

CANTERBURY HISTORY FOUNDATION

Newsletter

December 2021

Rhodes Medal

This year's recipient of the Rhodes History Medal was Rita Wright of Ashburton. For many years she was the sole curator of the Ashburton Museum, and has been active in many other historical projects in the district.



The Gardner Lecture for 2021 was delivered by Craig Thornhill of Christchurch Girls' High, on the subject 'Whose History?' which traced past changes in NZ school curricula and the prospects for teaching NZ History throughout the school system.

The Foundation has been in discussion with the College of Education, offering to help primary teachers equip themselves for the new curriculum.

Executive Changes

John Cookson having relinquished his position as Vice-President and Chair of the Executive, Paul O'Connor was elected to succeed him at the first meeting after the AGM. Geoff Rice continues as Secretary, and Jeff Field, who had been appointed

earlier in the year, was confirmed as Treasurer.

Our New Chair

Paul O'Connor is a product of the University of Canterbury's History Department, graduating M.A. (Hons) in 1973. He spent most of his teaching career at Burnside High School, including 26 years as Head of History until his retirement in 2016.

Outside the classroom Paul contributed widely to History in the schools. He led the Canterbury branch of the History Teachers' Association for a number of years, and chaired the national body on two occasions. His experience and capabilities were drawn on at the national level when the introduction of NCEA greatly changed the ways History was taught and assessed. He published numerous resources for classroom use and helped to train teachers on how to meet the challenges of the new dispensation.

In the midst of such a busy professional life, Paul somehow found time to indulge his own interests as an historian. These were centred on the impact of the First World War on New Zealand society at the level of families and local communities. His project for a Royal Society Teaching Fellowship in 2005 was called 'From Papanui to Passchendaele', eventually published in Belgium as a booklet, *Our Soldiers* (2009).

The Foundation awarded Paul its Rhodes Medal in 2012. On that occasion he was acknowledged as 'a teacher of outstanding merit, a professional who has won the great esteem of his peers, and a scholar who has found his academic vocation equally in the community as in the classroom'.

In retirement Paul is a volunteer worker at the RNZAF Archives at Wigram. He also helps to run a History group for a local U3A.

Lyttelton Cemetery Plaque

Having noticed a wrong date on an old bronze plaque in the Lyttelton Anglican

Cemetery commemorating victims of the 1918 influenza pandemic, our Secretary suggested placing an informative correction alongside it. This has now been installed, and the cost met from general funds.

Marion Steven, Classicist

Following the AGM on 29 November, Natalie Looyer gave a most interesting talk about the late Miss Marion Steven and her role in establishing the University's Logie Collection of Classical Antiquities.

This collection was named in honour of her husband, James Logie, who was Registrar of Canterbury University College from 1950 until his untimely death from cancer in 1956. With his help, Marion had acquired a number of important Greek pots from a 1950s dig on Cyprus.

One of these, the black-figure eye-cup, has only one equivalent, which is now in the Louvre in Paris. The stilt-walker cup is another important item. Most other items were sourced from London auction houses.

Marion was the only woman in the Classics Department in the 1950s, and rose to the rank of Reader, equivalent to Associate Professor. She was a dedicated teacher, inviting her students to handle the pots (without gloves!) while she stood by, 'smoking like a chimney'. When people commented on her carrying ancient Greek pots in the wicker basket on her bicycle, she replied, 'They came out of the ground in pieces, so they can always be stuck back together'.

Polynesia, 900-1600

This title (\$24.99), a recent publication by Canterbury University Press, introduces general readers to the history of *Southern Polynesia, 900 – 1600*. The author, Madi Williams, teaches at Canterbury.

The book incorporates the histories of Aotearoa, Rēkohu (Chatham Islands), and Rapa Nui (Easter Island). Although the period dealt with is contemporaneous with

the European 'Middle Ages', the term 'medieval' has to be eschewed. The author is part of a trend to fashion a global history, free of the old Euro-centric bias, fit for our own age of globalization.

A Piece of the Berlin Wall

The Foundation was recently approached by members of 'Deutsche in Christchurch' seeking assistance for a photographic exhibition to accompany the unveiling of a large concrete panel from the former Berlin Wall now on display in Cashel Street.

The Executive agreed that this was an appropriate project for the Foundation, as it helped to inform the public about a significant event in recent world history, and a grant was made. Geoff Rice and Frieda Looser represented the Foundation at the unveiling ceremony on 7 November when speeches were given by the Mayor, Lianne Dalziel, former mayor Vicki Buck, and Dr Michael Feiner, Deputy Head of Mission at the German Embassy, Wellington.



Christmas Greetings

The Foundation's Executive wishes all members a joyous Christmas, a relaxing and safe holiday season, and a fulfilling 2022 – in spite of COVID!