

**KAPITI BRANCH
NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF GENEALOGISTS INC.**

BRANCH REPORT 1 OCTOBER 2007 TO 31 MARCH 2009

Introduction

I have pleasure in presenting the Branch report for the period 1 October 2007 to 31 March 2009. This extended period of reporting over an 18 month period is to comply with a rule change by our parent Society. Branches and the Society had different financial years, now standardized and to meet legal requirements of registration with the Charities Commission and thus be exempt from tax on income within the normal IRD tax year of April 1 to March 31 in the following year.

This extended period was formalized at a Special General Meeting held on 26 October 2008, at which members received an interim report highlighting activities; received a financial statement; confirmed the new financial year period and membership subscription; and approved the current Committee members continuing in their positions until the next AGM in April 2009.

Charity Registration

In November 2008, the Branch was advised that it was registered as a charitable entity with the Charities Commission. While this imposes some annual legal requirements to test our accountability through the Commission, it exempts us from tax on income (previously a blanket exemption through the national body) and allows us to independently claim charity status in dealings with local bodies, national agencies and funding bodies.

Membership

Our membership has fallen slightly during the most recent subscription renewal process, but there is a steady flow of new members and visitors to meetings who are prospective members. During 2008 numbers peaked at 231 and at the time of writing this report where at 215. Members come and go, pass on, find other interests and priorities. Membership trends over the past 3 years show that the Branch enjoys strong local support and the 200 member mark is a lower expectation.

Programme of Activities

We have continued our policy of offering a wide range of activities concomitant with a large membership with different levels of experience and interests. Monthly meetings continue to be well attended, averaging at 44, with a mix of focussed research evenings and guest presentations. As these are not the priority of many members as the attendance numbers suggest, we have continued with our visit programme to centres of interest and excellence including National Library of New Zealand and ArchivesNZ; an informative monthly newsletter; a website; personal help through our Branch Research Officer; and a range of daytime meetings during autumn/winter months focussing on using our research facilities. Emphasis is on being user-friendly and to this extent we have altered the format

of monthly meetings with supper at the commencement of the evening giving time for a chat before formal proceedings; having some research facilities available before the main meeting; combining the Secretary's and help desks; and paying special attention to new comers with a meet and greet process. We have also published a booklet for new members on how to use our resources and help facilities. Kapiti Community Centre continues to provide us with excellent accommodation and our very reasonable evening hire fee has been increased by \$5 to \$35. We have recently become a member of the Trust that manages the Centre. A new unit to cope with our growing storage demands at the Centre, particularly for spare microfiche readers, has been ordered.

The special interest Computer Friendly Genealogy, Australian & Family Tree Maker groups continue to be active and add to the variety of assistance we are able to offer.

Alison Procter Family History Centre

On 7 April 2008, at a gathering of friends, family, Branch and KCDC Library staff, our research facility at Paraparaumu Public Library was dedicated to a former long serving Branch and Committee member, Alison Procter. This has given the centre a clearer Branch and public identity. The District Libraries have published a special brochure and the centre facilities promoted are on their website.

A major achievement during the reporting period has been the completion by KCDC Library staff of cataloguing the book collection. This makes the audit trail much easier for us with the collection now on the KCDC Library Catalogue and website linked to our own. Books remain accessible only by Kapiti Branch members but can now be borrowed through the electronic scanner system at the issues desk, replacing a rather cumbersome manual process. Book borrowing seems however not a high priority of members, a sign of the times perhaps with so much information available on the internet. Nevertheless this is a useful and commendable resource.

We continue to have an excellent working relationship with KCDC Library staff in a win-win association utilizing a valuable community resource. We have access to the Library internet facility with ancestry.com and many other family history sites accessible to members at the Centre. The Branch has taken out an annual subscription to the UK website findmypast.com. Our computer facility faults are now managed by the Library IT staff person, relieving us of a major burden. We have also introduced a technical maintenance programme for our microfiche readers with a Wellington company.

Two successful applications for grants from Pub Charity have made a quantum addition to the Centre. With Otaki Branch, Library and community support we received \$11000 to purchase the NZ Gazette Archive. In an agreement with the KCDC District Libraries we have made this resource available for public access at the three district libraries as well as availability at the Centre. Latterly we have been granted a further \$5500 which has allowed us to install two additional PCs and accessories, providing a much improved amenity. Members now have a networked four PC s & printer system; a total revamp of desktop presentation; and internet access to hundred of websites. A revised help booklet on using the new system is being prepared. We are in discussions with KCDC Library

management to provide better use of our limited space with installation of a workstation for the computers and printers.

Using our own funds we have recently installed a drawer unit for our microfiche and CD collection which includes storage space. This has released space for expanding our book collection. The APFHC is now in a much better position to cater for future demand. Volunteers continue to be the key to the successful operation of the centre, and we are grateful to those who offer their services to our weekly public help sessions which continue to attract much interest, our autumn/winter series of day meetings & research help, and maintaining the facility. This remains an underutilized facility and promotion of the resources should be high priority for the incoming Committee.

Publicity and Marketing

Your Committee has continued to place high priority on promoting family history as a community activity and advertising our resources. A communication strategy has been approved and actioned which has resulted in a regular stream of promotion in local media and fliers about our activities posted around town. More recently we have circulated information to local schools.

Following a successful promotion in September 2007, we were invited by Coastlands Shopping Town to hold an expanded "Find Your Family" event in the Mall, October 2008. This relationship had been developed as a good example of our voluntary research expertise combining with the financial and commercial marketing resources of a business organization. Response from participating organisations was excellent and we are very grateful for the huge amount of time and effort engendered by them and our local volunteers. A key to the event was our in house effort "Why You Are You" (YURU), involving two local celebrities, Kevin Milne of TVNZ Fair Go, and Anna Kenna, TV Producer and Journalist of Raumati, for whom we researched their family history with a scripted and informative presentation and which was to be the show piece of the event. Regrettably a critical staff change and then a management backtrack a matter of weeks before the event, meant that we were gazumped and promotion not followed through. Attendances were far from that expected, however the Branch did take a small profit. Any future events such as this must include a written agreement on commitments. YURU has spin-offs as both presenters have agreed to tell their stories again at Branch evenings.

Nevertheless we continue to attract a steady stream of new members, so our wider promotion activities should remain a high priority.

The National Body

The national body has a large number of Councilors who are still settling into their roles. The future of NZSG and its survival in a changing and competitive genealogy environment is hotly debated between those who see no changes necessary and those who believe major changes are due if the organization is to survive. Council has therefore embarked on a strategic plan debate. The furore about the role and recognition of Branches, which rather soured the early stages of negotiations with the Charities Commission, has settled down. That debate seems to have raised the stakes, as

discussions with senior officers indicating better recognition that Branches are at the grass roots level of family history in their communities and have an important role to play in engendering local interest and activity. During the period we hosted both the Executive Officer and new President and had constructive dialogue with them. We have not seen attendance at the quarterly meetings of regional branch officers of high priority. Our view is that they should be far more structured to engage in real debate about the Society and its future, but they tend to be social gatherings and talkfests, attendees being told what Council have done rather than using these meetings as a consultative opportunity. The incoming Committee however may wish to review this.

Conclusion

The Branch is in good shape financially and administratively, has sound research facilities and a wide programme of activities and backup resources. The Committee was fortunate in having three co-opted members join later in the reporting period which has spread the workload and contributed to new ideas and action. In December our Secretary Derek Griffis had a major medical challenge and stood down from the position. We are pleased he is in positive recovery mode. Sandy White stepped in as Acting Secretary and we are very grateful for her efforts, having being thrown in at the deep end at short notice. In any event Derek had decided to relinquish that portfolio come AGM time and the Branch owes a very sincere thanks to his five and a half years of Secretary and Branch Research Officer, during which he has put in a huge amount of time and experience. His experience will not be lost as he has agreed to continue as a Committee member. Meryl Opie is leaving the Committee after many years of service. Meryl joined NZSG in 1985. She has recently received an NZSG Branch Service Award in recognition of her contribution to branch activities to which we add our congratulations and thanks. She has indicated she will continue to assist, off-committee.

We celebrate our 25th Anniversary on May 26th at a special function of members, supporters and friends. The first meeting of the Branch was held on 25 May 1984 with June Pritchett in the Chair. 22 members were present.

To our many volunteers and Appointed Officers, we again express our gratitude for giving of your time, when family, work and other commitments make for busy lives. My special thanks to the committee for their teamwork and faith in what we are doing. As I have announced previously, I too would like a break and believe it is time for fresh blood, but would be pleased to continue on the Committee and provide what support I can. My five and a half years as Convenor has been a rewarding experience, and I have actually managed to get some genealogy done too!

Clive Palmer
Convenor, For & on Behalf of the Branch Committee