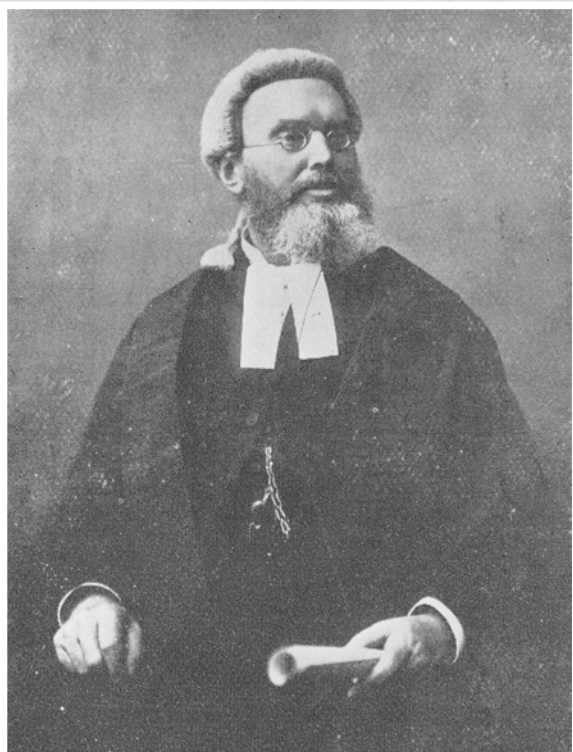


A Changing Profession

NEW ZEALAND
LAW SOCIETY
1869-2019

BY **GEOFF ADLAM**



◀ **Portrait of Sir James Prendergast,
ca 1890–1900**

Ref: 1/2-031752-F. Alexander Turnbull
Library, Wellington, New Zealand

On 20 November the New Zealand Law Society Act 1869 Amendment Act 1877 makes it lawful for Law Society members to form a district law society in any Supreme Court district and to elect a Council.

The *New Zealand Jurist* says the number of legal practitioners in New Zealand is 225.

1869

On 19 February by warrant the Governor appoints a 12-man Council with James Prendergast, Attorney-General, as President.

1870

1875

James Prendergast is appointed Chief Justice. As far as can be determined, no successor as President was appointed.

1876

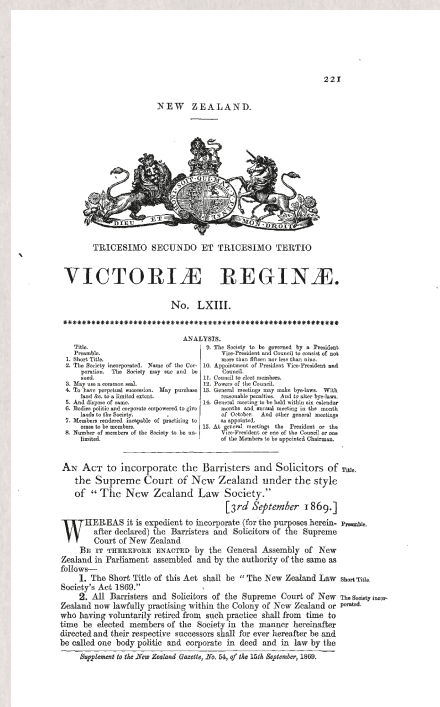
1877

On 3 September Parliament passes the New Zealand Law Society's Act 1869, for all barristers and solicitors of the Supreme Court lawfully practising within the Colony of New Zealand to "for ever hereafter be and be called one body politic and corporate in deed and in law by the name of style of 'The New Zealand Law Society'."

The New Zealand Law Society is the second lawyers' organisation to come into existence. On 16 October 1868 the Canterbury District Law Society was established at a meeting in Christchurch.

▶ **New Zealand Law Society's Act 1869**

New Zealand Acts As Enacted, NZLII





◀ **Sir Āpirana Ngata, photographed in 1910 by Herman John Schmidt**

Ref: 1/1-001566-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

On 18 February the Hawke's Bay District Law Society is founded.

On 12 August the Nelson District Law Society is founded.

1878

1879

1882

1885

1885

On 6 June the Marlborough District Law Society is founded.

On 31 January Westland District Law Society is founded.

On 6 March the Taranaki District Law Society is founded.

On 7 June the Law Society of the District of Otago and Southland is founded.

On 26 August the Wellington District Law Society is founded.

On 11 November the District Law Societies Act 1878 deems the 1877 amendment "ineffective" and establishes firm rules for formation of District Law Societies. Any District member "aggrieved by the decision" of the District, has a right of appeal to the Council of the New Zealand Law Society. Amendment Acts in 1879 and 1882 are introduced.

On 21 December the Southland District Law Society is founded.

▼ **New court room interior being constructed, Court of Appeal, Wellington. Evening Post photographer, 15 Jan 1960**

Ref: EP/1960/0162-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand



On 26 March Āpirana Turupa Ngata (later Sir Apirana) is the first Māori to be admitted as a barrister and solicitor.

On 3 May Walter Scott Reid is unanimously elected the first President of the New Zealand Law Society. Solicitor-General for a record 25 years from 1875 to 1900, Mr Reid is the only in-house lawyer to have held the role.

On 10 May Ethel Benjamin becomes the first European woman to be admitted as a barrister and solicitor. She is followed nine years later by Matilda Monteith and Eliza Melville (both admitted 1906), Geraldine Hemus (1907), Annie Rees (1910), Hariette Vine (1915) and Lyra Taylor (1918).

In February the Gisborne District Law Society is founded.

On 7 June 10 King's Counsel are appointed: the first in New Zealand. 112 years later, 317 members of the profession have been honoured with the rank.

On 11 September The Female Law Practitioners Act 1896 allows women aged 21 and over to be enrolled as a barrister or solicitor.

Sir Francis Henry Dillon Bell KC becomes President in January and remains so until 1918 – the longest tenure of any President. His equally long CV includes terms as Mayor of Wellington, a founder of Bell Gully, one of the first King's Counsel, Cabinet Minister, acting Prime Minister four times, and Prime Minister for 16 days in 1925.

1896

1897

1901

1907

► **Dunedin Court opening 1902**

Otago Witness, 2 July 1902. Photo courtesy of the Otago Daily Times





◀ **Wellington District Law Society building, Wellington. Duncan Winder, ca 1962–1965**

Ref: DW-1299-F.
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Lieutenant Herman Baddeley, 23, was killed on 25 April 1915 during the first day of the Gallipoli invasion. He was the first of 54 lawyers and a similar number of law clerks who died while serving during World War I. Quartermaster Sergeant Benson Wyman, 36, and Private Percy Henderson, 24, both died of influenza in New Zealand on 15 November 1918, the last of the lawyer soldiers who died because of the war.

On 4 August in the great 1908 Statutes Consolidation, the Law Practitioners Act 1908 brings together 12 previous Acts which regulate the legal profession. District Law Societies are empowered to issue practising certificates and to institute prosecutions and other proceedings for breach of any statute or rules relating to the practice of law in the district, with right of appeal to the Council of the New Zealand Law Society. The New Zealand Law Society's Council is to consist of representatives of each of the Districts and the Council is to elect the President and Vice-President.

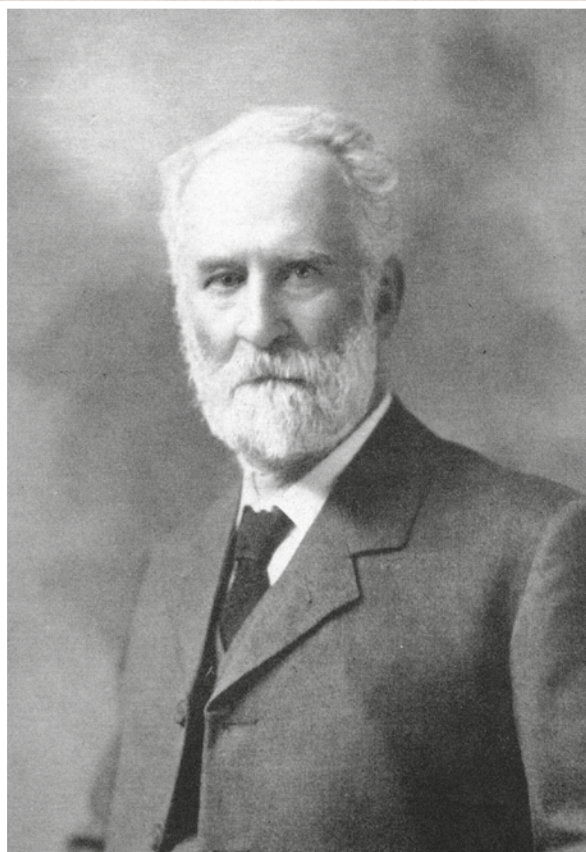
On 8 December the Hamilton District Law Society is founded.

On 23 October the Wanganui District Law Society is founded.

1908

1913

1914–1918



Charles Perrin Skerrett KC becomes President. He served until 1 February 1926 when he was appointed Chief Justice and knighted. His time as Chief Justice was short and he died at sea en route to England on 13 February 1929.



◀ **Portrait of Sir Charles Perrin Skerrett. Hardie Shaw Studios of Wellington, ca 1900–1910**

Ref: PAColl-6418-1-12. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

A Royal Commission on University Education issues a report which is very critical of the quality of legal education and says the phrase “learned counsel” is in danger of becoming a sarcasm.

1918

◀ **Left: Walter Scott Reid**

Published in *Portrait of a Profession: The centennial book of the New Zealand Law Society*, 1969. Original source unidentified.

◀ **Right: Ethel Benjamin ca 1896**

Hocken Library, University of Otago.

1919

New Zealand has 1,102 practising lawyers (1,096 men and six women as Ethel Benjamin has moved to England). That gives one lawyer for every 1,102 people.

1923

Harold Herbert Carr is appointed to the bench of the Native (later Māori) Land Court, the first Māori to be appointed a judicial officer.

1924

Henry Ah Kew becomes the first person of Chinese ethnicity to obtain an LLB (from Auckland) and to be admitted as a barrister and solicitor.

1925

▶ **View of Victoria Street, Hamilton. William A Price, ca 1905–1915**

Ref: 1/2-001326-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



► **Group photograph of members of the Wellington legal profession. Muir and Stewart, 1903**

Ref: PA7-49-33.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



Alexander Gray KC becomes President and remains so until his death on 28 April 1933. He was knighted in the 1933 New Year's Honours.

The first of what becomes a long-running series of triennial Law Society conferences is held in Wellington. Dwindling interest and the development of other forms of communication saw the last conference held in Christchurch in 2001.

1926

1928

1929

1930

1932

The Rules Committee is established by statute to take over rule-making for the superior courts.

On 25 October the Law Practitioners Amendment Act 1930 requires the University of New Zealand to hereafter conduct the examination of candidates for admission as barristers or solicitors. The New Zealand University Amendment Act 1930 establishes the Council of Legal Education to enable the University to do so.

There are 1,779 practising lawyers – one for every 825 people.

On 7 November the Law Practitioners Amendment (Solicitors' Fidelity Guarantee Fund) Act 1929 makes the first legislative provision for a Fidelity Fund, administered by the Law Society's Council.

◀ **Charles Herbert Treadwell, ca 1934**

Ref: PAColl-8972-3-05. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

On 1 January most of the Law Practitioners Act 1931 comes into force after receiving the Royal assent on 11 November 1931. The New Zealand Law Society is established (but declared to be the same Society as the one constituted under the 1908 Act) and deemed to consist of all practitioners who are members of any District Law Society.



◀ Corner of Stuart street and Castle street showing the Dunedin Court

On 18 August the New Zealand Council of Law Reporting Act 1938 comes into force, formally incorporating the body established in 1883 and responsible for publication of the New Zealand Law Reports.

Humphrey O'Leary KC (later Sir Humphrey) becomes President and remains so until 1946 when he is appointed Chief Justice. "As President he enjoyed tremendous popularity and goodwill all over the country. In Council he was an excellent chairman, probably at his best with broad issues for he was not a man to be bothered with trivia," Sir Richard Wild wrote in *Portrait of a Profession*.

On 26 October section 33 of the Law Practitioners Amendment Act 1935 prevents anyone from practising as a solicitor on their own account without at least three years' legal experience.

In April Olive Virginia Malienafau Nelson becomes the first Samoan to graduate LLB. In August she is admitted as a barrister and solicitor, the first Samoan and Pacific woman to be admitted.

1932

The Law Society's Disciplinary Committee is established.

1933

Charles Treadwell KC becomes President at the age of 71 – the oldest President. He retired after under two years, having brought to the office "an aura of immense dignity," says *Portrait of a Profession*.

1935

1936

1938

▶ **Olive Nelson**

Ref: Williams, N. (2009). *A View From the back, Spaces between times: Equality of educational opportunity and Pacific students at a University*. (Doctoral thesis).





◀ **Humphrey Francis O'Leary, his wife and son. 17 October 1932**

Ref: PAColl-6301-21.
Alexander Turnbull
Library, Wellington,
New Zealand.

1939

On 7 October the Legal Aid Act 1939 receives the Royal assent. It allows the making of regulations to authorise the Law Society to establish committees and panels of legal practitioners for the assistance of poor persons, "and for this purpose to require practitioners to serve on those committees and panels and to undertake the advising of poor persons and the conduct of litigation on behalf of poor persons; and empowering the New Zealand Law Society to delegate any of its functions under the regulations to any District Law Society."

There are 1,754 practising lawyers, a decrease of 1.4% on a decade earlier.

1939 – 1945

A Law Society plaque lists 913 principals and law clerks who served with the Forces during World War II. Of these, 21 died while serving.

1946

Philip Cooke KC, MC (later Sir Philip) becomes President and serves until his appointment to the bench in 1950. In the examination of proposed post-war legislation during his time as President, he rendered very valuable unpaid service which the Government warmly appreciated, says Sir Richard Wild in *Portrait of a Profession*.

1949

New Zealand's current longest-practising lawyer is admitted (we're preserving their anonymity). There are 1,784 practising lawyers – one for every 1,039 people and up 1.7% on a decade earlier.



◀ **Major General W Cunningham. Evening Post, 14 March 1951**
Ref: 114/268/08-G.
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

On 1 January the Law Practitioners Act 1955 comes into force after receiving the Royal assent on 27 October 1954.

1950

1954

1956

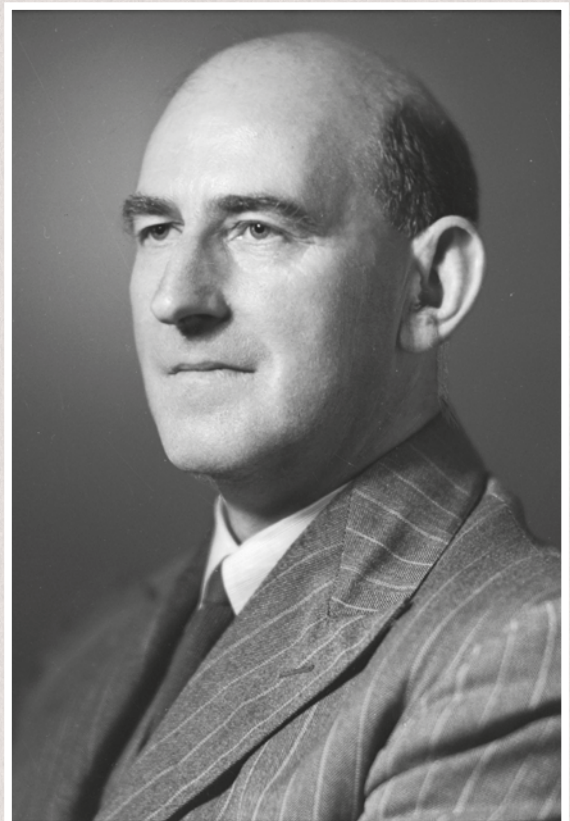
Timothy Cleary (later Sir Timothy) becomes President. Revised law practitioners' legislation and establishment of a permanent Court of Appeal were key focal points during his term. He left the presidency to go straight to the new Court of Appeal in 1958 (after declining judicial appointment for a decade), one of just three judges ever appointed directly to that court.

Lalbhai Patel is the first person of Indian ethnicity to be admitted as a barrister and solicitor.

William Cunningham becomes President at the age of 67. He attained the rank of Major-General during the War, was Wellington Crown Prosecutor for many years and became the first President to represent New Zealand at a Law Conference overseas – in Australia in 1951. He joined Sir Alexander Grey in being knighted on his retirement from the role.

▶ **Timothy Patrick Cleary. S P Andrew Ltd, ca 1955**

Ref: 1/4-020261-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



On 23 October the three members of the newly established Court of Appeal are appointed: Kenneth Gresson as President, and Alfred North and Timothy Cleary as Judges of Appeal. Harold Barrowclough CJ is ex officio head of the court. The establishment of the court was widely welcomed with discussions at the Law Society's 1954 Conference providing impetus.

On 17 February a permanent Court of Appeal sits for the first time in the Wellington Supreme Court building. It secured its own premises in February 1960.

Allan Buxton becomes the 10th President. He died aged 64 while serving in the role. During his term the Council dealt with some difficult questions of professional privilege, began a study into retirement schemes, and entertained a further group of overseas guests. In the short space of two years, made none the easier by a change in secretarial staff, Mr Buxton served the Society well, says Sir Richard Wild in *Portrait of a Profession*.



▲ Chief Justice, Sir Harold Barrowclough (left) and Registrar, G R Holder being escorted by Constable W J Firmin to the new Court of Appeal, Ballance Street, Wellington. Evening Post, 5 Feb 1960
Ref: EP/1960/0507-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

1957

▼ Right Honorable Sir Kenneth Gresson. Crown Studios of Wellington, 1964

Ref: 1/2-194721-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



1958

1959

1962

On 30 March the Manawatu District Law Society is founded.

On 1 August work begins on construction of a national office for the Law Society at 26 Waring Taylor Street. Completed in 1964 at a cost of £250,812 it was funded by a £5 increase in practising fees for four years. Denis McGrath was the key player in overcoming opposition and ensuring delivery of the building.

Edward Denis (later Sir Denis) Blundell becomes President. His tenure sees completion of the Law Society's national office building. He was knighted in 1967 in recognition of his services to the legal profession. Sir Denis was the first resident New Zealander to be appointed Governor-General, in 1972.

Margaret Smith is admitted as a barrister and solicitor, the 46th woman. New Zealand has 2,113 practising lawyers – one for every 1,096 people.

David Perry becomes President. He instigated the move to obtain a permanent home for the Law Society, enhanced the status of the triennial conference and oversaw Law Society decisions to appoint an audit inspector of all trust accounts and to adopt a general policy under which public statements would be made on matters of controversy where legal principle was involved.



◀ **New Zealand Law Society building, Wellington. Duncan Winder, ca 1962–1965**

Ref: DW-1289-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Stanley Tong becomes President. He is the first non-Wellingtonian to hold the office. He travels to many law conferences overseas and establishes enduring relationships with law organisations and the judiciary in a number of countries.

Georgina te Heuheu (later Dame Georgina) is the first Māori woman to be admitted as a barrister and solicitor.

1968

Denis McGrath becomes President. During his term he oversees assertion of control over contributory mortgage management by means of the nominee company system and the centenary of the Law Society in 1969.

1969

On 1 April the Legal Aid Act 1969 comes into force, removing responsibility for legal aid from the Law Society and establishing a Legal Aid Board.

In June Ken Mason is sworn in as a Stipendiary Magistrate (and later a District Court Judge), becoming the first Māori to be so appointed. He retired in 1988.

In September the Ponsonby Citizens Advice Bureau opens. NZ's first CAB, it offers free legal advice thanks to waivers given by the Auckland District Law Society.

1970

1971

1972

The Law Society centenary is marked by commissioning of a Coat of Arms, the issue of a set of three stamps on 8 April, an international conference at Rotorua from 8–11 April, publication of a history, *Portrait of a Profession*, edited by Robin Cooke (later Lord Cooke of Thorndon), a Centennial Scholarship and a special tie.

▶ **Members of the Court of Appeal sitting in the new courtroom, from left, Justice North, Justice K M Gresson, Justice Cleary and the Registrar G R Holder, (front), Ballance Street, Wellington. Evening Post, 8 Feb 1960**

Ref: EP/1960/0508-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



lawTalk 2

Newsletter of the New Zealand Law Society



Solemn tributes follow sudden death of President

"In no other profession do men know their colleagues more intimately and judge them more astutely. That Guy Smith should have reached the very summit of the organised profession is therefore the surest proof of his worth

Profession honours late President. Watched by a full bench of judges, members of the President's family (right) and fellow practitioners, Mr B.L. Stanley, a Vice-President of the New Zealand Law Society, pays tribute to Mr W.G. Smith, leader, colleague and family man. On the bench were (from left in the photograph) the Chief Justice, Sir Richard Wild, Mr Justice Richmond, Mr Justice Beattie, Mr Justice Cooke, and (not in the photograph) Mr Justice Haslam and Mr Justice Quilliam.

1973, and in his humble yet strong observed that the late President had

▲ The second issue of LawTalk, published 26 July 1974

The Honourable Rex Mason Prize for Excellence in Legal Writing is established to commemorate former Attorney-General and Minister of Justice Henry Greathead Rex Mason (1885-1975). It is New Zealand's oldest legal writing prize.

In February the first issue of "The New Zealand Law Society's News Sheet" is published with an asterisk where the title should be. Lawyers are asked to suggest a name and the fourth issue is called *LawTalk*.

On 29 March Guy Smith becomes President but dies of a heart attack in Germany in July while on a world tour with his wife. "I suppose I would like to create the atmosphere in which all those who practise law can feel that they're giving their best, and that they've got all the opportunities open to them to give a measure of public service," Mr Smith said in an interview published in the second, April, issue of *LawTalk*. "We have to make the profession attractive to young men and women."

On 1 April the Accident Compensation Act 1972 comes into force, radically reducing or changing personal injury practice for many lawyers.

In August Lester Castle becomes President. A 1987 obituary in *LawTalk* says as President his diplomacy and skill and fundamental commonsense in dealing with many difficult situations shone through. CLE seminars through the Law Society began during his term. He was appointed an Ombudsman in 1977 and Chief Ombudsman in 1984.

In September Augusta Wallace (later Dame Augusta) is appointed a Stipendiary Magistrate (later a District Court Judge), the first woman to be appointed to the bench.

The Law Society runs 19 one-day seminars around New Zealand to begin its role as a provider of continuing legal education. Just under 1,000 lawyers attend. Three years later, in 1977, 35 seminars are provided with 2,400 registrants.

The first year that records are available by gender, perhaps recognising the increasing number and influence of women in the profession. Of New Zealand's 3,512 lawyers, 168 (4.6%) are women.

Laurence Southwick QC becomes President. His advocacy for continuing legal education saw appointment of the first Law Society education director, and he was a fervent proponent for using interest on trust accounts for funding of areas such as education, says Alan Ritchie in *Law Stories*.

In June the Grey Lynn Neighbourhood Law Office opens in Auckland, the first community law centre under a Law Society pilot. John Wilson is its first full-time lawyer and initial funding comes from the Law Society.

1973

1974

1975

1977



▲ Henry Greathead Rex Mason. Thorpe Studio of Pukekohe, ca 1930s

Ref: PAColl-4415-09. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



▲ **Corner of Lambton Quay and Ballance Street, Wellington, showing the Magistrates Court**

Ref: 1/1-015601-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

1979

On 9 February Mary Finau Tuilotolava is the first Tongan woman admitted as a barrister and solicitor.

1980

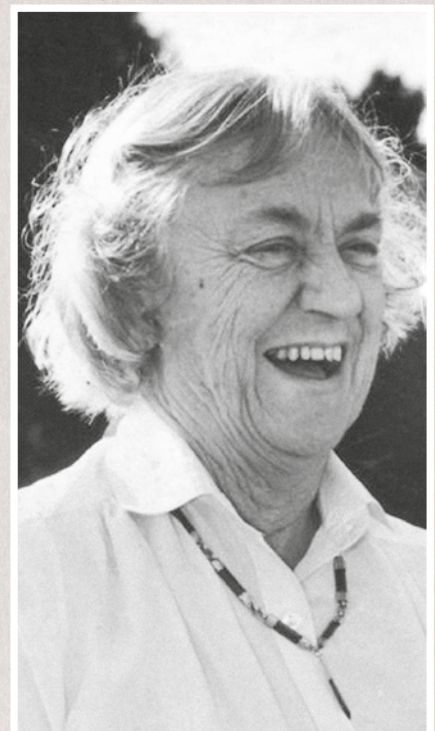
Thomas Eichelbaum QC (later Sir Thomas) becomes President. He was an important contributor to the reforms in the 1982 Act. A major interest during his term as President was the maintenance of professional competence and a credible public image in a time when the “traditional aura and mystique of professions” no longer sufficed. Appointed to the High Court in October 1982 he became Chief Justice in 1989, the first already-serving judge to be appointed.

1981

Major changes are made to the court system, with Magistrates’ Courts renamed District Courts, the Supreme Court the High Court, and establishment of specialist Family Courts. The changes have been driven by recommendations from the 1978 Beattie Royal Commission.

In April Avinash Ganesh Deobhakta is sworn in as the first District Court Judge of Indian ethnicity.

In September Silvia Cartwright (later Dame Silvia) is the second woman to be appointed a District Court Judge.



▲ **Dame Augusta Wallace**

The growing number of community law centres form the Coalition of Community Law Centres Aotearoa, to act as an umbrella body. This coincides with the first definite decision by the then Department of Justice to provide funding for all CLCs.

A group of barristers forms the Criminal Bar Association, to further and promote the practice of criminal law.

In November the Law Society abolishes the Scale of Professional Charges which fixed prices for conveyancing. The profession has to focus on providing a “good, efficient and well conducted conveyancing service at a reasonable cost,” President Bruce Slane says.

On 1 April the Law Practitioners Act 1982 comes into force after receiving the Royal assent on 4 December 1982. The Act continues the New Zealand Law Society, which it says “shall consist of all practitioners who for the time being are members of any District Law Society and hold current practising certificates”.

Peter Clapshaw becomes the 20th President. His “fair and gentlemanly approach” in the face of abolition of the scale, lessening of restrictions on advertising, the dawn of Rogernomics and major institutional reform “made him, in many ways, the ideal president at a time when the profession was rather catching its breath,” says Alan Ritchie in *Law Stories*.

Mervyn Rogers retires as Law Society Secretary after 14 years in the role. He is succeeded by Alan Ritchie, as Executive Director

1982

1983

1984

1985

The New Zealand Law Foundation is established as an independent trust. It begins its funding operations in 1992 with grants for legal research, public education on legal matters and legal training.

Bruce Slane (later Sir Bruce) becomes President. An outstanding communicator, he wrote a regular column in *LawTalk*, was a strong advocate for the increasing number of women entering the profession, pushed for abolition of the scale of charges and worked hard to make the Law Society a more public advocate in law reform. He was appointed the first Privacy Commissioner in 1993.



▲ Representatives of the Whanganui River tribes and their solicitor D G B Morison. Taken at the Dominion Museum in 1945, by an unidentified photographer

Ref: PAColl-2427-1. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

On 1 February the Law Commission Act 1985 (assented to on 9 December 1985) comes into force, establishing the Law Commission which has the role of reviewing, reforming and developing New Zealand law.



▲ From left to right: Dame Sian Elias, Dame Judith Potter and Dame Lowell Goddard. Sian Elias and Lowell Goddard were the first women QCs and Judith Potter was the first woman President of a District Law Society (and later NZLS)

1986

On 1 March the Fair Trading Act 1986 comes into force, bringing to an end lengthy discussions, committee investigations and arguments over the right of lawyers to advertise.

On 29 May Margaret Lee is sworn in as the first District Court Judge of Chinese ethnicity.

The Corporate Lawyers Association of New Zealand (CLANZ) is formed with Peter Lorrigan as President. Later renamed ILANZ, it became the first section of the New Zealand Law Society in 1989.

In August Anne Gambrill is appointed a Master of the High Court (now Associate Judge). She is the first woman appointed to the senior court bench. She is the seventh woman appointed to the judiciary.

The Auckland District Law Society establishes the LINX legal information database and is later joined by the Canterbury and Wellington District Law Societies in maintaining and developing the database.

Major research commissioned by the Law Society among the public, includes a question about their preference between male and female lawyers (who comprise 15% of the profession). 67% have no preference, 21% state a preference for a male lawyer, and 9% a preference for a female lawyer.

1987



▲ Dame Silvia Cartwright

On 4 March Sian Elias and Lowell Goddard are the first women to be appointed Queen's Counsel.

Te Hunga Rōia Māori o Aotearoa The Māori Law Society is formally established in John Chadwick's Rotorua garage.

Graham Cowley from Hawke's Bay becomes President, the first from a region outside the main centres. "He spearheaded reform of the Law Society's own rules, its ethical rules and solicitors company nominee rules. His conciliatory approach helped to smooth relations between the Law Society and the [recent NZ Bar Association]," says Alan Ritchie in *Law Stories*.

Judith Potter (later Dame Judith) is elected President of the Auckland District Law Society, the first woman to hold that role for any of the district law societies.

In July the Association of Independent Counsel Inc is incorporated, becoming the New Zealand Bar Association after resolution of differences with the Law Society. Ted Thomas (later Sir Edward) is elected inaugural President on 8 June 1989.



▲ Dame Judith Potter

1988

On 1 February substantial parts of the Bay of Plenty and Thames/Coromandel area are transferred from the Auckland District Law Society to the Hamilton District Law Society. The name Waikato Bay of Plenty District Law Society was adopted in 1993.

On 1 November the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 commences, establishing the Youth Court and other major family law reform.

In December the Arbitrators' and Mediators' Institute of New Zealand is established to replace the NZ Branch of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators. AMINZ is a non-profit body focused on maintaining high standards for all aspects of dispute resolution,

1989

1991

On 1 February the Legal Services Act 1991 comes into force, giving the first statutory recognition of community law centres.

On 13 April it is revealed that two partners in the Upper Hutt firm Renshaw Edwards are responsible for the largest fraud by a law firm. Pat Renshaw (theft of \$6.4 million of client money) and Keith Edwards (theft of \$3.5 million of client money) both receive sentences of imprisonment. The thefts along with others leave the lawyers' fidelity fund facing claims of over \$30 million, compared with \$6.7 million in total for the previous six years. The money was raised by a special levy on the country's 2,700 partners or lawyers in sole practice, with each having to pay \$10,000 over five years.

1992

Judith Potter (later Dame Judith) becomes the first woman President of the Law Society. President during the Renshaw Edwards affair (see 1992), she received much praise for her poise, accessibility and management of the issues, but also endured some abuse from both the profession and the public. She publicly stated that the deregulated economy meant there was no longer a need for lawyers to be involved in lending money. She was closely involved in establishment of the NZLS Women's Consultative Group, instigation of the Law Society Board and reform of law practitioner legislation. Dame Judith was appointed to the High Court in March 1997.

Austin Forbes QC becomes President, the first from the South Island. He has the task of continuing to repair the damaged image of the profession after Renshaw Edwards and becomes a very popular and respected public figure. His speech to the 1996 triennial conference in Dunedin was entitled "Profession in Crisis" and widely televised and reported. Law Society-commissioned research among both public and the profession in 1997 shows the profession still enjoys a high level of respect and trust.

In July Judge Silvia Cartwright becomes the first woman appointed as a Justice of the High Court.

At 1 November it is revealed that 266 (52.1%) of the 511 lawyers admitted that year were women – the first time more women than men have been admitted.



▲ Sir Edward Durie

In February it is revealed that the Law Society has taken out a \$7.3 million loan to comply with a High Court ruling that it must pay Renshaw Edwards claims immediately. In November the Law Society sues Renshaw Edwards' auditors Clark Fitzgerald for \$24.6 million. The Society of Accountants no longer has a fidelity fund after paying out \$12 million for an Auckland accountant's actions. In June 1996 the Law Society settles the claim against Clark Fitzgerald out of court. Details are kept confidential.

In November Lowell Goddard (later Dame Lowell) is appointed to the High Court – the first woman of Māori ethnicity to be so appointed. Sian Elias (later Dame Sian) is also appointed to the High Court.

1993

1994

1995

1997

1998



Ian Haynes becomes President. Reform of the legislation regulating the practice of law is a key element of his presidency. He travelled widely around the country to present a model Law Practitioners Act and "gave the process and the profession a real chance in the face of menacing political attention," says Alan Ritchie in *Law Stories*.

The Family Law Section of the Law Society is established to represent the interests of family law practitioners. In 2019 it has just over 1,000 members.

A Law Society survey of the public shows that 84% would prefer to resolve their disputes out of court.

In October Edward (later Sir Edward) Durie is sworn in as the first man of Māori ethnicity to be appointed to the High Court.

◀ Dame Lowell Goddard



◀ Christine Grice

On 22 February A'e'au Semikueiva Epati is sworn in as a District Court Judge at Manukau District Court, the first judge to be appointed of Samoan and Pacific ethnicity.

On 24 September Ida Malosi is sworn in as a Family Court Judge, the first Samoan and Pacific Island woman. In 2013 she becomes the first woman judge to preside in the Supreme Court of Samoa.

On 4 November Ajit Swaran Singh is sworn in as a District Court Judge. He is the first Fiji-born Indian to be appointed to the District Court bench.

1999

On 17 May Justice Sian Elias is appointed Chief Justice: the first woman appointed to the role.

New Zealand has 8,151 practising lawyers – one for every 470 people. On the bench are seven Court of Appeal Judges, 32 High Court Judges, five Masters and 118 District Court Judges.

2000

2001

The Pacific Lawyers Association is established. A key objective is promoting fellowship, mutual support and continuing legal education for Pacific lawyers.

On 2 October Denise Clark is sworn in as a District Court Judge on Tematekapua Marae in Rotorua. She is the first Māori woman appointed as a District Court Judge and it is also the first time a judge has been admitted to the bench in a ceremony held on a marae.

2002

Christine Grice becomes President and is the second woman in the role. She is the youngest person to have ever been elected President. It is also the first election where all three candidates are women. The impetus for reform of the practice of law continues during her presidency. In the 2004 New Year's Honours she is appointed a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to the legal profession.

The proportion of women admitted reaches 60% – 440 women and 288 men.

In April the Property Law Section of the Law Society is established to represent the interests of property law practitioners. In 2019 it has over 1,500 members.



▲ **Mr Tere Mataio, first Cook Islander to qualify as a solicitor, with Professor C C Aikman and Mr Mathison. Evening Post, 3 Jun 1960**

Ref: EP/1960/2023-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

On 20 March the Lawyers and Conveyancers Act 2006 receives the Royal assent after its third reading on 14 March. It brings about the most far-reaching reform in regulation of the legal profession and has the purpose of protecting the consumers of legal services, maintaining public confidence in the legal profession and recognising the status of the legal profession. This becomes the mandate of the New Zealand Law Society which is to issue practising certificates and regulate the legal profession. District Law Societies are dissolved six months after commencement of the Act. After much debate, all but one of the 14 district law societies vote to combine their assets with the New Zealand Law Society to form “one society”. They become branches.

John Marshall QC is elected President. During his presidency he tirelessly works to explain the “one society” model and also to respond to negative comment resulting from the Bazley report on legal aid. He is also a strong advocate for increased pro bono and later instigates the successful Practising Well initiative.

2003

2004

2006

2007

In May a pilot Public Defence Service begins in Auckland. The success of the pilot leads to the roll-out of the service in major population centres, ending with Hawke's Bay in 2012.

On 1 July the Supreme Court sits for the first time.

Chris Darlow is elected President. He is closely involved over his whole presidency in work on the proposals for major reform of the regulation of legal services and creation of a new role of registered conveyancer. In 2008 he is made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to the law.

The Landonline electronic titles system is completed at a cost of \$141 million, introducing a new era of digital land titles registration. In October 2018 Cabinet accepts a \$128 million business case to progressively rebuild the system over five years.

On 24 June the Lawyers and Conveyancers Bill is introduced by Mark Burton. It receives its first reading on 29 July, is reported from the Justice and Electoral Committee on 27 July 2004 and receives a second reading on 29 March 2005.



▲ **New Zealand Law Society Council in 2010, President Jonathan Temm**



▲ Kathryn Beck

Jonathan Temm becomes President. Just the second President from outside the main centres, he is active in communicating the Law Society's viewpoint on major changes to legal aid, the One Society Model, development of the Law Society's regulatory expertise and a wide range of law reform developments, including the Criminal Procedure Act 2011 and major family law changes.

Former President Christine Grice becomes Executive Director, succeeding Alan Ritchie.

On 4 September the first of two devastating Canterbury earthquakes has a severe impact on the region's legal profession. Led by the Canterbury-Westland branch the Law Society co-ordinates many offers of assistance and support from lawyers around the country.

On 1 July most of the Legal Services Act 2011 comes into force, introducing major changes to legal aid, including fixed fees for lawyers.

On 1 October completion of the Law Society's Stepping Up programme becomes mandatory for barristers sole.

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

On 1 August the Lawyers and Conveyancers Act 2006 comes into effect.

On 1 October, seven Senior Counsel are appointed – the first and last time the title has been conferred. All subsequently took the title Queen's Counsel.

On 1 February, all but one of the former districts become branches of the New Zealand Law Society. A new Auckland branch is established and Canterbury and Westland amalgamate.

In June John Marshall launches Practising Well, the Law Society's health and wellbeing initiative.

On 27 November Dame Margaret Bazley's report "Transforming the Legal Aid System" is released. Among her findings, she says over 200 corrupt lawyers are rorting taxpayer-funded legal aid.

▼ Admission of Te Pehi Wright, 2018



Chris Moore becomes President. His presidency includes securing final agreement on changes to the intervention rule for barristers, a busy programme addressing and encouraging law students and young lawyers, a focus on advancement of women in the profession which includes chairing the Women's Advisory Panel and advocacy of access to justice.

On 16 May 26 barristers are appointed Queen's Counsel – the most ever in an appointment round, and the first formal round of appointments since 2008.

On 1 October the Law Society introduces a requirement for lawyers to complete at least 10 hours a year of continuing professional development. The innovative scheme is self-directed.

On 5 December the Law Society and NZ Bar Association launch the Gender Equitable Engagement and Instruction Policy, with the key objective of policy adopters aiming to increase the number of women leading court proceedings.

Executive Director Christine Grice is appointed to the High Court bench. Mary Ollivier becomes Acting Executive Director.

On 1 September Justice Mark Cooper is appointed a permanent judge of the Court of Appeal, the first person of Māori ancestry to be appointed to the Court.

On 1 July changes to the Intervention Rule come into effect with barristers able to apply to Law Society for approval to accept instructions directly from clients without an instructing solicitor.

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

▼ Soana Moala



Kathryn Beck takes office as the 30th President. She continues the strong focus on the advancement of women, and a broadening focus on diversity in the profession, access to justice and communication to Law Society branches. The #Me Too developments in 2018 place her under intense pressure but she provides strong and visible leadership of the profession. "I'm a bit bruised, last year took its toll and I struggled with some aspects of it but I never regretted being in this role," she tells *LawTalk* in April 2019. "We were given a massive wake-up call ... but as a profession we listened, we reflected and we accepted that things had to change. There is still a long way to go but people are willing and there is a momentum and genuine desire for change." She continues to lead the Culture Change Taskforce.

On 11 April at the memorial service for Judge Ian Borrin, the Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation, in memory of his parents, is announced. The \$38 million charitable trust – one of New Zealand's largest single purpose trusts – is devoted to legal education and research.

On 1 June Mina Wharepoura is sworn in as a District Court Judge and becomes the first Tongan-born Judge.

On 2 September Soana Moala is sworn in as a District Court Judge, becoming the first Tongan woman appointed to the bench.

On 1 February, 13,530 New Zealand-based and 803 overseas-based lawyers hold practising certificates. Of these, 51.3% are women.

On 7 March the Law Foundation announces it will be going into recess to allow its funding base to rebuild. The last funding round will be in June 2020.

On 14 March the Law Society announces the appointment of an independent Board member. Social entrepreneur Jason Pemberton is the first non-lawyer to be involved in setting Law Society direction.

On 9 April Helen Morgan-Banda becomes Executive Director of the Law Society.

On 10 April Tiana Epati becomes the 31st President and fourth woman in the role. She is also the first person of Samoan ethnicity to be President.

On 2 May Justice Joseph Victor Williams becomes the first Māori appointed to the Supreme Court.

On 10 June NZAL Lawyers is launched in Auckland. A sub-group of NZ Asian Leaders, it aims to offer collegiality, guidance, and wisdom to the growing Asian legal community.

On 3 September the Law Society completes 150 years as an organisation.



▲ Tiana Epati

2018

2019

On 14 February the *Newsroom* website reports “a pattern of sexually inappropriate behaviour” by some senior male lawyers at Russell McVeagh towards female university students who were summer clerks in Wellington in 2016. The resulting fallout places the role of the Law Society under intense scrutiny and a wide range of measures and support systems are subsequently introduced.

On 20 February at the Supreme Court the Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation announces five inaugural grants totalling \$1.7 million for criminal justice, family law and Māori legal research projects.

On 1 March the Law Society announces a working group, to consider what improvements can be made to enable better reporting of harassment in the legal profession to the Law Society. Dame Silvia Cartwright is subsequently appointed chair, along with four other members. The working group reports in December and the Law Society Board accepts its recommendations and commits to taking action to get them implemented.

On 12 April the Law Society launches its Gender Equality Charter which is a set of commitments around gender equality aimed at improving the retention and advancement of women in the legal profession. By August 2019 133 legal workplaces have signed the Charter.

On 30 May the Law Society releases the results of its Workplace Environment Survey. With input from 3,516 lawyers this shows that nearly one third of female lawyers have been sexually harassed during their working life and more than half of all lawyers have been bullied at some time in their working life. President Kathryn Beck says the Law Society is committed to building a culture that is safe, inclusive, fair and just. She asks all lawyers and stakeholders to work with the Law Society and announces the formation of a taskforce to drive culture and systems change across the profession and to eliminate bullying and sexual harassment.

On 1 July lawyers are required to comply with the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Funding of Terrorism Act 2009. The Department of Internal Affairs is supervisor.