

Innovative Bookbinding Excursion at Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Central Library

In April this year the MOTAT Society went on an excursion to the Sir George Grey Special Collections at the Auckland Central Library to see examples of innovative bookbinding by New Zealand bookbinders. Specialist librarians Renee Orr and Jane Wild took us on a tour of fascinating, innovative and unique books in the collection. Some, like the *Down the Rabbit Hole* made by Tara Bryan formed the hole Alice fell down into Wonderland, others formed waves of the ocean, and another slowed our pace of reading as it required turning alternate pages. One of New Zealand's most innovative bookbinders is Elizabeth Steiner who wrote the book "Woven and Interlocking Book Structures." Many of Steiner's books are in the collection and her work was the focus of our visit. Her work demonstrates extraordinary bookbinding inventions. You can find Elizabeth Steiner's book online at the link address here: (<https://ia801204.us.archive.org/11/items/woveninterlockin00vanv/woveninterlockin00vanv.pdf>). It includes step by step instructions for some of her designs.

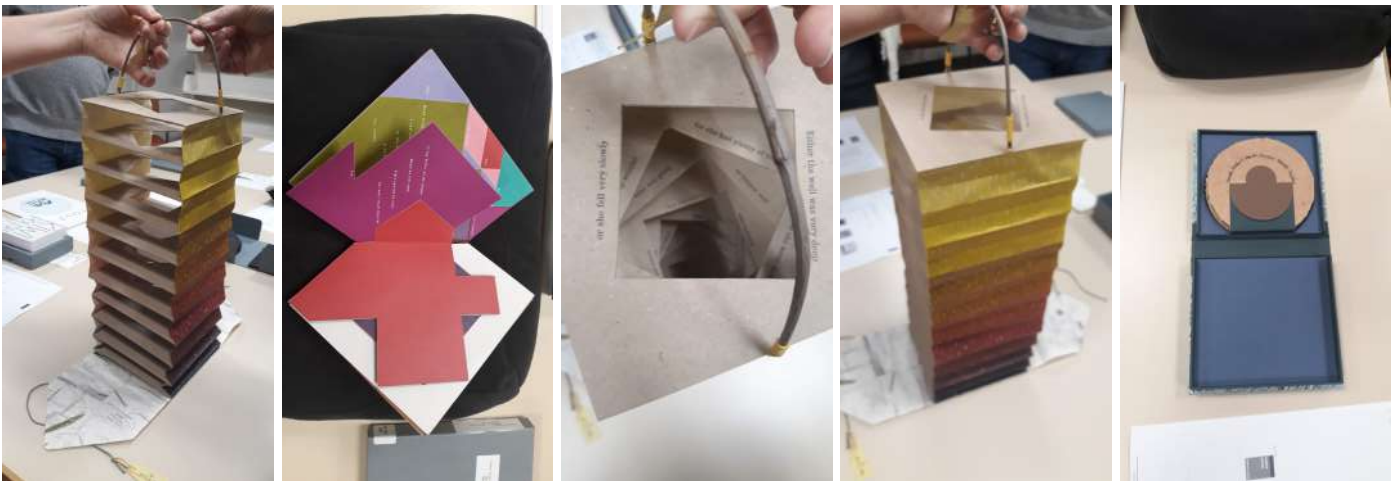
In addition to this special tour of books, Tara McLeod's exhibition 'About Type' had just opened, and we got a personalised tour. Tara McLeod is an exceptional letterpress artist and specialist and the exhibition ranged across his repertoire including his collaborations with many New Zealand poets, and works McLeod produced in response to different modes of printing over time. The exhibition is on until 15th of July and I recommend you visit before it closes. (You can see a great YouTube video about Tara McLeod at the following link address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtex73elUHI&ab_channel=EmmaJeanFramingGallery).

What did we see?

- Moeraki boulders / Elizabeth Steiner
- Letters from Tonga to the Welseyan Missionary Society, London 1826 – 1828 / designed and constructed by Elizabeth Steiner
- Sing, weaving ; Elements / designed and constructed by Elizabeth Steiner; text by Judith Haswell
- The tiriti book / Vanya Steiner
- Full circle / Elizabeth Steiner
- Along the lines / Elizabeth Steiner
- ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ / Elizabeth Steiner
- Aunt Sallie's lament / Margaret Kaufman ; designed by Claire van Vliet
- To a friend going blind / Joric Graham
- The topography of home / Macy Chadwick
- Bone songs / written by Clifford Burke ; to drawings by Ruth Fine ; book and structure by Claire Van Vliet
- Night street / Barbara Luck ; illustrations by Lois Johnson
- Beauty in use / Sandra McPherson
- Compound frame : seven poems / by Emily Dickinson ; with relief prints by Susan Johanknecht ; book structure by Elizabeth Steiner
- Rise : Governors Bay Sept/Nov 2000 / Alan Loney
- Recollect : Italy / Judy Haswell
- Lost at the South Pole = Verdwaald op de Zuidpool / Carolien Scholten ; illustrations by Marian Veldman
- Cloud book work / John Reynolds ; designed by Inhouse ; produced by Source
- The colour of water : (or a circumnavigation in three watches) / Paul Thompson
- Down the rabbit hole / text by Lewis Carroll ; designed by Tara Bryan



If you'd like to visit the Special Collections to view any of the books we saw on this excursion, email specialcollections@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz and book a time. If you want to see something else, you don't need to know exactly what you want to see, just let them know what you're interested in and they'll help you find something special.



Words by Makyla Curtis
Photography by Makyla Curtis and Scott Pilkington

Thank You Bruce Hucker!

On Monday the 3rd of April the MOTSoc Committee took outgoing MOTAT board member Bruce Hucker out for brunch to thank him for his incredible service to the museum over his tenure as a board member as well as all his work for the museum before that too

We are so grateful, thank you Bruce Hucker!
(Pictured L to R: Henry Swan, Peter Burch, Alan Curtis, Bruce Hucker, Makyla Curtis, and John Tutchen)



Matakohe Kauri Museum - “Real New Zealand Heritage at its best”

The MOTAT Society excursion to the Matakohe Kauri Museum on Saturday, 20 May started out by coach from MOTAT 2, stopping for a cup of well-needed coffee at the Tulip Cafe in Kaiwaka, a place I have passed often but have never visited previously. With the yummiest caramel slice on offer, I'll be back!

The weather on this grey-skied, autumn day did not improve, which only made stepping into the Matakohe Kauri Museum all the more striking. Yes, the gift shop, filled to the brim with some amazing pieces of artistry and more than a few prime souvenirs was great but the initial display room exhibiting kauri gum pieces and craftsmanship, with walls and cabinets of polished wood (I'm assuming kauri), definitely exuded warmth. The crowded shelves of the display served as a reminder of the region's once-thriving gum-digging industry (from 1850 to 1900 kauri gum was Auckland's leading overseas export for use in varnish and linoleum) with photographic evidence of daring gum-diggers who braved the treacherous swamps in pursuit of this valuable natural resource.

Moving further through the museum I learned about the kauri timber industry. Early European settlers found kauri to be ideal for shipbuilding and other construction and by the mid-1800s sawmilling was a huge NZ industry with kauri being milled for houses, furniture, fences, firewood, and railway sleepers. Timber was also exported to Australian colonies to build their houses and ships. By 1853 timber made up 31% of NZ's exports and between 1890 and 1920 between 15 and 25 percent of all native timber was exported.

The pathway from “majestic standing tree” to “building materials” in a time of limited transportation was an amazing feat of human ingenuity (and may be a component of the Number 8 wire mentality attributed to Kiwis to this day). Trees were felled by bushmen with axes and two-man crosscut saws and at times the highest tree would be felled first, taking down others in a domino effect. Bullock teams hauled the massive logs to driving dams where water built up over a period of months. Then, in stormy weather (much like the weather on the day of our visit) advantage was taken of deluges to further encourage the cascade of logs downstream after tripping the dam gates.

Kauri is the only native New Zealand timber that floats, which allowed rafting (chaining logs together and towing them by steamer) through the Kaipara Harbour, down to the Kaipara River and to one of a number of busy timber mills such as the mill at Helensville. From there sawn timber was taken by rail to Auckland or shipped to Australia. Millions of metres of timber was transported.

The museum invited me into the lives of people during the times of kauri gum and timber extraction. Bushmen living in remote camps, working long days and longer weeks, far from simple amenities such as medical care, and in some cases solid rooves over their heads. An exhibition on Edward Coates outlines the life of an English gentleman who immigrated to NZ in 1866 seeking better fortune than that of a “younger son”. Edward, father of Joseph Gordon Coates, NZ's first NZ-born prime minister (1925-1928), heavily influenced the Matakohe history and was involved in both farming and the timber trade. His homestead, “Ruatuna”, which we were able to visit after the museum trip (see Bruce Wild's account here) and where Gordon Coates was born and raised, is said to have been built from a single Kauri tree.

Today the Kauri is significantly deficit (not a one could be seen from the Ruatuna homestead). Depleted by historical logging and threatened by a soil-borne pathogen (*Phytophthora agathidicida*), which causes the fatal kauri dieback disease, no longer do we see the extent of their majesty. A graphic on the wall of the Volunteers' Hall in the museum depicts the circumferences recorded of many felled kauri. I was astonished to learn that our biggest living kauri, Tane Mahuta, at 4.4m is dwarfed in comparison to others, with the largest recorded being 8.5m. It's incredibly sad that examples of these gigantic natural treasures today only exist in paintings and displays.

There just was not enough time to soak up all the detail within the Matakohe Kauri Museum and I can only touch the surface here of the exhibitions the museum provides - the machinery and milling processes displayed in the Smith Wing were impressive: a full-sized sawmill, enormous kauri logs and the actual



From Top to Bottom: 1 & 2. Mannequins reside in the Sterling Wing of the Kauri Museum. The lifelike detail is incredible. 3 & 4. The Smith Wing houses equipment used to transport and mill the massive kauri logs. 4. An example of a plank of kauri timber stretches the length of the Volunteers' Hall.

equipment for felling trees, transporting logs, milling timber and collecting kauri gum. The Sterling Wing, a recreation of a quality 1880 to 1920 six-room home, sporting authentic furnishings and decor, typical of how kauri timber was used for buildings and furniture. The lifelike mannequins, based on real people and dressed in period costume, were very impressive - from the corner of your eye you could almost imagine them moving. Perhaps most impressive was the life-sized recreation of a two-storey boarding house built INSIDE the museum.

Recently opened and what we did not get to see on our visit is the Forest Walkway

“The first and largest part of a multi-phase redevelopment, the new walkway features a forest of tall “trees” – cleverly designed light boxes – which visitors pass through after entering the Museum. Alive with a natural soundscape of bird song and sounds from the native bush, the Walkway takes visitors back in time to the Jurassic era when kauri emerged in Gondwanaland. It introduces the Māori dimension of the story and, in particular, the story of Tane Mahuta and the creation of the world of light.

Entering through the walkway, the height, sound and light give a “wow” factor, to the Museum, creating a sense of awe and the scale and ancientness of kauri.”

from the Matakohe Kauri Museum Website

We ate well at the Gumdiggers Cafe which offered very enticing lunch options and some made a quick stop at the Coates Memorial Church. I am definitely looking forward to a return trip to Matakohe to spend more time in the museum and explore the church and its surroundings.

Words by Jodie Cawthorne (Administrator)

Photography by Ken Lee-Jones (MOTAT Society Member)



MOTAT Society Visit To Ruatuna

A late suggestion by Bruce Wild to add value to our trip to the Matakohe Kauri Museum by also stopping off at the Ruatuna homestead afterward was met with great interest by excursion attendees and despite the weather it was a fascinating visit. Bruce expands...

We were met at the gate by Mary, Heritage NZ/Pouhere Taonga host – in appalling weather of rain and wind - and quickly shown inside.

Ruatuna is the family home of (Joseph) Gordon Coates, b1878, d 1943 the first New Zealand-born Prime Minister, 1926 -1929, and parliamentarian from 1911 to 1943.

Ruatuna was built for the parents of Gordon Coates, Edward and Eleanor in 1877 by the local builder Samuel Cooksey.

The north face of the house provides the entry through a choice of French windows, from a deep verandah. The current verandah roof is “bullnosed,” early images of the house show it as pitched, similar to the other sides of the hipped, skirt, roof. This suggests verandah or enclosed verandahs on all sides.

The plan is living to the north, bedrooms east, and west and kitchen and bathroom to the south. The internal plan has changed over the years with small rooms created and doors shifted, then removed. The west side has an add-on



RUATUNA North and West



bedroom at a lower level and a room used as a classroom. The plan creates a circuit around the central space. The house was not substantially changed though in its long occupation by the female members of the Coates family, the last of whom left in 2000. The house is furnished with belongings original to the family and house including books, paintings (often on folded tin sheets) by the daughters of the family, music and records.

Edward, a fine singer, is believed to have modelled the central part of the house with lofty ceiling on the spaces he experienced in Scotland, for acoustic quality. This feature was in the gable ended central roof, with central fireplace. This contrasted to the sides of the house where the roof was low. The high “cathedral ceiling” gable ends each have a small window providing light and ventilation. All timber in the construction is reputed to be from one single Kauri tree from the property.

The frame of the house is expressed on the inside. The exterior cladding of vertical board and batten and lining of vertical boards form the walls. There is no insulation cavity. The central room, with fire place and mantle piece, is remarkably unpainted and a beautiful leathery mellow tone. Other rooms are papered or painted. There are interesting features remnant from possible different architecture, of high level vents and boards that do not match the expressed purlins or pitch of the roof. The house has been at a different time retrofitted for electricity and fire sprinklers.

The bathroom has the remains of an early Thermette heater present. All floors are wide tongue and groove Kauri boards, all clear finished. Today there are no Kauri trees to be seen in the district.

Gordon Coates was known as the “Jazz Premier” in reference to his genial progressivism and breezy manner. Ruatuna, to which he returned often in his parliamentary career reflects a comfortable, casual informality in design and construction which may have shaped the man.

Ruatuna is a wonderful place to visit. It is a short distance from the Matakohe Kauri Museum, which references both the Coates family and Ruatuna extensively in its exhibitions and artifacts.

Across the road from the Museum is a large cemetery which features a neat Gordon Coates memorial church and other references to the family.

Words and Photography by Bruce Wild



INTERIOR front room



INTERIOR kitchen behind front room



KOWHAI painting on tin



INTERIOR inventive storage



INTERIOR ceiling lean-to



INTERIOR storage and ribbons



INTERIOR wall and window with books and brush



INTERIOR scullery

Last Chance To Book



**Excursion To:
Ross Bros Museum
22 July 2023**

**Book Before 18 July
to secure your seat
on the coach**

Contact admin@motatsociety.org.nz to book now.
Society Members free travel & entry

6 August 2023



**BTC 2023
WE'RE GOING BACK!**

The MOTAT Society loved our last trip to the Bush Tramway Club so we're heading back there for some more steam action. Once again, members travel and ride for free. Contact Administrator on admin@motatsociety.org.nz to book your spot.



MOTAT Society Maritime Museum Excursion 24 June 2023

The MOTAT Society's trip to the Maritime Museum was a huge success! Peter, our guide, made history come alive with his captivating storytelling and in-depth knowledge. We couldn't have asked for a better experience.





Words and photography by Scott Pilkington

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