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The Otaki Historical Society Journal is published annually every December by Otaki Historical Society (Inc.). The Otaki Historical Society, founded in 1977, is a member of the Federation of New Zealand Historical Societies. Secretary and co-editor, OHS, P O Box 50, Otaki, Telephone 06 364 7554. Email: jan.harris@xtra.co.nz

EDITORIAL

Margaret Long

THIS YEAR sees a return to the production of the journal by an editorial committee. Anthony Dreaver, editor of the last eight journals, is completing a history of Levin, commissioned by the Horowhenua District Council. We look forward to its publication. Anthony did the initial planning and prepared some of the material for this journal. Jan Harris, Secretary of our Society, and former historian and writer for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, is carrying full editorial responsibility and I am assisting her.

Seven of the articles this year had their origin in the research carried out for the exhibition by the Otaki Museum supporting the 125th anniversary of Otaki School (1880-2005). A magic cave of material was found by the principal, including headmasters' log books, attendance rolls, and school plans. This was supplemented by the old *Otaki Mail* and enriched by the 'collections' of former pupils who contributed photographs, recollections, badges and other memorabilia. Of course there were gaps in the records - for instance the disappearance many years ago of the headmaster's log book for 1914-1923 - but enough material to illuminate our understanding of the 'old days'.

The school project was the work of the organisation responsible for the museum, the Otaki Heritage Bank Preservation Trust, a quite separate entity, although the Historical Society has a seat on the Trust and some of its committee members are on both bodies. In order to clear up any future misunderstandings of our separate roles, both organisations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, clarifying the role and responsibility of each. That done, we can enjoy a rich future of separate activities and sharing of resources.

Otaki has also seen a number of oral history projects carried out or in progress - stories from older people with their roots in Otaki, the history of eeling in the Mangapouri and Waitohu Streams, and stories of Chinese and European market gardeners in Otaki. Recording and transcribing has been carried out by a handful of researchers. There are plans for oral history training sessions which will increase our oral history collection.

Steven Young's article "To be Happy for the Rest of Your Life", the story about a Chinese boy growing up on a Levin market garden will stir many memories in the Chinese community and set us all thinking. The journal has been well served by ex-Otakians. Iolanthe Small, daughter of Harold Small, and historian of the Small family, has again provided the journal with one of his talks, a description of a walk 'over the ranges'. Read also "Early Settler", an account by Rewi Roach (now in Australia) of his great grandfather's years in the Wellington and Manawatu areas from 1842-1855, when he died at the age of 35. This is a tale woven together with threads from written records of contemporaries and from family tales, an audacious but enjoyable interpretation.

We farewell three people, two of them with roots deep in the Otaki community. Thankfully, some of the memories of Miki Rikihana had been recorded, and Tungia Baker was known New Zealand-wide. She returned to Otaki to die in her parents' home. Her brother took her to the museum to see the school exhibition, and she wrote