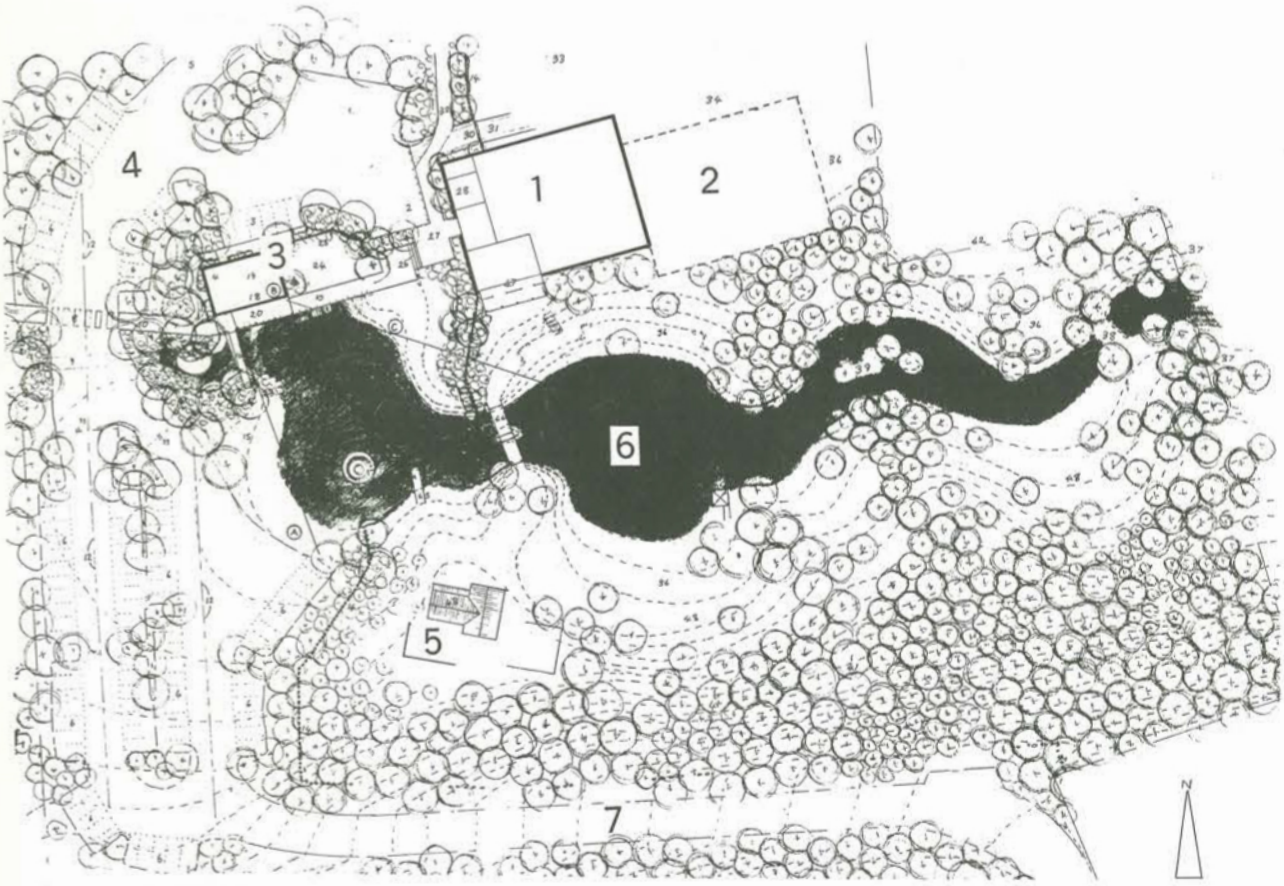
# CLYDESDALE MUSEUM




1. Clydesdale Agricultural Museum building
2. Future extension
3. Tearooms, opening onto a deck overlooking the lake. Children's play area.
4. Car and bus park
5. Historic cottage
6. Lake
7. Access road down steep bank.

# AGMANZ NEWS

The Art Galleries & Museums Association of New Zealand
Volume 7 Number 1 February 1976

# AGMANZ NEWS

vol 7 no. 1
february 1976

## contents



Cover: Clydesdale Agricultural Museum development plan.

## The Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand

## administration

President: Bruce Hamlin
National Museum
Private Bag
Wellington.
Telephone — 59-609

Secretary: Constance Kirkcaldie
National Museum
Private Bag
Wellington.
Telephone — 59-267

Treasurer: Mrs M. Gibson-Smith
P.O. Box 6853,
Auckland 1.
Telephone — 74650 ext. 633

Editor: Ken Gorbey
P.O. Box 1382,
Hamilton.
Telephone — 84-119

## copy for the news

Manuscripts may be submitted to the Editor at any time. Copy should be typed, double spaced and ideally on A4 paper. The Editor cannot undertake to extract copy from newsclip supplied by contributors. Photographs for publication should be glossy and of a fair size. Photographs are reproduced by a reduction process and therefore small prints are difficult to publish.

AGMANZ News is published with the support of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand.

TCP TIMES COMMERCIAL PRINTERS

# some thoughts on programmed information provision

TL Rodney Wilson

The simplest form of A-V programme. A synchronised Uher four-track tape recorder and Kodak Carousel SAV 2000 projector in a public operable rear projection unit.

When it comes to a conscious attempt to put the visiting public at ease and to make their visit both a profitable and enjoyable one, New Zealand museums may be seen, on the whole, to succeed where the art galleries fail dismally. That is not to say that there are no examples of museums failing to come up to scratch, or galleries excelling themselves from time to time, but as a generalised truism, it seems fair enough to me.

Such, I am sorry to say, is an indictment which should not be dismissed lightly, for it is a direct survival of the elitist attitudes concerning art which elsewhere fortunately belong (at least as far as art museums are concerned), to the distant past where, God willing, they may rest in peace. It would appear that recently in New Zealand attention to, and interest in the arts has grown. If that is another New Zealand myth (and our inability to produce an art periodical in the 70's as we could in the 20's and 30's would seem to refute it), then it is one in which we all like to believe. Attendance has improved at galleries and museums but, to the best of my knowledge, no attempt has been made to analyse the nature of the public, their likes and dislikes and their expectations of a visit to the art gallery. Some of our gallery personnel have moved their ponderous institutions slowly in the right direction, but for my money I wouldn't mind betting that there are vast numbers of people who find their gallery visits less than fulfilling and come away a little bewildered, and more than a little frustrated in their attempts to expand their realm of experience in the visual arts.

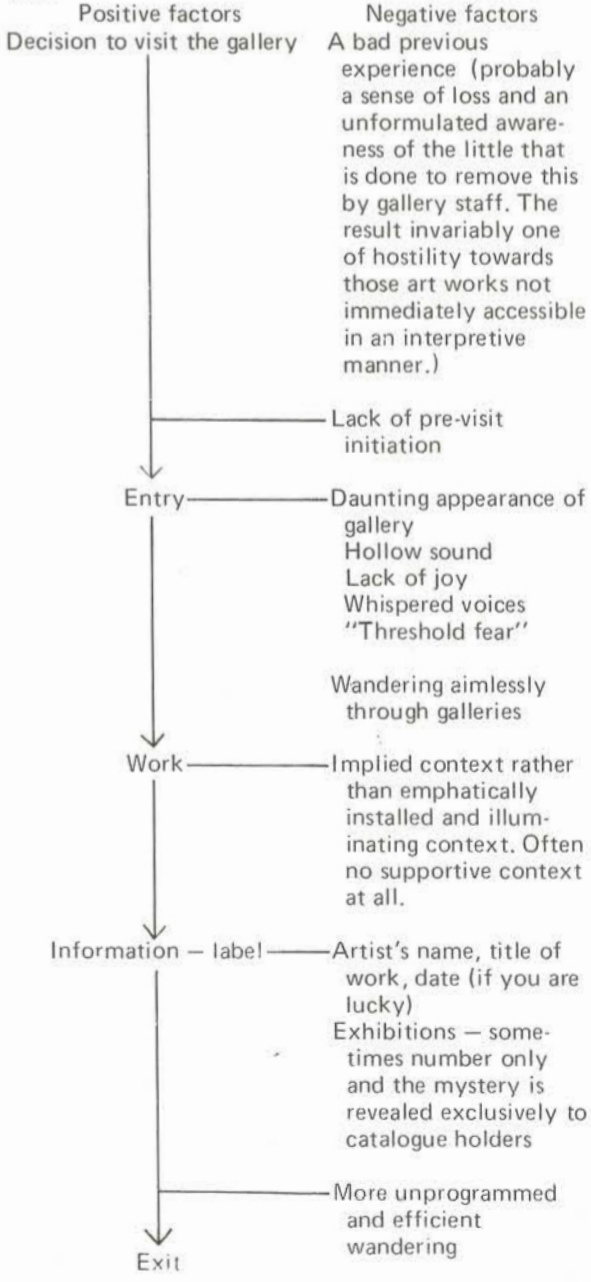
Obviously what is missing is some reasonable attempt to meet the visitor at the door and to guide him through the collections at the pace and in the direction he establishes, armed with information, documentation and good will. He is left entirely to his own devices and, without so much as a floor plan of the larger galleries, he must stumble from exhibit to unrelated exhibit, the victim of gallery policy which seldom considers the variety of visitor flow

possibilities and the provision of back-up information sources to the works on display. If at this point the reader has experienced a flash of indignation and righteous superiority, asserting that "the works speak for themselves", I would invite him to put aside his prejudices and attempt, if he will, to recollect his own confusion when first coming to grips with works of art. The learning process is one of self acquisition, but self acquisition within parameters and perimeters established for it will be less painful, less daunting and more enjoyable.

The art gallery is a variety of things, not the least of which is an immense mausoleum in which objects are laid to rest and from which some sense of order is extracted. But it is also a patron of research. Neither of these functions involve the public and if it was not for the immensely significant aspect of the gallery's intercourse with its public, a more stuffy place could hardly be imaginable. A work of art which is not accessible has no value as such. The gallery's job is to make its collection, and, in the form of exhibitions, those of others, accessible. At present this takes the form of little more than hanging the works on the wall, sometimes fortunately in some sort of context, although this is certainly not always the case. In my mind, and in the minds of most overseas gallery staff, this is not sufficient.

What we are talking about is education. We all have our prejudices and our hang-ups, and my major one is that art education is best conducted in art museums. An assertion undoubtedly, and a belief unsupported by the necessary evidence it certainly is, but like most matters of belief unsupported. I am committed to it. Indeed if I did not believe it then I could not justify the existence of a single art gallery. It is not possible for the public to step inside the gallery without them becoming immediately involved in an educational experience. As soon as the gallery opens its doors to the public it accepts, ipso facto, that it has an educational obligation. When we talk of museum education we are not talking of the function some boffin carries out in a back room or the wielding of brush and paint by ten year olds in the cellar. We are talking of the entire spectrum of the gallery's public affairs. We must certainly have education officers in our galleries, but their activities rather than being an isolated fragment of the gallery's total work, will embrace all its contacts with the public. The education officer has a central function in the gallery's affairs and there is much to be remedied.

It is all a question of efficiency. Efficient use of the resources available and an efficient use of the public's time and energy. A simple flow chart of a typical gallery visit at present would look something like this:



The only support I can find in me for this state of affairs is that it certainly provides the visitor with the maximum amount of freedom to make his own decisions on how he shall utilise his time available, including of course the decision to leave.

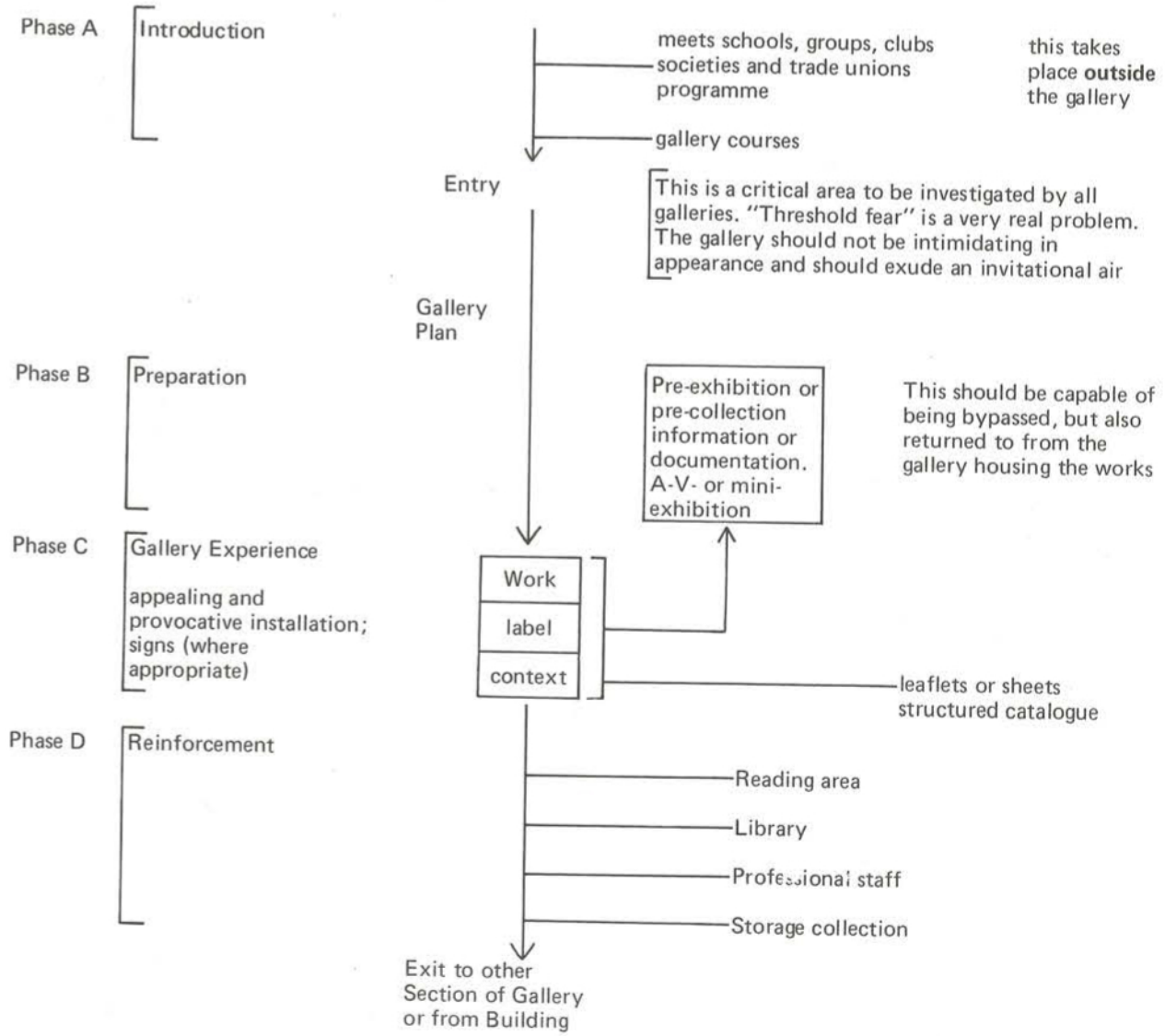
What we must recognise is that amongst the public we receive at our galleries there will be a wide variety of experiences. Their backgrounds of familiarity with the visual arts will be varied both in kind and in depth. Any successful total educational programme for an art gallery will be designed to accommodate the greatest variety of experiences and allow each visitor to extract from it that which he requires. In fact the range of experience we will encounter will extend from the most elementary introduction to a searching examination of both the works and documents concerning them. It would be unfortunate if either of the extreme categories here identified, and those which lie between, were compelled to undergo the educational experiences designed for the other. A programme should be designed to be both comprehensive and selective. It should allow a visitor to move through material of steadily greater complexity as his familiarity with the collections improves. It should suggest definite paths of progress through the material but not restrict the visitor from discovering his own alternatives. Above all, at all levels, it must be attractive; it must encourage the visitor to make use of it.

A gallery's total education programme will be a complex organism only limited in its scope and in its resourcefulness by the limitations imposed by the availability of both staff and finance. In this article I shall suggest a possible approach to one segment of educational activity; the central one, that concerning the works themselves. Obviously the works are what it is all about, they are why the gallery exists, they are why the public is there. They will be central to any and all schemes designed to elucidate them. Where a documentary or A-V programme becomes an end in itself and where it ceases to explain and reinforce the works, it will be seen to have become divorced from the central consideration, viz. to present a work or works of art in the most meaningful context possible for the widest range of experiences likely to be brought to bear upon it.

Again my suggested educational plan can be shown as a simple flow chart, although necessarily more complex than the previous one. It will be noted that four independent phases of activity have been identified, one consists of pre-gallery preparation, three consist of independent but cumulative gallery experiences of varying complexity.

Phase A represents that aspect of gallery affairs that might be considered 'Foreign Affairs'. It involves bringing the gallery, knowledge and information of its collections and activities to social groups outside. A programme of this kind will be extremely effective in schools, preparing groups for their visit to the gallery in such a way that they will attend with a specific knowledge of what they will find and how they will best use their time. A visit by any social group, a school or whatever, involves a considerable amount of time (both in travel and in the time actually spent at the gallery). It is not unreasonable to expect that members of such parties should be given the opportunity to become adequately prepared in order that they might best utilise the time available. Such initiation courses might reasonably also be seen to lead into specific educational programmes conducted at the gallery and utilising the gallery context. Necessarily all these activities will be voluntary and many visitors will not have had the benefit of them.

The moment of entry is one which we should be careful not to under-estimate. The present gallery public would appear to be comprised of those long since initiated into the art museum experience and the more intrepid of the uninitiated. There is reason to believe that a substantial body of people are turned off by the thought of an art gallery (generally considering it a temple of elitism) or, for those who are passing, by the formidable appearance of many institutions. These reservations we might term "threshold fear". It is best overcome by eliminating off-putting physical features of the gallery, consciously striving for an air of welcoming unprecious intimacy, and developing a wide-spread reputation for a catholic programme of activities. Especially in New Zealand galleries with their none too generously endowed collections, we should be looking closely to regular associated activities in order to enliven and broaden our galleries. These would include film, dance, concerts (of all kinds), mime, theatre in the round, poetry, discussion, children's creches, and, since by computation the average male homo sapiens' stomach is some forty seven centimetres from his eyes, a small restaurant or at least coffee facilities.




| | |
|---|---|
| Centre of Flow Chart: | Involuntary programme determined by traffic flow and involving the works, attached information and context |
| Left Side of Flow Chart: | Largely involuntary contextual assistance |
| Right Side of Flow Chart: | Voluntary cumulative information sources. |

Phase B is one of preparation. The public should be informed of where particular material is to be found by a clear, concise and attractive floor plan. At this point, especially in the larger galleries, the initial decision of what is to be seen, or in what order the collections are to be seen, will be made. The floor plan is an essential step in reducing at an early stage the tendency for the public to become lost and wander aimlessly through the galleries, their sense of programme lost, their eyes alighting briefly from time to time on material which momentarily takes their fancy – gallery window shopping.

Wherever an exhibition or didactic selection from the collection is assembled, there should be an introduction to the material exhibited. There are many forms which this might take. Perhaps two of the most effective are the synchronised tape-recorder/carousel projector of the kind used to such good purpose by the Auckland City Art Gallery on three recent occasions, (this can, without complex electronics, be made operable by the public, the installation being activated by a member of the public pushing a button, and switching itself off after the programme has been completed), and the documentary exhibition. On the walls, on horizontal plinthes and on screens, photographs and text can be arranged providing an introduction to the exhibition. This can be of programmed complexity, proceeding from headlines to a bold type basic introduction, to smaller type for more detailed and specific information. At all times such programmes should be **supportive, appealing** and **informative**. It is good practice if this is adjacent to, but separate from, the galleries in which the works are shown, but pressure on space can allow it to be introduced in the same area. At all times it should be so positioned as to enable the public to return to it whenever in need of answers to questions raised.

Phase C is the essential central phase involving the least number of choices. The choice to leave it or see it has been made on entry, the context in which the works are hung is unalterable and the information provided by the labels on the work is there and unlikely to be ignored. An appealing and stimulating installation will attract the visitor, a repetitious unimaginative one will repel him. At all times the visitor should be absorbed and channelled in the use he makes of the material provided for him. Unobtrusive attractive signs (letraset on clear perspex for example), will offer positive assistance where their use is necessary.

At the simplest level cyclostyled or xeroxed explanatory leaflets can be made freely available from tables or boxes. At a more spohisticated level simple illustrated offset leaflets (such as employed by the National Art Gallery for their 'Picture of the Month' scheme), will fulfill the same task in a more attractive way. Indeed if these are provided with punched holes, the gallery shop can sell ringbinders and eventually indeces which will encourage the public to save them, eventually building up a file of gallery collections and activities.


An obvious form of market research and method of creating a sense of public involvement.

Is a creche too much to ask for shell-shocked Mums at the end of a city visit?

More substantial than the leaflets are catalogues, exhibition catalogues and collection catalogues. The preparation of these, and guidelines which might be formulated for their preparation, are issues much too complex for me to become involved with in this context. Save to say that for museological reasons the *Les Guides Bleus* method of grading the detail of information by diminution of type size has much to offer. I have suggested it for the preparation documentation and I reiterate here, as a typological concept with wide-ranging educational applications.

If Phase B can be considered to cater predominantly for those unfamiliar with the material to be seen, Phase D is its counterfoil, opening avenues of further enquiry for those whose knowledge of the works has demanded that they consult less popularist information sources. Essential reading material might well be included in the immediate exhibition area, and if this represents pickings for petty theft, it might be secured in best mediaeval fashion to a table by a long, and not too daunting chain. Galleries must compliment their collections by the acquisition of textual material and this should be housed in a reference-only library open to the public. It will necessarily have to be supervised and for smaller galleries unable to extend to the luxury of a librarian, some architectural expedient will have to be sought. It is not sufficient, however, to delay its introduction on the excuse of staffing. A library is an essential aspect of any art gallery. Finally the public should have, when all above sources have been exhausted, free and obliging access to the curatorial and educational staff, whose servants they are! Obviously a gallery secretary should act as a coarse sieve if staff are not to become open season for the most fatuous enquiries.

Education by self enquiry is a grand thing; education by directed self enquiry is perhaps the ideal; education by groping in a dark vacuum is pitiful. All public art galleries have a responsibility to their public [their benefactors and patrons], and a conscious effort must be made to recognise their needs, identify their requirements, construct an ideal, and establish criteria and an information provision programme designed to strive towards that ideal. Our galleries are, with some occasional exceptions, well below the level that we might reasonably expect of them. It is time that education officers (seconded from the teaching service?), were present in all medium to large museums, that equipment and resources were pooled and conferences called to establish the needs and formulate methods of dealing with them.

# clydesdale museum to become public

Vaughan Jones

The famous Clydesdale Agricultural Museum at Matamata has been purchased by the N.Z. National FIELDAYS Society, Inc., and will be moved to the Society's 65-hectare Mystery Creek property, just south of Hamilton.

This private collection, which is a credit to its founder, Mr P. Ward, has been built up by him over the last 40 years. In April it will become a public museum, and will be ideally sited between Highways 1 and 3, only 1 km from the Hamilton Airport. Mr Ward will live on the property, and continue to tell visitors about the history of the collection. He is delighted that the Museum will become public, and will be so centrally situated in the Waikato. The FIELDAYS property is well known for its National FIELDAYS, held for the Building Industry each March, Agriculture in June, and the Transport Industry each November. These events of practical demonstrations attract a total of 63,000 people. The beautiful property on the banks of the Waikato river is also the centre of many sporting activities, such as rallycross, speedway, raft races, etc.

The FIELDAYS Society, on hearing of the impending sale of the Clydesdale Museum, took an option for one month. It had insufficient funds for the deposit, and already has a heavy mortgage, so it campaigned for the $30,000 necessary to go ahead. The response was as hoped, and the amount was raised or pledged within the month. Fund-raising is continuing, and has indeed now become more important than ever, to cover the cost of housing the exhibits.

The Society, in looking for buildings to house the collection, asked the Hamilton City Council for the world famous Bledisloe Hall, which has to be demolished within a few years to make way for new buildings in the centre of Hamilton. The Council agreed and assistance to move the building is now being sought. It made world headlines in 1935, because it was the first welded steel building. A booklet on it was published by the British Steel Association, so with its historical background and its 18,000 sq ft it should be ideal for housing the 3,000 pieces.

A price to move the Hall (several years ago) was $136,000, so it was not moved. Public support for it to house the Museum has been so great that, at the time of writing, it looks as if it can be moved and re-erected for approximately $50,000. The Museum committee is investigating all avenues of obtaining further discounts, and raising the remainder.

To the Society's knowledge, there is no specifically agricultural museum in New Zealand, and it is intended to develop this collection as the country's best record of our agricultural past. Already many implements and gadgets, used by early farmers and their wives, have been offered, and, it is envisaged that they will make a complete record, together with the bullocks and the Clydesdale horses from which the Museum gets its name. Parklike surroundings are to be developed, and it is planned to have a working blacksmith's shop, an historic farm house, cowshed, and shearing shed. Ferry trips from Hamilton to the Museum are planned, and visitors will be able to picnic in the Museum grounds, which will include a lake and native trees. The Clydesdale horses will give wagon rides, and use some of the agricultural equipment. The bullocks will also demonstrate.

Donations and Life Memberships have come in from a wide area. Life Membership costs $100, and entitles the member to free entry to the Museum for his lifetime.

The Museum committee hopes that all New Zealanders interested in our primary industries' excellent record of growth will support this venture, by either donating or joining as a Life Member. Donations of $2 or over will be receipted, as they are tax deductible. The address is –

Clydesdale Museum, Private Bag, Hamilton.

# silver

Norman Marks

Silver is one of the metallic elements. Its chemical symbol is Ag, its specific gravity is 10.57, its atomic weight 107.88 and its melting point is 961C. It is capable of being beaten into leaves of as little as one hundred thousandth part of an inch in thickness and may be drawn into wire considerably finer than a human hair.

Vessels of silver have been made by man for thousands of years. They were common in ancient Egypt and the Old Testament contains many references to silver cups, bowls, candlesticks etc.

Pure silver is a little too soft to be satisfactory for the making of articles for domestic use but by being alloyed with a small quantity of other metal (usually copper) it gains sufficient hardness without impairing its appearance. In practice the proportion of alloy varies from about 75 to 200 parts per 1000.

Auctioneers, dealers and the public in New Zealand are, I feel, a little over fond of speaking of Sterling silver and it would be better if we spoke of English silver, Scottish silver, French silver and so on and left the use of the term Sterling silver for those articles so marked.

The term Sterling is an indication of a silver content of not less than 925 parts per 1000. While all English silver is of Sterling quality not all Sterling silver is English. The word Sterling is supposed to have been derived from the 12th and 13th century inhabitants of Eastern Germany called *Easterlings* who were renowned for the quality of their silver coinage. Thus Easterling – Sterling quality.

For several hundred years it has been an offence in England to sell as silver any article of less than Sterling quality and numerous laws have been enacted to prevent abuses, policing being carried out by the Goldsmith's Company to whose halls every article had to be submitted for assay before sale and there to receive its "Hall Marks" which guaranteed its quality and identified its maker.

To describe fully these marks is well beyond the scope of this short article but if we concentrate first on the marks to be found on London-assayed silver articles we shall be off to a good start.

London marks are (almost invariably) either four or five in number and are as follows:

1. The Leopard's head. A mark appointed by statute as early as 1300 to be placed on all silver (and gold) articles. Once known as the "King's mark" and originally intended as the "Standard" mark, it may now for most practical purposes be considered to be the "London" mark. On pieces made before 1821 the leopard's head will be found crowned and from then onward uncrowned.

2. The maker's mark. Made compulsory in 1336. In the earlier days a symbol. An act of 1697 called for the mark to consist of the first two letters of the maker's surname. A later act of 1739 directed makers to substitute the initials of their christian and surnames.

3. The date mark. The use of a letter to indicate the date of assay was introduced in 1478. Always one of twenty of the letters of the alphabet the same letter appearing every twenty years but in a different form – Roman, Italic, Old English etc., and upper or lower case. The letter was changed every 30th May.

4. The lion rampant. The standard or quality mark appears from 1545 onward.

5. The duty mark. From 1785 to 1890 a duty was imposed on silver and the duty mark which took the form of the head of the reigning sovereign was virtually a receipt for duty paid.

To "read" the marks on the illustrated example then we may proceed like this:

The Lion passant tells us that the piece is English silver. The leopard's head tells us it was assayed in London and the fact that the head is crowned tells us it was made before 1821. The initials R.A. tells us it was made by Robert Abercromby. The date letter tells us it was assayed in London between May 30th, 1744 and May 30th 1745.

The absence of a duty mark tells us it was not made between 1821 and 1890 and combining this with the fact that the leopard's head is crowned one can say at a glance and without reference to tables that the piece was made before 1785.

A similar "off the cuff" one can arise if one is shown a piece bearing an uncrowned leopard's head and no Sovereign's head. Here one can say immediately that this piece was made after 1890 — thus causing a situation if its owner has just been told that it came over on one of the first four ships.

From the above I hope I have persuaded you that English silver marks are not quite as impossible to understand as you might have thought. A word of warning though: do not make the mistake of now considering yourself an expert. This is an introduction only and a considerable simplification. Much remains to be said.

For instance, in 1697 the standard was raised and from then until 1719 a silver content of 959 parts per 1000 was required. This was called Britannia Standard and during this time two marks, the figure of a woman, commonly called Britannia, and a lion's head erased were substituted for the leopard's head and the lion passant. This higher standard is still perfectly legal and examples bearing the Britannia Standard mark may occasionally be found among modern pieces.

Next we must consider those English pieces assayed in offices other than London. Those assayed at Sheffield will be marked with a crown in place of the leopard's head. Birmingham uses an anchor, Chester uses the City Arms and Exeter a castle with three towers. There are others. These provincial assay offices used cycles of date letters different from London and from each other. It therefore follows that it is essential to establish the town of assay before attempting to identify the date letter.

Scottish and Irish silver marks differ from those of England although broadly speaking the same general principles apply. Books of reference giving all these marks are fairly easily obtained and one should form part of the library of every museum.

Weights of silver articles are always expressed in "Troy" not the Avoirdupois scale to which we are more accustomed (and are now in the process of abandoning in favour of metric weights). Troy weights are:

24 grains = 1 cwt (pennyweight)
480 grains = 20 cwts = 1 oz.
5760 grains = 240 cwts = 1 lb.

192 ozs. Avoirdupois = 175 ozs. Troy.

Therefore a very rough and ready troy weight can be obtained by weighing the article on ordinary scales and knocking off one seventh e.g. 70 ozs. Avoirdupois = 60 ozs. Troy or, if you wish to be more exact multiply by 175 over 192.

Generally speaking silver articles of non-British origin are by no means as well documented and the systems of marking are a good deal more complex. Some will be found to bear such marks as 800, 900 etc, which can usually be taken to indicate the silver content. One frequently encounters tableware bearing such marks as Nevada Silver, Petosi Silver and the like. These are trade names for plated ware and are not silver.

Once one has a grasp of silver marks the next logical step is to acquire some knowledge of the types of ware one may encounter and a feel for period. Silver articles made for domestic use will generally reflect pretty accurately the tastes, habits and the fashion of the period in which they were made so that they would be in harmony with other furnishings. With experience and good observation one can often date a piece within a decade or so by its style. Even when a style has lapsed to reappear at a later date one can usually detect a subtle change of spirit. When the appearance of an article conflicts with the date it is well to consider it very carefully. It may, of course, be a reproduction made to go with or replace an earlier piece or it may have been altered or decorated to conform to changing tastes. Many plain and dignified pieces of early Georgian silver were, in Victorian times, chased with scroll work to conform to the style then fashionable.

For those who may be unfamiliar with them I should perhaps mention that the terms Lion passant and Lion's head, erased are Heraldic ones and convey very precise meanings. A basic knowledge of heraldic terms will often be found to be of considerable use to museum workers. I once made the mistake of taking it for granted that a museum worker would understand when I said that a mark was "A lion's head erased". I was a little shattered when he replied "Oh no, it's not erased. I can see it distinctly."

For those who feel that they would like to study further, the following books will be found worthy.

Cripps, W.J. *Old English Plate* 1878 and later editions

Jackson, Sir C.J. *An Illustrated History of English Plate*

Carre, Louis *A Guide to Old French Plate* 1928

Oman, Chas *English Domestic Silver* 1931

*Chaffer's Handbook to Hall Marks on gold and Silver plate* 1897 and later editions.

# united states government funding for the arts

The US House of Representatives is expected to recommend its appropriate committee to allocate $79.5m (approx. £38.5m) to the National Endowment for the Arts for 1976/77, representing an increase of $4.5m over the current financial year. This decision, although not unexpected, has disappointed many arts workers, representing as it does a $2.5m cut on the $82m requested. However, there are expectations that the US Senate will recommend a higher figure when it considers the arts budget.

Meanwhile, the Arts Endowment has released details of the apportionment of its budget for the current year.

| Programme Area | Allocation $ | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Architecture/environment | 2,655,000 | 4.1 |
| Dance | 4,980,000 | 7.6 |
| Education | 4,167,500 | 6.4 |
| Expansion Arts | 5,050,500 | 7.7 |
| Federal-State Partnership | 14,348,640 | 22.0 |
| Literature | 1,445,000 | 2.2 |
| Museums | 6,905,000 | 10.6 |
| Music | 7,412,000 | 11.4 |
| Public Media | 5,446,000 | 8.4 |
| Special Projects (+ Folk Arts) | 4,549,479 | 7.0 |
| Theatre | 4,870,000 | 7.5 |
| Visual Arts | 2,915,000 | 4.5 |
| Research | 400,000 | 0.6 |

Reprinted from British Arts Council Bulletin No. 9, Oct./Nov. 1975, p.15.

# museums' workshop, otago museum, 31 october to 2 november 1975

Rose Cunningham

Volunteer museums are run by enthusiasts who, as the response to the Workshop shows, are eager to seize an opportunity to make their interest more worthwhile. They face formidable problems in terms of manpower, finance and isolation.

They require sufficient experience to be able to judge the value of their own efforts and thus to determine whether they are able to contribute, and how they can best contribute, towards the common aim of the preservation and presentation of the history of their districts.

The highly successful Museums' Workshop at the Otago Museum attracted enrolments from 57 representatives of professional, volunteer and private museums and allied institutions in Otago and Southland.

The Otago Museum accepts some obligation towards other museums in Otago and Southland. It can do little to influence the actual number of museums but it believes that once a museum has been established, that museum should be encouraged to perform its functions competently. The Otago Museum can assist in this only if a happy working relationship is established with each museum. This applies particularly to the small local museums run by volunteers.

It could well be argued that there are too many local museums, that they are too much alike and that by virtue of their very number, they are self defeating. Unless the people concerned with these museums become familiar with each other's aims, broaden their experience of museums and see themselves as part of the museums movement in New Zealand as a whole, this problem is not likely to be resolved. Although the Otago Museum's Extension Officer visits these museums and assists with problems as they arise, there is a need for a general training programme to assist staffs of volunteer museums and for a forum for the exchange of ideas among themselves.

The Museums' Workshop was intended specifically for persons involved in running local volunteer museums in Otago and Southland, although invitations were also sent to other persons and institutions concerned with museums. Representatives were invited from every public museum and art gallery in Otago and Southland and from the better known private museums and historical displays. Individuals known to have a personal or professional interest in local museums were also invited.

Thirty-six institutions in Otago and Southland were notified of the Workshop. Fifty-seven individuals enrolled for the course, who, including staff and speakers from the Otago Museum, the Hocken Library and the Museum of Transport and Technology in Auckland, represented 28 institutions. It was important that Mr Arthur Mackenzie with two of the other three professional staff of the Southland Museum were able to attend; obviously museums in Southland look first to the Southland Museum for guidance.

The aims of the Workshop were to foster co-operation among museums great and small and allied institutions in Otago and Southland, to examine the role and responsibilities of local museums, to give positive advice and offer practicable goals and to promote professional standards. The Workshop was supported by a grant of $500 from AGMANZ, for the purpose of encouraging distant museums to send representatives to the course by offering assistance towards travel and accommodation expenses.

The programme was devised to give the volunteer museums an opportunity of learning professional practice from trained staff and also to hear of each other's practical experiences in running local museums. Discussion and questioning were encouraged throughout and every attempt was made to banish the lecture room atmosphere. The Workshop proved to be a most enjoyable meeting of like-minded people, at the conclusion of which the larger institutions agreed that they had learnt as much as anyone.

The course opened on the Friday evening by *Introducing the Otago Museum* to the visitors with a tour of its storerooms, workrooms and display areas. On the Saturday there was a discussion, *What is a museum?* and a training session *Care of the Collections* which was led by Otago Museum staff. This was followed by a talk on the *Care of Documentary and Pictorial material* by the Hocken Librarian, followed by a tour of the library premises and a talk and discussion on *Visitor Appeal* by Mr Sterling of the Museum of Transport and Technology. On Sunday, Otago Museum staff spoke on *Displaying the Collections* and a police officer talked about *Museums and Security.* The course ended at 5 p.m. after discussion on *Museums and the Community* and *Administrative Experience of Local Museums.*

The programme was deliberately intended to be a general introduction to museums; it is hoped to offer further courses with detailed instruction on specific points at a later date.

When meeting volunteer museums, the established museums must be wary lest their willingness to assist be misinterpreted as interference. The lines of communication must be kept open. One advantage of the Workshop was that issues which would have been difficult to raise with some individual museums, could be aired in a general manner. Such matters as the delegation of responsibility among a museum committee and the importance of expert care for library material were handled at the Workshop without any museum needing to feel that it was being specifically criticised. The chairman of a committee in which responsibility for different aspects of the museum is successfully shared was asked to describe how the work is apportioned; the personal acquaintance with the Hocken Librarian and the tour of the Library gave participants a personal insight in to the expertise that is required in the proper care of archives and pictures.

Predictably, the discussion of display techniques aroused great interest, but even more encouraging were such comments as "I see what you mean about the need for a storeroom" and the long discussion on labelling and recording techniques. Local volunteers are eager to make their museums worthwhile. The reason why so many museums are at present disappointing is because those who run them are unaware of other options.

The discussion on visitor appeal emphasised the financial necessity which forces local museums to some degree of compromise with the tourist trade. Indeed, someone remarked that it was hard to tell whether this was a meeting of tourist operators or of those with an interest in preserving historical artefacts. Unless a museum is publicly funded, it is not enough for it to know how to perform its curatorial functions competently; it must attract visitors and it must touch their pockets. Unless it can conjure money from its visitors, it cannot afford to perform its curatorial duties properly. It was for this reason that Mr M.V. Sterling, the Keeper of Exhibits at the Museum of Transport and Technology in Auckland was invited to come to address the Workshop. As visitors know to their cost, MOTAT is not content with the income from admission fees alone!

The Otago Museum is able to offer very little direct assistance to local museums. Instead it seeks to make museums aware of those matters in which they require advice and to encourage them to ask for it. It was particularly welcome that most museums sent more than one representative to the Workshop – several sent four representatives – so that the local communities do not depend upon being alerted by a single individual.

# letters to the editor

## Fakes and professional responsibility

Dear Sir,

I feel I must ask to be allowed to reply to the editor's comments under the above heading to my article in the November issue of AGMANZ News.

The editor misquotes me when he attributes to me the statement that *we should put a forgery down to experience* and I would ask him to read the paragraph to which he refers once again.

The burden of my argument was, to put it succintly, that people who purchase an article which turns out to be less than expected when purchased at auction should not grizzle and seek protection any more than they should be called upon to return and pay more when they secure a huge bargain.

The editor makes a categorical statement – *Museums are purveyors of truth.* I wish it were so but truth is a very elusive quality. With the best wish in the world the best a museum can do is to survey what the best opinion believes to be the truth at the time. This applies particularly to pictorial art because whilst it is often possible to prove what a painting is not, it is seldom possible to prove what it is. May I quote Lord Justice Kenyon –

*It is impossible to guarantee the authenticity of pictures by someone who worked in times long past because there is no means of tracing their origin and their evaluation is never anything but a matter of opinion.*

In spite of this pronouncement by a man whose profession makes him dedicated to the establishment of truth Museums throughout the world present paintings as the undoubted work of stated masters. I would not suggest they are wrong to do so. They are offering the opinions of the best of generations of people of great learning and experience, but it must not be called truth.

The editor further states *There are experts available in New Zealand who can pronounce on a suspected forgery*. There may be a few who could so pronounce in a very limited field but I maintain that the expert who can pronounce on any painting does not exist. It has been my pleasure and privilege to know a number of learned men in the artistic field for whose opinion I have the greatest respect. I have always found such people very modest in their claims to expertise. If and when they pronounce it is on matters of fact which they are willing to demonstrate. In other directions they express considered opinions – no more.

The editor continues – *particularly where comprehensive authentic comparative material is held in New Zealand.*

Where, may I ask, is there such material other than that of New Zealand artists and perhaps a handful of others?

Referring to Van Meegeren the editor states – *All the experts did not agree – had they agreed the forgeries would not have been recovered.* With respect may I point out that Van Meegeren's fake Vermeers were not uncovered by experts but by the fact that Van Meegeren exposed himself in order to avoid a prosecution for what at that time was considered a worse sin, that of collaborating with the Nazis which would have incurred a much greater penalty. His first fake "The Disciples in Emmaus" was certified as authentic Vermeer and as *A masterpiece – his crowning achievement* by no less an expert than Dr Abraham Bredius an authority of international fame and by Professor Martin, Dr Schneider, Dr Schmidt Dagener, Jonkheer Roell, Dr Van Gelder and Dr Hannema. The picture was so displayed in an exhibition of Dutch Masterpieces.

Lord Duveen's agent's condemnation of it as a rotten fake was merely a reported event and, to the best of my knowledge has never been substantiated. In any case Lord Duveen made something of a habit of condemning other peoples' paintings as rotten fakes and was involved in much litigation as a result. I am inclined to treat this reported condemnation as suspect.

I would suggest that the best lesson N.Z. museologists as the editor calls them (I prefer the less pretentious term museum workers) can learn is a becoming modesty and the realisation that they are engaged in an enormous field of endeavour in which, if they are sufficiently dedicated, they will be learning for the rest of their lives. Some may conceivably become something of authorities in some limited field but, if they are wise, will shun the term expert.

For any of them to seek to sit in judgement upon what may or may not appear on the art market in an effort to see that no frauds, misattributions or "wrong" items come up for sale would be most presumptuous. After all every painting is a genuine something and there is no reason for anything to be kept off the market. The only sin is deliberately misrepresenting it. Let me give an example. It is a well recorded fact that many paintings by Gerard Dou, Nicholas Maes, Ferdinand Bol and others have been sold above the signature of Rembrandt over the last 100 or so years. Whilst they are not Rembrandts they remain considerable works of art by master painters and there is no reason why they should not be offered for sale nor, for that matter, why museums should return them to store.

They are far more worthy of display (with appropriate information) than much of the modern pseudo-art which litters our galleries. Most fakers were craftsmen of no mean ability and, speaking at least for myself, I would rather view a genuine Van Meegeren fake than the unworkmanlike rubbish which is all too frequently presented to us as art.

Norman Marks

## Thanks for grant

Dear Sir,

I am writing to ask you to please convey my thanks to the president and committee of AGMANZ for the grant made to me, enabling me to work at The Hague Gemeentemuseum as a volunteer. I appreciate very much being able to take this opportunity, and feel that it is a most useful and interesting experience.

I have been at the Gallery for three weeks and will be here probably for five weeks more. I have spent two weeks in the Documentation Department working on the Mondrian material. The Gemeentemuseum has a very large collection of Mondrian and has an extremely comprehensive documentation system containing material on this artist.

At present I am working in the Print Room making condition reports on the extensive collection of Mondrian drawings, and assembling further information on the artist for the Print Room files.

I am to spend some time in other departments of the gallery, including the Inventory Department and the Education Department, and generally am finding it most interesting to see the operation and organization of a large gallery.

I am most grateful to the committee for making it possible for me to take this opportunity and ask you to please pass on my thanks to them.

Kirsty Hazledine.

## Thanks for assistance

Dear Sir,

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all the museums and art galleries throughout New Zealand who have responded to two questionnaires sent out by Waikato Art Museum on the subjects of allocations for purchasing works for the collection and cataloguing systems for the fine arts collection.

From the information gathered staff are now in a much better position to resolve several very obvious problems.

Ken Gorbey
Director
Waikato Art Museum

# presenting geology to the public

Maxwell Gage

While overseas recently for a few months I found opportunities occasionally to spend an hour or two in the geological sections of public museums, large, medium-sized and small, in North America and Great Britain. It was interesting to take note of how each had tackled the problems of presenting to the layman what is perhaps the least well known or understood of the natural sciences, and to attempt some kind of assessment of how successful they seemed to be. It is emphasized, though, that this assessment is as regards their public education function through displays of earth-science materials in the public galleries, and not their curatorial and research functions. As might be expected, there is some diversity of approach. Some, especially the older ones, were rather strictly systematic, attempting some sort of overall representation of the subject while others gave greater weight to aspects that were particularly well shown or economically important in the region. The level of erudition, and therefore the required amount of prior knowledge of earth-science varied considerably, even between one section of the subject and another in the same museum.

I am left with a strong impression that success in communicating geological principles is not simply related to the wealth and resources of the institution. Some quite small museums had excellent displays very effectively covering limited aspects of special local interest, whereas the larger museums provided examples of elegant but complicated displays which are probably confusing rather than instructive. On the whole, though, the last few decades undoubtedly have seen important advances in the art of arranging geological displays so as to bring the subject alive, and in this the larger museums with good facilities are clearly at an advantage. Progress in this respect has been helped by the directions in which the science itself has made rapid strides, providing opportunities for ingenuity in presenting the highly dynamic history of the deep ocean floors that has recently been unravelled, and along with it a more satisfactory explanation for the present disposition of continents than we have had before.

The problem of how to represent adequately the scale of time involved in geological events of various orders of magnitude apparently remains unsolved. Elaborate displays that attempt to depict geological processes and events with the aid of animated models and cinematography generally fail to emphasize the enormous scale contrast between model and actuality and may well be giving false impressions of the different orders of time and quantities of material involved in these processes on the global scale. It was disappointing not to see any really effective attempts to help the layman to comprehend the time perspective of geology and the true tempo of geological changes. Otherwise, many and varied successful ways have been found to communicate basic geological concepts to the layman, having first entrapped his interest by means of some eye-catching exhibit or some dramatic art work.

Many of the medium-sized and larger museums obviously have their own geological staffs oriented towards museum requirements, but some are administratively linked with other institutions through which they can command the services of geologists. Nowhere did I find the science neglected, and it may be assumed that public interest justifies the appropriation of adequate sums from museum budgets to maintain geological displays and services up to a standard matching the other departments. I saw excellent examples of the use of dioramas to convey three-dimensional concepts, animation and time-lapse cinematography, and slide sequences with taped commentaries running continually or commanded by press-buttons. New or recently renovated displays generally reflect the modern trend towards arresting colours and backgrounds. At the same time I suspect that some may be remembered for the vividness of the presentation, the lighting, sound and mechanics, and not for the message they were intended to convey.

Of the two most general faults (or so they seem to me), one is possibly the result of employing professional scientists from other institutions, who

are either essentially research workers or teachers at university level but not trained specifically in museum work, to prepare the texts of labels and displays. This could explain the tendency to err either on the side of kindergarten simplicity, or of assuming too high a level of acquaintance with geology, its language and jargon. On the one hand an over-simplified picture of the earth is acquired by the uninitiated while the serious student learns nothing; on the other, the beginner is liable to be scared away, or discouraged by being left behind where there are gaps in the logical development of topics – gaps which the authors of the displays may not have realized are there because of the long time since they made their own first steps. Almost as unfortunate, in my view, is the unsatisfactory lighting in many geology halls. The modern trend towards low-level general lighting to concentrate attention upon the exhibits is often overdone, so that important general wording outside the highlighted areas is hard to read or may be overlooked altogether. All too often one finds small lettering too far away to be read easily by the substantial proportion of museum visitors who have eyesight problems, and text panels located where neck-craning or genuflexions or the use of a torch are necessary for reading them. In the choice of colour combinations for lettering and backgrounds, artistic effect and blending with the exhibit are sometimes achieved at the expense of ready legibility under the prevailing soft lighting.

Finally, the noise problem. Although much has been done in museums generally to diminish by means of absorbent surfaces and floor coverings the inevitable noise of people moving about the exhibits, yet one now often finds distracting interference between two or more unrelated recorded voices emanating from neighbouring galleries. There is much to be said in preference of portable tape-players with ear-phones available for hire.

In case the foregoing seems rather critical in tone, it may be wise to stress the point that the object of writing this note is to draw attention to what I saw as defects and unsolved problems in geological presentations mainly in the five medium-sized and large museums where I took particular notes because I believe these difficulties can be avoided or over-come. The relative prominence given to the earth sciences is surprisingly high, and with one deplorable exception the standard of presentation and main-tenance is high. Local materials are used selectively and to good effect in support of instructive texts rather than for systematic reference, and most displays went far beyond exhibiting the local geological and mineralogical curiosities and show-pieces. Obviously, there has been much interest in problems peculiar to geology in communicating modern scientific concepts to the general public.

# a second review

With Volume 6 now completed the time has come again to thank contributors for their efforts over the year. The News has been well supplied with copy of a high standard.

In particular I would like to thank three people who have contributed a great deal to the success of the last volume. Ralph Riccalton of Canterbury Museum undertook to gather copy and edit the Canterbury Issue, August 1975, while I was overseas. Raewyn Cooper, Waikato Art Museum, has been responsible for the new layout of the News and all pasteups, while Mrs Sue Wade, also of Waikato Art Museum, has typed numerous manuscripts.

Could I make a plea for the coming year – to develop a sense of professionalism, and therefore a profession, there must be an interchange of views and knowledge and one of the most effective means of achieving this is through the pages of the News. The Editor would therefore like to see a steady flow of copy covering such aspects of our work as technical innovations, how-to-do-it type articles, exhibition developments, theoretical considerations, etc. And please remember to present visual material as well.

Hon Ed.

# new zealand news

## Museums and cultural and scientific exchanges

Museum and Cultural and Scientific Exchanges – regional Symposium organised by the Indian National Committee for ICOM in co-operation with the ICOM Regional Agency in Asia, Calcutta, December, 1975. A report from Keith Thomson.

The symposium, held at various institutions within Calcutta was attended by some 60 museologists including representatives of 12 South and East Asian countries and members of the Council of the Commonwealth Association of Museums from outside the region. The Council chose to hold its meeting in association with the Symposium and was also able to assist certain museum personnel from Commonwealth countries to attend. A full report will appear in due course but it is worth indicating that it is clear a new climate of opinion emerged which will encourage the relatively ready movement of cultural objects between institutions in the Asia-Pacific region. Exchanges of objects in surplus is to be encouraged, or the supply of replicas and/or photographs. Direct contacts between institutions should lead to mutually satisfying exchanges although it was agreed that ICOM agencies may assist where other means fail. The eagerness to co-operate between institutions runs counter to pressures of cultural nationalism. A second heartening impression was the absence of political manoevring which tends to mar the larger international meetings of ICOM. The Indian National Committee are to be commended for an excellently organised working conference.

The Commonwealth Association Council met on several occasions and will bring to members at the ICOM Conference in Leningrad in 1977 a revised constitution which aims to make CAM an Association of associations of art galleries and museums in the various countries of the Commonwealth. A newsletter is to be published and a major project in East Africa undertaken.

## Arthur McKenzie retires

Mr Arthur McKenzie recently retired after 15 years with the Southland Museum. Beginning as Assistant Director, he has been Director since 1967. During his time as Director the museum has seen vast improvements to its collection, displays and extensions to the building. One of the most significant developments has been the Tuatarium, the first in New Zealand. Upon his retirement he leaves a museum of which all Southlanders can be justly proud.

## New director for Lake Districts Museum

Last November Mr Mike Bennett was appointed Director replacing Mr Bruce Young. Mr Bennett has experience covering mining, film making and as a venison hunter, a subject on which he is now writing a book. Mr Bennett's first task is the completion of the gold mining displays.

## Subscriptions for 1976 are now due.

As postage charges have increased, and AGMANZ'S income has greatly decreased, the Treasurer wishes to avoid sending a subscription reminder to each individual member and institutional member (a saving of approximately $20). Would members please remit their subscriptions at the following rates:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| AGMANZ | Individual member | $ 6.00 |
| | Institutional member | as 1975 |
| ICOM | Individual member | $ 8.00 |
| | Institutional member | $91.00 (note increase) |

to: Hon Treasurer
AGMANZ
c/- 7 Bracken Avenue
Epsom
Auckland 3.

Receipts will not be sent unless specifically requested.

# who you should know — 16

Ian Thwaites
Librarian
Auckland Institute and Museum

Ian Thwaites was born in Christchurch in 1940. He was educated at Wellington College and later at Victoria University of Wellington, where he completed a part-time degree, majoring in Political Science.

In 1958 Ian commenced work at the Alexander Turnbull Library where he was employed successively in the Reference, Periodicals and Photograph Sections, and in 1966 he was appointed Manuscripts Officer. After gaining the Diploma of the New Zealand Library School he was appointed Senior Assistant in the Periodicals Department at the Victoria University Library and in 1969 became Senior Reference Assistant, General Assembly Library. On the retirement of Miss Enid Evans in November 1970 he took up his present position.

Ian has a strong belief that the Auckland Institute and Museum Library ranks with the Turnbull and Hocken Libraries but he feels that it should be even better known than it is. The Library's impressive collection of New Zealand and Pacific material includes significant manuscript, newspaper and photograph holdings. He also believes that where practicable local history records should remain in the area of their origin and be housed in the libraries and museums of a province or region.

Ian has been active in New Zealand Library Association affairs and has been Secretary/Treasurer of the Auckland Branch since 1972. He is also a member of the Archives Committee of the NZLA. Recreations include photographing old Auckland buildings before they are demolished, and piobaireachd, the classical music of the highland bagpipe.