

INSIDE

Cover image: Intrigued visitors explore the interactive **Clever Crustaceans** exhibition on tour from Te Papa during the very busy July school holiday period.

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**SOUTH CANTERBURY
MUSEUM**
EXPLORE our heritage

2024-2

Director's comment: A change in direction amidst busy times

On the 16th of July, the Timaru District Council voted to not proceed with the planned new heritage centre and redevelopment of the historic Theatre Royal. This had been the focus of the Museum's work for the last four years. The Council is now currently considering future options for the provision of a theatre for Timaru, which will go to public consultation sometime in about October or November this year.

As a result, the Museum team are now refocussing our work while we await the outcome of further Council planning and public consultation. However, "business as usual" continues, with staff engaged with ongoing collection management, exhibition planning and development, formal education and public programmes, assisting with external enquiries and the many administrative tasks that come with running a museum.

All of this is happening as we recorded our busiest financial (July-June) year to date, with over 28,000 service users. These include casual visitors, groups, school visits, archives users, offsite school groups and other external service users. These figures have been boosted by our greater uptake of education programme users, especially offsite early childhood centres, and by the influx of cruise ship passengers over summer. We've also had some busy times with holiday programmes and good attendance at some of our public programmes.

User numbers are only part of the picture, however. Much of the Museum's work, like the base of an iceberg, remains unseen much of the time. This is particularly so for the time and effort that goes in to documenting and caring for our collections. While most of the 100,000+ items that we have documented on our system remain in storage, they are an essential resource to be preserved and made available through our outward-facing programmes. Increasingly we are able to provide digital access to the material and information held in these

collections, giving anyone around the world access to our region's heritage.

We'll be working to keep our user numbers remaining high as we head into warmer months. We have an interesting exhibition programme underway, along with some ideas for more public programmes. I gave a talk on local biodiversity on International Biodiversity Day (below) on May 22 - any excuse to bang on about beetles - and the numbers attending highlighted the interest that there is for events like this and others within the community.



Watch this space for more ideas, and let us know if there's something you'd like to see happening here.

Philip

Did you know? Museum Explorers Club reaches 4,000!



Visit the Museum on a wet weekend day or any day during the school holidays and you're almost certain to see children excitedly exploring the Museum or taking part in activities (left), wearing a card "passport" on a lanyard, often bedecked with badges. These are our Museum Explorers Club members, now over 4,000 of them ranging in age from four to 14.

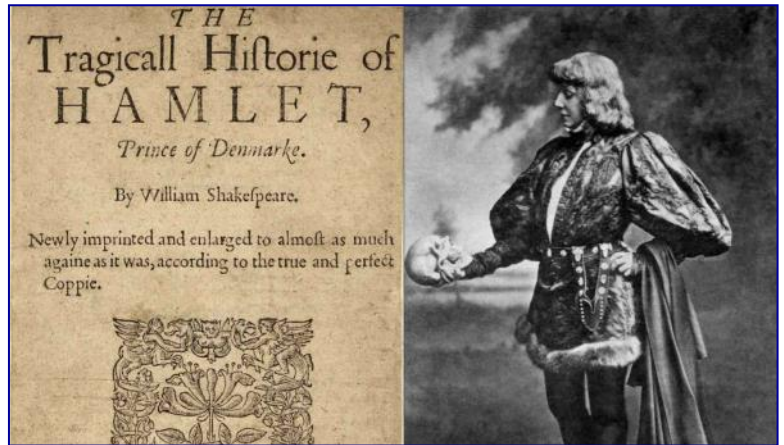
This is a free membership club where members are given a passport and lanyard, with their passport stamped every time they visit. Upon receiving five stamps they receive a silver passport and a bronze badge, progressing their way through a series of ranked passports to ultimately collect the red Super Explorer lanyard. In addition, we produce a new badge for every temporary exhibition that we mount, and explorers collect these when they visit.

The Museum Explorers Club began life as a small after-school activities club in 2008, the brainchild of former Curator of Collections, the late Davina Davis. Over the years it has grown and transformed into a wide-ranging membership club where members are incentivised to visit as often as they can, usually dragging in parents, caregivers, family and friends as they do so. For a relatively modest outlay, we have created a programme that seems both addictive and essential. And while our current Explorers will eventually grow out of membership, there seems to be no shortage of new recruits coming through. Many of our Explorers also proudly wear their passports when visiting with school classes, much to the interest and intrigue of their classmates, many of whom then join.

To be or not to be? Shakespeare live in the Museum

The week of 31st October to 2nd November will see the Museum's central display area ringing with the Bard's words as Timaru's Aiden Theatre stage William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* over three nights. This is not the first time our temporary exhibition space has been used for dramatic productions, with school historical short dramas being performed on occasion, along with a 2017 one-woman show, complete with live music, that commemorated an ancestor's participation at the battle of Passchendaele 100 years earlier.

Ticketing information for the performances will be available from the Museum and Aiden Theatre by early October.



Operation Grapple: a poignant look back at a nuclear cost



Above: The late George (Hank) Cowan, a Timaru resident whose story is told in *Operation Grapple*.

Operation Grapple: We Were There will open at the South Canterbury Museum in early November. This exhibition is a powerful photography exhibition by Denise Baynham which tells the story of Operation Grapple through the portraits of 19 New Zealand nuclear test veterans and their stories. Two of these stories are from Timaru residents.

The first-hand accounts tell of the excitement that young teenage servicemen felt travelling into the Pacific, the experience of observing the nuclear tests, and then being exposed to the immediate effects. They also tell of the devastating legacy that they carried back, in many cases having a major impact on their health and that of their descendants.

In 1957/58 the British Government conducted a series of nuclear weapons tests at Christmas Island and Malden Island in the mid-Pacific Ocean. This series of detonations was given the codename "Operation Grapple". Christmas Island is today better known as Kiritimati and is part of the nation of Kiribati.

Operation Grapple consisted of nine nuclear detonations between May 1957 and September 1958. The biggest of the detonations, Grapple Y, was equal to 140 Hiroshima bombs.

Two New Zealand frigates attended the series of detonations: HMNZS Pukaki and HMNZS Rotoiti. Over the course of these tests a total of 551 New Zealand naval personnel manned these ships. Their duties consisted of witnessing the detonation of the nuclear devices and collecting weather data as close as 37 kilometres to Ground Zero.

Nature Stories coming at the end of the year.



In late July 2022, Pareora resident Chris Sargent made an exciting discovery while walking along the shingle beach at Pareora. Heavy rainfall had caused a pond to burst, scouring out the beach shingle and exposing a reasonably flat muddy area that looked to have some rather large footprints. A closer examination revealed the toe bones of a medium-sized moa trapped within one of the footprints where the bird had died, mired in the mud of a coastal swamp several thousand years ago.

Find out more about this along with other stories from our collections, such as that of the fascinating Sealy natural history collection gathered by a local man in the 19th century, the oceanic treasures contained within the Bennett marine life collection, the elegance of some of our feathered treasures, and more. The exhibition will be running from January through to the end of March 2025.

An eventful autumn

Te Raraka Kua Ihotia: Weaving handed down through Time opened in April, running through until late June. This exhibition featured works by local artists and weavers who utilised traditional skills and a mix of traditional and modern materials to produce a stunning array of woven items. The exhibition was popular with a wide range of visitors, attracting attention from weavers from other parts of the country. It also provided a focal point for April school holiday programmes where participants used coloured paper to try simple weaving (lower right).



Below: We marked International Museums Day on Saturday 18 May with guided tours of some of the Museum's collection storage areas. Four participants relished the opportunity to go behind the scenes to view the often unseen work that the Museum team carry out - cataloguing, packing, storing and retrieving thousands of heritage items from nature and history. Visitors were able to learn about the roles that acid-free materials, climate control and careful storage play in preserving fragile heritage items to ensure their longevity and availability for future use. It was stressed that the 100,000+ items in our collections are the key resource for what the Museum

does: research, exhibitions, education, public programmes and more.

Below left: Curator Tony demonstrating the acid-free storage boxes used for rolled plans in the Documentary History cool store.

Bottom left: Visitors view an array of drawers retrieved from the Natural History Collection store: fossils, insects, moa bones.

Below: Curator Chris Rapley explaining social history object packing in the Textiles Collection Store.



Crabby times at the Museum in July

The July school holidays were, as usual, a busy time for the Museum with hundreds of keen young visitors making their way in to explore the Museum. In fact, with so many Museum Explorers (see p.2) visiting or signing up for the first time, we ran out of badge-making components. We ran activity programmes linked to the **Clever Crustaceans** exhibition touring from Te Papa, a popular draw on its own. Holiday attendees made craft crabs in a series of free sessions that were popular with many family groups.

We also ran the usual in-gallery activities, such as Museum Mystery quiz sheets where children could find answers within the exhibition cases, and the perennial favourite, Find the Golden Frog. This activity requires participants to search the Museum for a garden statue of a frog painted gold (left) that is hidden amongst the displays. The frog itself was deposited at the Museum's front door in the 1970s with quite a story attached about its wayward past and redemption! Over recent times, finding the Golden Frog has become something expected by our regular young punters, keen to find it and enter the prize draw.



New publications on the way with a family connection



Above: Hugh McCully with artist Tony Fomison and local historian Airini Woodhouse at Raincliff, 1959. Both McCully and Woodhouse were members of the South Canterbury Historical Society. Fomison had been brought in for a new rock art recording project.

We are working with Rosanna McCully McEvedy and Marion Seymour on publications that focus on local archaeological heritage activities in the early 20th century. Rosanna and Marion are granddaughters of Hugh McCully (1878-1967), one of four locals who were enthusiastic amateur archaeologists in the 1930s and 40s. Much of what they collected has ended up in South Island museums, including ours. While their approach and methods would raise more than eyebrows today, the fact remains that some of the sites that they worked on no longer exist, apart from what they collected.

Hugh McCully had involvement with a number of key individuals involved with this subject area at the time, including Theo Schoon, the idiosyncratic and controversial artist employed to record local Māori rock art throughout the region in 1946-7. Schoon was later found to have altered the original drawings and later used some of their designs in his own artistic work. Schoon's work on this project and the impact it had on local people is the subject of the first publication **Theo Schoon's Tipping Point**, scheduled for release later in October this year. It will be followed by another looking at the work of McCully and his three archaeological colleagues who excavated and studied local Māori archaeological sites.

Recent additions to the collections

Over 80 items have been added to our collections this year, with many more in process. Some of the highlights are shown here:

Right: 2023 Waimate incinerator environmental protest badge (2024/039.03).

Far right: early-20th century Smithfield freezing works tag (2024/035.1).

Lower right: Presidential chains for the Benvenue Men's Friendship Club which ceased this year (2024/029.03).

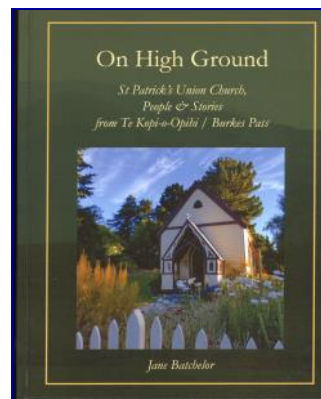
Lower far right *On High Ground* a 2023 history of St Patrick's church in Burkes Pass (2024/020.1).

Below: Spoon engraved with "WN" for Whare Nana, an early 20th century Timaru maternity home (2024/023.1).

Bottom: South Island Marching championship pennant from 1963 (2024/036.1).

Bottom right: Eocene leaf fossil from new local site, inland South Canterbury (2024/051.01)

Bottom far right: Embroidered shirt for local record store c.2001 (2024/026.1).



From Museum store room to Aigantighe's walls



Te Taha o te Rangi, photographic works by acclaimed New Zealand artist Dr Fiona Pardington (left), ran at the Aigantighe Art Gallery from 14 June to 4 August (below). This featured Dr Pardington's images created earlier in the year at South Canterbury Museum.

Fiona worked with us (lower left) to select a number of our bird specimens from storage or display, making high resolution digital images onsite. She used these to create stunning large-format works in partnership with Starkwhite Gallery in Auckland. The works have been exhibited at several locations before coming home to Timaru. Fiona has generously gifted three of these works for the Aigantighe's permanent collection, ensuring that our community will hold a record of her work. (Below and lower right image credits: Samuel Bos, Aigantighe Art Gallery).



Heritage Education: all go in Terms 2 and 3

Our Heritage Education Team have had a varied and busy time over Terms 2 and 3 this year. Keely, Ruth and Joanna have found themselves alternating between high school drama classes, onsite early childhood centre visits, nature field trips and a range of programmes at the Museum itself.

Early childhood centres in particular are keen to host visits from the team, with the mix of real things from nature and history combined with an enthusiastic and friendly face making repeat visits more and more common. Given the short stay and quick turnaround for pupils, our team are usually visiting these facilities more than once a year. Some have then gone on to arrange a visit to the Museum, quite a logistical undertaking with a large group of under-fives!



Above Ruth with a fabric tuna/long-finned eel replica at a local early childhood centre. The youngsters love the hands-on replicas that the team use with them.



Top left: Timaru Boys High School drama students working on a re-enactment of the 1868 Great Fire of Timaru.



Left: Joanna talking about native creatures with an enthralled audience of under-fives at a local early childhood education centre.



Right: Keely working with a class from Waimataitai School looking at local marine life in the Museum. This visit was coupled with the chance to see the **Clever Crustaceans** exhibition currently on tour from Te Papa.



Left: Waimate Centennial School students experiencing a Victorian classroom at Waimate Museum. Our team now work with several local museums to provide programmes where schools would find it difficult to come to Timaru but can use their local museum as a resource.

Both local schools and museums appreciate having curriculum-linked programmes delivered by professional educators who often bring additional resources from South Canterbury Museum to add to their programmes. This also has acted as a catalyst for schools to then arrange visits to us at the Museum in Timaru.

People around the Museum (and beyond)



We farewelled Museum cleaner Jan Rippin recently following several years of going above and beyond to make sure the Museum always looked fabulous. When Jan signed on, she quickly joined in on everything going on, including being part of the team who won the 2018 International Museum Dance off, and being prepared to get into the '70s spirit of things at **Retro Rock 2018** (right).



Right: A bit of a 'busman's holiday' for Museum Educator Keely in July when she and her family visited Borneo. As well as looking at museums, biologist Keely was delighted to find horseshoe crab shells, similar to those we have on display in the **Clever Crustaceans** exhibit, found while the family was exploring a national park area in 30°C heat and 90% humidity



Below: A Central South Island Museums Group meeting was held in Temuka in June. Co-ordinated by Curator Tony Rippin from South Canterbury Museum, over 30 representatives from a wide range of institutions from Mid and South Canterbury and North Otago. There were presentations about operational aspects along with a visit to the Temuka Museum, currently completing a refurbishment.

Below centre: Exhibition designer Jenny Partington from Ashburton Art Gallery and Museum presenting about label design.

Below right: Attendees learning about the Temuka Museum redevelopment.

Right: All in a day's work: Keely and Chris in the lift, transporting mannequins back to our textiles storage area after packing down the **Te Raraka Kua Ihotia** weaving exhibition.



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

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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
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