



# NOHANZ NEWSLETTER

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NOHANZ Newsletter  
Volume 34 number 1 May 2020

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**NEWSLETTER EDITOR:** Ann Packer  
We welcome contributions to the NOHANZ newsletter, published three times per annum. The next deadline is 1 July 2020

**NOHANZ REGIONAL CONTACTS**

We are building our network of regional contacts. Please feel free to contact the person for your area or another member of the Executive Committee. Contact details are on our website

**NOHANZ welcomes the following new members:**

Central Otago OHP Cromwell  
Dunedin Public Libraries

*Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of NOHANZ, and information on services does not imply endorsement.*

Cover image: Sue Berman—Picnic date at Level 4 in the bubble.

Other images: Unless specified, provided by the authors

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NOHANZ is now on Twitter and Facebook. Follow us for regular updates and discussions about oral history. Please feel free to share information about your projects, recent publications, or events on either the Facebook page or by emailing [nohanzexec@gmail.com](mailto:nohanzexec@gmail.com).

Twitter handle: @oralhistorynz

Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/nohanz/>

Website: [www.oralhistory.org.nz](http://www.oralhistory.org.nz)



## From the President

Tena koutou katoa. Not much has occurred with lockdown in place over the past few months, so there is not much to report in terms of NOHANZ events. There have been regional NOHANZ zoom meetings held in the South Island, and we are still in discussions about whether this year's conference will be postponed to a later date perhaps in 2021 or beyond. An update regarding the conference will be provided in the coming month, so keep tuned to our website or Facebook page for the latest news.

Oral history in isolation is still viable using the technology available to us. There has been a range of readings and ideas on this circulated via our Facebook page and website. If you are still recording and interviewing, please keep an eye out for these links. We hope they offer some ideas and support for those still practising during the current isolation period.

As we transition back to some sense of normalcy and interaction with our local and wider communities, please continue to stay safe. Our executive will meet in the coming month to discuss the shape of the following year for NOHANZ following our nationwide covid-19 isolation and social distancing protocols. We hope to announce when the next NOHANZ conference will occur, and any other events for the duration of this year.

NOHANZ has an active oral history journal, so we would love to hear about any oral history work you have been involved with recently. On behalf of the NOHANZ Exec, we wish you all the very best. Stay safe and well.

Ngā manaakitanga,

***Dr Nēpia Mahuika***

**President, NOHANZ**



## Life in Lockdown: NOHANZ members share their experiences

At this most extraordinary of times, we are all facing changes in our work patterns and home lives. We asked members for feedback on their personal situations and how this period has affected their oral history practice. We've also noted some of the epidemics that have been mentioned in oral histories recorded by our members.

If you have anything to add in either category, please get in touch at [newsletternohanz@oralhistory.org.nz](mailto:newsletternohanz@oralhistory.org.nz)



**Caren Wilton** has been locked down with her husband Colin and cats Poppy and Louis in their new house on the edge of Carterton.

"We moved in as the Covid crisis was starting to flare up, and after a month we were locked down. It's autumn and beautiful here, and a few minutes' walk takes you onto semi-rural roads with sheep in paddocks and huge wind-twisted macrocarpas, and little old cottages tucked behind thick hedges. There are lots of fantails, kōtare calling from power lines, and a few kererū.

I've missed getting out and about to different places, though I've been forced instead to get to know my new neighbourhood really thoroughly, which I've liked. And I've missed the collegial friendliness of my work at Upper Hutt City Library – my contract there finishes late May and I may not even see my workmates before then except

over Zoom. Level 4 also stymied my attempts to build a native garden bed along the front of the house, but we're getting it started now in Level 3.

I'm doing some short interviews over Zoom about people's experiences of lockdown and Covid-19, with people in Carterton (where I live) and Upper Hutt (where I work). Like almost everything at the moment, this is harder and muddier than usual; normally I can rely on my technology and my familiarity with my gear, and put all my focus on the interview and interviewee. Not now! It's also harder to read cues, to build rapport and to avoid talking over each other, and the results are a bit patchy, though interesting and useful.

My oral histories with older trans people are on hold for the moment; I want to do these kano ki te kano ki. Their time will come. But I've appreciated being able to engage online with some of the events at Columbia University's Center for Oral History."

**Regional contact Jacqui Foley** is in a bubble with her husband in Tokarahi, rural North Otago.

"I panic-bought a weed eater on the day before Level 4 and have spent the past six weeks mowing down huge areas of long grass that should have been attended to ages ago. It is satisfying to see we have made progress! I have not missed any significant occasions although a friend in Ireland died three weeks ago and of course there was no funeral for him there either. Many people posted tributes online and here, I sat up at the time of the funer-



al, toasted his memory and put a candle in the window to speed him on his final journey.

The hardest part of lockdown is not being able to see our daughters and granddaughter. Video messenger doesn't always work for a young child; getting the timing right to talk can be tricky if she doesn't feel like talking or doesn't like talking on a phone. I recorded a story which she read when it suited her and that worked well.

I am a podcast fanatic and have been interested to hear commentary on how others have coped in lockdown. One observation that resonated is that we shouldn't beat ourselves up about what we have or haven't done with this unexpected 'gift of time'. None of us have ever encountered this situation before and if we did not do much then that's fine; others have done amazing stuff and that's wonderful too. I guess I will look back and regret I didn't use the time better even so.

I gave a lot of thought to recording a Covid diary and actually contacted a couple of people to ask if they would take part. After more thought I made the decision not to go ahead with this. Part of the reason was a purely selfish one in that I wanted to step back for a while and tackle jobs as mentioned above. The other was that I had concerns about recording quality, ethics of recording by

phone or online and I also felt that if my heart was not totally in it, or that I felt it was something I should be doing rather than really wanting to, then the task was better left to others. I am delighted there seem to be many projects happening and I'm really looking forward to the results.

I was really pleased to take part in a Zoom meeting a few weeks ago, organized by Ruth Low and others. It re-connected me to oral historian friends and colleagues and it was great to discuss issues such as recording online and the challenges that presents. Currently all of my interviews are on hold and I am comfortable to wait until it is possible to start face-to-face recordings again. Planned future work also needs further thought. This has been a time of reflection for sure – what the future holds in terms of funding and work opportunities is definitely uncertain. That said, I am optimistic about our work. If ever there was a time for story-telling and -capturing, it is now. Ways of doing this is something I am giving more thought to!"

**Alexander Turnbull Library Oral History Advisor Lynette Shum** spent lockdown with her partner at his home in Wellington.

"I was disappointed to miss the funeral of a friend of my partner. He had died suddenly in Auckland. It was surreal watching the live stream, one step removed from reality, when it was hard to accept that he had died anyway. His only son, living overseas, was not able to make it. On May Day we caught on Zoom the end of a singalong in his honour, and a more fitting memorial will be held in due course.

Now we are out of Level 4, I miss the silence, the lack of traffic. There are people hurting all over – scared, sick, dying, lack of money and jobs; I know this. But for me, I'm one of the lucky ones. There have been opportunities – to





get to know my partner more, to share something so big with him. To feel free to go for regular walks – thank goodness the weather’s been mostly kind. To work from home (it’s exhausting – much harder and of course the face-to-face stuff has had to be abandoned). To take advantage of a range of webinars made available to me, broadening my professional capacity. I miss being able to wander over to the copier, the spontaneous chat, the easy expression of camaraderie – thank goodness for Zoom, Skype, Teams and texts. But I know this will pass.”

**Dr Emma Jean Kelly** of the **Ministry of Heritage** has been in a 47 sq m apartment with her partner, and Ruby Tuesday, “a very fat cat”.

“We have missed Mother’s Day, my sister’s birthday, and I have attended one virtual funeral, which was actually very good. The 10 people in the room with the tūpāpaku were able to be relaxed and share more than is usual at a Pākehā funeral, and we all got to witness this silently from our homes.

I am lucky to have been able to design a new oral history

project at this time called *In the Bubble* with my colleagues. MCH has been well resourced to set us all up at home. My partner, however, has been challenged by suddenly going to full online study as well as working in Early Childhood Education and needing to be in the world more than he would like, when I’ve had pneumonia (not Covid-19) on top of my usual asthma.

The OH awards I administer have been delayed until October 15, so it’s been a pleasure to be able to encourage oral historians in other ways. I have also been undertaking Zoom meeting software interviews with a Zoom H4n recorder with lapel mics at my end for the best quality recording possible.

The community garden here has been a saviour with an excuse to be outside, talk to people at a physical distance, and share herbs and veges, which I’ve invited people to pick with a sign and a notice in the local FB page. “



**Newsletter editor Ann Packer** has been in lockdown in Eastbourne, on the edge of Wellington harbour, with husband Denis and son Matthew, who managed to score a flight home from the middle USA earlier than planned.

“We have been blessed with beautiful autumn weather so

exercise has been a sheer pleasure – cycling, walking or hill climbing. There seemed little point in doing much else except reading, knitting, and a surprising amount of long-delayed mending. Once Matt was out of lockdown, daughter Genevieve continued to shop for us all. We learnt to drink plunger coffee and use up what was in the freezer before our local butcher and greengrocer began deliveries at Level 3.

Early in lockdown I lost my *Listener* book reviewing gig, when Bauer pulled the plug on its New Zealand magazines – review books stopped coming as publishers put all releases on hold.

We've found that Zoom meetings can take over the whole house. Matt is still officially teaching university English and has Zoom chatted to most of his American students in the last few days. Many are in challenging personal situations, sent home when they're used to being independent. Some have parents employed in the town's meat-packing industry, which has a high infection rate.

This has been a time of unexpected surprises – phone calls and emails from old friends. Every walk or ride calls for (distance) chats with locals we hardly ever see, normally. We manage to see our granddaughter at a distance

but miss her friends from school pickups.

I was able to have a long phone conversation last week with my most recent OH interviewee, a blind physiotherapist living in a rest home. For a person more used to going out of the village for all sorts of activities, being in lockdown in her own room the whole time has been traumatic; she was able to see her daughter only when a fall necessitated a visit to hospital for a scan. Ann B is keen to have her OH made available to other Blind + Low Vision consumers through their talking book service."



**Limbo Thompson of Christchurch** writes:

"Jan and I returned from a week away on the West Coast to be greeted by a daughter who informed us that the lock up was imminent and we were to commence immediately. She would organize food etc. At 75 and with lung issues she was right but this was the first time I have been characterized as 'old'; it was a shock to the system. We did as told and our bubble of two was established. Bubble life was not much different from retirement. I have experience at doing nothing; the secret is to know when you have finished!

Daily phone calls (with video) to a one-year-old grandson were special and we did not miss him learning to walk.



The exercise of having a medical assessment was an interesting event. I developed swollen feet and could not walk. First a call to the medical centre. This got us onto the Nurse's list. She phoned two hours later, and after a discussion decided it needed a Doctor's involvement. Next day the Doctor phoned and requested photos and after discussion prescribed antibiotic. An emailed invoice was the end of problems and we had not left home.

Some Oral History work was attempted but needed input from others so little progress was made. It occurred to me that for many, born post-WWII, this was the first occasion where the whole country was confronted with a catastrophic event. Here was an opportunity to record attitudes while people were confronted with an event, but I did nothing!"

**From Sue Berman, Auckland.**

"Kia ora koutou. We are living in precarious times and I am aware there are many people across the motu who have immediate and foreseeable future challenges in terms of work, income, and frustrations with the restrictions imposed to connect meaningfully in community. It certainly is a time for drawing on the lessons of resilience learnt from those before us. This is what makes our work as documentary historians so important.

My personal experience so far has been privileged in many ways. I am living in the leafy suburb at the foot of Maungawhau Mt Eden, in a small 50sqm open plan apartment with my partner. We are in a second storey 1960s breeze block rental which has a wonderful outlook west toward the Waitakere Ranges. I am grateful for this expansive view and for the productive balcony garden that we have spent our leisure time working on and talking to!

Lockdown started with a personal challenge for me. I lead a small committee in the Progressive Jewish community of Auckland that takes care of death and dying arrange-

ments for our wider membership – taking care of the rites, rituals and logistics when someone dies. One of our elders passed away in the first week. At that time, we were unable to fulfil the rites of washing and preparing the body for burial or to attend to the family in their grief through the 'sitting shiva' process. Instead we had to develop new ways to connect and to attend to the rituals, and conduct the funeral service. There was so much new learning in such a short time.

Over the weeks, I have had conversations with a few people who lost members of their community or family in this time. There have been profound effects for people dealing with this end of the life cycle. I plan to explore this more deeply in future interviewing when we resume face-to-



face interviewing work – including with those in the funeral industry.

As the weeks have gone by, I found myself adjusting to ‘new normal’ with work practices from home including planning meetings, Local Board workshops, production of podcasts and running of webinars all taking shape relatively easily. I think I might actually quite like it!

I did a virtual journal-writing course with Deborah Shepard during this time which has been very rewarding. I enjoyed the focus it offered each week and loved the company of mainly older women whose wisdom and humour was enriching. I am considering submitting the journal of this time into our Auckland Libraries Covid-19 Archive. It includes an account of Pesach – Passover, an important Jewish festival which took place in Lockdown – which was certainly different to the usual extended family around the table – although no less chaotic!

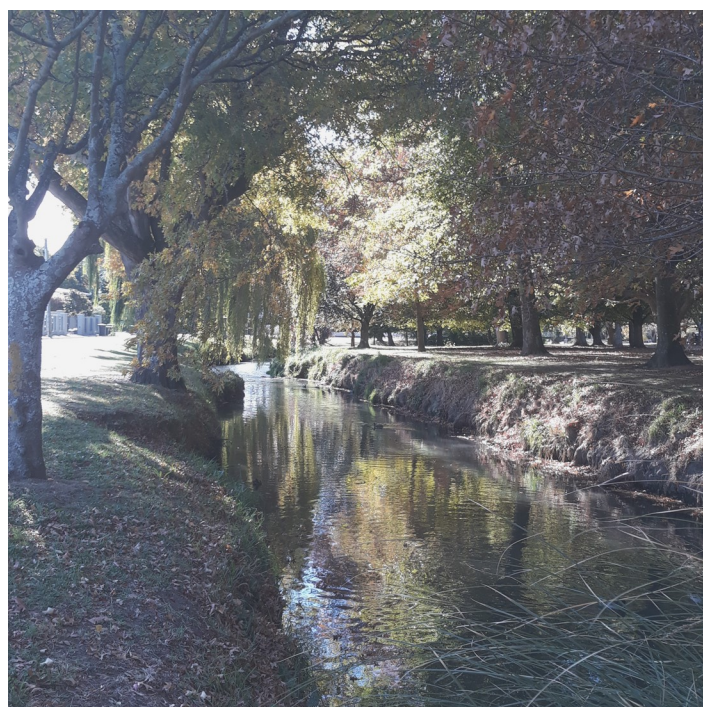
I am looking forward to going back to the office next week and to resuming some projects that have been on hold.”

**Exec member *Ruth Low* of Timaru writes:**

“I am sure a pandemic was not on any of our radars when we celebrated the beginning of 2020, yet here we all are having made it through lockdown, Level 3 and now we are all coming to terms with life at Level 2.

Toward the end of lockdown, South Island NOHANZ members enjoyed time together via a Zoom chat. It was refreshing to see faces other than those in our ‘bubbles’ and have the opportunity to share snippets of our lives in our newly straitened circumstances and even share a laugh or two. Whether negotiating the difficulties of preparing a harvest for wine, navigating working life while having teenagers home studying online or adjusting to life in a bubble of one – each of us had our individual lockdown experiences to share. Much of our meeting time, howev-

er, was spent talking around the pros and cons of distance interviewing, a timely conversation given the difficulties of ensuring the safety of our interviewees and ourselves in our current climate. The Baylor University webinar provided a sound basis for discussion. Carol Dawber, an oral historian and writer from Picton, was able to share her experiences of interviewing from a distance which acted as a great counter to a variety of discussion around the disadvantages of interviewing in this manner. As one would expect there were as many varying opinions as there were faces on the screen. It is a topic, given the shape of our ‘new normal’ that will generate much more discussion I am sure.”



## Epidemics in oral histories

**From Jacqui Foley:** I have recorded a number of interviewees who have talked about **polio** epidemics. Some were directly affected with paralysis and lifelong effects. Interestingly, this seemed to be something associated with long hot summers. The **1918 flu epidemic** also came up in one interview with the interviewee recalling a family member who nursed victims of the flu.

For me personally the lockdown has given rise to the thoughts of what **WWII** must have been like. My understanding is very superficial of course, but being locked down is not something I have ever experienced before and it made me think of the horror of years of uncertainty and restrictions that people endured. This virus is certainly a great leveller: I feel fortunate we have been well taken care of by our government and I hope that lessons learnt or whatever we carry with us from this experience, will be kept in mind as we head back to what is bound to be a very different 'normal'.

**From Ann Packer:** Some years ago I recorded husband-and-wife polio survivors who between them represented three treatment regimes for **poliomyelitis**; both were suffering from post-polio syndrome and have since died. Rosemary had later trained as a physiotherapist to treat children affected by a subsequent outbreak. These recordings are lodged in the Alexander Turnbull Library.

**From Sue Berman:**

You can tune into a presentation I gave on the 1918 Flu Pandemic on our Podcast offer for how previous collections have come to be useful. Ironically I had a terrible cold that day – barely had a voice!

<https://soundcloud.com/auckland-libraries/influenza-100-sue-berman-the-lived-experience-remembering-1918-1920>



## CONFERENCE

### National Oral History conference: Ko wai mātou? – Who are we?

The joint planning committee from NOHANZ and Stout Centre will meet mid-June to discuss options for postponing our biennial NOHANZ conference, which was scheduled for 3–5 July at Victoria University of Wellington. We will consider the possibility of November 2020 and various dates in 2021, depending on the availability of spaces within the University.

The **International Oral History Association** has postponed its Biennial Conference, scheduled for 22-26 June 2020, in Singapore, to 2021. "This is in accordance with our Constitution which allows the Conference to be held every two to three years," the website states. They will reassess the situation over the next months to determine when the Conference may be rescheduled safely.

### News from Auckland Libraries – Oral History and Sound Archive

Good news !

We are open again for walk in research enquiries at the regional research centres and the Central City Library. Due to limits on numbers in the building and for time spent while here it pays to send your enquiry ahead of time if you can. This is especially true with oral history collections and borrowing equipment as it can take a bit of time to locate download and prepare the content for use. You are welcome to email me directly with OH related enquiries [Sue.berman@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:Sue.berman@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

More generally, you would have heard that Auckland Council is assessing the budget deficit and making plans for savings required due to loss of income during Covid 19 lockdowns. This will impact on projects, external commissions and possibly our jobs. There will be a restructure across the organisation. The Local Board project that had oral history collecting at the heart of it in the Maungakie-



kie Tamaki area is on hold although we hope we can continue in some form.

I have been busy supporting recording and documenting life in various project format during lockdown including interviews and sound archives. Auckland Libraries is interested in donations of material from this time or focuses on documenting life in Lockdown. Please let me know if you have something you would like to contribute to the record.

Wishing everyone well over the winter months.

Ngā mihi

**Sue Berman**

**Principal Oral History and Sound**

## From the Alexander Turnbull Library

The implementation of the Government-mandated Lockdown came as a relief in a way, after weeks of uncertainty. I had to cancel oral history workshops, presentations and meetings in Christchurch and Wellington, and scheduling for further workshops has been put on hold. Even as face-to-face services are gradually returning to the Alexander Turnbull Library, we are still not yet sure when full services, including workshops, can resume. I am lucky enough to be able to continue the rest of my job, supporting, training and advising, working from home, as I've said in my contribution elsewhere in this Newsletter.

A first for me during this time was a blog – or more precisely, contributing to a colleague's blog about Covid-19 collecting, with recommendations for those interviewing during the crisis, particularly those who have not done any oral history before: <https://natlib.govt.nz/blog/posts/lockdown-2020-your-history-your-voices>. I've been working on a couple of instructional videos that will appear on the National Library's YouTube Channel. Email if you'd like a copy of the *Using the Zoom H5 for oral history* video in the meantime.

For re-scheduled or other workshops, keep an eye on the National Library or NOHANZ websites, or email [ATLOutreach@dia.govt.nz](mailto:ATLOutreach@dia.govt.nz). For all other enquiries, including equipment hygiene during the Covid-10 crisis (Clue: Don't use sanitiser or disinfectants on your gear!), you can

still get me at [lynette.shum@dia.govt.nz](mailto:lynette.shum@dia.govt.nz).

Noho ora mai

**Lynette Shum**

**Oral History Advisor**

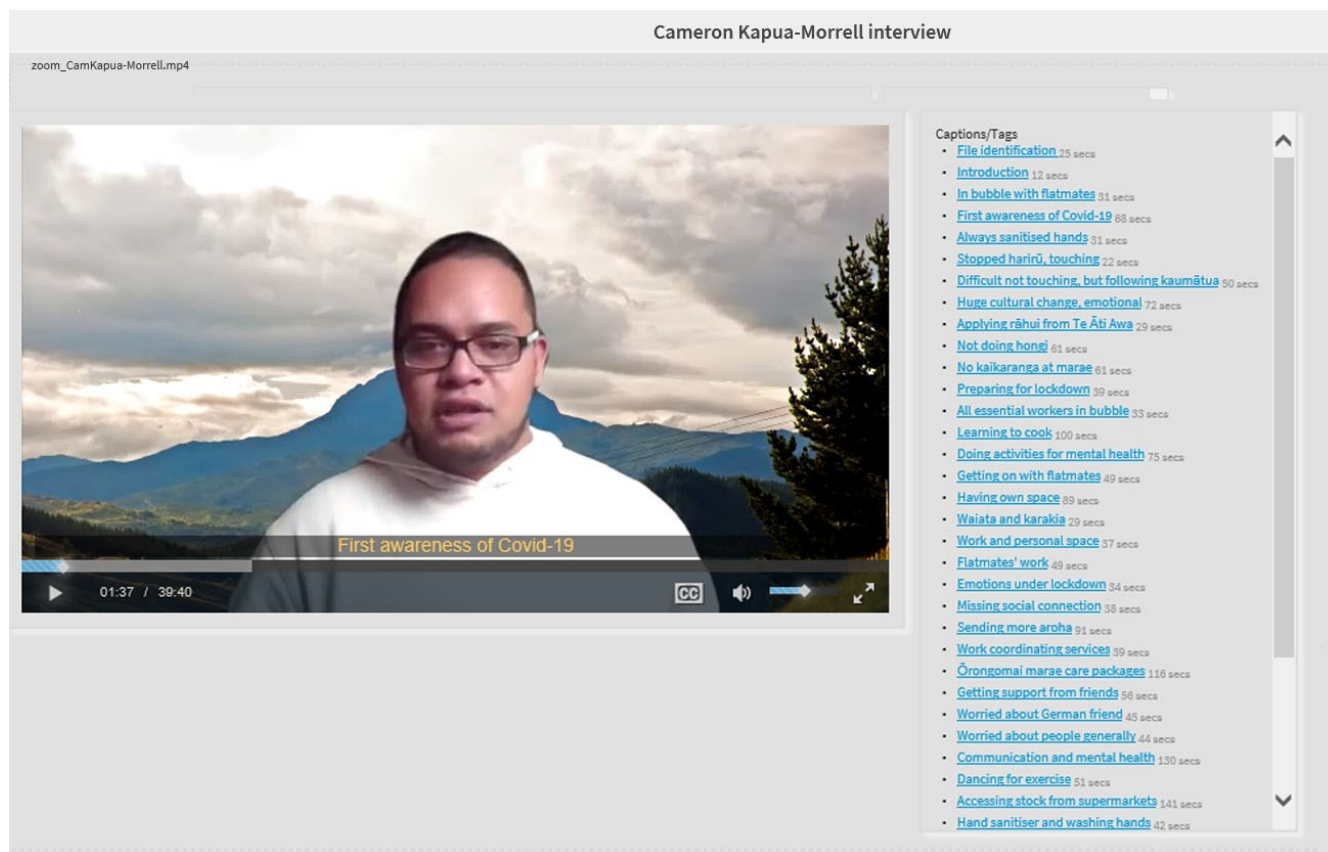


Wellington Road, Paekakariki. Photo: Deidra Sullivan ATL

## Upper Hutt City Library

As a way of making sure that the experiences of its own local community during the Covid-19 pandemic were captured and preserved for the future, Upper Hutt City Library began in late March to collect archival material about this event. Initially this consisted of photographs documenting both the disruption to normal everyday life caused by the crisis (empty streets, closed notices, queues outside supermarkets, etc) and the gestures of community solidarity that arose in response (chalked messages of support, teddy bears in windows, etc).

From mid-April the Library started also using distance interviewing tools like Zoom to record local people's experiences of life during lockdown. Interviewees were located through personal contacts within the community and an effort was made to include people from a range of different circumstances. Participants included a mother working from home while also looking after young children, an elderly retiree living on a remote rural property, and someone working at the local marae to provide essential welfare services. Using Zoom for oral history purposes had some limitations in terms of end quality but



Oral history screenshot: Upper Hutt City Library Recollect: CC by 3.0 NZ

this was compensated for by the way it allowed for something of the immediacy of the experience of being in lockdown to be captured.

While the Upper Hutt & Covid-19 Archives Project is still ongoing the photographic and oral history material gathered so far has been uploaded to a special section of the Library's local history website. This can be viewed here at: <https://uhcl.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/30557>.

**Reid Perkins,**  
**Community Heritage Coordinator**

## Books to note

### Hurunui Seismic Stories

We want to congratulate NOHANZ member **Emily Anderson** on the publication of her *Hurunui Seismic Stories*, which shares some of the experiences of those affected by the 2016 Kaikoura earthquake. Emily conducted the interviews along with Linda Hepburn and Clive Lind. To purchase a copy email [emily@commotion.co.nz](mailto:emily@commotion.co.nz).

NOHANZ President **Nepia Mahuika's** *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition: An Indigenous Perspective*, published by Oxford late last year, will be reviewed in the NOHANZ Journal.

## Online

Fantastic free online workshops by institutions such as Baylor University, Texas, in conjunction with the Oral History Association (USA), and Columbia University, New York, are still available to view. The Oral History Society (UK) and The Vermont Folk Life Center's "Listening in Place" project have useful advice on interviewing remotely—see the [NOHANZ website](#) for links.

## NOHANZ Journal: A REMINDER

Please do not hesitate to contact the editors of our Journal *Oral History in New Zealand*, Megan Hutching and Pip Oldham, with ideas for topics, themes or content you would like to see in the 2020 edition of the journal. The editors welcome contributions, whether long or short articles, book, documentary or exhibition reviews, reports of meetings or conferences, or work in progress. They would also like to hear from anyone interested in becoming a peer reviewer for the long articles, or a book reviewer. The deadline for contributions to the 2020 issue of the journal is 30 June for long articles (to allow for peer-review) and 15 August for other content. There is a *Guide for Contributors* on the NOHANZ website. [pipoldham00@gmail.com](mailto:pipoldham00@gmail.com); [hutching28@gmail.com](mailto:hutching28@gmail.com)