

ART GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND (INC.)

C/ - Auckland Institute and Museum,
Private Bag,
Auckland.
NEW ZEALAND.

February, 1968.



A.G.M.A.N.Z. NEWSLETTER NO. 38.

WILLIAM JOHN PHILLIPPS F.M.A.N.Z.

Mr. W. J. Phillipps died at Wellington in December 1967, aged 74 years. He served as Biology Assistant at Otago Museum 1910-1915, with the N. Z. E. F. 1915-6, and on the staff of Dominion Museum 1917-1958. During his 41 years at Dominion Museum he accepted responsibility, at one time or another, for almost every section of Museum work, including the Acting-Directorship for several periods. He retired as Registrar and Ethnologist in May 1958, and continued writing in his favourite field, Maori art.

He attended the inaugural meeting of AGMANZ in July 1947, was Hon. Treasurer of the Association from 1947 to 1950, and was elected a Fellow in June 1957.

To his widow and family we extend our sympathy in their loss.

MEMBER HONOURED

Members were pleased to learn that Mr. W. S. Baverstock, Director, the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the New Year Honours List.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

The following appointments were announced recently:

Dr. R. S. Duff, Director, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, to be a member of the Commission.

Dr. R. K. Dell, Director, Dominion Museum, Wellington, and Mr. D. R. Gregg, Keeper of Geology, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, to be members of the Sub-Commission on Natural Sciences. Dr. Dell represents AGMANZ and Mr. Gregg represents the Geological Society of New Zealand.

Professor K. W. Thomson, Massey University of Manawatu, to be a member of the Sub-Commission on Social and Human Sciences and Culture.

(AGMANZ Council made a nomination for the Sub-Commission on Education but was unsuccessful.)

ASSOCIATION DES MUSEES SUISSE

A Swiss Association of Museums was formed in 1966 and now includes 160 museums and collections. The Association published a Bulletin d' Information in September 1967, and has sent AGMANZ a copy with a view to starting exchanges. The first issue has 32 pages, and the articles deal with professional questions and new galleries. Languages used are French and German. Members wishing to exchange their publications with the new Association should write to:

Association des Musees Suisse,
Lidostrasse 5,
6000 Lucerne,
Switzerland.

THE BURLINGTON

The Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd., wishes to increase sales in New Zealand, and will consider a reduced subscription rate for The Burlington if the size of the order merits it. The firm suggests that Friends of Museums or Galleries may be interested in offering The Burlington to members as part of their subscription or as a members' service. Any members interested should write to:

Mr. David Nosworthy,
General Manager,
The Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd.,
258-268 Gray's Inn Road,
London WC 1,
England.

CROWN JEWELS

Shalom Traders Ltd., of Wellington recently displayed a replica set of Crown Jewels at the N. Z. International Trade Fair in Wellington. The firm offered them to the Government but it was decided not to buy them. The firm is prepared to lend the set to one of the major museums.

It consists of the St. Edward's Crown, the Imperial Orb and the Sceptre. The basis is handwrought jewellers' bronze, subsequently gold plated. The stones are Zircris, a man-made stone used by the Gablonz industry. The set took some 3 months to make, and is similar to those supplied to the U. K. and one or two of the Dominions.

Will any member interested in borrowing the set please write direct to the firm whose address is P.O. Box 613, Wellington.

FRIENDS OR AMIGOS

The International Congress of Friends of Museums, which was to be held in Barcelona, Spain, from the 22nd to the 26th April 1968, has been postponed. The devaluation of the peseta and the reduction in help from official organizations have forced the postponement.

MUSEUMS FUND

Applications are invited again for subsidies from the Fund. AGMANZ Council will meet on Monday afternoon, the 8th April, 1968, and requests for grants should be sent to the Hon. Secretary before the meeting. The Fund is provided by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, and is not available for capital purposes such as buildings, materials or equipment. Applicants should describe the local contribution to the project and enclose a copy of their accounts.

It is not always clear whether applicants for training subsidies, or for grants to meet the expenses of visiting experts, have obtained the consent of the Museum or Gallery which is to do the training or lend the expert. This Museum or Gallery may have a target date to meet and may be unable to accept a trainee or lend an expert. Will members please obtain the consent of the Director of the training or lending institution before applying to AGMANZ for a subsidy.

A WELCOME VISITOR

In January 1968, Mr. J. L. Willis, Director, The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, visited Auckland on his way to the ANZAAS Science Congress. While in Auckland, Mr. Willis visited the Museum of Transport and Technology (Inc.) and the Auckland Institute and Museum. The Museum of Transport and Technology arranged a social evening for members to meet Mr. Willis. His advice on museum development and praise for the job of work which the Transport Museum has done, were reported in the press and need not be repeated. They should give new direction and stimulus to the collection, preservation and display of technological material.

HAMILTON ART GALLERY

The Annual Report of the Waikato Society of Arts (Inc.) for the year ending December 1967 records a year of activity: 17 exhibitions were shown, 14 lectures or performances were given, fortnightly drawing classes and weekly meetings for young painters were held. Membership has reached 350, and an attractive brochure on membership benefits has been printed. The permanent collection has been increased with the aid of grants from the Hamilton City Council, Waikato Savings Bank and Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, and a building fund has been started.

The Gallery is playing an active and worthwhile role in the cultural life of the City and is attracting an increasing amount of support, but the total expenditure is still low for a University City of more than 60,000 inhabitants. The expenditure on the Art Gallery during 1967 was \$3,707. Palmerston North City, with a population of 45,000, spent \$4,800 in 1965 and \$6,000 in 1966 on their Art Gallery.

During the year, Miss Ann Pearce, Secretary-Custodian at the Hamilton Art Gallery resigned, and Mrs. G. Day was appointed in her place. For 1968 the Hamilton City Council has been asked to raise their Annual Grant so that the Secretary's salary, at present

\$1,000 a year, can be raised. Even if the salary is doubled however, it will still be below the scale proposed by AGMANZ. The Association has recommended that, for small Galleries and Museums away from the four main centres, staff salaries should be tied to the scale used by the local City Council, so that the Director or Secretary is equated with an officer of the Council, for example, the Librarian or Assistant Librarian.

NATIONAL ART GALLERY

A pamphlet, titled as above, has been prepared by the Gallery with support from the Wellington Education Board, as a forerunner to a series designed to stimulate interest in visual art. Mr. S. B. MacLennan A. R. C. A., Director of the Gallery, comments in the foreward that the basic function of the National Art Gallery is to house, care for and exhibit the National Collection of paintings, sculpture, drawings and prints. "A lively educational programme is inherent in the essential activities of the Gallery and this is entrusted to the Education Officer, John Ritson."

The brief text is illustrated from the Gallery collection, and ends with suggestions for teaching art appreciation, a list of books for further reading, and directions for obtaining reproductions, slides, tapes, films, film-strips and art books.

CONSERVATION

On 13.4.67 Mr. B. G. Hamlin represented AGMANZ Council at a meeting of the UNESCO Sub-Commission on Education. The need for the conservation of art gallery and museum collections was discussed, and members asked for further information with a view to the National Commission making suitable representations to Government. AGMANZ Council decided on 18.5.67 to ask appropriate specialists to report on the need for conservation, and to invite the N. Z. Archaeological Association to comment. On 13.11.67 the Council decided to circulate the reports with a view to their discussion at the Annual Meeting on the 9th April, 1968.

Mr. N. S. Brommelle, Keeper of Conservation, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, will attend the meeting and will be available to advise members on conservation.

The following are the reports received:

"City of Auckland Art Gallery

11 October, 1967.

Dear Dr. Cooper,

Conservation : N. Z. National Commission for Unesco Report

I have discussed your letter of 4 October with Mr. Les Lloyd and have the following information to convey to Mr. Hamlin:

Certain proposals have in recent years been put forward to the appropriate organisations:

- (1) The Cooperative Conservation scheme (please see notes attached)
- (2) The production of films on conservation (See notes attached)

- (3) Following a request from the Alexander Turnbull Library the Gallery Conservator Mr. Lloyd made an inspection of the Collection and furnished a report on the condition of the works including his recommendations.
- (4) At the same time Mr. Lloyd made a report on the Treaty of Waitangi which is the property of the national archives. He recommended that it should receive early care and treatment. To our knowledge no action has been taken to save this document from further deterioration.

It should be noted that the biggest problem concerning the conservation of works, is not so much the physical one of treating the works but the psychological problems involved. Trustees, Committees and staff members of galleries and museums are usually reluctant to admit that the works in their care have deteriorated and require attention. Rather than discuss the condition of works in an open committee it has been known for some Directors who are not trained in conservation methods to potter with the pictures themselves or to ask a local amateur or staff attendant to 'fix it'.

Yours sincerely,

G. Docking.
Director. "

Cooperative Conservation Scheme.

Established by the Auckland City Art Gallery Conservation Department June 14, 1965.

It is with considerable concern for the welfare of picture collections throughout the country, and the urgent necessity that treatment be made available, that the following scheme has been conceived, and endorsed by the Art Galleries and Museums Association.

A programme of conservation is now available to any member, public or private institution, museum or gallery which cannot maintain an adequately equipped and staffed conservation department. This is not a repair service, but a centre for the care and treatment of works of art, and a centre for information and advice leading to improved practices in maintaining collections.

Following an official invitation from the authorities concerned, the Conservator of the Auckland City Art Gallery has approval of the City Council to visit the institution inviting him to make an inspection.

In the initial inspection a record card of the picture or object is supplied on which the object is identified, as well as its materials and construction, along with the details of damage and condition.

The Conservator adds recommendations for care and treatment.

Objects requiring urgent attention have a distinctive mark on the card. In addition, a photograph of each object is made and attached to its appropriate card. All cards are then left with the curator of the museum or gallery. The plan for subsequent action is then in the curator's hands; he may withdraw some objects from exhibition or loan, or on consultation with his committee, he may arrange treatment

depending upon urgency and as funds budgeted for conservation permit.

Should a committee or curator be considering an object for purchase, they or he may use the services of the conservation department for a report on condition and identification of materials that may have a bearing on the object's provenence or history.

Effective conservation depends upon the full understanding of all who are associated with collections, from the packing of the pictures, etc., to the cost of conservation which Trustees and committees are called upon to underwrite.

Charges and cost involved in this cooperative scheme are reduced to a minimum. The institution requesting the services of the Conservator pays his travelling and accommodation expenses and refunds the Auckland City Council his salary whilst he is absent from the Auckland Gallery. The Conservator supplies the institution with a quotation for conservation costs on each work. The institution is then responsible for packing and freighting costs along with insurance from the home gallery to the Conservation Department at the Auckland Gallery and return. Charges are made on a cost basis for cards, photographing and supplying black-and-white prints or colour transparencies, etc.

The Auckland City Art Gallery Conservation Section is considered to be one of the best equipped sections in this part of the world. Recently a vacuum hot-press table was installed costing about \$3000. This equipment enables the Conservator to reline pictures with maximum control and efficiency. The equipment along with the professional services of two trained conservators, who are both members of the International Institute for Conservation (London), are thus put to the general service of collections throughout New Zealand.

(Grants from the Museums Fund are made for conservation,

Hon. Editor.)

Teaching Films on Conservation.

It has been proposed by the Auckland City Art Gallery that a 16mm sound-film be produced on the various aspects of the conservation of works of art. This film may be circulated to galleries and museums in order to teach staff members the complexities of conservation of oil paintings, watercolours, prints, etc., and their general care. There is a great need - indeed an urgency - that staff members be made aware of, at least, the minimal care that a collection requires.

"New Zealand Archaeological Association (Inc.)

20th October, 1967.

Dear Dr. Cooper,

The Council of this Association will not be meeting for some time, so I am unable to give you a detailed report on the need for conservation of Maori artifacts. However, we also sent a representative, Dr. G. Blake-Palmer, to the meeting of the UNESCO Subcommission you refer to, and we have discussed the question of conservation in the past. I have also discussed the subject recently with colleagues from the University of Auckland.

With the excavation of a small swamp at Kauri Point, some years ago, by Mr. Shawcross, a former President of our Association, New Zealand archaeologists were confronted with the urgent need to preserve material of a more delicate kind, than any previously recovered from swamps in this country. Accordingly, various methods were tried at Auckland University Anthropology Department with some success. Recently, experience gained there by Mr. Peters, a member of this Association, has been employed at the Auckland Institute and Museum.

Members of our Association with whom I have discussed this question feel that there is a very great need for a more positive approach to conservation. There are two main problems : conservation of materials recently recovered from swamps, and conservation of artifacts already in Museums but tending to deteriorate through old age. My colleagues at the University have facilities for handling only the smaller of the swamp artifacts, which require different treatment from fragile items already in museum collections. They feel that, ideally, each major Museum should have a trained conservator, with knowledge of techniques suitable for both kinds of problem, and that these trained conservators should have adequate facilities in which to work. Experience in other countries, particularly in Scandinavia, has shown that to be completely successful, conservation methods must be carried out in properly controlled conditions. To appoint a trained conservator in New Zealand without adequate facilities would not be sufficient.

We also have found that proper conservation is a time consuming process. To give the best possible treatment to items in museum collections requiring preservation for future generations, and at the same time provide the most up-to-date treatment for items still being recovered from swamps, a provincial Museum would require a properly trained person working full time on conservation.

In sum, it is the view of many members of this Association, that while in the long run, proper conservation methods should be available in each province, it is imperative, that somewhere in the country there should be a properly trained conservator, with adequate working facilities, who would be able to treat newly discovered water-logged artifacts from swamps, and the wide range of wooden artifacts, woven materials, baskets, and so on, in museum collections, if they are to survive for future generations.

Yours sincerely,

Janet Davidson
Hon. Secretary.

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STUDY TOUR OF NORTH AMERICAN, BRITISH AND AUSTRALIAN
MUSEUMS.

MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 1967

D. R. Gregg,

Keeper of Geology, Canterbury Museum,
Christchurch, New Zealand

In December 1966 I was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship by the New Zealand Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.

This Fellowship, together with generous grants from the Canterbury Museum Trust Board and the Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand, enabled me to undertake a study tour of overseas museums. I was granted study leave by the Museum Trust Board and left New Zealand on 22 March, and, after visiting some 150 institutions, returned on 5 September.

The primary purpose of my tour was to study methods of display in geology to aid with the planning of exhibits for the Von Haast Hall of Geology at the Canterbury Museum. My visits also gave me an excellent opportunity to study museums more generally and to have discussions with a wide range of museum workers. I attended the joint meeting of the American Association of Museums and the Canadian Museums Association in Toronto, and the annual conference of the Museums Association in Glasgow. In general I have restricted my comments to those which I hope will be of particular interest to museum workers in New Zealand. That I have returned from five months' tour with a vastly greater knowledge of museums and their problems is largely due to the friendly and ready co-operation (and the personal hospitality) I received everywhere.

General Comments

Museums and the Public:

A museum should be a friendly and comfortable place for the public to visit. An attractive entrance foyer persuades people to enter and explore, and may be used for an introductory display with a few interesting specimens symbolizing the scope of the museum. The information counter and museum shop should be staffed by pleasant and well-informed attendants as these are often the only staff with whom the public come in contact. Many museums have a simple leaflet with a map of the galleries available at the counter. It is in this entrance area where a museum may be able to provide facilities for visitors which have come to be expected in shops such as a public telephone and a letter box (to post the postcards purchased at the counter). A sign of a lively museum is a public notice board where notices of local meetings, exhibitions and other events are displayed.

Serious concern for the comfort and convenience of the visitor is unusual but is well shown at the Milwaukee Public Museum with carpet on the floor, escalators, drinking fountains and attractive lounges. Museums are tiring places and there should be plenty of opportunity for visitors to sit down in pleasant surroundings. One lounge area could be used as a reading room with appropriate magazines readily available.

Carpet is one of the best antidotes to museum fatigue and is being used in more museums. The Milwaukee Public Museum has had carpet on its floor for three years and it is still looking brand new, and is easier to clean than a hard surfaced floor. It is a great asset where school classes are using the halls; it not only reduces noise but provides a pleasant surface on which the children can sit.

Display:

During my tour I visited many of the most famous natural

history museums but it soon became clear that the museums which showed liveliness in display were often smaller ones, comparable in size to the Canterbury Museum. In large institutions, the minute detail in which every stage of a display has to be planned well in advance seems to stifle spontaneity. There are advantages in a small museum where the designer and the keeper can work in close co-operation and often devise solutions to problems as they arise. Many museums are too large both from the point of view of the visitor and of the ease of liaison between the members of the staff.

Most English provincial museums I visited were lively places often with a high standard of design in displays, publications, and furnishings. This elegance of design can be attributed to the employment of young and vigorous designers with professional qualifications, e.g. the National Diploma of Design (N.D.D.).

The public is continually exposed to highly skilled methods of communication by advertisers in the shops, in the press and on television, and museums are, or should be, making use of the best of these new techniques. Photography is being used more and more in museum display and large photographic enlargements form effective back-drops for the display of specimens as well as stimulating exhibits in themselves. Automatic film and slide projectors and recorded commentaries are being used increasingly in museums.

The clear, well-spaced copy produced by electric typewriter provides a simple means for museums, without conventional printing press facilities, to produce easily read labels. New techniques of photographic type setting, widely used for offset printing, are used extensively in museums for producing copy for silk-screen printing.

The imaginative use of photography can provide a means of producing displays more quickly, and may enable museums to get away from the static concept of permanent displays.

Geology:

Few museums make a serious attempt to present geology as an integrated subject. Many have impressive halls of fossils and minerals but other aspects of geology are neglected. Awe-inspiring dinosaur skeletons and beautiful crystals form only a small portion of geology. Attempts to cover geology more broadly range from the laborious text-book approach of Chicago's Field Museum to the light-hearted random displays at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne.

In the Von Haast Hall of Geology I will aim at awakening an interest in geology in the uncommitted; to stimulate the visitor to look afresh at the landscape and the rocks that form it. Consequently I think the ponderous, if logical, approach ("What is geology?" "What is a mineral?" etc, etc.) would be best avoided. But inevitably there will have to be a compromise. For the important visitors who already are interested in geology the aim will be to explain the geological story of New Zealand and of Canterbury in particular. I visualize a variety of displays directed at different levels of interest, including that of the captive audience provided by visiting school classes.

New Zealand Museums

I have returned to New Zealand impressed with the strength

of its museum movement and with the quality and number of museums that this small country is supporting. The number of museums is partly a consequence of our geography with a sparse population spread through a country 1,000 miles in length. But I am also impressed, or rather depressed, by the lack of government support for the Dominion Museum which due to inadequate accommodation and insufficient funds is unable to fulfil its function as the National Museum of New Zealand. It is shocking that New Zealand's only museum directly financed by the government should have such depleted staff and inadequate facilities. If the Dominion Museum were to be strengthened so that it could function as a more comprehensive research and archival institution I would certainly advocate the transfer of biological and geological type specimens to its collections. The scattering of types throughout a variety of museums and institutions, some of which may no longer have any real interest in the material, places unnecessary difficulties in the way of the scientist. The place for these important specimens is in our National Museum. And this does not apply only to type specimens. Too often in New Zealand museums the efforts of the staff have been concentrated on display and research while important collections have deteriorated through inadequate curation.

In New Zealand small, independent and underfinanced museums are being established in large numbers. The Museums Association at Glasgow resolved to discourage the formation of such museums and A. G. M. A. N. Z. could well consider similar action. I support the suggestion of Mr. D. R. Simmons (in A. G. M. A. N. Z. Newsletter No. 35, 1967) that provincial federations of museums should be established; these would facilitate mutual assistance and co-operation.

At the Glasgow conference I heard a stimulating address from Mr. Michael Jaffe of Kings College, Cambridge, who advocated a close relationship between universities and museums including the interchange of staff. In universities ample opportunity is available for scientific discussion; in museums staff tends to work in isolation and they should be encouraged to have meetings within the museum and to participate in university seminars. As part of the co-operation between universities and museums there should be a greater use of museum collections for university teaching and research; museums can encourage this by providing better facilities for visiting workers.

(Editor's note: There will be an opportunity for members to discuss matters raised in this summary during the Annual Meeting on the 9th and 10th April 1968. It is regretted that Mr. Gregg's report is too long to reproduce in full, and some 16 pages of supporting data have been omitted. Copies of the full report may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary of AGMANZ or from Mr. D. R. Gregg, Canterbury Museum, Rolleston Avenue, Christchurch 1.)

STOLEN OBJECTS

The Commissioner of Police, Wellington, has sent further Interpol Circulars regarding stolen works of art, but it is impossible to include them in this Newsletter. They will be circulated as soon as possible and, meantime, are available for reference on request to the Hon. Secretary, AGMANZ, c/- Auckland Institute and Museum, Private Bag, Auckland.

Robert Cooper,
Hon. Secretary