



The Voice of Heritage

Chairman's Report - September 2012

You are at present witnessing a very proud moment for Heritage in Central Otago - the birth of a new organisation to represent local heritage advocacy in our region.

At the last AGM as Chair of the Central Otago Branch Committee of Historic Places Trust I said it may be the last AGM under that banner. It was.

Over the last 12 months a lot has happened and we are richer for it. Historic Places Central Otago (HPCO) is now a fully fledged Regional Society of Historic Places Aotearoa. I would like to thank all 15 signatories to our incorporation document for their support and enthusiasm for a new heritage organisation.

The hard work that went into drafting our Constitution (with special thanks to Dr Mike Floate in this regard), resulted in a very swift approval from Incorporated Societies. We also received support with transition funding from Historic Places Trust to the tune of \$3800 which was the entire current account of the Branch Committee. This was transferred in early August. We now operate our own finances under the watchful eye of Brian Croot our Treasurer.

Recapping on the previous year as an HPT Branch Committee many people enjoyed the fabulous tour of St Bathans with special thanks to Keith Hinds for his organisation of the event, and again Mike Floate for his historic notes and information. This tour was greatly enhanced by the late Tom Morgan who acted as an impromptu guide and we sincerely regret his passing barely 3 months after that tour. How blessed we were to witness his erudite words on Cambrian and his personal recollections. We have lost a great historian from within our midst.

The year has been one of hard work and decision making for the committee. They have been subjected to a range of duties in carving a path through the Branch Committee transition process, the incorporation of our new organisation, submissions on the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Bill and working through the issues that present themselves with a new heritage strategy for Central Otago. There have been some lengthy meetings, and special thanks to Wendy Browne for her meticulous recording of clause changes, motions, amendments and discussions on the way forward.

We have also finalised a tour to Ophir, Ida Valley and Naseby for Sunday 14th October so we formally invite you to that event. More details to come.

Our new national body Historic Places Aotearoa, (HPA) has required a lot of regular input and as an executive of that organisation I have made a number of trips to Christchurch and Wellington to participate in its formation and its future. It has meant 3 day round trips but the rewards have been there to see as we grow membership and plan the future albeit with very modest financial resources. Apart from the executive meetings, it has been a constant process working through many issues for the new start plus coordinating new regional societies.

One of the more memorable moments was the official launch of HPA on 14 August 2012 by the Governor General, his Excellency Lt Col Sir Jerry Mateparae at Government House which Jeni and I attended representing Central Otago. The executive was granted a personal audience with the Governor General. It was a great occasion and Sir Jerry officially opened our organisation with some very relevant words followed by our Patron, Dame Anne Salmond, and Chairperson, Anna Crighton. We were given a conducted tour of Government House which was magnificent after having had \$47 million spent on it. It was also a great opportunity to meet with other Regional Society members and compare notes. It is fair to say that Central Otago is becoming one of the influential Regional Societies within Historic Places Aotearoa.

Whilst we are now completely separated from Historic Places Trust we have not deserted them nor cease to be connected with them. Our relationship with Owen Graham and his staff has been closer than at any time over the last 3 years and we will continue to work with them to achieve better heritage outcomes through cooperation on any issues that compromise this goal. Some of you will be well aware of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) Bill before Parliament. For the benefit of those that are not, the Bill proposes a change of name for HPT to HNZPT and there are some changes within the Bill itself from the previous Historic Places Act 1993 including disestablishment of Branch Committees.

As Historic Places Central Otago we are now in a position to speak publicly on heritage issues and we took the opportunity to present a lengthy submission on many aspects of the proposed Bill with a strong emphasis on name protection and the Membership retention by HPT. Of particular interest is that we see the Archaeological date of 1900 as outdated and proposed a new date of 1945 to embrace the heritage of two world wars and a depression. I will explain more on these subject during the AGM.

In making the submission we (HPCO) elected to speak at the Select committee hearing comprising 10 MPs, and held in Christchurch. This was an interesting exercise requiring thorough preparation and some forthright opinions. It was an enjoyable experience nevertheless. One of the side benefits was the opportunity to have a lengthy discussion with the Ministry TIC for Arts, Culture and Heritage. We also had a lengthy discussion with the drafter of the Bill.

We also work closely with other heritage organisations and take opportunities to speak when requested on heritage awareness, issues and the future for heritage. Central Stories Museum and the Cromwell Community Group were two such organisations.

The Central Otago Heritage working strategy group facilitated by the CODC is another opportunity for us to play a key role in any future strategies for heritage. The workings of the District Plan, Heritage schedules, inventories and heritage values will become a key focus for us. The District Plan review is scheduled to be consulted upon over the next two years. We will be working even more closely with the community and the Central Otago Heritage Trust to achieve better heritage outcomes. Mike Floate and I are Trustees of the Heritage Trust.

One of the distinct advantages of Historic Places Central Otago is that we can have direct communication with the membership. We can now also have a public voice and be proactive on Heritage. We welcome the chance to be more active with our members and communicate frequently on local heritage. We have a list of things to do and if there are any particular issues our members identify, on which we can have a positive influence, we will endeavour to accommodate these. This hasn't been possible in the past to a great degree and some of you here will bear witness to that. This is a new beginning for heritage and we would like you to be part of that.

The transition to an independent heritage organisation has meant more work and decision making for the committee than in previous years. They have not faltered and offer themselves for election to HPCO. I acknowledge their support and commitment in the past and for continuing to be part of the future.

I would like to think that we are making a difference for heritage and welcome your support to continue along that path. The emphasis will now change into more proactive heritage protection as we get involved in more projects and look for new ways to support heritage protection.

Central Otago has within New Zealand the largest amount of cultural landscape and heritage within its borders and we have a very small population base to work with in that regard. That means we need to work harder per person to keep on top of the loss of heritage and protect it for future generations.

Please support us, work with us, and if you feel the urge, be part of us in that pursuit. The last year has been a steep learning curve, edifying, frustrating, rewarding and stimulating, but also fun shared with great people with a common purpose.

I table my report for your adoption

David White
Acting Chairman - Historic Places Central Otago Inc.

