

CANTERBURY HISTORY FOUNDATION Inc.

Newsletter
December 2017

Christmas Greetings

The President and the Executive take this opportunity to extend to you their best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. Have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

The Executive

Philippa Rutledge was elected to the Committee at the AGM. Several nominees have had their appointments reaffirmed. Professor Geoff Rice represents the University's Vice-Chancellor, Dr Heather Wolfram the Historical Association and Paul O'Connor the History Alumni. Dr Bernadette Devonport continues as Treasurer and Professor John Cookson as Vice-President and Chair of the Executive. We are very grateful that Dr John Wood, the University's Chancellor, is willing to remain as our President in view of his recent appointment as Chair of the District Health Board.

Strassmeyer Bequest

John Strassmeyer, a life member for many years who died recently, left a generous gift of \$10,000 for the Foundation in his will. The Executive has decided that the money should be used to inaugurate a special fund to subsidise the publication of worthwhile historical research. Local histories particularly depend on this kind of assistance.

In the past the Foundation has made several such grants each year of up to \$2,000 out of its general account.

Gordon Ogilvie (1934 – 2017)

Gordon, who passed away on 23 October, must be counted as one of Christchurch and Canterbury's best-known local historians. He served the Foundation most notably as a member of the Awards Committee where his knowledge and experience as a much published author were greatly valued. He was also the Jim Gardner Lecturer in 2004 when he spoke about his history of Ballantynes department store.

He was a compulsive writer, often ready to cite Juvenal's dictum that 'writing is a disease'. Sometimes the work was done in the early hours before he went to his daytime job in the classroom. He had over twenty books to his name, starting with the history of his local parish and, while teaching at Pleasant Point, a history of the Waitohi area. Gordon is also credited with bringing the aviation pioneer, Richard Pearse, out of the shadows with his book *The Riddle of Richard Pearse*. Champions of the Wright brothers might never forgive him.

His most ambitious work was a full-length biography of Denis Glover, a complex person indeed but whose poetry had always engaged Gordon. One wordsmith was attracted to another.

But a greater love still was the history of Banks Peninsula and the Port Hills. An upbringing in the Horotane Valley, with time spent roaming the hills above, 'captured his soul' and many books were the outcome. His last published work on the place names of the Peninsula and Hills appeared just two months before his death. Few who were present at the launch will forget the frail figure of the author. Yet they will remember even better a most likeable and sociable man, 'a really superior human being' in one colleague's words, who made good use of his talents, given and acquired.

A publication grant of \$2,000 was made to Gordon Ogilvie for his book, *Place Names of Banks Peninsula and the Port Hills* (Canterbury U.P., 2017), 320pp, \$59.99.

Two New Publications

Colin Amodeo with Paul Croucher, *Taking the Bar: a History of Kaiapoi Port* (early Dec. 2017 publication).

New Zealand's maritime history deserves more notice than it has received, especially the coastal trade and the small, often river, ports that for a long time sustained it.

This book is a good example of what could be on offer. All credit to the Kaiapoi Maritime Heritage Trust which commissioned the work. The author needs no introduction as a maritime historian having previously written *Tuhoe Tales* (2009) (about the ill-fated M.V. *Tuhoe* which last year did not make the Waimakariri bar) and *The Mosquito Fleet of Canterbury* (2006).

Geoffrey W. Rice, *Black Flu 1918: the Story of New Zealand's Worst Public Health Disaster* (Canterbury U.P., 2017), 96pp, \$29.99.

Professor Rice is a leading authority on the influenza pandemic of 1918, which is attracting further scholarly attention throughout the world as its centenary approaches. He recently presented a paper at an international conference in Madrid on Maori mortality in 1918, and has been interviewed by the BBC World Service. In this age of mass air travel, another influenza pandemic is more likely than not, and there are still lessons to be learned from how neighbourhoods and local communities responded one hundred years ago.

This book is a condensed and updated version of the author's *Black November* (2005).

Foundation Publication Grant

One might be forgiven for thinking that another book on the Deans of Riccarton is surplus to requirements. But the CHF was pleased to make a grant of \$2,000 to Louise Deans for an account of William Deans' life. His brother John and wife Jane are much better known, and the focus has always been on the Riccarton farm. William arrived in New Zealand (Wellington) before John and took up land in the Eastbourne area. He explored up the

west coast of the North Island and into the Wairarapa, one of the first to venture into these parts.

The work is written as a personal memoir using the voice of William as an extension of his letters. It will have an immediate and imaginative quality that a conventional biography does not have. That said, the content is firmly anchored to the available evidence.

The City Council and Heritage

This year the Council has been working towards a Heritage Strategy commencing with an on-line survey of ideas and attitudes afloat in the wider community. There were 160 responses.

Professor Cookson made a submission on behalf of the CHF. He emphasised that the city's heritage was not confined to the CBD but included historic sites and buildings in suburban areas as well. He also pushed for a Community Archive and for protected areas where the pre-settlement landscape might be re-created; for example, wetlands such as Travis Swamp and the bush and tussock hill country of the Port Hills and Peninsula.

The Council in September adopted the outline of a strategy which included four 'principles': Heritage as inheritance and legacy, as tangible and intangible, as a story-based approach acknowledging all cultures, as cultivating a local and community sense of place and city identity.

It is interesting that in the earlier survey 'local history' got the most support for heritage value. (Trees came second.) On the other hand, buildings were considered the most important type of heritage to preserve.

When the survey results were reported, the CHF offered a further observation: 'History and heritage overlap, but are not quite the same thing. Heritage needs a solid historical foundation, otherwise it risks being captured by identity politics, present-day fashions and sectors or lobby groups with the loudest voices'.

A date for your diary: field trip to Barr Hill and Ashburton Museum on Sunday 18 March 2018.