

NZMHS Secretary's Report 2020

It is with much pleasure that I present my 12th annual report as secretary.

I'm sure you'll all agree the 2019-2020 year has slipped by almost unnoticed as we locked down and hid away from the evils of the world. The Committee changed its habits and met by Zoom conference a couple of times but otherwise did little apart from keep things ticking over as best as possible in the circumstances.

Over the previous full year, with ongoing efforts to promote membership across a range of activities we have continued to grow the Society and are well entrenched above the magic 150-member mark.

We currently have 163 members made up of a Patron, 2 life members, 141 individual and 19 institutional members. 12 of these are overseas based with the rest local New Zealand members. We also continue our reciprocal arrangements with the Military Historical Society of Australia and share knowledge and information between us regularly.

As you will see in the treasurer's report, we continue to focus on careful and prudent spending of funds in areas that help promote awareness of the Society and that enable us to produce and deliver the excellent Society Journal.

Unfortunately, it looks like again this year we will be unable to hold the annual Military Heritage Day at the Auckland War Memorial Museum as part of the Auckland Heritage Festival. Indeed, we are here today because of ongoing delayed renovations at the Museum, yet another casualty of the pandemic.

So a break of a second consecutive year for this event gives us another chance to revisit the activity and decide if it is now past its usefulness or does indeed serve a good purpose promoting the Society and other similar groups to the public.

Our website continues to be our anchor online platform and provides a valuable space for presenting the Society to the public. We still get 2 or 3 enquiries every few days from the public seeking information about military and family history.

We tried this year to include some published articles for the first time online to meet an overseas audience that otherwise would not be able to access the material – the Cook Island Defence Force in WW2 articles and they are still getting weekly hits as people seek out the information. The articles have since been published in the Journal to add them as a permanent record to our history.

NZMHS.org.nz still appears on the first page of a Google search for New Zealand military history just behind the Wiki page, the NZDF and the Army Museum.

Our webstats show we still get an average of 250 unique visitors a month, looking at 7 pages each visit. They come first and foremost as expected from New Zealand, followed by Australia and then the US.

Our Facebook page now has over 1300 followers and is linked to our Twitter feed so all posts are re-presented to our 1100 followers there.

The new format Mail-Chimp derived newsletter links directly back to the website so members reading extended articles in the newsletter are driven to the website where more information and photos etc can be presented. This is a much more effective use of the material and also introduces the website to some members here and overseas who might not otherwise visit regularly.

So again we are reaching more and more people in more and more places with less effort and cost than before and all of this is helping the Society remain relevant and attractive to those interested.

Finally, as usual, I must thank the committee for their continued support and help in keeping the Society functioning.

Special mention to Derek again and while we recognise that he is looking to retire from the role we must acknowledge that he has always efficiently and capably handled the Society's finances no matter what has been thrown at him.

Of course, Peter Cooke and Tony Rippon, along with Neil Frances, continue to produce a great looking and valuable Journal which is always full of fascinating material.

And to Herb, as always, every year I say this but every year Herb manages to constantly and tirelessly promote the Society at every turn, here and overseas to anyone who will listen. We exist as we do in a large part due to Herb's never-ending efforts.

It is from these efforts and all of the input from the whole membership that we continue to grow and prosper and make an impact in the field of New Zealand history.