

A HISTORY OF THE AUCKLAND PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY FROM 1883 – 1985

In researching the history of any organisation, Minute Books are of prime importance and these can be supplemented by Annual Reports and Correspondence. Beyond these, information can be meagre but in this instance we have been fortunate to glean further details principally from the Auckland Museum and Press files, as in the earlier days club activities were often reported in the daily newspapers.

This then is an attempt to put on paper a permanent record of the activities of the Auckland Photographic Society in its first hundred years.

The earliest record that we have found of the Society's existence is in Bretts Almanac for 1884 which was printed and published by H. Brett, Evening Star Office in 1883. This carries a listing of organisations under the heading of *Music & Art* and includes - *Auckland Photographic Society - J. M. Clark, President; W. J. Hurst & J. Chambers, Vice Presidents; J. L. Sinclair, Secretary; C Bartley, Treasurer. Meets monthly in Winter, fortnightly in Summer. Field days fortnightly in Summer.*

The President, Mr J. McCosh Clark was a citizen of some standing and was born in 1833 and died in 1898. He was Mayor of Auckland from 1880 to 1883, and was Managing Director of Archibald Clark & Sons, a well established furnishing company which continued in business well within the memory of many of our current members. He was also a Chairman of the Education Board, and President of the Chamber of Commerce as well as a Vice President of the Auckland Racing Club in 1884.

Among the more illustrious officers of our Society were the *Father of Auckland* Sir John Logan Campbell and in the early 1890s, His Excellency the Earl of Onslow who was *pleased to accept the position of President.*

A short resume of the club's history compiled in 1916, refers to the difficult times experienced in its first 17 years until 1901. It flourished initially and *then waned* but was *resuscitated through the efforts of Mr Francis, a wellknown Master at Auckland Grammar School, and Mr G. R. Carson of the University. Again it flourished and again it fell on hard times and had to sell off its assets to meet its accounts.*

This could well be the time when the club went into recess for a short period around 1889/1890. In this 1916 history the foundation date for the Society was given as 1885, however Bretts Almanac proves quite clearly that the 1916 archivist was incorrect in this regard.

In 1885 the club met in Broomhall's Photographic Shop in Shortland Street and following the *resuscitation process* shifted to the top floor of the A.M.P. Building where there was a small meeting room and a very large dark room with a nine feet long sink, and ample lockers. Portability of equipment was of course a problem in the days of horse-drawn transport, and availability of lockers was a necessity.

It was not long before a further move was made to the factory of Mr Alf Whittingham in Greys Avenue. The reason for this is quite obvious as it was available free of charge, however a further move was made necessary following the death of Mr Whittingham and the next venue was at the premises of Jones & Colman in (Queer) Street. Subsequently Messrs J. Holland & Son provided the club with a *fine large room for meetings*. This was at a date prior to 1909 and the club continued to meet there until 1916 when the demands for club rooms with darkroom facilities prompted a move to Caxton Chambers, 21 Swanson Street on a three year lease at Five Shillings (50 cents) per week. In 1922 the club took advantage of an offer to use the Society of Arts premises at no charge but in 1923 turned full circle by returning to Holland & Sons rooms. At this stage membership stood at 38.

A shift to Unity Hall in Queen Street in 1929 was of short duration, as with the early stages of the great depression members were finding it difficult to pay their subscriptions, and as a consequence the club was unable to pay rental. This led to a nomadic existence with meetings being arranged at *suitable rooms to be determined from time to time.* Subscriptions then were Ten Shillings and Six Pence (\$1.05). Principal club rooms used since then have been -

1933	Fabian Club Rooms, His Majesty's Arcade
1935	Penwomens Club Rooms, Shorts Buildings, Queen St
1940	Auckland Polytechnic Institute
1954	Y.M.C.A., Wellesley Street
1955	Unity Hall, Queen Street
1965	Auckland Building Centre, Darby Street
1980	Auckland Scamens' Mission, Quay Street
1981	All Saints Church Hall, Ponsonby Road

Club outings have always been a feature of the Society's activities and we cannot help but wonder at the limited opportunities that were available to members in the early days. For instance in October 1909, the success of an outing to Cabbage Tree Swamp in what is now Sandringham was reported to the meeting; while the following year a trip to Motions Creek was planned *subject to the suitability of the tide.* It must have been a significant milestone when in 1916 three members of the committee *intimated that they would be pleased to utilise their motor cars on some convenient day for a club outing and would be able to take some eleven*

members. No record is available as to the outcome of the offer. These early accounts do however remind us of the way in which the development of photography has followed on the heels of improved transport facilities, which together with the advent of small cameras, fast film and the choice between colour and monochrome have created almost unlimited opportunity to amateur and professional alike.

While it is disappointing that we have been unable to locate the club's Minutes between 1941 and 1956, it is an even greater loss to be without the early Minute Book covering the years from 1889 (or earlier) to 1908, which went missing about 12 years ago. This covered the period when the club was really struggling, prior to and after the period of recess in 1889-90, and consequently exact details are a little clouded. However Brett's Almanac has been invaluable in providing essential information. We have been able to check every edition from 1884 to 1907, with the exception of 1898, 1899 and 1902 which are not available, and in each instance, the club and its members are listed, apart from the year 1890.

Some minor confusion exists in the fact that Brett's listings do vary over the years between 1884 and 1900 where three different titles are used -

- Auckland Photographic Society
- Auckland Camera Club
- Auckland Photographic Club

However from 1901 onwards, it is consistently described as Auckland Camera Club. In view of the fact that we do know that the missing Minute Book covered the entire period it is a natural assumption that these different titles would be no more than aberrations in the same way as today's members of the Auckland Photographic Society often refer to the "Camera Club". It is therefore obvious that they refer to the one organisation.

A small matter that is still unresolved is the listing of two photographic groups in Brett's 1891 Edition. The executive members of the Auckland Photographic Club are identifiable with the original Society, and these names continue in future editions of Brett's. The other organisation does not appear in later issues, nor do the names of its executive members. Whether or not this second organisation disbanded or perhaps merged with the ongoing Photographic Club can only be a matter of conjecture at this time.

For the first twenty years of the 20th Century, Lantern Slides were very much part of the programmes at club meetings and one of the many popular showings was made by the Reverend Fisher covering Ely and Canterbury Cathedrals and the Houses of Parliament during 1909. At the same meeting the President gave a *very interesting demonstration of gaslight postcard painting.*

1910 was the year in which Sir John Logan Campbell terminated his term as Patron and it appears to have been a time for major decisions. Not only did the club purchase a new Slide Lantern, but it also decided to exchange prints with the Tasmanian Camera Club and made enquiries

regarding a subscription to a photographic magazine from England costing Two Pence per copy. With 25 financial members and a bank balance of Five Pounds, Two Shillings and One Penny, (\$10.21) caution could apparently be thrown to the winds. However such affluence was not to be maintained, for at the A.G.M. in 1911 the club was faced with outstanding accounts of Three Pounds, Fourteen Shillings and Five Pence (\$7.44) and had only Nineteen Shillings and Six Pence (\$1.95) in the bank and was consequently obliged to double the subscription rate to Ten Shillings (\$ 1) per annum. This was hardly the climate to make inroads on the limited resources, so a member's suggestion that the club hold a New Zealand Photographic Exhibition produced no more than a sympathetic hearing.

However 1912 brought a more benevolent outlook, when the club agreed to assist Onehunga Camera Club with their exhibition in which 14 of our members submitted 47 prints for display. Apparently interest in photography was steadily increasing on a national basis at that time, as in 1914 a letter was received from the Reefton Club suggesting the national affiliation of camera clubs. This was 38 years before the formation of P.S.N.Z.

Auckland club by now was realising the value of exhibitions and in 1913 shared fourth place in an All Australia club competition and had obtained a first and a special award in the Auckland Exhibition of the same year.

The club was also an exhibitor at the Society of Arts and various trade shows. In the Annual Report, mention was made of *the necessary expenses consequent in participating in so many exhibitions in a somewhat low (financial) condition, but the result has more than justified the expense.* After some discussion the A.G.M. carried a motion that subscriptions be increased to One Pound, One Shilling (\$2.10)

1914 heralded the commencement of World War 1 with its consequent social problems, however these were days of patriotic fervour and the club continued to operate despite the enrolment of many members for War Service. And despite the limited funds on which the club operated, at the first meeting after war was declared, the Minutes show that Ten Pounds (\$20) was donated to the Patriotic Fund.

In July 1916 the club was registered under the Incorporated Societies Act as *The Auckland Camera Club Incorporated.* It was during the war that women's rights were beginning to be taken a little more seriously than previously, so it is perhaps no surprise that in August 1916 an application for membership was received from a Mrs Halls of Norfolk Street, Ponsonby. However the essentially male pattern of the club was equal to such an intrusion into their sacrosanct domain, as the Minutes tell us - *The Secretary was instructed to inform her that the club consists of men only, but that if Mrs Halls will organise a ladies club, this club will offer facilities for use of club premises.* - Exit Mrs Halls.

But it was only three months later that the following impassioned plea arrived from another of the fair sex -

November 27th 1916

Dear Sir,

Miss Hanson and I and a few others perhaps, interested in photography would like to join the Auckland Camera Club. We do not know sufficient ladies interested in photography to form a ladies club. We only wish to be present at your demonstrations and submit our work to be criticised. We do not wish to interfere in your business work, and will retire at half-time and use the rooms and dark-rooms when specified by you.

Trusting you will favourably consider our request and permit us to join. We have, neither of us, any means of doing work, as at present situated.

Yours truly

JANET FINN

Alas poor Janet. The following extract from the Minutes of the December meeting spelt it out -

A letter from Mrs Finn was received requesting the club to admit lady members. Resolved unanimously that at present the committee cannot recommend the club to admit lady members.

Eventually more than three years later on February 10th, 1921, we learn that -

Mr Gee proposed 'that the ladies be admitted to the club at a subscription at half that fixed for the men but that they will not have a vote in the management of the club'

This motion was seconded and carried. It was then put to the Annual Meeting and approved.

And so women's rights were upheld - up to a point at least. It only remained for a couple of minor details to be corrected at a later date, so that today ladies not only have the privilege of having a vote but also enjoy the privilege of full equality with men in the payment of their subscriptions.

Whether as a result of the cessation of wartime hostilities or the conciliatory attitude shown to the ladies, everybody seemed to be thoroughly enjoying their photography with very little untoward happening until 1929 and the lead-up to the great depression when finances became such a problem. Membership fell away and in fact dwindled to twenty with very few members exhibiting. And then it became financially impossible to maintain regular club rooms. As a result equipment was stored and the club was virtually in limbo for about eight months until May 1931. At that point a very positive approach was taken for the reformation of the club and within the year, despite the depression, membership was built up to 62. A magnificent achievement. The Annual Report for the year states -

The event which helped us most in our struggle for recognition was the winning of the Inter-Club Competition for the first time. The pictures were shown in all centres and it was agreed that they were the best set which had ever been shown in New Zealand. The Exhibition of the pictures entered by the seven clubs was staged in Auckland on a much grander scale than in the past. . . "

Perhaps it would be appropriate to say that only when people have their backs to the wall in a situation such as this that they are really in a position to appreciate the advantages of having a 'nest egg' to fall back on as is the present case with the Society today.

In 1932 membership was increased further to a total of 74 and through sheer grit and determination, the club was once more back on its feet. It was now possible to have a regular meeting place again, and the club arranged for the use of crockery. And so, for the first time supper was provided on club evenings.

Almost from the club's inception, sponsored cash prizes were awarded in club competitions but this policy was discontinued in 1939, the year which saw the commencement of World War 2. A decision was promptly made that honorary membership be accorded for the duration of hostilities, to all members serving in *military and allied forces*.

The year 1952 saw the launching of P.S.N.Z., and this new national organisation had the full support of the club and a good measure of individual members.

A major project was embarked on when the club inaugurated an international salon in conjunction with Auckland's Annual Festival in 1959. This drew heavy entries from all over the world and was continued by the club each year until 1968.

Enthusiasm is always an essential ingredient of success and it was certainly present in full measure in 1961 when the Society's commitment to running the international salon on behalf of P.S.N.Z. was honoured concurrently with the staging of its own international. Two separate committees were necessary and both events were completed most successfully. Certainly a great achievement as a tremendous amount of work is involved in handling even one international.

The early 1960s were notable for the rapid growth of T.V. in New Zealand which completely changed social habits. Clubs and organisations of all types were faced with the fact that month by month more and more people were being hypnotised by "the box". The club made every effort to make programmes more appealing and apart from a few hiccups was able to hold membership at a most satisfactory level although records show that it did fluctuate between 120 and 150. To some extent membership in camera clubs was assisted by an increase in overseas travel, and the fact that it was the "in-thing" to return home with an expensive duty free camera, and in many cases, no idea in the wide world

how to use it. Consequently night classes in photography flourished with many of the students graduating to camera clubs. And despite this new affluence, it is somewhat amusing to find that some members complained when the price of supper was increased from Nine Cents to One Shilling (10 cents).

In 1963 Auckland Society in conjunction with North Shore and Howick Camera Clubs undertook the hosting of the Annual P.S.N.Z. Convention and for the first time operated it on a residential basis to enable out of town visitors to live-in on the site of the Convention at Ardmore Teachers' College. This proved a huge success which has since been adopted at several other Conventions where facilities have been available.

But all was not good in 1963 for we had a major downturn in our fortunes when, in an endeavour to supplement our building fund, we purchased a residential property in Ponsonby. This was a most ill advised move with an unsatisfactory tenancy and local body problems and it involved the club in considerable time and expenditure before we were able to extricate ourselves. Any club member wishing to embark on this type of operation in the future would be well advised to check out the Club Minutes from 1963 to 1968.

A most successful operation was instituted in 1965 when we held our first Annual Salon (now known as Exhibition). Until 1968 the venue was at our club rooms in the Auckland Building Centre. Invitations were extended to the year's judges, night classes at secondary schools, and former members. In 1969 we arranged for the use of the coffee lounge at the Building Centre and the extra space enabled us to invite all local camera clubs. In 1970 it was decided to further extend the scope of the salon by inviting the general public. With the consequent need for a larger and more prestigious auditorium, we transferred to the Auckland Museum where we have continued to hold this function ever since.

A most notable competition took place in 1969 when we invited one of the "toughest" P.S.N.Z. judges to officiate at a competition titled "Jiggery-Pokery". Slides were to incorporate a feature other than straight photography. There were 13 entries, all of which were superb. After viewing and reviewing them, said "tough judge" announced that he was unable to separate any of them and had no option but to give them all Honours Awards. His judgement was fully vindicated as it was decided to submit them to the N.Z. Herald's Weekly News, and as many as there were space for adorned the centre spread of that much respected publication in full colour. To commemorate this unique occasion, the photographers concerned handed the payment from the Herald to the club for, the purchase of the Experimental Colour Trophy which has a permanent place among the Club's Annual Awards.

In 1975 the Society undertook to mount the P.S.N.Z. Convention again and this must surely be regarded as one of

our most successful projects. While the whole club was unitedly behind this success it is fitting to make particular mention of the special committee that set everything in place. Mention has already been made of the group that organised the series of International Salons in Auckland from 1959 to 1968. This group took considerable pleasure in working together in the interests of photography and was the nucleus of a committee that arranged special projects for public viewing in 1969 and 1970. They then co-opted others into a full working committee to handle the P.S.N.Z. International Salon in 1971 and followed this up in 1972 by instituting a most sophisticated photographic programme on behalf of Auckland Society and presented it to the public. This was known as "Foto-Colour" and became an annual event and the group itself later operated as the Apex Group (Auckland Photographic Exhibition Group). These members made a priceless contribution to the Auckland Photographic Society and to photography in general in many cases for as long as 20 years and it was a great loss to all when they disbanded in 1983.

Over the past decade the economy of the country has been caught up in continuing high inflation, which has not only resulted in the escalation of membership fees, but it has also made the pursuit of photography as a hobby much more expensive. However despite this, membership continues in excess of 100, and enthusiasm is evidenced by high member participation in all club activities. Currently this includes preparation for the P.S.N.Z. National Convention scheduled for May 1985 which is well advanced, and the special committee and members generally are fully committed to ensuring that this prestigious event will stand out as a highlight, when in a hundred years time, a future scribe records the progress of our Society during its second century.

CONCLUSION

The main limitations experienced in researching the foregoing history of the Auckland Photographic Society relate to the unavailability of many vital records. In particular we have no copies of Minutes prior to 1909, and there is a further gap between 1941 and 1956.

We would therefore ask that should the whereabouts of these books or any other early information concerning the club become known that details should be notified to the Auckland Photographic Society in order that they can be incorporated in this record.

On behalf of the A.P.S. Centennial Historical Committee

**T. HODGES
13 January 1985**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

T. Hodges L. Hodges T. Hoskin H. Robinson

**OFFICERS OF THE
AUCKLAND PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY INC.**

PATRON	PRESIDENT	SECRETARY			
1884 – 1886	J. McCosh Clark	J. M. Sinclair	1940 – 1941		
1887 – 1888	Josiah Martin	Mr Edwards	Nello Porter	L. M. Beck	D. Whillans
1889	C. Brown	A. Tibbutt	1942		
1890	No Record		Nello Porter	Howard Page	Miss J. Connett
1891	H.E. Earl of Onslow (Auckland Photographic Club)	J. P. E. Francis	1943 - 1945		
	G. S. Sturtevant (Auckland Camera Club)	S. B. Brown	Nello Porter	D. Whillans	Miss J. Connett
	J. Martin	G. R. Boulter	1946	D. Whillans	Miss J. Connett
1892	Dr (later Sir)	G. R. Boulter	1947		A. G. Robson
1893 - 1897	John Logan Campbell		1948 - 1955	No Minute Books or records available.	
	No Record		1956	E. H. Driver	A. R. Waite
1898 – 1899			1957		
1900 – 1901			L. M. Beck	E. H. Driver	W. H. Colbert
Dr J. L. Campbell	R.B. Waldron	H. R. Arthur	1958		
1902	No Record		L. M. Beck	E. Robinson	A. Turnbull
1903 - 1906	E. W. Payton	H. R. Arthur	1959		
1907			A. C. Hipwell	G. Price	Mrs A. M. Healy
Dr J. L. Campbell	E. W. Payton	A. Graham	1960		
1908			A. C. Hipwell	G. Price	N, L. Oldham
Sir John Logan Campbell	E. W. Payton	G. O'Halloran Jnr	1961		
1909			A. C. Hipwell	E. H. Driver	N. L. Oldham
Sir John Logan Campbell	T. D. Leedham	G. O'Halloran Jnr	1962	R. F. Singleton	N. L. Oldham
1910			A. C. Hipwell		
H. B. Morton	T. D. Leedham	G. O'Halloran Jnr	1963	N. L. Oldham	R. C. Sandford
1911			A. C. Hipwell	N. L. Oldham	R. C. Sandford
H. B. Morton	Rev. T. Fisher	G. O'Halloran Jnr	1964		T. F. Hodges
1912			S. F. Ashby	N. L. Oldham	
H. B. Morton	Rev. T. Fisher	F. J. Cullen			
1913 - 1914			1965 - 1966		
H. B. Morton	Rev. T. Fisher	F. J. Cullen	S. F. Ashby	F. Hofmann	T.F. Hodges
1915	Chas J. Ellerbeck	E. A. O. Butler	1967		
1916	(Registered as Incorporated Society)		S. F. Ashby	P. M. Barclay	T. F. Hodges
	Chas J. Ellerbeck	P. H. Wyman	1968		
1917	Chas J. Ellerbeck		S. F. Asliby	G. W. Mansell	T.F.Hodges
1918			1969 - 1970		
H. B. Morton	Chas. J. Ellerbeck	Mrs Birch	S. F. Ashby	Mrs Joan Blundell	T.F. Hodges
1919			1971 - 1972		
H. B. Morton	J. H. Kinnear	Mr Gee	F. Hofmann	H. G. Robinson	T. F. Hodges
1920			1973		
H. B. Morton	J. H. Kinnear	W. L. Fletcher	F. Hofmann	T. F. Hodges	H. Budd
1921					J. Budd
H. B. Morton	P. E. Gee	W. L. Fletcher	1974		
1922			F.Hofmann	T. F. Hodges	R. Withers
H. B. Morton	J. F. Cullen	W. L Fletcher			J. Ploag
1923 - 1926			1975		
H. B. Morton	J. W. Foster	C. J. Ellerbeck	F.Hofmann	Mrs M. Appleby	Miss J. Donald
1927			1976 - 1977		
G. Baidon (Mayor of Akld)	Geo. Henning	R. S. Lediard	F. Hofmann	B. H. Blackwood	Miss J. Donald
1928			1978 - 1979		
G. Baidon	Geo. Henning	Miss Lawson	0. Petersen	T. W. Hoskin	Miss J. Donald
1929			1980		
G. Baidon	Geo Henning	R. S. Lediard	0. Petersen	L. E. J. Sodon	Miss J. Donald
1930	Geo. Henning	R. S. Lediard	1981		
1931 – 1932			0. Petersen	L. E. J. Soden	J. Delowe
G. W. Hutchinson	Nello Porter	D. F Lyon	1982		
1933			0. Petersen	Dr 0. Baker	J. Delowe
G. W. Hutchinson	Nello Porter	T. Olsen	1983		
(Mayor of Akld)			R. F. Singleton	Dr 0. Baker	Mrs D. Carter
1934			1984		
G. W. Hutchenson	Nello Porter		R. F. Singleton	T. Shorter	Mrs D. Carter
1935					
Nello Porter	Dr F. J. Gwynne	A. C. Hipwell			
1936					
Nello Porter	Dr F. J. Gwynne	A. C. Hipwell			
		R. M. Jackson			
		Mr Shear			
1937 - 1939					
Nello Porter	A. C. Hipwell	D. Whillans			