

**FRIENDS OF THE HOCKEN COLLECTIONS
WEDNESDAY TALK SERIES
2017**

Refreshments and a chat from 5.15pm; talks start at 5.30pm.

17 May
Nicky Page, Director of Dunedin's City of Literature programme.

19 July
Aaron Fox
On his work in progress, a biography of Brigadier James Hargest.

2 September (Annual Dinner)
Malcolm McKinnon, author of *The Broken Decade 1928-1939*, will offer a reflection on a life in history. This talk is part of the Friends' Annual Dinner. Venue to be advised.

25 October (AGM)
Jenny Burchell
On her 150th anniversary official history of the City Choir Dunedin.
AGM begins at 5.30pm, followed by talk.

All talks at the Hocken Seminar Room, 90 Anzac Avenue, Dunedin. Parking is also available in Parry Street. If you haven't yet seen the re-designed foyer at the Library let that be an additional reason for coming to the next Talk.

MOTHERS' DARLINGS

Judy Bennett and Angela Wanhalla's shared presentation on their book on March 15th opened windows on an aspect of our social history that is too little known. Two particular aspects of their work stood out – the first being their extraordinary sensitivity to the integrity of the hundreds of individuals they had interviewed, and whose experiences were not always

easy to share. The second was that there are children of indigenous South Pacific women and World War 2 U.S. servicemen who still want answers to their questions.

WORLD WAR 1 TRANSCRIPTION PROJECT

It was satisfying for the Friends to find in the *Otago Daily Times* in April 22nd a substantial article describing this project. David Loughrey, the writer, had interviewed participants in the project, Ross Grimmett and Nigel Harwood, as well as Anna Blackman and Sara Barham.

At that stage about half of the work had been done by the 15 trained transcribers on the available letters and diaries. **Hocken** is also engaged in getting these archives digitised. When that is done they will be added to the Library's web-site, and thus become generally available. The archive will, in the end, be in three formats - original documents - high-quality PDF images, making the record accessible to those wishing to have a photocopy - transcriptions.

Fifteen people have been involved in the project, and at the time of the publication of this article 11,000 pages had been completed. They meet regularly to discuss the process, which is, as must be the case, a very painstaking one, with a high level of cross-checking at every stage. Handwriting has to be deciphered, and, for example, the variant phonetic spellings of foreign place-names, hospital and camps, have to be interpreted. Nigel Harwood's grandfather, Fletcher Roberts, whose diary he has transcribed, was an engineer in WW1. His record is additionally demanding, in terms of its transcription, because of the frequency of the little sketches he draws when describing an engineering problem.

This is a very timely public reminder that **Hocken** is a repository of WW1 treasures. It also highlights the contribution that can be made by the Friends on behalf of the Library.

MOONLIGHT AND MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT

This brief journey back into Dunedin's beginnings, with its literary history as its focus, requires the use of our imagination. It starts in 1851, and you are challenged to imagine what the still small settlement looked like at that time - especially at night.

No public transport – so you walked. No paved streets or footpaths to speak of – so you wore strong shoes or boots. No streetlights – so you carried a lantern of some sort or other. Someone writing in the late 1850s spoke of the makeshift torch – an upturned glass jar with a lit candle inside, sitting on a frame across its mouth, and the whole contraption carried in a rope net. What say it blew out on a 'dark and stormy night!' The worthy citizen simply got there.

Read the newspapers of the time, and you won't be surprised to find that the favourite nights for public meetings were around the full moon. In November of 1851 the full moon was, most inconveniently on a Sunday night. But four days later, in the School Hall, the Rev'd Thomas Burns delivered the first lecture under the auspices of the Dunedin Mechanics Institute. His topic was:

Pleasures and advantages connected with the Pursuits of Literature and Science; of the value of Intellectual Self-culture to the Workingman.'

By the way, 'Ladies Respectfully invited.'

Dunedin wasn't the first town in New Zealand with a Mechanics Institute – they had been active in Wellington and Auckland for some years – but the value of 'intellectual self-culture' is still very much alive and well here. This short study simply sets the scene.

The Institute had a somewhat shaky start, with Dunedin, at that time, being divided along denominational as much as sectarian lines. Some of the initial supporters came to feel that there was too much 'party' feeling. Nevertheless, by January 1853 there was a brand new hall on the corner of Manse and High Streets, with a lecture room seating 100, and two reading/class rooms. The prospectus had spoken of classes in natural

philosophy, history, astronomy, geology, chemistry, political economy, and architectural and mechanical drawing.



Detail from a Burton Bros photograph showing the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institution in 1869. Ref: Te Papa C.012523 (<https://builtindunedin.com/2017/03/27/craigie-house>)

The building in Manse St. was soon recognised to be too small for its purposes, and the Institute languished. A few years later, on the initiative of a more powerful group of civic leaders, like James Macandrew, J.T. Thomson, John Hyde Harris and T.B. Gillies, the erection of an Athenæum was proposed. The Institute's Committee became associated with this venture, and the merger eventually resulted in the building of a substantial and impressive stone structure in the Octagon.

The objectives of the new body were almost identical with the earlier set – 'To provide for intellectual recreation and advancement in science, art, and literature, by means of a library and reading room, a museum, public lectures, etc.' To this end, in 1860, before the building project had started, £800 (\$90,000 in 2017!) was sent Home for the purchase of books for the library.

Thus was inaugurated a feature of Dunedin's cultural and intellectual life which still flourishes. In fact, interest in the ongoing role of the Athenæum has been enhanced over recent years and a book launch there is a pleasantly crowded experience.

But that earlier period of intellectual self-culture was not solely in the hands of important citizens. The Dunedin Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association was formed in 1857. It is likely it was associated with both First and Knox Churches, and was later absorbed into the YMCA. The Young

Men's Christian Association was inaugurated in December 1861 with a specific clientele in mind – they would have to be, at least, comfortable with 'evangelical church doctrine.' The Association's objects were more simply set out – 'advancement in useful elevating knowledge' – this to be achieved through essays and public lectures among other things.

Some of the founders of the Association were men already involved in public education, such as Charles Kettle (the first YMCA President), Thomas Dick, J.H. Barr and Robert Gillies. The 'elevating' knowledge was not necessarily a reference to religion - though the meetings were still being held in the two principal Presbyterian churches. James Buller, a former Wesleyan missionary, spoke on 'Maories' in January 1862, and the final lecture in that first year was given by Thomas Hocken on the subject of botany.

That year saw the establishment of the Dunedin Debating Club and Mutual Improvement Society. In its brief prospectus it claimed that it would not engage in religion or party politics. With an annual subscription of £1 it proposed to engage 'competent lecturers' on scientific and other subjects. One of its first advertised lectures was on the morality of the Stage, and another questioned the propriety of British neutrality in relation to the American Civil War. Already, too, national self-awareness was surfacing – hence the lecture on 'Whether New Zealand was destined to hold a prominent place in the history of the Australasian Colonies.'

This brief outline of the progress in Dunedin of the movement for self-improvement, attainable for anyone, concludes with a diversion into another aspect of social history. From the early 1860's increasing pressure was applied to retailers whose shops were open every weekday until about 9pm. This was regarded as an affront to common justice and by 1862 the Early Closing Movement was well established in the town. That year the boot and shoe shops were closed by 7pm, the drapers followed, but it was not until 1867 that the grocers fell into line.

The cause had been taken up by the churches, and their support (as was the case with the issues of

sweated labour in the 1880s) made a difference. One of the arguments was that the grocers' assistants deserved time for their own self-improvement which was denied them by the existing system. Very possibly the shared experience of preparing their case for public debate helped to make them aware of their need for literary (today's 'communication') skills.

In fact, the Grocers' Early Closing Association in February 1867 launched the Grocers' Mutual Improvement Association. This body met in the Athenæum on a regular basis, and their second lecture in March was on the subject of William Shakespeare. The report in the *Otago Daily Times* stressed the high morality of the Bard's writings.

This decade of the search for knowledge ended in 1869 with two major developments. Firstly, the establishment of the Otago Institute, many of whose members, all men, were already known for their scientific interests. 'Every man of average ability', said Justice Dudley Ward, its first President, had the power to leave his mark. Some of these made a unique contribution to the natural history of the colony, its recording and its study.

Of infinitely greater significance was the foundation of the first university in New Zealand. In the context of this study it forms, to a degree, the culmination of a particular kind of self-awareness among the people of Dunedin, and of Otago and Southland in general. They were now prepared, as could be said of no other part of New Zealand, for the rigours of academic self-improvement.

DUNEDIN WRITERS AND READERS FESTIVAL

The foregoing contribution was occasioned by the *Dunedin Writers and Readers Festival* (May 9 – 14), which focused attention on Dunedin's status as a UNESCO City of Literature. That international recognition is in itself a tribute to the city's history as a national leader in every aspect of arts and science – a history which began well over 150 years ago by ordinary citizens with a commitment to the spirit of enquiry and of self-improvement.

The Hocken Collections' particular contribution to this Festival is by means of

FREEFALL

an exhibition, which opened on May 5th. It includes gems from the archives, books, ephemera, maps and music, and significant works of art from Hocken, the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and Central Library's Special Collections. Predominantly an art exhibition, it highlights, among other things, the connections between these three collections.

FREEFALL is curated by Robyn Notman (Head Curator, Pictorial Collections), assisted by Andrea Bell (Curator, Art), and a team of advisers. It will be on display at the Hocken Collections Exhibition Gallery, Hocken Library, 90 Anzac Avenue, Monday – Saturday 10am-5pm from Saturday 6 May- Saturday 1 July.

This exhibition provides a unique opportunity to experience the variety and the depth of **Hocken's**, and Dunedin's, cultural heritage. You will see that the hours of opening make it accessible to those whose weekdays are otherwise committed.

STAFF CHANGES

Some existing staff have been re-deployed, and a number of new people will start at the end of May. These include:

General Assistants: (Tuesday to Saturday):

Virginia Jory (BA in History and English, Otago) - further study in Information and Record Management, and Archaeology. In 2015/16 she was the sole archivist on a digitisation project for Calder Stewart Industries, and also has a several years of customer service experience in a variety of workplaces.

Alexa Anderson (BA in History, Otago). More recently working in a customer service role at Cadbury World.

Collection Assistants:

Kari Wilson- Allan (Archives)

Ali Clarke (Archives)

Scott Campbell (Researcher Services) (BA (Hons) and MA (Dist) in History, Otago). His MA focused on mobility, sociability, religion and place in colonial Port Chalmers. From 2012-2015 Scott worked as a historian with the Office of Treaty Settlements and has a lot of experience with early NZ resources. The past 18 months he has been travelling.

Sarah Hibbs (Researcher Services) (BA(Hons) in Art History and Theory, BA in Theology, Otago; National Certificate in Museum Practice from Service IQ). She has been working at Toitu Otago Settlers Museum since 2012 as a Visitor Host and Collections Assistant. (Tuesday to Saturday)

Megan Vaughan (Researcher Services)

Jennifer Anderson (Publications) (BA (Hons) in English and Philosophy, Otago). Since then has worked in libraries and archives around the world including Dunedin (DPL), Australia, Ireland and London. She has international Masters qualification in the conservation of books, archives and artworks.

Jennie Henderson (Publications) (BA (Hons) and MA (Dist) in History, Otago). She has studied and worked in the GLAM sector since then, and is currently a Visitor Host at Toitu Otago Settlers Museum.

The arrival of new staff has, naturally enough, necessitated a major redesign of the main office. The Special Reading Room has been closed – but the larger reading room next door will cope with the needs of readers and researchers. The column by which the Reference Desk presently stands marks the line of a wall which will effectively create a closed area, and the Reference Desk will, accordingly, be moved nearer the main entrance.

Behind the wall and in the former reading room the 9 staff members of the Research Services team will work. One significant expected outcome of the enhancement of the **Hocken** staff team is increased attention to the backlog in cataloguing, an in the digitising and on-line services of the Library.

FOHC MEMBERSHIP

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.

Prepared by Donald Phillipps for the Friends of the Hocken Collections P.O. Box 6336, Dunedin North 9059 - donaldphillipps@gmail.com