

NZHA President's Report December 2015

General

In 2015 the NZHA has gone about its business of promoting historical study, teaching and research, maintaining and raising the profile of history including recognising achievement through awards, lobbying government, connecting with stakeholder groups and disseminating relevant information to NZHA members.

Importantly, the state of play is that we are 'at the table' as a 'stakeholder' in the nation's history. This has taken considerable time and effort, and the results are unclear. Without continually trying to push for a place, we would likely be invisible. We are, however, as the year closes, a presence. We are speaking up and out on matters of concern.

On the positive side, we are an important part of the Royal Society of New Zealand. We have run the two prizes initiated by Otago – the W H Oliver for the first time. We have fostered connections between publishers, politicians and teachers.

The conference at Canterbury, and its theme of 'History – Making a Difference' captures what, as an executive – we have tried to do – to unite historians from a diversity of backgrounds and make a difference in a climate that can seem cold and uncaring about the past.

Finances and membership

We have continued Otago's lead and have kept the conference and association finances separate. We have introduced on-line banking for the payment of subscriptions and this has been enthusiastically taken-up by our membership. In 2014, we provided the option of members renewing their memberships for two years at once.

Our paid-up membership stands at 109. We have 172 'non-sub paid' people whose membership expired in 2014. This is after follow-ups. I was concerned about this – but after discussion at the RSNZ constituent organisations' meeting in December 2014, I was reassured: Declining membership is a part of most professional associations. In the digital age, people express their belonging digitally – and our website is going strong with 116 followers. I feel it is an important site for our membership to cohere – whether paid up or not. And the costs of postage etc. have dramatically decreased, meaning less pragmatic need for subscriptions.

Royal Society of New Zealand

Margaret Tennant and Charlotte Macdonald will address the AGM about the RSNZ.

In my opinion and experience as president, owing to its status at the RSNZ, the NZHA is positioned as a premier humanities association, and we are on a roll. Becoming a

constituent organisation on 7 June 2013 was an excellent idea. Tom Brooking, Margaret Tennant and Charlotte Macdonald have all attended various meetings of the RSNZ during the past two years. I attended the Constituent Organisations meeting in December 2014.

In June 2015 the Canterbury executive, with council input, has provided comment on RSNZ organisational change. Andrew Cleland, CEO of the RSNZ replied 'Thank you for that really helpful response. We have in fact already been thinking about co-option along the lines you describe so it is helpful to see your support for that.' (email 1 July 2015)

We pay a NZHA membership-adjusted fee to belong to the RSNZ. However, the \$1500 sponsorship of our 2015 conference means that we more than re-couped any fees paid.

In April 2015 we nominated Linda Bryder to a three year term as an elected councillor of the RSNZ. Many thanks to Linda for allowing her nomination.

Being a CO of the RSNZ does entail a lot of work for the executive and I do wonder if we need a ring fenced position on the executive for RSNZ business?

The Promotion of History

An important part of this work has happened organically through the NZHA website. The historic film footage found in a California garage is an example. After being contacted by the Santa Clara Historical Society we posted the story on our site – primarily thinking that it was a useful teaching resource. The story spread like wild fire and I think that there is the potential for us to develop this side of our outreach. For example, through featuring members' new books and research.

Lobbying Government

This has been a presidential priority in 2015. Thank you to the council members for the input and responses to our calls for your input. We have managed to make a number of full responses.

Major efforts in 2015 were: February 2015 Submission on the BDMM records proposed disposals with a prime concern 'that these records be safely preserved and as freely assessable as is possible according to the privacy standards of the day. The significance of these records definitely includes, but extends well beyond, genealogy and family history. These records concern the bedrock of New Zealand society, and must be treasured'.

We reviewed and commented on the National Library Review – Collections Policy – July 2015. Largely to do with changes in a digital age, and ensuring the most valuable collection.

The key lobbying cause for 2015 is the proposed DSW Record disposals. In May, after constant lobbying, I was a guest of Archives New Zealand and put our case to the Chief Archivist and had a meeting with the DSW. I have also co-ordinated with PHANZA about this matter. Since, I have continued to lobby against the proposed record disposals. The current

situation is that the case is being revisited. I have spoken to Trevor Mallard (opposition Internal Affairs spokesperson) and Megan Woods (MP for Wigram and PhD History). I have followed up with letters to them. I continue to ask Archives New Zealand what is going on, because to go through with the proposed disposals would, I believe, be in contravention of the Public Records Act and set a terrible precedent.

Prizes and Awards

The Mary Boyd Prize judges for this round were Margaret Tennant and Tony Ballantyne. How to proceed in nominations for this prize will be discussed separately at the meeting.

We have run the W. H. Oliver Prize for the best book in New Zealand history. The judges were Giselle Byrnes and Graeme Dunstall. We note with sadness and appreciation that W. H. Oliver passed away in 2015.

Conference

I would like to give special thanks to Canterbury executive member Lyndon Fraser, who has capably, tirelessly and tactfully led the conference organising committee. From Lincoln University, Greg Ryan has deftly handled the finances. And from Canterbury Museum, Sarah Murray and Marguerite Hill (PHANZA NZHA rep) have performed too many vital tasks to list here. What a super team.

Final thanks

To the Canterbury-based executive, enormous thanks for your time and energy. Another super team. Joanna Cobley has been a powerhouse of a secretary. Peter Field, and latterly, Greg Ryan have handled the finances. James Smithies was our webmaster and Lyndon Fraser the council member.

Katie Pickles

Thursday 26 November 2015

Matters arising

NZHA Constitution

As per point 9. In the minutes of our AGM 20 February 2015:

For the December 2015 AGM to consider:

The newsletter has been replaced by the NZHA website nzha.org.nz.

Motion:

That in the NZHA constitution the word 'newsletter' be replaced with 'NZHA website' and also replace the word 'Editor' with 'NZHA webmaster'.

NZHA governance

At the 2013 AGM in Otago I was charged with convening a working party to discuss the future governance of the NZHA along the lines of a document tabled by Otago. In accordance, Tom Brooking, Cathy Colborne, Felicity Barnes and I have conversed during 2015. We have also drawn upon the expertise of other executive members – in particular Charlotte Macdonald. The view of the working party is that we are in favour of continuing the governance as it currently stands – rotating around all of New Zealand's history departments. We also acknowledge diminished department sizes and the difficulty of resourcing administrative assistance. In particular, it is the maintenance of the wordpress website that is an increasingly important function. I would like to put the following motion to the AGM:

That this meeting of the NZHA endorse the incoming 2016-17 NZHA executive to spend up to \$4000 per annum on administrative assistance.