

Kapiti Branch
New Zealand Society of Genealogists
May 2024

CONVENORS ANNUAL REPORT

Another solid year for Kapiti Genealogy with membership steady at 188 as we emerge from the Covid years. Covid has changed the world with many people working from home and the emergence of “on line” meetings as the norm. Kapiti Genealogy has not been spared from this and we have embraced the technologies for many of our meetings and workshops.

While this has served us well I must say I personally yearn for getting back to gathering together to enjoy the company of my fellow genealogists. Lets hope the future brings us a healthy mix of online and face to face gatherings.

The face of our Branch to the majority of our membership is our monthly Newsletter that is very ably edited by Sheila Jolly. Sheila is always on the hunt for member contributions to the Newsletter and given its importance to our Branch I would encourage you all to get pen to paper, or should I say fingers to keyboards, to write up some of your stories for the Newsletter on a regular basis. This will make a difference.

Our evening meetings continue to be well attended and included several external speakers this year.

First off, in June, Maggie Gaffney gave an excellent presentation on Tracing Property in England. The next month had Jonathan Newport from Archives New Zealand explaining the merits of their updated Collections search software that no doubt some of us may have been struggling with.

August Rodney King from the Kilbirnie branch gave an enlightening and challenging presentation on preserving your history “before you are gone”. Sarah Hewitt, our NZSG Chair and also from Kilbirnie, followed the next month sharing mistakes made and how to learn from them as well as update on NZSG activities.

October Mick McKelvie talked about the very early shipping voyages related to his New Zealand Post Office research. In addition Garry Aitchison gave a very graphic and detailed talk about the conditions our pioneering forbears endured on the immigrant ships.

Our traditional end of year fun Christmas meeting included the Chase, as on TVNZ, and our own chaser Mary Quizmas (good on you Deborah Shuker) aided by Garry Aitchison “the clock” and the quizmaster will remain nameless. A very enjoyable fun evening.

We started the new calendar year with a “Letters and Correspondence” session, where members brought a wide range of interesting documents, ranging from very personal letters to farm records.

February saw Lorna Henderson and Ian Brooking fill in for our original speaker, who had first-hand experience of FamilySearch’s Utah library system. Lorna and Ian did a commendable job illuminating the many facets of FamilySearch’s ecosystem.

In March, Martin Wright told the story of the difficulties faced first in New Zealand, and then Australia, by his relative Mavis Higgins. Mavis grew up as a girl, but in the thirties, at about the age of twenty, became Peter Alexander. An element of intrigue was added by official alterations to her birth and death records by persons unknown.

April, Chris Pugsley with an outstanding and enlightening ANZAC day aligned presentation on World War One and how New Zealand “broke from the Empire” thus ensuring country specific recognition of New Zealand soldiers. The catalyst for this change including the Mothers Revolt following the fateful Gallipoli campaign.

The transition to rostered evening super duties has gone well and will be continued. Thanks for all the supper volunteers. Donna Bridgeman has stood down from the face of our evening welcoming desk after many years of service. Judy Olsen has stepped up to full this role going forward. Thanks Donna for work done and Judy going forward.

Generally the Day Group followed the topics of the evening group whereby generally a committee member from the evening meeting would present at the Day Group. We thank Denice for her work in leading the Day Group and for those days I have personally attended they are a fun afternoon. I would encourage you, even if you have been to the previous evening meeting, to come along to the Day Group. You will be warmly welcomed and have an enjoyable afternoon with fellow genealogists.

Many of you are involved in many ways, including setting up chairs and helping where you can ensuring our monthly meetings run smoothly. So a big thanks to you.

As prices come down and quality goes up, we replaced our aging projector with a full high definition quality one last July. Hopefully you have appreciated the improvement. Gone are the days when you needed a Lotteries Grant to buy audio visual equipment!

Our special interest groups continue to meet specific needs of our membership.

The Irish Special Interest Group (SIG) met bi monthly throughout the year in the Alison Procter Family History Centre at the Paraparaumu Library, the sessions being hosted by Donna Bridgeman.

Donna has recently stepped down from the group. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Donna for her efforts in providing assistance to our members who were researching their Irish roots.

I am pleased to be able to advise that the Irish SIG will continue as Graeme McVerry has agreed to take the group forward with the support of Bernard McManus and Denice McCarten.

The DNA group continues to meet in person bi monthly from Feb through Oct with a bonus Zoom session in early Dec. Always a lot to catch up with in the fast moving changes the assorted companies make and everyone's new results or matches.

RootsMagic User Group also continues to meet bi monthly via Zoom and is well attended by Roots Magic users. The sessions are open to all and even if you do not use RootsMagic as your genealogy software you will find things to learn from the discussions that you can apply to the software you do use.

Monthly Zoom "How To" sessions have high participation. Topics have included Wiki Tree, The Genealogists Map Explorer, DNA, Family Search and Ancestry. These sessions are really a must do for members and are interactive giving you the chance to get your questions answered.

We are so indebted to Lorna for leading the DNA, RootsMagic and How To sessions. Lorna we thank you for your commitment and extensive knowledge that make these sessions an outstanding contribution for our members.

The popular visits to Wellington very ably lead by Kathy Callaghan took place in September with visits to both the National Library and the Wellington City Council Archives. These are fun days out with a lot to be learnt about the information available to genealogists at these locations both on line and by visiting.

The Alison Procter Family History Centre at the Paraparaumu Library is a vital asset to our Branch giving access for our membership to extensive genealogy information. The Centre is staffed on Wednesday mornings providing face to face contact to both our membership and the public.

It is worth a reminder of the material that is available at the Alison Procter Family History Centre. In addition to the microfiche and various registers and indexes we have a special members genealogy library where you can loan specialist genealogy books. Then there is the computers for access to more material including the library version of Ancestry and the New Zealand Gazette.

You can also access Find My Past, RootsIreland and the Genealogist, all of which the Branch subscribes to for the mutual benefit of all members.

Our computers linking to the worldwide web giving access to all other free data bases like Archives New Zealand, Papers Past and many others in the genealogy heaven environment the Centre exudes.

Bev Chappell leads her group of committed helpers in providing these services. Having noted that more volunteers are welcome so please make it known to Bev that you would love to join her team.

A big thank you to all those that have helped Bev in her role in providing help and support to those making use of the Wednesday morning help sessions. What does fly under the radar is the support and leadership Ian Brooking provides in maintaining the computers at our Library and we thank Ian and the willing support he in turn gets from the library IT people in maintaining this vital service.

Your Committee is currently working through a refresh of how we can use Facebook to the benefit of our Branch. Donna Bridgman has had an active role in our Facebook activities and we thank Donna for her commitment and dedication to this role over many years.

Representatives from your committee meet three times a year with the Lower North Island group of the NZSG to keep in touch with other Branches activity and that of the NZSG. It is nice to note that the NZSG is getting back into good health after a couple of rough years. Their financial situation and membership has now stabilised. The NZSG play an important role as our overall umbrella organisation for New Zealand.

Membership of the NZSG is additional to that of your Branch membership but I would encourage you to explore if membership of the NZSG would be useful for you by visiting their website.

It is with sadness we learnt of the death in April of Clive Palmer who has been a longterm member of Kapiti Genealogy.

Clive recently completed the book on the history of our Branch which is available both on line and at the Alison Proctor Family History Centre.

Clive was Convenor from 2003 to 2014, a life member and received the NZSG Service Award in 2015.

Being a relative new member of Kapiti Genealogy I only met Clive during 2022 when he was writing his book. From the several meetings we had Clive was truly a gentleman, a professional and experienced manager and just a very nice guy to have a cup of coffee with.

I am leaving the committee this year after six years including three years as convenor appointed or acting. I have enjoyed my time and thank all those that have willingly supported me in my roles. Some say it is not easy to have helpers come forward but I can say, hand on heart, that I don't recall anyone turning down my calls for help. I love my genealogy and especially my related family history story writing. I am gone from leadership but will now enjoy just

being a member, perhaps having a bit more time for my own genealogy research.

Thank you all.

I thought I would take the liberty of signing off with looking forward to the new year. We live in a rapidly growing community and our chosen field of interest, genealogy, has ever expanding data and search capabilities, meaning the future growth of our Branch is assured if we met our members needs.

Let's learn, enjoy, have fun, so our genealogy gatherings are a must do in your weeks activities.

Thank you all.

Ian Barbour
Acting Convenor
25th May 2024