



CANTERBURY

HISTORY FOUNDATION

May 2022 Newsletter

The Canterbury History Foundation Executive has continued to meet via Zoom meetings this year while trying to navigate the current difficulties. This year we welcomed two new committee members: Jeff Field, former Registrar of University of Canterbury, and Terri Elder, who is the Curator of the Teece Museum of Classical Antiquities, at the Arts Centre in Christchurch. Jeff has also accepted the post as Treasurer of the Foundation.

Garner Lecture

This year's Gardner Lecture will be given by Ron Crosby on Sunday 24 July. Ron Crosby is a lawyer with an interest in environmental law, and is currently a member of the Waitangi Tribunal. He has written several books on New Zealand history, including *The Musket Wars: A History of Inter-Iwi Conflict, 1806–1845* (1999), Gilbert Mair: *Te Kooti's Nemesis* (2004), *NZSAS: The First Fifty Years* (2011), *Kūpapa: The Bitter Legacy of Māori Alliances with the Crown* (2015), and *The Forgotten Wars: Why the Musket Wars Matter Today* (2020). Ron's presentation will focus on the impact of the Musket wars on Te Waipounamu.

At this lecture, the Foundation awards the Rhodes Memorial Medal to a deserving person who has contributed to an understanding of Canterbury history. This year's award will be made to Edmund (Ned) Bohan, whose writing about Canterbury history includes biographies of James Edward Fitzgerald and Edward Stafford. Ned has completed a new history of Christchurch Cathedral and a new history of the Arts Centre. His O'Rorke series of historical novels set in Opawa vividly evoke the Christchurch of the 1870s.

The Foundation is particularly grateful for the continued financial support from Paul and Sally Rhodes, son and daughter-in-law of A.C. Rhodes, in whose name the medal was established 20 years ago.

Obituary: Colin Amodeo

COLIN AMODEO (1942-2022), one of Canterbury's most prolific local historians, has died at the age of 80. A recipient of the Foundation's Rhodes Memorial History Medal in 2011, Colin taught at several Christchurch secondary schools but in recent years was most closely identified with Shirley Boys' High, where he was their archivist and historian. He was descended from an Italian sea captain turned Otago gold miner, but also had Scottish ancestry and loved playing the bagpipes as a pupil in the St Andrew's College Pipe Band. As a teacher of English and History he shared with his students his love of great literature and poetry, and could turn out amusing doggerel on all manner of topics. His career as an historian came late, but it came as a flood of 20 books, starting with *The Summer Ships* in 2000, which won Caxton Press a

gold medal. This detailed study of the people who started the Canterbury settlement was followed in 2003 by *Forgotten Forty-Niners*, about the men who prepared the way for the settlers. Colin's love of ships and the sea produced *The Mosquito Fleet of Canterbury* in 2005, a year after his history of Lyttelton Engineering. Histories of Christchurch West High School, Shirley Boys' High, the Russley Hotel and Cholmondeley Children's Home soon followed, and a popular history of Burnham Camp. Apart from Lyttelton, Colin's other favourite place was Kaiapoi. He wrote a history of its port, the restoration of MV *Tuhoe* and the history of Blackwell's department store. A biography of Captain Thomas appeared in 2017 followed by that of Magistrate John Watson in Akaroa. A biography of the surveyor Thomas Cass was completed but remains unpublished.

Colin was a generous man, always helpful to other historians, and he was also a talented model-maker, of ships and houses. His model of the Land Office graced the Christchurch office of Archives NZ for several years. Apart from his books he wrote numerous articles for the *Akaroa Mail* and *NZ Maritime Review*. The Foundation's condolences have been conveyed to his widow Margaret and their son Jamie and daughter Stacey.

Dr Courtney Nedwill

Geoff Rice's project on nineteenth century Christchurch doctors has produced a major biography of Dr Courtney Nedwill, the city's second Medical Officer of Health,

1879-85. Nedwill saved many lives by getting rid of cess-pits and other nuisances, halving the death rate from typhoid even as the sewers were being built. As a man of courage and high integrity, he drew attention to wrongs that needed righting, and caused no fewer than three official inquiries at Christchurch Hospital. His complaint about a botched operation that cost a man his life led to the Medical Libel Case of 1886, in which the jury awarded the careless surgeon involved just one shilling in damages. Nedwill himself was a fine surgeon with a high survival rate, and some of his operations were reported in *The Lancet*. Blessed with abundant energy he took up tennis in his fifties and represented Canterbury at several tournaments while serving as president of two clubs. He was a co-founder of the Canterbury Medical Society which later became the NZ branch of the BMA. His full and active life has been reconstructed from rich archival and newspaper sources. Copies of *Nedwill: That 'Peppery' Irish Surgeon* are available for \$30 from the author: geoff.rice@canterbury.ac.nz.

Thank you for your continuing interest and support for the Foundation.

Paul O'Connor

Chairman, Canterbury History Foundation