

RICHMOND COTTAGE

REMOVED AND PUT TOGETHER STONE BY STONE

IF stones and shingles and rosemary hedges can look shy, then the description fits Richmond Cottage, an architectural heirloom recently inherited by the City of New Plymouth.

Perhaps its demure air is enhanced by the fact that it stands near one of the city's newest and most imposingly handsome buildings, glossy with polished marble and glass, the combined library, museum and war memorial hall.

Some people think both structures would look better if separated by geography as well as time. Others find the neighbourliness of the old and new, charming.

Built between 1853 and 1854 for pioneer couple C. W. and Emily Richmond, the cottage originally stood closer to the foreshore and was known as Beach Cottage. (Its value on completion is recorded as £150).

C. W. Richmond held the appointments of Clerk of the Provincial Council and Attorney for Taranaki.

He and his family lived in the cottage until 1856, when he became New Plymouth representative at the General Assembly.

A related pioneer family who lived in the cottage for a time, until 1868, were newspaper editor and M.P., A. S. Atkinson and his wife Jane Maria (nee Richmond), a sister of the first occupier.

During their stay, Jane and her husband added two detachable rooms (apparently duly detached because they are not part of the cottage today).

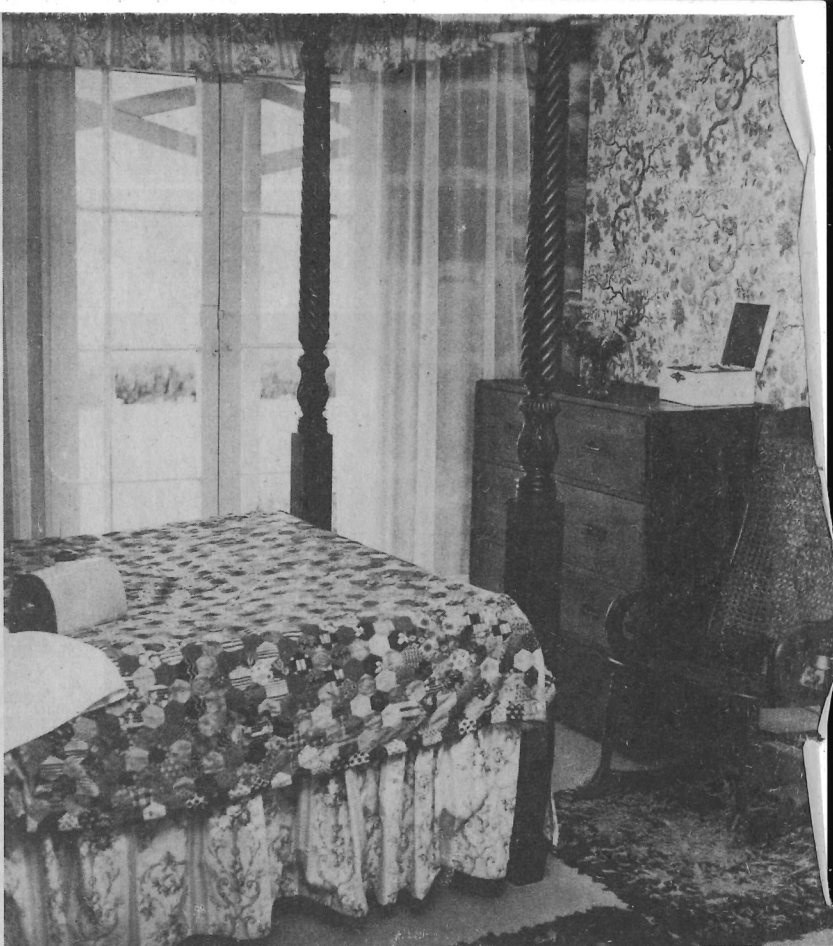
By 1872, Jane's youngest brother, Henry, was living in the small house, where he opened a school attended by the boy who later became Sir Truby King, founder of the Plunket Society.

Science lessons included experiments with iron sands from the foreshore of New Plymouth.

Contrary to quite widespread belief, the cottage is probably not that used as the first branch of the Bank of New Zealand. Researchers consider it more likely that the bank was established in another cottage owned by the Richmond family in New Plymouth.

Interestingly enough, however, among the historic items now on display in Beach or Richmond (as it has been renamed) Cottage, is a ceramic hot-water bottle presented by a descendant of the bank's first manager.

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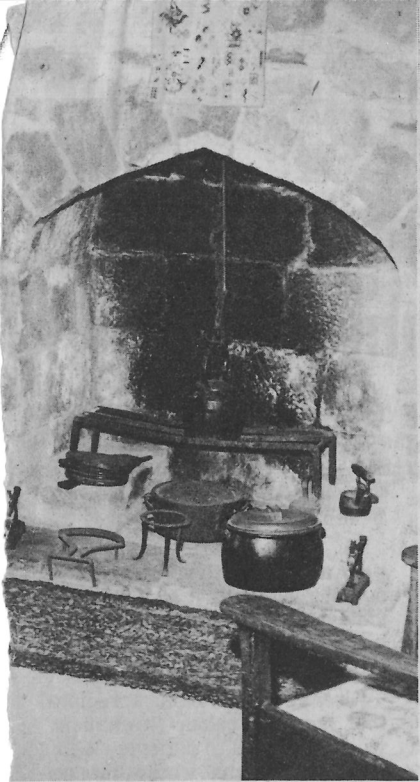


Mrs Audrey Gale beside one of New Plymouth's heirlooms, Richmond Cottage.

That's an antique hot-water bottle on the four-poster bed. The sea chest converts into a writing desk.



By Staff Writer
LEAH NEWICK



The late Sir Truby King, founder of the Plunket Society, attended school in this cottage room, later graduating from Edinburgh University.

The results can now be seen at the cottage, a plum-coloured "damask silk" design on two walls of the living room and an elaborate arrangement of flowers and birds in the bedroom.

Some of the china on display belonged to the family of Sir Harry Atkinson, who held several terms of office as Prime Minister between 1876 and 1891. During the Maori Wars, relatives hid the best of the family crockery and crystal in their garden. By the time peace returned, years later, they'd forgotten where they put it and it has only comparatively recently been dug up.

The embroidered sheets and pillow cases on the four-poster bed were part of a trousseau dating back to 1836.

An elegant chaise longue is draped by a shawl that belonged to Jane Maria Atkinson (Richmond) who, incidentally, was the first white woman to climb Mt Egmont.

During Eartha Kitt's visit to New Zealand, the chaise was borrowed for the singer's stage show, during which it was gracefully draped by the elegant Eartha herself.

Left: "... furnished with antiques brought to New Zealand by the pioneers."

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