

Newsletter
March 2015

The Late Binney Lock

The Executive at its December meeting observed a minute's silence in tribute to Binney who was our first, and a very long-serving, Secretary. Binney's funeral was held in the Transitional Cathedral on 19 November. John Cookson spoke on behalf of the Foundation. Here are some extracts from the eulogy.

"Binney can count as a Founding Father of the Foundation when it was formed in 1999. In the work he did as Secretary, it's hardly an exaggeration to say that he was *the* Foundation. Meticulous in everything he did, full of sensible advice, never complaining about the ball and chain that the office imposed on him, he was the general factotum to whom we all referred and deferred.

Allow me to be facetious and call him the elephant in the room at meetings of our Executive. That is to say, elephants never forget and neither did Binney. He presented as a huge bulk of information and memory that it was extremely difficult for us to sidle around.

Binney had a journalist's and historian's curiosity about events and people. It gave him an immense range of knowledge and understanding, backed, I can add, by a well-stocked private library.

An old colleague of Binney's at *The Press* has described him as the 'ultimate gentleman'. Before the 18th century the word 'gentleman' denoted a social rank. In the 18th century it began to apply to persons who displayed a set of qualities; in particular, social obligation and what contemporaries called 'politeness' or 'manners'.

This is the model that will always remind us of Binney – agreeable, inquiring, public-minded, big-hearted Binney."

Community Historians

Two of our Community Historians have recently published their work, both with Canterbury University Press.

Dr Vaughan Wood (2008) *Akaroa Cocksfoot* has more than met our expectations of a valuable contribution to New Zealand's farming history. Cocksfoot in the late 19th century became the 'king of grasses' and Banks Peninsula's an international brand and world leader. From the 1880s, for about thirty years, thousands of tonnes of seed were shipped around the world, especially to Europe. On the burnt-over bushlands of the Peninsula cocksfoot flourished at a time when a 'grasslands revolution' was underway in farming economies elsewhere in the world.

Several other factors coincided. For instance, the availability of large numbers of casual or seasonal workers to harvest the seed. The rise of steam shipping also made it possible to harvest in the southern summer and efficiently supply markets in the northern hemisphere.

The Foundation is immensely grateful to PGG Wrightson for subsidising the publication of Vaughan's book.

The second book is Ian Dougherty (2011), *The People's University*, which commemorates the centenary of the Canterbury Workers' Educational Association (1915-2015). It is to be launched on 4 March, again by the Canterbury University Press.

The significance of the WEA in the city and province scarcely needs to be stated, as surely the oldest existing provider of 'second chance' education with an inestimable broadening effect on our cultural life. James Hight, Professor of History, was one of the founders.

