

AUGUST 2015



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

It's the 3rd of August as I write this so I can say that next month at least two notable events will occur for MHS members. The conventional start date for Spring is the 1st of September and following the traditional very frosty Marlborough winter we have had this year I will join the great majority of you in welcoming spring. The blossom on the wattle trees, the first calves, lambs and spring bulbs have already signalled that spring's on the way and asparagus, fruit tree blossom and other similar delights will soon join them. The other September item is the AGM of our Society which is scheduled for 2.00pm on Sunday 13th September in the Theatre of the Museum and Archives Building. Among other things the AGM elects the Society officers for the next year.

Our constitution requires a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and at least four (with a maximum of eight) committee members. Some of the current committee have indicated that they will not be standing again so if you wish to be involved in directing our future please ensure your nomination is received at the museum office well before the 13th September. The significant effort involved in ensuring the transfer of many of our activities to the Marlborough Heritage Trust is all but complete so the new Committee will be focused on mostly membership activities, the "new MHS" rather than the reasonably demanding role of governing a medium sized business. That governance role and its demands was a major driver for the devolution to a trust for our commercial activities; we are nearly back to being of and for the members. But back to joining the committee; the old saying of "**you only get out what you put in**" is as true of the MHS as it is with virtually every other aspect of life. If you have not served on the

committee, as a volunteer or in some other similar capacity then next month would be a great time to rectify that.

The target date for the transfer of some of our assets and commercial activities to the Marlborough Heritage Trust is the 30th September 2015; the process is going well and that date looks achievable. There is though one MHS member who opposed this process at the 2013 AGM and has done subsequently. He has recently initiated a legal challenge against it; the advice received by your committee says the challenge is invalid but it must and is being worked through. You will certainly be advised of the outcome of this if it has any effect on the transfer being achieved on time.

Our Sunday Series this year has been great and that plus my earlier comment on Spring means we need to start planning the trips to some of our many historic sites that are so enjoyable during summer. While we have some ideas (Pelorus Sound, sites in the Awatere and others) if there are any that you have please let me know before the final program is confirmed.

Briefly returning to the subject of the AGM and standing for office let me paraphrase the words of President JF Kennedy and say "My fellow historians, ask not what your Society can do for you, ask what you can do for your Society". As always many thanks for your ongoing support as we continue to celebrate Marlborough's marvellous heritage.

Dale Webb

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SUPER SALE @ reduced prices, until 30 September 2015

As part of the recent stock take of the many items we hold it was decided to have a clearing sale; retailers do it all the time so why not us? What's available is attached as a separate list to the newsletter and is for sale at the advertised, very reduced prices.

From the **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**



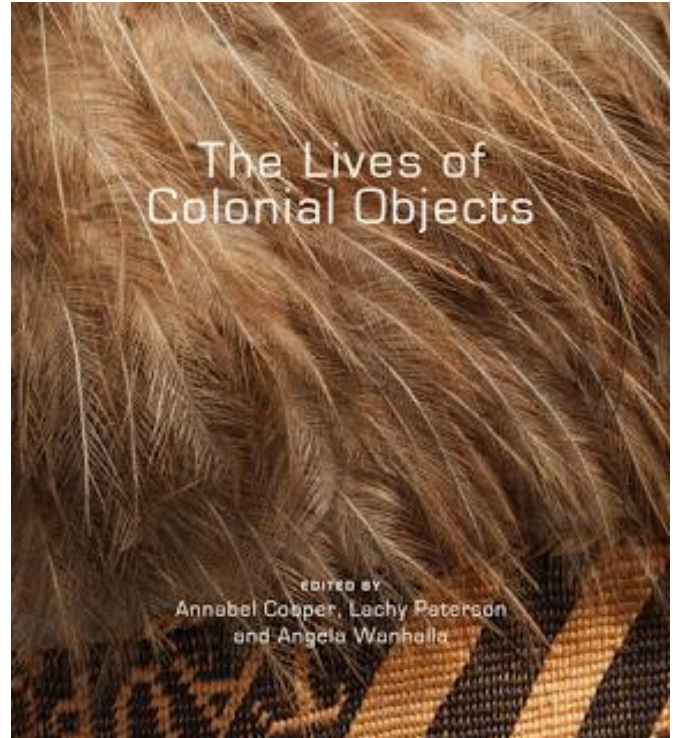
On 21 July, I was delighted to be present at Otago University Staff Club, for the launch of a new, and rather fantastic book, which is essentially the history of New Zealand in 50 objects. The contributors represent leading researchers from around New Zealand with extraordinarily diverse backgrounds, interests and chosen subjects. It was a great way to spend a day of annual leave!

Chapter 27 is the chapter I contributed on William Ah Gee, a Chinese carver who met Elijah Bythel on the goldfields of Ballarat, and came to New Zealand in the 1860s. He became a well-known wood carver, and furniture maker, based in Wellington, and Blenheim. In this chapter, I wrote about the eagle lectern, once at the Church of the Nativity, but now at St Luke's, Spring Creek. I am indebted to Brenda Carr, who helped me with initial research when I was Manager, Programmes and Curatorial Services at Nelson Provincial Museum who helped me get started many years ago. Also the parish, and leaders of the Church, have been extremely tolerant of my requests so that this stage of my research could be completed. However it was Brenda who introduced me to that wonderful Archives here in 2004, and all the potential for development that they have. Little did I know then that one day I would come to live in Blenheim!

The book is amazing in terms of the breadth and depth of coverage. It reminds me that our nation's history is essentially in the provincial collections in many ways. The research of other authors is very inspiring. When I said to the editors it was an ambitious project to organise 50 authors into one book, and ensure it was edited to that it was a seamless reading experience for the reader, they said their ambition was based on naivety. However Otago University Press is currently the powerhouse of publications on New Zealand history, and their publisher and designer have created a very beautiful book that is truly a landmark publication.

At the launch, Emeritus Professor Erik Olssen described the book as showing an "excellence of uniformity and interest". We were all amazed at the production qualities of the publication, and it is just great that everyone loves the book. How can you get a copy? It is in some stores now, but it still early days, so keep your eyes out for it!

The Lives of Colonial Objects - a sumptuously illustrated, highly readable book



The Lives of Colonial Objects

Edited by Annabel Cooper, Lachy Paterson and Angela Wanhalla. Paperback with flaps, full colour. ISBN 978-1-927322-02-4, Otago University Press - \$49.95

Colonial objects and their stories

Historic objects invite us into the past through their tangible and immediate presence – their stories shed light on how we lived, how we related to each other and to the natural environment. In *The Lives of Colonial Objects* fifty objects from our collective past are explored, mused over and revealed. This sumptuously illustrated, highly readable book encourages us to reflect on why things matter.

Each object is given its own chapter and is introduced with a full-page colour photograph and a short essay. The authors include historians, archivists, curators and Māori scholars. *The Lives of Colonial Objects* opens up our history in astonishingly varied ways.

Everyday objects, such as billies, toys, diaries and scrapbooks, often contain histories quite distinct from their initial purpose, and come to life with new meanings for later generations. A single object may tell many stories.

There is delight to be had from the choice of 'things' and the tales they tell us. Which would you like to touch or be in the presence of? Which speaks to you the loudest, and why?

Some of the objects featured are treasured family possessions such as a kahu kiwi, a music album or a grandmother's travel diary. Some, like the tauihu of a Māori waka, a Samoan kilikiti bat or a flying boat, are housed in museums. Others – a cannon, a cottage and a country road – inhabit public spaces but they too turn out to have unexpected histories.

The Lives of Colonial Objects offers a creative, innovative approach to history that will captivate the general reader and provide a rich resource to educators seeking a fresh way to communicate New Zealand's past.

Radio New Zealand review by Paul Diamond link (copy and paste into your browser)

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoon/audio/201761725/book-review-'the-lives-of-colonial-objects'>

Ernest Berry is a haiku ninja and has recently donated these for our WWI: Marlborough Sacrifice exhibition, now on at Marlborough Museum. Ernest is internationally acclaimed for his work, and lives here in Blenheim. I was touched by how evocative this very spare style of poetry can be.

armistice day
searching in vain
for old mates

Ernest Berry, b.1928. From *Forgotten War*, 2000. Blenheim-based
Ernest Berry is a veteran of the Korean War,
and a multiple international award winning haiku poet.

dawn parade
old soldiers
dropping poppies

Ernest Berry, b.1928. From *Forgotten War*, 2000. Blenheim-based
Ernest Berry is a veteran of the Korean War,
and a multiple international award winning haiku poet.

SUNDAY SERIES

Since the last newsletter we have heard from Mr Nigel Costley and Mr Ron Perano. Nigel, the author of *Teak and Tide*, the story of the *Edwin Fox* gave a great talk to a full house on some aspects of his research for the book. Ron, a member of the crew in the 1950's spoke on and showed some of the 8mm movie footage he had taken while serving on *AS Echo*; sadly the Picton icon

was recently demolished due to its deteriorating condition.

- 30th August, 2pm, *The Archaeology of New Zealand's sub Antarctic Islands* by Steve Bagley. Steve is the DOC Archaeologist for Nelson/Marlborough and did a survey down there some months ago.
- 27th September, 2pm, *Yarns and tales of the early years of the Marlborough Historical Society* by Derek Cordes, Kevin Andrews and Prue Mathews. In the lead up to our 60 years of Marlborough Historical Society celebrations in October, listening to tales and viewing photos of the early days in the society by past presidents and committee member, Derek, Kevin and Prue.

PEOPLE

In this newsletter we welcome Mr Don Jameson as a new volunteer Archives and as a new member of the MHS; Mr Gareth Pugh. Many thanks to Don and a very warm welcome to Gareth and we look forward to seeing you at some of our activities.

We have also received a donation of \$100 from Mr Geoffrey and Mrs Paulette Handley towards our Map Project; this project is carefully classifying and appropriately storing the very large collection of maps we have in Archives. A very welcome contribution, many thanks indeed.

From the REGISTRAR *SIXTY YEARS OF SERVICE – THE ECHO of BLENHEIM*

(This article is condensed from a much fuller account by Arthur J. Sprosen. A typescript of the full article is at the Museum where it may be consulted).

Years ago visitors to Blenheim who happened to be in the right time and place were startled to see a ship apparently making its way across a paddock and among the trees. They could be forgiven for thinking it was an hallucination, but to Marlburians it was just the scow Echo making its way up the tortuous Opawa River to the wharf in the centre of Blenheim. For years the gallant little ship was a life-line between Blenheim and Wellington. Despite trials and misfortunes, storms and the notorious Wairau Bar she usually arrived sooner or later, customers of the local shops were familiar with her vagaries being an excuse for the lack of commodities and the non-arrival of ordered goods.

Like many of the early scows her life began in Northland, scene of much ship building activities. She was built by Brown & Sons of Northern Wairoa in 1905 for their own use as a timber trader with a 30 h.p. engine to help in and out of port. She cost £3,700 to build. She was later sold to the Karamea Steam Ship Company for the

Wellington Karamea trade and then to Richardsons in 1916. Her engines were changed and she was used to carry frozen meat and coal between Wairoa and Napier until the opening of the railway.



In July 1920 she was sold to Charles Alexander Eckford of Blenheim and became the third scow in his small fleet trading between Blenheim and Wellington. Even before coming to Blenheim the Echo seemed to be accident prone – during seventy years of active life she clocked up an amazing number of disastrous happenings but somehow survived them all! Surely a tribute to her builders. Before Eckfords she had survived two fires and after 1920 there was no less than thirteen reports of mishaps such as broken shafts and masts and damage to machinery; at least eight collisions with other ships and beacons; and then there were the eleven reported strandings. The infamous Wairau bar was responsible for some while the narrow and winding twelve miles of river accounted for others. One of the more spectacular accidents was in 1932 when she stranded at Pencarrow Head and struck the Pinnacle Rocks in heavy seas. The crew of ten took to the life boats thinking the scow had come to the end of her life. While they were at Fort Dorset in the care of the army the Echo slipped off the rocks, rolled over on her port-side and drifted towards the Port. The tug sent failed to find her, but next day she was found and towed to Clyde Quay Wharf, righted by the crane and unloaded. Her cargo consisted of Marlborough cider, wool, barley, about fifty crates of eggs (scrambled by now?) and boxes of butter – some of which had landed on the Petone Beach. The mate at the helm was sacked, it was said he was in a hurry to catch the last train to his home in Hutt Valley. When stranded on the Wairau bar she was sometimes freed by the next high tide, but often had to wait for a spring tide and the help of other boats. Eckfords did not keep a tug, but the small cargo lighter, Standard, would go along side and take off 27 tons of cargo.

In 1960 when the Echo was the only ship the firm owned, she was bar-bound for ten days when returning to Blenheim. It happened to be the whitebait season so



the crew occupied themselves catching them by the 4 gallon tinful. Fortunately the weather remained calm and at low tide it was possible to walk round the ship. Eventually a road was bulldozed to her side and local trucks drove alongside; nearly 200 tons were unloaded and brought into Blenheim. The scow was re-floated on the next spring tide with the help of a pull from fishing vessels. When stranded she usually lifted off on the next high tide. There were collisions between the Echo and various harbour ferries, and even beacon lights, as well as with other small ships; in most cases with little damage. In 1948 heavy seas were responsible for a disaster, she had successfully navigated the 12 mile river journey, the Wairau bar and as far as Cook Strait where there were heavy seas. Progress was slow with high seas and strong winds buffeting the small craft. It soon became apparent that she was being blown past Wellington Harbour and toward Hawke Bay; then a huge wave struck the starboard side damaging the bow. Captain Tom Eckford had to radio for a tug to come to the rescue and tow her to port. She was unloaded and repaired but the master lost his job!



The most unusual experience of the Echo was during WW2 when she was requisitioned by H.M. the King for service with the United States Navy. From 1942 - 1944 she was in and around the Pacific Islands. As part of the US Navy she voyaged over 40,000 miles fitted with two extra lifeboats, extra crew, extra accommodation and A.A. guns. It was reported she met a few Japanese but escaped. She returned to the N.Z. Government in 1944 and was purchased by Eckfords. Her war service became a film in 1961, "The Wackiest Ship in the Army" (she actually served in the Navy!) The picture company

wished to buy her but Eckfords refused to sell or let her be taken out of N. Z. waters, so in most sequences it was not the real Echo who appeared. Those who knew the ship were not impressed with the film.

I recall a visit to the Echo about two years before she ceased to cross the Strait. The wharf is right in the centre of Blenheim, it was a cold night but the scow was warm, we wandered all over her ending up in the engine room just as the first engine was started. From the wharf we saw the captain board the scow and watched as the Echo was pulled astern and twin searchlights *were switched on to help the Master in his navigation of the dark Opawa river.*

From 1965 all local freight for the North Island was carried on the Cook Strait ferries, but the Echo survived for a further 50 years; a story for another newsletter.

UPDATE: As part of the demolition John Orchard and Steve Austin have been working with Port Marlborough re salvageable items from the Echo for a potential interpretation site on the river bank in the heart of Blenheim. There are no definite plans but they have been doing their very best to ensure what can be salvaged has been and stored safely for the future. This is an on-going very exciting project.

MEMBER PROFILES

Your editor is constantly amazed by the wide range of interesting things our members have done over their lives. This small snapshot is of two more, they are:- Doreen Fowler and Lloyd Kerr.

DOREEN FOWLER, LIFE MEMBER MHS



HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH MHS: More than thirty years. I joined when we were still on the farm, and I really did enjoy the field trips and outings that I got to go on.

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE MHS: Family History. My grandfather was born on board a ship while it was becalmed off the island of Tristan da Cunha during the trip it was making to New Zealand. The family lived all their lives in Marlborough.

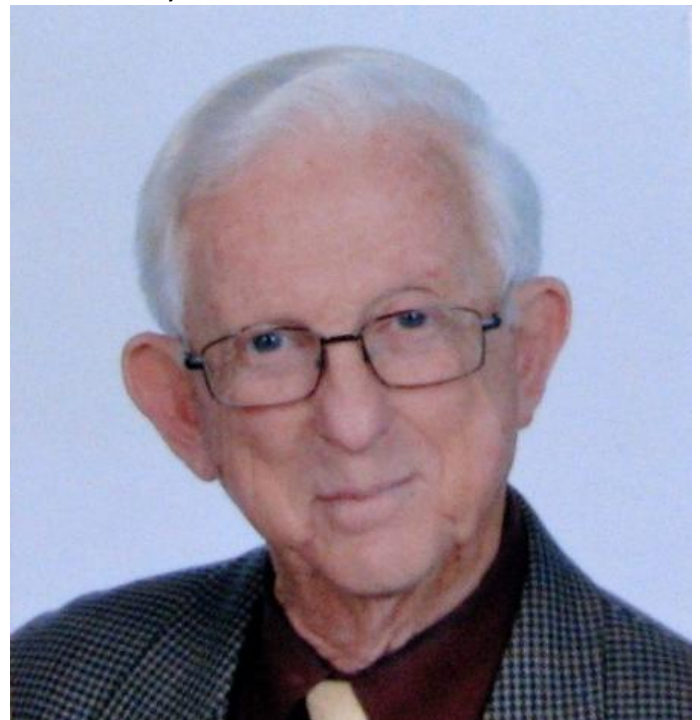
WHAT DID YOU DO BEFORE YOU JOINED: Lived in Blenheim and worked in at least three departments for the New Zealand Post Office. Then I got married and lived on the farm in the Wairau Valley.

WHAT IN YOUR OCCUPATION WAS SPECIAL: Enjoyed spending time knowing friends from primary school and from College. Played quite a bit of sport like basketball, or netball as it is now called and enjoyed socialising. I was a good player and was selected on a number of occasions for representative teams. Loved living in Marlborough, the company of family and friends.

IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE: If it were possible, I'd ask all the family history questions that I didn't ask when I had the chance and the opportunity.

WHAT WOULD MHS MEMBERS NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU: In about 1941 a friend and I cycled to Picton on the old gravel road, sometimes through clouds of dust. We were both at College at the time, so I was about 15 years old.

LLOYD KERR, LONG TERM MHS MEMBER



HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH MHS: I retired in 1983, tried Courier driving for a fortnight, thought better of all the mad running to and fro and settled into the cosy atmosphere of our Provincial Archives, on a one day a week basis.

WHY DID YOU JOIN MHS: The blame must go to spare time gold panning in Otago and a love of that province's rich history. Wakamarina sandflies put a stop to panning but I soon found that Marlborough's story equalled that of Otago. So, for reasons of digging further, I ventured in as a volunteer.

WHAT WAS YOUR OCCUPATION: I joined the then co-ed Marlborough College in 1961 and thereafter enjoyed teaching history and geography. After leaving the classroom I carried on as the Boys' College archivist for the next 22 years, retiring just months ago.

WHAT IN YOUR OCCUPATION WAS SPECIAL: Lots. Perhaps senior geography field trips must come near the top. Field work along our Wairau fault, on Mt Robert, on the crest of the Black Birch Range or delving into the Wither Hills gully erosion - all proved fun and the students loved doing original work. Helping prepare publications for the 2000 Colleges Centenary also kept me out of mischief. While working as a MHS volunteer it proved most worthwhile taking part in the production of the MHS magazine *Past and Present* as well as the MHS book *Click a Captured Moment*.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE HOBBY: Decades of back country tramping have now given way to less-pack walking on and near our wonderful Withers. Reading history is a must - Marlborough of course, as well as Otago. Cycling has proved a lot of healthy fun - provided there is no wind beating into ones face.

WHAT WOULD MHS MEMBERS BE INTERESTED TO KNOW ABOUT YOU: I must confess that I am a rotten cook. It is great to record my life-long passion for pipe organ music. And am lucky to possess a new Swedish two-manual instrument complete with pedal board.

TUA MARINA CHURCH



Ian Conway, the Project manager for the church restoration and his team have made great progress with the front steps. The handrails still need to be added but visitors can now enter in much more comfort and safety than was previously the case.

BUY A WINDOW?



This window is one of the three on the already reboarded south side. The windows on the north side are all missing having been removed when the church became a Sunday School in the 1930's. There are also two windows in the vestry and one in the entrance foyer. To ensure they match and last as long as the rest of the restored church it has been decided to renew them all. Three families and one local organisation have so far donated a replacement window and will have that commemorated on the glass of the lower panes. What a great way to have your family remembered. Each window costs \$1,000; if you would like one please speak to Ian or myself.

FINAL BIT - AGM & 60th

Our AGM will be held on Sunday the 13th of September in the Paul Davidson Theatre. Several of the current Committee have indicated they will not be seeking re-election so if you would like to be part of setting the policies and future programs of your Society please consider standing. If you wish to know more please speak to the President or one of the current Committee, their names and contact details are available in the Museum office.

In October of this year the MHS is 60 years old and as part of the celebrations is holding a dinner on the Marlborough Club on Saturday the 17th October. More details to come but please put the date in your diary!!