

Waimea South Historical Society Inc.

President's Report May 2015

The past year has been, in my opinion, one of the most active and interesting years during my time as President. We have had a good balance of field trips and speakers and can also record some worthwhile achievements and events which helped to promote our society in the district. This has resulted in a growth in membership from 29 to 40 financial members (an increase of 42.85%) despite a rise in our subscription from \$10.00 to \$15.00.

Projects and Promotions

We began with an extra meeting in June 2014 to celebrate the completion of the William Harkness information board which was jointly funded by the Tasman District Council, Waimea South Historical and William's great-granddaughter, Helen, who officiated at the unveiling. Its weather-protected position at the northern car park entrance of the Tasman District Library also proved ideal.

In January the committee agreed to have printed 50 copies of a booklet entitled *The Way we Were* - a collection of the last two years of articles that I had written for the *Window on Wakefield* magazine. Since then we have printed 25 more to meet demand. I am continuing to write articles centred on Wakefield for this magazine and hopefully this will continue for another two years when we can produce a second volume. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Marion Stringer and Betty Bint, without whose efforts in producing *River to Range, Another Row of Spuds* and other publications, I would have found this task considerably more difficult and time-consuming.

Our latest project was suggested by Shona Barber and agreed to in July to produce a tourist brochure entitled *The Rutherford Trail* which would detail important places throughout Nelson and Marlborough with connections to Lord Rutherford. On May 3rd we visited Nelson College where the headmaster, Mr Gary O'Shea, showed us a series of wall panels on Rutherford's life and items of memorabilia held in the Scriptorium. He was extremely supportive of our plans and has promised support in the design and production of the pamphlet. A sub-committee needs to be established to co-ordinate this work.

This year we have been able to promote our Society at four local events:

In July 2014 the Richmond Women's Probis Group invited us to speak to them about our society. I felt that it was a good opportunity to promote our activities to quite a different section of residents. As internet access was available I found that I could base a talk around our web page and this provided an excellent visual source of interest and focus for my comments.

The second opportunity was the combined meeting of history societies in Nelson, Waimea, Motueka, Tapawera and Golden Bay held at Willow Bank in February. This was an extremely successful and useful event which enabled us to gain an insight into the work of other groups in the area. It was also an appropriate occasion for my suggestion of a way of celebrating 175 years of European settlement in Nelson which will occur in 2017. (see attached) This idea of a "house trail" of a range of interesting/historical houses will need to be followed up in the coming months to determine the level of support from the different groups in the area and to set up a team to oversee its implementation.

Many of us enjoyed the Wakefield Apple Fair held at Willow Bank on the 12th April. We were able to sell our publications and interest several people in what we do. It was an ideal venue to show everyone that we are part of the Wakefield community. The performance of the bell ringers from the Nelson School of Music with the Edridge – Maclean handbells struck just the right historical note particularly with the closeness of Wai-iti and the presence of Edward Edridge's great-granddaughter in the audience.

The Apple Day held at Founders on Sunday 26 April as a fundraiser for non-profit organisations was not well attended because of bad weather. Nevertheless, through the enthusiasm of Maryann and Colin Mann we "manned" a table there during the day and "showed the flag" for Waimea South.

The Age to Be: Positively Ageing Expo was held in the Headingly Centre on Friday 27th March. This was an excellent event and a particularly good opportunity to make contact with others and to be seen ourselves. We were approached by a member of the Rotoiti History Group who wanted to know more about how we operate. This could become the basis of a future field trip where we learn about the St Arnaud area and share ideas with them.

Fieldtrips

We were privileged during the year to visit two homes which would be excellent to include in a “trail” of historic houses.

In September we visited *Mapledurham* and *The Stables* in Edward Street, Richmond. These are two houses that were originally one property owned by Thomas Kidd in the 1920's. The new owners, Carol and John Syme were extremely welcome hosts and presented us with a sumptuous afternoon tea complete with bone china trifles.

The Stables, now owned by Jane and Jonathan Watkins was the original coach house of *Mapledurham* and has undergone extensive renovations over time. One of our members, Ron Craig, lived in the house for many years and was able to add to the information about how it has been developed and also narrowly escaped destruction by fire.

Our October 2014 trip was to the two-storied cob homestead first constructed by the Busch family and now owned by Joanne Kininmonth and her husband at Hoddy's Orchard in Hope. Apart from the dormer windows, the cellar from which the earth walls were constructed is a special feature of this house. We also travelled to Aniseed Valley to the Hans Busch Memorial Reserve where an informative plaque explained much about the man but did not pinpoint his gravesite.

Speakers

Our first guest speaker in July was Diane Clarke who spoke on her great-grandfather, Appo Hocton. This remarkable man's life was an inspiration to us all. Copies of his biography, written by Karen Stade were on sale.

In August, Karen Stade spoke to us about Nelson's experience of World War I. She has been helping to prepare the excellent Nelson Provincial Museum displays commemorating those involved in this conflict. Her focus was on the effect of the war on those at home and the support they provided for the troops overseas.

Jenny Baumfield was our guest speaker in March. Her recently published book *Nelson 1914* was the result of extensive research of *The Nelson Mail* for the year in which the war began. Some amusing anecdotes as well as familiar local concerns created a link with the past of 100 years ago. She also spoke about her two other books – one on cats, *Our Furry Family* and the other a history of the first 50 years of the Nelson Motor Cycle Club in which both her father and grandfather were involved. Personal stories of extra- sensory perception involving the death of two cats in particular were particularly fascinating coming as they did from someone with a very down-to-earth, practical personality.

Our Christmas celebrations were once again held at Willow Bank in November.

Summary & Conclusion

We have achieved much during the last year. Our membership has grown, we have increased our profile in the community and made contact with other history groups. By adopting a new project for the coming year (the *Rutherford Trail* brochure) we have established a focus for future activity for our members. If there is sufficient interest, the idea of the Historic House Trail will involve more people over a wider area in the province, further developing contacts with people interested in our local history.

My special thanks to the supportive members of our committee, Jeannine, our long-serving secretary and Maryann our newest treasurer whose enthusiasm and love of things historical has widened our outlook in the whole area. I would like to thank Colin Mann also for his work as our photographer and my deputy Wayne Price whose wise council can always be relied on.

I have particularly enjoyed this year as your President. However, as I enter the third year of a second term we should all be looking forward for someone to take over the reins as President from June 2016.

Roger A. Batt

27th May 2015

