



# AGMANZ NEWS

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# Objectives for New Zealand Conservation

By Ken Gorbey, Director Waikato Art Museum

It would appear to me that the New Zealand museum movement must, in the very near future, define both its short-term and long-term conservation needs for, I suggest, at this time we are floundering in a darkness occasionally lit by brief flares of publicity that do more to confuse than enlighten.

After seeing a few more conservation facilities and talking with a few conservators, I set out here views that have been formulated over the last seven years, when my concern has been the conservation of collections ranging from water-logged wood to paintings and prints.

## CONSERVATION — A BROAD OBJECTIVE

As the museum profession is charged with maintaining its collections in the best possible condition conservation must go beyond patching up the broken artefact or the mouldy canvas. The term *collection security* has been used more widely to include such matters as adequate storage, the correct handling of objects, protection against vandalism and fire, extremes of climate, strong light and packaging for shipment, etc, as well as the normal studio and laboratory techniques we normally associate with conservation. We might, therefore, divide conservation into two fields; preventive conservation where the aim is to maintain collections in as stable a condition as possible, and studio conservation where, as a last resort, we charge trained conservators with the job of fixing a dangerous or distracting damage or condition with the best materials and methods known for that job. I stress here the words 'last resort'. One conservator of international repute that I recently met was quite outspoken in this matter stating in his own dry way, that conservators had guaranteed their employment for the next 50 years attempting to put to rights the results of the ill-considered use of new materials and other mistakes over the last 30 years. Our broadest objective should perhaps then be the maintenance of our collections in as stable a condition as possible guaranteeing their survival for the enjoyment and edification of this and succeeding generations.

## NEW ZEALAND: SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

With a broad objective to guide us it should be possible for the museum profession to formulate specific objectives we must follow through to guarantee survival.

**1. The training of all members of the profession in preventive conservation.** Every member of a museum's staff has an important part to play in maintaining the collection and this should be stressed to all staff. The workshop hand who fails to clean his area and then throws a cigarette butt into a pile of shavings just before 5 pm can wipe out a century of collecting. The security guard who is a bit lax on checking windows can be an offender equal to the director who fails to keep his staff up to scratch. We need to have in all facets of museum work people trained in maintaining collections in the most stable

condition possible. Fire, burglary, vandalism, rough handling, inadequate packing, bad storage, leaking pipes, badly maintained buildings and services, etc, are not stable conditions.

**2. The establishment of studio conservation facilities adequate to meet our needs.** This I believe we would all accept as pressing. We will probably never have the conservation facilities we deem necessary so we will always be faced with the problem of the best possible utilisation of limited resources.

**3. The continuation and expansion of practical conservation within New Zealand collections.**

I hope all museums will commit more of their resources, both personal and money, to the conservation of their collections.

**4. Establish priorities in both research and practical conservation work in New Zealand.** It is very obvious that some specific artefacts and researches are more important and pressing than others so a system of priorities will need to be established and constantly reviewed.

**5. The setting up of an adequate promotional hierarchy within the conservation profession in New Zealand.** If we can guarantee promotional possibilities within New Zealand, something we have trouble doing at the moment, we will have a much better chance of not only recruiting but also holding conservators. I have discussed this before in my review of Karel Pater's Churchill Fellowship report (*AGMANZ News*, v 7, no 4, pp 75-76).

**6. The training of conservators within New Zealand.** I would suspect that our present economic structure is such that we cannot hope to compete with the salaries paid conservators in, for example, Australia, to where we have recently lost one of our conservators at a salary way beyond that paid to all but two or three of our major institutions' directors. Therefore we must train our own personnel. Some will leave New Zealand but others will become involved in their work here, and our peculiar lifestyle, and stay to become our senior conservators of the future.

**7. Research into specific problem areas in New Zealand conservation.** We do face many problems that are basically New Zealand in their scope but on which little work has been done to produce either basic research or bring together scattered references. For example we know very little on the preservation of New Zealand woods and fibres, materials that make up such a huge part of our collections. We seem to know very little about the ways various bugs and animals affect our collections nor the ranges of climatic extremes within which we should store and exhibit different categories of objects.

SOME PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS ON A PLAN OF ACTION  
I fully realise that many people will disagree with

these specific objectives and I look forward to comments in future issues of the *News* that will help to define them with greater precision. However, having set out my objectives I plan to plough straight on with a discussion of the set of solutions that I believe will have the greatest chances of success while utilising the resources we might have and might be given to the fullest.

We already have an Arts Council report that has recommended the establishment of a national conservation laboratory. This is no new concept. There are well-established national laboratories in Canada and Japan among others, India is in the process of organising such a laboratory, and the recent royal commission on Australian museums has recommended a national laboratory for Australia.

The plan to establish a national laboratory in New Zealand has been attacked, largely I would believe because of a mistaken belief that in some way this national institution threatens regional laboratories already established or that might in the future be established. However the report in no way suggests any down-grading of regional laboratories but instead looks to encourage their growth with grants and other assistance.

I believe this bogey of any national institution being an all-devouring monster of centralist control needs to be dispelled once and for all. It is a mistaken fear as even a cursory reading of the report will show. For example, a recent article in the *News* (vol 8, no 1) has set out how a small regional museum with a great deal of presence of mind and push did what can only be described as a magnificent job in restoring a huge anchor. All power to them. Yet, at the end of this article fear was expressed as to what might have happened had this anchor been transported in its initial fragile condition to a national laboratory in Wellington. There are several matters here that demand comment.

The museum concerned went straight to Dr Pearson with their problem. Dr Pearson has a huge staff in Perth involved in the preservation of objects that have been immersed in salt water. He is a world authority in this field and his institution acts as a virtual national conservation laboratory for Australasia and was recognised as such by the royal commission.

But this is in no way an argument against a national laboratory. Any such New Zealand institution will not be large enough to handle many of the fields represented in our collections and it will therefore develop in part as an advisory and information disseminating centre. From visits to a few conservation studios in Japan I am now aware of the 1000 years of skills learnt during a ten-year apprenticeship for remounting scrolls. No conservator in New Zealand could tackle such a problem but the director of a national conservation laboratory would be in a very good position (protocol

being all important) to make the necessary contacts to have such work done.

It would also be unfortunate to automatically assume that because a national laboratory is established in some particular place all large and fragile problem artefacts will be shipped off to this place. This is unlikely except where large-scale and already installed machinery is involved. It is very possible that if the next big anchor found has to be removed it will be to the large tanks already in existence in the Far North.

I have dealt with these objectives at some length as I believe we must dispel some of the fears that cloud this issue for it is my firm belief that, in part, the way of meeting our conservation objectives is through the establishment of a national conservation laboratory.

**Objective 1** is in part met by having available a pool of conservators who could act as tutors, if necessary establishing small formal courses of short duration around New Zealand.

**Objective 2 and 3** could be furthered substantially not only by the establishment of another laboratory involved in some work of a practical nature but by grants to assist regional laboratories.

**Objective 4** could be the responsibility of the governing council of a national conservation laboratory in liaison with all New Zealand museums and galleries. Private collections and the archaeological professional should be included.

**Objective 5** requires the establishment of a large, by New Zealand standards, institution with well-paid senior staff. The government rates for scientists would probably be adequate. In this way those in conservation would have promotional possibilities within a widened spectrum of positions both in the national and regional laboratories, perhaps encouraging them to pursue a career within New Zealand.

**Objective 6** could be a large part of the work of a central institute training both technical staff and science and arts graduates with no conservation training.

**Objective 7** is probably the preserve of a national laboratory for regional laboratories to be funded with practical work on a specific collection in mind. This does not mean that the national institutions should not assist the funding of research in regional laboratories where this seems practical.

In conclusion I must restate very clearly my belief that every museum has a duty to be involved in the conservation of their collections from the technological museum's wobbly wagon wheel to the gallery's mixed media. For this reason I would hope that more and more museums take steps to set up studios, laboratories, workshops, call them what you will, with their collections in mind.

I also believe for the reasons set out above that we do need a national conservation laboratory to assist us in these tasks.

# The Bell House Restaurant: an exercise in conservation

By John Stacpoole



In the field of building restoration the New Zealand Historic Places Trust has been almost solely concerned, until recently, with preservation, aiming to restore buildings to their peak periods for display to the public in the roles for which they were originally built.

When the Bell house at Pakuranga was given to it, the Trust ruled out a simple museum approach in the manner of Ewelme Cottage or Alberton because of the difficulty of furnishing the house as it would have been furnished by its first owners, Captain and Mrs Montessor Smith. There was no nucleus of Smith possessions to build on and any attempt to illustrate the building's importance as a fencible officer's house, through its furnishings, would have been completely artificial. Its subsequent rôle as a farmhouse also offered little scope for it lacked the ancillary buildings, other than a barn, which give interest to the more highly developed farming complexes.

Suggestions for craft displays, club rooms, or ordinary domestic use, finally gave way to the proposal for a restaurant. A willing lessee was found before restoration began. It had already been decided to demolish a big skillion or lean-to running across the back of the house for this was of inferior and later construction — the main house had been built in 1851 and the skillion in or after 1885 — and to replace it with a new kitchen wing with a hipped roof in keeping with the main two-storeyed structure. When the concept of a restaurant was accepted it became necessary to change the partitioning of this wing to accommodate cloak and toilet facilities for both diners and kitchen staff and the kitchen itself became vastly more complicated than it would have been for domestic use.

The wide entrance hall, with stairs at its far end, runs the combined length of the sitting rooms and dining

room and forms a pleasantly generous area in which to receive guests. Tall folding doors have always linked the two rooms and French windows, canted bay windows and good proportions together make an equally pleasant dining space. The French windows give access to a wide verandah on three sides of the house. Veranda flooring once more runs parallel to the walls and grape vines festoon the posts. Upstairs the big bedroom was turned into a sitting room and the dressing room became a bar. There is also a small private dining room on this floor.

Basic furnishing such as tables and chairs reproduce Victorian details but a sufficient number of antique chests and what the antique trade call 'smalls' have been lent by the Howick Historical Society or the Historic Places Trust to give an air of authenticity. The restaurateur has added to these, the architect has lent a large naval portrait to hand over the downstairs chimneypiece, and the Trust has provided four small sofas which came from Parliament's Legislative Council chamber. The Bell family produced family photographs, colourfully illuminated certificates and even the boat ticket which brought the family to New Zealand.

All the walls are lined with kauri boarding. By choice these would have been in a natural finish but they had been already painted and were painted again. The colours chosen were rich but subdued — a shade called 'bracken' in the main dining area, red in a small side room, yellow in the upstairs sitting room. Curtains upstairs are lace and downstairs either tapestry or brocade. Carpet squares have been preferred to body carpet.

The general effect has obviously met with public approval and it is to be hoped that the simple comfort of the setting will be retained. The lessees will no doubt be encouraged to gild the lily, to introduce florid Victorian pieces out of keeping with the plain but not inelegant architecture of the house. They should gather their strength to resist.

Bell House stands in the middle of Lloyd Elmore Park, a newly developed open space running to more than a hundred acres. The landscaping of this park will greatly improve the setting of the house which is soon to have as neighbours a group of smaller buildings, a colonial village to be set up by the Howick Historical Society. Howick's old vicarage is already there.

After some months of operation the lessees of Bell House had to face up to the need for a coolroom and this has now been installed out of sight of visitors but nonetheless a regrettably unhistorical addition. Such problems (fire egress is another) are part and parcel of conservation as opposed to preservation. The important thing is that the historic fencible house is retained without any great affront to its fabric and that it is giving pleasure to a great many people.

# A Costume Society for New Zealand

By Rose Reynolds, Hon. Curator,  
Early Colonial Dept, Canterbury Museum

Most museums in New Zealand have the nucleus of costume collection but how many deal with its conservation, or display it to the best advantage? As a comparatively young country for European civilisation, the present generation is still close enough to its early settlement forebears to remember them and proudly surrender heirlooms in their memory. The nineteenth century was notable as a great emigration period. Hundreds of sailing ships took men, women and children to settle in new lands on the far side of the world. And it all happened not so very long ago. So close, in fact, that out here in New Zealand we have been able to preserve with comparative ease many relics, including clothing, and assemble them in our museums, partly for our own pleasure but mostly as a measure of responsibility for their preservation and presentation.

Exhibitions of period rooms either in the original buildings or reproduced in museums and furnished accordingly, are a popular method of showing our early colonial way of life. Provided the setting is right and a sufficient supply of suitable furniture and furnishings available, many excellent results have been achieved. Even small museums with limited staff expertise can put up a good showing with the help of local enthusiasts whose memories of youthful days in grandparents' houses can produce authentic and quite delightful displays.

*Figure work*, the display of period costume on lay figures, is one of the most difficult types of display work yet it is often undertaken in the most haphazard manner by people who have little knowledge of historic costume or how to display it. If a stuffed bird were to be shown with the wrong feet or feathers, positioned in an impossible attitude or placed in a wrong setting, the museum concerned would quickly become a target for derision, yet we poor humans are frequently submitted to incongruous inaccuracies when represented by lay figures in period clothing. The general public, quick to discern ornithological errors are not so discriminating with their own kind. So long as the display appears to have an old-fashioned touch which appeals to their sentiment or humour it holds its interest, but museums have a responsibility to give correct information.

Overseas there is a strongly growing interest in collecting, conservation and display of period costume. Even the theatrical world has become aware that a very high standard of reproduction costuming is essential for the authentic presentation of period plays, especially for television. Just prior to World War II, theatrical costume for historical plays and films was making noteworthy headway but the turmoil of war and its aftermath called a halt to its progress for a quarter of a century and it is only recently that it has burst out into even greater glory. Museums, too, came in on new methods of

presentation with exciting results. A new purposeful vibration could be felt pulsating throughout the entire costume world.

In 1965 the British Costume Society was formed and, guided by the top museum costume authorities, specialised collectors, designers, lecturers and writers, it was instrumental in furthering knowledge and interest in costume. A quality journal is produced annually with articles by experts on the various aspects of costume. Seminars are held with lectures on widely diverse topics relating to costume, and organised visits are made to study notable collections in museums and historic buildings.

At the AGMANZ Conference held earlier this year in Dunedin, a suggestion was made that a New Zealand Costume Society be formed and that the Canterbury Museum be the platform from which to launch it. The idea sounds quite enchanting but the Canterbury Museum, despite its costume gallery and large costume collection does not have facilities for instituting such a grandiose scheme. To establish such a society satisfactorily would require a fair-sized roster of costume experts drawn from throughout the country to start with. The drive, office work and general organising would be expensive and time consuming. A society, apart from those run for charity, must give value for its membership fee and potential members would want a good return for their money. Again, a society must maintain the interest of its members. This work would fall heavily on two or three people, in all likelihood heavily loaded with their usual museum work. I doubt if any museums here could afford to spare their personnel for such extra time-taking responsibilities. It would therefore seem that the time is not yet quite ripe for the formation of a society, but undoubtedly the time will come when it should be possible. Now could well be a time of preparation, an intervening period of study and more study, more practice and yet more and more, then we would have more expertise and be better equipped to bring the proposed plan to fruition. To postpone the formation of a society does not mean that we necessarily reject it, but that we approach it from a different angle. Encouragement, practical advice, experiments and exchange of ideas would seem a start to the immediate problems. With something of this in mind we have been experimenting with the making of costume stands at the Canterbury Museum, working from instructions given in Janet Arnold's excellent *Handbook of Costume*. Jennifer Quérée and John Postlethwaite, two members of our staff, have produced a satisfactory adaptation, and Jennifer, who supervised the construction has also supplied the notes and sketches and has had photographs taken showing the method of construction which is simple and inexpensive and which should be within the capacity of even small museums to copy. With

correct padding and petticoat mounting to give the right shape and stance, the same stand can be used for any period. Also by photographing dresses on the stands a useful record can be made to be used in conjunction with the written detailed accession list. Dresses shown on stands are obviously unsuitable

for realistic displays such as in period rooms but they are invaluable for other types of display and for archive purposes as suggested above. Once costume curators have mastered the correct way to show clothes on stands, they will be well on the path for the satisfactory dressing of proper models.

## An adjustable dress stand for the display of period costume

By Jennifer Quérée, Assistant Curator,  
Early Colonial Dept, Canterbury Museum

In planning a three-dimensional display of period costume, the museum curator has always been faced with the problem of a suitable stand. Often, the use of a shop mannequin (or lay figure) is suggested, but this solution is not always very satisfactory. Lay figures used in commercial displays tend to stylize the human form — they are usually not in proportion and are often poorly modelled, the skin colouring is romanticised (heavily tanned, or excessively 'pink and white'), and the eye, mouth, and fingernail make-up is often over emphasised. In particular, they do not have the proper stance required for period costumes. Indeed, how many of us today stand in the contorted attitudes affected by these figures? In the past, the Canterbury Museum has used some commercial lay figures in displays, but in all cases they have undergone drastic 'surgery' to reduce height and size, to make them adjustable, and to tone down their often outlandish stance. Repairing and repainting was almost always necessary, and problems also often arose with the moulded hair of early shop models.

For a realistic period-room display we have found that the best solution to this problem is to have lay figures made to suitable specifications, but this can be expensive, and carries with it further complications in terms of correctly styled wigs for each period of costume displayed. However, for stylized displays a period costume can be shown on its own or in association with contemporary artefacts or furnishings, and here adjustable stands which can be padded out to the various required shapes seem to be the answer. Such stands are also of great assistance when it is necessary to mount dresses for study purposes, or for photographic cataloguing. In developing an adjustable dress stand, which is relatively easy to construct, and inexpensive (about \$10-\$15), John Postlethwaite and I have been greatly assisted by diagrams and descriptions of a similar stand given by Janet Arnold in *A Handbook of Costume* (Macmillan, 1973).

### MATERIALS USED IN CONSTRUCTION OF DRESS STAND

Length of 1½" square timber, 38" long

Four 22" lengths of ¾" light timber

¾" chipboard

3" door-bolt

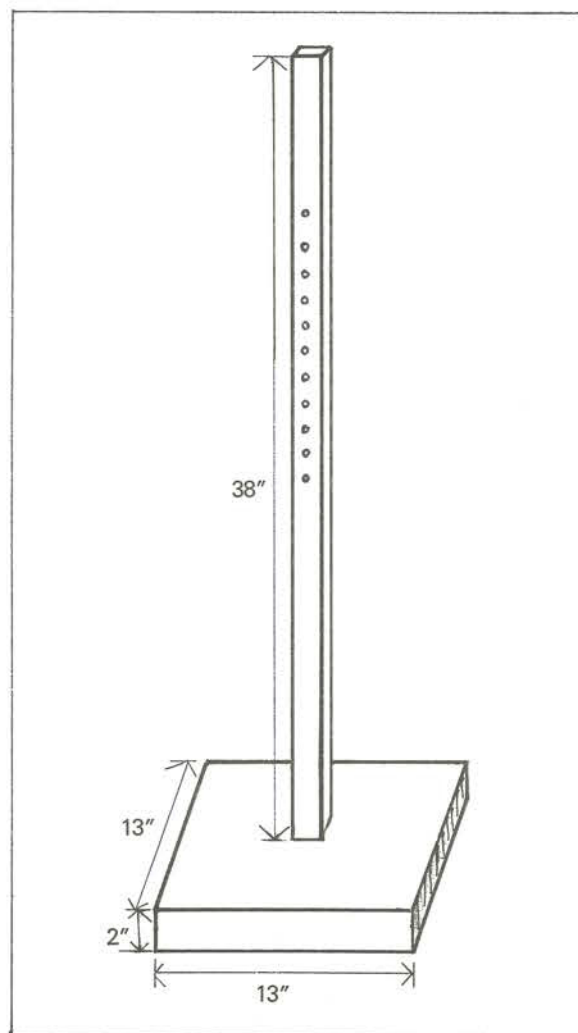
½" mesh chickenwire, approx. 30" x 32"

Two 44" lengths of No. 14 swg wire; fine florists' wire

Wadding; stockinette or any neutral-coloured stretch fabric; cardboard.

### CONSTRUCTION

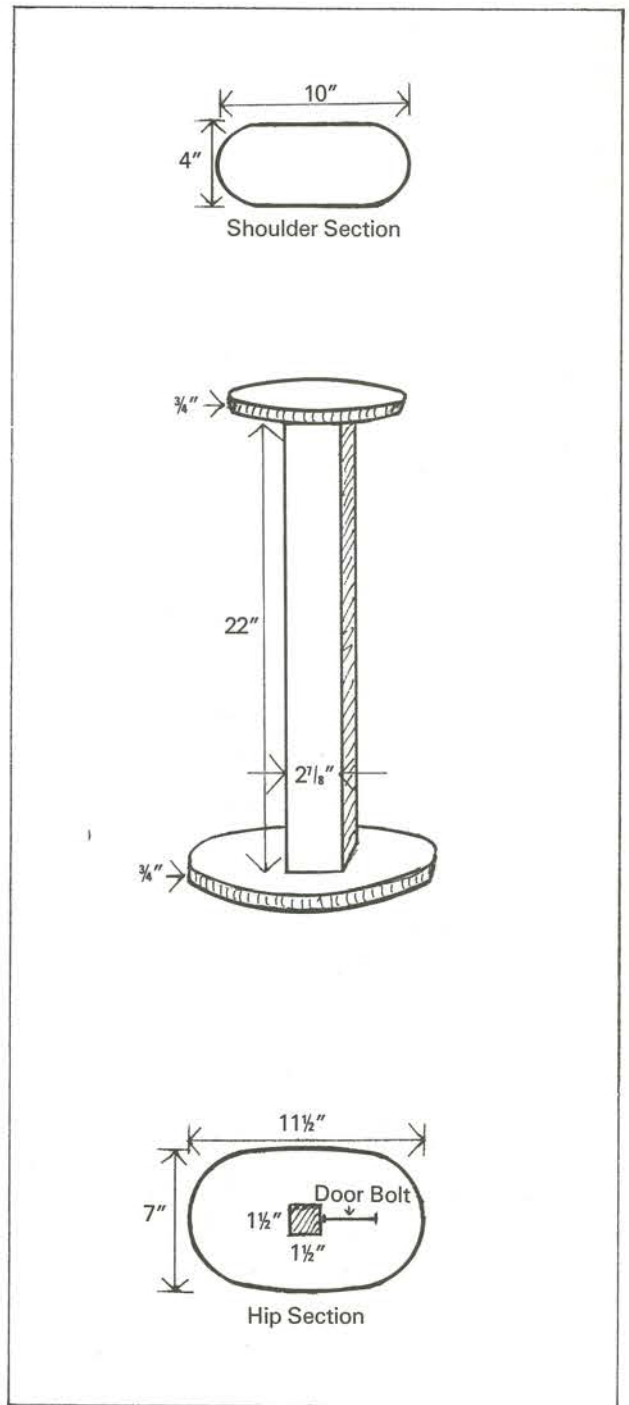
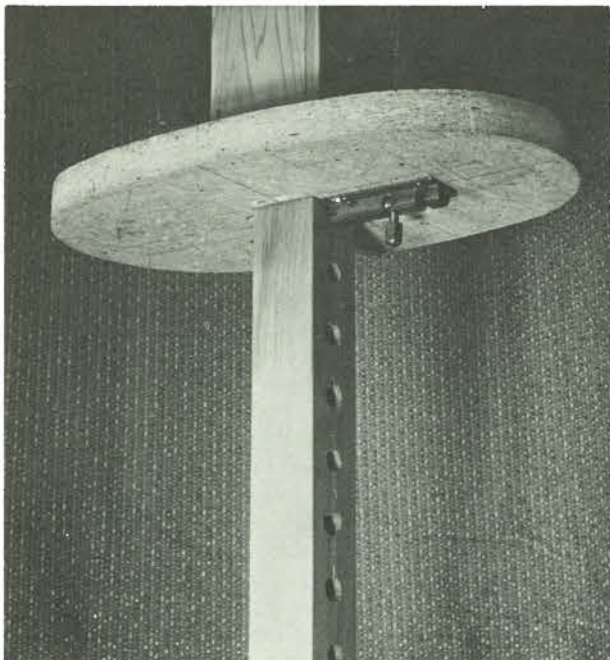
#### Rigid frame — Base and Pole



Construct a 13" square base, 2" thick, from chipboard. (Varnish later to prevent marking.) Attach 1½" square pole, 38" high. Bore eleven holes (of a diameter to take door-bolt) in pole, starting 18" and finishing 31" from base, the holes being ¼" apart.



Sliding frame

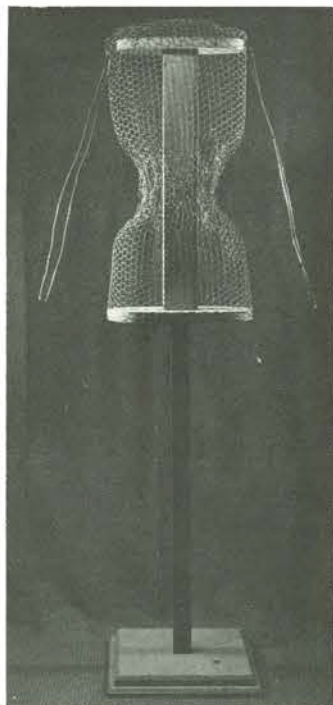


For the hip section, cut from the chipboard an oval shape measuring  $11\frac{1}{2}'' \times 7''$ . In centre of the oval cut a  $1\frac{1}{2}''$  square hole to take the pole. Attach the door-bolt to the underside of the hip section making sure that the bolt lines up with holes in the pole. Glue the four 22'' lengths of  $\frac{3}{4}''$  light timber to form a frame which slides *smoothly* over the pole. Attach hip section. Cut oval shoulder section,  $10'' \times 4''$ , from chipboard and attach to top of frame.

### Wire outer frame

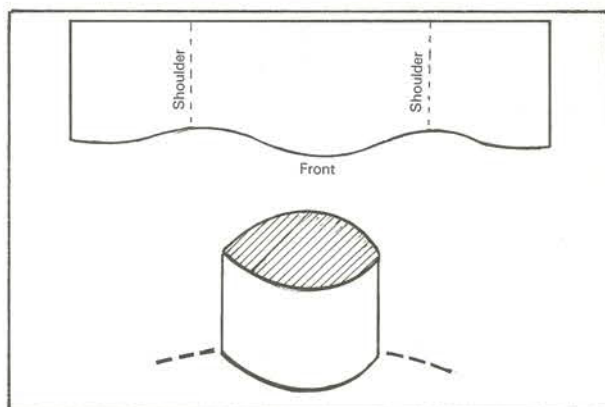
Cut rectangle approximately 30" x 32" from wire mesh (this gives a small bust size). Staple to hip and shoulder sections. Draw in to 'hourglass' shape at waist, using long-nosed pliers and a piece of stout twine. The centre of the waist should be about 9"-9"-10" from the base of the hip section. (A useful finished waist size is 18"-19" so make the unpadded size slightly smaller.) The join in the mesh at the back can be fastened with fine wire. Fasten mesh at top about 2"-3" above the shoulder plate. (This should be done with more of a slope to the shoulders than is shown in this photograph.) The arms are made from a doubled length of No. 14 swg wire, hooked and wired into the frame at shoulder level, to give a finished length of 20"-21". The arms can be bent into any position desired.

(Note: It is advisable to wear gloves when handling the wire mesh.)



### Covering the mesh frame

The mesh frame is covered with wadding tacked into place with large stitches. (I found it useful to cover the wire first with two layers of tissue paper — this stops the wadding poking through the holes.) Do not make this layer too thick, especially around the waist. The bust, however, may be padded out to 31". The wire arms should have a thin layer of wadding — more bulk can be added later with tissue paper if necessary. Cover the body and arms with stockinette or stretch fabric, seamed and darted into shape so that it fits firmly. This may be dyed a skin tone or left cream. (Alternatively, an old stretch-cotton skivvy with the collar cut off could be used — not a coloured one however.)



The neck piece should be made slightly smaller than the collar size of the dress being displayed, to avoid straining the fastenings. I used thin card, covered with fabric, to make a neck piece, but, as may be seen in the photograph, this was not entirely satisfactory as it tended to crease vertically. A plastic, of the type used in lampshade covers, could be better. Cut a strip of firm card, or plastic, about 15" long and 3"-4" wide, shaping it to fit over the shoulders and slightly down in the front. A circular piece is cut with tabs, to fit on top. Cover with fabric — do not get glue marks on this.

### Notes

By modifying the size of the sliding covered frame, a stand suitable for the display of children's clothing could be made, using the same techniques.

For the display of evening dresses which have very short sleeves it is suggested that a stand be made without arms attached. The sleeves can be filled with tissue paper.



## Displaying a period dress

As can be seen in the accompanying photographs of a silk bustle dress of 1870-1, the simple dress stand described above can provide a very satisfactory display vehicle, but the correct display of period costume is, unfortunately, not simply a matter of draping a dress over a stand. However, the problems inherent in this difficult type of display work can be overcome by study and practice. Appended to this article is a list of books recommended for the study of costume — other useful sources include papers such as *Punch*, contemporary magazines, newspapers, and *authentically dated* photographs. What is the date of the dress? It is essential to know the period of the dress in order to give it the correct *shape* when it is mounted on a stand. A word of warning! When a dress is handed into the museum, the donor may tell you the 'date' of it: 'This belonged to my great-grandmother who was born in 1865, so the dress is over a hundred years old', or 'Great-grandmother was married in 1865, so that dates this dress'. The 'date' may not always be accurate — great-grandmother may have worn the dress when



she was 70, or it might not have been *her* wedding dress. Thus it is most important to be able to identify the characteristics of garments of various periods.

Once the date has been established, the correct shape for the dress must be reproduced on the stand. This applies mostly to the skirt, as the torso is padded out to fit the cut of the bodice. Usually the shape of the skirt is achieved by the use of pleated brown-paper petticoats — this saves wear and tear on the original petticoats or frames (which are often not available anyway).

We use standard rolls of brown paper (either Kraft or a slightly lighter weight) which come in manageable widths of about 36". Ascertain the length/s of the skirt (it may be longer at the back) and cut somewhat shorter lengths of paper to correspond. Pleat the paper vertically and secure firmly across one end with wide sellotape. (Make enough of these pleated sheets to form a 'skirt' of the correct shape when pinned together.)

Using 1" wide strips of cotton material, make a waistband and crossover braces for the figure. Pin the lengths of pleated paper to the waistband, darting into shape around the waist with sellotape, until the skirt is formed. Fasten down each 'seam' of the paper petticoat with pins. (*Note:* It is most important to weave the pins in and out several times so that they hold, and to tuck the sharp ends inside so that they will not catch on the dress. As a further precaution against snags, or the pins rusting in a damp or humid climate, it is advisable to sellotape over the pinned area.) Do not make the pleating too bulky around the waist. Extra pieces, shorter in length, may be needed as reinforcing or to form the late crinoline and various bustle shapes. Sometimes the paper may need trimming into shape at the hem so that it does not show beneath the dress.

Once the paper petticoat is correctly shaped, the skirt may be placed over it. If the dress material is very fine or is semi-transparent a material petticoat should be placed over the paper. To achieve the correct shaping around the hips and stomach, lightly pad on top of the petticoating with acid-free tissue — do not scrunch the tissue into hard lumps, but fold it into place softly, and smooth it into shape from the outside, taking care not to damage the material. If the bustle shape, for example, is not full enough, add extra brown paper or tissue in the same way.

The bodice is padded into shape with acid-free tissue paper. The desired shape is the one dictated partly by nature, but also by the cut of the garment.

*Do not strain seams and fastenings by putting in too much padding.*

**Accessories:** Dresses often need accessories such as collars, vests, cuffs and undersleeves, without which they would not have been worn. Useful guides to accessories for the different periods are the *Cunnington Handbooks* and *Bradfield* (q.v.).

However, if you are not sure, or do not have the *correct* accessories for a dress, it is better to leave them off altogether, rather than have, for example, a

wide Edwardian machine-lace collar on a crinoline dress of the 1860s.

Other accessories such as shoes, hose, gloves, fans, wedding veils, bonnets, parasols, and so on, which may have come in with the dress, and/or which are correct for the period, may be shown alongside the dress stand. This topic will be discussed, and illustrated more fully in later articles, as will the means of achieving the various period shapes through paper petticoating, and the general cataloguing and care of costume.

#### **Books on Costume**

(particularly relating to the nineteenth century)

*A Handbook of Costume.* Janet Arnold. Macmillan 1973

An excellent introduction to period costume work. Historical sources, dating, conservation, storage, display. Very helpful bibliography and notes on collections in British museums. Well illustrated.

*Patterns of Fashion.* Janet Arnold. Macmillan 1975

Book I — c.1660-1860; Book II c.1860-1940

Englishwomen's dresses and their construction. Splendid drawings and notes on materials, colours, trimmings, measurements and accessories.

*Costume in Detail.* Nancy Bradfield. Harrap 1968

Women's dress 1730-1930. Similar type of instructional book to above but without the graph measurements. Greater variety of types of costume.

*The Gallery of English Costume.* Anne M. Buck.

Picture Books 1 to 8: 1. A Brief View; 2. 18th Century; 3. 1800 to 1835; 4. 1835 to 1870; 5. 1870 to 1900; 6. 1900 to 1930; 7. Children's Costume; 8. Costume for Sport.

Illustrated with photographs showing accurately posed models with good captions. These inexpensive booklets are very reliable and can be obtained from Gallery of English Costume, Platt Hall, Manchester 14, England.

*Handbook of English Costume.* C. Willett Cunnington and Phyllis Cunnington. Faber. Various publishing dates.

From the Mediaeval period onwards a separate handbook covers every century to the present day. Many illustrations and highly detailed text. The handbook on the nineteenth century is particularly useful.

*The Dictionary of Costume.* R. Turner Wilcox. Batsford, 1970.

In alphabetical order for quick reference. Many well-drawn groupings of costume. Includes textile descriptions.

**Note:** The above books have all been on sale recently. There are earlier books by C. Willett Cunnington, Herbert Norris, James Laver, Millia Davenport, Doreen Yarwood and Langley Moore which are all very good but they are now out of print. Most of them should still be available in reference libraries.

## Commonwealth Association of Museums

**By Prof. Keith W. Thomson, Dept of Geography,  
Massey University**

In May, in the week prior to the commencement of the ICOM meetings in Russia, the Commonwealth Association (CAM) met in London. In addition to several meetings of the Executive Council and the General Meeting, a series of seminars was held covering topics on establishing and improving museums, particularly in developing countries. A total of 38 museologists from 10 Commonwealth countries attended for all or a part of the 'conference'. Two New Zealanders, Captain John Malcolm and the undersigned, registered and gave short papers on problems associated with Museums of Transport and Technology and with the siting of institutions in urban areas.

The generous host institution was the splendid new Museum of London, opened in December 1976 in the rebuilt Barbican Complex. Other meetings were held in the Science Museum, the Horniman, the Commonwealth Institute and the headquarters of the Oxfordshire County Museum system at Woodstock. A noteworthy feature in the last museum was the magnitude of the operation supplying educational 'boxes' to schools and other institutions.

Numerous British specialists from museums, universities and private consulting services contributed their expertise to the meetings although I imagine most delegates would have gained more from their inspection of facilities and methods used in the museums visited and from the exchange of ideas and information. As an example, arising from such talks copies of the recent Antiquities Act

passed in New Zealand have subsequently been despatched to certain African countries to help in the devising of appropriate statutes there.

A new constitution was approved which transforms the Association into one of national museum associations rather than of institutional and individual members. Where no such national body exists, a limited number of individual members will be permitted to join. A regular newsletter is to be established under the editorship of Dr E. Haque, Director of the National Museum, Dacca, Bangladesh.

The following are the officers elected for the coming three-year period:

*President* Dr W. D. L. Ride, Australia.

*Vice-Presidents* Dr E. O. Eyo, Nigeria; Dr F. Greenaway, Britain.

*Council* Mr M. P. Alladin, Trinidad; Dr E. Haque, Bangladesh; Mr T. Hume, Britain; Dr M. S. N. Rao, India; Professor K. W. Thomson, New Zealand; Mr R. J. Varney, Britain; Dr M. Williamson, Canada. *Secretary/Treasurer* Mr J. Robinson, c/- Science Museum, Exhibition Road, London, SW7 2DD.

Mr Tom Hume, who is shortly retiring from his position as Director of the London Museum, has been appointed to replace Mr R. Singleton as Director of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Mr Singleton is commencing a series of consulting assignments which may enable him to visit New Zealand again within the next couple of years.

# Defining Archives

By Stuart R. Strachan, Archivist  
Hocken Library, University of Otago

Many museums, as well as caring for the usual artefactual collections, also collect and preserve what are loosely called historical documents. This is a broad term which is usually taken to include photographs, maps, books, pamphlets, newspapers, manuscripts and archives. While the nature of photographs, maps, books, pamphlets, and newspapers is obvious from their physical form, and is generally well understood, the same is not true of archives, manuscripts, and of a third category with which they are generally associated, records. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that in certain contexts maps, photographs, newspapers, and pamphlets can assume the character of archives in a way which has nothing to do with their physical attributes. And it is important to get the distinctions right because they bear fundamentally on the way in which any particular collected of historical documents ought to be handled.

**Records**, wrote T. R. Schellenberg, the great American theoretician, are:

*All books, papers, maps, photographs, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any public or private institution in pursuance of its legal obligations or in connection with the transaction of its proper business and preserved or appropriated for preservation by that institution or its legitimate successor, as evidence of its functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities or because of the informational value of the data contained therein.*<sup>1</sup>

This is a very comprehensive definition, and it can be briefly restated. *Records are the documentation created by an organisation in the transaction of its business and preserved as evidence of them.*

The origin of the word **archives** is usually traced back to Greek *archeion*, which is explained as meaning, 'a magisterial residence or office', and which in its turn is derived from the Greek, *arche*, meaning 'government'. This emphasises the fact that records, and so archives, are in the first place, created as a tool of government. From this it will be seen that there is some overlapping of the two terms, archives and records, even in archival circles. In England, for instance, the national archives is known as the Public Record Office; the head of a County Record Office is known as the County Archivist; and *Archives* is the title of the journal of the British Records Association. Schellenberg, however, made the distinction very clear, and it is one which has achieved general acceptance. For him archives were simply:

*Those records [which we have defined already] of any public or private institution which are adjudged worthy of permanent preservation for reference and*

*research purposes and which have been deposited or have been selected for deposit in an archival institution.*<sup>2</sup>

Archives then are those records which are kept deliberately for one reason or another, be it legal, administrative, or cultural. Not all records become archives, but all archives are records, albeit specially marked out ones. Records is the wider term, and archives the narrower one.

There is, however, a third term, **manuscripts**. The trouble with this word is that most people know sufficient Latin to translate this as 'handwriting' or 'written by hand' and so to apply it to any handwritten document. This is a legitimate use of the word, but rather a misleading one which should be held in check. To call every document written by hand a manuscript is akin to calling every object without wires a wireless. Strictly speaking a manuscript is a document written with literary intent, and in this sense the use of the word and the particular kind of document it describes has quite a different history to the kinds of documents characterised as archives and records. There are in fact two different traditions, the library as represented in the manuscript, and the administrative as represented in records and archives. The modern literary tradition as represented in manuscripts can be seen as having begun after the fall of the Roman Empire when the medieval Church adopted as a work of God the transmission of the writings of some classical authors, the patristic writings, and the writing and transmission of lives of saints and chronicles, all by the laborious process of copying by hand. The writings had nothing to do with administration, were not part of the result of a transaction, and their intention was literary. With the invention of the letter press, the work of transmission was carried on by printing instead of by copying by hand. The manuscript became the published book. This rather left the word 'Manuscript' without a niche, but it continued to be applied to unpublished literary works and to literary works in their pre-publication state, for which a wide readership was eventually intended. This very strictly is what the term manuscript ought to continue to mean, but it would be unwarrantably dogmatic to say that it does. It has also come to be attached to the documents of individuals, particularly letters and diaries, which may or may not have a literary intent, in the sense that they were meant to be read widely. Another term which is often used of such documents is **private papers**. But whether the term manuscripts is applied to private papers or not, it would never be used of archives and records as they have been defined. Historically this use has no justification. Organisations such as government departments, local authorities, and

businesses never refer, and have never referred, to the documents they produce as manuscripts, but always as records or archives. Not only are such documents hardly ever written with literary intent, but archives and records invariably include considerable numbers of typewritten, cyclostyled, and printed documents, to which manuscript in its literal sense cannot be applied.

The definitions of archives and records, as given by Schellenberg, have already revealed something of their characteristics, but they should be made explicit:

Archives are generally created by a corporate body with perpetual legal succession: a government, a local authority, a business, a society; occasionally the body can be a family, but very seldom an individual on his own account.

Archives are created through the transaction of that body's business in the accomplishment of its purpose; indeed they are an essential part of the transactions, without which the transactions are not possible. This emphasises the *official* character of archives.

'The documents so created can be of every kind, and may include maps, photographs and printed matter. It is not their physical form which counts, but the circumstances which have brought them together.

A fourth characteristic is that they are preserved permanently often for reasons other than for which they were originally created. The reasons may be official or cultural, especially for the purposes of historical research.

A most important characteristic which does not really emerge from Schellenberg's definitions is the *organic* quality of archives, the dependent relationship of one item in a group of archives on another. A single letter taken in isolation is very often meaningless unless considered in relation to other letters or other forms of documents; a whole series of archives may be meaningless unless considered in relation to other series of archives created by the same organisation. The consequence is that a single archival item cannot be viewed or treated or organised in isolation, but has to be seen in the whole context of the body of archives of an organisation, which has overriding primacy. The word *organic* naturally suggests that the whole body of archives of an organisation is akin to a constantly growing, changing, and adapting organism, no part of which is independent of the others. More than any other quality, a feeling for this organic characteristic of archives will give the museum curator the surest touch when he comes to handle them.

There is a sixth characteristic about which there is some dispute among theorists. Sir Hilary Jenkinson, the great English archivist, maintained the importance of an 'unblemished line of responsible custodians' as being an essential ingredient in archival quality. Unless it could be shown that a document had not escaped at any time from its official place of deposit, Jenkinson felt that its authenticity must always be suspect, and that in a

court of law for it to receive the same credence as a document that had always remained in official custody would require the support of expert testimony including the actual production of the document in court, whereas for the document which had never strayed a certified copy would be quite sufficient.<sup>3</sup> This doctrine of custody has never been accepted by European and American archivists, and though there is no doubt that archives are better archives for having an unblemished line of custody, the real question is whether archives which have strayed cease to be archives altogether. Jenkinson would say, yes, they do, but Schellenberg maintains, and I think rightly, that Jenkinson's doctrine was only possible in the somewhat peculiar circumstances of England, which has been relatively free from war and never known mass dispersal of its archives. If Jenkinson's doctrine were applied in its full rigour to European archives, which have suffered so severely in the past from the ravages of war, then an unacceptably large part of them could no longer be regarded as archives.

All this may seem rather theoretical, but an accurate appreciation of the nature of archives is of practical importance for the way in which the archivist, and the museum curator, organises archives. Their job is to ensure that the essential characteristics of any particular group of archives are preserved in the highest degree possible so that it will have maximum value as evidence for the historian. This is done by strict adherence to the twin principles of **provenance** and **original order** which were developed in Europe in the nineteenth century. The application of these principles permeates the whole of archives work, and it is their use which most strongly marks off archival from library methods of handling documentary material. The **principal of provenance** has its roots in the organic idea of archives which was touched upon earlier, and can be alternatively referred to as *respect des fonds*, which is sometimes loosely rendered into English as *sanctity of the archives group*. As its language would suggest the idea of *respect des fonds* was first put forward and applied in France, but received its most rigorous application in Prussia as the *Provenienzprinzip*, the origin of the phrase, principle of provenance. The essential idea of *respect des fonds* is that all the archives, no matter what their form, from a single administrative source, no matter what its nature, should be kept together as a single *fonds* or group, and that documents from different administrative sources should never be physically confused.

The second principle is that of **respect for original order**, which was developed originally in Prussia as the *Registratorprinzip*. This lays down simply that archives should be maintained in the original order given to them by the administrative source, if this can be determined. In a real sense this merely amounted to respecting the provenance of a document within a *fonds* or group, as *respect des fonds* was a means of doing so between groups. The fundamental notion behind both these principles is

that of context, the physical and administrative context of a document. It is not subject or authorship, or, in current library jargon, 'responsibility for intellectual content', which is crucial, but the idea that the importance of a document can lie as much or more in its relationship to other documents, as in itself.

Boiling down these theoretical considerations into practical advice for the museum curator:

Always keep together documents, whether diaries, letters, photographs, pamphlets and maps, from a single source, if it is physically possible to do so.

Never confuse documents from different sources unless it can be plainly shown that they originally belonged together.

Retain or endeavour to re-establish the original order of documents within a particular group of archives.

Do not arrange them according to an artificial scheme of your own devising unless it can be shown that none previously existed.

If you should chance across a large or complex group of archives, do not attempt to select from it or organise it yourself. Call in specialist advice from an institution such as the Alexander Turnbull Library or the National Archives. Otherwise you may do irreparable damage.

A group of archives can be likened to an archaeological site, but one composed of paper. It should be approached with the same care.

#### REFERENCES

1. T. R. Schellenberg. *Modern Archives. Principles and Techniques* (1956). p 16.
2. *ibid*, p 16.
3. Hilary Jenkinson. *A Manual of Archive Administration*. (1965). pp 9-11.

## Picton's Museum

By Christine Cole Catley

Picton's small museum is uniquely situated, on the foreshore behind the extensive play area for children, and in view of the streams of people who travel daily in the Cook Strait ferries. Even those making a day excursion to the Sounds have time, between ferries, to visit it and see something of the district's past.

Whaling exhibits naturally predominate. The whaling settlement of Te Awaiti in Tory Channel was established by Captain John Guard in 1829. Many Picton and Sounds families are descended from the early whalers, and the Perane family, which wound up its operations at Whekenui in Tory Channel in the 1960s, has many links with Marlborough. Prominent among the whaling equipment is a harpoon gun from the Peranos' whaling vessel, the *Orca*, although children show even more interest in the coconut which was taken from the stomach of a 48-ft sperm whale, caught off the Kaikoura coast.

The billet or figure-head of the sailing ship *Edwin Fox* was donated by the New Zealand Refrigerating Company. It evokes mixed feelings: gratitude of course that it was saved from the hordes of souvenir-hunters who have ravaged the splendid old ship, but sorrow that the hulk still lies, deteriorating, in the inner waters of Queen Charlotte Sound.

Last year the Picton Borough Council celebrated its centenary. The festivities benefited the museum as further gifts were made to build up its store of domestic and farm exhibits, period furnishings and photographs. A garment known as 'Uncle Fred's bathing suit', pre-1910 and in tasteful stripes from neck to knee, was particularly suitable in view of the museum's site on the shore.

Farm implements, butter churns and an old mangle jostle for space. A strikingly sturdy and bone-jarring bicycle was used by Picton's much-loved doctor,

Dr Redman, on his rounds. Dr Redman was the first person in Marlborough to own a bicycle, then the first to own a motor-cycle. Not to be outdone, he then became the first to own a motor car, an Oldsmobile, which he procured in 1903. Of these vehicles, apparently only the bicycle survives.

A recent acquisition, from the Marine Department, is the original kerosine light from the Borthers Lighthouse. Of 1000 candlepower, it was used as the standby light till towards the end of last year.

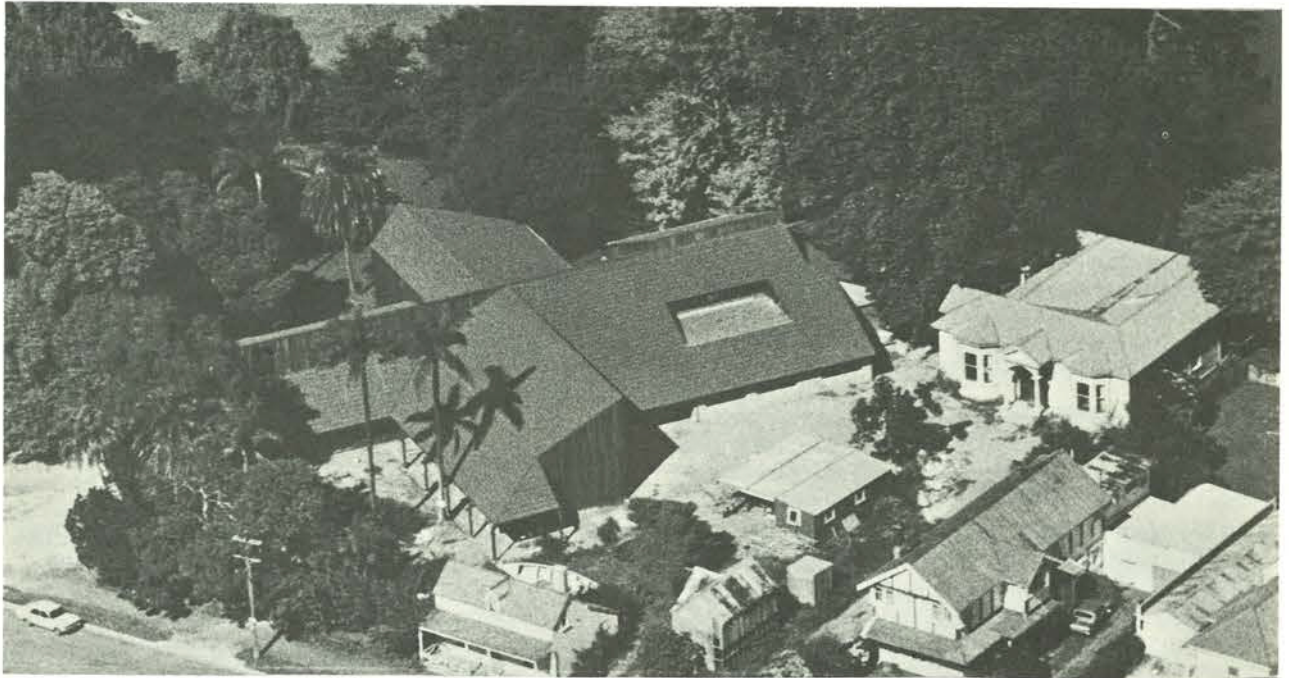
The museum is officially known as the Smith Memorial Museum. The Smith Memorial Building was originally a shelter shed for those enjoying Picton's foreshore reserve. The Picton Borough Council offered the building to the local branch of the Marlborough Historical Society in 1963, as there was no longer room in the town's library for the branch's collection of historical material. The museum was officially opened on 28 November 1964 — for one day. Restricted hours and much voluntary work the next year put the museum on a regular footing.

Although an admission charge was abolished at the end of 1965, the museum was debt free by the close of 1969. Two rooms have been added since then, and there are plans for extension on the same convenient site.

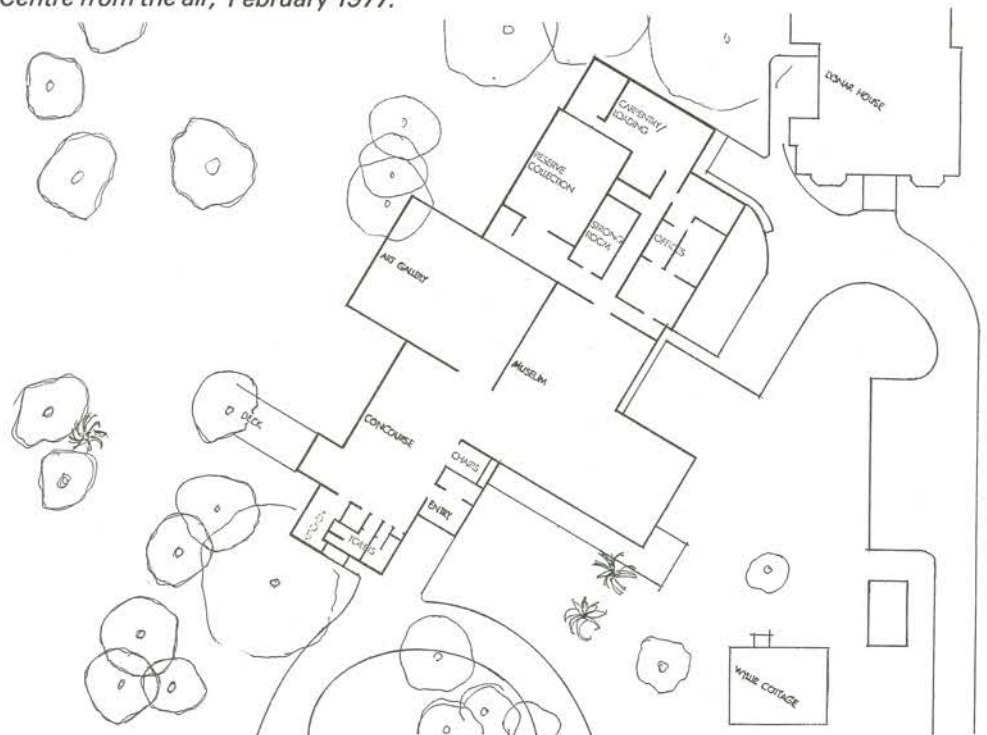
The president of the Picton Historical Society, Mrs May Horrey, is a great-great-granddaughter of Michael Aldridge, a whaler in Port Underwood. Mrs Horrey talks warmly of 'the marvellous band of voluntary helpers, who come back year after year to staff the museum'. It is open daily, with a paid custodian on duty from 10 am to 1 pm when the volunteers take over till 3 pm. During holiday periods and weekends, or when tour parties or school groups are expected, the museum is staffed till 5 pm.

# Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre — a new development in recreation and research

By Warner Haldane, Director



*Gisborne Museum & Arts Centre from the air, February 1977.*



Plan *Gisborne Museum & Arts Centre*. Drawn by Colin Pilbrow (Architect).

### General considerations

The Gisborne Museum & Arts Centre which is set overlooking a park, consists of five principal sections: Museum, Art Gallery, Concourse, Offices, workrooms and stores, Studios. All except the last are in the main building, which is of fireproofed wood construction except for the stores that formed part of the pre-existing building and are made of concrete. The design of the building is low key to blend in with its surroundings and avoid distracting the visitors' attention from the contents. Due to the nature of the building a heat-detector activated sprinkler system has been installed throughout. This has been augmented in the Museum, Art Gallery and Stores by a smoke detection system giving direct warning to the fire brigade, which, under normal circumstances, will give about ten minutes' grace before the sprinklers are activated. The use of sprinklers was sanctioned as a back-up system because of its very localised action which would cut down on much more costly fire and smoke damage. Some conflict arose between the needs of fire safety and security. However, by cutting down on the number of windows and on the number of exits (to the legal minimum) as well as compartmentalising

the building, good basic security has been achieved. The public areas and offices are heated by electric underfloor heaters. Ventilation in the public areas is through floor level vents and an extractor fan in the apex of the roof. No air conditioning has been provided as its high capital and running costs were considered inconsistent with the degree of environmental control required for the bulk of the exhibits. It was decided that for special cases localised control could be provided. It is expected that the design of the building and the materials of which it is constructed will for the most part keep the fluctuations of temperature and relative humidity within acceptable limits. It is also unlikely that dust and airborne chemicals, for example, sulphur dioxide, will be a serious problem in Gisborne for a good many years to come. The comfort of the visitors has also been considered in the provision of carpet throughout the public areas. An important feature of the new building is the ease with which exhibits can be transferred between the stores, the loading bay, the museum and the art gallery. Distances have been kept to a minimum, changes of level have been provided with ramps, and corridors and doors have been made wide and high.



### The Museum

This is a windowless area of some 198 square metres with no obstructions other than trusses 2.9m above the floor spaced 3.6m apart. There is no background illumination, everything is individually lit by spots and floods set in lighting tracks attached to the underside of the trusses. Display case lighting is also derived

from these. As a result the area is very flexible. Within the museum area is the supervisor's desk, which affords a view of most of the museum, art gallery and concourse and is the control point for the lighting. Integrated with the supervisor's desk is the shop, which provides an outlet for members' work, as well as publications of various kinds.



### **The Concourse**

This area of some 112 square metres is capable of seating 100 people. During the day it serves as an entrance hall, venue for movable displays and a coffee bar which has an extension onto an outdoor deck in the park. At night, the area, which can be completely shut off from the rest of the building, and which contains a projection room, toilets and a kitchen, is hired out to other groups. The concourse has already been used for music, drama, poetry, lectures, films, meetings and dinners. It has become a very popular venue and is already being booked many months in advance.

### **The Offices, Workrooms and Stores**

The Offices are modest and functional and consist of a Director's Office, General Office and Committee Room. There is a workroom for research, cataloguing, etc, which also houses the reference library. There is a large workshop adjoining the loading bay for the construction of displays, unpacking exhibitions, etc. A laboratory has been provided which is equipped with large sinks and a fume cupboard and will be used for first-aid conservation work. There are three principal storage areas: a small document store, a strongroom and a main store some 63 square metres in area to which a

### *The Concourse interior.*

mezzanine floor of some 20 square metres has been added, on which there will be movable shelves for smaller objects. Pictures, light carvings and the like will be hung on movable netting-covered frames on the ground floor. An undifferentiated area on the ground floor will be used for bulky and otherwise intractable items. The mezzanine floor has been designed to allow for expansion and care is being taken to ensure even temperatures and good air circulation.

### **The Studios**

These are situated in the old Museum building which has been moved round to the back of the section and renamed Lysnar House. It provides working areas and equipment for painters, printmakers, woodcarvers, potters and photographers and is jointly administered by the groups concerned. The darkroom is used by both the Camera Club and the Museum staff, thereby eliminating the need for a separate darkroom in the main building. Lysnar House is available to members 24 hours a day, seven days a week and has already been the venue for numerous tutorials and meetings as well as individual activity.





### **The Art Gallery**

This is an unobstructed area of some 149 square metres, with one window which can be closed off with a shutter, leaving an uninterrupted length of wall. The maximum usable height is 3.4m, governed by the base of the trusses and a rectangular grid for supporting dividing screens using a pressure pole system. The walls are lit by fluorescent tubes (incandescent lights have been rejected on the grounds of power consumption and heat generation). The central area is however lit by spots and floods mounted in tracks under the trusses.



*The Concourse exterior.*

### **Conclusion**

After many years of gestation, the birth of the new complex has given many fields of artistic, scientific and historical endeavour a timely boost and by bringing together a wide range of activities should provide most valuable cross-fertilisation. If Captain Cook were to step ashore today, one hopes that he would be impressed by the local blend of the arts and sciences which will provide the basis for the future of the East Coast. All photos by Warner Haldane.

## **The need for contact — a taxidermist's view**

**By H. D. Barker, Taxidermist-Preparator  
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery**

The Winston Churchill Memorial Fellowship which I was offered in 1976 was a most rewarding and stimulating personal experience. My application was activated by enthusiastic encouragement from fellow staff, including the Tasmanian Museum's Director, Don Gregg, a former New Zealander late from Christchurch. I also had a strong personal desire to see how the other fellow operates, something we isolated taxidermists don't often get the chance to do. The six months spent organising the tour of Britain and North America was quite an exhausting exercise. To be quite honest I was a little apprehensive about the possible outcome. But the experience gained from my observations at the 15 museums visited in Britain, the United States and Canada well compensated the effort of programming. (The period of travel, incidentally, was from 28 March to 25 June 1976.)

British natural history museums faced problems generally similar to those we have in Australia, but as institutions became larger these problems became magnified. It became obvious to me that my British

counterparts sadly lacked the inter-museum contact one would have expected in view of the smaller distances between museums in that country.

The American scene was a little more cheering. Techniques could be — and often were — widely discussed and criticised. Such lively contact brought new variations and a professional approach to preparation.

It was generally agreed by all I met on tour that if our display preparations are to be kept at an acceptable standard we must communicate and show willingness to exchange ideas and developments rather than keep them to ourselves. After all, we are working for the same cause. For example, I am privately working on a promising improvement in manikin construction; basically a 'once-off positive' variation of the method of the famed taxidermist Carl E. Akeley, of Chicago. If it is successful I will introduce it to our museum and to others interested.

The nature of museum taxidermists' work is basically similar the world over, though of course with varying

degrees of enthusiasm and productivity. We are usually contained in the bowels of our institutions, emitting obnoxious odours from time to time, and invariably having inadequate work areas (a problem shared by other museum personnel). Taxidermists are numerically a small minority in museums. They therefore carry little clout in a highly specialised job which, for natural history museums, is an indispensable part of their display and collection function. Their work, especially in smaller museums,

involves a large range of materials and demands a wide range of skills, so continuing contact with suppliers of materials and with taxidermy and scientific staff of other institutions is essential. Without such communication, taxidermy is going to continue to languish. [Mr Barker would be interested to hear from museum taxidermists in New Zealand. His address is, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, GPO Box 1164M, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia 7001.]

## Fixation and Preservation of Biological Specimens

By H. D. Barker

[The following information is culled from a seminar and discussion with Dr H. F. Steedman, Australian Biological Resources Study Consultant.]

Perhaps the most important fixation formula offered by Dr Steedman follows:

Propylene phenoxetol	0.5 ml
Propylene glycol	4.5 ml
40% formaldehyde	5.0 ml
Sea water or distilled water	90.0 ml
(Ratio of active ingredients — 0.5:4.5:5)	

Stock solutions may be diluted as required and osmotic pressure variations achieved by altering the amount of propylene glycol in the mixture (Steedman, 1974).

Specimen colour is maintained longer if stock solution is diluted with distilled water.

The minimum recommended fixation period is one week.

The solution offered above may be used for storage following fixation but for morphological work Dr Steedman has suggested the following propylene solution:

Propylene phenoxetol	0.5 ml
Propylene glycol	4.5 ml
Sea water or distilled water	95.0 ml

There are a number of variations of these formulae, mostly depending upon further dilution of the mixtures. Weak solutions of triple fixative (2.5 ml stock:97.5 ml H<sub>2</sub>O) apparently have narcotic properties first and are active fixation agents after. For workers concerned with the narcotisation of fragile and soft bodied animals, the use of propylene phenoxetol as a narcotic may well be worth considering.

Dr Steedman has intimated that the use of these fixative and preserving formulae in North Australia must be tested by local workers but I would point out that —

This is the first time any worker has offered logical reasons for using stated formulae for fixation based on experimental work.

Propylene glycol is apparently inimical to fungi and its use may extend beyond fluid preservatives, as there is some indication that it may kill cellulose-producing symbionts in, say, termites, thus giving biological stores non-poisonous protection against such tropical pests.

If the lower concentrations of Dr Steedman's fixation/preservation mixtures are suitable for use in the 'North', biological storage may become cheaper and will also free us from the Customs Department's regulations concerning the use of ethyl alcohol.

Fixation using formaldehyde and propylene mixtures is designed for morphological study. Histological study of material stored in this way may dictate further fixation with, say, Bouin's at a later date.

Further information may be found in the following references:

Steedman, H. F. 1974. 'Laboratory methods in the study of marine zooplankton. *J. Cons. int. Explor. Mar.*, 35(3):351-8.

Steedman, H. F. 1976. *Zooplankton fixation and preservation*. Unesco Press (Paris). [One of the most useful reference works on fixation and preservation. H.D.B.]

Unesco 1974. *Monographs on Oceanographic Methodology IV*.

A point that I would offer here is that as these methods are adopted and experimented upon the history of preservation of a given specimen becomes more important (see the previous note about further fixation for histological studies). Thus it would seem important that specimen labels carry information about the methods of fixation and preservation used.

# The Seeing Eye

By S. Waterman, Education Officer,  
Museum of Transport and Technology

To be successful in the art of observation is to add interest to your life and to the enjoyment of living. It follows that it must play a very important part in the success of your job whatever it may be. Learning to observe is an art. Most people have very poor powers of observation and continue through life with those poor powers. Observation is not only a matter of the eyes, but what you hear, touch and smell is equally involved. When we become aware of all the advantages there are in being a keen observer, we immediately want to improve our powers. This can be done quite easily if we try. Once there is the desire to learn, the rest follows automatically.

The basic obstacle to good observation is mental pre-occupation, which can be brought about by worry or anxiety or by simply mind wandering. Our eyes may be looking at things around us but our *minds* are not. There is a great difference in simply looking at or seeing something or somebody and *observing* them. We may look at some object or person on and off for a long time but still not recognise anything different or special about it or him. When asked about the person, or object, at a later date, recollection is poor.

We can train our eyes to look at larger areas simultaneously. This is the basis of the quick reading courses available today. We can have lazy eyes, or hard working eyes. We can improve the working of our eyes by looking at objects, letters or numerals in a limited and simple form. Gradually we increase the complexity and scope of the objects at the same time decreasing the exposure of time. By giving the eyes the right exercises they will automatically adjust themselves. This was proved over and over again when specially trained observers in the various air forces in the last war could scan and note down all manner of detail when pilots made low-level runs over enemy territory. The cultivation of the roving eye and the roving mind forms the basic activity in all forms of observation. We should make the mind and the eye rove in depth, in imagination, behind, in and around what we are looking at — look beyond.

Parallel with this observation technique is the art of comparison. Very soon we find that when we observe we compare. By comparing new items and circumstances, things become more firmly fixed in our minds. If we put into the mind all the relevant observational material, *without* any mixture of bias, prejudice or strong feeling then the mind is left alone to do all the necessary sorting and comparing. Whatever it is we are seeking we should try and absorb as much information about it, factual and visual, as we possibly can. In this way our mind builds up a clear sharp image and stores it for future reference.

The *number* of views we get of the object under study is important. We should always be on the

lookout for the odd or the unusual as we go about our daily tasks. Observing people can be done quite casually and discreetly. At first we look at the subject with a passing glance, letting our eyes pass over him and come to rest on something near him. If the subject does glance at us he is aware that we are interested in other things. He will look away. All the time we are moving our heads slowly, glancing at the subject, our eyes sweeping over him, but never actually resting on him. The more we practise the better we become. Very soon just a brief glance will be sufficient to describe the person in detail.

To turn the mind's eye from looking inwards to looking outwards we need to think about something interesting and enjoyable to take its place. What could be a better substitute than learning, practising and improving our powers of concentration. The mind is constantly required to recognise and recall. It is much easier to learn to read a foreign language than to speak it. Reading is a matter of recognition, but speaking is a matter of recalling. If we wish to train ourselves or someone else in observation it is important to know the difference between the two.

One hears all kinds of comments in art galleries, museums, and various other displays by people with 'ordinary' or unseeing eyes. Stock phrases and commonplaces are repeated over and over again. The taste of people with these 'ordinary' or unseeing eyes is greatly influenced by ideas and names. They repeat what they have heard other people say or give their own impressions after a very hasty glance. They usually are quick to defend their own ideas and beliefs stubbornly.

There are all sorts of tasks we can set ourselves so that we can become an expert in the art of observation. Pass any shop window, pause for a minute or two and cast your eyes over the display then move on. See how many things you can remember and where they were in the display.

Set out a number of objects on a tray and cover it with a cloth. Whip the cloth away for a few seconds and test your companion. See how many things he can list that were on the tray.

When in a strange environment or travelling on a strange conveyance check out all the unusual gadgets and try to find out how they work.

Set someone to rearrange your living-room in your absence then return and look over it and see if you can spot what has been shifted.

Take a key that you use daily and study it at close range, noting scratches, embellishments, imperfections, etc. Put it away and sketch it, filling in all the minor details.

There are lots of other ideas. Practice will make you a good observer, whatever your age.

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