

### 3. CORRESPONDENCE

#### 3.2 Frances Ryman – Documentary Funding

The following letter has been received from Frances Ryman requesting funding for a documentary entitled “The Daisy Fields of Ellen Gowan”:

*“I am in quandary with regard to the production of the documentary entitled “The Daisy Fields of Ellen Gowan”. It is in the form of a poem written as a trilogy: “The First Few Days” “The First Few Months” and “The First Few Years”. I have read the poem to Councillor Anna Creighton, Board member John Freeman and Ms Jenny May, Director of “Our City”. All three were impressed and urged me to take it further. The TV script has been written and shown to Mr Russell Pickersgill-Brown of CTV. He was equally impressed with the quality of the script, and asked if he can have the rights of becoming the co-producer.*

*I am aware that much depends on the quality of the associate TV producer and I took great pains to find one with the commitment to quality and sensitivity. I was fortunate that, without asking him outright if he was interested, he, without hesitation, made the request to me. Moreover, he was deeply involved with the documentary on Ngaio Marsh which received accolades from all over New Zealand. However, with regard to “The Daisy Fields of Ellen Gowan” the major handicap is one of finance.*

*I am fortunate in having friends in England and in Southland who have the skills required to make the supplementary video support. The documentary begins in London, down to Plymouth and the Sutton Pool from where the ships left. It then follows those ships until they reach Lyttelton. The research I have done for my book on William Guise Brittan has been most useful, as is the propaganda put out by the Canterbury Association, and believed to have been composed by Edward Gibbon Wakefield. But the reality of land configuration, and the conflict of it being represented as “England in a foreign shore” is the initial subject of the poem. What had originally been called the “Daisy Fields” is now site of the red brick house on the northern side of the Avon River. It is where the Fitzgerald Avenue bridges span between “Englefield Farm” belonging to William Guise Brittan, and that of “Ellen Gowan” the farm belonging to Charles Bowen. The poem is about the transformation into “England in a foreign shore” and the development as each side viewed the other.*

*I feel very passionately about the historical nature of this particular area and the “Daisy Fields” is but the first of a trio of documentaries each relating to different aspects of this particular junction with the further two being titled “Cabbage Trees and Cabbage Mayors” and finally “Brewer Boys All” the content of which would surprise you. I can assure you that there is much to be revealed and, that as a result, the whole intersection will finally get the historical recognition that it so richly deserves. Much has been published that is wrong and there is much to be published that, for historical social, political, economic and sporting reasons will further entrench that it is the Hagley-Ferrymead Board that embraces the most historical parts of early Christchurch. Moreover, it reinforces that the whole junction deserves a much higher profile. But unfortunately nothing can come of it unless I can find \$10,000 to produce the first documentary.*

*In 1972, when it was almost derelict, my husband and I bought “Englefield Lodge” and then, having restored it at great effort and expense, had to fight for its survival. The City Council had decided to put through the Avonside-Woodham Road Expressway. Fortunately, and to the benefit of our early domestic architecture we succeeded in saving it from the bulldozer. Then followed the in-depth research which has justified an application to the Historic Places Trust for an upgrade to a No 1 category and which is being applied for at present. After a visit from some city councillors, during which we pointed out that with age my husband was no longer able to do the maintenance himself, the City Council generously granted sufficient funds to restore the major historical architectural features – mainly the unique barrel-vaulted drawing room believed to be the only kind in domestic design in New Zealand. “Englefield Lodge” will now last many more years without it being a financial concern and steps have been taken to make sure of its historical viability.*

*But it is not just “Englefield Lodge” that is at stake. No 10 Avonside Drive is for sale. Originally it was the site of the delightful garden to which Sir George Grey was brought when demonstrating a “model farm” established within 12 months of the land having been allocated. It was this factor, along with all of the above that brought me to despair of ever having the significance of the junction recognized by the citizens of Christchurch. William Guise Brittan was the first man to cross the threshold of the Canterbury Association, put his money on the counter and thus make the first land purchase in the colony. There were 41 people on that committee but none had sufficient desire or the faith to invest in it. At the height of a very stormy winter, and two weeks after the books had opened, it took a stranger from Dorset to claim the honour of “First Colonist”. He has never been adequately recognized for either his enterprise or his ongoing very significant contributions to this settlement. What he achieved was in the face of specious political adversity but nevertheless done in order to promote a city he served faithfully until he died. I have lived in his house for 30 years (the anniversary is the date of this letter) and my research has brought about a profound respect for the man. But I also bear in mind that a good historian is, first and foremost, always objective. It is for all of these reasons that I sat down and wrote the poem – in one day. If you wish to hear it I would be available.*

*In seeking your support I have enclosed an abridged CV, some accompanying letters of recommendation as to my qualities as a person, and with it is also my hope that you will see fit to support my impassioned if somewhat lengthy plea for financial support for this project. As yet I have not applied to any other institution or person. To do that I would need advice on procedures for which I would be grateful. Asking for money is not my long suit but I am willing to learn.”*

**The Community Advocate comments:** Frances Ryman presented this project at an earlier Board meeting and also gave a deputation on the project at the last Board meeting in June. The Board expressed its support for Frances and her project, however the Board has not considered funding the project. The Board recently initiated funding guidelines that preclude the Board from funding individuals’ projects.

**Chairman’s**

**Recommendation:** For discussion