



Auckland
War Memorial
Museum

NEWS

Auckland Institute and Museum
Private Bag, Auckland. Phone (09) 30-443
Registered at Post Office Headquarters
ISSN 0111-2252

Number thirteen
March 1983

Will You Volunteer?

In the last issue of the **News** you read of the overseas study trips of Curator of Display Richard Wolfe and Director Stuart Park. In the case of the latter, the report was perhaps a little short on detail, since when it was written Stuart was still overseas. It did note however that he was interested to examine docent programmes in museums in North America. (For those of you who don't know what docents are, see 'What is a Docent Anyway?' elsewhere in this issue.) Arising from his experiences, our Director has recommended that a system of volunteers be instituted at the Museum. But for that we need your help.

One of a museum's major responsibilities is to assist the visitor to relate to, to understand, to appreciate, to enjoy the objects and exhibits in the collection. This can be done in a number of ways, through labels, guidebooks, audiovisual aids and so on. One of the most effective devices, however, is a personal guide, who is knowledgeable about the collections and is

able to communicate a personal enthusiasm and interest in them.

Auckland Museum has made some efforts in this area in the past, but a substantial unfulfilled need remains. The existence of a well-trained and enthusiastic group of volunteer guides at the Museum would enable tours to be given on request to visiting tour groups (we get many of these requests at present which we are unable to fulfill). Guides could offer tours to members of the public in the galleries at specified times, at both a general and a more detailed level. They could also respond to requests from conference organisers for tours of specific parts of the Museum collections for those attending conferences.

Volunteer guides will not appear magically, however. Museums, as educational institutions, must be accurate in the information they convey, and their volunteer staff as much as any other must be well trained and provided with the necessary resource material to enable them to inform members of the public with confidence and authority.

At present therefore the Director and staff are preparing plans for the volunteer scheme, and devising training materials, a guiding handbook and the necessary

resource materials for volunteers. In the second half of the year, probably commencing in June we will begin training sessions, at which museum staff will introduce potential volunteer guides to the Museum and its collections and brief them on the information they will need to be able to face museum visitors with confidence and assurance. If the scheme progresses satisfactorily we would anticipate that the first tours guided by volunteers would take place over the summer holidays at the end of the year.

In order for the scheme to succeed, we need your help. We will need a large pool of trained volunteers ready to be guides, in order that the burden on any one individual will not be too great. If you are at all interested in training as a volunteer guide and giving your time to help the Museum serve its visitors better, please write a brief note to the Museum Director, Stuart Park, indicating your interest, enclosing your name, address and telephone number, and the most convenient times of day and days of the week for you to attend training sessions. This will not commit you to anything at this stage, but will enable us to contact you when we are ready to begin.

What Is a Docent, Anyway?

As you have read above, we plan to introduce a team of volunteer guides at Auckland Museum. Those of you who have visited museums in the United States, or who have talked to jargon speaking members of the museum staff, may have come across the word "docent". For the etymologists amongst you, we offer the following extract from the handbook for docents produced by the National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC:

"In England the word 'docent' came into usage in the 1600s as an adjective whose meaning was derived literally and directly from the Latin verb *docere*, to teach. In America in the late 1800s the noun 'docent' was employed by universities and colleges to denote a recognised teacher or lecturer not on the salaried staff, who was paid by the students for their private instruction." In 1906, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts began a scheme to use volunteers as official commentators on the things it showed, and



A group of visitors, including our Director, are guided through the Dinosaur Hall in the Natural History Museum, New York, by a docent.

was the first museum to apply that forgotten English word "docent". Although it is widely used by museum professionals, the word "docent" is not widely understood even in the United States. Many museums use other terms for their volunteers, such as guides, interpreters,

explainers, hosts. None of these is particularly satisfactory, but for want of better we intend to use the term "volunteer guides", even if some of us slip back into our bad museum jargon habits occasionally and refer to "docents". At least now you'll know what we are talking about!

Maintaining the Museum

One of the initial aims of the **News** was to introduce to Members some of the Museum staff and describe their activities at the Museum. In recent issues this aim has fallen a little by the wayside, but we reinstate it here by allowing one of the lesser known and frequently unsung members of staff to describe in his own words the part he plays at the Museum. Harold Rowe ('Harry') is our Maintenance Man, and came to the Museum after obtaining the necessary experience by working in a variety of capacities, including that of merchant seaman and Canadian lumberjack interspersed with occasional appearances as Father Christmas at Auckland's **Downtown**. Harry writes:

"The Museum is the only place I know where there seem to be only three hours in the day. I start at 8 am, not with a 'Good Morning' but with a 'Harry! The toilet's leaking' or 'there's a light out in my office' or it's a lock jammed or a key broken. To be a maintenance man at the Museum one has to be carpenter, plumber and electrician, as well as part-time burglar to get through some of the doors. You also need to be a marathon walker — I will never know how many miles I've tramped through the halls, roofs, catacombs and endless flights of stairs to climb. If I were to add up the heights of all the ladders I've climbed to replace countless light bulbs and various other jobs I could look down on Mount Everest.

"The Museum staff never know where to find me, so they wait until lunch time. I've never had a social visit for a lunchtime chat yet. There's a knock on the door and a 'Hello Harry!' — so that's another lunch hour gone.

"I would be the scruffiest looking bloke in the place. Clean overalls at 8 am on a Monday, and by 9 am you'd think I'd put them on last year. I find I get on well with the other staff, especially if you've got a sense of humour, whether it's unblocking a toilet, helping some visitor to start their car or undoing a door when keys have been left inside."

Not only does Harry have a sense of humour (much appreciated at staff social occasions) but his ingenuity has to be seen to be believed. He recently retrieved a tennis ball that was blocking a really inaccessible down-pipe by lowering a vacuum cleaner down on a length of rope until the nozzle sucked up the offending article and he could haul it out. Without Harry and his multi-farious skills, the Museum would sometimes grind to a complete halt. Next time you're in the Museum and see a man with overalls that he seems to have been wearing since last year, say hello to him — that'll be Harry, our Maintenance Man.

Maori Gallery Roof

As members will be aware from earlier issues of the **News**, a major redevelopment of the Maori displays at the Museum is underway. Members who attended the reception for the Governor General and Lady Beattie had an opportunity to examine the plans for this development as they stand at present, as well as to examine progress so far. The most notable alteration to date has been the renovation and modification to the roof of the central Maori Court. When work in the area was first considered, it was discovered that the roof required considerable maintenance work to rectify the effects of 50 years of wind and weather. In conjunction with this work, the decision was made to exclude the natural light from this area.

This decision was not taken without much thought, since the architectural character of the Maori Court is an important aspect of the Museum as a whole. However, the preservation of the Museum's irreplaceable Maori collections, and their protection from the harmful effects of sunlight is also an important consideration. Readings of light intensity and ultra-violet content indicated that quite unacceptable levels of light were falling on sensitive objects. In the event, the decision was taken to replace the ceiling panels and the glass roof with opaque surfaces, to project controlled artificial light up onto the ceiling, to provide background illumination for the gallery and to light specific objects with spotlights and other forms of lighting.

Several benefits followed from this course of action: the maintenance and replacement work to the roof itself was carried out at a reduced cost, the collections are now shown in a controlled light environment and the overall character of the Maori Court, while certainly having been altered, has not departed greatly from the original architecture.

The Maori Court roof is an inaccessible part of the building. Our contractors decided that the simplest and most efficient means of access was to transport all the necessary



materials onto the roof by helicopter, and subsequently remove the replaced material by the same method. On two occasions therefore the Museum resounded to the noise of the helicopter, causing a little

inconvenience to staff and visitors, but achieving the task in a remarkably short space of time. Naturally, staff photographers were on hand to record the event for the Museum's historical records.

Fanny Osborne Flower Painting

With this issue of notice of a special Publishers. The Osborne of Great the treasures of the Museum. For Department, and Goulding has as a collection of 48 Osborne's painting Museum's collection privately. Jeanne introduction to the Fanny Osborne a is sure to have c lovers of native p

By special arrangement an embossed slip produced for the Museum exclusively handnumbered illustrations to be 250 copies will be number ordered of this special edition general public.

Institute Lectures

Enclosed with this Syllabus card for Lectures. A wide programme has Institute Committee will prove popular general public. B reaches you, the Cossens will have that lecture was a time of writing we greatly to Dr Coss as he is a most e notable industrial

Another eminent Institute lecturer OBE is a renowned broadcaster on m arrangement with Society of New Zealand Commission, Dr tour of New Zealand Astronomy Week world-wide between Moore's lecture to April 14 will be given Auditorium. It is Auckland Astronomical Section certain to be of c Members are urg

oking bloke in the
am on a Monday,
I put them on last
with the other staff,
sense of humour,
illet, helping some
undoing a door
inside."

sense of humour
(social occasions)
e seen to be
ved a tennis ball
inaccessible
vacuum cleaner
until the nozzle
article and he could
and his
useum would
plete halt. Next
n and see a man
s to have been
ay hello to him —
enance Man.



and visitors, but
remarkably short
staff photographers
the event for the
rds.

Fanny Osborne's Flower Paintings

With this issue of the **News** you will receive notice of a special offer from Heinemann Publishers. The flower paintings of Fanny Osborne of Great Barrier Island are one of the treasures of the Botany Department of the Museum. Former Curator of the Department, and Honorary Botanist Jeanne Goulding has assembled a remarkable collection of 48 of the finest of Fanny Osborne's paintings, from both the Museum's collection and those held privately. Jeanne Goulding has written an introduction to the paintings and to the life of Fanny Osborne and her paintings. The book is sure to have considerable appeal to all lovers of native plants and flower paintings.

By special arrangement with the publishers, an embossed slipcase edition is being produced for Members of the Institute and Museum exclusively. Also included will be a handnumbered print of one of the illustrations to be published. No more than 250 copies will be available, and only the number ordered will be produced; no copies of this special edition will be available to the general public.



Tryphena Post Office, Great Barrier Island, 1892. A Winkelmann photograph from the

Museum Library, used in Jeanne Goulding's book.

This book is commended to Members of the Institute and Museum as being of considerable interest, and this particular edition especially so. The publishers are to donate 10% of their income from this special edition to the Auckland Institute and Museum for botanical purposes.

Because of delays in the production of this issue of the **News** (for which your editor must take responsibility) the closing date for this special offer has been extended to April 15 1983, from the end of March date shown in the notice. Members who are considering purchasing a copy can see colour 'proofs' of the book on display in the Museum Library.

Institute Lectures

Enclosed with this copy of the **News** is the Syllabus card for the year's Institute Lectures. A wide-ranging and interesting programme has been arranged by the Institute Committee, and we hope the series will prove popular with members and the general public. By the time this **News** reaches you, the first lecture by Dr Neil Cosson will have taken place — notice of that lecture was sent to you earlier. At the time of writing we are all looking forward greatly to Dr Cosson's visit and to his lecture as he is a most eminent museologist, and a notable industrial archaeologist.

Another eminent British speaker is our Institute lecturer in April. Dr Patrick Moore, OBE is a renowned astronomer and broadcaster on matters astronomical. By arrangement with the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand and the British High Commission, Dr Moore is giving a lecture tour of New Zealand to promote National Astronomy Week, which is being held world-wide between April 18 and April 24. Dr Moore's lecture to the Institute on Thursday, April 14 will be given at 8 pm in the Museum Auditorium. It is being held jointly with the Auckland Astronomical Society, which is the Astronomical Section of the Institute, and is certain to be of considerable interest. Members are urged to attend.

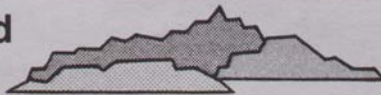
Dr Moore will also be giving a lecture to members of the Astronomical Society at the Auckland Observatory on Wednesday, April 13, and Institute members with a particular interest in astronomy are invited to attend. For further particulars on National Astronomy Week promotions at the Auckland Observatory, please ring 656-945 or 478-8887, and watch for newspaper and radio advertising.

In May, the Institute lecture takes a rather different form. The Offshore Islands Research Group is an informal grouping of scientists and scholars interested in the natural history and anthropology of the Offshore Islands of the Auckland province. Following the centenary celebrations of the University of Auckland, the Group is holding a national symposium on research on the offshore islands, which is attracting a large number of scientists from throughout the country. In conjunction with the symposium,

the Institute lecture on Wednesday, May 11 is a lecture by a panel of speakers, entitled "Our Northern Offshore Island Heritage". The panel will be chaired by Sir Charles Fleming, who will introduce the lecture and discuss the geology, archaeology and history of the islands. The panel will consist of Dr Roger Grace, who will discuss marine life, Mr Dick Veitch on birds and reptiles and Dr Ian Atkinson who will discuss the plants. The lecture will conclude with an opportunity for questions and discussion.

Auckland Institute and Museum has a longstanding involvement with research on the offshore islands extending back to its earliest years. Many past and present Members of the Institute and members of staff have carried out research on the islands, and it is therefore most appropriate that this lecture will take place here. A most stimulating and enjoyable evening is anticipated.

Offshore Island Symposium



Anthony Wright, Chairman of the Organising Committee for the forthcoming Symposium on the offshore islands of northern New Zealand, reports that interest in the meeting has far exceeded expectations. The proceedings will be opened by the Minister of Lands, Hon J.H. Elworthy, on 10 May 1983. A very full programme of scientific

papers has been offered for the rest of the week, and a day trip to Tiritiri Matangi Island is planned. Many of the papers and the field trip will be of interest to members of the Institute. If you wish to receive the final circular and registration form, please write to Mr A.E. Wright, Auckland Institute and Museum, Private Bag, Auckland 1.

Auckland Museum Women's Archives Collection

March 8 was International Women's Day and accordingly it is appropriate to devote space in this issue of the News to a little-known feature of our library, the New Zealand Women's Archives Collection. The collection began in 1961, when the late Mrs Enid Roberts of Levin donated her extensive collection of biographical files about New Zealand women.

From its inception the Women's Archives Collection has become an expanding resource which at present contains biographies of over 4,500 women. It is primarily a collection of short biographies of notable women in all walks of life and typical entries often consist of newspaper accounts or specially compiled biographical resumés, usually of no more than three or four pages in length. The Women's Archives Collection is not a file of individual letters and diaries, although of course this type of material can be found in the library's manuscript collection.

The New Zealand Women's Archives Collection is maintained by a sub-committee of the Auckland Branch of the National Council of Women, working in close co-operation with the librarian. Mrs Margaret Nash is the convenor and committee members are Mrs Shirley Ross, Mrs Betty Holt, Mrs Nancy Moore, Mrs Margaret Carruthers, Mrs Ann Harrison and Mrs Georgina Mason. Their contribution is entirely voluntary and their efforts are greatly appreciated.

This important collection is slowly gaining recognition and it is especially pleasing to note its increasing use for research

purposes. The subject index in particular has proved invaluable in locating women who have made contributions in such fields as nursing, the Armed Services, music and trade union activities, just to name a few areas.

Of course the collection can never be complete. There are many notable omissions but the librarian is always glad to add new entries to the files or learn of women whose achievements have as yet been unrecorded.

How is material gathered for inclusion in the collection? Every few years an appeal is made to all branches of the National Council of Women and affiliated organisations to send in information about notable New Zealand Women for inclusion in our files. In

doing so, we request information not only about office holders but about any women who have made a valuable contribution in their field of interest or service. Also, National Council of Women Branch correspondents regularly send us material, and the committee members constantly collect information from newspapers and other sources.

The librarian, Ian Thwaites, recently participated in the NZBC programme to mark International Women's Day. In the course of a short interview he was able to explain the scope of the Women's Archives Collection, and its relationship to other Women's Studies Collections. It is hoped that this publicity will result in more information coming forward.

Off the Ground

Members who watched the recent television series on the history of aviation in New Zealand will have seen some remarkable movie footage of the Walsh brothers flying school at Mission Bay in 1917. What you may not have realised was that the film came from the small but important collection of cinematographic films held in the collections of the Library of the Auckland Institute and Museum.

This particular film, like all films of similar age, was printed on cellulose nitrate stock. Nitrate film deteriorates with age, becomes a dangerous fire hazard and a possible source of spontaneous explosion. For this reason, all the Museum's films on nitrate stock are stored with many others from throughout the country in ammunition bunkers in Wellington, as part of the New Zealand film archive. Very gradually, as funds become available, the Archive has decided to copy the most deteriorated films first, leaving those in good condition until later, when more funds may be available to have them copied.

Unfortunately, from one point of view, the



A seaplane lands at the Walsh brothers flying school at Mission Bay 1915.

Auckland Flying School film is still in very good condition and therefore merits a low priority for copying. However, until it is copied, it cannot be viewed, or made available for viewing, by the many Aucklanders who would be interested to see it. Television New Zealand copied for their purposes only parts of the film, and much of the 50 minutes of footage has not been seen in this generation. The Museum is currently exploring ways of raising the \$2,000 estimated to be the cost of copying the film, so far without success.

We do hope to be able to achieve this, however, and to let you know in a future **News** of a special "premier" for members.

Three Kings Islands

The Museum's Botanist, Anthony Wright, took part in an Offshore Islands Research Group trip to the Three Kings Islands in December last year. This was a rare opportunity to visit these isolated and rugged islands, which are surrounded by almost continuously rough seas. Due to a calm spell, brief landings were made on two of the three smaller islands in addition to five days spent camping on the largest island, Great Island.

Auckland Museum has had a long association with these islands: T.F. Cheeseman made the first scientific collections in 1887 and 1889, while a 1934 Museum expedition in the auxiliary ketch "Will Watch" undertook the first detailed scientific investigation of the islands. Over the next 15 years, the Museum organised a number of further expeditions which led to publication in the Museum *Records* of a fairly thorough, if basic, account of the natural history of the islands.

Thirteen species of plants are endemic (i.e. confined) to the Three Kings. The main reason for Mr Wright's visit was to assess the conservation status of these plants, as it had been 20 years since the last survey. It was feared that some of the species represented by very small populations in

1963 may have declined further or even become extinct.

Fortunately, this was not the case. All the endemic plants were represented by equal or greater numbers of individuals than have been found in the past. Two species, *Tecomanthe speciosa* and *Pennantia baylisiana* exist as single relict plants and have not spread. All the other species, however, have developed large enough populations to ensure a stable future under existing conditions. Cuttings, seeds and seedlings of many of the endemics were brought back to Auckland for cultivation and are doing well. Many photographic slides were also taken, and these will form the basis for lectures to the Auckland and Wellington Botanical Societies later this year.

Auckland War Memorial Museum was erected in the Auckland Domain in 1929 and extended in 1960 as the Memorial to those from Auckland Province who died in two World Wars. It is administered by the Auckland Institute and Museum, whose origins go back to the first Auckland Museum of 1852. **Auckland Museum News** is issued free to members of the Institute and Museum, a group of friends and supporters of the Museum.

