



Keeping in Touch

Newsletter for New Zealand History Federation Inc

Te Kotahitanga o nga Hitori o Aotearoa

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Robin Bertram Astridge QSM 1942-2022



As you would already be aware, Robin Astridge passed away in June this year. This is the text of the eulogy I gave at his funeral service in Te Awamutu.

My name is Lisa Truttman, and I am the current President of the NZ History Federation.

Robin served the Federation for 39 years. He was President, under its former name of NZ Federation of Historical Societies, from 1983 through to 1998, remained on the executive committee 1998-2001, served as Vice President 2001, then became President once more from December 2001 until 2008. Again, he remained on our committee from 2008 to 2013 and worked hard as our Liaison Officer, then returned in 2014 and remained on committee through to this year. He was reappointed to the committee, but had to resign due to his ill health. He was appointed Patron in 2019, and remained so through to his death. To the last, he made a grand effort to keep the Federation's magazine *NZ Legacy* alive in a digital format.

All of the above does not come close to describing what Robin meant to the Federation, or to its constituent member societies and organisations dotted all across the country.

According to Robin, he came into contact with the Federation just after he joined the New Plymouth Historical Society in 1972. Sid Hart, President of that Society, was also the Federation's first President, so Robin's path began to intersect subtly with that of the Federation from that point now and then, through to his attendance at a Wellington conference in 1979. Then, in 1983, he was talked into running as President of the Federation, thinking he had little chance of winning the election because he was sure he was an unknown. That may have been the case – but he did win. And so began his journey with us, and our wonderful one with him.

The amount of faith Robin had in the Federation, his love for the local and national history of our country, and the strong spirit and support he so freely lent to and shared with all of us over the past 39 years is beyond words to describe.

I met him in Long Bay up in Auckland in 2002. Torbay Historical Society were hosting the annual Auckland Regional Gathering, and two reps from a very young society from Avondale-Waterview, our President Bruce Spencer and myself as Vice President, attended. My Society then had yet to join the Federation, we were definitely new kids on the block, but keen to find out about this collective of like-organisations. Robin said a few words at the gathering as President of the Federation, and later got into conversation with Bruce and



me, establishing that his family had a connection with Avondale. He said yes to receiving our regular Journal, and remained on our mailing list through to now.

Robin's way was to welcome everyone. He was an inspiring and down to earth speaker, top notch when it came to holding the crowd with every single word – but you couldn't tell him that to his face, he'd only deny it fervently, casting himself as somehow not that special, just "ordinary." No, Robin Astridge was not ordinary. He was exceptional, inspirational, full of love for the subjects he felt passionate about. A post-conference Sunday road trip through part of South Canterbury in 2007, Robin driving and taking myself and fellow Federation committee members Kenneth Stringer and Wynne HaySmith along, will stay in my memory forever. A spontaneous "Let's go" wound up as a leisurely tour around the heritage of the area, spotting things, stopping, exploring, then proceeding again. The journey with Robin for the past 20 years for me has been that – explore, appreciate, be inspired to do the very best we can do for local heritage. Inspired by a man who believed in the cause of heritage, believed in historical societies and organisations, by a man who would drop everything where possible to visit those who were full of doubt, and leave them with hearts full of hope. At the core he believed in people and our stories.

I'll miss you, Robin. The History Federation you strove hard to help keep together will miss you. Every heritage team you've come into contact with over your long, long service will miss you.

To quote Meg Cardiff of the Okato Historical Society, from one of a number of emails I've received since last Sunday:

"Certainly a dedicated and valued member of the Team, Robin will be sorely missed, but can be remembered of, as "Well Done thou Good and Faithful Servant."

From info later published in the *Waikato Times*:

Robin Astridge was born in Masterton in 1942. His father Leonard was serving with the Royal New Zealand Air Force at the time Robin was born, but after the war returned to work at the Post Office.

According to an obituary published in the *Waikato Times*, Robin was a keen cricketer and the sport remained a life-long interest. By the time he left school in 1959, he began to study accountancy, and worked as a clerk at the Waingawa Freezing Works, followed in 1960 by work in similar capacity for the Colonial Motor Company Limited. He would work in the motor trade for the next 32 years.

Robin married Christine Wilmshurst in 1963 at Lower Hutt Methodist Church. Up until early the 1970s, his life path did not really include heritage study – until he joined the New Plymouth Historical Society in 1972. Robin and Christine shifted to the Waikato in 1992 where, in retirement, Robin became a mainstay for the Te Awamutu Rosetown Choristers. He was deeply involved with his local Methodist Church, and with NZ Methodist history in general.

Images: cover — Robin at Pleasant Point Railway, 2007. Photographer: Lisa Truttman.

Opposite page — Robin at Henderson, West Auckland, 2010. Photographer: Bill Ellis

NZHF Conference 2023



Thames Street, Morrinsville, 1930s. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections

The dates set for the 2023 Annual NZ History Federation Conference , to be kindly hosted next year by the Morrinsville Museum & Historical Society, are **Saturday 25 to Sunday 26 March.**

More information, including programme details, will be sent through as they come to hand.



New Website, refreshed logo

Replacing our website has been a matter of discussion by your committee for some time now. We've been aware that the old site, built before the dominance of smartphone technology, wasn't exactly "mobile friendly", and changes to the site required going through a third party, which sometimes led to

delays. No longer.

We've taken the plunge, purchased a new domain (nzhistoryfederation.org.nz), taken up with Wordpress and Bluehost, and launched the new website which is now controlled by

the Federation rather than by a third party. We also arranged for a graphic designer to give our logo a bit of spit and polish, and the refreshed version is now on both the website and this newsletter.

Fine details are still being worked out, and the site is still being tinkered with (page appearance consistency etc), but the Members Directory is up and running, and as soon as you let us know of any changes, they will be done. Also — there is no longer any need to charge that one-off cost for setting up a page for your organisation, as a Federation member, on the website. This can be easily sorted now, and is a benefit of Federation membership. I'd appreciate receiving more images from those who do already have pages on the website!

Contact Lisa for more info, nzhistoryfederation@gmail.com

Anne Lillian Farrington 1933-2022

(From Birkenhead Heritage Society's July newsletter.)

“Anne was born and raised in Australia, and she shared her interesting story with the editor some years ago... She lived in Cairns, Queensland, where she worked for the Colonial Sugar Company (parent company for the Chelsea Sugar Refinery). “With a friend we were planning a trip to New Zealand.” Not knowing anyone here Anne wrote to the Auckland office asking for local information. By chance a cousin of Edward Farrington was working in the office and as most of the staff were married she suggested Edward reply. They wrote for about two years but the friend became romantically distracted and the trip was called off. Edward decided to visit Australia, and a visit to Cairns resulted in later wedding plans.

“In 1953 Anne came to New Zealand, with wedding plans underway, she worked in the city office of the New Zealand Sugar Co. Ltd. She was welcomed into the Young Wives group at All Saints Church before she was married. They were married on 15 November 1954. She and Edward were very involved in all aspects of the Church life over many years, the choir, fundraising, concerts, and Edward was later on the Vestry. Anne completed accountancy examinations and encouraged Edward to do the same.

“Once their two children arrived they were involved in their activities. Over the years they had their own home built, and enjoyed an active family life and travelled overseas. Anne also had her brother with diabetes come to live near them. Sadly Edward had died some years after the founding of Birkenhead Heritage Society, and the transfer of his relatives former villa to Mahara Ave for the Museum.



Anne Farrington at Soroptimist's celebration of Women's Suffrage, 2018.

Image from North Shore Channel magazine.

“In 2017 we congratulated Anne Farrington who had been recognised for her long years of service to the community with the MNZOM. Since 1975 Anne had been involved with Soroptimist International, at local, regional, national, and international levels. Soroptimist International was founded in 1921 in Oakland, California and sought to bring about change to the lives of women and girls worldwide – transforming lives through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities ... In New Zealand the organisation had set up a refugee relief committee for people escaping Europe during WWII.

“From the start it involved business and professional women and Anne has held a range of leadership positions with her local North Shore club, as Regional President of the Upper North Island clubs, and Treasurer of the Maori Scholarship Trust. She served at the national level as Treasurer and Trustee of a Scholarship Trust for education ‘for women over 25 years and on a course of study’, and various regional Scholarships towards furthering girls’ education. Anne also served on the Council of the Federation of Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific, a member of the team which chose the Soroptimist International Programme focus for the next four years, and Treasurer of the umbrella organisation comprising four Federations.

“Locally Anne had led the Women’s Fellowship of All Saints Anglican Church in Birkenhead, and Parish Auditor for 20 plus years, and completed a similar valuable task for the Birkenhead Heritage Society for many years. Anne continued to support the Birkenhead Heritage Society, holding Committee Meetings in her home. Providing her advice and knowledge willingly to assist the smooth running of the Museum and Society. She has been the financial reviewer for the [Society’s] Annual Report. She understood and explained the various documents required, for the Ten-year Council lease, and grant application processes. Anne and Edward were early neighbours of Brian Potter, so has a lifetime of contacts with the family. Anne has been a wonderful hostess and friend and she will be greatly missed by many people, as well as by her precious family. Anne was able to meet her newly born 2nd Great-grandchild born just before she passed away. We owe Anne a huge thank you for all she has done, she will be remembered long after her sudden loss after a short illness on the 7th May 2022.”

John David Isdale

1949-2022

Those of you readers who attended the 2018 NZHF Annual Conference at Thames would recall the wonderful and fact-filled lectures given by John Isdale, Manager of the Thames School of Mines, along with a look at the adjacent minerology museum.

Sadly, John passed away in August this year.

In 2021, he received a Thames-Coromandel District Council Community Services Award for 20 years service as the School of Mines, but he had had associations with the institution much longer than that. At the time he received his award, he told reporters, “I started here officially on December 13, 2001, but I’ve been associated with the place since at least the

1950s through my family. I first came in here when I was about seven.”

Hardly surprising, seeing as John’s father was noted local Thames and Hawkes Bay historian Alistair Isdale (1911-2001), a member of the Paeroa & District Historical Society and author of a number of books, including *The History of the River Thames*. The Isdales moved to Thames in 1943, starting a herb nursery. Alistair became curator of the mineralogical museum in 1956, and worked as a volunteer at the School of Mines from 1985. Alistair Isdale was honoured for 44 years of work at the museum and the School of Mines in 2000 with a certificate from the NZ Historic Places Trust (now Heritage New Zealand).



His hard-working and equally dedicated son John felt that the establishment of The Rock Shop at the School of Mines was a highlight of his career, but he had to pull back from the museum in 2021 due to ill health.

“What I’m doing now is the most important thing – dealing with the public,” he told reporters. “Heritage NZ’s mandate is promoting our heritage, especially to New Zealanders, and this is the kind of place that goes way back. Things are going to change over time, but the basics will still be here. In 20 years you’ll talk a different story, but it’s still the sample from the same mine, and it’s still our history in New Zealand.”

Information and image from The Valley Profile, www.valleyprofile.co.nz/2021/02/03/service-award-for-mineral-museum-manager

Additional Information on Alistair Isdale from

<http://www.ohinemuri.org.nz/journals/73-journal-45-september-2001/1623-alistair-isdale>

The New Incorporated Societies Act

(From the Incorporated Societies website:)

There is further information on the **financial reporting requirements** — the changes however will mainly affect those who are not what is termed “small societies”. According to the website, a “small society” is defined as:

“a society is considered small if the following criteria apply:

1. it spent less than \$50,000 in each of the 2 preceding financial years, and
2. it had current (that is, liquid) assets of less than \$50,000 at the end of the 2 preceding

financial years, and

3. it is not a 'donee organisation' for tax purposes and/or a registered charity.”

Also ...

Societies will need to reregister

Societies will have some time to transition and complete their reregistration. The reregistration period will run for 2½ years — **from October 2023 to April 2026.**

The reregistration process will involve reregistering on the Incorporated Societies Register and providing us with an up-to-date constitution (rules document). Until then, societies will continue to operate under the existing legislation (Incorporated Societies Act 1908). The regulations being developed over the coming months will provide more information about what societies will need to do to reregister. Before the start of the reregistration period, we will provide detailed information to societies on what's involved in reregistering.

Some of the things you can't do until your society reregisters

Your society won't be able to:

- * reduce its membership to 10 (there have to be at least 15 members, for now)
- * stop using its common seal
- * take appeals against decisions by the Registrar to the District Court (you'll have to take them to the High Court, for now).

Some of the things you can't do once your society has reregistered

Once your society has reregistered, it won't be able to:

- * ignore complaints from members (you will have to run a dispute resolution process that meets minimum natural justice standards)
- * appoint as an officer a member who is an undischarged bankrupt, has been prohibited from being a director or has been convicted of certain offences.
- * present its financial statements to its members later than 6 months after the end of your financial year
- * after winding up, divide any surplus assets between the members (you will have to give them to a not-for-profit entity named in your rules).

How you can stay up to date

We will update the information here on our website throughout the transition period. You can also choose to receive updates from us directly to your inbox. Alternatively, you can follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CompaniesOffice

President's Notes

Just popping this in under my other capacity as President of the NZHF to say — isn't it good news that the Covid-19 traffic light system is over? Oh yes, we should all still be careful, watch out for others who may be sick nearby (apart from Covid, who really wants the 'flu, etc?), perhaps consider still wearing masks while using public transport (I think I will). But hopefully, as folks regain confidence to step out and about, we might start seeing recovery in our part of the heritage sector.

That said, we've of course also got the challenges brought on by the effects of the complete digitisation of our bank accounts with the loss of cheques, which still affects many in older generations. Along with this, the consideration that will be faced by many committees of incorporated societies as the process of rewriting/revising constitutions and reregistering as societies continues. This could prove daunting to many, and too much so in some cases. I really do urge that you keep an eye on the Incorporated Societies site for updates. I will continue to publish any updates here in KIT as well.

Morrinsville Museum stepping up and agreeing to host next year's Conference was very welcome — and I have heard back from Taumarunui, who have expressed interest in hosting for 2024. More on both as info comes to hand.

With Robin Astridge's passing, *NZ Legacy* is on hold once more pending a decision at next year's AGM as to its future. He undoubtedly would have wanted it to continue in some form, but we also need to consider (1) Why have *NZ Legacy*, (2) Who is it for?, and (3) Does it really fulfil the Federation's commitment to our members, if hardly any contributions come through from the membership? We may need to specifically stage/host a workshop dedicated to coming to an agreement as to *NZ Legacy's* status and future. These though, are just my personal thoughts, and do not reflect those of the rest of the executive committee.

Anyway — I hope you all enjoy our Spring.

Regards, Lisa Truttman

News from the members

North Shore

In August, the Society noted the passing of both Ross Nunn, a long-time member and past President of the historical society, and their past Treasurer David Thorpe.

Torbay

(From the August issue of *Focus on Community* magazine)

"On looking at 'Papers Past' we found (Auckland Star 25 August 1880) a court case where "Charles Edward Smith and Arthur Smith were charged with committing wilful damage to

certain real property ...(owned by George Vaughan) ..by digging and making dangerous holes, and removing certain mineral, from beneath the surface, called kauri gum....” After the court case concluded Smith was fined ‘1s. And costs’.

“In the areas of Lucas Creek. Albany and the Wade River, Silverdale there were gum fields in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Up in the hills behind Long Bay there were once 40 gum diggers working. The Vaughan brothers took on the job of transporting the gum punts to ships off the beach, charging the diggers £1 a ton in one day they moved 30 tons. George Vaughan built a small shed to store the gum awaiting shipment. In the store were kept basic supplies for sale or trade. The women of the camp would buy a yard or two of material, sit on the bank, sew up each side, cut a neck hole, and go off happily in their new finery. That shed is in the old photos but it was later destroyed as it was past repair.

“When our society applied to restore the homestead, the small shed on the property was incorrectly called ‘the gumstore’. We found out that Tommy Vaughan (The last to live in the Homestead) had the Lightfoot family living with him. They had many dogs, which annoyed Tommy, so he brought in to the property the shed to house the dogs. The dogs won many prizes at shows. These certificates were displayed on the walls of the shed. We have left some of the certificates and some of the scrim on the wall as part of the history. As part of our ongoing projects we are going to use the shed to display more artefacts.”

Toroa Preservation Society

It took the Federation Executive Committee a long, long while (lots of things, such as Covid 19 for one, getting in the way) but we finally headed along on 20 August to visit some of the volunteers there who have worked hard since 2001 to repair and work on bringing the steam ferry *Toroa* back into working condition. Radio New Zealand offered them land at Selwood Road in West Auckland near the radio transmitter there.

Here’s their own website with a good timeline history of the ferry.
www.steamferrytoroa.com/



In other news ...

News from **National Services August newsletter** that the old NZ Museums website has been relaunched under a new name: **Kōtuia ngā Kete**.

“Bringing together over 1.3 million items from more than 60 collections, the new website will connect collections and taonga across Aotearoa New Zealand with people, places, and stories.

The name, Kōtuia ngā Kete, is drawn from a narrative based on the Māori worldview that weaves together baskets of knowledge, interlinking a broad range of knowledge base systems. Kōtuia ngā Kete sets the kaupapa and direction for the site, one in which communities come together to share their unique knowledge and practise of care.

One of the changes that we have recently rolled out is an updated directory that allows you to share the strengths of your collection and your organisation’s full list of facilities. To update your directory information, just log-onto to your eHive account.”

<https://ehive.com/communities/1000/kotuia-nga-kete>



For those of you who have faced the varying degrees of frustration with using **Archives New Zealand’s new “Collections Search” database** — be reassured that the department is still working on it. According to their August update:

“Conversations with our vendor continue regularly as we work together to progress options for enhancements. We’re working to make improvements on what we have, creating a more intuitive user experience.

“Some of the behind-the-scenes improvements we’ve made relate to system performance, data enhancement and the resolution of some historical issues. With over 6 million searchable archives in Collections search, of which over 1.2 million are able to be viewed online, this all takes time to embed. Our holdings continue to grow each day! Next steps include improvements to the advanced search functionality. We expect these improvements will be ready for user testing in September.”