

OTAKI HISTORICAL SOCIETY (INC.)
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EDITORIAL.....	1
EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK.....	2
THE TOWN OF OTAKI, by Jan Harris.....	3
A LOST MEDAL COMES HOME, by Joe Franklin.....	12
EDUCATION IN OTAKI, by Jan Harris.....	19
TENEI KAINGA O MATOU / THIS PLACE OF OURS, by Anthony Dreaver.....	27
WHALER AND HOTELIER: MARY ANN AMES, by Andrew Kincaid.....	40
GOODBYE TO GRANDFATHER'S COTTAGE, by Patricia van der Velden.....	43
OTAKI LIVES: <i>Doug Garrity; Margaret McNaughton; Nan Simcox; Petal Summers,</i> interviewed by Rose Monk.....	45
OTAKI RAILWAY, by Rose Monk.....	52
EXPLORING OUR HISTORY.....	54
SKETCHES OF A COUNTRY TOWN, by Gwynneth Roussel.....	55
KOHA ORA / GIFT OF HEALTH, by Margaret Long.....	56
WHO WAS COUNT CORNELIUS MICHAEL VON BERWALD? contributed by Jean James.....	60
HISTORY IN ACTION.....	62
POROPOROAKI / FAREWELLS: <i>Len Moss; Lena Roiri; Iolantbe Small; Charles Adsett</i>	65
OTAKI IN 2008, by Jan Harris.....	69
A NEW INDEX FOR THE JOURNAL, by Anthony Dreaver.....	74
OTAKI HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT.....	75

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EDITORIAL

Our region is up against it. For the fourth time in recorded history the conditions of living are to be drastically altered. The first, in the 1820s, was the displacement of Muaupoko by the northern tribes, Ngati Toa, Te Ati Awa and Ngati Raukawa. The second was the arrival of European settlers in Wellington. The third was the influx of 'railway' settlers in the 1880s and 1890s that marginalised indigenous people. The fourth will be the expressway.

In each case, the people who live, work and play in the region are deemed an unavoidable nuisance ... what one letter writer to the Dominion Post called 'BaNANA' advocates: 'Don't Build Anything Near Anything.' Anyone smart enough to come up with this pithy acronym should have the imagination to realise that in this case 'Near' means 'On Top Of'.

On top of what? Homes, farms, businesses, parks and reserves ... memories. The places we go to for refreshment, exertion, income and nourishment. Or the leafy gullies replanted by willing volunteers of all ages. So much effort. So much goodwill.

But all these things are fleas on the hide of the government elephant. The idol of Greater Good must be appeased, so the juggernaut will roll on.

In this issue

The accumulation of essays for this Journal is made easier by the old reliables who can be counted on to contribute to what by now amounts to an 'Encyclopedia of Otaki'. Again the work of the Museum staff has yielded two major articles, ably written by Jan Harris, who researched the exhibition about 19th century Otaki. A labour of love continues with another sheaf of life-stories recorded by Rose Monk. Margaret Long, my predecessor as editor, continues the careful research she has given to the various health institutions of Haruatai Park. I always try to produce a research-based piece, and this year I share an insight about the life and work of a government land buyer in the 1850s. I had to go to Canberra to find it!

But it's always a surprise what turns up without any solicitation. Joe Franklin's article about the fight at Horokiri and a lost medal is an example. So are the interesting stories sent us by Pat van der Velden and Gwynneth Roussel, and by Andrew Kincaid of Melbourne.

Stories from contemporary documents have always been a valuable feature of *OHSJ*, in this case relating to the building of the Otaki and Waikanae railway bridges.

We also bring great news of a new index for the Journal.

Finally, it is always our sad duty to mark the passing of good friends. And among those we have lost this year is foundation committee member, Len Moss, still sharp and wise at the age of 102. What human riches we live amongst!