

INSIDE

Cover image: Members of the local Kiwi Conservation Club come to grips with an historic python skin during a weekend programme in October 2024.

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**SOUTH CANTERBURY
MUSEUM**
EXPLORE our heritage



2025 - 1



Director's comment: 2024 - our busiest year yet!

2024 has proven to be the busiest year on record in terms of Museum service users. Over 28,000 people either visited the Museum, or used our services in some way. This is over 2,000 above any other year recorded.

This figure breaks down into several groupings. Nearly 18,000 of these users were casual visitors attending during opening hours. Another 1,400 attended in groups or for booked events, with a further 500 or so offsite users. Then there are the record student numbers using our Heritage Education Service - a total of 8,276, also the highest figure yet recorded. As well as classes who came directly to our Museum, this figure included classes participating in field trips, working with our educators at their local museum, and educator visits to schools and early childhood centres - in effect taking the Museum to the students.

We can pinpoint several factors that led to the increase in numbers. There was a busy cruise ship season during the start of 2024, with an estimated 1,500+ visitors coming from those vessels. We held several successful public events that drew good numbers. We're also noticing an increasing number of tourists, both domestic and international, through the year. Locals are visiting in larger numbers and coming back, particularly family

groups. The Museum Explorers Club for children continues to be popular. Our educators have been reaping the rewards of their hard work put in to promote the use of our services, both onsite and elsewhere. And finally, we've been pleased to see local responses to some of our changing exhibitions, with visitors coming in specifically to view them.

All of this has been achieved during what has been a challenging year at times. The Museum team have been stretched, and we are well aware of the need to ensure that the team maintain their personal wellbeing. While there are many opportunities that could be taken up, there are only so many hours in the day and people available to make things happen. We are now looking at how to maintain momentum while managing the finite resources that we have.

We're grateful for the support the Museum receives, from the Timaru District Council, the Friends of the Museum/ SC Historical Society, the SC Museum Development Trust, collection donors, those who collaborate with us and our many service users. Now to rise to the challenge of making 2025 a new record year!

Philip



Recent visitor survey feedback

We encourage visitors to fill out a form telling us about themselves, how they learned about the Museum and rating their experience at the Museum. The results are not definitive as not all visitors fill out a form. However they do give us an indication of who is visiting and their responses to us.

42% of responders are from the Timaru District, another 35% from elsewhere in NZ, with about 23% from overseas. 99% rated their visit as excellent or good. 75% stated that the Museum was better than they expected, with another 21% stating it was as good as they expected. Visitors can also leave comments.

- *I felt old seeing the rotary phone as an 'artifact' - I am only 20! (USA visitor).*
- *Amazing collection of history and culture. It's a true wonder to see such an exquisite and well curated museum (South Island visitor, aged 19-35).*
- *Brilliant museum, good range of information and the cabinets contain very cool exhibits (UK visitor aged 19-35).*
- *I love coming to the museum, the museum is very exciting. I like this place very much, I wish I could stay here because I love it and I like learning. (Timaru visitor aged 12 or under).*

What's happening over Summer and Autumn 2025



Nature Collected: Tales from the Natural History Collection opened at the end of 2024 and is running through until March 30. This looks at some important collection items from our stored collections, along with those who collected them. Stories include the historic birds' egg and tropical butterfly collection of Edward Sealy, the 1950s local seashell collection collected by Sylvan Trigrance and donated by Ray Bennett, "Timaru witchdoctor" Lionel Belcher's fossils, the 2022 Pareora Beach moa footprints and more.

These collections contain a range of specimens that are of public interest and scientific importance, highlighting the important role museums play in preservation.



The **2025 Sunsational Challenge** is coming to an end. This now annual event is held in January each year for children and students aged 18 or under. It runs through January to provide local families with a range of interesting activities that get them out exploring the district. Participants can visit local museums, the Aigantighe Art Gallery, local libraires and several outdoor sites to collect activity stamps. On the way they can earn badges, free swims in the district pools and finally enter a draw for some rather impressive prizes, including digital devices.



Retro Rock returns! On Saturday night 15 February, the Museum grounds will again play host to an audience of several hundred enjoying local bands playing great music from the last 60 years. This will be the seventh such occasion for what has become a popular event, drawing punters locally and from beyond our region.



80 years ago the Second World War came to an end, first in Europe, then in the Pacific. This ended six long years where world events had a profound effect on our community. Thousands of New Zealanders actively served in the New Zealand and British Commonwealth armed forces, along with associated services such as women's auxiliaries, medical units and more. Locally, nearly every aspect of life was affected with rationing, air raid precautions, shortages of many everyday items and the constant worry about loved ones, relatives and friends serving overseas.

We will be exploring the war and its local impact and experience within an exhibition currently under development. This will open in time for ANZAC Day and run through until August.

Left: A Timaru crowd celebrates VE Day on Stafford Street, 17 May 1945. (SCM 2003/113.1)



Recent events around the Museum

Make your own Museum! The October School Holidays saw a hive of activity in the centre of the Museum with children invited to make their own mini museum or display piece using card and other materials (right). A wide range of possible designs came forth, much to the delight of the staff. Unfortunately nothing that we can move into straight away, but the creativity was fabulous.



Mars Rover replica draws a crowd. In October we had an unexpected but most welcome visit by a team from Auckland University with a life-sized 3-D printed replica of the Mars Rover craft. Over 400 people called in for the afternoon to have a closer look at this interesting piece of technology and engage with the students who were touring it.



Historic book launched. Theo Schoon's Tipping Point was launched at the Museum on 23 October. This book had been researched and written by authors Marion Seymour and Rosanna McEvedy (pictured at right with Museum Director Philip Howe). The book is an in-depth look at the project to record local Māori rock art in the post war period and how artist Theo Schoon over drew many of the original drawings to better "interpret" them according to his own ideas. The book has been published by the SC Museum Development Trust and is available from the Museum for \$40, with proceeds going to the Trust. The authors are now finishing another book which will look at the activities of amateur archaeologists in South Canterbury during the 1930s and 40s.



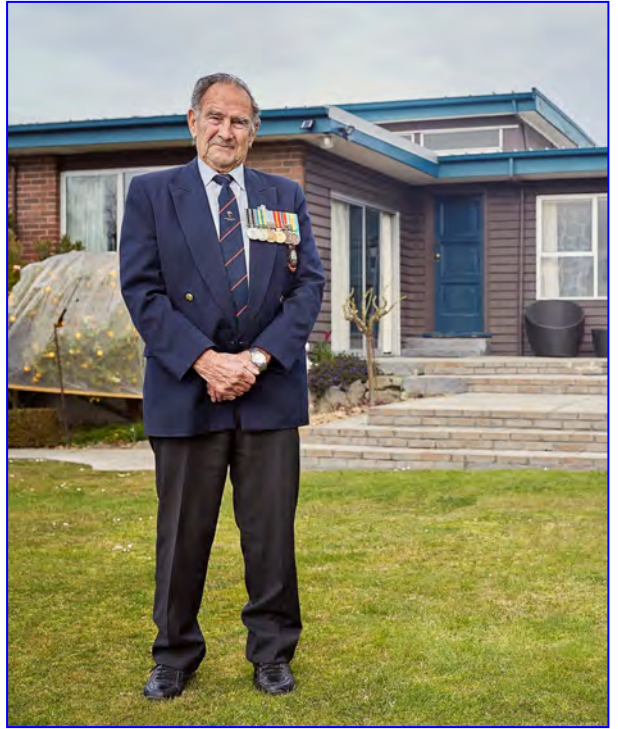
"The Scottish Play" performed

A production of Hamlet by local company Aidan Theatre was staged in the centre of the Museum over three nights at the end of October. Audiences were thrust into a ringside view of the action, being seated around the X-shaped stage (left), a fabulous almost interactive experience.



Operation Grapple: a poignant look back at a nuclear cost

We launched **Operation Grapple: We Were There** at a special opening on 8 November. The exhibition featured photographs by Denise Baynham, an Auckland-based photographer who set out to photograph and record the stories of surviving New Zealand Navy veterans who witnessed British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s. Among those present were families of the veterans featured, including the family (below) of the late Hank Cowan (right) one of three South Canterbury veterans featured in the exhibition.



Left: Those attending heard from Hank Cowan's daughter Linda Moore, Royal Navy test veteran Mick Glover of Fairlie, and local MP James Meager, pictured with Museum Director Philip Howe (far left). Linda was active in ensuring local naval veterans and families were aware of the exhibition and could attend the opening.



Council considering new design and project for Museum



Following the decision in July to suspend the planned Heritage Centre and Theatre Royal project, consideration is now being given to a new proposal that would locate a new Museum behind the Theatre Royal on Barnard Street (left). Developed by local firm NB Architects, this initial concept would see a redevelopment of the Theatre Royal followed by the construction of the Museum.

The concept has now been put out to tender to invited local firms. It is likely that much of the work developed by the Museum team for the creation of new exhibitions and internal services will be able to be reworked for a new proposal. The original long-term exhibition plan had been costed at \$3m, with the South Canterbury Museum Development Trust committed to supporting the Council's partial funding of this amount. At the time of the project's suspension, over \$2m had been raised or promised for the project.

Recent additions to the collections

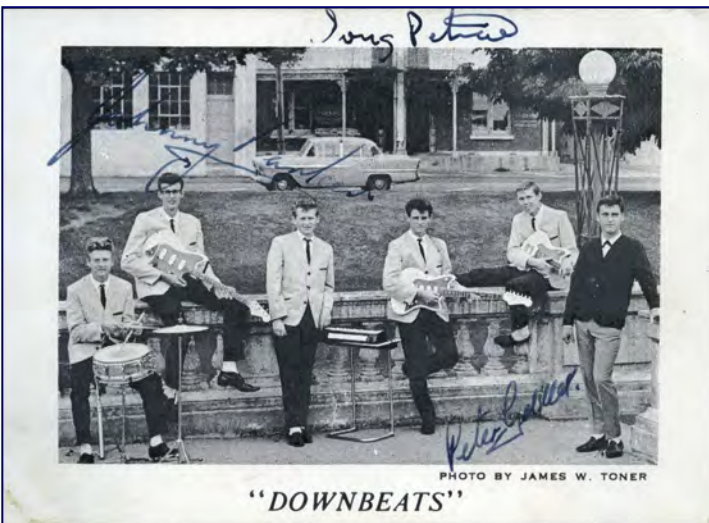


Over 80 items have been added to our collections from 2024 so far. Some of the highlights are shown here:

Left: Loose copies of the four-page *Geraldine Guardian* newspaper from 1897 (2024/130.02).

Right: Commemorative medal marking the coronation that never happened: Edward VIII in 1937 (2024/090.01). Edward abdicated and was replaced by his brother George.

Below: A signed photograph and performance promotional card for The Downbeats, who played local venues in 1966, including the "Twist" marathon world record attempt held in Temuka (2024/133).



YOUR HOLIDAY PROGRAMME
with the
"DOWNBEATS"

December			
Wed.	25th	Midnight to ?	Citizens Hall TEMUKA
Thur.	26th	8 p.m. to 12 p.m.	Scottish Society Hall TIMARU
Fri.	27th	8 p.m. to 12 p.m.	Scottish Society Hall TIMARU
Sat.	28th	8 p.m. to 12 p.m.	Scottish Society Hall TIMARU
Sun.	29th	Midnight to ?	Citizens Hall TEMUKA
Mon.	30th	8 p.m. to 12 p.m.	Scottish Society Hall TIMARU
January			
Wed.	1st	8 p.m. to 12 p.m.	Twist Marathon TEMUKA
Thur.	2nd	8 p.m. to 12 p.m.	Twist Marathon TEMUKA
Fri.	3rd	9 p.m. to 1 a.m.	Scottish Hall OAMARU
Sat.	4th	8 p.m. to 12 p.m.	Twist Marathon TEMUKA
Wed.	8th	8 p.m. to 12 p.m.	Citizens Hall TEMUKA
Sat.	11th	8 p.m. to 12 p.m.	Citizens Hall TEMUKA

Unlocking the value of stored collections



Local researcher Julie Brown (below) has joined us for a six-month project to rehouse and improve documentation for two significant natural history collections held in our Museum. The Bennett Marine Life collection contains important local specimens collected by local woman Sylvan Trigrance in the 1950s, including a shell that was named after her for her discovery of it. We also hold the fossil collection created by local man Lionel Belcher which contains a range of fossil molluscs and echinoids collected from South Canterbury localities and elsewhere, which will be part of this project as well.

Julie is checking the documentation for each specimen, carrying out additional specimen photography and rehousing the specimens arranged in taxonomic order. The finished project will allow us to add the records to our online database, providing access to specialists, collectors and interested viewers anywhere in the world. They in turn can provide us with more information about the specimens where possible.



Heritage Education: A varied final term for the busiest year

Term Four of each year is traditionally a time that sees most programmes being delivered outdoors with schools utilising our services on field trips. Keely, Ruth and Joanna were active around the district, splashing about in streams and rockpools, finding fossils and making increasing use of the excellent resources available at Caroline Bay. This includes the new C-Play playground that is thoroughly imbued with local heritage information and provides a great teaching resource. We also continued to work with kindergartens and host schools in the Museum itself.



Above: Waimataitai School students ride the “retro” horse at the C-Play playground on Caroline Bay. Increasing numbers of schools are working with us to make use of this award-winning site that combines recreation with local heritage learning.



Left: Waitaki Valley School students explore stream life at Gunn’s Bush. Teachers are glad to utilise the Heritage Education Service team’s knowledge and enthusiasm for natural science topics.

Below: Keely working with a class from Highfield School at the Museum with a focus on Māori science. These classes use the “virtual” fireplace as a central point for discussion of mautauranga Māori, or traditional knowledge.



People around the Museum



We farewelled two staff members at the end of 2024. Museum technician Simon Cullimore (left) had been with us since 2017. Simon undertook many technical and creative endeavours, including a wide range of exhibition preparation and changeover tasks, maintenance tasks, public programme assistance and creating some amazing replicas and models for us in our education programmes, including the scale model of an oceanic waka that Simon is holding in the photograph.

We also said goodbye to Museum educator Joanna Miller (right) who is heading overseas following two years in the role. Joanna's enthusiasm and passion for education contributed to our successful programme numbers, especially her work with early childhood education.



Left: Local man Jack Rushton with a life-size 3-D printed replica of the moa footprint discovered in 2022. Jack used the digital model developed from site photographs to create printable sections which were assembled like a kitset model for the current **Nature Collected** exhibition. Miniature prints were also created and are for sale.



Above: In October Museum Director Philip Howe hosted the Timaru Endeavour Sea Scouts who had an evening visit to learn more about local maritime history.

See more from out the front and behind the scenes on the Museum's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/SCMuseum



South Canterbury Museum is part of the Community Services Group of Timaru District Council

Contact the Museum

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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 an email with the following details and correct amount and we'll sign you up! Name, Address & phone number please.

Membership type: Individual	\$30.00
Family	\$35.00
Organisation/Business	\$35.00
Overseas	\$35.00
Life	\$300.00

You can pay over the counter at the Museum or by bank deposit to the following account

Bank account number: **02 0888 0028865 000**
 Reference: **your surname**
 Code: **SUB**

And again, please don't forget to email us your full name, address and other contact details when you've paid.