



Rotary Club of Christchurch South Inc.

P O Box 12-243, Christchurch 8023, NZ.

SERVICE ABOVE SELF



Bulletin

#39 for 22 April 2026

SUPPLEMENT

### Speaker report for 22 April 2026

This week we were fortunate to have Deb Donnell, a Christchurch author, speak to us. Deb has written a series of pictorial books on Christchurch, Then and Now, with the most recent being Volume 4. These chronicle the “before and after” effects of the 2010 & 2011 earthquakes on the city.

Deb commenced work in her family’s jewellery store, Donnells Jewellers, which was located in the Triangle Centre, on the corner of High, Hereford and Colombo Streets in Central Christchurch, just south of Cathedral Square. Her father, Richard (Dick) Donnell operated that business after he completed an apprenticeship under Kennedy Blair, of Kennedys Jewellers.



Donnells Jewellers had the Stewart Fountain outside their store. Latterly, Deb’s father worked for Kennetts Jewellers.

Deb was able to track the changes in Christchurch following the earthquakes, noting that one of her memories was of the smells from rotting food etc. emanating from restaurant businesses in the area following the quakes. She noted the redevelopment of the city centre through to the eventual building of tram lines in the central city to enable the “back to the future” return of trams to the area.

There was much reminiscing of the businesses which had been in the central city, including The Dainty Inn, Black Beattie & Co (Drapers) in Bonnington House, Fails

Café, a fish restaurant in Cashel Street near the Bridge of Remembrance, and Kiddey's Korner nearby.

Deb recalled the Lamson Pneumatic Document System in operation in Ballantynes which took payments to a central office for receipts and/or change. This system was also utilised in Black Beattie & Co.

All in all, Deb's presentation provided wonderful highlights of the "older" Christchurch, as did her 4 volumes of Christchurch Now and then, and the book she wrote on the search & rescue teams which came from outside of Christchurch (including Australia) to assist with the aftermath of the quakes.

In rounding up her address, Deb alluded to the difficulties she faced as a new author trying to get her books on the shelves in Whitcoulls, but her persistence paid off, and they were eventually stocked in these bookstores.

Thank you, Deb, for sharing your own journey, along with the journey of our city, with our Club. We were also fortunate to be able to purchase copies of Deb's books after her address, and have her sign them for us.

*Thanks to Athol for the report and Diane for the photo*

*End.*





