



ONslow HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Established 1968

E Newsletter May 2026



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Notice of 2026 Annual General Meeting

The 58th Annual General Meeting of the Onslow Historical Society Inc. will be held on

Wednesday, 27th May 2026

at KATE, 86 Khandallah Road, Khandallah

7.30pm for a 7.45pm Start

Acceptances and Apologies Welcomed

Contact Secretary John Galloway

Email: onslowhistorical@gmail.com

Phone: (04) 478 7603

The business of the meeting and the election of office holders for the forthcoming year will be followed by our guest speaker:

Francis Fanning: Topic: The history of real estate agent J. Bethune & Co.

President's report 2025/2026 – to be delivered at the AGM, 27 May

Many thanks for your continued support to the Onslow Historical Society. We've hosted 11 companionable events for members, maintained a community profile with several other events, and contributed interesting local history throughout 2025/26, including two editions of the *Onslow Historian*. OHS encourages and welcomes new members, and successfully re-registered as a charitable society.

Events in 2025:

AGM function in June featuring speaker John Martin on "Native potato ground to urban bliss. How road and rail created Ngaio and Khandallah".

In July an enjoyable talk by Catherine Ruth on "Genealogy and how to find your family history."

The big Ngaio Town Hall Centenary celebrations were jointly hosted with Ngaio Residents Association in August, and a blue plaque was arranged for the hundred-year-old heritage building.

A walk of historic Johnsonville and visit to the heritage (former) Brigidine Convent was jointly hosted with Historic Places Wellington in September.

Kelvin Nairn reflected on Pacific Voyaging in his interesting September talk.

Our Labour Day 2025 walk, late October, during the Wellington Heritage Festival was of historic Ngaio and included a visit to heritage Crofton House – led by John Galloway and Felicity Wong.

A well-attended Christmas event with historical food items prepared by Viv Chapple was held in late November.

Events in 2026:

Given its popularity, a second walk of historic Ngaio – which included a visit to heritage Donisthorpe House – was held on Waitangi Day, 6 February. Our thanks to generous hosts Rod Baxter and Dylan Aplin. Also on 22 February Claire Bibby talked about the important Glenside Reserve and heritage Halfway House.

An enjoyable screening of short historical documentary films was hosted by George Walter on Easter Sunday, 5 April, including his “By George” local history film.

On 19 April, just prior to ANZAC Day, historian Damien Fenton gave an excellent talk about the Ottoman Empire and the context for the ANZAC WW1 landings at Gallipoli. It was a treat to see author Julie Bremner at the talk along with Life Member Margaret Domett.

The improved facility at KATE has enabled much better visual presentations since late 2025 (thanks to George Walter for his work). A big thank you to all who have attended OHS events.

Onslow Historian

Claire Bibby researched and wrote a very good history of the Glenside Reserve, published in November 2025. It was a timely community contribution at a time when the Council is deliberating on the future of that land, now expected to revert to restored green space “for the birds”.

Peter Reimann produced a third history of the Trelissick Park Group (2014–2025) – a riveting story of the struggle to successfully restore the native bush and ecosystem of the Ngaio Gorge. The Committee attended the publication’s launch at Otari in March 2026.

Both publications were ably guided and enhanced by historian and editor John Martin.

The next *Onslow Historian* will tell the history of the early years of the Khandallah Domain and Reserve. In 2027 we plan to publish the history of Ngaio's historic Donisthorpe house. We are also considering a history of military activities and of the emergence of suburbs in the area.

Please convey any further topic suggestions to John Martin (bearing in mind our limited resources).

Sundays at KATE, education and archives

The society's rooms have been regularly open on Sundays from 1-4pm, hosted by a knowledgeable team including Claire Bibby, Hugh Bibby and Keefe van Musscher, as well as Committee members. The displays and photographic and exhibition materials were reorganised by George Walter and John Martin late 2025.

Ngaio Air Scouts had an evening of fun and (old) games at KATE in August 2025. Material was produced for local schools by John Galloway.

The Committee visited the new central library to view its new layout and the society's safely stored archive collection.

The KATE building remains generously provided by our major sponsor Chorus, for which we are extremely grateful. There are no developments to report. The government's new Earthquake Prone Buildings Act will, however, contain relief for single-story buildings with secure facades like KATE.

Newsletters, website & comms

Four newsletters were produced during the year – in July, October, February and May. Thanks go to Geraldine Needham-Girven for managing the OHS website and Facebook page.

John Galloway and Felicity Wong ran an OHS stall at the Khandallah Christmas fair in December 2025, and another stall at the Wadestown Fair in March 2026 with numerous book sales.

In March 2026 Felicity Wong with John Galloway gave a talk to the residents of the Malvina Major Retirement Village on “the Oldest Road North”. This was well received. There’s been great feedback about Felicity Wong’s weekly “Local History” columns for the *Independent Herald*.

Committee

Good news – our dedicated committee members have agreed to stay on with your support. Secretary John Galloway has kept records in fine order with Vice President George Walter leading the refresh of KATE. John Martin oversaw the *Onslow Historian* publications. Liz Newport has kept diligent financial books and Viv Chapple master-minded the Ngaio Town Hall centenary and heritage themed catering for our events. Christine Davis created interesting displays for visitors and John Wilson’s input was welcome.

Finally, thanks to all for supporting me as President, and especially to John Galloway for his sustained valuable contribution. It’s been a busy year but we’ve all supported each other. I warmly recommend that you re-elect the Committee.

Many thanks to our hearty community of society members.

Felicity Wong
May 2026

Forthcoming event – AGM, 27 May 2026

Francis Fanning will give a presentation on the history of J. Bethune and Co., Wellington's longstanding real estate agent company going back to the mercantile business Kenneth Bethune and George Hunter formed in 1840 in Wellington. Francis has generously donated a large body of records relating to the company dating from the 1890s. These include records of sales, newspaper clippings, brochures on real estate projects and plans. Notably, the collection also includes three sets of 1890s Thomas Ward maps of Wellington, each comprising around a hundred sheets. (These maps form the basis of Elizabeth Cox's recent book, *Mr Ward's Map*.)



Francis Fanning in his garage alongside some of Bethune and Fanning real estate archival material he is donating.



Onslow College is celebrating its 70 years since being founded in 1956 on the windswept, gorse-covered lower flanks of the Johnsonville hills

Onslow College

70 years young

A display of Onslow College photos through the decades.



**At Onslow Historical Society Historical Centre.
86 Khandallah Road.**

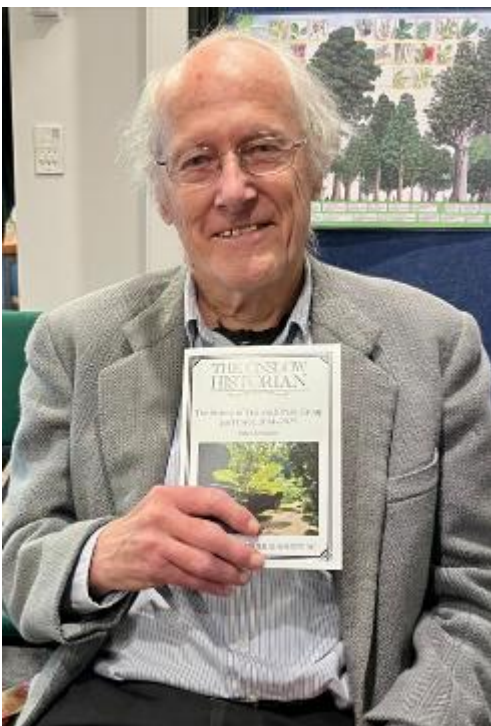
**from Sunday the 31st May to 31st July 2026
Sunday afternoon 1-4pm**

Photo Gallery

This gallery contains a photographic record of a number of events some of which are highlighted in the President's report to be presented at the AGM



Park Group Chair Anne Tuffin launches the Trellissick issue of the *Onslow Historian*, vol 55, 2026 – the third part in the history of Trellissick Park, Ngaio Gorge. OHS committee members attended the launch at Otari on Wednesday 25 March.



Author Peter Reimann with a copy of the history. Peter also contributed parts 1 and 2 of the history in previous issues of the *Historian* in 2014.

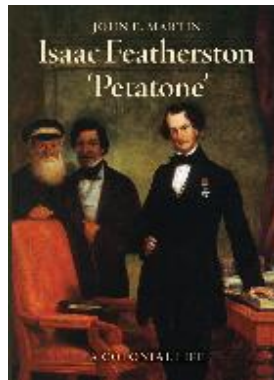


John Galloway and Felicity Wong on the OHS stall at the Khandallah Christmas fair, December 2025





Committee member John Martin's biography, *Isaac Featherston – 'Petatone'*, was launched in November 2025 at Unity Books. Alongside his earlier work, *Empire City*, this biography has much to say about early Wellington



Historian Damien Fenton has a look over the many cap badges mounted on a board and also in a trunk – part of the Bell collection held by the society



On Waitangi Day, 6 February, OHS held its second walk of historic Ngaio which included a visit to the heritage Donisthorpe House owned by Dylan Aplin (left of centre post) and Rod Baxter (right)



Dylan Aplin hosts the tour of Donisthorpe House

Mysterious early painting of Ngauranga Gorge



The Alexander Turnbull Library is trying to determine the provenance of the above painting of Ngauranga Gorge, circa 1850s, deposited with them by a person on behalf of its owner. It apparently featured in the *Evening Post* some years ago.

It appears to be a version of another painting of the same subject held by the Turnbull Library: <https://tiaki.natlib.govt.nz/#details=ecatalogue.50775>.

The depositor received the painting from its owner around 2018, but cannot now remember who the owner was, other than that they lived in Khandallah.

If someone knows anything about this painting and its provenance please contact Rebekah Clements at the Turnbull Library: Rebekah.Clements@dia.govt.nz

Remembering Joy McNicoll: 1941–2026



Enthusiastic member and former committee member Joy McNicoll died in February.

Described in her death notice as ‘an enthusiastic traveller’, Joy spent much of her early working life overseas. After spending a number of years in the UK, she returned to NZ, but later worked in Melbourne for a few years.

After returning to NZ in 1975, Joy was appointed a senior social worker with the Department of Social Welfare in Lower Hutt. Through part-time study at Victoria University in 1977–78, she completed a Certificate in Personnel Management, before joining the Department of Internal Affairs in Wellington. Continuing to study, she went on to complete her Master of Public Policy at Victoria University, before taking up an appointment with the Ministry of Defence in 1990.

Following her retirement in 1992 Joy served as Assistant National Secretary to the National Council of Women of New Zealand (1992–94).

Joy played golf, tennis and bridge, enjoyed theatre, ballet and the creative arts and crafts, and was actively involved in the women’s movement. She was awarded a 1993 Suffrage Centennial Medal and was a Justice of the Peace. Joy joined the Onslow Historical Society in 2012, and was on the committee from 2017 to 2020. She was always a regular attendee at our events, a number of which she had organised personally.