

## Official Newsletter of Marlborough Museum and Marlborough Historical Society Inc - April 2013



*Tena Koutou Katoa*  
Greetings to all from  
President  
DALE WEBB

It's always tempting to tell you about the goings on in the Museum, the Archives, the Heritage Education Program, the Marlborough Heritage Trust and the many other things we are doing, but this time I will leave that to others, the "others" who contribute so well to both our Society in particular and Marlborough's heritage in general. We have a great team at the Park, they do it superbly well.

Why do we have a museum and archives to save, restore, display and explain the many treasures there? Steve has very good answers to that question but the one I use is "so that things can continue to live rather than just quietly die". I had a personal example of that late last year which I would like to share with you. I was in the museum talking to our textiles and clothing guru, the one and only Pam Saunders and Bev, Pam's assistant. They were cataloguing our collection of ladies furs, we have a great collection and they were looking at a really nice fur coat. One of them looked in the pockets, apparently they find some intriguing things in pockets and out came a piece of paper. The paper said the coat had belonged to Mrs Annie Nosworthy, previously Elbeck. That lady was my great grandmother. Born Annie Coleman, she

married Herman Elbeck from Hamburg, had a family of daughters who respectively became the matriarchs of Marlborough's Andrews, Mathews and Soper families, and was widowed while still young. She then married Frank Nosworthy and had a further son and daughter. My grandmother was Phoebe Andrews, a daughter from her first marriage. Having seen the coat I phoned my aunt Mrs Rae Gilmour, Annie's only surviving granddaughter, and then brought her up to the Museum. Rae had a number of photographs of her grandmother wearing the coat and could tell us a lot about it which has all been added to our records - a real story of a very real person and what real history is about. It certainly crystallised for me why we save, restore, display and explain the treasures we have and I just hope everyone else can have a similar moment when their personal history becomes so alive. Everything we have was once part of someone's life. So that's what we do, we continue to celebrate lives. I understand the coat is also part of the Feathers and Fur Exhibition now in the Museum so lives on.

Many thanks for the part you play in ensuring Marlborough's treasures continue to live.

Dale Webb

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**Editors Note;** *This edition of the newsletter is not produced as usual by our Editor Paul Davidson. Paul is in Brisbane very busy with his university studies so the acting editor is at the helm. Accordingly it will not be as well laid out and there will be no music, sound or moving pictures. Hopefully back to normal in due course.*

*Regards Lauri Ashwell*

## New Members

We are delighted to welcome as new members of the MHS Geoffrey and Paulette Handley and Amanda Lynn, Amanda is also a member of the Friends of the Museum.

## Donations

We thank Miss Jonette Elder and Mr Alan Bolam for generous donations that will be applied to the Fever Ward restoration.

## Sunday Series

This year we again run our very popular Sunday Series of talks on heritage topics. They will be on the last Sunday of the month from May to September 2013 inclusive. The programme at this stage has not been finalised but you will be notified of the speakers and topics either in the next newsletter or a specific item about the series. So put the last Sunday which is the 26th May, 30th June, 28th July, 25th August and 29th September in your diary. The talks as usual start at 2.00pm, will be in the Paul Davidson Museum Theatre, and a gold coin donation is always appreciated.

## Heritage Day 2013

Another great day was held in the Park on the 6th February. The Museum again ran the passport competition with many young participants. The winner's smile says it all.



## In the Footsteps of Capt James Cook

This trip back in February was a great day, really well received by all who went. It was organised by Robin Cox and presented by John Orchard, and there was even an escort of about 100 dolphins as the launch came back to Picton. The photograph shows all who went listening to the speakers at Ship Cove.



And this one was Mr Peter Cozens who spoke and laid a wreath on behalf of the Captain Cook Society of the UK.



## The Second Marlborough Living Treasure Award was held on the 3 April 2013 at the Marlborough Museum

There were many special guests, most were the invitees of the award recipients Joy Cowley and Duncan Whiting. The President opened by welcoming all prior to the award ceremony. CE Steve Austin explained the development of the Living Treasure Award and then Museum Ambassador Toni Gillan outlined the lifetime achievements of both Joy and Duncan before Mayor Alistair Sowman presented the medallions and certificates. Kiley Nepia displayed, explained and then blessed the two cloaks made for the occasion by Margaret Bond which were finally placed on Joy and Duncan's shoulders. Bishop Richard Ellena gave a blessing to both recipients before both Joy and Duncan very eloquently replied.

The Award was very generously supported by Bookworld who sponsored the catering, Aunstfield Estate Wines, No 1 Family Estate Wines and Tan and Rob McNabb who sponsored the cloaks; the cloaks were beautifully made by Margaret Bond.

The evening was subsequently well covered in the Marlborough Express and Blenheim Sun newspapers.

## 4 Wheel Drive Adventure 6/7 April '13

The following is a summary of the report made by Robin Cox, the organiser of our recent very successful outing earlier this month. The trip involved about 50 people and three organisers; 14 4WD vehicles were involved with presentations given by the guides, John Orchard and Steve Bagley, Steve is the DOC archaeologist. Going up the Awatere John Orchard did most of the interpretation while on Molesworth it was done by Steve. The 4 new interpretation panel sites on Molesworth were great and added additional information to what Steve provided. A copy of the DOC Molesworth brochure was also handed out to each person on the trip. As Steve had been involved in the historic survey to Molesworth he was able to show sites that the rest of the party did not know about. Prior to the trip Steve gave a talk in the Riverside Railway Station on Sunday 24th March about the Molesworth archaeology; this drew over 20 people and while very interesting in its own right was also great background for those going on the trip. Again members of the MHS benefitted with lower fees, they only paid a little over half of that required from non-members. Rather than use words to explain the run up the Awatere Valley, the overnight at Hanmer and then the second day through the Rainbow Station the following is a selection of photos taken.



The final outdoor activity left to run this year is the trip to view the historic icons of Picton. This is on the 9th June with the visit to the Picton Museum being at 11am and the cost for the MHS group being \$3.00 per person down from \$5.00. This will be followed by a trip to the Edwin Fox for a cost of \$2.00 if not a member. Again John Orchard will be the main guide outside the museum. It will be advertised in the Marlborough4fun activity schedule and the Sun as well as the next newsletter.

## What happened to the Blenheim Post Office statues?

My late father, Jock Penney, always wanted to know what happened to the Post Office statues. He had heard various stories, including the one about them being on the gates to the rubbish dump, but was never able to prove for himself exactly what happened. Nor can I, but I do have a theory, so this article, Dad, although it's a bit late, is for you.

I think, like me, Dad was looking for large, brilliantly white marble statues, as they appear in this photograph probably taken in the 1930s, but in reality they were small, about four feet high, made of stucco, and in the end painted a dull white.



When the second Blenheim Post Office burnt down in the great fire of November 1876, it was decided to replace it with a building made entirely of concrete. This was a new concept, but Blenheim had had its fill of losing wooden buildings to fire and so the Government of the day was persuaded that concrete was the way to go.

The building, then known as the Government Buildings because it was built and owned by the Government and housed much more than just the Post Office, was begun in June 1877 and the original plan included the emblems of state, the Lion and the Unicorn, over the central doorway, "under them is a clock and under the clock is a window with niches on each side filled up with 'Justice' and another respectable old lady to be executed in what Ruskin terms 'stuccoed blasphemy'." So says the Marlborough Express of the day.

Things didn't go quite as planned; we needn't bother ourselves with the intricacies, except that the emblems of state were supposed to be moulded and manufactured wholesale in Wellington, whereas, in reality, they were moulded in a shed at the rear of the new building. The artist overseeing the moulding was Ah Gee, Blenheim's "excellent carver", who was also making the statues; "... There they lay in pieces, here a bust, there a head and in another corner an arm". Ah Gee also made the trusses which the statues sat upon, "and other embellishments for the Government Buildings".

When the new building was completed, at a cost of 11,000 pounds, in July 1878, the statues stood beneath the clock tower and beautified what was otherwise a rather plain structure. They stood there for a long time, one figure holding scales representing justice and the other holding a book representing truth; they became known as Justice and Mercy.

In 1999 Mercy's book was donated to the



Marlborough Historical Society by Rodney Knight along with an explanation of how he came to have it. In essence, his father, Herbert (Bert) Knight, was custodian of several Blenheim Government Department buildings during the 1940s, including the Post Office, and was on hand when the statues were removed, he thought for earthquake safety reasons. Bert said that no value was placed upon them; they were simply smashed up and disposed of. He salvaged the book for his own personal interest.

Rodney thought the disposing of the statues occurred in the late 1940s. An earlier note, written by an unknown donor, thought they were disposed of after the 1929 Murchison earthquake. Nevil Matthews, when reading that note, added to it, "Rubbish, they were still there when I began work at the Post Office in 1950".

Photographs in the Museum archives show the statues still in place in the 1930s, but gone in the 1960s. The 1960s photograph shows the clock tower has been lowered and the niches that held the statues have been filled in, so it may be true the statues were removed for safety reasons. The Murchison earthquake did rock Blenheim severely and then, in 1931, there was the horror of hearing about the Napier earthquake. In 1944 the Government wanted to remove the clock tower but



was requested by the local Council to leave it, "until the new Post Office is built", so replacing the Post Office was being considered; it was eventually replaced in 1974 – as the advert says, 'Good things take time'! Two badly borer-infected joists on the first floor, where the statues lived, were replaced in 1949. And then, in 1953, Queen Elizabeth II was to visit Blenheim. What if the unbelievable happened and a statue fell on the Queen?

When the Queen visited Blenheim on 16 January 1954 a photograph, with the Post Office in the background, shows the two niches but no statues, and it is my belief that the clock tower was lowered and the statues removed during the refurbishing of the Post Office in 1953 in readiness for Her Majesty's visit.



Refurbishing included re-painting and there is an article in The Marlborough Express for 2 December 1953 about how the Blenheim Chief Post Office was the first Post Office to be painted in the new, "several-colour pastel shade scheme" of grey, cream and green, instead of the old all cream or all brown colours. Mercy's book, the last known remaining piece of the old Post Office, is painted a brownie-maroon on the outside and dull white on the inner, not in the new colours, leading me to think it,

along with the statues, was removed before the Post Office was re-painted.

Bert Knight, who witnessed it, says the statues were simply smashed up and disposed of and as part of his duties he cleaned up the rubble for removal. This probably involved the statues being toppled from their niches to smash on the ground and the shattered remains being loaded on a Borough Council truck and taken to the County Council rubbish dump at Burleigh, which, ironically, was in the area where Brayshaw Park and Churchward Park are today. They were, after all, Government property, and would be disposed of by local Council.

Both Bernice Adams and Kevin Andrews have heard of the statues going to the tip; Bernice remembers them being one on each side of the gate way, while Kevin remembers that the man in charge of the dump when they were there was Mr Conroy. In 1966, when Norm Brayshaw copied some photographs, he noted they were "from Mr Conroy, Rubbish Dump". Interestingly, Beverley notes in his book, 'Borough of Blenheim', that in August 1953, "The Marlborough County Council gives the Borough Council one month to restore the Burleigh rubbish dump to a condition satisfactory to the health inspector, or have it closed". Did part of their restoration involve making the place more attractive, and did they do that by tying the shattered remains of Justice and Mercy to their front gates?

We will probably never know for sure until Papers Past digitalises The Marlborough Express for the 1950s, or until enough dated photographs are donated to the Archives to clearly show exactly when the statues were and then weren't in their niches on the Post Office. Until then I feel confident that my theory that they were removed for the Queen's visit is a valid one. And to round things off rather neatly, I was intrigued to find that the contractor for building Blenheim's third Post Office in 1878 was none other than John Knight. Whether they are related or not, it seems entirely appropriate that Bert Knight should rescue the last remaining piece of John Knight's Post Office.

By Jenny Pierson.

Postscript. While researching in the Archives in March I found the following in the MHS minutes for August 1969. "Statues on Post Office [were] dumped when taken down – not recoverable".

## What else has been going on in the Museum and Archives Building?

February saw the Official Opening of the Wairau Bar Exhibition. Rangitane, the tangata whenua, were well represented by Judith MacDonald, Richard Bradley and Kiley Nepia with Kiley leading the blessing of the exhibition and the artefacts. If you have not seen this exhibition yet you owe it to yourself to do so; the

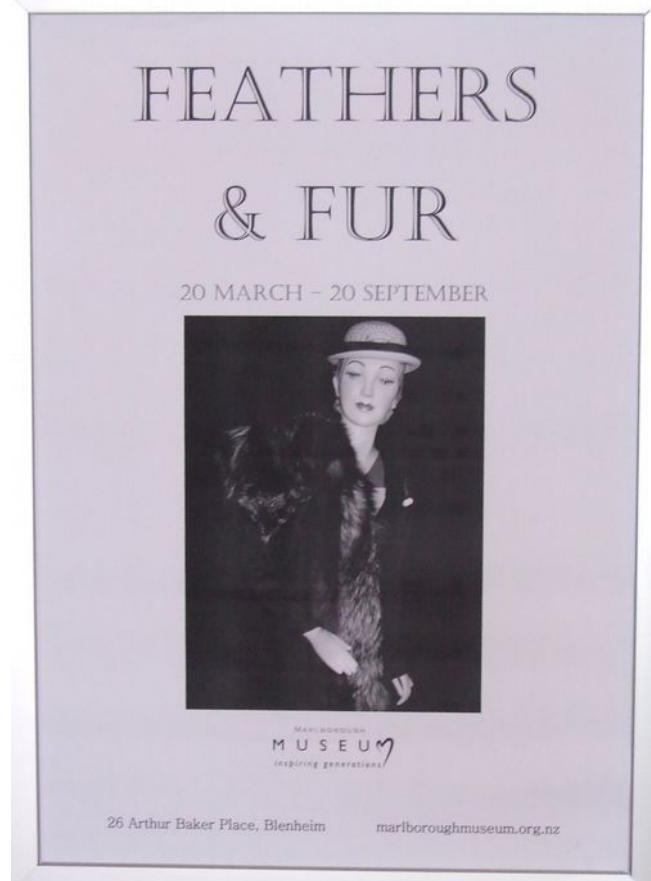
Wairau Bar is now accepted as the first recorded site of human habitation in New Zealand. Scientific evidence has shown that some of the people buried there were immigrants, they died but were not born here.

We hosted a recent meeting of the Chamber of Commerce at the Museum. The Chamber meet at sites of interest from time to time and we were proud to show them through the Museum.

Our Cuppa Culture Textiles Exhibition has now finished.



This very popular exhibition has been replaced by Feathers and Furs, the new Textiles exhibition put



together by Pam Saunders, Bev Webb and Steve Austin. At the bottom of the previous page is a photo of the poster for this exhibition.

## From the Heritage Education Programme

This has been our busiest Term 1 for the 15 years of the programme. Output has been over 2100 pupil lessons. The Ministry of Education set a target of 6000 in the 4 term year, so great progress. The Ministry have extended all Museum Education contracts for another year, through to the end of June, 2014. John Orchard, our senior teacher, has been assisted at times by Rod McCloy and Lou Avery. Major activities for the term have included 25 classes for the ANZAC programmes, many field trips involving all 5 Marlborough Secondary



schools, and a wide range of age groups visiting the Treaty 2 U Exhibition.



Classes, this one from Westmount School mostly combined this with time spent in the new Wairau Bar Exhibition, and the James Cook, Whaling, Colonial Home and Musket Wars activities. There is continuing interest in Edwin Fox and Gold Mining activities. John spent a busy day with over 50 pupils from Richmond View school, exploring the Wakamarina Goldfield. He also taught gold panning in a creek at Lynton Downs School south of Kaikoura. No gold was expected here, but it was good practise for the school's trip to Hokitika. 2014 is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wakamarina Gold Rush, so the Marlborough museums and schools are beginning to

consider ways of marking this significant event in our history.

Heritage Education is still looking to buy or receive donations of items for our programmes including: a school slate, bottled ink (blue or black), old children's cycles, trikes and scooters, leather school bags, Janet and John reading books, and any old military equipment. Please phone John on 5781716 if you have any of these to dispose of.

While not in the M&A Building, it was at the Ritual Cafe in town, the Pop Up Restaurant evening, a recent Friends of the Museum Event was very well patronized and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Back to the M&A Building where our hard working staff are in some cases resting from their labours. You already know what HE teacher John Orchard has been up to. CE Steve Austin is away for most of April on Annual Leave and Archives Manager Megan Ross has been on holiday in Auckland for a week. Office Manager Marilyn Lowe has been holding the fort during the week with Jillian, Rachael and Nigel doing so during the weekends. The team of M&A volunteers have of course been supporting Marilyn during most weekdays.

We also have an Article contributed by Pam Woodward on Altimarloch homestead in the Awatere Valley, this is the Marlborough ancestral home of the Mowat family. Unfortunately there is no space so that will be in the next newsletter.

Cob Cottage restoration; we have had this project underway for some months, they always take a while to get the plans, quotes, funding applications and approvals through the various agencies but it has now been caught up in the new building regulations as a result of the Christchurch earthquakes. That is a good thing in so far as the restoration should ensure that the building will be able to withstand anything nature may throw at it in future. Bad in that it has added markedly to cost, the foundations will now have enough steel in to build a modest battleship. As we have only a finite amount of funding the cost increase means less can be restored so there will subsequently be a second part to what needs to be done. More on that in future editions.

## The Final Word, also from Jenny Pierson.

A young and pretty W.A.A.F. was walking along a cool and tree-shaded Marlborough lane one hot summer day, when she saw a most inviting pool in the near-by river. Slipping out of her uniform among the trees, she walked into the refreshing water. Suddenly she was startled to see a young Army lieutenant walking towards her. He saw her too, stopped, and in his best parade-ground voice shouted : "No. 4. Camouflage Platoon dismiss !" And all the trees marched off. [From: "All Clever Stuff", a booklet put out by R.N.Z.A.F. Woodbourne in 1944, full of 'fun, gaiety and topical titbits of Blenheim life']