

Canterbury History Foundation

Newsletter

May 2016

Gardner Lecture 2016

This year's lecture will be given by Dr Christopher Pugsley, the well-known military historian who is an authority on the First World War. His topic is entitled '1916: a Pattern Emerges: Gallipoli's Influence, the New Zealand Division, the Somme and Conscript'. The date of the lecture is Sunday 24 July. Members will receive a reminder nearer the time.

Rhodes Medal Award for 2016

As is customary, the Rhodes Medal will be presented on the occasion of the Gardner Lecture. This year's medallist is Mrs Phyllis Johnson of Cheviot who is recognised for her many years of serving and leading the Cheviot and District Historical Records Society. The award is a good opportunity to acknowledge how much small country museums and archives owe to people like Phyllis.

Bus Trip to Akaroa

Last year we had a successful 'field day' to the Hororata district. This year on Sunday 25 September we will be going to Banks Peninsula where we will be guided by our 2016 Community Historian, Daniel Smith. Daniel is using his award to work on John Henry Menzies (1839-1919) of the Menzies Bay family who was an outstanding decorative carver and furniture-maker.

The tour will start at the Akaroa Museum to visit the exhibition devoted to Menzies which opened on 15 April. Some pieces on display are on loan from the old family home at Menzies Bay, still in possession of the family, and this is an exceptional opportunity to see them.

The tour takes in St Luke's Church at Little Akaloa, the decoration of which is Menzies' best-known work, if not his masterpiece, combining Maori motifs with European forms. Interest in 'Maoriland' was a feature of colonial society at the time, one which deserves further attention from historians.

Book on Governor's Bay

The Foundation has made a grant to assist publication of a book, *Head of the Harbour*, which covers the history of the Lyttelton Harbour communities from Teddington to Governor's Bay. It is a district very familiar to Christchurch people and should attract a wide readership, complementing Gordon Ogilvie's work on the Port Hills and Banks Peninsula and Mary Staphylton-Smith's history of the south-eastern bays around Diamond Harbour.

The book's author is Jane Robertson who has undertaken exhaustive original research, taking in previously unpublished archival material, previously recorded oral histories, new oral sources, and a collection of several hundred historical photographs.

History Student Numbers

Government funding of postgraduate students has been severely reduced, so it is encouraging to learn that this year the History Department's Honours (4th year) class numbers about 30. First-year numbers are over 300, including the two largest first-year courses in the School of Humanities.

Canterbury's History Department is ranked in the top 200 in the world, as is the University.

Recent Book Launches

Last year the CHF made a grant to assist publication of Helen Thomas's biography of Henry and Jane Holland whose main claim to fame is as Mayor and Mayoress of Christchurch (1912-19) and perhaps as the parents of Sid Holland, Prime Minister. The book was duly launched by the mayor at a function in the Council Chambers on 3 April. John Cookson represented the Foundation and Geoff Rice also spoke. In his remarks, John noted that Helen Thomas's grant was one of six made during the last two years, totalling \$10,000.

May Your Shadow Never Grow Less amounts to a weighty family history covering an assortment of topics in great detail – farming (at Greendale), business (selling traction engines), Methodism, local government and politics, the plethora of civic organisations found in Christchurch, parliament in the period of Massey's premiership. Jane Holland dutifully kept a daily journal for years which is a record of female lives and the social round of a lady - including clothes shopping at Ballantynes!

The other launch with which the CHF was associated was *Rushing for Gold*, a social history of the goldfields focussed very much on Otago and Westland experiences. It was reviewed on National Radio's *Nine to Noon* programme on 22 March.

The book is edited by Lloyd Carpenter (Lincoln University) and Lyndon Fraser (Canterbury). It might be said to continue the work started by Philip Ross May who before his unexpected death in 1977 had become interested in the trans-Pacific and trans-Tasman goldfields connections. Much, in particular, is made of the linkages between the Victoria and Otago rushes.

The general reader will enjoy the individual characters that the various contributors have brought into the light of day, including many women. The arduous conditions can only leave us marvelling at the hardihood of miners and their families. They were also a more enterprising, conventional and community-minded lot than they have been given credit for.

Praise Due: Lost Opportunity

An article found in the business pages of the *Press* on 20 May by Peter Townsend, chief executive of the Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce, is worth noting.

Carrying the headline 'Protecting our Cultural Heritage' it described the role of the Air Force Museum in providing storage, workspace and expert repair and conservation advice to groups anxious to find a safe place for their archival collections in the aftermath of the earthquakes. What was lost in the disaster, particularly by businesses and law offices, in the CBD remains unknown. But the holdings of community groups, like the Lyttelton Museum, escaped pretty lightly, not least thanks to the initiative taken by the Air Force Museum.

The CHF acknowledged its contribution by awarding the Museum's Director, Therese Angelo, the A.C. Rhodes Medal in 2012.

No fewer than 38 organisations availed themselves of the Museum's hospitality; 16 remain without a permanent home for their collections and may occupy storage space at the Museum until 2018 at the latest.

Such dispersal marks a return to the pre-quake situation. It misses an opportunity to bring fresh thinking as to how Christchurch archives might best be organised for the benefit of all users.

In 2011 the CHF put the idea of a stand-alone Community Archive to the major archive-holding institutions and also the City Council as a submission on the Annual Plan for 2012-13. It would seem the idea died in the face of the assumption that archives belong to libraries and museums. The county Record Offices found in Britain or the Community Archive found in America were models suggested that gained no traction.

Attention has focussed instead on how these publicly funded facilities might be made to fit into the leisure culture of the 21st century with archives relegated to a backroom of indifference. With the new City Library in the Square, will its archives find suitable accommodation or will they languish in some remote place?

