

Newsletter - September 2009

James Hight and the Festival of History – 10 October

*James Hight was among the most formative influences on higher education in New Zealand during the first half of the twentieth century and, because of his deep imprint on students, well into the second half... Hight's title to remembrance rests mainly upon two cognate achievements: the care and gentle stimulus he gave his students over many years, and his hard-won success in adapting the University of New Zealand to receive and cherish, as time went by, students from increasingly varied backgrounds. He believed wholly in what his own life attested – that careers should be kept open to talent. – N.C. Phillips in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol. 3, (1996), pp. 217-8.*

This year's Festival of History at the University of Canterbury celebrates the appointment 100 years ago of Dr James Hight to the first Chair of History at Canterbury College. Dr Hight, later Sir James, became a powerful and eventually successful advocate of separate universities. He was born at Halswell in 1870; retired in 1948; and died in Christchurch in 1958.

On Saturday, 10 October, the History Department will welcome members of the public and alumni to its second festival, a full-day event that includes lunch and morning and afternoon teas. Topics include China and World History, the History of Democracy and Emancipations, Ngai Tahu History, drink and drinking in New Zealand, and the reshaping of Europe after World War II. The afternoon session will begin with a panel discussion on the future of New Zealand History.

The enrolment fee is \$40 for the day, or \$20 for alumni. The programme begins at 9.30am in the central lecture theatre block.

For inquiries and enrolments contact the Alumni Office at the University of Canterbury: 0800 822 586 or (03) 364 2344. The email address is: reunionweekend@canterbury.ac.nz. The festival is part of the 2009 alumni reunion weekend, which is described at www.canterbury.ac.nz/reunion.

Subscriptions Reminder and Membership

Quite a few annual subscriptions are awaited. The Foundation is grateful to the majority of members who have paid promptly, and especially to those who have added a donation. A reminder will be sent, but unprompted payments will be welcomed to avoid this extra cost.

If you have friends, relatives, or neighbours who might be interested in joining the Foundation, or who might like to receive newsletters to learn first about what we do, please let the secretary know. Refreshing and enlarging our membership list is important.

Gardner Lecture and Rhodes Medal

More than 170 people attended the Jim Gardner Lecture delivered by Professor Peter Hempenstall on 26 July. The text of our tenth lecture in the series will be available soon, and members who would like a copy of Professor Hempenstall's account of *Getting Inside the Tasman World* may order one from the Foundation secretary*.

Professor Hempenstall began and concluded his talk on the significance of local and regional history in the wider contexts of history by referring to Jim Gardner's role in stirring and advancing academic interest in this cause.

The commendation accompanying the award of the Rhodes Medal to Murray Thacker of Okains Bay is reproduced in this letter. After Professor John Cookson had read the commendation it was supported by two speakers: the chairman of the Okains Bay Museum Trust Board, Mr Nigel Hampton, QC, and the Mayor of Christchurch, Mr Bob Parker.

Presenting the medal, Mr Paul Rhodes paid tribute to Mr Thacker for "the dedication and passion you have put into retaining our heritage." Having achieved his dreams, Mr Thacker had selflessly given the fruits of his work to the community, and had whetted the appetites of people to appreciate and explore their heritage. This helped them to look at ways to cement their cultures and learn to live in harmony.

Mr Thacker's concluding tribute to his community, and to his Peninsula ancestors and the experiences from which his interest in collecting and preservation had sprung, rounded off an afternoon that clearly fostered support for local history.

** For copies of the lecture text please send \$4 in postage stamps to cover mailing and copying to the Foundation secretary at PO Box 29 070, Christchurch.*

To and about Scotland

As usual, the latest Learning for Life brochure from Continuing and Bridging Education at the University of Canterbury is rich in history topics. Ireland and Scotland are the themes for lectures offered in the October-December series.

Dr Philip Ferguson will give a one-day session on Dublin and the Easter Rising on Saturday, 31 October. Mrs Frieda Looser will be giving five courses on Scottish topics and these will connect with the Community Education Abroad study tour that she will lead in June next year.

This tour will focus on the northern isles and eastern coast of Scotland. For a detailed brochure and enrolment form phone Shandley Wenborn on 364 2346 or email shandley.wenborn@canterbury.ac.nz and consult the Learning for Life brochure that has been widely distributed for details on the lectures. These cover the Shetlands, David, King of Scots, Sir Walter Scott and his life, writings and influence, and whisky, haggis, and Hogmanay.

These courses are likely to have wide appeal beyond those who are able to go on the tour next year. Most of the lectures are on Monday and Wednesday evenings in October and November.



Craigievar Castle, Scotland

A Gown of Mystery

By Jean Sharfe

It all began in early December 2008. The Christchurch branch of the New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women received a request for regalia for Canterbury's Vice-Chancellor Elect, Dr Rod Carr, who was to speak at a December ceremony. A quick check of our somewhat eclectic collection of donated overseas regalia confirmed, as was suspected, that we did not stock a set of University of Pennsylvania doctoral robes.

Having ascertained the colours and style of Dr Carr's regalia, we identified a rather striking red woollen gown with blue silk shawl collar, cuffs and facings. We thought it would be appropriate; and Dr Carr was satisfied. He wore it to the December graduation and, in February on Christchurch's hottest recorded day, to a welcoming powhiri.

This gown had hung in our wardrobe for many years and, frankly, was in need of a little TLC. The blue silk of the collar had been replaced before it came into our hands and we decided to replace the rather bedraggled silk facing and cuffs as well. One of our band of volunteers was assigned to unpick the very fine stitching.

As she went about her task Dr Lindsay Fenwick saw that the gown bore an embroidered label, "Sir Joseph Ward LLD", and that the gown had been manufactured in Edinburgh. To which Sir Joseph Ward it had belonged? There was no indication in his DNZB entry that the first Sir Joseph had a tertiary degree and, while his grandson Sir Joseph was known to be a graduate from Canterbury College, his highest degree appeared to be LL.M.

Jane Teale, archivist at Christ's College, at which Sir Joseph (jnr) was a pupil, could not throw any light on the matter. However, our Trust Board chair, Judy Brooks, checked the University of Edinburgh website and this revealed that an LLD had been bestowed upon Sir Joseph Ward, Prime Minister of New Zealand, in 1907.

Jane Teale consulted Papers Past and came upon a reference in the *West Coast Times*. This clue led to other, full newspaper accounts of a ceremony held at the University of Edinburgh in late April, 1907, when honorary LLDs were bestowed not only on Sir Joseph but also on the Prime Ministers of Cape Colony and Natal. All were in Britain to attend the Imperial Conference.

One mystery was solved. Another remains: we still do not know by what course the century-old gown came into the Federation's care.

Grant Applications

Applications for the 2010 Community Historian grant have been coming in and we have had inquiries about small grants for assistance with publications. The deadline for these applications is 30 September.