



Issue 27
December 2024



Auckland Council Archives

Ngā Pūranga Kaunihera

Auckland begins at the Archives

Kia ora and welcome to the December 2024 issue of the Archives' newsletter. We aim to keep you up to date with our mahi at Council Archives, as well as sharing interesting stories we uncover working with Auckland's records. We wish you a Meri Kirihimete and a Happy New Year from everyone at Council Archives. We will be closed from 5pm on Thursday 19 December and will reopen at 2pm on Monday 6 January 2025.

In this issue:

- Archivist Heléna Lunt writes about the stunning black-and-white photographic prints of Gil Hanly in the archive
- Senior Archivist Owen Gordon discovers a most unusual planning application
- Read about our staff visit to the fascinating Albertland Heritage Museum in Wellsford
- We also welcome our new team members: Grace Lange in a newly created position of Conservation Technician and Siobhon Moore joining our team as an Archivist.

Snapshots of Birkenhead



Caption: Constructing the Island Bay Reserve Toilet Block. Photograph by Gil Hanly, 1988. Auckland Council Archives reference BCC 474/174.



Caption: Children leaving Birkenhead Primary School. Photograph by Gil Hanly, 1988. Auckland Council Archives reference BCC 474/158.

Birkenhead, 1988. Three men sit at a building site, mid-smoko. Traffic moves along the street. A gaggle of school-children waits to cross the road. Cars circle the Zion Hill roundabout. These events are nothing unusual. In fact, one may describe them as mundane occurrences that we still encounter today. But these photographs, immortalised in black and white by esteemed documentary photographer, Gil Hanly, speak to more than just the everyday.

Analogue photographs hold a unique place in our increasingly digital world because they possess physicality. A moment of light and energy has been suspended in time and its matter becomes contained and captured in a photographic object. Yet, the tangibility of analogue photographs is bound to the intangible, fleeting concept of memory. As indexes of their subject matter, photographs conjure memory responses and bridge time to create a sense of closeness with the viewer.

I experienced this memory response when I opened the envelope containing these photographs. Searching for images of the Chelsea Sugar Refinery, I became fascinated by the other prints in the envelope. Drawn to the familiar views of Birkenhead and the snapshots of life 36 years ago, I thought about how the area has changed with the passing of time and how special it is to have these photographs in our archives. Then, to my excitement, I flipped them over to find 'Photographed by Gil Hanly' written on the backs of the prints. A special discovery had become even more special. Negatives and proof sheets accompany these prints - providing an insight into Gil's prolific photography practice.



Caption: Proof sheet. Photographs by Gil Hanly. Auckland Council Archives reference BCC 474/175 (sheet 6).

Gil has contributed significantly to the collective memory of Aotearoa New Zealand through her commitment to capturing protests, major events, prominent people, the art scene, political moments and movements and more. She has kept meticulous records of her photographic archive and her dedication to sharing this with the community resulted in the donation of a large selection of her work to Auckland War Memorial Museum in 2015. These photographs of Birkenhead, snapshots of 1988, speak to this bigger picture. They speak to Gil's camera lens and her humanity as a photographer, a documenter.



Above left image caption: Looking down Hinemoa Street from Highbury. Photograph by Gil Hanly, 1988. Auckland Council Archives reference BCC 474/152.



Above right image caption: Traffic roundabout, Zion Hill, Birkenhead. Photograph by Gil Hanly, 1988. Auckland Council Archives reference BCC 474/154.

Thank you to the Hanly family for permission to reproduce these photographs.

By Heléna Lunt

Note:

These photographs are part of Auckland Council Archives series BCC 474. This series predominantly includes material used in a published booklet *Birkenhead: The Kauri Suburb* (1969). The Gil Hanly photographs were taken in 1988, after the publication of the booklet, and we are unsure of the context of their creation. The BCC 474 material had no noticeable arrangement and has been retained in the order received from Birkenhead City Council. We are working to update the records on Archives Online to attribute the material to Gil.

Sources:

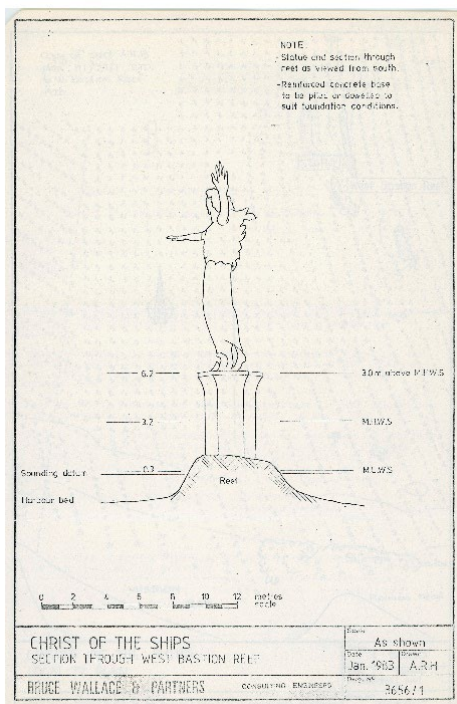
Auckland War Memorial Museum. 'Gil Hanly photographs.' <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collection/object/1045124>

Auckland Council Archives series BCC 474.

Hanly, Lillian. 'My Grandma Gil, The Photographer.' <https://www.1news.co.nz/2024/03/03/gil-hanly-captured-the-essence-of-20th-century-aotearoa-and-shes-my-grandma/>

Trish Clark Gallery. 'Gil Hanly.' <https://trishclark.co.nz/non-rep-artists/gil-hanly/>

The Statue That Was Never Built



On 15 February 1983 the Waitemata Harbour Maritime Planning Authority met to consider a most unusual application; a proposal by the Christ of the Ships Trust Board to erect a 16m high metal statue, 'Christ of the Ships', on West Bastion Reef off the coast of Mission Bay. The nickel and bronze plated statue would rest on a reinforced concrete base covered in marble 'or some other suitable material', the \$1 million dollar cost being met by the Trust Board through a public appeal. Noting the high visual impact of the statue and community interest in this proposed 'non-essential' use of the harbour, the Authority directed that the application be publicly notified.

Opposition to the proposal was overwhelming. A total of 252 objections were received, mostly from individuals, while only one submission was received (late) in favour of the proposal.

Objectors wrote of the statue's potential effect on harbour amenities (including its visual impact and possible effect on the harbour's ecology) and the negative impacts it might have on the social and cultural values of the community. Concerns were voiced over the religious nature of the statue and its potential to cause offence to people of different religious and cultural groups, including Māori. Almost a third of objectors

mentioned the cost of the project, many believing that the money could be better spent on other projects that would benefit the community such as the new Children's Hospital.

Among the objectors, and commenting solely on the aesthetic appeal of the statue, was Dr Rodney Wilson, Director of Auckland City Art Gallery -

'[I] am unable to recognise any artistic merit in the sculpture proposal. It is archaic by nature, inelegant and unsophisticated in form [...] The proposed sculpture is intended to draw any stature it might have from its scale and location, and in this sense it mimics hollowly and naively such 'monuments' as New York's Statue of Liberty or Rio de Janeiro's figure of Christ.'

Perhaps surprisingly, Auckland Harbourboard voiced no operational concerns with the original proposal, Auckland City Council did not object to the statue on planning grounds, and an ecological report commissioned

from Bioresearches Ltd concluded that the statue would have no long-term detrimental effect on the surrounding marine habitats.

The application was duly considered in accordance with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1977. The Maritime Planning Authority recommended the application be declined, based on the statue's significant visual impact on the natural character of the coastal environment, the unsuitability of the reef location as opposed to on adjacent land, its potential to cause social divisions in the community, as well as concerns that a precedent might be set for future applications of this type.

Source:

Auckland City Council Works Department subject file on Maritime Planning Authority – Ferry Basin Development, 1982-1984. Auckland Council Archives reference ACC 219/995b (record no 70-104-02 pt 3 box 995)

Staff News



Auckland Council Archives now has a conservation team, Grace Lange has joined as our Conservation Technician.

This new role supports Conservator Aline Curtis to prepare the archives for future relocation. Grace holds a Master's degree in Museum and Heritage Practice from Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka, and a bachelor's degree in Visual Arts with a specialisation in printmaking from the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic, graduating with distinction in both degrees.

Before joining council archives, she worked as Research and Collection Assistant for Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga at Old St Paul's Cathedral and Old Government Buildings, Wellington. Grace was also employed as a Digitisation Technician at NZMS, Wellington. During her master's study, she interned at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, working with the Muka Studio Youth Prints collection.

Outside of the conservation studio, Grace enjoys sewing, art, pub quizzes, and exploring the beautiful environment around Tāmaki Makaurau.

Siobhon Moore has joined the Auckland Council Archives team as our newest Archivist. Siobhon holds a Bachelor of Arts from Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka.

They come to council from the Museum of Transport and Technology (MOTAT), where they were the Assistant Librarian – Ephemera and Manuscripts at MOTAT's Walsh Memorial Library. They have also worked as a Project Technician within the Documentary Heritage team at Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira, a Library Assistant at the Turnbull Library and were a Summer Scholar at Te Papa Tongarewa where they worked researching and enriching the catalogue records of the Sir John Illott collection.



Community Day at Albertland Museum, Wellsford, Northland



Archives staff with volunteers from Albertland Heritage Museum, Clare Joensen, Sandra Berry, Jenny Driskel, Dr Tracey Wedge conservator, Rose Reid and Barbara Lane.

Early this month, most of our team headed North for a joint Community Day at Albertland Heritage Museum in Wellsford¹. This small organisation is collecting and caring for a wide diversity of artefacts related to the history and telling the story of the 'Albertlanders', British immigrants who arrived in Aotearoa in the 1860s. The museum holds a large collection of photographs, written and printed archival documents, social history artefacts, maps, scientific and natural objects.



Exterior and interior of Albertland Heritage Museum.

¹ [Albertland Heritage Museum - Heritage Centre in Wellsford](#)

The museum is run entirely by volunteers and reliant solely on its membership and fundraising. Therefore, it is extremely beneficial for them to get the visit by professionals for some guidance and support. We first met Rose Reid and Jenny Driskel, the two co-curators of the museum, when we visited the Warkworth Museum earlier this year. After a short tour and conversations at their museum, we thought it would be a reciprocal enriching experience to spend a day with them.

We focused our visit on three main activities: mechanical cleaning of exhibition cases which required several pairs of hands and detailed attention, advice on resource description and arrangement of archives, digitisation of artefacts by our imaging specialist.



Conservator Dr Tracey Wedge assessing condition of the banner with volunteers

The most delicate cleaning concerned two major items of the collection, a banner and a dress, which were extremely fragile. We were lucky enough to have Dr Tracey Wedge with us, textile conservator and historian. She was an incredible addition and undertook a condition assessment of both items that she could share with the volunteers, vacuumed and guided them to carefully vacuum the artefacts. She also supported us with the display cases, re-housing textile items in safer conditions for their conservation.

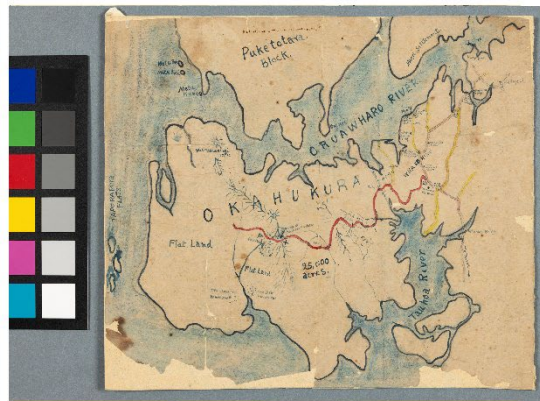


Example of intervention: artefacts were cleaned and re-housed with suitable materials ensuring their good conservation

Our conservator also got the opportunity to observe the collection, give basic advice on preventive conservation, with focus on enclosure, storage and display.

Meanwhile, some of our archivists were busy helping volunteers with archival management. We focused particularly on two aspects; firstly, help with troubleshooting their collections management software, PastPerfect. We were able to help the volunteers refine their searches and improve the findability of their records. Secondly, we provided advice on metadata – what it is, why they are important, and how to keep them well. As part of this mahi, our archivists and the volunteers explored the different metadata fields available on PastPerfect and together identified the fields they should focus on when describing records.

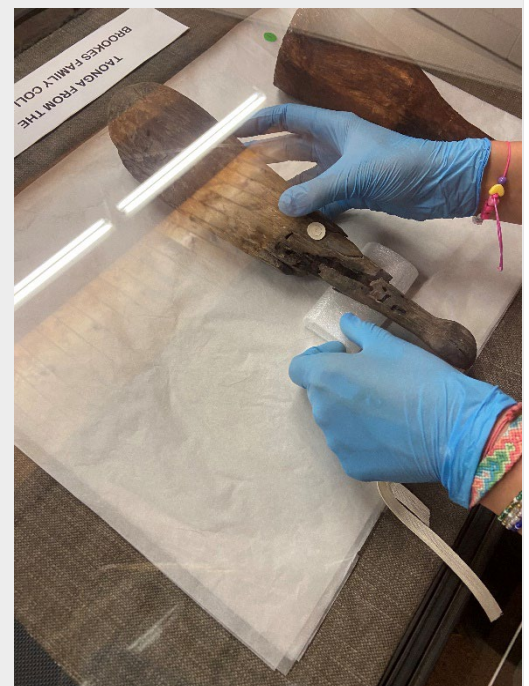
A makeshift photographic studio was set up for the day, away from the busy archivists, conservators, volunteers, and foot traffic. Our digital imaging specialist, with help from an archivist, was able to safely handle and document paper items. They paid particular attention to maps, capturing those with unique hand-drawn aspects. They also documented a drawing book which featured graphite drawings of Māori tools and artefacts.



Make-shift studio with photographer Paul Chapman and archivist Becky Hawes. Digitised map image.

By the end of the day, twelve exhibition cases were cleaned with some re-arranged to display the objects in more suitable conditions. Other items on open display were also mechanically cleaned thanks to our archivist Owen Gordon. Around fifty archival documents, including maps and drawings, were digitised, and the volunteers benefited from the advice and explanations given by our archivists.

We thank the Albertland Museum's volunteers for their warm welcome, incredible motivation and beautiful homecooked kai. Thanks to small local organisations, some heritage can be registered and protected, even if regional or national institutions cannot receive it.



Mechanical cleaning of various display cases by the Archives team. Replacing artefact after cleaning.

Pamela Yerex (née Sharratt) 1935 – 2024



In September it was with great sadness that the Archives team learnt of the death of one of our volunteers, Pam Yerex. Pam had been with us for many years working on transcription projects at the Central office, and came with a wealth of life experiences, among them working for Bata Shoes, and the company that owned Tip Top. We remember Pam telling us about one of the perks of this particular job; free ice cream every day at the office. More recently, she enjoyed sharing with us stories of her family (including a great-grandchild) and their travels, as well as the exploits of dear Mr Cat. Thank you, Pamela, from everyone at Council Archives.



Find out more



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