

Obituary

Alison Mary Dalgairns Fraser
1936 – 2018



In October 2016 Alison Fraser was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand for her contributions to records management. It is therefore with regret that we note her death on 14 August 2018.

Born in Glasgow in 1936, Alison married Walter (Wally) Fraser in Gisborne in 1958. As a soldier's wife she travelled with her husband's postings until finally settling with Wally back in New Zealand. In 1976 she took up a role as an assistant filing clerk in the (then) Army Department, with responsibility for personnel files. Taking on this role was more, as she herself stated, because of "suburban neurosis and a need to earn", than from an interest in records management. However, frustration with the lowly status of records clerks led Alison on to fighting for an understanding of the importance of these people and the records they managed. By 1986 an acknowledgement of what she had to offer came when, as Deputy Defence Registrar, she was seconded to a joint State Services Commission-National Archives initiative headed by Patricia Acton, a Canadian recorded information management consultant. The team of two archivists, a management services officer, a financial expert, a facilitator, together with Pat and Alison, produced the Acton Review of Records Management in the New Zealand Public Service. This report

gave New Zealand records management as a profession a real boost and also strengthened the linkage between the creation of public records and their eventual transfer, as appropriate, to Archives New Zealand.

At the same time, looking for all avenues to advance her knowledge and to assist in her passion to improve the lot of records officers, Alison joined the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ) in the mid 1980s. Elected President of the Association in 2000, Alison served in that role for two terms. She had also served as a member of council and was elected vice-president in 1996. Additionally Alison was active in more specialised records management groups and was a prime mover in the establishment of the Records Management Association of New Zealand (late 1986) and Charter President of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) International in New Zealand (1988). With Patricia Acton she formed a records management consulting firm in 1987 which through advice, training courses, and more general symposia assisted in the professionalisation of the work of records managers.

Previous issues of *Archifacts* (April 2001, December 2016) provide a more detailed analysis of Alison's commitment and contributions to her chosen field. In the 2001 issue Alison sets out engagingly in her own words how she became involved in records management (*From Basement to Board Room: an Unintentional Career Path*). As the citation for her nomination to life membership published in the December 2016 issue stated: "Confronting obstacles inconceivable to modern practitioners, she became a trailblazer in the linked disciplines of archives and records management."

Alison's enthusiasm for training officers in records management and for raising an understanding of the importance of records and archives was invaluable. She ended her 2001 article: "I am proud to be part of an organisation that has fought so strongly for the professions. I am proud to think I had some part in fighting for the integrity of our National Archives, and its establishment as a stand-alone department. I am proud to have been involved in dragging 'Records' from the dark ages to the age to the age of technology. I would like to think I might have made some small but lasting contribution to my unintended profession."

Alison had a right to feel proud of her role in all these ways. Certainly the records managers of today owe a lot to Alison and she richly deserves her place in the history of archives and records management in New Zealand.

Kathryn Patterson