OTAKI HISTORICAL SOCIETY (INC.)
HISTORICAL JOURNAL VOLUME TWENTY

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EDITORIAL

by Gordon Dempsey

I WOULD like to record what a great pleasure it is for me to be invited to write this editorial. Little did we think, way back in 1977, that the Otaki Historical Society would continue as one of the strongest Historical Societies in New Zealand. And one of its great strengths has always been its well-known *Journal.*

At the end of the first editorial I wrote: 'We trust that the seed sown will fall on fertile ground.' And indeed it did. Amazingly fertile. How long can a district keep on recording its history? We thought that if we aimed for five years we'd be doing well. Never in our wildest dreams did we think we'd reach the twenty year mark. But here it is. Absolutely remarkable. Everyone connected with the Society can be justifiably proud. I can recall in the earliest days when we had so few writers that we even despaired of ever getting out a new issue. But as the deadline for printing each *Journal* approached, the manuscripts appeared and its popularity seemed to go from strength to strength.

This progress I put down to two things in particular. First, our OHS *Journal* has always been full of *interest and variety.* We deliberately set out to cater for everyone – Maori and European; academics and whatnots; and, while we did have some scholarly contributions, the articles have been mostly of general interest and people-centred. I can remember people commenting how thrilled they were to see their Grandad's or Aunty Pat's photo 'in print', and to know that the history of their society or club had been recorded. There was even some excitement as to who or what would appear on the next cover! What we didn't realise until later was that we were riding the wave of the emerging school of social history that hit New Zealand in the late 60s and early 70s. Stemming from one or two people in our universities this exciting new approach to history gradually began to influence we ordinary folk, and we began to see that history wasn't just dry academics about the Romans, or Magna Carta, or Kupe's voyage of discovery (not that they are 'dry'!) but had to do with why Great-grandad came out to New Zealand in the 1870s, and what the Plunket Society has meant to Otaki, and how our Main Street shaped up over the years. This is what gave rise to the intense interest in the people-history of communities all over New Zealand, and resulted in the formation of many historical and genealogical societies. It's been a healthy approach. It's made us much more aware of who we are and what we're on about. It's helped us to be sensitive to where others come from, and to respect each other's point of view. So, long may it continue, and long may the OHS continue to produce a *Journal* for ALL people.

The second strength of the *Journal* has been the contributors. Once we were under way an amazing variety of people offered support and turned their hands to writing local and regional history. We were lucky to have a few professionals to help, but most of us were quite untrained, and for some it was a scary first-time involvement. But out of it all has come enthusiasm and new-found skills that have ensured the vitality and quality of the *Journal.* As I pay tribute to all those noble souls and the great work done by successive