

Obituary

Kenneth Richard Scadden

10 April 1952 – 17 October 2016



First and foremost I wish to acknowledge the enormous contribution that Ken Scadden made to Archives New Zealand and to the archival profession as a whole.

Regrettably I do not have Ken's gift of the gab, but I hope I will be able to convey the deep respect in which Ken was held by the profession, highlight a few of his many achievements, and through the comments conveyed to me by others demonstrate how much we valued his company and friendship.

I first met Ken following his appointment as Cartographic Archivist at National Archives on 10 October 1982. This marked the beginning of his career in archives. He had previously completed a BA (Honours) degree at Victoria University and worked as Assistant Advisory Officer at Trade and Industry from 3 December 1979. As Cartographic Archivist, Ken listed a range of map holdings, provided staff training on the arrangement, description, and appraisal of maps and also produced "A Hitch-hikers Guide to the Map Room", which identified key map holdings. His considerable talents were not entirely devoted to maps. In conjunction with Sherrah Francis, he mounted an excellent exhibition called "The Government Architect and Builder in the Nineteenth Century". He and Ruth Stoddart also conducted a records survey at the Government Printing Office. It was a pity Ken was not able to devote more of his skills and time to the care of maps. I often wondered when he titled his 1988 *Archifacts* article *Maps – Mainstream or Misfits* whether he might have been reflecting on the conflicting demands on his time between mainstream archives work and cartographic work.

Following his job as Cartographic Archivist, Ken successfully performed a number of roles at National Archives – including Head of Reference Services; Senior Archivist, Regions and Projects; and then Assistant Director – before to his departure to the Wellington Maritime Museum in 1990. Jane Tucker, who also held the position of Head of Reference Services, described Ken as “the consummate Head of Reference – he was always first and foremost interested in people, and people who were interested in history, in any shape or form, were grist to his mill. He taught us all the value and rewards of networking and knowing our readers (as they were in the days before they became ‘customers’ or ‘clients’), and of knowing their research interests. He joined the dots for so many, through bringing to their attention sources or related research. He always had or made time to give his full attention to whoever he was with (invariably at the cost of punctuality), and this extended to his colleagues both at and outside work.”

There were occasions when Ken’s off the cuff remarks were not always appreciated. I recall one occasion when a researcher was enthusiastically thanking Ken for all the time and effort he had spent helping him with his research. Ken light-heartedly responded by saying “Just buy me a drink sometime”. Unfortunately, all his good work was undone in an instant as the researcher was an ardent teetotaler.

Upon leaving National Archives, Ken held a range of important roles, such as Archivist/Curator, then Director of the Wellington Maritime Museum, independent consultant for his own Consultancy Company – Heritage Advisory Services, and Archives Manager for the Marist Archives, until his retirement in 2015.

As Museum Director, he was responsible for its transformation into the Museum of Wellington City and Sea. Peter McCurdy of the Auckland Maritime Museum told me that when he and Robyn Mason first knew Ken, “he was the smiling pirate from the other maritime museum, with the beard and the tales and the terrible jokes signalled miles ahead. He had a great range of knowledge and enthusiasm for matters maritime. He understood that our maritime heritage matters – it is a colossal part of who we are.” Peter went on to say “our associations with Ken are maritime museums, the machinations of maritime museum trust boards, doing the maritime heritage thing despite the board machinations, recognising a kindred spirit, recognising a consummate story-teller with a similar body of knowledge, recognising a trustworthy friend (notwithstanding the regional relics gone from under the nose), knowing that there was always a place to stay here or there”.

In 1986, Ken completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Information

Management (Archives Administration) from the University of New South Wales and was also registered as a Certified Archivist by the Society of American Archivists. Ken was an active member of ARANZ, serving on Council in 1983-84, 1987-88 (also on the Editorial Committee in 1987), and 1990-91.

During the course of his career Ken drew on his academic training, archival skills and experience to write a number of articles for *Archifacts*, including:

- Impressions of the 1984 ARANZ Conference, *Archifacts* 1984/3, p. 29.
- Third Pacific Archives Training Seminar, *Archifacts* 1987/4, pp. 28-29.
- Maps – Mainstream or Misfits, *Archifacts* 1988/2, pp. 32-34.
- The Auckland Islands 1806-1900 Research in progress, *Archifacts* 1988/1, pp.2-15.
- Fourth Pacific Training Seminar and Conference 10-12 April 1989, *Archifacts* October 1989, pp. 41-42.
- The Government as Architect and Builder in Nineteenth Century New Zealand, Ken Scadden and Sherrah Francis, *Archifacts* 1983/4 p17.
- Obituary Edward 'Jack' Churchouse, *Archifacts* April 1994, pp. 62-64.
- More Perspectives on the Ham Report Smaller Institutions – Wellington Maritime Museum, *Archifacts* October 1994, pp. 1-4
- Surveying Maps and Plans – A Case Study for Solid Energy New Zealand Ltd, *Archifacts* 2008, and pp. 57-64. This article provides an insight into Ken's work as independent consultant with his business Heritage Advisory Services, which provided assistance to both archival institutions and museums.
- The Marists and Maori – Records of a 175 Year Relationship, *Archifacts* 2013 pp.32-41.
- We shall remember them: Our World War One Chaplains, Elizabeth Charlton and Ken Scadden, *Archifacts* April 2015, pp. 25-33.

Ken was also a major contributor to the 1989 Directory of New Zealand Map Collections, wrote *Rugged Coast Rough Seas: Wairarapa's Maritime History* (published posthumously in November 2016), co-authored *The General Grant's Gold* with Madeleine Ferguson Allen, and wrote a foreword in her book – *Wake of the Invercauld*.

The Sub-Antarctic Islands, shipping, and medals were just three of the many interests Ken was passionate about and these interests were reflected in his extensive book collection. I have many fond memories

of book hunting in Australia and New Zealand with Ken. Bookshops, such as Arty Bees in Wellington, were regular places to meet up and share information about recent book releases and purchases. Ken had no uncertainty about buying books, or indeed anything which he took an interest in. He was always committed in all he did, as evidenced by his work only a few months ago to put the records of various organisations he held into the Alexander Turnbull Library – service before self again.

Ken was a life member of the Maritime Archaeological Association of New Zealand (MAANZ), and was one of its founding members. He was President several times, and was on the committee for its entire existence. Mary O’Keeffe summed up Ken’s contribution: “Robust scholarship, formidable encyclopaedic knowledge, strategic thinking. But so much more than that – hugely good fun, able to utterly engage an audience, utter glee on a MAANZ fieldtrip clambering over a wreck or walking along the beach, huge wit as he acted as the MC at the annual maritime quiz. His contribution to both MAANZ and NZ’s maritime history is immeasurable.”

From the outset of his archival career Ken demonstrated active interest in the Pacific Islands and their archives. He was active in PARBICA (Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives), holding the position of Secretary General for a number of years and was involved in a preservation work programme in the Cook Islands following Cyclone Sally in 1987.

Ken was always willing to share his wealth of knowledge. His broad interests, ability to tell a great story, combined with his depth of knowledge and ability to fit into character with the subject he was talking about, meant he was able to enthral an audience, whether it was in a conference room or over the occasional jug in a pub. On such occasions his Irish heritage shone out strongly. Without doubt Ken will always be remembered for his wonderful stories and off-colour jokes. Chris Adam, for example, recalled the first time he met, Ken told him the most outrageous joke he had ever heard – involving a hamster and some masking tape – that can’t be repeated here, although Chris is certain Ken would approve if it were. Jane Tucker astutely said “He could spin a story from mere gossamer, and his fund of jokes never ran dry, both attributes for which his father remains renowned in Ken’s beloved home district of Wairarapa! Always inclusive, Ken would take the time to ring around any of his friends who he thought would be interested in some event, book or activity he’d heard about.”

Peter Miller noted that “Friendship played an important part in Ken’s life. The fact that he managed not only to attend the ARANZ Symposium

held on 26 August this year, but also came out for dinner again with a group of his old archival friends and colleagues the evening before, as was the custom, showed both his determination and his unwavering friendship – and meant a lot to those who were there, especially at the dinner.” Chris Adam also stressed the importance Ken placed on friendship. “He was extremely gregarious – he loved company, and never seemed happier than sitting around with colleagues and friends over a meal or a few drinks, spinning yarns and seeing how outrageous he had to be before he offended you.”

Ken genuinely liked people, all sorts of people, and was interested in what they did and what they thought. He was also very politically incorrect, or could appear to be. Part of this was clearly just to shock you, but part of it was from his ability and wish to always see the other side of any point of view. His love of stories was connected to his love of history, which must have seemed to him like a giant store-house of personal and institutional memories which all led up to the present day. He always seemed aware of the historical context of the present and the personal histories that created it. He had a great awareness of place and belonging, and his own heritage. He knew who he was and where he came from.

Ken was always a very positive person, with an admirable facility to relate to people in all walks of life, as shown by the way he got on so well with the Sisters in other religious orders while at the Marist Archives. His passion for archives, the enthusiasm he displayed in all his pursuits inspired those around him. Chris Adam highlighted this by saying “He was a great story-teller and showman and used those skills to infect you with his enthusiasm for whatever he was talking about, and for promoting archives and their use.” Ken’s enthusiasm did infect people, as attested by Polly Martin, who stated “I started at Archives New Zealand in 2010 and Ken was one of the first community archivists I was introduced to. He was welcoming and happy to share his knowledge to help me settle into my role at the time. He was also one of the people who inspired me to pursue a change in career to archives and information management and I’ve been here since.”

Polly was not the only person Ken influenced as attested by Hinerangi Himiona. “In 1992 I was a student at the Wairarapa Polytechnic in Masterton studying Archives Management. Our class had regular trips to Wellington to visit various libraries, archives and museums. As a young archives student I was always interested in the people who were ‘actual’ archivists, I enjoyed observing and learning from archivists in their spaces. At that time, Ken was Curator of the Maritime Museum

and he is one of the people who I remember very well. He was like the David Attenborough of the archives world, completely passionate, committed, and enthusiastic and totally in love with the work he was doing. I actually think most archivists have these characteristics and qualities, but Ken was very open and expressive and as someone who was training and preparing for a career in archives he was great to be around, very encouraging and supportive.

“A decade later I took up the position of Kaiarahi – Māori Manager at Archives New Zealand in Wellington. Ken was an archivist here at the time. It was great to work alongside him and talk about projects he was working on and have conversations about Māori culture and archives in Maori communities. He was interested in looking at how the profession might better incorporate and benefit from some Māori understandings of information and heritage management. He was a very thoughtful man and I am grateful for his friendship and the influence he had on me and my career over the years.”

Long after Ken had left National Archives he continued to take an active interest in its affairs. For example, Marilyn Little informed me “Ken Scadden contacted me soon after I became Chief Archivist in early 2014. He wanted to share a lengthy list of concerns about Archives NZ. Archives NZ had been through a rough patch, and Ken was fired up. I think I surprised him because I agreed with most of what he had to say, and then told him what I was doing to get the ship back on track. We got on like a house on fire, and Ken became a good litmus test on whether I was making progress. My last conversation with Ken was at the ARANZ branch Xmas function last year, and I was very pleased to see Ken looking so well. I was really sorry to hear that Ken’s cancer had returned. He was a good man, and is a sad loss to the profession. My thoughts are with Wendy and his family.”

Ken was always willing to provide a helping hand to a friend in need. I will always remember the day we managed with difficulty to get a very large rimu case into the back of his Maxi. With the back hatch open we somehow got it up Maungaraki Hill – followed by a trail of smoke!! We then repeated the trip, as the case came in two parts. We had a good many drinks reminiscing on that episode. Some years later I was able to return the favour. Upon arriving at his home in Belmont, Ruth and I found Ken frantically trying to mop up a sea of water that not only threatened the shag pile carpet but also baby Michael, who was watching his father’s desperate efforts to stem the flow before Christina returned home. I have always meant to ask Christina if she was aware of this event.

I am sure all those reading this will have many fond memories of wonderful times experienced with Ken that have brought pleasure to your lives and will continue to do so.

Along with his multiple research interests, several careers and entertaining stories Ken was always a friend to all and we shall miss him greatly. To Wendy and his family, we offer our deepest sympathy, but hope it may be of some small comfort to you to know that he was so highly regarded by the archival profession and all those who had the pleasure of knowing him.

*E te Ariki, hoatu ki a ia te okiokinga tonutanga
A, kia whiti ki a ia te maramatanga mutunga kore
Takoto Rangimarie e Ken.
Eternal rest grant unto him o Lord
And let light perpetual forever shine upon him
Rest in Peace Ken.*

“Farewell old friend.”

Mark Stoddart



This picture of Ken was taken on a MAANZ fieldtrip to Wanganui about three years ago.

A remembrance of Ken's time at the Marist Archive

Ken spent ten years with the Society of Mary in the Marist Archives and during that time helped design and move to the repository in which I write today. I had known Ken for several years through maritime archaeology circles before joining the Marist Archives; in fact he enticed me here with stories of the letters of the early French Marists, rich in ethnographic detail, which were published in *Lettres reçues d'Océanie* (ed. C. Girard sm, 2009). In my years of interacting with Ken in this archival space the following are what have stuck with me:

His commitment to assisting colleagues through organising many informative and fun talks and outings for the Sole Archivists' Group. From the back files, I note his contribution to the planning and running of the 2008 Catholic Archivists' Conference.

Ever the writer and historian, Ken showed his interest in the Marist Mission to Maori, through a presentation given in 2012 which culminated in the October 2013 *Archifacts* article, "The Marists and Maori – records of a 175 year relationship" for which Ken was awarded the 2015 Michael Standish Prize.

Involved with the Friends of Mount Street Cemetery, Ken wrote and donated to them all proceeds from *Maritime Memories of Mount Street Cemetery*. While there are many notable figures (including Marists) who rest there, I remember how much Ken worked towards finding funding for a headstone for Jean-François Yvert, the lay printer for the Marists.

"I'll be brief here," to which Br Gerard Hogg sm, former Chief Archivist for the Marists, would start the stopwatch ...

I am indebted to Ken for conversations about all things archival and many that were not.

Elizabeth Charlton