

## 2016 TALK SERIES

18 May: Mike Stevens – “Bluff 1800 - 2000 Bluffing his way through the Hocken and taking Hakena back to Awarua.”

Dr Stevens of the Department of History and Art History is primarily interested in knowledge born out of cultural contact and colonisation in the long nineteenth-century. His PhD thesis, which drew on scholarship from the new imperial history, ethnohistory, economic history, the history of science, and religious history, examined changes and continuities in southern Kāi Tahu thought and practice as illustrated by te hopu tītī ki Rakiura —“muttonbirding”— the annual harvesting of juvenile tītī (sooty shearwaters) from islands adjacent to Stewart Island in southern New Zealand. Mike is currently reworking some of this research into a general narrative history. His more theoretical work on the other hand, much of which extends the idea of Māori modernities, is being reworked into a series of academic journal articles.

- 20 July (AGM): Tom Brooking - Richard Seddon – “Illustrations and Loose Ends”
- 2 September: Jim Sullivan reflects on 50 years of digging around in New Zealand’s archives, as a writer and broadcaster. (This talk is associated with the FOHC Annual Dinner – venue to be advised.)
- 16 November: Professor Kevin Clements – “Pacifism in Otago; Exploring Pacifism in the Hocken Collection.”

You are invited to gather at 5.15pm as usual for light refreshments. The illustrated talk will begin about 5.30pm.

Dr Elizabeth Whitcombe’s talk to the Friends in March proved to be a fascinating reminiscence of a period and setting familiar to quite a number in the audience. Her accuracy of memory, and her vivid recreation of the nature, as much as the content, of the teaching she received, was greatly appreciated, and may well have challenged some of our assumptions.

## “DOING WELL”

Dr Hocken was a member of the Acclimatization Society and attended their Annual Meeting, held at Farley’s Hall, Princes St., on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1866.

The report of the Meeting contained a paragraph, the irony of which can hardly escape the reader exactly 150 years later. The sting is in the last phrase, as published in the *Otago Daily Times* on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1866.

‘At the Society’s Depot [by the Waters of Leith] improvements have been made, such as clearing, planting, and the erection of aviaries, etc. The following stock have been turned out in various parts of the Province: - 4 pheasants; 20 magpies (“Australian”); 2 owls (“Australian”); 4 laughing jackasses (“Australian”); 5 dozen rabbits, and a number of leeches. Many of the above have been seen, and are doing well.’

Leeches being ‘released’! It’s understood native leeches don’t feed on human blood - how would an introduced species be brought into circulation, one might well ask. And aren’t the rabbits ‘doing well’!

## WW1 COMMEMORATION ACTIVITIES

Some time ago the possibility arose of Friends assisting with the transcription of WW1 archives in the Hocken Collections. Several diaries have been digitised, so it’s an easier process to manage. Transcribing can be done (within reason!) wherever there is access to a PC, laptop or tablet. There might be an advantage in working at the Hocken itself, with experienced interpreters of century-ago handwriting available. There is a range of fascinating material to transcribe, potentially, not only diaries.

Initial scoping and planning has been done by Anna and Sara who will soon invite interested participants to meet at the Hocken, to discuss the transcription project (there is a list of people who originally offered to assist). We want to have something useful to celebrate with the media in one year or so from now.

## WHEN YOUR SHIP COMES IN

The gold rushes provided welcome business for the fairly primitive early steamers plodding between New Zealand and Australia. In the early 1860s the 515-ton *Aldinga* was known as a flyer, especially when 'Hell Fire Jack' McLean was on the bridge. A single-screw steamship capable of averaging 9-10 knots across the Tasman, for a time it held the record for the speediest passage. Launched in 1860 at Greenock for Melbourne merchants McMeckan and Blackwood, it was built of iron, with 2 funnels and rigged as a 3 masted barque. The *Aldinga* was modified in 1862 and its tonnage increased to 446 gross for the Tasman run and Otago

The *Aldinga* was just one of three boats, with the *Gothenburg* and the *Alhambra*, making regular and rapid sailings across the Tasman to Bluff. There was a reason for this concentration of resources. The *Southland Times* was promoting Bluff as the preferred port of entry for the diggers. The distance from Melbourne to Bluff is 1200 miles - from Melbourne to Port Chalmers 1333 miles. The shortest route from Victoria to the Lake Goldfields is via Invercargill – at least a day nearer. The distance from Invercargill to Lake Wakatipu is 92 miles, compared with 220 miles from Dunedin. The road from Invercargill is 'perfectly level', with accommodation houses 'all the way'. From Dunedin, the route is 'mountainous to a degree', said the newspaper. By the time a digger reached the lakes from Invercargill the Otago-based digger had hardly left Dunedin.



**S.S. ALDINGA ENTERING BLUFF HARBOUR – 1865**

*Reproduced by kind permission from the Collection of Toitu Early Settlers Museum*

***Painted by Captain Thomas C. Robertson (1819-1873). After receiving his master's ticket Robertson emigrated to Australia in 1853. His interest in painting was for many years that of a competent amateur, but in 1865 he exhibited some large oil paintings of renowned clippers and other ships and was awarded a bronze medal at the New Zealand Exhibition. His work is represented in the Hocken Collection.***

This very brief account deals with just one return journey, that of September 1864. The *Aldinga* (Captain Stewart) left Melbourne at 7.30pm on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> and arrived at Bluff at noon on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>. It left for Port Chalmers at 1.30pm the same day and reached its destination by 6.30am on the 15<sup>th</sup>. It was back at Bluff on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and sailed for Melbourne on the same day. Though it was regarded as a very good run various newspaper accounts referred to adverse weather during the latter part of the crossing – blowing thick, with 'rain, half a gale, east wind' – and every prospect of a real gale to come.

Captain Stewart complained of the 'inattention of the authorities' on his arrival, and not for the first time. He had to wait for some considerable time before any notice was taken. The 'authorities' excused their inattention on the

grounds that the weather affected visibility, and since the ship's warning gun was cracked, the use of the ship's whistle was not an adequate alternative.

The *Aldinga* did not, on this occasion, carry too many passengers for Bluff or Port Chalmers – as many as 12 recorded in the saloon, and up to 35 in steerage. How many of these latter were diggers is not known. Moreover, on this September run there was no cargo for Bluff – the stop-over only lasted 90 minutes, sufficient time for the few passengers to disembark and the mail to be unloaded.

The role of the *Aldinga* as a mail carrier was of particular importance. There was a mail agent on board, Mr Schrader, whose task it was to sort the mail during the journey, and to have it ready for distribution on arrival in New Zealand. He would normally have delivered the mail, at Bluff, to postal officials, but the weather prevented this happening, and the captain, with little time at his disposal, required the mail agent to hand the large quantity of material to the Harbour Master, who was to ensure that it came into the proper hands. On board was the July mail from Europe. This was an exceptional feat - the fastest time ever for European mail to leave England and reach Bluff – just 43 days! When the *Aldinga* reached Port Chalmers it unloaded the rest of its mail, and it is something of a tribute to the systems already in place along the eastern coast that the mail for Wellington was there by the 20<sup>th</sup>, and at Napier by the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

On board also, were copies of the Australian and English newspapers. In Invercargill there were two regional newspapers, the *Southland Daily Times* and the *Southland Daily News*. It was the responsibility of their Bluff agents to engage the local 'telegraph' for the transmission of a summary of the latest news received from the ships. Presumably the ship's captain, or even the mail agent, had copies of overseas newspapers available. 'The most active gets first on the wire,' said the *Southland Daily Times*, whose man had been first on the spot, four times in a row. They had been able to publish their intelligence some hours before their rival. The latter were, understandably miffed, even hinted there was something underhand about it all, and raised the matter with the Provincial Superintendent. He, naturally enough, did not wish to interfere into this local spat.

On the return journey the *Aldinga* collected mail for all over the world from Dunedin and Bluff. The *Otago Daily Times* published quite detailed time-tables so that letters would be received at the boat's side, conveniently, before the *Aldinga's* departure from Port Chalmers. It wasn't all wanted at once, presumably to make the handling by the mail agent on board a little easier. When the ship arrived in Melbourne it was claimed that every item was in its appropriate box, ready to be sent around Victoria and the Australian colonies, or on to England and Europe, and the United States. It was an Auckland newspaper that compared the arrangements in other inter-colonial ships most unfavourably with the efficiency of the *Aldinga*.

This ship was designed for speedy communication. It carried no cargo for Bluff on this occasion, but there was a fairly substantial manifest for Dunedin, including over 1000 bags of sugar. No flour, however – and prices for the latter were rising around the country because of low stocks. Shortly before its arrival a commercial report suggested it would be better to wait for the *Aldinga's* arrival before the colony's plight could be accurately assessed. It was hoped that prices would fall as a result of the ship's arrival. One boatload could make that much difference. But this cupboard was bare.

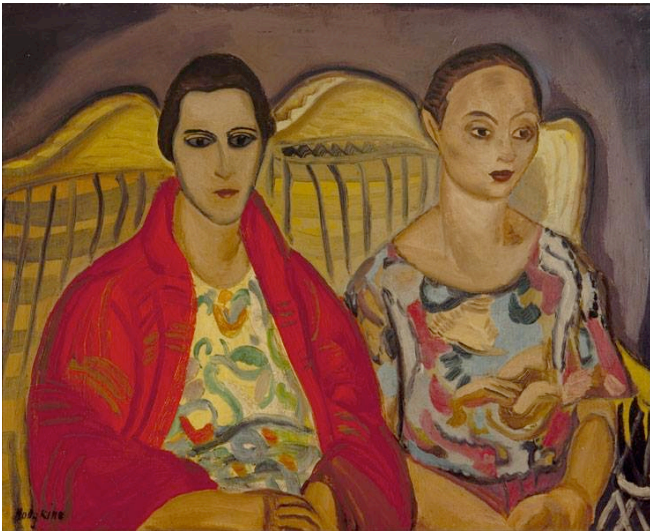
On its return journey to Melbourne there were 38 passengers (saloon and steerage), and ballast. On board, too, was one of the largest loads of mail ever despatched from New Zealand. The *Aldinga* performed an errand of mercy in Foveaux Strait when it took on board a couple of sailors who had been earlier rescued from a lighter in danger of sinking near Solander Island. It reached Port Philip on Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, having completed the round trip in not much more than a fortnight.

It was ships just like the *Aldinga* that helped in the slow process of breaking down the isolation surrounding the southernmost colony. To get news from 'Home' in about six weeks must surely have created a sense of immediacy. The very first item many New Zealand newspapers printed in their summary of the news the ship had brought was that Her Majesty the Queen was well. Family news! Maybe that says it all.



## HOCKEN HIGHLIGHTS

Showing a knowledge of the elongated figures and oval eyes which characterised the work of Amadeo Modigliani, this painting also recalls the flattened forms and bright colour of the Henri Matisse, whose retrospective Frances Hodgkins (1869-1947) had seen in 1910. Double Portrait brings to the fore Hodgkins's latent interest in abstract pattern-making in the treatment of the fabric of the women's dresses. Shortly afterwards she worked as a textile designer for the Calico Printers' Association in Manchester.



The portrait commemorates a long association. Hannah Ritchie (on the left) had joined Hodgkins's painting class in Montreuil in 1911 and the following year brought her friend Dorothy, later Jane Saunders (on the right) to St Valery-sur-Somme. The couple attended later classes in England and France, and frequently had Hodgkins to stay when both had become art teachers at Manchester High School for Girls. While visiting them, Hodgkins herself studied briefly with the English Post-Impressionist Walter Sickert, known for his paintings of theatrical or music hall subjects often arranged in couples or pairs.

Hannah Ritchie and Jane Saunders separated in 1931, but Hannah kept the painting until 1957 when she sold it through the Leicester Gallery to Charles Brasch. The painting forms part of the background to a well-known photographic study of Charles in his house in Teviot Row.

This Hodgkins work features on the programme notes for **Hocken Highlights**, an exhibition, opening on Saturday May 28<sup>th</sup>, highlighting the Hocken's pictorial collections, and presenting a history of New Zealand art. This was not Thomas Hocken's original intention - for him the purpose of his art collection was to

document the history of New Zealand. Art works were to increase the viewer's understanding of events in our history. The works now chosen take the story of New Zealand art to the mid-1960s, since which time contemporary collecting has had the Frances Hodgkins Fellowship as its prime focus.

This is a small selection of a larger whole. It shows some of the main strands in the makeup of the collection; historical works, the La Trobe scheme teachers at Dunedin School of art and the pupils they taught and inspired; and examples of the research depth of the collection with sketch plans and designs.

It is also a tribute to people who have contributed to the collections from the major donors especially Charlton Edgar, Charles Brasch and Rodney Kennedy whose gifts and influence on our policies changed the character of the collection, to the many individual, families and artists whose generous donations ensure that the collection is continually strengthened.

The exhibition will also feature photographs. This collection began as a documentation of NZ life, landscape and culture. It has a national scope with a regional focus. The breadth widened as artists used photography as a creative medium and today the edges between the art and photographs collections are somewhat blurred. The strength of the collection is evident, with examples from John Kinder, George Chance, Franz Barta, Guy Morris and Gary Blackman.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November **Undreamed of.....50 years of the Frances Hodgkins Fellowship** will open at Hocken and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. This large exhibition will showcase the work of the FH Fellows and demonstrate how their work has changed and developed from the time of their residency. It will also show how the Fellowship has influenced the development of art practice in New Zealand. It will be an illuminating look at the last 50 years of art making in New Zealand.

The Curator is Priscilla Pitts a former Director of the DPAG. In 2017 Otago University Press will publish a book on the Fellowship, jointly written by Priscilla and Andrea Hotere.

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*Subscriptions: Individual: \$25 per annum; Life Member \$250 Joint: \$30 per annum; Joint Life Member \$300*

*Cheques to: Friends of the Hocken Collections, PO Box 6336, Dunedin North 9059.*

*Online payment: Westpac 030903 0393175 000, including "Subscription" in Particulars field, surname/initials in Code and Reference fields.*

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