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CANTERBURY
HISTORY
FOUNDATION

Diary Notes

WEA Lectures -- three history themes

The Canterbury WEA is about to launch its first term of activities for 2008 and these include three series of lectures with history themes. A full notice in this newsletter supplies contact details.

***Rugby and Empire* – A memorial lecture series begins**

Dr Greg Ryan of Lincoln University will deliver the first lecture sponsored by the Family History Society of New Zealand to honour the late Harold Raines. Mr Raines was secretary-treasurer of the society and rugby was among his special interests.

Dr Ryan's lecture title is *A Tale of Two Dinners – Rugby and Empire on the 1930 British Lions Tour of New Zealand*.

The 10.30am lecture, at Knox Church, Bealey Avenue, Christchurch, will follow a 10am morning tea on Saturday, 15 March (\$2 donation). For inquiries about the Family History Society, soon to celebrate its fortieth year, phone Allan (03-352-4950) or Jill (03-352-4506).

Theatre Royal – launching the 100-year history

Many specialist writers and researchers have contributed to this 216-page history of a theatre that has served Christchurch for the last century. It has more than 300 illustrations. The principal contributors are Professor Howard McNaughton, Peter Downes, Adrienne Simpson, Associate Professor Ian Lochhead, Edmund Bohan, Catherine Hurley, Malcolm Douglass, Sir Miles Warren, and Philip Norman.

The Friends of the Theatre Royal, assisted by Dr Glyn Strange and Clerestory Press, have produced the book and it will be launched on 25 February. A special pre-publication offer is available to Foundation members (\$40, plus \$5 for postage). An order form is included in this newsletter. It is valid until 25 February. Thereafter the book will have a recommended retail price of \$50 and be on sale at the theatre and bookshops.

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Our 2008 Community Historian – Dr Vaughan Wood

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Timaru poisonings – new book

Greek and Roman treasures – Logie Collection

Newsletter
February 2008

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The 2008 Community Historian

Recalling a major Canterbury industry

Dr Vaughan Wood has been chosen Community Historian for 2008 and is working on a booklet about the Banks Peninsula cocksfoot industry. It is hoped that his work will also lead to a public exhibition to illustrate and celebrate an industry thriving on the Peninsula a century ago and supplying grassland seed to hungry markets in New Zealand, Britain, Europe, Australia, and the United States.

He will trace the story from the introduction of cocksfoot in the 1850s, explain the way the Peninsula environment favoured it for pastures after the burning of bush, and will describe the circumstances, here and abroad, that led to the production and high reputation of an important seed crop.

By the 1880s this large, seasonal industry attracted a migration of harvesters to Banks Peninsula, a migration that impinged on Peninsula life for several decades until the cropping, seed cleaning, and export businesses went into a slow decline from 1910.

This is a history that will touch on many aspects of Canterbury – the farmers, harvesters, the seed companies, local transport, shipping and machinery firms. It will embrace the science and politics and world trade patterns that affected the industry.

Dr Wood has gathered information on the industry for many years, and has written or has shared in the writing of several papers on seeds that were the foundation of much modern pastoral farming.

Dr Wood graduated BSc (Hons) in Chemistry at Canterbury in 1993; then turned to history, taking BA (Hons) and MA (with Distinction) in 1996 and 1997. His Otago PhD in 2003 was awarded for his study of the management of soil fertility in 19th century New Zealand. He has contributed to journals on soil and grasslands topics and has written many conference papers. He was a Marsden Fund post-doctoral fellow in the Canterbury Geography Department for three years from 2004 and has been a contract historian and report writer for the Waitangi Tribunal.

The Community Historian scheme
is generously assisted by



School's first awards ceremony

The first Canterbury School of History prize ceremony was held on 5 December and a dozen top students were honoured. The Head of the School, Professor Geoffrey Rice (recently advanced from his associate professorship) introduced the occasion to the prize winners, families and friends, School staff, and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Roy Sharp, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Arts), Professor Ken Strongman, and the University Registrar, Mr Jeff Field.

The common opinion afterwards was that this had been a very successful way of recognising the academic distinction of students. It will be an annual event, in part sustained by funds given by Mr Gerald Hunt for the Gerald Hunt Prize. Foundation members will be welcome at these ceremonies.

Professor Hempenstall leaves Canterbury

After serving for nine years on the provisional and executive committee of the Foundation and for nearly ten years as a professor in the School of History Peter Hempenstall has returned to Newcastle, NSW. The executive committee noted his retirement with regret in January.

Professor Hempenstall's Canterbury appointment in July, 1998, was to teach Australian and Pacific Islands history. Among his regrets on leaving is the feeling that too few Canterbury students are choosing this area of study. He will also miss his close connection with the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies and its world-class research library.

"This great asset deserves to be exploited much more than it has been," he says. From 2003 to 2005 he chaired the board that oversees the centre and Macmillan Brown Library, and earlier was the centre's acting director.

Professor Hempenstall has been a member of the University Council and lately has chaired the College of Arts committee that reviewed the Bachelor of Arts degree structure and courses. He is confident that the degree's strength and future at Canterbury are secure.

Throughout most of his term on the Foundation's executive he has been the Vice-Chancellor's representative. For three years (2003 – 2005) he was an ex-officio member as Head of the History Department.

In farewell comments to the executive Professor Hempenstall said he would treasure friendships with History Foundation members and had, from the outset, been impressed by the enthusiasm and professionalism of the organization.

He will retain a connection with Canterbury as an Adjunct Professor; he will be completing the supervision of his doctoral students; and will be sharing the completion of a book, *Remaking the*

Tasman World, on which he has been working for three years with Professor Philippa Mein Smith and their contributing researchers. This major exercise was funded by a \$345,000 Marsden Grant to re-examine relations between Australia and New Zealand and features of their common and distinct histories and experience.

In Newcastle, to which he returns to meet family commitments, he will also be working on a substantial school history. He has been commissioned to write the history of The Anglican Church Grammar School, Brisbane, for its centenary in 2012.

At a farewell gathering the Foundation's president, Dick Hlavac, applauded Peter Hemenstall's support and contribution to the executive. Professor Hempenstall has also been an enthusiast for the Canterbury Historical Society and was its president in 2007.

Recent Books

***Vile Crimes – The Timaru Poisonings*, by Peter Graham**

“Thomas Hall is much the most remarkable man in the criminal annals of the Colony; it may even be said, without exaggeration, that he takes rank among the very greatest criminals of the nineteenth century.

“In October 1886 he was convicted of attempting to murder his wife by poisoning her with antimony, and was sentenced to penal servitude for the term of his natural life. In January 1887 he was found guilty of murdering his father-in-law by means of the same poison and was sentenced to be hanged. The verdict, however, was set aside by the Court of Appeal on the ground of wrongful admission of evidence, and so he was spared the gallows.” - O T J Alpers, *Cheerful Yesterdays*, 1928.

Eighty years ago Mr Justice Alpers told the essentials of the Timaru crimes and subsequent trials, at one of which he was an intensely interested spectator. Another lawyer, retired after 30 years practice in Hong Kong and now home again in Canterbury, has picked up the story that stunned the town and province: the crimes of Tom Hall, popular businessman, apparently devoted husband, nephew of former Premier Sir John Hall, a dapper young man about town and the life of many a ball and party.

Peter Graham has set the event and personalities in a broad and historically interesting context: the origins and prosperity of Timaru, the economics of the time and the stresses of depression years, the social scene, domestic life, and the plotting and preparations of the poisoner as he deceived family and friends.

Mr Graham has retold the trials in detail, adding an analysis of the Court of Appeal proceedings that followed. The crimes and trials were devastating for many innocent people. The author records the careful handling of the situation by Hall’s uncle; the self-imposed exile of Tom Hall’s forgiving

wife; the fates of other leading characters in the drama; and Tom’s eventual release and 23 years of obscurity in Queensland before he died in 1929 – two years after Alpers ranked him internationally as “one of the great criminals in a century prolific in great criminals”.

The Canterbury University Press, publishers of *Vile Crimes* (168pp RRP \$29.50), say that Peter Graham, now growing apples at Dunsandel and reading much history, is working on a second book.

***Greek and Roman Treasures in Christchurch*, by J R Green, with photographs by Duncan Shaw-Brown**

The James Logie Memorial Collection of Greek and Roman artefacts displayed in the Classic Department of the University of Canterbury has recently had more public notice through an exhibition in the Christchurch Art Gallery. Given the support of the University and other donors, including the Christchurch City Council and the Canterbury Community Trust, the Friends of the Collection, PhiloLogie, inspired this 72-page description of thirty of the treasures.

PhiloLogie engaged Professor Green, Emeritus Professor of Classical Archaeology at the University of Sydney, to prepare a comprehensive catalogue of the collection of more than 300 items. This shorter work describes and illustrates a selection of pieces. The photographs are excellent, a map shows the sites from which items came, and Professor Green has added his advice on further reading to expand understanding of specified items or themes.

The book is available from the Classics Department. It may be ordered from bookshops or Canterbury University Press. The RRP is \$22.50.