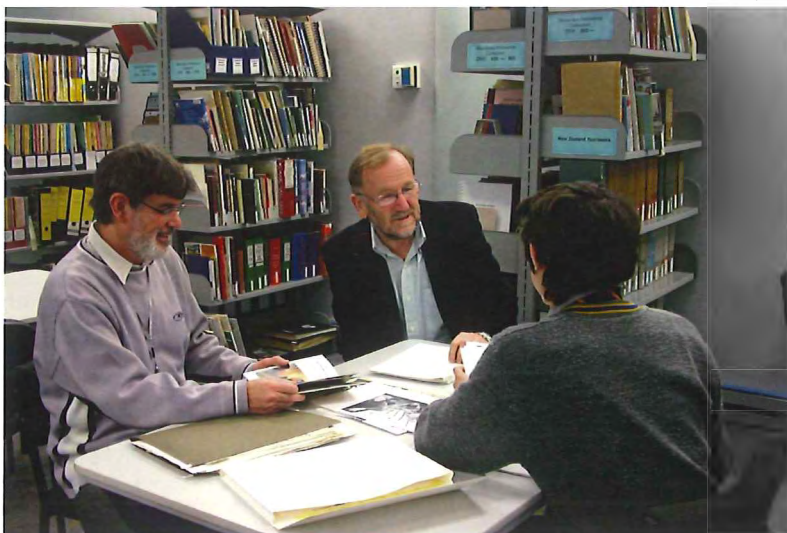


Getting to know you...

Regular feature profiling New Zealand's Archive community



Who are you and where are you based?

I am Gareth Winter, the District Archivist for the Masterton District Council, based at the Wairarapa Archive, in Queen Street, Masterton's main street. I have been in this position for 18 years.

What services do you provide?

The Wairarapa Archive is a part of the Masterton District Library and holds the Masterton District Council's corporate archives as well as a substantial community archive. The latter far outstrips the corporate archive in its extent. We also hold the Library's Wairarapa reference collection as well as their old newspaper and microfilm collections. We house the genealogical collection for the library, although much of that has been superseded by on-line access to genealogical databases. To assist family researchers we sub-let part of our building to the local genealogical society. They are able to connect to our free wifi, and as such can use our subscription to Ancestry.com library edition.

We happily assist a steady stream of researchers – usually about 2,000 sign in each year. They range from post-graduate university students through to primary school students. We also have a regular flow of remote researchers, usually family historians, and provide historical background on matters to Council members and staff.

It would be fair to say that our entire focus is on delivering our records (or information if you prefer) back to our community, accepting that many of them will not come in and use our records themselves. Accordingly, we are very active in the outreach field. We deliver lots of speeches and presentations to schools and community groups – 30 last year – and also provide feature stories for the local newspaper – over 250 and counting.

We have an on-going book publishing programme, with 23 volumes published by our support organisation, the Wairarapa Archival Society, ranging from major works on Wairarapa Moana (Lake Wairarapa) and other local history subjects, through smaller and more pictorial works, to a children's book about the eels that live under the ANZAC Bridge at Kaiparoro. I have written six of these and one of my staff, who has a strong interest in military history, has written three with a military focus, including one on the World War One Featherston Military Training Camp.

Our catalogue is available online and is delivered using the Civica product Exhibit. <http://bit.ly/1pJRss9>. It will soon allow us to integrate with the library's Spydus system so researchers will be able to undertake a federated search across bibliographic, archive and newspaper index records, using common authorities. Included in the online collection and able to be searched separately, Picture Wairarapa is a selection of 16,000 digitised photographs from the collection. <http://bit.ly/1f9sXzl>. These records are also available through DigitalNZ. We have also prepared a number of stories about the region which feature on our website, and have made a separate WW100 Wairarapa website <http://www.wairarapa100.co.nz/> to promote activities during the commemorations and to provide extra information for researchers. We are also posting the wartime diaries of local businessman F.P. Welch in real time plus 100 years. <https://fpwelchdiaries.wordpress.com/>. Extracts from the diary are tweeted each day as part of our social media programme, which also includes daily Facebook and Twitter postings.

What do you hold?

We hold the pre-1989 amalgamation records from the territorial authorities that formed the Masterton District Council, including such

disparate bodies as the Masterton County Council, the Masterton Highway Board and the Mauriceville Cemetery Trust.

The community records have a narrow geographic focus – records from historical Wairarapa only – but have great depth, especially in rural records. As well as diaries from a range of local farms we hold records from the local Agricultural and Pastoral Associations, the local division of Federated Farmers, and the Golden Shears. We look after the records the local Plunket Society, the Country Women's Institute and Women's Division of Federated Farmers, the Masonic Lodge, and the Church of England, as well as many school records, and family and personal papers.

One of our most used collections is a set of copies of the Maori Land Court Minutes and we also hold the records from Nga Hapu Karanga, a group formed by Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairarapa as part of their Treaty of Waitangi claim process.

Biggest challenge for your Archive?

Our two biggest concerns are the perennial problem of space – we are close to capacity and the prospect of a lot of records arriving post any potential local body amalgamation is frightening – and our lack of expertise in dealing with community-generated born-digital material.

Biggest opportunity for your Archive?

Most of our small staff are in their 60s, so as we develop a succession strategy we have the chance to reinvigorate how we do things and how we present our information back to our community.

What is your favourite or most important collection or series and why?

One of my favourites is the collection of F.P. Welch's diaries. He was a member of a large farming family in Taita and Wairarapa, who became a commission agent in Masterton and his diaries, although not hugely reflective, contain a wonderful record of life in a rural town for over thirty years. His mild hypochondria, sewing and darning, and sauce-making make for interesting reading.

But my favourite items are a number of cartoon albums put together by local man Edward Wyllie in the 1880s. We hold five of these albums from disparate sources, each a bespoke collection from a range of cartoons Wyllie produced using photo montage, as well as some of his photographs. The cartoons are of purely local interest, as they cover local political matters, but the photographic trickery techniques Wyllie

honed in Wairarapa he developed further when he moved to California, becoming one of the world's foremost "spirit photographers".

Do you have a recent notable acquisition that you'd like to highlight to ARANZ members?

One of the secrets of our success has been a close relationship with the local newspaper, the *Wairarapa Times-Age*. As well as providing them with many feature stories and also giving a lot of assistance for news stories, we also provide the '100 Years Ago' column and a weekly 'Photograph from the past' segment. The newspaper is no longer printed in Masterton and recently they downsized and rationalised their office space. As part of that process they decided they would donate all their historic bound copies to us, as well as their entire photographic collection dating from 1960 – over one million negatives, arranged in chronological order of publication, and with no other finding aids!

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