

Hawkes Bay Branch Lunch, National Service Club, 1 February 2026

A large number of Hawke's Bay Branch members gathered for lunch at the National Service Club in Hastings on 1 February 2025 to celebrate our New Zealand Founders' Anniversary. The tables were festively decorated including informational placemats outlining the inception of the Society, including an excerpt from the *Evening Post*, Volume CXXVII, Issue 37, 14 February 1939, page 15: *The Founders' New Zealand Proposed Society*, a letter from D. Hope Johnston, M.A. (Cantab.), F.R.Hist.S. (Eng.).



The reverse of each placemat featured information on the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition, which ran from 8 November 1939 to 4 May 1940, along with details of the immigrant ship *Aurora*, which arrived on 22 January 1840, and the first birth associated with that voyage.

Attention was given to two local authors - a recent publication and a forthcoming book launch.

Our guest speaker Val Burr travelled up to Hastings from Palmerston North especially to talk to us about her experiences in her writing about history in the Manawatu/Hawke's Bay areas.

She trained at Massey University achieving a BA in history and anthropology in 1995, and then MA (Hons) in history in 1999.

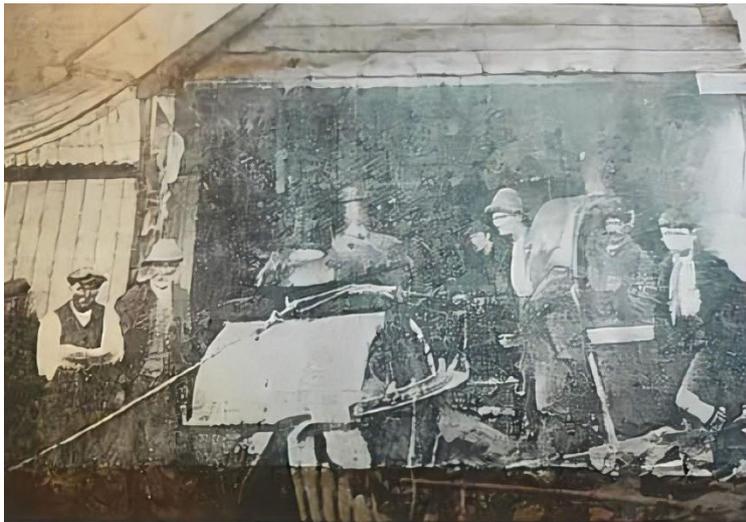


Since the mid 1980's Val has contributed to and has written many books and newspaper articles, after researching histories of many old buildings and sites in and around Palmerston North, Manawatu, Horowhenua, Whanganui, Rangitikei, and Tararua for councils and Heritage New Zealand.

Val's paternal-line great grandfather was a guy named Amos Burr. He arrived on the ship *Cuba* in January 1840. Then on January 22nd 1840 his arms were advertently shot off in a canon firing mishap when saluting the arrival of ship the *Aurora*. Amos lead an interesting life, even without arms!

A story of interest for our local people was about a steamroller, which was built in 1911 and originally owned by the Napier Borough Council. On April 23rd, 1914 a pin fell out of its gear lever, meaning that the cogs became unmeshed and the steamroller "free engined" down the Shakespeare Road hill. Its brakes didn't work and soon it slammed, at speed into the side of nurse Jone's small maternity cottage, only two hours after the latest baby had been taken from the bedroom it hit.

The steamroller survives to this day at the Steam Traction Engine Society's facility at 76 Marewa Road, Fielding. The cottage also survives to this day at No 36 Shakespeare Road, Napier. Both the steamroller and the cottage needed a few repairs.



No. 38 Shakespeare Road, Napier - on about 24 April 1914, and in September 2024

The arrangements for the National AGM were discussed. Members interested in attending a venue with facilities to join the meeting will be contacted once registrations have closed.

The Branch Coordinator role was also discussed. The current transition coordinator is not seeking nomination, and there were no expressions of interest. Chris King has since agreed to be the Branch Coordinator for this year, to be approved at the AGM.

Lois Ward