



CANTERBURY HISTORY
FOUNDATION Inc.

NEWSLETTER May 2024

Since our last Newsletter, the national conference of the New Zealand Historical Association was held at the University of Canterbury on 21-24 November. The Foundation was a major sponsor with a grant of \$5000 and our banners were on display throughout the conference. Professor James Belich gave the Beaglehole Lecture on the subject of global history, and the conference was deemed to have been a great success.

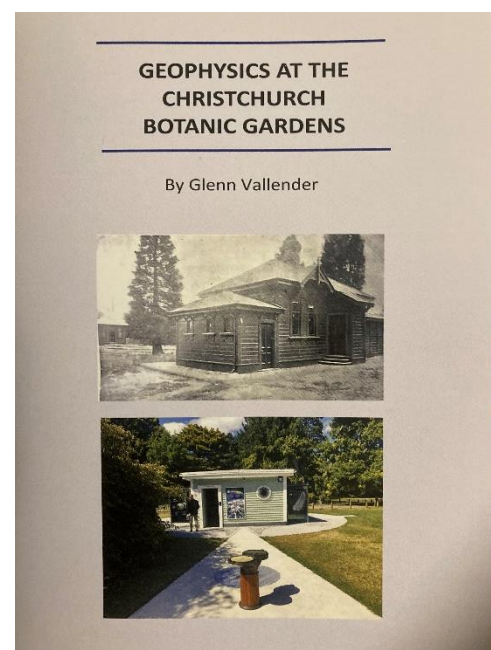
The 2023 History Awards Ceremony was held on 5 December. This event is funded from the bequest of the late Gerald Hunt, but inflation and rising catering costs have necessitated an additional grant of \$1000 from the Foundation. As usual, the departments of Art History, Classics and Philosophy shared the event to present their top achiever prizes. It has been suggested that they might contribute to the catering cost in future. The Graduate Women of Canterbury awarded prizes to the top students in first-year History courses, while the Neville Phillips Memorial Prize was awarded to the two top second year students. Prizes for the top third year students were presented by the donors, John Cookson, Frieda Looser and Geoff Rice. The outstanding honours student for 2023 was Xanthe Rose, who carried off the Gerald Hunt Prize, the top Honours Student Prize and a Joan Burns Scholarship.

Also at this ceremony Emeritus Professor Geoff Rice presented a medieval manuscript dated 1465 to the university to assist honours students in their study of

palaeography. It is a good example of a routine land grant whereby three villages north of Gloucester were transferred to a new owner. Some years ago Professor Rice was in San Francisco on a stopover when he saw it framed on the wall of an antiquarian bookshop. The price seemed a bit steep, so he didn't buy it then, but after coming home he kept thinking about it and finally made an offer which was accepted. It has been sitting in a box under his bed ever since. The gift was accepted by Fiona Tyson, head of the Macmillan Brown Library.

Professor Chris Jones has stepped down from the Executive after accepting an editorial role for an international journal, and his place as representative of the Canterbury Historical Association has been taken by Frieda Looser.

A grant of \$1500 has been made to Glenn Vallender to assist publication of his booklet *Geophysics at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens*, a history of the magnetic Observatory established in 1901. Only one small building remains, which now houses a museum. The Observatory was built in time for Robert Falcon Scott's calibration of instruments for his *Discovery* voyage to Antarctica.



We regret to announce the death of Ned Bohan, prolific Canterbury historian and novelist, who was the recipient of the Rhodes Medal in 2022. He died at the age of 88 on 23 March 2024. Several members of the Executive attended his funeral. Ned had a successful career as a professional singer in the UK, appearing in opera and oratorio, before returning to New Zealand in 1987, when he contributed essays to the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. Two of these became notable biographies, of Stafford and FitzGerald. He also wrote on Governor Grey and the Land Wars. His historical thrillers, featuring Inspector O'Rorke, were set in 1870s Opawa. His last book was a history of Christchurch Cathedral (2023).

We are pleased to announce that this year's Gardner Memorial Lecture will be given by Dame Anne Salmond, distinguished Auckland anthropologist and historian. She will speak on a topic related to the Treaty of Waitangi. The lecture will take place on Sunday 28 July. Members will receive notices in due course.

The Treasurer has completed an update of our constitution to bring it into line with the requirements of the Charities Commission. This new version will need to be approved at the AGM in September. Copies will be sent to members well ahead of that event.

Executive members Terri Elder and Emily Rosevear have volunteered to relieve the Secretary of his responsibility for the CHF website and are planning a major refreshing of the site. Members are encouraged to visit the website, chf.org.nz, and to send any suggestions to the Secretary.

Members may have noticed a recent article criticising the new History curriculum by Professor Paul Moon (*Press*, 2 May 2024) of the Auckland University of Technology. He claimed that students were being 'turned away' by the repetitive emphasis on three 'big ideas', namely Maori history as

the 'foundational and continuous' history of New Zealand, colonisation and its consequences, and the exercise of power. Moon traces these ideas to now-debunked 'critical race' theory which reduces people in the past to villains or victims. He fears that students will be made to feel guilty about the actions of their forebears. He also criticises the narrowness of the omission of many groups and issues that have made New Zealand a multi-cultural modern nation.

Other critics such as Jock Phillips and Erik Olssen have noted the absence of the economy and how people earned a living. A major gap is the lack of emphasis on the Britishness of our law, constitution, business and culture. Other gaps include the roles of women, religion and social conflict.

Your Executive took a close interest in the early stage of drafting, and held several meetings with Professor Letitia Fickel, head of Education at the University of Canterbury, and Dr Billy O'Steen, to explore ways of helping primary level teachers implement the new curriculum. Those discussions were derailed by Covid, and then the government's decision to delay the introduction.

Our conclusion was that History at lower levels is best told by stories about people and explanation of local place-names, to give students a sense of identity and belonging to their surroundings. There are already ample resources for such story-telling.

The Executive now includes Graig Thornhill, president of the NZ History Teachers' Association, who was a member of the panel that designed the new curriculum. Members may recall his Gardner lecture in 2021. We have invited Craig to explain the latest revisions to the curriculum in a special newsletter.
