

WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND CREATES THREE HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

The WSNZ is delighted to bestow honorary life memberships on three individuals who, in line with our rules, have 'made a recognised contribution to the understanding and acceptance of Wagner's music in the community.'

All three, as performers, are strongly linked with Wagner and have continued the musical association with the Master that was led for so many years by our existing honorary life members Heath & Liz Lees and Sir Donald McIntyre.

As one of the world's top current heldentenors **Simon O'Neill** (top left) ensures New Zealand is at the centre of Wagner performance all over the world. He is a principal artist with the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Teatro alla Scala and both Bayreuth and Salzburg Festivals, appearing with a number of illustrious conductors including James Levine, Valery Gergiev, Sir Antonio Pappano, Daniel Barenboim, Pietari Inkinen, Sir Simon Rattle and Christian Thielemann.

Simon made his Bayreuth festival debut in the title role of *Lohengrin* and returned as Parsifal in the celebrated Stefan Herheim production. Other recent engagements have included opening La Scala's season as Siegmund in *Die Walküre* with Barenboim, the same role in the celebrated Keith Warner *Ring Cycle* and the title role in *Parsifal* at Covent Garden.

For WSNZ members Simon has been instrumental in ensuring that we received our Wagner fix with memorable performances of *Parsifal*, *Die Walküre* and the recent gala of highlights from *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*.

Margaret Medlyn's (top right) career has also taken her all over the world. She's appeared in such companies as English National Opera, Covent Garden, Vienna State Opera, Opera Australia and companies including State Opera of South Australia where she sang the roles of Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* and Kundry in *Parsifal*.

She joined Simon O'Neill in the NZ Festival production of *Parsifal* as Kundry and as Fricka in *Die Walküre*.

In 2006 the Wagner New Zealand Foundation was delighted to support Margaret's overseas study of Isolde which she covered for Welsh National Opera's production of *Tristan und Isolde*.

As a highly experienced voice teacher she is currently Head of Classical Performance Voice at the New Zealand School of Music.

Terence Dennis (top centre) is currently professor and Head of Performance Studies at the University of Otago Department of Music. Terence has been acclaimed both overseas and in New Zealand for his performances, teaching, master classes and presentations, regularly partnering leading resident musicians and distinguished visiting artists in recital including Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Bryn Terfel, Sir Donald McIntyre, Sarah Walker and cellist Maria Kliegel.

In 2007 Terence released a recording of Liszt and Wagner piano works to wide critical acclaim and he has been a driving force behind the very active Dunedin branch of the WSNZ where he regularly presents talks or provides introductions.

A warm Wagnerian welcome to Margaret, Terence and Simon.

AGM - 6 MAY

For the first time in the history of The Wagner Society of New Zealand the Annual General Meeting will be held outside Auckland. Difficulties in securing a booking at the School of Music in Auckland led to the decision to hold the only formal meeting of our year in Christchurch.

FORMAL NOTICE

The Wagner Society AGM is to be held on Friday 6 May 2016 in The Music Suite, Room P2, Rangi Ruru School, Merivale, Christchurch at 7.30pm.

So far, Committee and Office-Bearer nominations have been received as follows:

President..... Chris Brodrick
Vice President..... Ken Tomkins
Secretary Peter Rowe
Treasurer Jeanette Miller
PR/Liaison Gloria Streat
Committee..... Lesley Kendall
..... Bob O'Hara
..... John Davidson
..... Juliet Rowe

If you wish to make a nomination:
Phone: Peter at 09-520 4690 or
Email: info@wagnersociety.org.nz.
to be sent a form. Nominations can also be made from the floor at the meeting.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Included with this newsletter is a 2016-17 membership renewal form. Needless to say we sincerely hope you will be continuing your membership of the Society because without members we don't have a Society.

Remember also, we continually need new members as sadly none of us is getting any younger. If you know of anyone who would be interested in joining us please do encourage them. We do, after all, offer wide-ranging programmes in all four of the main centres of New Zealand. Programmes that, in their sheer diversity, must be the envy of many other societies.

As you complete your application please also consider a donation to the charitable arm of the Society, the Wagner Foundation.

WW2 KNICKER SPY

This article started life as a review of historical Wagner singers on record and immediately ran into problems with the sheer volume of material available. My initial focus was on an HMV set of seven LPs called, *Wagner on Record 1926 – 1942*. It's a treasure unmatched elsewhere and I recommend it if you can find a copy.

However, my thoughts were derailed by a reproduction of a poster in the notes relating to a performance of *Die Meistersinger* in 1936 and a singer long forgotten but with a story worth telling. That singer was Margery Booth.

In 2010 a photograph of Margery surfaced at auction and her story attracted media attention.

Much of the information in this article is in the public domain. However, I found reference to a planned film called *The Spy in the Eagle's Nest*. I wrote to the company and received a very helpful response from Franz von Habsburg who had carried out a lot of research into Margery's life which he shared with me. He also sent me the film script.

Margery was born in 1905 in Wigan. There is a curious twist at the start of the story. The celebrant at the wedding of Margery's parents was a Rev C J Buckmaster whose son, Henry, died in WW1. The head of Section F of Special Operations Executive was Maurice Buckmaster whose father happened to be called Henry. I do not know whether Henry was in fact Maurice's father but the coincidence is remarkable given Margery's later activities.

As early as 1927 she was given a contract at the Berlin State Opera.

In 1933 she first met Adolf Hitler following a concert at Potsdam and later sang before him and Goering at the Berlin Opera. Hitler went backstage to meet Margery, later sending her 200 red roses allegedly wrapped in a swastika flag.

Margery first sang at Bayreuth in 1933 as a flower maiden and made regular appearances after this. There is evidence of her having sung, the Valkyrie, Siegrune in *Die Walküre* in 1934 with Frida Leider playing Brünnhilde. It seems the entire performance was recorded and a snippet can be found on You Tube.

In 1936 she made her Covent Garden debut in *Die Meistersinger* as Magdalena and, in spite of a sore throat, she impressed Beecham. The season that year was a personal triumph with Margery appearing in 23 out of 35 productions in roles such as a Flower Maiden in *Parsifal*, Flosshilde in *Das Rheingold*, *Götterdämmerung* and her most famous portrayal, *Carmen*.

In 1936 Margery married a German lawyer, Dr Strohm (see above).

About this time she was contacted by the Special Intelligence Service (MI6).



During the next three years she spent time working between Berlin and England until in August 1939 she returned to Berlin and was there when war was declared. By this time Margery had been granted German nationality and was trusted enough to sing at Stalag III-D, in the hope that British Prisoners might be persuaded to join the British Free Corps.

In 1940 the Bayreuth Festival was broadcast live on Short Wave to Britain and Margery together with Winifred Wagner provided the English language continuity announcements. I wonder how many people heard these broadcasts and what their reaction was to a night in an Anderson shelter followed by Bayreuth in the afternoon. In the same year she sang Flosshilde in *Das Rheingold*.

Margery continued to sing at Bayreuth during the war years, the most notable being a 1942 performance of *Götterdämmerung* under Karl Elmendorff in which she sang Flosshilde and this is her sole Wagner recording in the catalogue apart from a disc with Set Svanholm of Wagner and Verdi excerpts. The performance of *Götterdämmerung* can be heard complete on You Tube.

During this time she was working for MI6 apparently sheltering British agents, concealing escaped PoWs at her Berlin apartment and acting as courier passing on vital documents. It is reported that at some point she sang before Hitler with some secret documents stuffed down her underwear, which revelation prompted a BBC online article in which she was given the soubriquet of the WW2 Knicker Spy!

At some stage she became friendly with another British agent, John Brown, who held the rank of Standartenführer, and was a disillusioned member of the British Union of Fascists. At the opera house bar he pretended to be amorous towards her, cuddling up and being what people would describe as an 'intoxicated nuisance'. It was in these moments that he passed secret papers to her, stuffing them down her dress! It sounds like a scene from *'Allo, 'Allo!* John Brown recounts this story in his autobiography *In Durance Vile* which is available at Amazon.

Up until 1944 Margery was singing regularly at PoW camps. She was supposed to sing only in German, Italian or French in case she passed on messages. She appears to have ignored this injunction and frequently sang English folk songs much to the irritation of the German guards. She also included in her repertoire, *There'll*

always be an England and Land of Hope and Glory. It may have been these songs that convinced the Germans (who were clearly slow on the uptake) that her loyalties were not entirely with Das Vaterland and, following an indiscreet remark to Goering in 1944, she was arrested by the Gestapo.

She spent a week in custody suffering mental rather than physical torture and then managed to talk her way out. She then headed west and found safety in the American lines. She returned to the UK in 1945 and was subsequently involved in the trials of traitors such as William Joyce where her testimony played an important part in securing convictions. Sadly there were those in the UK, including her stepfather, who were of the opinion that Margery herself was a traitor.

She retired from the stage and in 1951 died from cancer in the USA in obscurity.

In the 1980s the mayor of Wigan and the local MP made representations to Margaret Thatcher for Margery to be awarded a posthumous George Cross but nothing came of this. To be fair to Mrs Thatcher she was rather busy at that time showering honours on such worthy recipients as Jimmy Savile and Rolf Harris.

Margery Booth did not achieve the celebrity status of Flagstad or Leider but nevertheless she was a Wagnerian heroine in the truest sense of the word. It is a story that warrants telling and it is a pity that the film is not likely to come to fruition because of lack of money.

If any of the readers of this bulletin have a spare couple of million or even an introduction to Sir Peter Jackson please let me know.

– Ben Thomas

WAGNER MURMURS

- Jonas Kaufmann and Stuart Skelton will share the role of *Lohengrin* at the Paris Opéra in 2017.
- Rumours coming from Seattle Opera are that they are planning a new *Ring Cycle*, possibly for its 2019/20 season.
- La Monnaie Brussels will mount a new production of *Lohengrin* in January 2017. This is a co-production with Opera Australia so watch this space!
- Berlin is planning two new *Ring Cycles!* The previously announced Deutsche Oper Berlin Stefan Herheim production has now been followed by a plan for Daniel Barenboim to conduct a new *Ring* directed by Dmitri Tcherniakov for the Staatsoper unter den Linden. However, there is debate going on as to whether Berlin needs two new cycles.
- In the meantime, the Deutsche Oper Berlin will give two cycles of its Götz Friedrich *Ring* in April 2017, the final outing for this iconic 1984/85 production.
- Melbourne Opera will present *Tannhäuser* in August 2016. (12, 17 & 20)

– Michael Sinclair

WAGNER SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND 2016 PROGRAMME DETAILS

Auckland

Sunday, 31 July at 7.30pm

Venue: Music Theatre, School of Music, University of Auckland, 6 Symonds St

Singers of the Cosima Era:

Terence Dennis will present this travel back in time and bring to life the great, pre-war Wagner singers who were caught in sound recording

Sunday, 25 September at 7.30pm

Venue: Music Theatre, School of Music, University of Auckland, 6 Symonds St
A Ring Refresher: Heath Lees presents the *Ring* in 2 hours

Sunday 11 December at 7.30pm

Venue: Music Theatre, School of Music, University of Auckland, 6 Symonds St

Christmas Function: Featuring a Pot-pourri of Wagneriana plus our famous cake and wine

Wellington

Sunday 17 April at 4.00 pm

Venue: St Andrew's Hall

Margaret Medlyn in Conversation

Wellington singer Margaret Medlyn discusses her career as a Wagnerian performer, and her experiences of other Wagnerian performances and singers

Sunday, 8 May at 4.00pm

Venue: St Andrew's Church

A Ring Refresher: Heath Lees presents the *Ring* in 2 hours

Sunday, 19 June at 4.00pm

Venue: St Andrew's Hall

Documentary Film and discussion

Details TBA

Sunday 10 July at 11.00 am

Venue: The Bergman Theatre, Paramount Cinemas, Courtenay Place

Joint meeting with the Opera Society.

Screening of *Die Walküre* (La Scala 2010, with Simon O'Neill)

Sunday, 18 September at 4.00pm

Venue: St Andrew's Hall

Wagner and Trains:

Otago University's Professor John Drummond discusses the coincidence of Wagner's development at a time when he made important railway journeys
Christmas Party details to come

SIMON SINGS SIEGFRIED

With the announcement of Houston Grand Opera's 2016/17 season earlier this year, we are delighted to be able to advise members that Simon O'Neill will sing his first staged Siegfried in their production of *Götterdämmerung* in April/May 2017. This exciting news follows on from his hugely successful concert with the NZSO last year where, accompanied by soprano, Christine Goerke, he delighted audiences with excerpts from *Siegfried*

Christchurch

NB: Due to earthquake repairs at the University of Canterbury, our usual venue is unavailable in 2016

Friday, 6 May at 7.30pm

Venue: The Music Suite, Room P2, Rangī Ruru School, Merivale

WSNZ AGM followed by

Behind the Score.....The Tristan Effect:

In this documentary, introduced by Chris Brodrick, conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and creative director Gerard McBurney present the vivid story of the opera's creation and its impact on musicians and artists of all kinds. It includes complete performances of the opera's Prelude and Liebestod, among other extensive orchestral passages from this great opera

Friday, 12 August at 7.30pm

Venue: The Music Suite, Room P2, Rangī Ruru School, Merivale

Singers of the Cosima Era:

Terence Dennis will present this travel back in time and bring to life the great, pre-war Wagner singers who were caught in sound recording

Friday, 16 September at 7.30pm

Venue: The Music Suite, Room P2, Rangī Ruru School, Merivale

Tuba or not Tuba? That is the Question.

Mysterious, misunderstood, and a misnomer, the Wagner Tuba is an essential part of the *Ring* orchestra, and deserves to be better known. Presented by John Pattinson

Friday, 28 October at 7.30pm

Venue: The Music Suite, Room P2, Rangī Ruru School, Merivale

Tristan & Isolde....The Classical and Medieval Background.

Presented by John Davidson

Sunday, 27 November

Venue: TBA

Christmas Social Function

NEW MEMBERS

A big Wagnerian welcome to:

Robyn Skrzynska..... Wellington
Janette & George Mullenger..... Chch
Roderick MacLeod Auckland

Dunedin

Sunday, 22 May at 12.30pm

Venue: Te Rangī Hiroa College Viewing Lounge, 192 Castle Street

Wagner: Lohengrin

A magnificent performance from the Vienna State Opera, conducted by Claudio Abbado with Plácido Domingo in the title role, Cheryl Studer as Elsa, Robert Lloyd as King Heinrich, Hartmut Welker as Telramund and Dunja Vejzovic as Ortrud. A legendary cast in a legendary performance

Sunday, 11 September at 2.00pm

Venue: Black-Sale House, Department of Music, The University of Otago

Historical Perspective:

The Mastersingers of Nuremberg

Roger Wilson will present a talk on the 1990 NZ Festival of the Arts production of *Die Meistersinger* which a quarter of a century later is still seen as a watershed in our cultural history

Sunday, 2 October at 2.00pm

Venue: Black-Sale House, Department of Music, The University of Otago

The Most Notorious Chord in The World

The revolutionary opening bars of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* introduced the world to the so-called Tristan-chord, which has swept audiences off their feet and confused and bewildered music analysts ever since. In this talk Professor John Drummond explains what the chord is all about, how Wagner came up with it, and why it is so appropriate to the story of the opera

Sunday, 27 November at 12.00pm

Venue: Carrington College, 57 Heriot Row (Turn right off Pitt Street)

Wagner: The Dresden Years

A special concert given in the Semperoper, in celebration of the Wagner 200th Anniversary Year, 2013. Star tenor Jonas Kaufmann sings from *Rienzi*, *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*, with the Staatskapelle Dresden under Christian Thielemann. Also on the programme is Wagner's early *Faust Overture*, and the overtures to *Der Fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser*



Christine Goerke & Simon O'Neill

and *Götterdämmerung*. Christine Goerke will also sing Brünnhilde in the Houston performances which will be conducted by Patrick Summers. The production is by the Spanish theatrical group La Fura dels Baus and has previously been seen in Valencia and Florence, and is available on DVD. Further details of the Houston performances can be found at houstongrandopera.org.

WHITHER BAYREUTH?

In the second of two articles, Dunedin-born singer Martin Snell responds to questions by Heath Lees on the state of opera today. Martin's long experience of working at the Bayreuth Festival makes him perfectly equipped to talk about Bayreuth, its Festival, and what the future might hold . . .

HL: Wagner Society people sometimes hear alarming reports of what's going on in Bayreuth, . . . fighting, muddled direction etc. Is this confirmed by your experience?

MS: I had the privilege of working at the Bayreuth Festival for a period of 12 years altogether. Initially three years as a member of the Festival Chorus and latterly nine years in a wide range of small and major solo roles. It is clear that Bayreuth has not been immune from the enormous social change that has occurred in Germany in recent years. Remarkably, Wolfgang Wagner was able to steer the fortunes of the Festival for well over half a century. Certainly, the period of his tenure was not without controversy but overall he was a formidable and innovative steward of his grandfather's legacy. It is possibly too early to gauge whether he was Festspielleiter for too long, but many consider he hung on solely to benefit his youngest daughter Katharina, the only child from his second marriage, and now sole Festival Director.

What has now become evident is that Wolfgang was in his latter years incapacitated through old age, and his actions and decisions were fronted and defended by his late wife, Gudrun, who unexpectedly predeceased him. Gudrun's untimely death laid bare Wolfgang's increased infirmity and incapacity. In a quirky twist of fate, it was decided by the external entities — the German Federal Government, the Bavarian State Government, the Bayreuth City Government, and the Society of Friends of the Bayreuth Festival — that Katharina's management of the Festival would be expanded to include her 35-years' senior half-sister, Eva Wagner-Pasquier, previously banished from Bayreuth by Wolfgang, and similar in age to the late Gudrun.

The intervening seven years until 2015 have been laced with poor decision-making, incompetent personnel management, lack of communication, contradictions, secrecy, rivalries, economy with the truth, intrigues, technological and social upheaval, escalating costs, decreased funding, and rapid modernisation of the revered institution which, in this fast social media age, has had great difficulty in withstanding the increased scrutiny. So much so, that it all sounds like the plot of one of Richard's operas!

HL: So do you think Bayreuth is losing its international status?

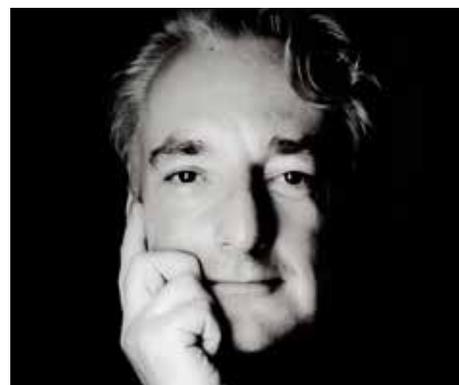
MS: I think Bayreuth and its remarkable theatre will always be afforded a special international status. It remains the only theatre ever built by a composer specifically for his own works. To some, even his great-granddaughter, Katharina, it is a mystery as to why Wagner should have chosen an obscure town in Oberfranken as the setting for his festival. The reasons are, however, well-documented and it is a small miracle that the Festival Theatre itself still exists given how seriously damaged the rest of Bayreuth was through Allied bombing raids in the closing weeks of WWII.

Any loss in the Bayreuth Festival's status is due to a manifold range of causes. For many years, including the early part of my association as a soloist, it was generally not possible to perform away from Bayreuth during the Festival. The rationale was two-fold: spending the entire summer in Bayreuth would provide a welcome opportunity for performers to recharge their energies from the normal operatic circuit whilst enjoying the company of their otherwise long-suffering families, as well as ensuring that everyone was available at all times.

However, with the increase in mobility and accessibility of Bayreuth and the demands of many performers' home theatres, it became increasingly difficult to require that artists should be present for the entire rehearsal period as well as for all the performances. The offer of more lucrative contracts elsewhere put paid to the appearance of many leading performers beyond the initial year of a production. Additionally, the growth of other festivals, some of which perform Wagner on a regular basis, has broadened the demand for the services and talents of specialists in the field, whether singer, conductor or orchestral musician.

HL: What could be done to get Bayreuth back into the Wagner-lover's and opera-lover's essential, must-see' category?

MS: In my opinion, by returning to basic principles. The trump card for the Festival is the theatre and its acoustics. The success of the post-war years, i.e. 'New Bayreuth' from 1951, were highlighted by productions of significant aesthetic quality. Audiences could concentrate on the beauty and complexity of Wagner's music with a visual accompaniment that did not



distract but complemented and visually enhanced the action.

But there have been noticeable departures and consequent disasters, particularly in more recent memory. Use and abuse of Wagner's music to the ends of a secret directorial agenda has been a regular criticism and has negated the pleasure and thrill that previously made Festival performances legendary. 'Less is more' is an artistic mantra that the Festival needs to rediscover. It is an economic mantra as well, since in recent years vast sums have often been expended to little effect, apart from garnering public disapproval. Preserving the Wagner Legacy for future generations, not only of German opera-lovers but internationally, is essential.

More effort needs to be made to train Wagner singers for the future as well as to educate the next generation of opera-goers. Katharina Wagner's initiative with adaptations of Wagner's operas for children has been an unqualified success, sometimes even regarded as the highlight of the Festival but because of the limited financial resources made available, its effect has been local rather than national or international.

It is to be hoped that Bayreuth will in future not only present established Wagnerian singers but also actively discover and nurture new ones. However, unless the domination of certain artist agencies is curbed, it is unlikely.

In terms of wider audience access, alas, the broadcasts of Bayreuth productions are dependent entirely on funding but basically the financial returns do not justify them. As for availability of tickets, I understand that the Bayreuth Festival is to do an about-face as regards Wagner societies whose traditional ticket allocations were stopped in 2009. This decision, at the behest of the Bundesrechnungshof, or Audit Office, should never have been implemented and has cost the Festival dearly in terms of goodwill and custom. Sadly, I fear that any about-face will be a case of shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted.

Overall, the current international standing of Bayreuth is low. Some say it will never recover its former radiance. I hope they are wrong, but we shall see . . .

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2015

This being the 21st Wagner Society of New Zealand President's report it is appropriate that, in our coming of age, we are holding our first Annual General Meeting outside Auckland. Due to difficulties in securing a venue in Auckland we decided to move the meeting and allow Christchurch members to attend to the business of the one formal meeting of our year. As we have done in previous years I am presenting this report in advance of the meeting, rather than at the event, so that all members have an opportunity to ask questions. Any member outside Christchurch is most welcome to attend or to alternatively email or phone any questions that this report may raise. As in the main it's a report on our activities during 2015 it may just be some clarification. Whatever it is please do ask. This is your Society.

2015 was another steady year for the Society. Membership showed a very slight decline (yes, we are all getting older) but there was also a steady number of new members.

Through the Wagner New Zealand Foundation, a committee under the chairmanship of Peter Rowe with members Heather Simpson, Sir Michael Hardie Boys and Terence Dennis, we supported the NZSO Wagner Galas with Simon O'Neill and Christine Goerke that were held last June in Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington. Additionally some centres were lucky enough to have an evening with Simon and Christine when Heath Lees lead an informal discussion.

The other major event in our 2015 year was the trip to Sydney, organised by Michael Sinclair, to attend the Sydney Symphony concert performance of *Tristan*. Michael, who is also organising the Society trip to the *Melbourne Ring* at the end of 2016, does sterling work for us in organising these trips. In addition he's the person responsible for keeping our web site up to date and he also contributes regularly to the newsletter with his *Wagner Murmurs* column.

During 2015 we reviewed the production of the newsletter and made the decision to reduce the number of issues per year from six to five. The call for more contributors resulted in some regular columns being featured. This has the double advantage of easing the load but more importantly provides some different voices which, I believe, results in a more interesting read. In addition to Michael, those to come on board the good ship newsletter were: Ben

Thomas, with pieces on Jon Vickers and *Ring* recordings and Heath Lees, who has taken up residency on the back page with a series of fascinating articles on all matters Wagner. During the year we were honoured to feature a contribution from CK Stead who kindly gave us his thoughts on the *Budapest Ring*. Many thanks to all the contributors.

A further change was made during the year on the way we dispatched the electronic version of the newsletter. After dreadful problems with Spark's Xtra Mail server and then a major stuff up by yours truly, we turned to an internet mail distribution programme called 'Mail Chimp' - which, overall, is giving us not only a better service but a better looking email.

The task of keeping the society functioning on a day to day basis has been masterfully handled by our Secretary, Peter Rowe, and our Treasurer Jeanette Miller. Our thanks to both for their hard work. We also need to thank Peter for the use of the telephone conference call facilities of Minter Ellison that enable the National Committee to carry out the Society business. The members of that Committee are: Ken Tomkins, Vice President; Jeanette Miller, Treasurer; Juliet Rowe, Minute Secretary; Peter Rowe, Secretary; along with John Davidson, Gloria Streat, Lesley Kendall and Bob O'Hara. These people deserve our utmost gratitude as, without their commitment, there would be no Society.

John Hambling continues as our honorary auditor and, once again, our grateful thanks go to John for keeping an eye on the books.

The National Committee is supported by smaller groups in each centre who not only organise meetings but also ensure they run smoothly. In Auckland we were lucky to have Ken Tomkins, Juliet Rowe, Jeanette Miller, Bob O'Hara, David Colemore-Williams and Helen Kirkman. John Davidson led the Wellington team with Tibby and Adrian Simcock, Anne Mallinson, and Michael Ashdown. In Christchurch the meetings were run by Gloria Streat, John Pattinson, Elizabeth Cooch and Jenny Lee, while Lesley Kendall, Louise Kilby and Terence Dennis looked after Dunedin.

So there it is – another President's report and another year gone! A big thank you to all who give their time for the Society and thanks to you, the membership, for making it all worthwhile!

CHRISTOPHER BRODRICK – PRESIDENT