

February, 1962.

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

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A.G.M.A.N.Z. NEWSLETTER NO. 12

Editorial Note: I must apologise for the lateness of this issue. It has been delayed for the announcement of a Gulbenkian Grant.

Gulbenkian Grant:

In July 1955, the Council recommended to governing authorities that sabbatical study leave, with pay, be granted to senior professional officers. The replies received favoured the granting of leave, but limited finance was an obvious difficulty in the way of the scheme.

In July 1959, a report by Mr. H.C. McQueen on the possibilities of apprenticeship in taxidermy was sent to member institutions but again limited finance was a difficulty.

An application for funds for overseas travel and staff training was lodged by the President and Secretary with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on 23rd November, 1959. Mr. P.A. Tomory discussed the application with the Foundation when he visited England in December, 1960, and a Grant of £5,000 over three years has been made for some of the purposes suggested.

Applications for the first travel grant and training grant will close with the Hon. Secretary on 27th March, 1962. The following notices indicate the lines on which the Council will make the initial grants, but, as applicant's needs will vary widely, they should not be regarded as hard and fast rules.

Travel Grant - 1962

The purpose of the grant is to raise the standards of New Zealand Art Galleries and Museums, and NOT to assist the prosecution of particular research projects.

The grant will be up to £800 to cover air fares to Europe and subsistence allowance for four months at, say, £3 per day.

The Council will prefer an application from a young director tackling a programme of improving the displays and amenities of his Gallery or Museum, or a technical officer to whom Nuffield, Fulbright and similar travel grants are not available.

Applications should be lodged with the approval and recommendation of the governing authority, who should be an institution member of the Association. The governing authority should state in the application the position regarding payment of the applicant's salary to cover his or her domestic and other commitments during absence.

Applicants should plan their itinerary to attend any appropriate museum or ICOM conferences, to establish good relations overseas on behalf of the Association.

Training Grant - 1962

The purpose of the grant is to raise the standards of New Zealand Art Galleries and Museums.

The Council will award up to £450 to pay half the salary of a trainee, for 12 months, up to £350, and to meet incidental expenses such as fulltime technical study, up to £100.

In making the first grant in 1962 the Council will give preference to an application for the technical training of a taxidermist or an art restorer.

Applications should be lodged with the approval and recommendation of the governing authorities concerned who should be institution members of the Association.

Training Grant 1962 (Continued)

The governing authorities should state who will pay the balance of the trainee's salary for the first twelve months, and the position regarding future employment.

It will be a condition of the grant that the governing authorities seek the assistance and approval of the District Commissioner of Apprenticeship in the preparation of a suitable agreement with the trainee.

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MUSEUM TRAINING AS A UNIVERSITY SUBJECT.

An address by Mr. P. Gathercole, to members of the 6th Biennial Conference, Dunedin, on 20th April, 1961.

My subject is really explained by my title, which I felt might be worth talking about today for two reasons:-

1. Although Museum Training has been discussed before by the Association, it has not been considered in the light of what seems to me a slightly changed situation, the rapid growth of small Museums in this country, and the really pressing need for more trained staff both there and in the larger museums;
2. As far as I am aware, I am the only member of a museum's professional staff who is also a member of a University Staff, and I therefore try to see the question from two angles.

One could legitimately ask if formal training, with a resultant diploma or certificate is really necessary. Is not a degree enough? Obviously, what matters most is the fact of training, not its formal recognition. Yet we are in an era of public control of Museums, with local councillors elected to Museums' controlling boards. Would not some recognised qualification be useful - in determining status for salaries, for example?

Secondly, the institution of some recognised qualification, if the conditions of award are responsibly controlled, cannot fail to raise standards, which, in my view, the F.M.A. (N.Z.), by recognising those who 'have arrived' rather than helping along those 'on the way', simply does not.

I am not arguing either that we should take the British diploma, or that we necessarily institute our own at this stage. What I would like to suggest is that in New Zealand, we do surely have the chance of instituting a form of training in association with the Universities - and as the latter become independent, our chance for approaching them becomes greater. Would it be possible to propose to them that Museum Training be instituted as a University Unit? The degree structure in this country is very flexible, if nothing else. Would it not be possible for 7 or 8 units (all deliberately chosen) to be taken as prerequisites by recognised museum trainees, who would then take a unit of 'Museum Training' in the third, or, in some cases no doubt, the fourth year, as a stage 3 subject? This could be used to complete either an Arts or Science degree, though the units taken as prerequisites would naturally vary considerably.

I would argue that English, Education and Geology should be compulsory subjects (except for Art Historians, in the case of Geology). For the remainder, other than Museum Training itself, I would suggest, for Arts, Anthropology, History, Geography, Psychology or Sociology; for Science, the normal Natural Sciences plus Psychology.

For the Museum unit itself, I suggest a selection from these topics :-

- a) Certain subjects not usually taught by Universities, (e.g. Ethnology, Art History, Folk Life), and the principles employed in applying specialist knowledge to Museum work;

Museum Training as a University Subject (Continued)

- b) Museum Administration, (including, for example, law, book-keeping, architecture, librarianship, bibliography, insurance and public relations);
- c) Principles of Adult Education;
- d) Principles of Restoration, Preservation and Display;
- e) A short thesis on an approved subject.

I mentioned at the beginning that I felt we were in a different situation to that of a few years back, with the growth of small new Museums, and the extremely urgent need in almost every Museum for more assistants - to fill out the base of the pyramid in each institution. I feel this to be a desperate problem; the wastage of properly qualified staff on many routine jobs is bad economics and personally frustrating. If the trainee took a year over the course, resident at a nominated Museum, or even working in two, with a certain amount of time in different departments, and was taught by permanent staff members, it might be possible to ease this situation.

The trainee should be paid, of course; the money could be found either by the Institution concerned, and paid directly, or it could be put into a central fund administered by A.G.M.A.N.Z. - and why not even a bursary scheme from Internal Affairs to help out?

If the trainee-posts were available, I cannot see why sufficient recruits could not be found, not just within New Zealand, but also from those islands in Polynesia where this country has a traditional interest. What should be done, for example, about training workers for Samoa, Tonga or the Cook Group, where urgent field and conservation work needs to be done in many subjects? Why should not the next school master appointed to Pitcairn Island receive some guidance from one of our major Museums before he leaves for his tour of duty? Indeed, each of our major Museums might well 'adopt' one of these island groups, under the auspices of A.G.M.A.N.Z., and supply regular advice.

Have our present staffs time to instruct trainees? Obviously not - we never have. But to take the longer view, would not the advantages of increases in staff - assuming that the trainees came in a regular stream year by year - much outweigh the disadvantages?

Would it improve our status, both in the eyes of our employing boards, the public and the Universities? With a proper recognisable qualification it must do so in the eyes of governing authorities. The public, (if one can use this blanket phrase for so heterogeneous a body) judges a Museum by results, and more staff of better all-round experience would surely give results.

The Universities would have another view, of course, because their standards are different and their own. The request for parity of salaries must run into difficulties here; by the same token, a suggestion that Museum Training is a subject worth regarding as a unit for a first degree might well meet with a mixed reception. If this suggestion was adopted, it would be necessary to determine with care the theoretical content of the course. It might be argued within the Universities that the learning of 'Museum work' only involves the application of principles absorbed in 'straight' theory courses, which should be done either ad hoc after the degree has been completed or by working for a diploma concerned entirely with applied or practical work. But is this so? I cannot see, for example, that a knowledge of New Zealand Painting, Folk-Life, or the principles of Adult Education - all relevant subjects for our profession - are any less theoretical than certain subjects to be found today in the University curriculum.

Might it not be that we are all so practically-minded that we just do not think and write enough about the theoretical principles within which we work? Here at least I think the Universities have a good point, and some informal discussions I have had on this topic at Otago University confirm this. But the answer lies within our own efforts. It is perhaps worth quoting that in the United States both graduate and undergraduate training is practiced, (Museum Journal, September 1957), where .... 'much of the training counts as a credit towards a Bachelor's degree' (P.138). In India, on the other hand, a graduate scheme is

Museum Training as a University Subject (Continued)

favoured, partly, at least, because of the problem of potential misemployment, so that only those who already hold a degree are received for training.

Is the situation in New Zealand really similar to that of India, where our ex-trainees might be unable to find posts suitable for their hard-won qualifications, or are we moving into a position where lack of both proper training facilities and - perhaps more important - goals for our staffs is inhibiting our development and preventing us from attracting and retaining promising recruits? If a fully-fledged diploma scheme for both graduates and undergraduates is impossible at present, is not this 'unit-training' plan a possible alternative?

Some of the ideas discussed here derive from my experience as a trainee at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Under this scheme, trainees are accepted on salary for two years and work in one of three departments. No formal certificate is issued at the end of the training period, but the scheme provides valuable training for the diploma of the Museums Association.

- D I S C U S S I O N -

MR. McQUEEN:

Over many years teacher training has been discussed and the arguments for and against University courses are applicable to this proposal. It is not the function of a University to provide training for a particular profession or trade.

The scientific museum will not live without scientists supplying it with basic material and knowledge. The staff in this kind of museum must have an adequate scientific background before undertaking museum work. The staff in museums which are merely educational or historic institutions will need a different background. The training of all these people for museum work may be compared to the training of people in social welfare. The course must be based on practical work and experience with a minimum of theoretical principles.

MR. TURBOTT:

This proposal is analogous to that for the training of librarians. The entrance qualification for the library school is a University degree. For those who do not wish to take a degree there is a library diploma of lesser status.

MR. McQUEEN:

Librarianship is not a good parallel. Librarians do not attempt creative work, such as writing books on museum material. They are useful technicians and nothing more.

MRS. STRATHERN: Defended the creative talents of librarians. Librarianship is a good parallel as library and museum staff face two identical problems:

1. The control and organisation of the institution, and
2. The provision of adequate techniques.

Training in research work alone is insufficient.

MR. F.E. SMITH:

The limiting factor to the proposals is finance. The minor museums cannot release staff to study for University degrees. There could be a diploma for people who have tackled museum work without University training. It is only in recent years that degree men have come to the fore in the larger museums.

DISCUSSION (Continued)

DR. FORSTER:

Until recent years, staff at the larger museums studied for University degrees as part-time students. The recent trend to appoint graduates has created the present problem. Is the diploma of the British Museum Association the answer to our difficulty?

MR. FISHER:

The British diploma was discussed by Council several years ago and was considered unsuitable. A.G.M.A.N.Z. established the fellowship to recognise lengthy service and worthwhile contributions to N.Z. galleries and museums.

MR. TOMORY:

At the Auckland Art Gallery two members of the staff are studying for the diploma but there are difficulties with the examination papers. Some questions are outside the knowledge and experience of N.Z. students. Mr. Gathercole's proposal would provide more suitable training. Otherwise how will N.Z. Art Galleries secure trained staff?

MR. TURBOTT:

Much museum display depends on the special skills of the preparators and their training requires apprenticeship. The technician certification scheme which is to begin shortly should be considered.

Mr. Scobie moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Gathercole for his address.

A resolution that the proposal put forward by Mr. Gathercole be studied by Council was carried at the Annual Meeting.

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MUSEUM SCHOOL SERVICE

The following letter has been received from the Director of Education regarding resolutions passed at the Annual Meeting on 20th April, 1961.

"I had hoped that it would have been possible for the resolutions of the Art Galleries and Museums Association, which you forwarded some time ago, to have been considered in relation to the survey of school museum services which has been under way in the Department, so that decisions could have been forwarded to you before this. Unfortunately, there have been unavoidable delays in completing the survey. Even now I am not in a position to do more than formally acknowledge the resolutions and say that it has been particularly useful to have the views of the Association on the school case service and the staffing of smaller museums.

In the course of the survey that we have carried out, a good deal of evidence has been obtained about the school case service. In general it supports your view that the cases are highly regarded by teachers. The points you make about the case service are of great value to the Department. However, I must add that it would not be possible to provide extra technical assistance to enable any major general extension of the scheme to be undertaken at the present time. This does not, of course, mean that consideration cannot be given to any particular case where, on the basis of existing policy, a reasonably adequate case service cannot be provided because the museum concerned does not have an art-technician.

While I cannot give a decision on the question of the appointment of museum education officers to museums outside the four main centres, I can assure you that the circumstances in the smaller museums have also been studied carefully and their needs will be kept under review. Your observations are particularly welcome and will be taken into full account."

## REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES

The following reports were presented to members of the 6th Biennial Conference, Dunedin, on 20th April, 1961.

### HAWKES BAY ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM:

The sculpture in bronze by Emilio Greco to serve as a memorial to Leo Bestall has arrived and will be erected shortly. The gift of the balance of the 3rd Edition of TUTIRA assisted the memorial considerably. The A.G.M.A.N.Z. grants-in-aid have been used to add to the displays: a three-cornered 18th century cupboard and some Chinese snuff bottles.

The installation of a sound broadcasting system has been made and chamber music is played for 1½ hours at Thursday lunchtime concerts.

J.S.B. MUNRO

### WANGANUI MUSEUM:

If attendances and the continual influx of accessions are any indication, interest in this Museum has grown considerably over the past few years. A popular feature of the Displays, is the Special Display Section - a section devoted to displays of topical interest, related to the news, whenever practical. Displays are changed frequently during the year and appear to be a good "draw-card". Popular topics have included "Wash Days", "Weighing Scales and Balances" (2 grains to 7½ tons) "The Kakapo" (Natural Habitat Setting), "Early Musical Instruments and Recordings", a Southern Beaked Whale Skeleton (*Mesoplodon grayi*), and Birds of the Health Stamps (Kotuku and Karearea).

Membership: Every endeavour is made to combine both cultural and social activities and satisfy a wide range of interests of the members. Film evenings, lectures, and qualified visiting speakers have proved most popular.

### Archaeological Group:

The Group, which works in conjunction with the Museum, was formed on 12th April 1960. Though not a large organisation, it has proved an active group of enthusiasts, and regular meetings, illustrated lectures and field work have been well attended. Field activities have consisted of visits and investigation of pa sites, and it is planned, with more experience, that detailed work and recording will be undertaken.

### Junior Naturalists Club:

This activity club for the younger folk of 10 to 15 years, is young also in that it was only started in November 1960. It has proved extremely popular, as shown by the rapidly rising membership. The Club which meets monthly, is organised by Mr. John Fahey and Mr. David Crockett, Wanganui Education Board Nature Study Specialists. Each month practical outdoor work, or related activities in the Museum, provide interesting experience for the enthusiastic youngsters.

Collections, an activity used to carry over the Xmas holiday period, were used as a special display for a period in the Museum. Membership to this Club automatically entitles the children to junior membership of the Museum. When of age, Junior Members of the Museum are entitled to Naturalist Club Membership.

Schools: Groups of children from both country and town schools make good use of the Museum for specific or general topics. Lesson periods are spent either predominantly in the display halls, when the Museum staff take them, or in the lecture hall-classroom section. In the latter case, Mr. Fahey organises the tuition. Lessons include special displays arranged with Museum materials, on particular topics related film or slide showings and discussions. They are extremely popular, particularly with local schools.

REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES

WANGANUI MUSEUM (Continued)

Museum Childrens' Week:

During one week of the May School Holidays, an activities week for children is organised in, and associated with the Museum. Activities endeavour to encourage the children in observation of displays and Museum work, by quizzes, games, essays, art, demonstrations, films and excursions. It has proved an extremely popular week, clearly indicated by the very high attendance and enthusiasm of the youngsters. The hours were 10 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. for five days.

ROSS MACDONALD

SOUTHLAND MUSEUM:

The Museum re-opened in December 1959, with the promise of local body support for five years.

The Art Gallery addition (1,350 sq.ft.) and store-room (1,500 sq.ft.) will be completed shortly.

Smoking is now permitted. One result is that visitors stay in the building for longer periods. Another result is that surreptitious smokers no longer toss cigarette butts behind cases and the risk of fires has been reduced.

The Museum has been opened on Wednesday evenings from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m., but the response has been poor, owing to lack of publicity.

The heating of the Museum is the most important amenity needed at present.

GORDON WHITE

(Since April 1961, the Art Gallery has been opened and the store-rooms are in use. Heating has been installed.)

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PLANETARIUM AT NAPIER

Mr. H.R. Holt, President of the Hawkes Bay Art Society, has made a gift to the City of Napier of the medium type Zeiss Planetarium which was the attraction of the International Trades Fair in Wellington. It cost £4,000 and the City Council have erected it at an estimated cost of £1,000 on a temporary site at Vautier Street. It will be on this site for at least two years. It is thought that the future home of the planetarium will be an integral part of the proposed new Aquarium planned for the Marine Parade. Mr. Holt has made the proviso that half the proceeds go to the City Council and half to the Hawkes Bay Art Society for new additions. The addition in mind is a lecture theatre at the Art Gallery and Museum.

According to the Zeiss representative, it is the company's first attempt to make a planetarium on a small scale to suit New Zealand conditions. It seats 56 people. An Astronomical Society has been formed and it opened on 16th December, 1961.

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USE OF EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE IN SCHOOL SERVICE CASES

by L. Cappel,  
Artist-Technician, Education Section, Canterbury Museum.

My own experiences with expanded polystyrene are very similar to those, given in A.M. Tynan's article "Styrocell in Museum Displays" in Museums Journal of June 1961. After using it in Holland I was pleased to learn that this material is obtainable here in New Zealand too. I have been using this for almost a year already as the main display material in School Service cases, and with very good results. The extreme lightness combined with amazing strength and durability, and the possibility of giving it almost any shape and surface, makes this material very suitable for display work. It can be cut easily on any sawbench, bandsaw etc., giving a smooth, accurate cut. Handsaws and woodrasps give a rougher "snowy" structure; knives, sandpaper and dentist's drills produce a clean cut smooth surface. And, an important new aspect, this foam plastic can be melted down almost completely. The heat of a burning match, kept a above the surface, is enough to melt the plastic. The trapped air escapes from the air cells and the heated up part disappears, leaving a shiny surface, which has a useful structure.

When I was mounting a number of scale models of historic ships, I used a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch sheet for the sea. The waves were carved with a hot piece of ironwire. A well heated plaster cast of the underside of the hull melted a hole in the surface, in which the ship fitted perfectly and in the right position, providing a large surface to glue the ship-model securely. The most suitable local glue is "Plastobind", a product of Morrison and Morrison, as no acetone-containing glues can be used. Most of the painting I do with Plaka posterpaint, "varnished" with diluted Plastobind. Making a model of a Maori earth oven, I built the entire display out of the foam plastic and shaped it with straight and curved woodrasps. The resulting rough surface I painted brownish-grey, and glued dry mud and dirt on top. After drying it I brushed off the remainder of the soil and thus a very realistic result was obtained. In fact, even a very close inspection does not reveal its artificial nature. In another display an Antarctic iceberg was made from a pure white piece of polystyrene, shaped, a very pale blue painted in the shadows, and the whole varnished with clear shellac. The result looked really cold and semi-transparent. Almost anything, from whales to anchor stones, from unpainted slabs as background to complicated constructions, can be well made of this material, and, if desired, plaster casts can easily be made, a mixture of raw linseed oil and soft soap being used as separator. I use slabs of foam polystyrene with a groove cut on the circular saw to prepare insects and carefully carved bodies of the same material for stuffed birds or fish.

The plastic is waterproof and non-absorbant, not too brittle and rather strong. As a modelling medium and for backgrounds on any scale I found it time-saving and better than most other materials.

Any further information will be gladly given.

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TARANAKI MUSEUM

Members of Council visited New Plymouth on 16th September, 1961, to attend the opening of the Taranaki Museum by the Minister of Maori Affairs, Mr. Hanan. Features of the opening were the Maori welcome and singing, and the massed floral arrangements.

The Council held a meeting to congratulate the Taranaki Museum Board and Executive Committee on the opening of the Museum and the very high standard of the initial displays. These were outstanding, and visiting members warmly congratulated Mrs. Audrey Gale, Mr. Rigby Allan, Mr. Ralph Riccalton, and their many voluntary helpers.



MUSEUM NOT A CEMETERY OF THE PAST

The following report appeared in the Times, 20th June, 1961.

Sir Hugh Casson, in a provocative and entertaining speech at the annual conference of the Museums Association today, began by asking whether there was any justification for keeping things at all.

Sir Hugh, who was opening a discussion on display in museums, said the pile of stuff left by the past was growing daily under our feet and impermanence was a fact now widely accepted.

Marinetti had said 50 years ago that museums were cemeteries based on a useless admiration for the past. That was a fair enough and defensible attitude. But we had to remember that the wish to preserve had no basis in rationalism, it was an emotional idea - but not unworthy, not to be ignored, and not modern. He had noticed that, when a great city was threatened in war, the first train out of it was loaded, 50 - 50, with expectant mothers and old masters.

New Attitude

The word museum had acquired a pejorative sense - a sad fact that had to be faced. But there were signs that this was changing, and museums were adopting a new attitude to display, which was better understood on the Continent and in North America than here. The very conception of a museum was artificial, and they must accept artifice in presentation, and the importance of the appeal through the eye and the emotions. There were some things which could be learned only through the emotions.

It was not a matter of passive viewing. A museum must be an active place, a lively cultural centre to arouse curiosity.

Dr. D.A. Allan thought the ideal with natural history exhibits should be a happy blend of the clinical and the artistic. Mr. J.W.Y. Higgs, dealt chiefly with folk material, where it was not a matter of displaying a few valuable things to the best aesthetic advantage but of demonstrating the interest of ordinary things.

From Mr. Norman Cook came a lively attack on the attitude of the professional designer to museums. Many archaeological exhibits, he said, had no significance in isolation. They were not trophies but the raw material of history. It was no good treating them like works of art. The museum's job was not to make everything look beautiful but to make it interesting. He had had more complaints of under-labelling than of over-labelling.

Two Types

Summing up, Sir Frank Francis, Director of the British Museum, said there was no single solution to the problem of display. There were two main types of visitors - the connoisseur, who knew what he was looking for and was revolted by elaborate display and selection, and the ordinary man who wanted a quick general view of what the museum contained and was equally revolted by, for example serried rows of potsherds. The future lay with some form of double exhibition - one for the specialist, one for the general visitor, but each equally available to everyone.

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P E R S O N A L

Members will learn with regret that Mrs. M.M. Dreaver, a delegate to the Association from the Auckland City Council, died on 20th July, 1961. Professor V.J. Chapman, Botany Department, University of Auckland, has been appointed to replace Mrs. Dreaver.

A cordial welcome is extended to the following new members:-

Mr. C.E. Fenwick, 69A Halton Street, Papanui.  
Mrs. C.H. Rathbone, 1 Hukarere Road, Napier.

PROTECTED FAUNA

For some time, the four major museums in New Zealand, at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, have been authorised to collect specimens of protected fauna under the provisions of Section 55 of the Wildlife Act 1953. A smaller museum requires a special permit from the Internal Affairs Department to keep such specimens.

The Secretary of Internal Affairs has now advised (I.A.47/193 of 4-12-61), that smaller museums with permanent staff have been delegated authority to retain specimens of protected fauna handed to them. The museums to which the authority applies are those at Napier, New Plymouth, Wanganui, and Invercargill. There will be an opportunity for discussion of the authority at the Annual Meeting at Dominion Museum on Tuesday 27th, and Wednesday 28th, March, 1962.

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