some thirty feet above water level to mark the approximate place of the original landing.

**"Rangiriri"** The Rangiriri continued in river service for many years but round about 1908 was left beside the river bank in what is now Memorial Park, stripped of superstructure, engines and rear paddlewheel, and left to rust away. Proposals at various times to do something about the disintegrating hulk never came to anything.

## HAWKES BAY BRANCH

### PRESERVATION TIPS

At a meeting at St Lukes Hall, Havelock North, on the 26th July, members of the Hawkes Bay branch of the Founders' Society heard Mrs Mina McKenzie, Director of the Manawatu Museum, speak on the subject "Those Precious Documents and Possessions - We must Preserve Them". The audience was given interesting and informative tips on how to preserve old documents and clothing.

The history of all articles should be recorded as, in future years, an object of no proven identity has little value. Soft lead pencil ( or Indian ink), not ordinary ink, should be used when labelling papers. (Ordinary ink rots the paper in time). Sellotape, masking tape, pins and steel paper clips should not be used.

Both paper and material should be kept in acid-free paper ( obtainable from U.E.B. and also used by jewellers). Articles should not be folded. Anything large should be rolled round a cylinder of cardboard and covered with acid-free paper. Objects should be kept away from sunlight.

Mrs McKenzie brought to the meeting some items of interest; a few old documents, a 100 year old christening gown hand-made in India and brought out by Europeans, and a two year old woven wall hanging from Panama.

The cleaning and preservation of leather and silver was also discussed.