**RNZE Charitable Trust (RNZE CT or “Trust”) Annual Report for 2020**

As I write this ninth annual Trust report, I am mindful of the extraordinary year we have experienced, it has been unprecedented in many respects, not the least from the Covid-19 influence. I reiterate, it is not a compliance or statutory requirement to provide an annual report, but it helps to acknowledge our sponsors and supporters, as well as inform our allied bodies (namely the **RNZE Corps Committee** and **Sappers Association (NZ) Inc**) and wider Corps’ serving and retired members of the progress the Trust has made during the 2020 calendar year. We continue to operate in accordance with our principal objective of “**Preserving RNZE Heritage**”, something we have continued to focus on since our formation in 2011.

During 2020, we have been winding down our key focus since 2012, notably the **RNZE Corps History project,** which has been highly successful. Of the 1,000 books in the first print run, only a few (8) are left, plus a small (30) presentation stock holding at the ECMC. Feedback on the book content continues to be positive from all quarters, both within NZ and from overseas. The book received a glowing review recently by LTCOL (Rtd) Dr Chris Pugsley, ONZM, FRHistS, in the November 2020 “Journal of the New Zealand Military Historical Society”. Once again, our grateful thanks to all who have supported and been involved with this major project.

Our **website** ([www.nzsappers.org.nz](http://www.nzsappers.org.nz)) continues to be an excellent repository for all information generated by the ECMC and RNZE CT, as we upload a range of heritage archival material, both older print (military engineering and history books and manuals) and photographic items in a separate gallery on the website. Our external contractor (Amanda Curnow) is doing an excellent job in keeping the site as up to date as possible, as well as adding Corps events, news, reports, and more heritage material to the site. A new section on the 2nd Engr Regt (2ER) has been added to the website, providing an overview of our serving Sappers and what they do as military engineers for the NZ Army, NZDF and New Zealand as a whole.

Progress on **rebuilding and refurbishing the museum** **displays** continues at a slower pace, as we have had to focus on other tasks throughout the year. We continue to appreciate and value the voluntary contributions made by Mike Early, Noel Woodley and Bruce McDonald of Palmerston North, who have joined Curator Clas Chamberlain and the writer for our regular Thursday public openings and workdays. Further progress has been made in the **scanning, digitising and post-processing** of our **photographic collection**, where over 5,000 of our collection of 20,000+ photos, slides, negatives, plates, etc have been scanned and stored digitally. We have almost completed Stage 3 of the project to **scan and digitise** many (over 300 publications to date) of our older (early 1800’s to early 1900’s) **heritage archival material and books**, subsidised by ECCT. Once post-processed, this material is uploaded onto our website, where it is available for public access and use for research purposes. We regularly have acknowledgment from contacts in NZ and overseas, who are using our site for reference and research purposes and they all positively acknowledge the availability of this information. With assistance from 2ER, we continue with sorting, cataloguing, and refurbishing the collection of **model Bailey** **bridge holdings**, which was passed to the ECMC as heritage equipment items some years ago. **Heritage RNZE equipment** will be mounted on the “Lazy E’” structures at the entrance to the ECMC, as part of an external display. The **computer system and local area network** have also seen some further improvements throughout the year.

We have had over **8,889** **visitors through the ECMC** since commencing record taking in late-2013, with 928 in 2020, (1,151 in 2019, 1,267 in 2018, 1,178 in 2017 1,008 in 2016, 968 in 2015 and 915 in 2014). These have included a wide range of local and international, serving and retired members of the NZDF and RNZE, community organisations, members of the public and so on. Obviously the CV19 lockdown and associated restrictions during 2020 have impacted on our attendances and visits during the year. Many **course participants** and personnel from other courses run by the SME(NZ), have made visits to the ECMC complex, as part of their programmes and **Corps heritage familiarisation**. Only one 1 (NZ) Bde-hosted visit from a Palmerston North Probus club visited the ECMC this year as part of this regular programme, due to CV19. No doubt more will continue in 2021, to catch up on the missed 1 (NZ) Bde community engagement objectives. We remain members of **Museums Aotearoa** and are shown in their annual directory and website, as a museum worthy of a visit. The ECMC is becoming better known within Palmerston North, the Manawatu and wider community and that in turn enables us to publicise the Corps and meet our key object of “**Preserving RNZE Heritage**”. Visit feedback is that the ECMC is also becoming known as “**the best hidden secret in the Manawatu**” or one of the “**Jewels of the Manawatu**” and is proving most popular.

We still want to introduce more interactive and electronic displays into the museum and will continue to seek advice from our technical advisers at Advantage Computers on both hardware and software requirements and availability. We still need an updated electronic library system, so that we can keep track of the extensive collection of reference material housed in both the library and “technical information section (“TIC RNZE”) for RNZE activities and deployments. This all still forms a part of our **information, communications, research and** **technology** (or ICR&T)initiatives for the ECMC and will be pursued in future years.

We are continuing with the challenging task of **cataloguing all the “assets of the Trust”**, now with nearly 30% of items in the ECMC/RNZE CT “collection” (out of an estimated 60,000 items) inventoried and with an estimated recorded total value of over $500,000. The latter needs to consider whether this is either market or sale value versus replacement value and also if an item is damaged, lost, stolen or whatever and can or needs to be replaced. Our **comprehensive insurance cover** is currently with Future Risk brokers and reviewed annually, it is presently rated at $400,000 (plus Trustee liability indemnity insurance).

Despite a disrupted year, our **financial situation** remains stable, as the annual financial report (shown separately on our website) indicates. We did apply for external funding during the year, with a grant of $4,000 from ECCT going towards our archival heritage material scanning project. The remainder of our expenditure was managed modestly by living within the bounds of our own financial resources. We still have our 32 **regular contributors**, adding to other donation income and showing **total donations** from all sources in excess of $9,000 for the year.

The **Corps bursary scheme** was confirmed following the initial 2019-20 trial, which was aimed at providing limited funds to support serving Corps’ members for hardship assistance, extra professional development (not covered by NZDF), adventurous training, pursuance of individual or team sports activities and representation and the like. The grants and process have proven successful since implementation and there have been seven (7) recipients to date for a range of grants, totalling $2,750 so far. This scheme is regularly promoted by RSM, 2ER and through RNZE sub-unit SSMs and the like.

The **monthly midday military history presentation (MMMHP) series** run in conjunction with the Palmerston North City Library, continues to be well attended and successful, despite the CV19 disruptions and lockdown periods. We appreciated the additional venues provided by PNCC and Te Manawa, due to the need to meet social distancing and other CV19 requirements. Presentation topics are varied, and we try to link these across all services and to key anniversaries of military heritage events and activities in the calendar. The 2021 programme is full (shown elsewhere on the website) and speakers continue to volunteer, as we compile programmes for future years. This also proves to be a good source of donation revenue for the RNZE CT, as well as publicity for both the ECMC and RNZE CT. Audio recordings of all presentations are being made and are uploaded to the website, for future access and reference purposes. We continue to be involved with the **evening public lecture** **presentation** **(EPLP)** programme, in concert with PNCC, Massey University and others to focus on major military history events, several times a year.

The **Trust Board** only held three meetings throughout 2020, performing the requirements of our objects in accordance with the Trust Deed. All relevant **compliance requirements have been met** and reports have been prepared, approved and submitted to Charities Services and are all available on their and the RNZE CT websites. We continue to appreciate the excellent service provided by Treasurer and trustee, **Greg Findon**, as well as the Secretary, LT **Mike Johnson**, latterly of the SME. My sincere thanks go to all trustees for their assistance and support throughout the year, including LTCOL **Ian Brandon**, **Clas Chamberlain**, **Greg Findon** and **Cliff Parker**. Early in the new year, WO1 **Tom Kerekere** (SSM (SME(NZ) replaced WO1 **Brendon McDonald** (RSM, 2ER) as a trustee (as well as Deputy Chair) and SGT **Rachel Boyce** (HQ 2ER) joined as a trustee. COL **Paul Curry** (Col Comdt RNZE) also joined us as a trustee and we thanked and farewelled Cliff Parker, who retired as a trustee towards the end of 2020 (trustee since 2015). An **amendment to** **the Trust Deed** was approved and lodged successfully with Charities Services and IRD earlier in the new year, following a review of the role, goals, and objects for the Trust. The latter focussed on expanding our objects, to include both legacy and welfare aspects, which the Trust has been running informally for a number of years. Our new **replacement Secretary**, 2LT **Blair Jones** (SME(NZ), took over from LT **Mike Johnson** in late 2020.

Over 85 personnel from all RNZE units in Linton Camp provided valuable **assistance to the ECMC** for a few hours each Thursday, as part of the RNZE **monthly duty unit assistance** scheme. This was initiated by a previous RSM, 2ER in mid-2014 and managed by the SSMs of each of the units of 2ER and the SME, based on a monthly roster and task list. This has enabled a wide range of tasks to be undertaken to assist us in the ongoing **maintenance of the ECMC library, museum and Chapel**, plus other RNZE CT administrative requirements. It also keeps these young sappers connected with their heritage and spiritual home, in the hope that they will take an interest in its management and preservation in the future and as their careers progress within the Corps and the Army as a whole.

Once again, several **minor projects were carried out by the SME(NZ)**, including electrical tasks and preparation for other trade-training-based tasks undertaken in 2020. This assistance is vital for the ongoing operation of the ECMC and we are very grateful to the CI, SSM and WO TTW, SME(NZ) for their support. Likewise, we have had excellent **support and assistance from** 2ER, in particular from the CO, XO, Adjt, and RSM, as well as sub-unit commanders, SSMs and a number of other RHQ staff. Our sincere thanks go to you all for this much needed and appreciated contribution and support. We have also appreciated support from HQ, 1 (NZ) Bde, LRSC, DEI Group and Spotless in the operation and maintenance of the ECMC building. Given that there is only a few of us trying to keep the ECMC open and running on a weekly basis, as well as managing the RNZE CT and various other key projects, we do need your ongoing assistance. Our wish is that **more retired members of the Corps** currently living in the Manawatu, take an active interest in the ECMC and **join our ranks as volunteers** in the future.

In closing and rather than list the aspirations for the coming year as I have done in previous reports, just to confirm that these have not changed and will remain our key focus for the future. Having been in the chair since the Trust was formed in mid-2011, I believe it is time for a change and some new ideas, we need to **find somebody new to lead the Trust into the future** and for at least the next decade.

Joe Hollander

Trustee/Trust Board Chair Palmerston North

RNZE Charitable Trust 31 December 2020