OTAKI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL - TIME TO REFLECT

SEVENTEEN volumes of the Otaki Historical Society Journal later ..... the people of Otaki have a unique reference to the life and times of their own town and district that is, arguably, unique amongst New Zealand communities. While many a town, small settlement and city, have histories equally as interesting, the vast majority are unable to reach out and read about it - their history is increasingly dead and gone.

The people of Otaki and the Horowhenua, thanks to the many and sundry contributors to the Journal over the past seventeen years, have indexed access to all manner of references to their past. Researchers have already found useful material from which to draw text for books; Chris Maclean, himself a contributor over the years, has acknowledged the Otaki Historical Society Journal in turn as a reference in his recently published account of the history of the Tararua mountain range.

Again this year the OHS takes pleasure in providing a wide range of articles, reflecting the rich and wide range of personalities and activities that have been part of Otaki's past.

It is sad to read of Maggie Briggs and to realise that, in our older people even today, that we may well have people unhonoured for their contribution and experiences. Maggie appears to have died in relative obscurity, alone amongst her memories and with her archival material destroyed after her death. There should be a message there for all of us.

It is interesting to read of the Small family growing oranges on the Te Horo plain, a venture seemingly with some success in the early years of this century. Is this a farming venture that still holds potential?

It is also interesting to read of the activities of a "Bushranger" in the Otaki community and to reflect that, in many ways, the "Western" stereotype of a frontier town - without the "sixguns" but with the horses, gigs, saloons, stage coach and the telegraph - fitted the local scene over a century ago.

We can reflect on the changing face of Main Street, the heart of the community, mirroring the changes in technology over the past decades. One wonders what changes there will be in twenty years time - when some 53,000 people are forcast to be living in an area which today accommodates some 7000 people. Will Main Street undergo even more radical changes in order to cater for increasing consumer demands? Are there any signs that local authorities are planning to meet such a trend? Or will the retail and service area shrink into the status of ghost town as people, more mobile, head "out of town" to the envisaged mega-opolis of Coastlands for their shopping? What ever direction Main Street takes - the trends will be evident before the end of the century.

There is only one way to recognise where you are going, in first seeing where we have been.

The Otaki Historical Society Journal has played a major role in enabling the people of Otaki to see where they have been. Ross Macpherson, Editor