

SOUTH CANTERBURY AREA - N.Z. MACHINE KNITTERS' SOCIETY INC

HISTORY - 1971 TO 2021

Written by Shirley Anderson

I purchased my first knitting in 1971 - the good old Empisal 100. It was advertised locally for \$39 with two 500 gram packs of Kaiapoi Classic 4 ply wool thrown in. Who could possibly refuse this? The Geraldine Machine Knitters' Club was formed in 1972 and members met monthly for the next 40 odd years.

In 1973 a group from Rangiora held a machine knitting contest and several of our members attended this. In 1974 the Geraldine Club was invited to organise a similar function and this was virtually the start of our festivals as the formation of a national society was mooted in Geraldine. In 1974 we had 6 visitors from Invercargill, a competition of 30 classes for machine knitted garments and items and received more than 300 entries. The Aotea Cup was donated for our competition and this trophy is still being contested today. The N.Z. Machine Knitters' Society Inc was officially formed in 1975 at a meeting held at Putararuru and New Zealand was divided geographically into 19 areas.

The South Canterbury Area held its first meeting in 1976 at Winchester and throughout the next 45 years workshop days were held at the Winchester Hall, the Orari Hall, the Clyde Carr Hall and the Annear residence, both in Timaru, before moving to Trinity Church Hall which is now called the Church Street Bible Chapel. During all these years members attended the annual festivals and competed in the competitions with tremendous success.

The following members served as Presidents throughout the years - M. Stevenson, E. Watson, S. Walton, E. O'Connor, B. Welch, F. Frater, V. Castle and P. Strowger. Secretaries were: E. St Erch, P. Strowger, D. Annear, J. Broomhall, N. Grundy and N. Jones. Treasurers were: M. Harris, R. Shortland and S. Anderson. The highest membership of our Area was 79.

South Canterbury Area Life Memberships were awarded to Shirley Anderson in 1986, Pat Strowger 1989, Verna Castle 1995 and Nancie Jones in 2011. Shirley was awarded Life Membership of the N.Z Machine Knitters' Society in 1991 after serving as National President from 1986 to 1990.

Gunn's Bush weekend camps were held in 1990, 1992 and 1994 and these were well attended and enjoyed by Society members from Invercargill to Wanganui.

The South Canterbury Area hosted the 1984 National Festival at the Caroline Bay Hall in Timaru and this was most successful. One of our tours was a day trip to Mount Cook which many members had never visited and this was very much appreciated. In 1998 we hosted the festival in Ashburton at the hotel and this was a huge success. Our main tour was a day trip on the Alpine Express to Greymouth. Ninety-nine members travelled on the train and everyone thoroughly enjoyed this wonderful trip. I still hold the only ticket for \$9,900.

Another highlight was the knitting of a jersey for Prince Andrew for his 16th birthday. This garment was knitted in homespun wool which had been spun by members of the

Geraldine Spinners' and Weavers' Group and was presented to the Queen when she visited Timaru in 1976. The Queen spoke to our group which sat in the front row behind their knitting machines. What a thrill!

The Minute Book and the Finance Book are now closed but our memories and stories live on forever.

Photo made by Sonja T. at the final meeting 9 June 2021

