UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD

Aotearoa New Zealand 2025 Inscriptions

By Jane Wild, Chair, UNESCO Memory of the World Trust Aotearoa New Zealand

The UNESCO Memory of the World Register recognises items and collections of unique national significance.[1] The Memory of the World programme was established by UNESCO in 1992 to raise awareness of the significance of unique documentary heritage and to support preservation and access to these collections. The Aotearoa New Zealand register was initiated in 2010 by the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO. The National Commission also supports other UNESCO initiatives including the UNESCO Creative Cities Network[2] and the first New Zealand global geopark, the Waitaki Whitestone Geopark.[3]

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND REGISTER

The Aotearoa New Zealand register welcomes the 56th inscription in 2025 with the exceptional *William F Crawford* Collection at Tairawhiti Museum Te Whare Taonga o te Tairawhiti. This collection of over 5,000 glass plate negatives documents the development of Gisborne and its surrounding district from 1874 through to 1912. The photographs range across people and places, including large events, commercial interiors and informal picnics. Many of the 5,000 + images are now online, thanks to ongoing digitisation by Tairawhiti Museum.[4] It is very significant for the Memory of the World Trust to have our first inscription from the Eastland, the "land of the first light", and the photographic format provides a powerful record.

INTERNATIONAL MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

In 2025 we also celebrate the *Katherine Mansfield literary and personal papers and belongings* collection being added to the International Memory of the World Register.[5] This significant research collection of Katherine Mansfield's writing at the Alexander Turnbull Library was originally inscribed on the New Zealand register in 2016. We now have four inscriptions represented on the International Register, with the others being the *Te Tiriti o Waitangi,* the *Women's Suffrage Petition* and the *Sir Edmund Hillary Archive*.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST AND NOMINATIONS

We continue to seek unique documentary heritage collections for the Aotearoa New Zealand register. For more information and advice please register an expression of interest through the website.[6] Nominations for the 2026 register close on 31 May 2026.

ENDNOTES

1. Memory of the World Aotearoa New Zealand Ngā Mahara o te Ao, "About New Zealand Memory of the World", n.d., available at https://unescomow.nz/about-us, accessed 9 July 2025.
2. UNESCO,"Creative Cities Network", n.d., available at https://www.unesco.org/en/creative-cities, accessed 21 July 2025
3. Waitaki Whitestone Geopark. "Our UNESCO Story", n.d., available at https://www.whitestonegeopark.nz/our-unesco-story, accessed 21 July 2025.
4. Tairawhiti Museum Te Whare Turanga o te Tairawhiti, "Searching for: Crawford", n.d. available at https://collection.tairawhitimuseum.org.nz/objects?query=Crawford, accessed 9 July 2025.
5. See "Katherine Mansfield literary and personal papers and belongings" in UNESCO, "UNESCO Memory of the World Register, 2025, available at https://www.unesco.org/en/memory-world/register2025, accessed 9 July 2025.
6. See: https://unescomow.nz.

Crawford was able to comfortably take his camera anywhere from city events to marae to coastal settlements

2025



Ropata's tangi. Self portrait by W F Crawford on board SS Hinemoa 1897.

William F Crawford Collection

The collection of over 5,000 glass plate negatives created by William Fitzgerald Crawford (1844–1915) is an unparalleled record of the development of Gisborne and the district between 1874 and 1912. Crawford had an ability to make quality images that both were informative and artistic.

His style could easily be described as journalistic. Its breadth covers nearly all aspects of life from important events to simple rural living. The growth of Gisborne is well documented, and social and business activities are well represented. Subjects appear comfortable in the camera's presence.

Nomination supporter Karl Johnstone writes: "At a time when many visual records reinforced colonial ideologies of Māori decline, Crawford's lens offered a counterpoint: portraying Māori as dynamic, expressive, and resilient – caught mid-karanga, mid-haka, mid-laughter."

Archive Location

Tairawhiti Museum
Te Whare Taonga o te Tairawhiti

unesco National Committee

Inscribed onto the UNESCO Memory of the World Aotearoa New Zealand Register in 2025

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