

KUAOTUNU HISTORY

REMNANTS & RESTORATION

One of the few remaining historic buildings from the 'gold rush' era is the Town Hall. It served as "the primer's room of the Kuaotunu School" according to Alf Simpson. Originally built around 1894, it was relocated to its present position in 1940 on the corner of Black Jack and Irishtown Roads, across the street from the footbridge, similar to the old bridge seen in photo on page 17. Even the Kuaotunu Stream maintains traces of its historic winding path. View it from above on Google Maps!

Now called the Kuaotunu Centennial Memorial Hall, the building is used for small concerts, weddings, and other gatherings. Alf's granddaughter, Rebecca Simpson, lead the restoration project in 2009 when the hall was in state of disrepair that could have lead it to being demolished. "I just thought 'the hall needs to be saved'. And, as a descendant of many of the families that settled Kuaotunu and passionate about Kuaotunu's history – why not me."

"Many people came on board either by picking up a piece of sandpaper or paint brush and working beside me", adds Rebecca. "Momentum grew quickly and soon we had donations of money, materials and more people!" And the effort continues even now, with a dedicated group of volunteers. This past year, they did a complete refit of the kitchen and ladies bathroom with other improvements in the pipeline.

Inside, the walls are adorned with historic photographs and the *Kuaotunu Roll of Honour* recognising those who attended the school and served the military in WWI. Outside the hall are mining artifacts, including a small ore push cart and a berdan (shown below), used in mercury processing of the crushed ore; cyanide vat processing later replaced this. Signs nearby describe the items, and visitors are welcome to browse the grounds if the hall is not open.



Above: the historic Kuaotunu Town Hall in current location. Below: Inside the restored hall are photos of Kuaotunu's gold rush days, an historic signal light, and a Roll of Honour, listing those who served in WWI.



Left: To the side of the hall are an old ore cart from the Try Fluke mine and a berdan, used in mercury processing.

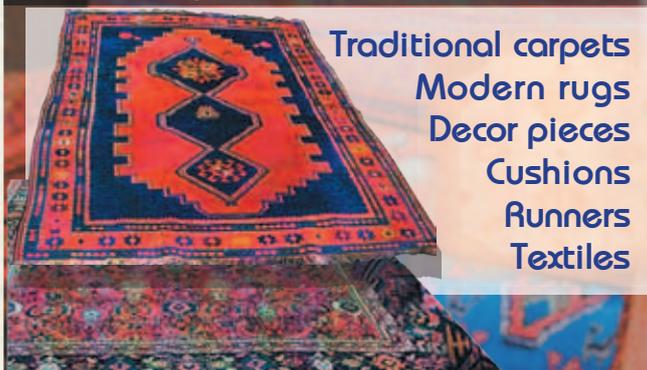
The Thames Coromandel District Council has now listed the hall, the old school house on Waitaia Road, and a former mine manager's house on Kuaotunu Wharekaho Road as historically significant.



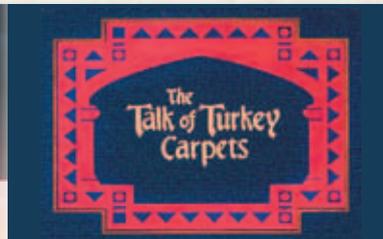
KUAOTUNU GOLD RUSH HISTORY SURVIVES IN THE ROAD NAMES

To get your bearing to location of mining areas, look for street names off SH 25: Pumpkin Flat, Cemetery Road and Waitaia Road are southeast of Kuaotunu, and Bluff Road is to the west (a scenic shore route into Matarangi). In town, note Irishtown Road and Black Jack Hill Road. There are no mine tours, but you can 'Geocache' to one of the abandoned Try Fluke mine shafts. See next page for details. - CW

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