

Ōtaki Museum



WORKING TOGETHER - A STORY OF THE OTAKI MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS

This story is about the Ōtaki Museum Volunteers – it is dedicated to them.

The Closure - In the beginning, 2020 started off very well for the Ōtaki Museum. The momentum of the previous year, which had been a very successful one, looked set to be sustained. The forty-four Volunteers and ten Trustees had worked well together, putting in around 4,800 hours of effort. The Museum doors were being opened every Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

However, by late March, COVID19 was exerting its malign influence upon the country, the Ōtaki community and the Museum. On 23 March, the country moved to COVID Alert Level 3 – and those aged 70 or over were identified as ‘Vulnerable’ and told to stay at home. With a very few exceptions the Museum Volunteers are all in their 70’s and

80’s, this action and the course of COVID19 meant it was inevitable that the Museum would soon need to close. When New Zealand went into ‘Lockdown’ two days later, the Volunteers were essentially locked out of the Museum and with a great and heavy reluctance its doors were closed.

The Reopening - Through most of April the Museum stood as a silent presence on Main Street. Along with most other New Zealanders, except for essential workers, the Volunteers remained in their homes. They kept to their own Bubble as ‘the curve’ continued to climb, then flatten, then slumped, signalling that the war against COVID19 was being won.

On 27 April, New Zealand moved to Alert Level 3, and started the move down through the Alert Levels. The move to Alert Level 2 on 14 May provided a much-needed opportunity for the Museum to reopen. While the Trustees were keen to do this as soon as possible, whether and when that could happen lay solely in the hands of the Volunteers. Given the relatively dark days from which they were emerging, their return to the Museum could not be taken for granted. The call went out and, remarkably, of the thirty-six Volunteers who replied, eighteen said ‘Yes’. Because of their generosity of spirit, the Museum was able to reopen its doors to the public on 22 May.

Working Together - Asked why she was working in the Museum in mid-June, Jean Shields replied that she felt safe, she enjoyed meeting the visitors and especially enjoyed enabling people returning to Ōtaki to reconnect with their childhood memories. When asked whether she felt part of a team at the Museum, Jean responded that she did and that this reflected to strong sense of a community team that characterised the township.

The Ōtaki Museum has survived its initial experience with COVID19 – and key to doing so has been the commitment of the Trustees and Volunteers to provide something of value to their community.

In the words of the pepeha:

Ka ora pea i a koe, ka ora koe i au – perhaps I survive because of you, and you survive because of me



Te Wiki Tūao ā-Motu
national volunteer week
21–27 JUNE 2020

**Te Hua o te
Mahi Tahī**
The benefit of working together