

Bella transforms old memories into history ...

By Stephen Forbes

She's just 10 and is already a prize-winning writer and amateur historian.

Bella Berman has won top honours in this year's JT Diamond Essay Competition with her entry, From past to present: George Ward remembers orchard life on Sturges Rd.

The Henderson Valley Primary School student wrote her piece over the space of about 10 weeks.

She was excited to get the overall title after also winning the student memories category.

Bella won a gold and diamond necklace for

her efforts. "My schoolmates thought it was awesome," she says.

"All my teachers came up to me the next day and congratulated me."

Judge Robyn Mason says Bella's essay was a delight to read.

"Her work embodies everything the competition is about," she says.

"For people to find out about local people and places in their communities.

"She's discovered this local treasure, George Ward, who's made such a contribution to his community.

"And she's really made that connection with him and told his story

in a charming way."

Mr Ward was also thrilled to hear Bella had won. "She really put some work into it," the 94-year-old Henderson resident says.

Other winners in the 2009 JT Diamond Essay Competition are:

Adult memories: Louise Maich, 1; Gwen Wilkinson and Mary Ann White, 2; Cherie Vazey and Dick Endt, 3; Wayne Nicholls and Trevor Pollard, highly commended.

Adult research: Elayne Wilson, 1; Mary Ann White, highly commended.

Student memories: Bella Berman, 1; Kimberley Halberg and Maisie Leigh Hamilton Murray, 2; Laura Coppard and Sarah

Dukes, 3; Mikayla Frazer, Kennedy McCabe and Brock Dormer, highly commended.

Student research: Jack Queenin, 1; Olivia McIntyre, Erica Wills and Kate Williscroft, 2; Michaela Gilpin and Yvonne Porter, 3; Victoria Webster-Paki, Vinny Tunnell and Olivia Cheyne, highly commended.

Mayor's Prize: Felix Owens-Leach and April Crofkey.

West Auckland Historical Society Prize: Ciara Doran.

Morris Photographic Prize: Toni Robinson.

Bullock Trophy: Henderson Valley Primary School, 1; Laingholm Primary, runner-up.



Outstanding effort: Bella Berman shows George Ward her winning entry in the JT Diamond Essay Competition.

Photo: STEPHEN FORBES