



*Flotsam and Jetsam Number 89: August 2020*

## 2020 – TALK SERIES

### WHEELING, DEALING AND MOA COLLECTING

On Wednesday 2 September the Friends' annual event, celebrating the Anniversary of the Trust Deed giving Dr Hocken's collections to the people of Dunedin, is taking place at the Otago Museum, at 5.30 pm, with a talk by Dr Rosi Crane, Honorary Curator History of Science, Otago Museum.

When the Otago University Museum opened in its new building on Great King Street in 1877, amongst other things there was a giraffe skeleton, a stuffed lion, several monkeys, and innumerable birds from around the world. From the outset the collections were international.

Many of the exotic animals came to Dunedin from commercial dealers from London, Sydney, Bremen, and Prague. Some of the purchase money came from limited museum funds, but most came from trading moa bones. A few scraps of correspondence have survived which tells us the price that these animals fetched, what else the dealers had to offer, and what the curators wanted to fill perceived gaps. The business of supplying museums with specimens was extensive, and Dunedin was part of this global network of supply and demand. The Hocken Library story features in amongst the mix – like the outcome of a good recipe...

In this illustrated talk, Dr Rosi Crane, Honorary Curator History of Science, Otago Museum, tells the story of how historical commercial trade practices have impacted on the Museum.

Dr Rosi Crane works on nineteenth-century New Zealand science, and its various styles of expression and exposition. Her largely biographical research extends to the specimens acquired for the museum as well as the people involved. She has published several research papers and, continuing in the tradition of museum work, she has also published articles for non-specialist audiences. More broadly, Rosi is interested

in the nexus of colonial science, culture, and art, particularly as it played out in the worldwide phenomenon of museum building. She is currently working on a book-length history of the early years of Otago Museum, *Skeletons in the Attic*.

Rosi is widely regarded as one of Otago Museum's treasures, a fount of knowledge about the institution and a highly engaging and informative speaker. Her talk is not to be missed, taking place at:

**Barclay Theatre, Otago Museum, Great King St  
5.30pm, Wednesday 2 September**

For Friends who wish to follow on for dinner, we have made a group booking at Ombrello's, across the domain at 10 Clarendon St. If you wish to attend, please advise [sarabarham@gmail.com](mailto:sarabarham@gmail.com) with your name(s) by Monday 31 August at the latest, so we can confirm numbers.

You can see the Evening Dining menu here - <https://www.ombrellos.co.nz/menus>.

### MCCAHERN'S ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

This opened on August 15<sup>th</sup> and arrangements are being made for an exhibition floor talk for the Friends by the Pictorial Collections Curator, Robyn Notman. Details will follow.

### Friends of the Hocken Collections AGM and Talk 18<sup>th</sup> November

We expect that the business of the Friends will be done promptly, and that we will then gather for a talk by Mike Hamblyn on the history of Newbold's Bookshop. This has been his particular interest for some time, and what he has to say will be of interest to many whose memories of Dunedin go back a few decades.

## HOCKEN COLLECTION

### A UNIQUE PART OF A BIGGER PICTURE

Exactly a century ago H.D. Skinner presented his Annual Report for the previous year to the University Council. The particular feature of it, as noted by the *Otago Daily Times*, was the outcome of discussions Skinner had had with the McNab Collection, and while it did not amount to any sort of a binding agreement it showed an awareness of the complementary nature of both institutions in the collection and preservation of historical records and artifacts. This same awareness extended to the policy and practice of the University's own library. What is particularly interesting about this record is that it gives us a brief insight into what was happening at Hocken at that very time.

About 100 volumes relating to the history and ethnology of New Zealand and the 'South Seas' published or written before 1901 'had been added to the Library by presentation or purchase.' Already we are in a different world! Just one hundred volumes accessioned in a whole year. A recent TV programme included the information that the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, as one of the official Libraries of Deposit in the UK received as a matter of course something like 1000 items per day!! But in the slower-paced world of Dunedin in 1920 a mere hundred items were worth reporting.

The newspaper account gave particular prominence to an illustrated catalogue of the Māori objects held by the Bankfield Museum at Halifax, Yorkshire. This Museum, founded in 1887, was housed in the former home of a wealthy worsted mill owner. It had been headed by [Henry Ling Roth](#) (1855-1925), an [anthropologist](#), since 1900. He had published numerous items on anthropology, as well 23 numbers of *Bankfield Museum Notes*. He was described as "The man who developed a small, confused, unattractive museum into an important centre of spectacular interest and research".

Well before then Dr Hocken and Roth had been in correspondence, through their shared interest in Australasian and South Pacific ethnology. Roth had visited Australia in 1878, and in 1890 had published *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, a careful and able gathering together of the available information relating to a vanished race. Roth was a modest man, his work in anthropology being very largely based on the fieldwork of other men. But he had a talent for collating information and records, and his volumes on the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and the original inhabitants of Sarawak and North Borneo were standard books.



Hocken had, for example, acquired a copy of Roth's own 1891 translation of Marion du Fresne's narrative in Croizet's *Nouveau voyage à la mer de Sud*. The doctor also purchased Roth's volume on *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo*, and, more to the point his *Maori Tatu and Moko* published in 1901. The two may have been kindred spirits, and, in any case, Bankfield was in a part of Yorkshire that Hocken knew well.

The particular item referred to in the 1920 newspaper report was the illustrated catalogue put together by Roth himself of the Māori objects held by the Bankfield Museum. He himself had done some of the illustrations but others were by an artist with *The Graphic* – 'at a time when that paper was famous for its wood engravings'. The expense of putting the catalogue together had been borne by the Halifax Education Committee

who 'have thus placed under a debt of gratitude all New Zealand students of Maori Art.'

The bigger picture referred to in this article's title leads to a reflection on the term 'Maori Art'. Another acquisition referred to in the same ODT report was the 'brilliant little water colour' by von Tempsky of 'An incident during a Hau-hau raid on a settler's farm'. Painted in 1863 it had recently been presented to the Library by Mrs N. Kettle, the artist's daughter. At that time Māori art often still meant art about the Māori, depictions of their way of life, portraits of individuals - an approach to art that treated the subject as object.

It is, of course, the purpose of ethnology to describe and to account for what is unusual and different in the culture of another people. Hocken Collections has a remarkable treasure-house of items. With its representative collection of ancient artifacts and its rich resource of printed and manuscript material, Hocken is an exceptional place for the interested visitor or student.

We might start with the art of tattoo. Hocken's interest in this had linked him to Henry Ling Roth around 1900, not long after General Robley's big book on the subject had been published. We hardly need to be reminded that in the earliest encounters with *tangata whenua* a chief's *moko* was his signature.

Wood-carving, relating to every part of the *whareniui* (meeting-house) - *maihi* ([bargeboards](#)), *tāhuhu* (ridge - representing the backbone), *heke* (rafters), *poupou*, (wall carving), and *kūwaha* (front door). Everywhere there was reason for carving - from canoe sternposts and figureheads, food-storage, the everyday *tokotoko* (walking-stick), to the utterly priceless *waka huia*.

Not unrelated is weaving. *Tāniko* - decorating the borders of garments, as well as bird traps, and eel baskets; *arapaki* or *tukutuku*, ornamental latticework, usually adorning the walls of *whareniui*; *piupiu*, a flax garment worn around the waist; *whatu*, or 'cloak weave', used to produce fabric; *whiri*, various forms of plaiting

used to make poi, waist girdles, and headbands, and *raranga*, one of the weaving styles used to make *kete* (bags and baskets).

One could go on and on. But Māori art is also a living thing. Hocken Collections reminds us, as it should, of a culture that has ancient roots. Now, maybe we need to be reminded that this cherishing of the past is only an introduction to a culture that is evolving. Nowhere is this matter represented more aptly than in another aspect of carving - the use of *pounamu* (greenstone)



*Pikorua* is a word found in Williams' Dictionary very briefly, signifying an 'ornament'. It is now in use describing a symbol that refers to 'eternal emerging paths in life'. The eight-shaped single twist is said to represent the strong bond between two loved ones. 'It's a powerful expression of loyalty because the arms of the twist have no end point, just like lifelong relationships.' It is relatively new because the tools required to create the complex undercuts in this design were not available to the traditional carver. Māori began carving such symbols for trade purposes from a very early date in New Zealand and would have had access to diamond carving tools by the mid-1800s.

Dr Hocken had been interested, so Donald Kerr notes, in Māori culture from almost the beginning of his time in Dunedin. This interest was whetted by the success of the New Zealand Exhibition here in 1865, visited by nearly 30,000 people - an extraordinary achievement. The Hocken Collections in 2020 is, in many ways, the culmination of Dunedin's commitment to conserving and promoting Aotearoa's unique culture.

## HOCKEN NEWS

- Edward Ellison's talk on 15 July on the signing of the Treaty at Ōtākou attracted a larger than usual number of interested listeners. Such an important event in the earliest days of the encounter between Māori and pākehā is still surrounded by a degree of doubt because of a lack of precise memory – both in terms of oral and written history.

Edward's own research underlined the importance of balancing oral and written history. Much of that uncertainty was dealt with by the Ōtākou kaumatua, for which the audience, filling the Seminar Room, were indeed grateful.

- Already we have some plans made for talks in 2021. For example, Professor Pat Langhorne, New Zealand's foremost sea-ice scientist, is booked to speak in March on her subject, which is one of immense significance.
- Sue Wootton, this year's Katherine Mansfield Fellow, will speak in May 2021 on a topic relating to her Medical/Humanities research.
- Dr Jonathan West is this year's recipient of the FOHC Research Award. While the ramifications of the Covid-19 restrictions have made the completion of his major study on New Zealand's lakes more challenging than he had imagined, good progress is being made and he (and we) are hopeful that in September next year he will be in a position to share with us the final results of all his work.

- U3A is something dear to the hearts of many Friends, who will be interested to know that Hocken staff have recently been busy preparing a series of presentations.

- As the Hocken Librarian says, these are 'volatile times!' Senior Hocken staff had held a planning day recently, only to have to contend with the announcement of Alert Level 2 by the Government. Once again the operational landscape changed.

- Hocken remains fully open and available to the public, with an observed increase in enquiries from New Zealanders, no doubt because the border is in effect closed. People are therefore turning their attention to locations such as the Hocken. There has also been a marked increase in distance enquiries in recent months. This is in spite of the fact that there are six vacancies within the staff, apart from one taking parental leave about now. Nevertheless, approval has been received for three vacancies to be advertised now, and for a further two professional vacancies to be advertised nearer the end of the year. It is hoped, therefore, that during the financial year of 2021 much of the present pressure will be relieved.

- Hocken is planning for the Hocken Lecture to be delivered on 1 October 2020. However the University is taking a cautious approach to future events in these times of uncertainty and the date may have to be changed.

Recently retired Professor Barbara Brookes will deliver the lecture entitled: HOCKEN, HEALTH & HISTORY: ARCHIVAL AND DIGITAL TRACES

The date, time and place will be widely advertised and Friends can expect to receive an invitation by email but you are advised to keep a watch on the Hocken website and social media pages for any changes in the plan.

- A gentle reminder to those who have not yet renewed their subscriptions for the current year 2020/2021 – now is the time.

### **FOHC MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION**

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

*Friends are reminded that subscriptions for 2020/2021 are due, and to note that cheques can no longer be accepted. Even if you are already a Life member, donations are gratefully received.*

*Online payment: Westpac 03 0903 0393175 000 - "Subscription" in Particulars field, surname/initials in Code/Reference fields.*

*Prepared by Donald Phillipps for the Friends of the Hocken Collections P.O. Box 6336, Dunedin North 9059 - [donaldphillipps@gmail.com](mailto:donaldphillipps@gmail.com)*