

# Phanzine

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## Editorial

As members know, this month (13–14 April) PHANZA is hosting its fifth public history conference and the first since 2011. We haven't been idle in the intervening period, with symposiums, mini-conferences and skills workshops filling the agenda.

Nevertheless, there has been a feeling that a full conference is long overdue. This will be an opportunity to showcase public history and practice in a larger setting and to bring public historians together to compare experiences and socialise with their peers.

We hope as many members as possible are intending to come. The venue is Massey University in Wellington and the programme is available on the PHANZA website along with all the other information you may need.

See you in Wellington.

—Michael Kelly  
President

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In this issue we trial a different layout to make the electronic version of *Phanzine* easier to read on-screen. The page size is smaller, with only a single column, and the pdf is arranged as page spreads so that two pages can be viewed as an opening on-screen, if required. Feel free to give feedback to the editor.

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Overseas Chinese History Museum of China, Beijing

*Phoebe H Li*

## Telling and retelling New Zealand Chinese stories

To date, the process of colonial New Zealand transforming into a modern nation-state has primarily been discussed within the context of relations between early British settlers and the indigenous Māori people. I believe that this omission of other minority protagonists' presence in Aotearoa may have impeded social inclusion and cohesion in contemporary New Zealand, a country increasingly becoming multi-ethnic, and thus encountering unprecedented challenges in diversity and race relations. Curating a museum exhibition on the Chinese in New Zealand, the country's third largest ethnic group, has enabled me to present an alternative narrative about New Zealand history.

In the past there had been small-scale exhibitions on New Zealand



Auckland Museum

Chinese, especially Chinese miners in the Otago gold fields back to the 19th century. What was the life of those Chinese miners like subsequently? It seems that mainstream New Zealand historians have treated Chinese as a missing subject. And yet, to end the story with sojourning Chinese miners cannot explain why in today's New Zealand some Chinese think, speak, and behave exactly like Kiwis, but others don't. Why have New Zealand popular culture practitioners recently shown an interest in

romances between Māori and Chinese? And why do some New Zealanders feel hesitant when ticking the 'race' box in the census form? Answers to such questions may tease out more latent fibres in New Zealand society.

My exhibition attempts to make use of outstanding photographs with both historical and aesthetic merit to illustrate the complex New Zealand Chinese history about encounter, integration and acculturation. Collaborating with photographic historian John B Turner, I intend to open up many possible windows for the audience to access various aspects of Chinese life in New Zealand spanning 175 years. Anyone wishing to know more may delve further.

It was a great challenge for an independent curator to present historical exhibitions at prominent museums in both China and New Zealand. Besides lack of funding, the most difficult hurdle for me was to assure museum managerial bodies that my narrative was positively balanced, so I did not stress the poll tax issue. One always remembers the origin of a significant scar, but living in pain and grief impedes healing and recovery. I wanted to reveal to a wider audience how early Chinese settlers endured hardship, but put down roots and eventually thrived in a promising land that their descendants now consider home. Such a trajectory may take time to reoccur for new Chinese migrants.

The Chinese story may shed a new light on other ethnic minorities' journey - from being 'others' to becoming 'Kiwis'. To tell such unorthodox versions of New Zealand stories, the primary source ought to come from below - voices deep inside the ethnic communities themselves. In the case of recording the social history of New Zealand Chinese, the Chinese Poll Tax Heritage Trust (CPTHT) has made an important contribution through support of various heritage projects, especially book publications. Those volumes might not be of great interest to mainstream academic historians, but they stand as unique first-hand material for thoughtful individuals to contemplate the making of New Zealand as a migrant nation.

Working on CPTHT commissioned projects, I feel privileged to emerge as a new story teller. I am also pleased that this photographic exhibition has been so well received. In Beijing it was held at the Overseas Chinese History Museum of China for five months. More than 200,000 visitors went to see it at the Auckland Museum during the eleven months of the viewing period. By 5 February this year it had been the most viewed exhibition at the Waitangi Museum. Such popularity suggests that the audience is ready to listen to a richer New Zealand story with Chinese elements.

*Fiona McKergow reports on the re-opening of Whanganui Regional Museum.*

## Filled with light

On Friday 15 March 2019, Whanganui Regional Museum reopened after a closure of two and a half years for earthquake strengthening. Hundreds of people, mostly Māori, gathered on the museum's forecourt at 5 a.m. for a whakatuwheratanga or blessing and re-dedication of the building. At 5.30 p.m. a smaller group, mostly Pākehā, gathered on the same ground for a civic reception. Between times, we learned with deep shock of the mosque shootings that had taken place in Christchurch. In particular, I would like to extend my deepest sympathy to the family of Sayyad Milne, aged fourteen, of Corsair Bay, who was killed at Al Noor Mosque that day.

It was to have been a proud day for the children around the country who participated in the international children's climate strike initiated by Greta Thunberg. Instead, an overwhelming majority of New Zealanders experienced grief, horror and shame. For many, the sense of dismay increased in the days that followed as the catastrophic effects of Cyclone Idai, the largest ever recorded in the southern hemisphere, also unfolded. This conjunction of events has led me to a single question: what is the role of museums in the 21st century? I do not have ready answers, but I know it is an important question.

It was a privilege to be invited to the whakatuwheratanga and feel the warmth of early morning greetings from friends, colleagues and mentors. Marshall Tangaroa, chair of the museum's Joint Council, representing the Tikanga Māori House and Civic House, explained to guests that in accordance with Whanganui custom we would circle to the right through the downstairs and upstairs galleries, gather on the marae atea at the main entrance for an exchange of speeches and presentation of gifts, and leave the building filled with light on our departure for breakfast at the nearby War Memorial Centre. The clarity and kindness of his explanation in a situation where depth of belonging varied created a sense of welcome.

In the evening, silence was observed for the people of Christchurch. The speakers were Marshall Tangaroa, mayor Hamish McDouall and director Frank Stark. A commemorative plaque was unveiled. This time round, the lights were completely up and there was a chance to preview the exhibitions. Refreshing changes have been made to the entry area. The Lindauer



Display case based on the story of Alexander Allison's ostrich farm, Letham, located south of Whanganui.

Gallery, which was previously tucked away, now takes pride of place to the right of the front entrance, while a temporary exhibition gallery has been provided to the left. It currently features a 1919 New Zealand army rowing eight that was used on the Whanganui River and at overseas regattas until the early 1930s. It received comprehensive conservation treatment from Detlef Klein and Aaron Roberts of Manawatu Museum Services as a World War One centenary project coordinated by the Whanganui Rowing Heritage Centre.

On entering Ngā Wai Honohono, which means encircling or interlinking streams, I was reminded of the exceptional collection of taonga Māori held by the museum. The enormous waka taua Te Mata Hoturoa has retained its place at the heart of the gallery. The original wall cases have been refurbished with new selections of taonga. The labels are bilingual, as they are throughout the museum, and pictorial and archival material is minimal. I learned afterwards that the exhibition was curated by a Rōpū Māori convened by Katrina Hawira. It complements Te Ara Tapu: Sacred





Journeys, an interpretation of the taonga Māori collection compiled by Michelle Horwood and Che Wilson for Whanganui Regional Museum in 2008.

While I was in the gallery, however, I had an intense conversation with a former classmate about Christchurch, and then stood disoriented in front of a case of parawai presented with their deep tāniko borders at floor level wondering if they had been mounted upside down. They were not, of course, and I became curious about how colonial photographers and Māori sitters negotiated the use of tāniko in head-and-shoulders portraits. Nearby a bale of muka made by kuia of Ngāti Uenuku glowed like gold, serving as a link between construction processes and finished garments. I lingered over drawers of kākahu in a poorly lit corner, because I am interested in textiles, while other visitors bypassed these fascinating items.

If you take a left turn at the top of the stairs, a predominantly Pākehā interpretation of Whanganui history begins with the theme of sport and recreation. A rare 'bi-furcated' woman's cycling outfit from the turn of the 20th century has been paired with a bicycle from that time, and Aramoho zoo and local male sporting heroes, such as Peter Snell and Billy Webb, have been highlighted. The door from the Rutland Stockade signals the beginning of a new theme that focuses on colonisation. Photographs of nineteenth century flags held by the museum are included here as suitable display furniture was too costly. A colourful tapestry by nurse Ann Evans caught my eye as I moved through the First World War material as women's stories are not a strong aspect of this section.

Many of the wall and floor cases in this long gallery include an abundance of archival material. As Senior Curator Libby Sharpe explained, all the new exhibitions had to be strongly collection driven because there was insufficient funding to install and maintain digital display components, and she was therefore keen to provide an interpretation of Whanganui's history that blended three-dimensional objects with drawings, photographs, maps, plans, albums, posters, and other paper-based items. Sensitive items will be exchanged within six months and the collection is rich enough to sustain this rate of rotation.

◀ Previous spread: Some Whanganui residents were upset when 'The Street – Wanganui, 1900-1920' was removed in 2016, as it had been a feature of the museum from 1970. This recreation of an H I Jones toy store window has already proved popular, particularly with children.

While I skipped the Ngā Moa and Ngā Manu galleries on this occasion, I was stopped by a large ostrich in a section on agriculture in the Whanganui region. In 1904, Alexander Allison switched to farming ostriches for feathers when dairying did not pay. A taxidermied ostrich from his farm is on display with ostrich eggs, both decorated and plain, and a fan and boa made from ostrich feathers. I enjoyed this comment on the back of a photograph: ‘We visited an Ostrich Farm. They are very strong birds, this one I rode around the Compound. As soon as the keeper let him go he went the pace. To get off all you have to do is to let go its wings, and unloose your legs around his belly and slip off on his tail just as simple as that’. It seems that ostrich feathers did not pay either, and riding them was an alternative.

My bias towards textiles in this report is deliberate. Other visitors will see other things. This is one of the great features of rich and extensive collections. There will be some local visitors, however, who will observe that their communities are not represented. Whanganui Regional Museum would be wise to take steps towards becoming a multi-cultural institution that is as equally focused on the present and future as it is on the past.

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## Members' publications: Notices

Although we do not publish book reviews as such in *Phanzine*, we are keen to give notice of recent publication of works by PHANZA members, especially since some commissioned works are not distributed via the usual commercial channels. If you would also like to write a short, informative piece for *Phanzine* about issues in the writing of your book, we would welcome 800–1000 words to consider for publication. We note a new publication from member Jane Vial:

*Elizabeth Lissaman: New Zealand's Pioneer Studio Potter*

By Jane Vial with Steve Austin

Rim Books, Auckland, 2018

(Commissioned by Marlborough Museum.)

Available from Rim Books [info@rimbooks.com](mailto:info@rimbooks.com) and

Marlborough Museum [info@marlboroughmuseum.org.nz](mailto:info@marlboroughmuseum.org.nz)



*Alison Clarke reports on a university history.*

## Writing Otago's history

Researching and writing a 150th anniversary history for the University of Otago was a privilege, a pleasure, and also a challenge! The university is a large, complex institution; there is a wealth of information to be covered and many stories that could be told. Squeezing 150 years into one readable volume was undoubtedly the biggest challenge of this project.

Michael Belgrave, whose history of Massey University was published in 2016, commented when we were both working on our projects that his was 'deliberately top down and big picture', while mine was 'history from below'. Of course, a university is by nature an elitist institution, but it's true that I have tried to provide something more than tales of the



Home science extension staff with the tools of their trade outside the Home Science School in the mid-1930s; Professor Ann Strong is on the right. The extension service was the face of the University of Otago to generations of New Zealanders. Faculty of Consumer and Applied Sciences records, MS-1517/064, S15-621e, Hocken Collections.

administration and its most senior people. That is, in part, a reaction to Otago's previous histories; they were good books, but of their time, with the centenary history including biographies of every professor that had crossed the threshold, leaving little room for anybody else. This book provided an opportunity to look back at the university's first 100 years from a different angle, and include the people whose stories had been omitted - notably Māori, women, students and the general staff.

Although I used a wide range of archival and published sources in my research, the project commenced with oral history. I interviewed 88 people, and had more informal chats or correspondence with many others;

I also had access to interviews conducted 10 years earlier for Dot Page's history of the medical school. It was a delight to meet some remarkable people. The oldest person I interviewed was 106 years old and had started working at the Dental School when he was just 14, in 1922, as a junior technician. He recounted his vivid memories of the Leith flood of 1923, which swept away parts of the Dental School.

I also started a blog early in the project, and highly recommend this to anybody writing an institutional history. Over five years I posted 133 stories on the blog and it received 108,000 views. People provided further information about stories I shared, and corrected some errors - it's always good to have things corrected before they go into print! They helped identify photographs - sometimes several years after a story was first posted. Perhaps most importantly, the blog raised people's awareness about the project and helped develop interest in the history of the university. A couple of stories even made it into the *Otago Daily Times*.

The book is organised thematically. About half deals with the university's academic departments and programmes, while the remainder covers a range of topics, such as the founding and administration, student culture, changes in teaching, support services and buildings. Major themes which are covered throughout include the organisation's growing diversity and the emergence of new technologies. One chapter is devoted to the history of the university's campuses in Christchurch, Wellington and Invercargill, and of its Auckland Centre - their development has been one of the university's most significant changes in the past 50 years, but is all too readily forgotten by Dunedinites.

As somebody who answers enquiries for a heritage institution - the Hocken Collections - I was aware that this book would be a standard reference book until the next university history is published. Because of that, I included as much useful information as I could, such as the year a particular subject was first taught at Otago, and the name of its first staff. I also included appendices, such as lists of all the residential colleges and of the main university buildings, along with some key facts about them. A time line records major developments - this helps when the arrangement of the book is thematic rather than chronological.

Since the last official history was published, in 1969, there have been

- ▶ A class in the Castle Lecture Theatres, c.1990. The overhead transparency was the teaching technology of the day. University of Otago Photographic Unit records, MS-4185/060, S17-550a, Hocken Collections.



many changes to the university. The student roll has quadrupled, and students have become increasingly diverse: since 1986, a majority have been women; there are many more international students; and the proportion of Māori and Pacific Island students has greatly increased. Student growth has also prompted expansion in staff numbers and the physical campus. In the 1970s the block across the Leith from the clocktower was transformed from a collection of tightly packed cottages into a series of major science buildings for the university, and there have been many other minor and major building developments since. Students need places to live as well as to study. University College opened as a centenary project in 1969; six new residential colleges have opened since, bringing the total to 15. Many more houses have become student flats. As some other industries declined, the university became an ever more important part of Dunedin's built environment and economy. Otago's campuses in Christchurch and Wellington grew significantly, taking on undergraduate medical students from the 1970s and becoming powerhouses of research. With the 2007 merger with the Dunedin College of Education, the university also acquired a campus in Invercargill. This added to an older relationship with Southland, involving clinical teaching for the health sciences, a lively extension programme and distance teaching in commerce.

Teacher education is just one of many new fields of study and research which have emerged at Otago since the centenary. The major departments of psychology and anthropology were then small and brand new, while many others were yet to get off the ground: computer science, information science, bioethics, gender studies, Māori studies and tourism, to name just a few. Meanwhile, other subject areas declined in importance and popularity with some, like Russian, disappearing completely. Home science was once a key part of the university, attracting women from all over New Zealand and beyond - from the 1920s until the end of World War Two there were more home science than pure science students at Otago. It has now effectively gone, though it left a legacy in the departments of human nutrition and food science.

The University of Otago has played an important part in the lives of many individuals. It has also been significant in the history of Dunedin and New Zealand as a whole; it has even been a player on the world stage, producing significant research and major scholars. The book is, I hope, a fitting tribute to the students and staff who have made the University of Otago the intriguing and interesting and fabulous place that it is.

## Heritage

*Michael Kelly looks at Peter Wells' heritage legacy and celebrates a remarkable gift.*

# Peter Wells RIP

A couple of issues ago, this column offered up an obituary of British architectural historian and heritage advocate Gavin Stamp. At the risk of this becoming a semi-regular feature, we're going there again.

Writer, filmmaker and gay rights advocate Peter Wells died in February this year. Like Stamp, he was 69 and, like Stamp, he fell to cancer. It was something of a public passing because he had been writing about his illness for over a year and collected those thoughts into a book that was published just before his death. Although he was indeed a wonderful writer and something of a cultural polymath, it's his work in heritage advocacy that I want to acknowledge; specifically, two seminal films that changed the public discourse.

It's hard to comprehend 30 plus years later, but there was a time when not many people cared about Napier's Art Deco architecture. Frustratingly, it's now hard to get Napier interested in anything other than Art Deco. If there is a good reason for that, it's because there's no better combination of architectural style and location in New Zealand. That it is as celebrated as it is, can partly be put down to Peter Wells.

Wells was a man with a taste for the aesthetic and a flair for revealing it. The 1980s were barely 50 years after the city's post-earthquake renewal, but he knew that Napier had something special in its architecture and, alarmed at the start of what could have been the wholesale destruction of that rich legacy, he did something about it. That something was a documentary - *Napier, the newest city on the globe* (1986). Just under 30 minutes long, and edited by his then partner Stewart Main, it presented Napier's architecture in an original and sparkling way, highlighting the style's curves, decoration and symbiosis with Napier's location and climate. Eyes were opened and attitudes started to change. Wells wasn't the only advocate for Napier's particular charms at that time - the late Robert MacGregor, founder of the Art Deco Group and executive director of the Art Deco Trust should be given much of the credit - but he was certainly amongst the most influential.

Two years later he was at it again. Auckland born and raised, Wells was upset at the potential loss of his favourite picture theatre, the extraordinary Civic Theatre on Queen Street. Another documentary was born and *The Mighty Civic* emerged. Part history, part a personal evocation with poetic overtones, it tried to define what made the theatre a landmark in the heyday of the movies. The Civic was built in 1929, just as the ‘talkies’ arrived, but it was more than a richly decorated movie house. It had a massive capacity (it could accommodate over 2,700 patrons) and it had its own house band and performers. The Depression put paid to all that and the size of the theatre always made it hard to fill, but it survived more than four decades before slipping audience numbers put its future under threat.

Perhaps Aucklanders had been complacent or were unaware of the Civic’s interior glories, but Wells’ film stimulated public interest. It was a long process, but the theatre was duly saved by a groundswell of public support, restored to its former glory and today takes its place as one of Auckland’s most celebrated historic buildings.

## A gift to the nation

Now and then, something extraordinary happens in the heritage world that deserves extra attention. In February this year, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) was the recipient of a remarkable gift. Susan Price, daughter of writers and publishers Hugh Price and Beverly Randall (Price Milburn and Gondwanaland Press), gave the organisation Chevening (1929), a four-storey apartment building she had lovingly restored. This remarkable gesture simply has not had the attention it deserves.

This gift did not come out of the blue. Susan Price and her family have been notable Wellington benefactors for decades, although they are far from wealthy. In 2001, they established Randall Cottage in Thorndon, built by a descendant of Beverly Randall’s in 1867, as a writer’s residency (the first writer in residence was Peter Wells). The family has donated large collections of books to various institutions, including Susan Price’s extraordinary collection of 26,000 children’s books to the National Library.

Susan Price, a writer herself, who studied history and has a great love of heritage, hired Studio of Pacific Architecture to oversee the house’s strengthening and restoration in 2011. The house, which had been owned



Chevening. Photo: Michael Kelly

by the family since 1979 (Susan bought it off her parents in 2002), was gifted to the *HNZPT* without conditions and came complete with a 24-volume archive and an endowment - to respond to the damage that might be caused by a major event like an earthquake. Has any heritage property in New Zealand ever been gifted with such generosity?

This bequest means that *HNZPT* will be able to draw an income from the building and use that for the benefit of New Zealand's heritage. The organisation intends to continue to rent out the apartments. Ms Price's history of the house will be released later this year.

*Gerard Morris proposes a New Zealand non-fiction writers' 'Earn as You Write' scheme and reports on the Prime Minister's response.*

## The letter P

The April 2019 PHANZA conference asks us to consider the future of our authorship. My abstract was accepted, but a few days later, I was told that I needed to pay all my travel costs, so I withdrew as I couldn't afford the air fares to Wellington.

My topic, 'Does New Zealand's public history actually have a future?' can be answered with one word - money. The letter 'P' in PHANZA stands for professional, but what does that mean? Why do we spend thousands of unpaid hours researching and writing books, and then struggle to find a publisher, sell possibly a thousand copies, all for an income that barely reimburses the cost of our past electricity and food bills. Forget about trying to pay tomorrow's rent. It is my contention that no matter how good the research is; only those with funding can survive. And, past, present and future historians are linked by this common problem. Where to from here? A bold decision is required before some of New Zealand's best thinkers ignore the 'Call of the Word' and quit in frustration. We cannot rely solely on grants, let alone royalties, to put food on the table and knowledge on the shelves.

From the time I joined the Government Audit Office as a 19 year old (1978), I was trained to ask the right people the important questions, so I wrote a three page letter (9 January) to the person who is theoretically my boss - the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Minister in charge of New Zealand's Arts, Culture and Heritage portfolio. She



Gerard Morris in Wellington on 1 November 2018 and spoke at this 2018 event, which marked the 150th anniversary of New Zealand adopting the Māori language on 1 November 1868. (MSL, Wellington)



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replied on 25 February 2019. Our abridged letters follow.

What we need is a living wage, that is, access to a government sponsored fund, an 'Earn as you Write' scheme that provides for the high costs of research and writing nowadays . . . Writers who sign up would be required to submit fortnightly timesheets to the MCH and give monthly updates on the writing project. When one project ends, the writer can submit a proposal(s) for additional projects. A small group of professionals can assess the merits of the projects. What I am asking for may be unprecedented in New Zealand and internationally, but something is only unprecedented until it happens for the first time. For our nation to progress it must get the best out of its resources, its assets, in this case its people. A thin ink line separates New Zealanders from intellectual ignorance. We must write our history as no other country will'.

In her reply Jacinda Ardern wrote:

I absolutely agree with your comments about the important role of historians and other non-fiction writers in preserving our nation's stories and knowledge, and appreciate your frustration at the difficulties of making a living in this field. The Government is committed to supporting careers in the arts and cultural sector, including non-fiction writers such as you. Last year I asked my officials at the Ministry for Cultural and Heritage for advice on how this could best be done, and the Ministry is now actively considering a range of measures to better support sustainable careers in the sector. I look forward to being able to share more details of the Government's approach over the coming months.

— Gerard S Morris

*Peter Cooke looks back at four years of writing **Won by the Spade, How the Royal NZ Engineers Built a Nation**, to be launched at Parliament in May.*

## Digging into specialist history

Have we seen the death of the official history? The 'o' word was not uttered during the World War One centennial but in the past it has referred to state actors writing of their activities. While the terminology may be changing, the need for histories of state activity has not. Perhaps what is also changing is who is commissioning them. No longer it seems is the government interested in documenting the successes and failures of those working in its name, but the people in state sectors or official roles are keen to see their efforts documented. In my chosen field - military history - the personnel who served in various corps of the New Zealand Army have never stopped wanting their stories told. Perhaps, by taking the bull by the horns and commissioning those histories, they have created the next best thing to an official history - the authorised history.

After a failed attempt by the government to write detailed army histories, the Corps of the Royal New Zealand Engineers (RNZE) decided to go it alone: raise the funds and employ the historian directly. In fact Joe Hollander, who oversaw the project, had been agitating since the early 1980s for recording the corps' history. Now a retired lieutenant colonel, Joe invigorated the various sapper bodies to ensure their history was preserved. History-minded sappers had established the engineer museum at Linton Camp, which opened in 1982, and in which much of the corps' taonga are held. Joe put together an oral history recording programme, getting 57 sappers 'on tape' (employing PHANZA members). Proving their serious intent, the corps established a charitable trust to oversee their cultural needs and shepherd their history to completion.

I was honoured to be chosen to write the sappers' story. I had, however, lobbied for it since 2002. A firm believer in the subject-matter specialist, I guided myself in that direction. A secondary skillset allowed me to offer graphical representations that helped tell the story - including a lineage tree of the RNZE 'family'. In military history - or any special topic - the learning curve can be steep and more than one generalist has stumbled attempting to climb it. These points gave me the confidence to offer an ambitious argument (that the sappers quite literally helped build New



Sappers preparing a wreck for demolition, Lyttelton Harbour.  
Photo: Engineer Corps Memorial Centre, Linton Camp

Zealand). I stuck to the basics; established the facts on the ground and from them worked upwards to draw conclusions.

There is much to preserve in our military engineering past. It started in 1500–1550, when the first pā or fortification was built (ironically about the same time as the birth of coastal defences in the United Kingdom). Māori had been here for 200–300 years beforehand but had no cause to erect fortifications. As the early arrivals explored their new domain, they found fishing, hunting and harvesting sites and others rich in wood and stone. There were initially enough of these sites to satisfy everyone, but as the population grew and some necessities (such as protein) became scarce, the competition for these resources increased. People started to fight over them and between 1500 and 1550 the first pā were built – to guard a valuable site and deny its riches to unrelated people. In this way ‘Archaic Māori’ become the ‘Pā Māori,’ entering their classical period in which warfare became endemic. In 1769 Captain James Cook concluded: ‘the people must have long and frequent wars, and must have been long accustomed to it, otherwise they never would have invented such strongholds as these [at

Whitianga], the erecting of which must cost them immense labour, considering the tools they have to work with, which are only made of wood and stone' (cited by Elsdon Best, *The Pa Maori*, 1927, pp 37-38).

The classical Pā Māori period ended with the introduction of firearms and the last known battle involving a pā - exactly 100 years after Cook's landfall. By then new people had arrived and introduced their own military engineering, primarily for besieging pā occupied by Māori resistant to new settlement. A new New Zealand sapper arose, starting with engineer volunteers who fought Māori. They also built infrastructure like wharves, roads, bridges, railways and telegraph lines, to make the new settlements viable and link regions. The Public Works Department and municipal works boards owe their origins to the ubiquitous 'Royal Engineers Department' set up in most North Island towns. From the Māori military engineer, the Royal Engineers and the pioneering citizen-sapper grew the RNZE, first given royal assent in 1902 (repeated in 1947).

In the world wars and cold wars New Zealand sappers established an international reputation envied by many. Whether tunneling in Arras, or building bunkers and bridges in France, the WWI engineers earned the respect of their Empire and Commonwealth colleagues. In WWII this extended to deft minefield and railways work in the desert, enhancing combat mobility in Italy and building strategic airports in the Pacific. At war's end Acting Brigadier Fred Hanson represented New Zealand at the Chief Engineers' debrief, rubbing shoulders with generals - but he was the only one there sporting three wounds. Since then engineers have added their skilled contribution to war zones and peacekeeping across the globe, from mine-clearing in Korea, base-building in Vietnam, IED-defeating in Afghanistan or bridging in Iraq.

If this is not the activity of the State, I do not know what is. From the foregoing it has been possible to claim that the RNZE (aka sappers) helped build the nation. The sappers still regularly assist Oceania neighbours after natural disasters - which are increasing in number and scale with climate change - where they are effectively the face of New Zealand's foreign policy.

Perhaps if the State does not want to commission these histories of state activities (other than through contestable funds), it should fund and support those who will. Certainly for 2039, another round of war-related centennials will be upon us, telling the State's story afresh for a new audience.

## Obituary

# Ray Grover

As in life, so in death . . . as he was dying late last year Ray Grover got on with organising his memorial service with a focus and humanity that also informed his archival career, his novels and, indeed, his entire life. The well-attended service at old St Paul's included readings that reflected a life well-lived - and, if this isn't a tautology, well-read. Military historian Chris Pugsley delivered an excerpt from WWI poet Wilfred Owen, reflecting Ray's keen interest in and contributions to our military story. Brother-in-law and environmental writer John Andrews read a passage from E H McCormick on memories of Hautapu, near Taihape. This spoke to Ray's peripatetic childhood in a family posted to small town North Island rural districts. Archivist Catherine Patterson read an excerpt from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Archives and National library staff sang a waiata.

Between these offerings and historian Brad Patterson's fitting eulogy, and a spare, heart-felt tribute from his California-based son Tom, Ray had prepared the perfect interludes. Three jazz items were offered up to the church's seasoned acoustics by Kiwi saxophonist/composer Lucien Johnson, son of the late Louis Johnson. Louis, with Ray, was part of the Wellington Group literary scene of the 1950s and 60s, together with others including Maurice Gee, Maurice Shadbolt and sisters Marilyn Duckworth and Fleur Adcock. Johnson edited Saturday's *Dominion* leader-facing page devoted largely to emergent writing and poetry.

A former Chief Archivist, Ray wrote novels located with historical exactitude in archival research. The first, *Another Man's Role*, drew on the West Coaster Stan Graham killings and his second, national award-winning *Cork of War*, tells of the tumultuous years of Ngāti Toa chiefs Te Rau-paraha and Te Rangihaeata. More recently he produced two more, *March to the Sound of the Guns* and *Province of Danger*, on New Zealand's role in, respectively, World War One and World War Two.

If family members attending the graveside at Makara were at all surprised to hear the line from psalm 121, 'I lift mine eyes up unto the hills', they ought not to have been. Chris Pugsley had already prepared the St Paul's attendees - when asked what his view on an afterlife might be, Ray had smiled that he was 'prepared to be surprised'.

— David Young

## News from the North

*Sandra Gorter reports on PHANZA end-of-year events in Auckland.*

The PHANZA Auckland Christmas walking tour visited the forgotten farms and commons of Mount Roskill. Starting on Sunday 9 December at the Municipal Chambers on what was once the edge of the Three Kings volcanic field, John Adams hosted a walking tour to the Pah homestead grounds, providing our group with fascinating commentary, frequently interrupted by questions and enquiries, as he painted a picture of what was once rural landscape fronting the Manukau Harbour.

► Starting our walk outside the Municipal Chambers on the old Three Kings common, L to R: Lynn Williams, John Adams, Joanna Boileau, Caroline Phillips, Phil, Gabrielle Fortune, Sandra Gorter (Cheryl Ware taking the photo)



Using trees and the remaining buildings as reference points, he brought the history of the landscape to life. The politics of the settlers and Māori were present as John described the 100 acre and 20 acre lots, the Wesley land, the Winstone quarry and the various owners and the naming of the Pah homestead alongside the people who worked the land. Queensland kauri trees were remarkable for their differences and similarities to their New Zealand cousins. The Ranfurly home was another highlight: now barely visible from the road it was opened in 1903 as a national memorial to New Zealanders who had served in the Boer war and initially housed Pākehā veterans from New Zealand's own wars just a few decades earlier.

The tour ended at the Pah homestead café with a cup of tea where John was roundly thanked by all for a captivating afternoon.

Note the stock in the foreground paddock in the photo below and the fenceposts, possibly pūriri or tōtara, atop the Big King. The panoramic view is similar to that of the Pah homestead, giving visual information of events on the Manukau Harbour with its vital communication and transport connection to all points from the harbour entrance to the small ports, jetties and farming settlement areas of Waiuku, Pukekohe, Papakura, Māngere and Ōnehunga.

▼ The view across Mount Roskill towards Waikowhai in September 1920 from atop the Big King, which was quarried away before the 1960s. Photo: J D Richardson, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 4-5665



## *Three new PHANZA members introduce themselves*

### **Alison Day**

I live in Wellington and have been there for three years. I previously lived in Hamilton, Auckland, Singapore and Sydney but originated from the UK. I came to New Zealand in 1996 and hold MA and PhD degrees in History from the University of Auckland and an MSocSci in demography from the University of Waikato. I have held research positions at the University of Waikato and in market research, and am currently undertaking some further study while looking to further pursue interests in history and oral history.



### **Clare Gleeson**

My particular interest is New Zealand's colonial social history, specifically areas relating to music making and the music trade. My MA thesis focussed on one of New Zealand's major music businesses, Charles Begg & Co, and in 2012 my history of the company was published. I have



recently completed a PhD continuing my research in this field, examining domestic music-making in New Zealand from 1840 to 1940, specifically the roles of the music seller and the amateur musicians (usually women)

who bought, and later bound, popular sheet music for the piano. With Dr Elizabeth Nichol I am curating a website of notable musical personalities in New Zealand from 1840 to 1920 which is due to be launched later this year. I have worked in a voluntary capacity transcribing gravestones from the Bolton Street Cemetery, as weekend curator at Nairn Street Cottage, doing archival work at the BNZ Archives and, further afield, on an archaeological dig in Orkney. I am currently part of a group creating a heritage garden in Wellington. I work as a research librarian at Radio New Zealand.

## Helen Leggatt



My name is Helen Leggatt and I am excited to join the PHANZA community. After a career in marketing and communications, I decided in 2013 to address my passion for history. I started with a BA in History from Massey University and, in 2018, graduated with First Class Honours (History) from the University of Canterbury. This year, I start my Masters at

the University of Canterbury along with my first term as Associate Secretary for the Canterbury Historical Association. My areas of interest lie in nineteenth-century British colonial history, with particular focuses on social history including deathways, people on the fringes of society, and local Canterbury history.

## Some April events

‘AFTER THE WAR - WHAT NEXT?’

§ Please do come along and support our own PHANZA Conference. Following four years of war commemorations and the many research and work opportunities the centenary provided, where does history go next? What research opportunities await public historians and what challenges will present themselves? The conference will be an opportunity to investigate the future of public history in New Zealand.

13-14 April, Massey University Wellington Campus

<https://phanza.org.nz/conference-2019/>

‘PLAYING DRESS UPS  
WITH MARGUERITE  
HILL’

§ PHANZA member and Auckland City Council Heritage Researcher Marguerite Hill will look at fancy dress costumes in New Zealand museum collections:

Wednesday 10 April,  
Auckland Central Library, 12-1pm

► Miss Laking perched on a low wall wearing an elaborate advertising costume for Thos Hanna & Co, Estate Agents, 1911. Photo: Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 31-68724



AUCKLAND HISTORY INITIATIVE SYMPOSIUM

§ Waipapa Marae, University of Auckland, 15 April 2019, 9am-4pm  
<http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/events/2019/04/auckland-history-initiative-symposium.html>