

FOHC TALK SERIES

WHY CARE ABOUT SEA ICE?

The increasing focus on climate change is reflected in the first of the talks for this year. Dr Pat Langhorne, New Zealand's foremost sea-ice scientist – with a specific focus on ice physics - will be the speaker on Wednesday, 17th March.

She writes: 'Satellites began monitoring the sea ice-covered area of the ocean in the late 1970s (just as I started my PhD). Over the ensuing four decades Arctic sea ice has changed dramatically. What has happened to sea ice in the Antarctic during this time? And what about sea ice thickness? Has it changed in the Arctic? What about the Antarctic? Over the last 40 years other things have changed too. I will give a personal perspective on the changing attitudes of the scientific establishment, and of the general public, with regard to polar research.'

As always the lecture begins at Hocken at 5.30. You are welcome to come for light refreshments at 5.00 - tell, and bring, your friends.

26 May – Sue Wootton, currently the Katherine Mansfield Fellow, and a former Robert Burns Fellow, is a poet, novelist and essayist. She writes for children and for adults. She has a special interest in the medical humanities, and her PhD subject at the University of Otago involved research into the role of language and the imagination in the recovery and wellbeing of the individual.

21 July – Professor Henry Johnson will talk about a 'History of Chinese music in New Zealand.' He joined the University staff in 1995 and was Head of the Music Department from 2006 to

2012. His interests include Ethnomusicology, Asian studies and music in New Zealand.

2 September – This is the occasion of the anniversary of the Hocken Deed of Trust. The celebration will include a report from Dr Jonathan West on the progress of his major study of New Zealand lakes – towards which goal the FOHC Research Award was made.

17 November – Friends of the Hocken Collections Annual General Meeting. The venue and the speaker are still to be finalised.

WHAT TO DO IN YOUR RETIREMENT - SORT YOUR PAPERS

Exactly a century ago the ODT published articles on the recent gift to the Otago Museum of the scientific papers of Frederick Revans Chapman, just retired after a long career as Judge of the Supreme Court. He was a man of exceptionally wide interests, and had earlier been a close associate of Dr Hocken. They had shared a particular concern for the gathering and preservation of records from the earliest days of the settlement of the Province.

Between 1924 and his death in 1936, the Library received from Chapman what has been described as the most considerable collection of documents, printed and manuscript, after that of Dr Hocken himself. In 1921, at the moment of his retirement, one might imagine Sir Frederick (knighted in 1923) approaching the 'sorting' with some trepidation. How fortunate that he had the determination, in what was still a very busy life, to largely see the task through.

PAPER – THE FOUNDATION OF ARCHIVES

Paper is a thin nonwoven material traditionally made from a combination of milled plant and textile fibres. It is primarily used for writing, artwork, and packaging. It is commonly white. What more needs to be said! Except that, as much as any invention throughout human history, it changed the world. Hocken, like all libraries and repositories, is founded on paper. How many sheets of paper are there in the Collections? The number must be astronomical.

The first papermaking process was documented in China during the Eastern Han period (25–220 AD). During the 8th century, Chinese papermaking spread to the Islamic world, where pulp mills and paper mills were used for papermaking and money making. By the 11th century, papermaking was brought to Europe. By the 13th century, production was further adapted to suit mill manufacture. A major European improvement came in the 19th century with the invention of wood-based paper.

The much earlier precursor, papyrus, existed in the Mediterranean world but this is not defined as true paper. Nor does it apply to parchment made from heavily prepared animal skins, though that predates paper and possibly even papyrus.

LETTER WRITING

By the Victorian era this had become a fine art – the accomplishment of and accompaniment to, civilised society. How many new settlers came to this country because of a letter sent to them from some pioneer? How many elderly parents, beyond the desire or the capacity to travel, maintained contact with, and gained knowledge of, the other side of the world through letters? This brief contribution looks at that question through a restricted lens – what, exactly, did all those Victorian people write on? Was it simply plain white 8½" x 11" paper – what were the traditional practices of that time?

The colour of paper has changed quite a bit over the decades. Earlier in the Victorian period, coloured and lightly tinted (and even scented) papers were fashionable, and mostly, if not exclusively, used by women. Floral embellishments, fancy finishes, and edges lined in gold, silver, or other colours were also in trend in the earlier years but fell out of fashion in favour of simple family crests and monograms. By the 1890s even those embellishments were considered to be in bad taste for most circumstances. One thing that everyone seemed to agree on, no matter the year or occasion - high quality plain white or cream paper in a

nice thick weight was always the most elegant choice. "There is a fashion in letter-paper and envelopes which is ever varying as to size and shape—sometimes small, at other times large; now oblong, now square; but one thing never alters, and that is the desirability of using good thick paper and envelopes, whatever the shape may be" (*Lady Gertrude Elizabeth Campbell, Etiquette of Good Society, 1893*).

For personal correspondence, note-paper was used. One very popular size was the commercial note, which is slightly larger than today's A7, at about 5" x 8". This size was used for longer letters, and by men for most of their letter writing (men also used the larger packet note size of 5¾" x 9"). Shorter, more casual notes (presumably favoured by women) were written on a smaller sheet size, called the octavo (7" x 4½"). An even smaller paper size called the billet (6⅞" x 4") was used for invitations and responding to invitations.

For either men or women's stationery, the best letters were kept simple, with the focus on high-quality paper and quality penmanship. A comment from that time: "Both paper and envelopes should be of fine quality. It conduces to fine penmanship, and perhaps inspires the writer with fine thoughts. Coarse paper, coarse language, coarse thoughts — all coarse things seem to be associated" (*Willis Westlake, How to Write Letters, 1876*).

No matter what the style of letter or note paper, the envelope had to match. Sometimes two envelopes were used; the inner envelope would be made of the same paper as the letter, and the outer protective envelope would be of hardier stock, sometimes in a buff colour. Envelopes were sealed with wax up until the end of the 19th century - women could use a variety of colours such as gold or blue, but men only used red. Black wax was used if the writer was in mourning. By the end of the 1800s, gummed envelopes replaced the need for wax.

Black ink was always a good choice, and by the end of the century, anything else was seen as distasteful. Some earlier passing trends allowed for women to write in coloured inks, with violet being a popular choice for some time. Quill pens were not as common as steel pens, but they were still used by some of the more talented writers. The stub pen was also viewed as a good choice for someone with the skill to wield it gracefully. The type of pen used wasn't nearly as important as the neatness, elegance, and grace of the penmanship.

BUSINESS LETTERS

Business letters were commonly written on an 8" x 10" or 9" x 11" letter-paper. The paper could be ruled or not, but unlined paper was considered to be the more tasteful choice as it gave the writer creative freedom and demonstrated the writer's skilled and controlled penmanship. Letterhead often came in tablets of 100 sheets and had printed headings, with monograms coming in and out of fashion over the decades. All in all, standard business letters haven't changed much in size or format for 150 years!

But what about keeping a record of one's correspondence? Hocken has many examples of 'letter-books' recording official and commercial correspondence. A brief *PapersPast* search of stationery advertisements in the mid-century reveals that this was important business. Munro's Stationery and Book Warehouse in Dee St, Invercargill had just landed (January 1864) 'Copying Presses, post 4to and foolscap size', while L. K. Morrison at the corner of Princes and Manse St in Dunedin had not only copying presses, but copying books and paper, damping pans and brushes.



What exactly is a letter copying press? They were used for making copies of letters into blank books. A copying book - a blank book filled with thin tissue paper - was used inside of these machines. Once a letter was freshly written, it was sandwiched inside the book. An oiled sheet sat atop a blank page, while the fresh letter sat under it, and another oiled sheet below the fresh letter. The tissue paper was dampened to encourage the ink to transfer onto the tissue paper when the book was being pressed. Of course, when printing, everything prints backwards. This was the reason the paper was made from tissue, so the ink could easily be seen from the other side! It might seem tedious today, but this was before the invention of carbon paper, so having such a device

saved more time than having to write everything out a second, third or fourth time.

As the decades passed, it became more important to have loose copies of documents rather than copies bound inside books. Newer copying presses used a roller and plate, with the fresh letter and blank sheet cranked through to create duplicates; makers claimed these machines could produce 100 copies in as little as two minutes. They were combination presses, which was a traditional copying press, but also featured a roller and plate on top. They were interesting contraptions that could be used to make a bound book of copies, or individual loose-leaf duplicates.

One might speculate that there are still, around Dunedin, old presses of this sort that look timelessly solid in their Victorian way. Typical expressions of the ingenuity of the time, and suggesting a type of office organisation that relied, as is the case in this digitised age, on the practical skills and competence of that essential staff person - the one to whom you always went when you wanted a job well-done.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

In putting together this very cursory survey of a large subject I was helped immeasurably by Anna Blackman providing me with a half dozen examples of letter books. The Milton Borough Council's letterbook was often a prosaic record of reminders to this farmer or that, that he needed to clear his drains. Walter Buller, or his clerk (?) seems simply to have written a second copy to keep for the record. Ethel Benjamin used carbon paper, but Bendix Hallenstein must have used the older and more elaborate process with all its various stages. And even he when adding an extra line or two at the end of a letter might save a whole page by writing at right angles to the prevailing script.

Whatever the case there is an immediacy about these fragile slips of paper, simply because one is reading another's personal record. And, as has ever been the case, a good education does not necessarily lead to a legible hand. Busy professionals or business leaders don't always have the time to ensure that the reader would understand their scrawl.

Spare a thought then, for those who engage in such primary research. One has to admire the perseverance of the scholars and researchers at the Hocken who strain through page after page of ancient, flimsy and fading paper to recreate that past world. Be careful before you break into their concentration.

HOCKEN NEWS

- After Covid-19 related delays the Hocken Lecture was finally held on December 1st. Prof Barbara Brookes spoke to a full lecture theatre on *Hocken, Health and History: Archival and digital traces*. The Lecture will be published in 2021
- The annual Hocken Donors' event which acknowledges the extraordinary contribution our donors make to the development of all of the Hocken's collections was held on Saturday the 8th December. Around 80 attended.
- Recruitment for the Head Curator, Published Collections, was completed in December. Chris Meech was appointed to this position. He has previously worked in the Library and Archives at Waitaki District Council in Oamaru. He will take up the role on the 15th February. This is a significant senior position and we have been carrying this vacancy since February 2020.
- Kaitiaki Matauranga Māori, Jacinta Beckwith, has been given a year's leave of absence from Hocken to take up an opportunity to be a Research Fellow on the Te Takarangi Project with Professor Jacinta Ruru in the Faculty of Law. This is a very exciting opportunity for Jacinta and we wish her well. Megan Vaughan will be seconded to a Subject / Liaison Librarian role to pick up the coordination undertaken by Jacinta. In conjunction with colleagues from the University Library's Information Services team and the Hocken Liaisons Megan will support as much as possible of Jacinta's student and researcher support during this period.
- In December the success of Hocken's latest nomination to the UNESCO Aotearoa Memory of the World Register - the Colin and Anne McCahon papers, was announced. There will be a ceremony in Wellington in March - staff are working on a story for the Otago Magazine. It comes as we received two new McCahon donations: a 1940s drawing from Gary and Marjorie Blackman and a small 1970s 'Jump' painting from Gordon Brown. The exhibition 'Colin McCahon: A Constant Flow of Light' continues to be well supported and will remain up until the 6th March. It will be followed by an exhibition highlighting recent acquisitions, with a current working title of 'Drift'. This will run from the end of April until June 2021.
- Throughout December/January pictorial staff registered and catalogued the large number of

art works donated during 2020, notably the gifts from Roger Collins and Gordon Brown.

- The shortage of collection storage will be relieved with infill shelving being transferred from elsewhere in the Library system.
- The Otago Motor Club Trust worked with the late Michael Findlay, and Mark Sharma of Museograph on Hocken's exhibition "[We Drove Here](#)" in 2015. A version of it developed with Antony Breese of Museograph is now on show at [Central Stories](#) in Alexandra, from 6 February.
- Staff have been active with blogs/social media. The first by Curator Ephemera Katherine Milburn is No 8 in the '[Stirring up the Stacks](#)' series - she tested a ginger ale Xmas Cake recommended by local cordial manufacturer Buckhams. Curator of Photos, Anna Petersen, posted two blogs: [Hot Shots from the '60s](#), describing the Geoff Adams collection of photos of life in 60s London, and [Lights of the City](#), looking at the history of city street lighting through the photos collection. In January Collections Assistant (Publications) Emma Scott's blog [Advice for Your Flight](#), on Air New Zealand and the Jet Era, was posted.
- Approval was received to commence recruitment for the Collections Assistant roles in Archives and Pictorial Collections.
- A number of staff attended an evening event at the Dunedin Public Library with Alexander Turnbull Chief Librarian Chris Szekely, historian Jock Phillips, and Hocken Librarian Sharon Dell, in a discussion about the future of research libraries - to celebrate the centenary of the opening of the Alexander Turnbull Library.

FOHC MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions: Individuals: \$25 per annum; Family: \$30 pa; Students: \$10 pa; Life: \$250; Life (Joint): \$300 pa; for Corporate Sponsor rates, please contact Carol Melville (carol.melville@xtra.co.nz) or Sara Barham (sarabarham@gmail.com).

Friends are reminded that subscriptions are due, and to note that cheques can no longer be accepted. Online payment: Westpac 03 0903 0393175 000 - "Subscription" in Particulars field, surname/initials in Code/ Reference fields. Contact Carol or Sara with any other queries.

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