

INSIDE

Snapshots from a strange time



Heritage
@Home

But we're open again now!

SOUTH CANTERBURY
MUSEUM
EXPLORE our heritage

Autumn
2020



It was all a bit of a whirl:
The Museum's "golden
frog" sits still as eight
weeks of Lockdown swirl
past.

Director's comment: When you don't work at a museum....

I began working on the newsletter at my kitchen table where I had been based for around seven weeks. My assistant Ned (at right) joined me occasionally until the activity of fantails outside would become too distracting. Thankfully he stood little chance of being able to catch one. But as pleasant as this may have been, this was not where I usually work and there were some limits on what I could do. This situation was repeated for the rest of the Museum team, as it was for many thousands of New Zealanders endeavouring to carry on working despite being restricted to their homes.

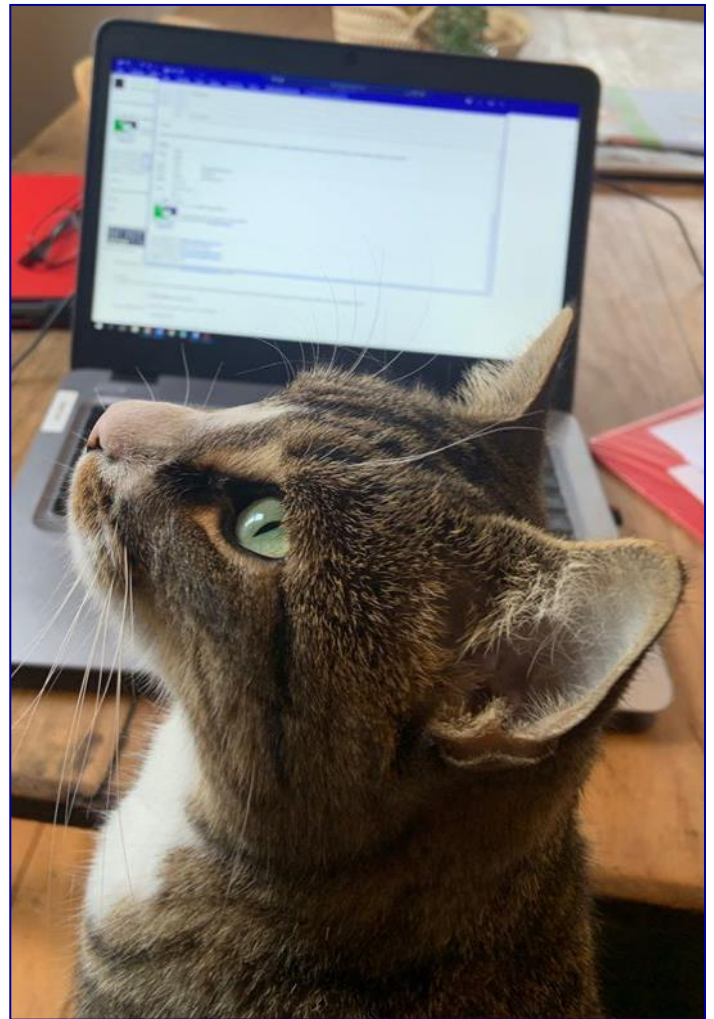
For the month of April and into May, this became our new normal. And while the internet allows us to connect, retrieve and share files and communicate; it didn't allow us to have a museum that is open to the public. Nor could we work on those things which are central to a museum's work; the many thousands of items stored in our collections. The challenge was to find ways to continue working, to communicate with the public, and to keep providing access to our heritage.

Our team kept things going - have a look at the stories on these pages to find out what was done. I am very aware that without modern technology we would not be able to do much of what we can. And despite the value we place on our collections as the central core of what we do, I am reminded of the well-known important Maori whakatauki or proverb:

**He aha te mea nui o te ao.
He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata**

*What is the most important thing in the world?
It is people, it is people, it is people.*

Philip



Staying in touch during lockdown

Like many workplaces, the Museum weekday team continued to work from home during lockdown, and communicated through virtual meetings. Tools such as Messenger, Zoom and Teams enabled us to meet onscreen with each other, with other Council staff and teams, with the Ministry of Education, with consultants, and with museum colleagues elsewhere in New Zealand.

Amusingly, we were not always the sole participants in these meetings, with pets, children or partners wandering past inadvertently or jumping onto our laps (cats especially, see above). Despite these pleasant distractions, we quickly adapted to this new form of communication, and were able to keep things moving, think of new ideas, plan our communications and actions, and ensure that everyone felt connected and part of what was happening.

We all looked forward to getting back to normal. There was a lot that was able to be done regardless of location, but so much of our work requires us to be handling collection items, preparing exhibition materials, and carrying out other onsite tasks. If nothing else, this crisis has helped us to learn new ways of working, as well as appreciating the importance of regular contact with each other as a team of staff and volunteers in a museum work environment.

Right: A snapshot of a team Messenger video meeting from the Museum Director's phone; top - Ruth Gardiner, Philip Howe, middle - Mel and Tony Rippin, Simon Cullimore, bottom - Chris Rapley and Keely Kroening.



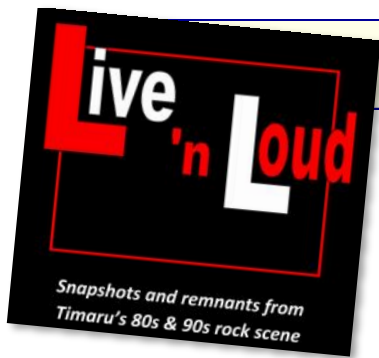
Putting on a public face during lockdown

Staff and volunteers were unable to enter the building unless specifically required. We developed a programme of work that could be carried out at home. This saw team members such as Keith Bartholomew (right) working on transcribing birth, death and marriage notices to create finding aids. The team of eight entered well over 15,000 names onto the system during this time.

We communicated as widely as we could with our community. We produced a range of online family fun educational activities for the holidays (Keely and daughter Nadia below) or simple puzzles where viewers could try and identify where the Museum's golden frog was located—a series of images which became clearer with each posting (lower right).

We also featured Museum team members and their personal collections on our Facebook page. This included Museum Educator Ruth with her David Bowie music collection (lower left), textiles volunteer Lee (lower middle) with brass rubbings from English churches that she and husband Grant made while living in the UK in the 1970s, and Curator Chris and daughter Alex with his Indiana Jones memorabilia collection (lower right).





Exhibitions: the bands play on (until mid July)

Our latest exhibition **Live 'n Loud** was open for just over a month before the COVID-19 Lockdown hit. After discussion with owners of some of the material on

exhibition, we have decided to extend it until 19 July. This will enable locals to come back in under Level 2 and Level 1 (hopefully soon!) to view it and enjoy catching up with some recent social history, with photographs, objects, memorabilia and video footage from the era.

Right: *Timaru band Jed Zephyr pose for a promotional photo in the late 80s. Jed Zephyr were one of a number of popular pub bands in the 1980s and 90s era.*



In late July we will launch an exhibition that marks the 150th anniversary of the formation of Timaru's Fire Brigade in September 1870. From humble beginnings as a voluntary organisation to the professional well-equipped force that protects our community today, the exhibition will give visitors the opportunity to learn about how our region has dealt with fires and emergencies over the last 150 years or so, as well as a look back at the equipment used over the decades. It is hoped that "live" events may be scheduled around the same time.

Left: The Timaru Volunteer Fire Brigade taking part in a parade in 1908.

Below: Fighting a fire in the CML Building on the corner of Stafford and Strathallan Streets in 1951.



Museum education: online offerings response for schools



Our usual Heritage Education Service programmes ground to a halt around the middle of March with schools cancelling camps and outings as virus worries began to take hold. Until then, our team had been busy since early February with a range of programmes at the Museum and around the region at Peel Forest, Waihao Marae (left), Caroline Bay, Smithfield rock pools (lower left), and elsewhere. We were also anticipating a busy school holiday programme in mid April.

The Covid-19 Lockdown in April and May presented us all challenges. The Museum curatorial and education teams responded with several online offerings.

Unable to deliver classes to visiting school groups, the education team developed **Heritage at Home**. Educator Keely Kroening produced several excellent short videos around themes including ANZAC, Insects & Spiders, and Amazing Animals. The videos, along with associated resources focused on supporting teachers and students learning at home.



Meanwhile Curator of Social History, Chris Rapley, reworked existing content from our popular World War One exhibitions to create the basis of a new online exhibition **Enduring the Inferno**. Chris worked with Tony Rippin, our Curator of Documentary History, who developed links to biographies of individual South Cantabrians who served that have been published on SCRoll. Tony, our web editor, built the **Enduring the Inferno** online exhibition and **Heritage at Home** website pages from the work of Chris and Keely – a real team effort!

The result will provide interesting resources for many (online) visitors, students and teachers for some time to come. Find these in the **Explore** and **Education** pages on our website now.



Science talks make a start before COVID shutdown

On 5 March we held the first of what was intended to be a series of talks through autumn, bringing national experts to Timaru to give public presentations. This was organised in conjunction with the Canterbury Branch of the Royal Society of New Zealand.

Around 100 people attended the first talk where Dr Paul Scofield from Canterbury Museum spoke about recent discoveries of giant penguins and parrots, and other fossil finds that change how we see our region's fossil past.

Unfortunately, the arrival of the COVID-19 crisis prevented us from hosting our other two speakers, University of Otago palaeontologist Dr Daphne Lee, and Wellington astrobiologist Dr Haritina Mogoşanu. We hope to rearrange these for later this year.



Collection news



Left: Curator of Documentary History Tony Rippin took advantage of Monday closing in early March to use the foyer to photograph a very large Timaru Harbour Board plan from the 1880s that contained proposed harbour works to completely enclose Caroline Bay to create a very large sheltered harbour. Had this plan gone ahead, our foreshore would have looked very different.

Right: Curator of Social History Chris Rapley, holding a 1970s-era police car siren, and former Timaru Police senior constable Carleen Craw-Thomson, holding two of the uniform policewoman hats she wore when in service. Carleen has donated a collection of police uniforms and other items worn or used by her and her late husband David Thomson. Senior Constable Craw-Thomson served 14 years on the force and Sgt Thompson served 31 years.



Lower right: Museum Director Philip Howe with a 1/5 scale model of a skeleton from an extinct heavy-footed moa (*Pachyornis elephantopus*). This is one of two scale models made by Rotorua-based biological artist and researcher Geoffrey Cox. These will feature in our prehuman fauna display area.



Left: A 1913 medal awarded by the New Zealand Socialist Party to young men arrested prior to WW1 for refusing compulsory military training. This was found in a Timaru garden in the 1950s.



Discoveries out and about



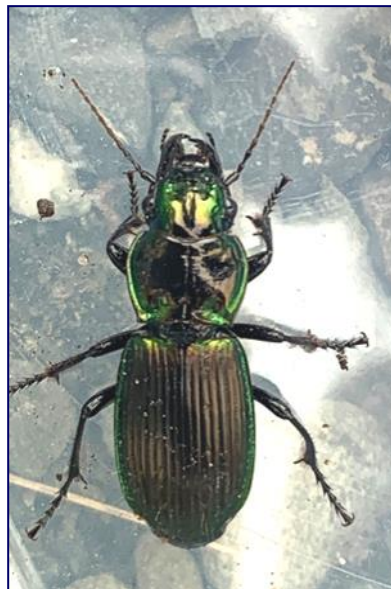
In February, Keely, Ruth and Philip visited the Ravensdown limestone quarry at Kakahu, following the discovery of some moa bone fragments. Manager Roger Buckingham invited us to join him looking for more fragments in the barren moonscape of the quarry site (above and left). We salvaged a few pieces and took these back to the Museum, along with the pieces salvaged earlier by quarry workers.

We were fortunate to be visited by two Canterbury Museum paleontologists, Dr Paul Scofield and Dr Vanesa de Pietri, along with young son Rollo (right). They were able to determine that the bone fragments came from a giant bush moa (*Dinornis robustus*), a little bush moa (*Anomalopteryx didiformis*) and an extinct flightless duck (*Chenonetta finschi*).



In March Museum Director Philip joined several biology experts who were carrying out a survey of plant and animal life at Otipua Wetlands on the south side of Timaru. This was part of a “bioblitz”, where experts and members of the public converge on a site for one or two days to find, identify and list every type of plant and creature found there.

The March date followed an earlier January date, and Philip was delighted to record the southernmost-known occurrence of the large predatory ground beetle *Megadromus antarcticus* (right). Findings from the site from both occasions were listed on the **iNaturalist** website, reaching close to 200 species of plant, bird, mammals, fish, lizards, spiders, and a variety of smaller creatures such as a native praying mantis, *Orthodera novaezealandiae* (far right).



People around the Museum



Left: Ara Polytech tutor Kera Baker demonstrates how to use the Heritage Education Team's replica poi with a group of Japanese English language students during a Museum visit in early March.

Above: The nearly 100-strong crowd that turned out to the Timaru District Council chambers to hear Dr Paul Scofield's talk in March.

Below: Some of the Museum team gathered to farewell retiring weekend supervisor Diane Shields (seated middle) and to welcome aboard new weekend staff member Heather Moss (right).

Lower left: FAKE NEWS ALERT! Museum Director Philip Howe was digitally transformed (by an evilly creative curator) into a Victorian lady for an April Fool's Day image on our Facebook page. The caption read:

To help with social distancing, Director Philip has raided the collection and grabbed this fetching outfit. Keeping a safe 2 metres away from other folks in the supermarket will be a breeze in this little number. Practical while looking sensational!

But you know it's fake because no self-respecting museum professional would **ever** try on a garment from the collection, no matter **how** wonderful it might look or feel sashaying through the aisles of New World, crinoline skirt swishing audibly.....



See more from out the front and behind the scenes on the Museum's Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/SCMuseum



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Become a friend of the Museum!

Receive this newsletter, invitations to Museum openings and events, members' meetings, discounts on some sales and services at the Museum and more. All Museum Friends are automatically members of parent organisation the South Canterbury Historical Society. You'll also be supporting the Museum, so it's **always** a good cause!

Membership forms are available from the Museum, simply phone, write or email and we'll send one out. But if you can't wait, send us a note with the following details and correct amount and we'll sign you up! We'll need: Name, Address, Phone no. & email if you have it.

Membership type:	Individual	\$30.00
	Family	\$35.00
	Organisation/Business	\$35.00
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