



## **Thirty years of NZIS Technician Surveyors**

*Story contributed by Steve Neal from Nelson/Marlborough*

2018 marks thirty years since the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors (NZIS) welcomed Technician Surveyors into their organisation at the 1988 NZIS Centennial Conference in Wellington.

This year's NZIS Conference to be held in Nelson 17-19 May 2018 presents an ideal opportunity to put the call out for past and present Technician Surveyors, and those that were members of the New Zealand Technician Surveyors Association (NZTSA) to reassemble and reconnect.

The NZTSA was formed in 1973 and went from strength to strength, providing a united voice for Technician Surveyors in NZ. NZIS rules at this time precluded Technician Surveyor membership due to the constraints of the Surveyors Act 1966. NZTSA membership was recorded at 215 by 1984 and the very popular journal called 'The Observer' kept the membership in touch with its activities. NZTSA lobbied hard for such things as recognition of its members within the survey profession and better education. Change was in the air as 1984 was the year that NZIS invited NZTSA to discuss the relationship between the two organisations. A law change was looming with the Survey Bill being heard and it was reported that delays with the Bill were partly due to the Compulsory Membership Clause that related to Registered Surveyors. Many surveyors at this time were hoping that a law change may open up the membership categories of NZIS.

By 1986 the Survey Bill had not been passed but Technician Membership of NZIS took a step forward when Ian Stirling, the immediate Past President of NZIS in 1986, offered to speak at the NZTSA AGM about Technician membership of NZIS. NZTSA membership was 205 at this stage and this membership had to consider what was to happen to the NZTSA with the imminent opening up of membership to the NZIS.

1987 was as much a landmark year for the NZTSA as was 1973, when it was formed. The Survey Act 1986 came into force 1 April 1987 and Section 24 (2) read 'Any person who is not a member of the Institute by virtue of subsection (1) of this section may be admitted as a member of the Institute in accordance with the rules of the Institute'. The NZIS, acting under the provisions of this clause, made a rule change to create a new class of Technician Membership. Direct entry into NZIS was available for existing NZTSA members and an earlier poll had indicated that a large portion of the members were going to make use of the offer. This meant that the NZTSA was at a crossroads. Whether to continue or disband? At the 1987 NZTSA Conference and AGM held in Invercargill there was a remit tabled 'That the NZTSA be wound up and the membership be advised to take advantage of the NZIS proposal to incorporate Technician Membership'. Prior to being passed we were presented with the Presidents Annual Report and the last paragraph is worth quoting, which states: *"Regardless of the outcome one thing remains certain, the vision of the founding members of this Association has been fulfilled and whatever future form of affiliation this meeting decides, the things that bind us together as specialists in Land measurement and the friendships forged within the Association will endure far beyond the minor differences we share as a democratic body"*.

As they say, 'the rest is history'. NZTSA membership in 1987 was recorded at 195 but this number is distorted due to quite a few members opting not to renew their membership in this final year of the NZTSA.

In 1988 my records show that 118 Technicians had opted to join the NZIS and 14 of us attended the Centennial Conference in Wellington. This photo shows 13 of us.



*Some attendees at the 1988 Technician Surveyors NZIS Centennial Conference Wellington*  
*Back row left to right – Phil Benfield, Russ Manson, Kelvin Tait, Bob Tombleson, Geoff Pilbrow, Lawrie Cairns, Bob Regnault and Chris Spencer. Front row left to right – Steve Neal, Andy Muir, Jerry Simonsen, Craig Thompson and Stu McDonald. Absent - Brent Trail.*

Several of these people were NZTSA Officers and the huge amount of work that all the past Officers put into the Association is evident when you read through the old conference folders.

I embarked on a surveying career in 1978 and joined the NZTSA in 1979 while working as a Chainman. I have fond memories of my time with the NZTSA, especially the annual conferences and the bonds formed with my fellow Technicians. Conferences are important to most organisations like ours and I managed to attend four of them so can provide a brief recap of those. The NZTSA Conferences had high calibre presenters and papers, amazing field trips and social events second to none.

1981 was my first and held in Te Anau. The guest speaker was Rt Hon Bill Birch who was also a member of NZIS. Peter Dalhousie was a surveyor on the Manapouri Power Project so presented a paper and managed to arrange for a tour of the whole power station including over the Wilmot Pass to Deep Cove. It is interesting to note that one of our recent Fellows, Steve Critchlow also presented a paper 'The Computer – Friend or Foe?'. We had an evening meal at Cavern House in Te Anau Caves. South Africa v's All Blacks was watched in between the AGM and our annual Dinner/Cabaret. After the Conference most attendees took the opportunity for a trip out Milford Sound. Another memorable event at Te Anau was an evening of indoor horse racing. The Conference programme showed the two options as Rest Night or 'Horse Racing'. Betting was frenetic and the racing was competitive to say the least. The mind boggles so ask me more at the Nelson Conference and I will complete the story.

Greymouth hosted the 1984 Conference and one speaker of note was Len Holmes who presented a paper titled 'Development of Westland's Resources'. The Silver Pine NZIS Conference peg was presented by Len Holmes at the 1966 NZIS Conference in Greymouth. The West Coast region around Greymouth is synonymous with natural resources so that formed the theme of the conference with the field trip being a tour of a working commercial sized gold screen. The wine, dine and dance was shown in the programme as being "from 7 pm till ?????." It went on into the early hours and there were many subdued Technicians the following morning.

Blenheim is my hometown and we hosted the 1986 Conference for which all the local Technicians had an organising and working role to play. We had tight budgets for all our Conferences and the Lands and Survey Department were always helpful due to a large number of our membership working for the Department. As we had local connections to Dennis Robinson who was then the Director of the Black Birch Astronomic Observatory this was the obvious choice for our field trip. The Observatory was sited high up on the Black Birch Range at an elevation of 1300m with a long and winding gravel road for access. Our Chief Surveyor at the time Graham Henderson came to the party by allowing us to use the Departments fleet of vehicles for getting people to and from the Observatory supported by some private vehicles as well.

Come 1987 it was Invercargill's turn to host what was to be the last Conference for the NZTSA. We all knew the importance of attendance so Graham Henderson stepped up again and covered the fuel costs for a vehicle down and back. Rather than split the fuel subsidy between two vehicles we worked out that the six of us from Blenheim could travel in my HQ Kingswood so off we went on a memorable 12hr 867km road trip. Tiwai Point Aluminium Smelter and Bluff were the two destinations for the Conference field trip. There were mixed emotions at this Conference but the business was conducted and we gave the Association the send-off it deserved.



*Steve Neal, Kelvin Tait and Jerry Simonsen in Napier*

My recent interest in getting Technicians to attend this year's Conference stems a lot from attending the 2017 Napier Conference where I caught up with Kelvin Tait and Jerry Simonsen who were both at the 1988 NZIS Centennial Conference. By this stage I was working on putting names to faces in the 1988 photo, so Kelvin and Jerry helped with some of the final few. The three of us along with Malcolm Archbold dined out with the Positioning and Measurement Stream on the first night in Napier and delivered a barrage of stories from the past to the young surveyors at our table. What a great walk down memory lane and the young surveyors were also able to enlighten us with their experiences as well. One of our Councillors Michael Cutfield was with us and he commented how interesting it was to hear all the old surveying stories. The Napier Conference reminded me so much of the NZTSA years which I think has a lot to do with the NZIS separating out the time-consuming AGM and workshops to a different time of the year. I also hear that a field trip is likely to be on the Nelson programme this year.

Rather than procrastinate about it I decided I had better do something about it hence my call to Technician Surveyors to come along and make the Nelson Conference one for the memory banks. It would be great if we can get a photo with more than three of us that appeared in the 2017.

My thanks to Lawrie Cairns, who appears in the 1988 photo, for providing invaluable feedback, help with putting the final couple of names to faces and giving me the drive to put pen to paper.

Look forward to understanding the future and reminiscing on the past in Nelson 2018.

If you want to look at the conference detail, click [here](#).

If you wish to register, then click [here](#).