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New Zealand Society of Genealogists

Te Rangapū Kaihikohiko o Aotearoa

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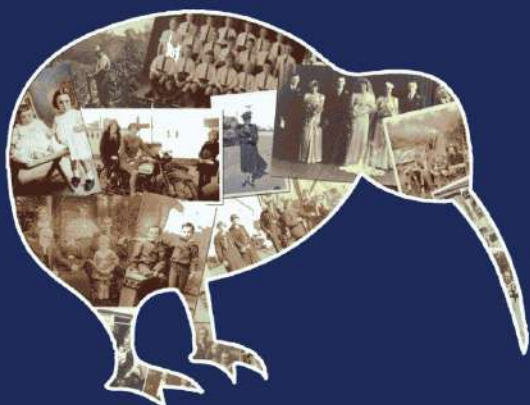
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Cover Photo:
Interior of a Factory
Fred Brockett
Circa 1908
[Te Papa Tongarewa](#)



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The New Zealand Genealogist

This month's theme:
Occupations

Upcoming themes

June 2026
Unions, Clubs and Societies

December 2026
Wellington region

September 2026
Miners and Mining

March 2027
Local finds

Criteria

1. Relevance: related to people and their society; genealogy, family history, whakapapa, research, documentary sources, application, biography, genealogical technology etc.
2. Length: Feature articles 1800 to 2700 words (2–3 pages) plus images, short articles 500–900 words plus images.

Editing

The Editorial Team reserves the right to edit articles to meet standards and for readability, but if substantial changes are required the Editor will consult with the author.

Members' area

Members may submit queries on Contact Sought, Information Wanted, Information Offered, Trader and Reunion notices. Please do not abbreviate your enquiry. The first instance of any surname should be in capitals. There is no limit the number of entries you may submit, but your full name, email and membership number must be included with each entry.

Advertising

Contact the NZSG [National Manager](#) for information about rates, specifications and conditions, or find details on the [NZSG website](#) with other details about *The New Zealand Genealogist*.

Style Guide

You must refer to our Style Guide before submitting an article. This is available on our website:

genealogy.org.nz/NZG-Editors-Notes/11168/

Submission of copy

Submissions can be made in electronic format emailed to editor@genealogy.org.nz. Include your name, contact details and membership number.

Copy deadlines

Regular contributions, advertisements and feature articles submitted for consideration must be received by the Editor by the following dates:

Issue	Last date for consideration
March	17 January
June	17 April
September	17 July
December	17 October

BOARD REPORT



Another year has rolled around. Our thoughts are with those who have had terrible weather impact their lives over the last few months.

The Board has been working on the Strategic Plan which will cover the years 2026–2030. We have used your comments to identify the key areas we need to work on. This is currently out for your feedback.

We have made changes to the menus on the NZSG website (as well as added more resources). These are detailed on page 35. We hope you will find the website easier to navigate. We will be getting feedback on these changes shortly.

The Shipping Collection Project is going from strength to strength. We would like to thank all of those who have contributed so much to this collection so far and look forward to moving on to the next phase of the project.

Planning is afoot for two big events which our Society will be hosting over the next year. We are hoping to broaden the appeal of the Auckland Expo to bring in more diverse communities. This will build their and our understanding of family history research in other countries. This will see the

Expo move to October as part of the Auckland Heritage Festival and it will be held at the historic Kings College in Ōtāhuhu.

The 18th Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations (AFFHO) Congress on Family History will be taking place in Wellington in February 2027. The theme of 'Across the Tasman: Natural Allies and Strong Connections' will see attendees from around New Zealand and Australia. Keep an eye on *e-KIT* as we announce the keynote speakers and sponsors in the coming months.

We always enjoy getting out and about in the community. We had a great, if soggy, day out at the Paeroa Highland Games in February. If you as individuals or as Branches would like to represent NZSG to promote membership of the Society, please contact our National Manager, Julian. We can provide resources to promote our Society.

If you have any thoughts to share with us, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Our strength comes from our members.

Sarah Hewitt, NZSG Chairperson



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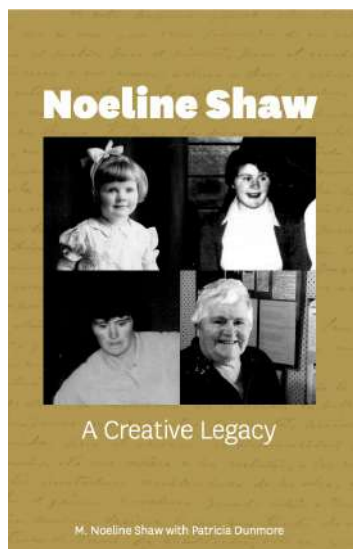


Noeline Shaw: An extraordinary life (1940–2025)

Noeline SHAW described herself as an ordinary young girl from Taranaki, who found the world a fascinating place and took to life head-on, but she was far from ordinary, setting sporting records and becoming a pillar of the New Zealand genealogy scene.

Noeline (née HAMBLYN) passed away a few months ago, just short of her 85th birthday. She became interested in genealogy while still in her teens, intrigued by stories of her family's emigration to New Zealand on the *Amelia Thompson* in 1841. She went on to write numerous books of family histories, organise family reunions, and even set up a museum in the Wyndham District of Southland, after moving there as the bride of local farmer, Malcolm Shaw. She was invited to contribute to the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, by Professor W H OLIVER, published in 1990 in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi).

'To be a good genealogist you need patience and imagination as the jigsaw unfolds, step by step', she explained in a newspaper article in 1984. 'You must be prepared to accept what you find, whether it is a castle in Ireland or a convict in Australia.'



Noeline's autobiography, *Noeline Shaw: A Creative Legacy*, appeared in print just before her death, and was published by Heritage Press Ltd, with whom she had a long-standing connection. They have also recently published some of her earlier books as eBooks, including *A History of the Chamberlain Family of Taranaki*, and *A History of the Bigwood Family of Southland*. Her book about the MacKAY family will be released as an eBook later this year.

Noeline was born and raised in Pātea, and her story brings this once-bustling town to life with extraordinary details about the people and places that made it such a prosperous economic centre in the 1950s and 1960s. After the Hamblyns, she turned her attention to researching her mother's maiden name, CHAMBERLAIN, and discovered that it was anglicised from the Swiss TSCHÜMPERLIN.



Noeline and Malcolm Shaw spent their lives on a variety of farms, settling in Wyndham for many years, until finally 'retiring' to Invercargill, where they established the Wyndham Park Heritage Centre, indulging both Noeline's passion for history and Malcolm's love of antique cars and farm machinery.

Thanks to the energy of this extraordinary woman, thousands of Kiwis know a lot more about who they are and where they came from, and her life's work is a legacy for future generations.

From a passion for sports, which led to her setting a New Zealand record for non-stop table tennis just weeks after giving birth, to a love of history, she barely stopped to draw breath.

Pat Dunmore
E: editor@heritagepress.nz

Peter Calver, Lost Cousins (1950–2026)

We are very sad to report the death of Peter Calver, founder and inspiration of Lost Cousins. Peter was born in Ilford, Essex, on 1 October 1950 and died in Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex, on 19 January 2026.

Following his diagnosis of bowel cancer late last year, he and his wife were not expecting the turn of events when,

just before Christmas, Peter was told the cancer had spread and was inoperable.

There is a wonderful tribute to Peter, his life and his work at www.lostcousins.com/newsletters2/Jan26deathnews.htm



The night locomotive AB 817 was stolen

Margaret Riordan

In the very early morning of 3 March 1962, I was a four-year-old, sound asleep in my bed in Waitara, Taranaki, blissfully unaware that my father was out chasing a stolen steam train. It must have been the next day, on a walk to the railway station, that we saw the locomotive in its shed with a wagon parked in front of it. Dad said the wagon was there so the train could not be stolen. It seemed to me that he was just being silly; surely nobody would ever steal my father's train.

My father, James Kevin (Jim) RIORDAN (1917–1966), was a guard on the railways during my early childhood at Waitara. We lived on Cracroft Street, close to the railway tracks, and in 1962 the steam train still ran past near our house with its familiar accompaniment of belching smoke. As a guard, Dad was involved with shunting in the railway yards. Occasionally, I watched from the safety of the platform as he coupled and uncoupled wagons and changed levers to sort the wagons for different destinations, using a system of hand signals to communicate with the engine driver. At that time, many wagons containing meat were railed from the Waitara Freezing Works to the Port in New Plymouth and other destinations.

Dad spent most of his working life as a railwayman. He left school after gaining Proficiency and first worked at Kibby's

metal pressing factory in New Plymouth, and he once told me that he made metal plates for tap dancing shoes. On 14 September 1936 he began work as a Junior Porter 'spare' at New Plymouth, as was recorded on his New Zealand Railways Service Schedule. He then progressed gradually up the ranks to be a porter, traffic assistant, shunter, and a guard spare, and on 3 June 1953, he began work as a Guard in Waitara.¹

During World War II, my father joined many of his railway colleagues for war service, entering Egypt on 30 September 1940. His military records show that he began service as part of the 16th Railway Operating Company, but he transferred to various Railway Construction and Operating companies over the period of his time in the Middle East.² From his clearly labelled wartime photographs we learn that he spent time in such places as Maadi, Amriya, Matruh, Moascar and Similla, and enjoyed leave in Alexandria and Cairo.³ He stayed in the Middle East until he embarked on the *Nieuw Amsterdam* on 15 June 1943 for the return to New Zealand.

It was during Dad's time as a guard in Waitara that the great train chase occurred. Of course, I was too small to have retained any actual memory of this, but I was able to discover more in attending the 1993 New Zealand Society

Image above:

Jim Riordan in a railway coat in front of a railcar, with three unidentified young people

Riordan family collection

of Genealogists conference held in Palmerston North. (See Editor's note.)

The conference theme was 'Tracking the Lines', and railways was one of the sub-themes. A key speaker was Vern ROSS from The New Zealand Railway and Locomotive Society Inc., based in Petone. In conversation with Vern after his talk about railway ancestors, I learned more about the Waitara train incident. He generously posted me some documents and suggested some other key contacts. Bruce G FRANKLYN, Administration Manager for New Zealand Rail, sent me a copy of my father's service schedule, and provided me with the reference number for a relevant file in Archives New Zealand.⁴

At the 1993 NZSG Conference, I also had another serendipitous encounter. I was helping with displays, pinning up some charts I had made about my father as a railway worker. A man approached me, said he was from Eltham, and that he had been in the same unit as my father in the war. He then told me that my father had been in demand in the canteen in the evenings, where he used to sing Irish folk songs. Sometimes, you can learn such precious things about your forebears, not from documents, but from conversations with people who knew them.

The Archives file title that Mr Franklyn had given me for the stolen train event was 'Charges for hire of Locomotives'.



Jim Riordan on a donkey or small horse in army uniform in the Middle East, July 1941

This was one of those obscure archive file names that, without his assistance, I would never have figured out held documents about the 1962 train chase. Most of the documents in the file seemed to concern actual hireage charges for equipment across departments but buried amongst them was a series of papers about that eventful night in Waitara. The file included statements about the event from various railways staff, as well as some newspaper clippings from around the country.

In my father's statement he recorded that he finished shunting at 12.10am, after arriving back from Lepperton on Saturday 3 March 1962, and returned home. About 1am he was awakened by a train whistle from the locomotive AB 817, which he knew should have been in its shed. He got up and saw it first on the tracks near our house, then it moved south over the Cracroft Street crossing. His first thought was that perhaps the engine driver had found a defect and was taking it to New Plymouth for repairs, but when the engine driver, Mr V J THOMAS, arrived at our house, Dad realised it had been taken by some unauthorised person. He rang the local police station, and soon, in the middle of the night, the engine driver, the guard, and the local policeman set out to track down the culprits with the hijacked engine.

My father next returned to the train station, from where he rang Lepperton so that the Waitara Branch line could be set to go into the 'back shunt', and Train Control could be advised of the incident. The Police advised a meet-up at the top of Big Jim's Hill, which was thought to be about the distance the locomotive could travel with the steam it still had left in it. When the three men arrived there, they discovered that the engine was reversing back to Waitara, and they soon found it had stopped about 200 yards from the station. Next, it drifted down to the outside of the locomotive shed. Dad saw four men near the shed and gave chase, but 'as they were young men I could not catch'.

A later statement on the file from the District Traffic Manager revealed that seven men had been arrested later the same day. Although my father had been unable to apprehend any of the offenders, he had recognised one who had previously been employed as a locomotive assistant at New Plymouth, and that was a vital clue leading to the arrests. Each of the young men involved appeared in the New Plymouth Magistrate's Court on Monday, 5 March 1962 and was fined £20.

My father, Guard Riordan, and the Engine Driver Thomas both received letters of commendation from the General Manager of the Railways Department. It was noted that my father took 'prompt and effective action' during the early hours, and that there was 'no doubt that the timely action taken materially assisted the Police Department in the apprehension of the offenders and also prevented what may have resulted in a serious accident'.

Newspapers of the time carried some vivid accounts of the chase. There was a report about the 'hectic chase' in the *Taranaki Herald* that very evening.⁵ In the article Mr Thomas described how 'the average person would not know how to start the air compressor for the brakes or how to start the dynamo for the lights', and he concluded that one of the four men must have had considerable knowledge of engines. One of the things that delighted me about this

article was the accompanying photograph of the engine with its front poking out of the shed, with a wagon on the track close in front of it. This accorded exactly with the memory I had from the walk I had taken to the station with my father.

In the *Evening Post* the following Monday, the lawyer appearing for six of the young men, Mr J R P HORN, said that the young men gave way to the instinctive desire of all small boys to drive a railway engine, and they had announced their intentions with considerable noise and clarity. Police inquiries had established that the idea for the train heist had been formed at a party held at the home of one of the men.⁶

There was even an editorial about the event in *The Star (Christchurch)* where it was written: 'Sooner or later it had to happen that someone, somewhere, no longer could resist the urgent—practically voluptuous—appeal of a railway engine in all its powerful majesty. What better setting for a deed that must pass into history than an eminence like Big Jim's Hill?'. The writer concluded by commenting that furtive fathers running their sons' model railways can only regard such an exploit with silent envy.⁷

In 1993 *The Daily News* ran an article revisiting the whole affair, entitled 'The night they nicked loco AB 817'.⁸ This account largely retells events from the viewpoints of the young men involved in the heist. Davey ROBERTSON, who had got the train moving, told how he had loved working on the old steam engines, and had checked everything was OK before he finally bolted. He described how 'old Jimmy Riordan' had caught up with the engine and was running towards them with his arms wide saying 'Stop! We've got you now'.

So often in genealogy, we benefit when people who are experts in their field are very generous with what they share. I was fortunate that back in the 1990s some train enthusiasts gave me copies of many of the documents and clippings that I used to write this article.

A generous group of people from the NZSG Kilbirnie Branch are currently involved in a project that is making it easier for those who have New Zealand Railway ancestors.⁹ They have been busy at the Wellington repository of Archives



**AB class engine number 816
in the Palmerston North railway yards
Submitted by Roland Penhall, May 1964
[Manawatū Heritage](#)**

New Zealand, indexing the H-6As, the Railway Service Schedules, which cover the years from 1901–1985. Archives then assign a reference number for each record. An individual's H-6A card includes personal information such as date of birth and date of marriage, as well as a record of all the positions they held. The project is still not quite finished, but you can search on Collections to see if your ancestor has been indexed yet.¹⁰

Finding out more details about this event in my father's life has been important for me, as Dad died suddenly of a heart attack in 1966 when I was eight, just a few years after this train chase.

On a recent visit back to Taranaki, I discovered that there was a way I could relive some of my childhood railway memories. The Waitara Railway Preservation Society runs public train rides periodically.¹¹ These trips curl gently uphill past the playground of my old primary school, travel under the bridge at Big Jim's Hill, and finally arrive at Lepperton. I rode their train, quietly imagining that night in March 1962 when my father was in pursuit of the steam locomotive AB 817 that had been hijacked. This was heaven for a former railway child.

Margaret Riordan
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Editor's Note: This article proves how valuable it is to attend genealogical conferences. The New Zealand Society of Genealogists will be hosting the next AFFHO Congress in February 2027—affhocongress.org/

References:

1. Service Schedule - H-6A, Riordan, James Kevin, Code R27017630, Archives NZ (Wellington repository)
2. WWII Military Records for J K Riordan were obtained from Base Records, Wellington, in the early 1990s, for a fee
3. I have uploaded a few of my father's wartime photos to the Online Cenotaph run through the Auckland Museum. www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph
4. Archives New Zealand file 'Charges for hire of Locomotives' [W2476, 20/1538 part2] copies obtained 1993. File renamed by 2025 Code R10622972, Record Number 1920/1538
5. 'Hectic chase after engine at Waitara', *Taranaki Herald*, 3 March 1962, p1
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8. 'The night they nicked loco AB 817', *The Daily News*, 7 August 1993
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10. Archives New Zealand, information page about H-6A service schedules collections.archives.govt.nz/en/web/arena/search#/entity/aims-archive/589/service-schedules---h-6as
11. Waitara Railway Preservation Society Incorporated www.waitararailway.org.nz/. Also, their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/waitara.railway/



An inherited profession: Education in the Todd family

Four generations of teaching and educational service in New Zealand

Jania Berryman

When David TODD (1843–1891) arrived in New Zealand from Glasgow in the late nineteenth century, he brought with him both professional training and a firm belief in the value of education. Educated in Glasgow with the intention of becoming a teacher, Todd spent the entirety of his New Zealand life in the teaching profession, establishing a legacy that would extend across multiple generations of his family.

Todd was appointed master of the State school at Chertsey in Canterbury, a position he held for approximately nine years. Contemporary newspaper accounts consistently describe him as a diligent and capable schoolmaster, faithful in his duties and well regarded within the community. His obituary noted that although his death at the age of 47 came after a long illness, it was nevertheless felt keenly by his family and the township he served.¹ Throughout his career, he was spoken of as a man devoted to his work and to the advancement of education in a rural setting.²

Education within the Todd household extended beyond the classroom. Todd's wife, Jane Todd (née McDONALD) (1848–

1905), served as sewing mistress at Chertsey School and was widely respected among the women of the district.^{3,4} Her practical leadership and involvement in school life complemented her husband's professional role and reinforced education as a shared family commitment.

The teaching tradition established by David Todd did not end with his death in 1891. It was carried forward most clearly by several of his children, most notably his son David Thomas Todd (1868–1927), commonly known within the family as Tom, and his daughter Isabella Margaret Todd (1873–1946), known as Maggie.

David Thomas Todd followed directly in his father's footsteps, becoming a schoolmaster and building a respected career within the New Zealand education system. Newspaper reports from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries record his appointments, transfers, and the public esteem in which he was held. Farewell functions were frequently organised upon his departure from schools, reflecting both his standing as a teacher and the importance of the schoolmaster within small communities.^{5,6}

*Image above: David and Jane Todd c 1880s (digitally enhanced by AI)
Berryman family collection*

A particularly detailed account survives from Milford, where a social gathering was held in the schoolroom to farewell Todd and his wife upon his transfer to Clandeboye. Speakers praised his qualities as a teacher and noted that inspectors' reports 'spoke for themselves'. He was also acknowledged for his wider contributions to local enterprise and community life, and both he and his wife were presented with gifts on behalf of residents.⁷ Such accounts provide valuable insight into the public role occupied by teachers in rural New Zealand at the time.

Alice Lillian Todd (née BARRETT) (1874–1939), wife of David Thomas Todd, also held a formal role within the educational sphere. She was employed as a sewing mistress, a position commonly held by women in teaching households and one that involved the instruction of girls in domestic and needlework skills. Her role reflects the continuation of educational work within the family through women whose contributions, while often less visible in official records, were integral to the functioning of schools and the moral instruction of pupils.

Alongside her brother, Isabella Margaret Todd also entered the teaching profession. She trained initially as a pupil teacher at Chertsey School while her father was headmaster and later qualified formally in Christchurch. In 1894 she received her first appointment at Longbeach School, with newspaper reports recording both her appointment and subsequent service.^{8,9} She later returned



Isabella Margaret Todd c1894
Berryman family collection

to teach at Chertsey School, working alongside her brother for a period. Her career reflects the increasing opportunities available to women within education during the late nineteenth century, while also highlighting the structured pathways governing entry into the profession.¹⁰

Educational work within the second generation was not confined to classroom teaching alone. Another daughter, Agnes Ketching Todd (1877–1961), was employed as a boarding school matron, including for a period at Wellington's Scots College.¹¹ While not a teaching role in the formal sense, the position carried significant responsibility for student welfare, supervision and moral guidance, and formed an integral part of the educational environment. Agnes's work illustrates the breadth of ways in which members of the Todd family contributed to education and student life beyond the classroom.

The third generation continued this strong association with education, though in increasingly diverse forms. Eric McDonald Todd (1896–1978), son of David Thomas Todd and Alice Lillian Todd, pursued a teaching career and rose to the position of headmaster. By the mid-twentieth century he was appointed headmaster of Runanga School, with newspaper reports recording his prior service at Kaiapoi, and earlier appointments at Linwood and Lyttelton.¹² His career reflects the professionalisation and mobility of teachers in the twentieth century, as well as the continued prominence of the Todd family within the education sector.

Not all members of the third generation were able to pursue teaching careers, despite holding the necessary qualifications. Elsie Mira JAMES (née Todd) (1900–1973), the eldest daughter of David Thomas and Alice Todd, sat her teacher examinations and appears in official examination records.^{13,14} However, family circumstances and responsibilities meant she did not pursue teaching. Her experience highlights the limitations still faced by women, particularly eldest daughters, whose domestic obligations could restrict professional opportunities despite formal qualification.

Elsie's sister, Freda Jane WATSON (née Todd) (1903–1977), is also understood to have held similar teaching qualifications, although documentary evidence of active service has not yet been identified.¹⁵ Family knowledge suggests that, like her sister, she did not pursue a long-term teaching career.

The fourth generation demonstrates both continuity and change within the family's educational tradition. Nada Olwyn WHITEHEAD (née Todd) (1924–2012), daughter of Eric McDonald Todd, became a teacher and was later photographed among the staff of Runanga School in the late 1970s.¹⁶ This image provides a rare visual record of the family's educational involvement extending well into the twentieth century and underscores the continued presence of the Todd family within West Coast education.¹⁷

Another fourth-generation descendant, Lois Freda Watson (born 1931), daughter of Freda Jane Watson, appears in the New Zealand Teachers' Register, confirming her formal registration as a teacher.¹⁸ While she represents one of the later members of the family to enter the profession, her inclusion demonstrates that the tradition of teaching

persisted for over a century following David Todd's arrival in New Zealand.

Although no known descendants from the present generation of the family have entered the teaching profession, the influence of this educational legacy remains evident. Subsequent generations have pursued professions that share strong intellectual, ethical and service-oriented foundations, including pharmacy, nursing, science, engineering and law. These careers reflect a broader continuation of values first embodied by David Todd; education, discipline, public service, and commitment to community.

Across four generations, members of the Todd family participated in New Zealand's educational history as teachers, headmasters, matrons, trainees, and qualified candidates whose circumstances shaped differing outcomes. Their collective experience offers a valuable case study of how teaching could become not merely an occupation, but a defining family tradition woven into the social fabric of New Zealand communities from the nineteenth century through to the late twentieth century.

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Jania Berryman is a descendant of the Todd family, her great-grandmother being Elsie Mira James (née Todd).

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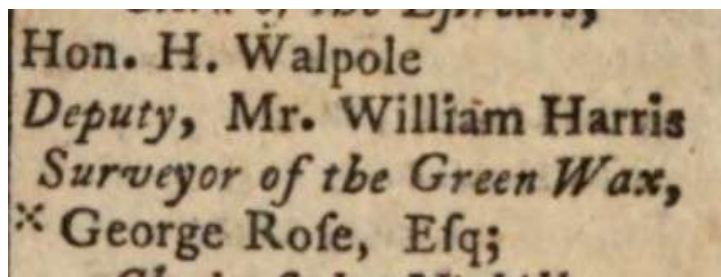


Headmaster David Thomas Todd 1896 (digitally enhanced by AI)
Berryman family collection

Surveyor of the Green Wax

Sarah Hewitt

This is an interesting occupation that I came across while looking for more on my ancestor, William HARRIS (c 1726–1804), who was Deputy to the Honourable Horace WALPOLE, fourth Earl of Orford.¹ I found William Harris listed in *The Royal Kalendar* from 1793, which has been digitised on the Hathi Trust website.² The person below William, George ROSE, had the title of 'Surveyor of the Green Wax'.



Searching for what that occupation might be was almost as entertaining as the title. The first two results were newspaper articles. One in *The York Times* and the other in the *Timaru Herald*.³ Both were exactly the same article from 1931! *The York Times* was the original publisher in August, followed quite swiftly in October by the *Timaru Herald*.

Unfortunately, the article does not really say what the job was—just that it no longer exists. But there is some amusing reading to be had on some of the other jobs that have been disestablished and others that still existed in 1931.

Many people have held the role of 'Surveyor of the Green Wax'. The 'Correspondence of Jeremy BENTHAM' notes that George Rose held the position from 1774–1797, and describes the position as:

An official in the Exchequer, was responsible for collecting so-called green wax monies, i.e. revenues derived from fines, amercements, forfeitures, and other debts owed to the Crown. The office's name arose from the colour of the seals traditionally used to authenticate the estreats by which such monies were exacted.⁴

Looking for more on Gale Newspapers, I found that the role seemed to be one that was there to annoy County Sheriffs. In 1831 the late Sheriff of Lincolnshire, Major-General JOHNSON, reported that dealing with the Court of Exchequer meant going through the convoluted processes of 'viz. the King's Remembrancer's Office, the Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer's Office, the Comptroller's Office, the Pipe Office, the Tally Office, the Curator Baron's Office, the Seal Office, the Foreign Apposer's Office, the Office of Surveyor of Green Wax, the Clerk of Estreat's Office, the First Fruits Office, the Exchequer Office, the Treasury, and the Court of Exchequer'.⁵

It is not altogether surprising that when a number of these roles, including Surveyor of the Green Wax, were disestablished in 1833, the *Morning Chronicle* noted:

Neither legal nor antiquarian knowledge could give a very satisfactory account of the duties of all these offices which the tax-consuming ingenuity of former statesmen have contrived to create for the benefit of their dependents. It should be our comfort that we have at length been released from them.⁶

Sarah Hewitt

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Theme for June 2026 Issue — Unions, Clubs and Societies

Our theme for the June 2026 issue of *The New Zealand Genealogist* is 'Unions, Clubs and Societies'.

Did you have a family member who campaigned with their union for workers' rights? Or played croquet or golf for the local club? Did your family belong to a gentlemen's club? A workingmen's club? A Masonic lodge? Plunket Mothers' Club? Were they into 'Mutual Improvement'?

What did our families do outside their working and domestic lives? Do you have a story to tell?

Make sure to look at the tips on submissions on our website [genealogy.org.nz/NZG-Editors-Notes/11168/](https://www.genealogy.org.nz/NZG-Editors-Notes/11168/) before submitting your article.

Send your submissions to editor@genealogy.org.nz by 17 April 2026.

A history of coachbuilding in Canterbury

Gordy Collingwood

During World War II, my father, Bruce Mason COLLINGWOOD, served in the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) in the Pacific Islands. He came back from the War in early 1946, and joined New Zealand Motor Bodies (NZMB) Christchurch as a Coachbuilder in February 1947. He started on the factory floor and moved around the various departments. In 1973 he became the Works Manager in charge of 100 or so workers. I have many fond memories of NZMB and my father's colleagues on my many visits there as a young lad.

It is here that my father met and became a close friend of Maurice STEVENS, grandson of William John Stevens (founder of Stevens & Sons Ltd, an early Christchurch Coachbuilding Company) and son of Herbert Sidney Stevens, who was one of the sons of Stevens & Sons. Stevens & Sons was bought out by NZMB in April 1946. Maurice had been a trimmer (upholsterer) with Stevens & Sons Ltd before the War. During the War he was based with the RNZAF in England as a navigator on sea patrol/rescue aircraft. After the War Maurice qualified as an accountant and became the NZMB Accountant and then Branch Manager in 1975.

Among the new arrivals flocking to New Zealand from England in the 1860s and 1870s were coachbuilding craftsmen whose trade had been entrenched in centuries of family history. The coaches, wagons, springcarts, cabs, tradesmen's vans, trams and drags they turned out were built to last a lifetime. They were literally works of art in their gleaming varnish, smooth, bright paintwork, dazzling brass and rich gold-leaf decoration.

Some of the men who single-handedly, or in small companies, laid the foundations of the motor-body building industry in Canterbury included:

- W Moor and Sons, Victoria Street, who had a large business, which included the building of horse-drawn vehicles and tram cars
- E Jones, Colombo Street, Sydenham, makers of spring drags and gigs
- Northern Carriage Works, Papanui Road, and Prince and James, who made passenger drags
- Trollaway Carriage Works, Victoria Street, founded by a Mr GLANVILLE in 1865, to be followed by Dutch and Bull, Trimmers, and later by Messrs C W HARRIS and A E MARRIOTT
- G W Bryant set up a business in 1878, which made trotting and training sulkies and light gigs
- H Brabner and Sons, Fitzgerald Avenue, makers of high-class carriages, with a countrywide business
- G Howland, founded in what is now Liverpool Street, who turned out a line of American Abbot buggies
- Steel Bros, founded in 1878 by Messrs J and D STEEL, had a large trade in light carriages, gigs, and tradesmen's carts, vans and lorries
- Cooper and Pryce started business in Victoria Street, and were among the very earliest motor-body builders, making bodies for: Rover, De Dion and Belsize cars

- Johnson and Smith, began in Kilmore Street in 1912 as motor body builders
- W Hunt, Sydenham, maker of good, heavy tradesmen's lorries and vans
- Boon and Stevens, a flourishing business in hansom cabs and drags. The partnership was later dissolved. Boon and Co's business carried on in High Street. Stevens & Sons (mentioned above) was founded and carried on business in Ferry Road, until taken over by New Zealand Motor Bodies Ltd.
- Others were Robertson, Curlet, Freeman, F A Drayton, C Hunton, L S Laycock and Modern Motor Bodies Ltd.¹

One of these early arrivals from England was William John Stevens. William Stevens was born in 1847 in Stewkley, Buckinghamshire, England. In the 1851 UK census his parents were Robert, a Cow/Cattle Dealer, and Mary EMMERTON.^{2,3} In the 1861 UK census William had left school and was a Cowman.⁴ In the 1871 UK census he was a Carman (a skilled worker who performs one or more operations in the building, repairing, dismantling, maintaining, and inspection of railroad cars at a station, shop, or yard).^{5,6}

In 1874 William immigrated to Christchurch, New Zealand, and married Eliza/Elizabeth EWAN on 27 May 1874, five weeks after he arrived. Eliza came from Newington Surrey and had been in New Zealand just three months. Their Intention to Marry Notice of 13 May 1874 states William's occupation as Coachbuilder.⁷

Later in 1874 William went into partnership with J R Glanville (Glanville & Stevens) in Victoria Street. William was a specialist in varnish and gold leaf work. The partnership lasted until 1877, when it was dissolved. The same year William commenced a partnership with Joseph BOON (Boon & Co.) to become Boon & Stevens. They worked out of a single-storey, wooden building on the corner of Lower High Street and St Asaph Street, Christchurch. Here they built gigs, parcel vans, dog carts, Whitechapel carts, hansom cabs, drays and hearses. By 1894 they were building tram cars. The partnership dissolved in 1898.

William carried on the business and eventually was joined by five of his sons who covered the trades of blacksmith, coachbuilding and painting (Stevens & Sons Ltd), the youngest son, Herbert, becoming manager in the early 1920s.

In the mid-1920s the factory was in full production with a staff of 80 tradesmen employed on the construction of wooden bodies for the following motor cars: Morris Oxford, Morris Cowley, Armstrong Siddeley, Singer Bantam, Rugby Durant and specials on Bentley, Bugatti and Wolseley chassis. This era ended about 1929.

In the period 1927–1929 a third building was added to the existing factory, and this was used for wooden bus building (service cars). A service car was one capable of carrying



Boon & Stevens c 1880s at 15 Lower High Street. Front row behind the sign: L to R Joseph Boon, William John Stevens

nine to 16 passengers with bench-type seating. The chassis used for these service cars were Cadillacs from the USA, which were extended to take the beech timber body.

In 1930 the company decided to diversify and engaged sales staff to sell radios, washing machines and vacuum cleaners under the trade name of 'Rolls'. This proved a very lucrative enterprise and in the late 1930s was making more profit than the factory. When Stevens & Sons was sold in 1946, Herbert Stevens took over this area, continuing to trade for many years.

During much of the Depression (1930–1934) the company ran with only a skeleton staff to keep it open. The third building, built in the late 1920s, was turned into a skating rink, then a dance hall.

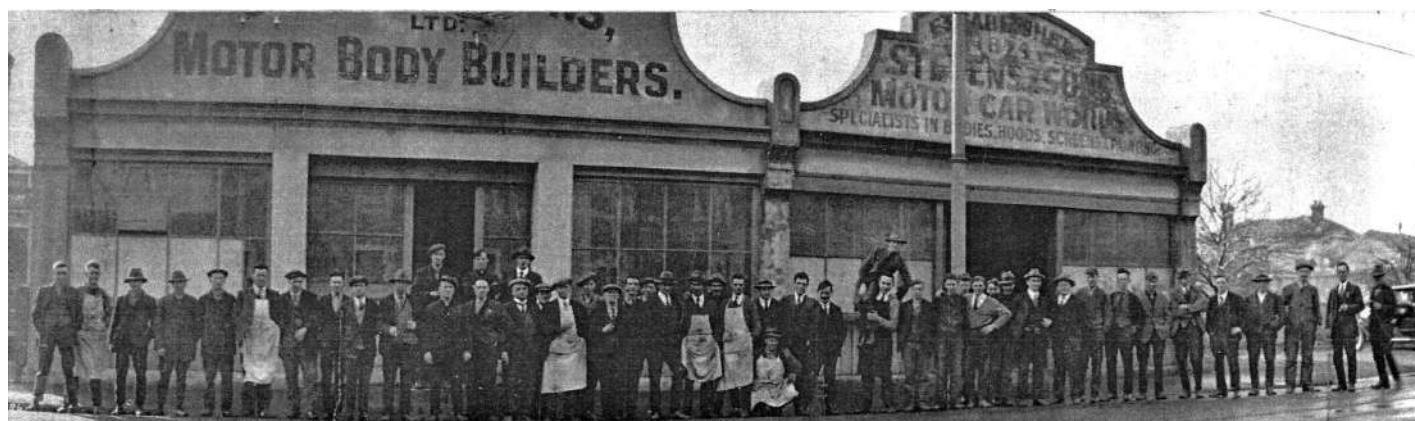
Trade started to pick up again from 1935 and the factory was split into three sections. The first section was for larger bus building with omnibuses for short haul and coaches for out-of-town work. The second section was for commercial work—light runabouts with a cab and deck, larger trucks

where decks and hoists were fitted, fire engines and hearses. The third section was in the recommissioned new factory where Morris 8s, 10s and 12s were assembled for Dominion Motors at the rate of three to eight a day, depending on the model.

Lord NUFFIELD, the founder of the Morris car, visited the assembly plant in 1937, along with Dominion Motors executives. Some Packards, Willys and Wolseleys were assembled about this time for South Island Motors.

The early days of the 1940s saw the end of the car assembly division, partly due to the War, and also a change in policy by Dominion Motors, which opened their own plant in Auckland.

During the War years the factory was classed as an essential industry and at one stage barges were built and gas masks and other equipment assembled for the Services. After the War, staff were re-engaged and work resumed on bus building and commercial work.⁸



Stevens & Sons c 1925/26 in Ferry Road

While this development in the coachbuilding industry was happening in Christchurch, in Petone, Wellington, a new coachbuilding company was established as Munt, Cottrell, Nielsen and Company Ltd in 1926, when Munt, Cottrell & Co. of Wellington and Neilsen's Body Works of Dannevirke merged. They operated out of a factory on the corner of Hutt Road and Jackson Street in Petone. The name changed to New Zealand Motor Bodies (NZMB) in 1937.

In March 1938 production was moved from building wooden frames to all-steel bodies. The first all-steel framed bus was put into service by New Zealand Road Services. The equipping of the plant for all-steel production and experience in the techniques involved were of national importance in World War II when 2500 vehicles were built for the Army and the Air Force. Included in the variety of Army vehicles were Bren gun carrier light tanks. The company also manufactured cabinets for the first Frigidaire refrigerators for General Motors in its metal pressing and fabricating department. This was the beginning of a productive association with General Motors that continued for many years.

Immediately after the War years there was a lack of work and so the company made toys for a short time. They made steel toys such as scooters, tricycles, pedal cars and others under the trade name 'Mr Mobo'. A little later on some chassis began to be available; a number of these were American truck chassis such as Mac, Ford and others. These were extended and modified for bus bodies.

NZMB decided that post-War the company would specialise in bus and coach body construction, and it was also decided to develop an all-metal body for New Zealand conditions. This was seen as a start to standardising quantity production and to allow a greater use of semi-skilled labour. The early NZMB all-metal bus bodies were rigidly mounted, but in 1947 a special flexible rubber mounting was designed and patented by the company. This was to minimise vibration, improve riding comfort, to give longer body life and, of prime importance also, was a desire to increase the safety level for passengers.⁹

Demand for NZMB metal-framed bus bodies increased rapidly. In April 1946 a factory was established in

Christchurch to assemble bodies for the South Island. The business quickly outgrew the first premises of old army buildings owned by New Zealand Road Services in Tuam Street, and in October of that year Stevens & Sons Ltd purchased a property in Ferry Road. Their factory was extended and modified to cover 30,000 square feet. The factory was transformed into a mass production plant, with wooden bodies being phased out within six months. Several of the tradesman bodybuilders terminated their employment, as firstly they did not want to work on 'tin cans', and secondly were concerned that at the production rate of one per week, it would not be long before the market would be saturated. A car repair division was set up in Tuam Street but lasted only 12 months due to economic conditions, and all staff returned to Ferry Road.

In 1948 it became evident that the Petone plant (established in 1926) could not cope with production for all of the North Island, and so a factory was established in Panmure, Auckland. This was outgrown, and the move to a newly completed factory in Mt Wellington, on a five-acre site, took place in 1957. The new factory covered 45,000 square feet.

About this time extensive alterations were made to the Petone plant to cover 80,000 square feet. By 1960 NZMB had 155,000 sq. ft of factory space, 250 employees and an overall production capacity of 200 bus and coach bodies per year. This output supplied over 80 per cent of the country's requirements.

It was then decided to expand into other areas. A car assembly division was established in the Auckland plant, and a contract was signed to manufacture body parts for Land Rovers at Petone. The Rover association led to an agreement in 1964 for NZMB to assemble Land Rovers in Auckland. To do this, a further 38,000 square feet was added to the factory which completed the coverage of the original five-acre section. An adjoining four and a half acres was purchased to provide expansion.

In 1969 an agreement was signed with General Motors to assemble Bedford light commercials and Holden utilities at the rate of 13 finished units per day. By 1976 NZMB had a total factory space of 200,000 sq. ft. and 550 employees. It



*L to R: My father (Bruce Collingwood), with Albert from Hess, with a sample of the aluminium section used in the Hess construction, c 1979
Collingwood family collection*



*Christchurch Transport Board Hess Bus Bodywork
built under licence by NZMB*

was then decided that the Petone building had served its useful purpose and to move to Palmerston North. Twelve acres of land was purchased, and stage one of the factory was commenced. The staff moved into the new premises in Keith Street in October 1977, with stage two being completed in November 1978. The plant covered 18,000 sq. m (194,000 square feet).

In 1979 production radically changed to all aluminium welded bodies. This was a design from Carrosserie HESS AG using aluminium sections from Alusuisse in Switzerland. Omnibuses were built for the Christchurch Transport Board and the Dunedin City Council.¹⁰

Owing to a downturn in the industry, it was decided to close the Christchurch branch of NZMB prior to Christmas 1980, with Palmerston North being the only remaining plant. After the Christchurch closure my father led a team to strip out all the fittings and equipment, and this, along with all the remaining parts and uncompleted buses, were sent to Palmerston North. Just before the closure, my father was offered a six-month position in Singapore supervising the building of a fleet of buses, but he turned that down. By the time the plant had been gutted in April 1981 he was 60, so it was time to retire, albeit earlier than he had originally planned.

In 1983 NZMB merged with competitor Hawke Coachwork to form Coachwork International, owned by Moller Corporation and Newmans. Production continued at the Palmerston North plant, while Hawke's plant in Takanini was retained, specialising in building and repairing buses for city authorities. In 1988 Coachwork International was

purchased by Jaguar Rover Australia. With the impending end of tariff protection allowing imports, Jaguar Rover Australia was placed in administration. The liquidators, Deloitte & Touche, received no offers to purchase the business, with all operations ceasing in June 1993. The only coachbuilding plant left in New Zealand at that time was Designline Engineering, based in Ashburton. Designline Engineering carried on until 2011 when it ceased trading. This was the end of the New Zealand coachbuilding industry for mass-produced buses and coaches, with everything being imported from China and Japan after that time.

Gordy Collingwood

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December 1980: Some of the remaining staff of NZMB at the time of the closure (Maurice Stevens is in front on the bicycle, my father (Bruce Collingwood) is in the back row, fifth from the left

My ancestor was a civil servant

Dennis Bush-King

The title of this article may have attracted your attention or put you off, depending on your perspective. I did consider an alternative title *The Royal Kalendar: A Genealogist's Window into Bureaucratic Britain*, because this record source has proved invaluable in tracing my 3x great-grandfather's work history.¹

This annually published almanack and directory, first appearing in 1767 and continuing through to 1890, lists government and civil service appointments across Britain. It offers rich detail, especially if you are researching ancestors who were civil servants, military officers, Anglican clergy, diplomats or held Royal appointments.

Originally published by J ALMON, and later by others, including J DEBRET and W STOCKDALE, the *Royal Kalendar* offers more than a roll-call of government personnel. It outlines not only names, ranks and roles of individuals in public office, but also gives insight into the structure and hierarchy of the State Departments, royal household and other agencies. It also gives an understanding of social networks revealed by other sources.

Using this record and related Parliamentary papers, I was able to construct the career of James KING, my 3x great-

grandfather, born in Paisley, Scotland, in 1775. By 1794 he had moved to London and was a junior clerk in the Office of Woods and Forests.

Crown land revenues were once collected by county sheriffs and accountants, known as escheators, who submitted payments to the Exchequer. Following the Reformation, Henry VIII assumed control of monastic lands, managed through bodies like the Court of Augmentations and the Court of General Surveyors of Crown lands. These were supported by the Board of Works.

In 1781 the Board of Works was abolished, and the royal buildings and other estates were placed under the direction of a Surveyor-General.

The Office of Woods and Forests and Land Revenues ('the Office') was formally established in 1810 as a Treasury department. The Office was headed by a Board of Commissioners appointed by the Crown on government advice. From 1810 to 1832 the Board comprised a government minister and two permanent officials. From 1832, and beyond James's employment until 1851, the Board included two Government Ministers and a permanent official. The Office was supported by an array of civil servants with titles such as receivers, comptrollers, surveyors, rangers, and keepers of the King's private roads, bridges, waters and gardens, and a bevy of clerks—extra, junior, senior, principal and chief.

The general business of the Office was the care and management of the ancient hereditary possessions of the Crown, consisting of forests, waters, parks, manors, landed estates, houses and public buildings, excluding military and Royal Household properties like Balmoral and Sandringham.

The portfolio was large, and the Office had both revenue-producing and spending functions. The land revenues were substantial, and the provision of timber to the Navy was vitally important in an era of wooden warships. The Government relied on the income stream to remain operational, and following the Napoleonic Wars, the work of the Office was central to the Government's public works and job creation programmes. The Office was also responsible for the provision of accommodation for government departments.

The history of the Office, however, was never far from criticism—reviews and investigations were frequent. In 1849 (after James's retirement) it was accused of incompetence, wastefulness and even fraud but the sentiments were consistent before this, focusing on dishonesty and nepotism. Yet others defended the Office claiming that things were much improved and that, unlike other branches of Government, the Office did not have the 'advantage of a disciplined phalanx to support them'.² Possibly this was faint praise.

Left: Copy of page 133 of the 1836 edition
of the *Royal Kalendar*

1836.] — 133

PUBLIC OFFICES.

OFFICE of HIS MAJESTY'S WOODS, FORESTS, LAND REVENUES, WORKS, and BUILDINGS, Whitehall Place.

Commissioners, Lord DUNCANSON, Sir Benj. C. STEPHENSON, K. G. H. and Alexander MILNE, esq.

DEPARTMENT of WOODS, FORESTS, AND LAND REVENUES. (For England and Wales.)

Chief Clerk, James KING, esq.

Prin. Clerk, William N. ROUND, esq.

Senior Clerks, Geo. CORNELL, John WALLER, William DRAKE WHITE, Rich. R. MUDGE, —esqrs.

Assistant Clerks, Thomas H. ROSE, Webb TOTBILL, Hy. A. WALKER, William ADAMS, esqrs.

Junior Clerks, Messrs. Robt. BROWN, Mayow W. ADAMS, Hy. B. ADAMS, William S. PHIPPS, Robert MARYMAN, Thomas DAVIDSON.

Clerk to the Board, and Private Secretary to 1st Commissioner, TRENHAM W. PHILLIPS, esq.

Itinerant Deputy Surveyor of Woods and Works, EDWARD JESSE, esq.

Surveyors of Houses, THOS. CHAWNER, Henry RHODES, —esqrs.

Clerk to the Commissioners for paving the Regent's-park, &c. WILLIAM ADAMS, esq.

(For Ireland and Scotland.)

Principal Clerk in London, JAMES WEALE, esq.

Senior Clerk, RICHARD ROTTON, esq.

Clerk of the Irish Quit Rents in Dublin, J. BURKE, esq.

DEPARTMENT of WORKS and BUILDINGS. (In England.)

Surveyor of Works and Buildings, Henry HAKE SEWARD, esq.

Assistant ditto, John PHIPPS, esq.

Professional Clerks, Mr. WILLIAM, B. BARKER, Mr. Hen. J. ROBINSON, J. BEDDAR, WILLIAM SMITH.

Clerk of the Furniture, Mr. James R. S. COX.

Engraving and Copying Clerk, Mr. W. WYATT.

Clerks of the Works, Messrs. Adam LEE, Will. CRAIB, James MORRIS, Rich. WHIBLEY, THOS. PULMAN, John BUSHER, G. J. ROBINSON, John FORTUNE, THOS. HEATH.

Turncocks, John SMITH, and Henry SMITH.

Office-Keeper, NICHOLAS CHOVEAUX.

Door-Keeper, JOHN BOSWELL.

Messengers, J. HODGKINS, W. SICKLEN, M. JONES, J. BRYAN.

(In Scotland.)

Master of the Works, Robt. REID, esq.

Clerks, Messrs. J. RAEBURN, J. MILLAR.

RECEIVERS of CROWN RENTS.

County of MIDDLESEX, City of London, and Bailiwick of St. James's, Westminster, John KIRKLAND, esq. 80, Pall Mall; Will. D. WHITE, esq. 2, Whitehall-place.

Essex, Hertford, Huntingdon, Kent, Sussex, Worcester, Bedford, Bucks, Oxford, Berks, Hants, Wilts, Warwick, Leicester, Stafford, Hereford, Salop and Gloucester, Messrs. EDWARD DRIVER, and GEORGE N. DRIVER, Richmond-terrace.

York and Nottingham, John BOWER, esq. Smeathalls, Ferrybridge.

Surrey, Samuel KENDALL, esq. Weybridge.

Lincoln, Cambridge and Northampton, William CUSTANCE, esq. Cambridge.

Derby, Josiah FAIRBANK, esq. Springhill, Sheffield.

As with many a rumour, there is often some truth to be found. The problem the Office faced was that much of the work was carried out across the country by agents who acted independently. The complexity and diversity of the portfolio, especially in the days before computers, and some very strong-willed individuals such as the aristocracy and some architects and gardeners, made the task of managing the Crown estates a challenging one. It was easy for the actions of a few to tarnish the character of many. In 1829, for example, two salaried employees collected £80,000 compared to the £35,000 collected by a predecessor who received a 5 per cent commission 'for his trouble in collecting and receiving same'.³ Was James one of these two employees?

Any investigation into the history of the Office will reveal evidence of misappropriation of public money through improper or incompetent conduct or deliberate enrichment by dishonest persons. Wells records how Royal forests were disposed of to 'powerful individuals ... without adequate consideration'. He presents cases where expenditure, for no obvious reason, exceeds income and questions why some projects took an inordinately long time to complete.⁴

To what extent the staff, such as James, were implicated in the allegations of impropriety or mismanagement is hard to evaluate so many years later. An 1833 House of Commons Committee recommended reviewing how some of the local agents were appointed to manage Crown properties and the expenses incurred in their upkeep. It seems that even if the staff acted with the integrity and professionalism expected, they 'encountered great difficulties and obstacles in high and influential quarters'.⁵ James began his civil service in July 1794 at age 19, appointed personally by the Surveyor-General, John FORDYCE. His employment was conditional on Fordyce's satisfaction, making job security tenuous.

John Fordyce was the first of six Surveyors-General James worked under. He was also a Scot and well experienced in property matters, having been a successful Receiver-General of Land Revenues in Scotland. Whether there was any familial connection that facilitated James's entry into government is still a mystery.⁶

James's starting annual salary in 1794 was £120 and he joined a department of 10 staff.⁷ The early years of his career saw him progress quickly; by 1797, he was designated as a third clerk, a position he held through to 1799, during which time the Office grew in size to 11 staff.

From 1799 to 1808 James served as a clerk, continuing to earn £120 annually. This period reflects a stable but foundational phase of his career, during which the Office staff remained around 10 to 11 in number—suggesting a tightly run, relatively lean organisation.

In 1809 James became Registrar with an increased salary of £430 and simultaneously served as Secretary to the Surveyor-General, John Fordyce, earning an extra £70 annually. These appointments signalled not only the department's growing complexity but also James's role within it.

In 1810, his responsibilities expanded further when he was appointed Receiver of Land Revenue, continuing until 1812. Office staff numbers grew to 14. His combined roles during

this period suggest a high degree of trust in his administrative capabilities, even after the death of his patron, Fordyce.

James became Senior Clerk in 1814, earning £600 by 1821. Staff numbers rose to 26, reflecting the increased bureaucratic demands of the Crown's landholdings. In 1822, amidst Treasury directives to all government departments to reduce their establishment, 'providing for the efficient execution of the duties ... at the smallest expense to the public', James's salary was reduced to £450 a year. The cut did not apply retroactively because of his seniority and incumbency, thanks to the intervention of the commissioners.

In 1823 he was promoted to Principal Clerk, one of two, and maintained this role through to 1831. During this time, the Office expanded to 36 staff. Though specific salary records for some years are absent, the regularity of his title suggests he sustained his leadership role during a period of organisational expansion and change.

In 1831 James reached the pinnacle of his career when he became the Chief Clerk—the highest-ranking administrative officer beneath the department's political heads. In 1834, and again in 1838, he is recorded with a salary of £800, a significant sum reflecting his rank and responsibility. Throughout the 1830s and early 1840s, the staff numbered between 24 and 35.

James remained Chief Clerk until 1844. By 1845, he is absent from records, indicating his retirement—bringing to a close a 51-year public service career. Within a department attached to the Treasury, he advanced through the ranks under a merit-based system that rewarded 'ability, attention, care and diligence of the respective clerks', rather than solely on seniority or 'sinecures'.⁸ To attain and hold the position of Chief Clerk for 13 years—a role akin to secretary or deputy secretary—he would have needed to demonstrate administrative expertise, political acumen, strong management and leadership competencies.

As Chief Clerk, James was tasked with representing the Department as its principal officer. He played a significant role in the 1832 restructuring that incorporated the Works portfolio into the Office, although this change did not alleviate criticism or enhance the Office's reputation in certain quarters. In 1834 he testified before a Parliamentary Select Committee investigating the management of lighthouses in the United Kingdom.⁹ Private individuals who owned lighthouses were profiting substantially. They only remitted funds to the commissioners of woods and forests after deducting all their expenses, which were also substantial. Despite revenue flowing in, the system seemed indifferent to whether it was operating transparently and efficiently.

James likely received more than the base salary for each position. Annual increments were typically paid up to a maximum cap, provided conduct was acceptable. Given that James was Chief Clerk for 13 years, he might have had an annual salary as high as £1000 before retirement. By modern standards, James was well compensated and significantly out-earned most other workers of his time. The salary he enjoyed when he retired determined his pension and given that he was entitled to one-sixtieth of his active service salary for each year of service up to 40 years, he would

have lived comfortably. Unfortunately, he died six years after retirement in 1850.

When James first joined the Office in 1794 it was located in a house in Scotland Yard, but it moved into new premises in Whitehall in 1795. No. 1 Whitehall Place housed the Surveyor-General and no. 2 was the Office. By 1830, both addresses were fully dedicated to Office functions.¹⁰

Reviewing various annual reports to Parliament, James was involved not only in collecting rentals from the Crown estate and managing sales of Crown property interests, but also in numerous significant property transactions that are now part of the fabric of London and other cities across the United Kingdom. These London developments or redevelopments included Green Park, St James' Park, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Trafalgar Square, Charing Cross, Regent Street, Regent's Park, The Strand, Downing Street, and the transformation of Park Lane, previously 'the resort of idle and disorderly persons'.¹¹

The return of Marylebone Park from the Duke of Portland to the Crown in 1811 marked the beginning of major urban planning initiatives by renowned architect John NASH, associated with the Office since 1806. These initiatives aimed to foster commercial opportunities and improve access to Westminster, 'particularly for higher classes of the public'. In 1819 the Office invested nearly £1 million in road-widening projects around Pall Mall, Portland Place, Charles Street, and Jermyn Street, involving the removal of 785 houses with 308 remaining to be purchased by year end.¹²

Further enhancements were planned in 1826 focusing on creating 'a more commodious access from the Houses of Parliament, Courts of Law, and Public Departments, to the British Museum and the numerous and respectably occupied new buildings in this part of the Metropolis in which the great National Repository is now to be permanently established'.¹³ James lived in the same area, potentially benefiting from the improved infrastructure.

On 16 October 1834, the Palace of Westminster, serving as the Houses of Parliament, suffered extensive fire damage.¹⁴ The Office organised a design competition and although reconstruction extended beyond James's retirement, he played a part in the early planning.

James rose to the highest civil service rank in the Office, overseeing a vast property portfolio which saw great administrative change. Considering the pervasive innuendo and criticism associated with the Office of Woods, Forests, and Land Revenue, one wonders how James navigated these challenges. Was he like 'Sir Humphrey'—possessing an unwavering confidence in his own abilities and an answer for everything? Did he exemplify the quintessential British civil servant of the Victorian era, known for pursuing an 'honourable profession ... practically incorruptible honesty, and integrity'?¹⁵

Postscript

New Zealand's equivalent to the *Royal Kalendar* are the so-called 'Stud Books', the colloquial name for the Civil Service List or Public Service List. It too was regularly published and listed all public servants, their department, position, sex, appointment dates, promotions, and salary. Reforms

under the Public Service Act 1912 aimed to create a merit-based, politically neutral civil service overseen by the Public Service Commissioner. The Stud Books served as the record for who was employed and allowed some oversight over the recruitment, promotion, and retirement of public servants. It also meant that civil servants could find out the employment history and salary of their peers.¹⁶

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Tinker, tailor ... doctor!

Pat Liddell

While scrolling through various census records, baptism records, and marriage banns of my ancestors, many occupations presented themselves: master mariners, shipwrights, blacksmiths, carpenters, hairdressers, and the inevitable agricultural labourers. However, I now realise I have a lot of tailors in my maternal line and trying to chart them through the generations and extended families has been a tricky exercise.

My first introduction to my maternal ALSOP family was in Newbury, Berkshire, where they are listed in various records as tailors and drapers.

Historically, the town of Newbury's economic foundation was the cloth trade.¹ This is reflected in the person of the sixteenth-century cloth magnate, Jack of Newbury, the proprietor of what may well have been the first factory in England, and the later tale of the Newbury Coat. The latter was the outcome of a bet as to whether a gentleman's suit could be produced by the end of the day from wool taken from a sheep's back at the beginning of the day. This production of cloth would lend itself to the business of tailoring and this is where my family comes in.

Mainly using census records and marriage banns, I have collated the Alsop family members listed as tailors.

Starting with **1.** George Alsop (c 1796–1844)—on the 1841 census, he is a Taylor [sic] and notably is not born in England.

George and his wife, Sarah née GOUGH, are resident in Newbury in Hardings Buildings in the 1830 edition of *Pigot's Directory*. In that directory, there are 19 names of tailors and drapers. Of the 19, seven are also drapers.

Bartholomew and Northcote Streets are heavily represented in *Pigot's Directory*. George and Sarah reside at 49 Northcote Street with their family of seven children. By then, though, eldest son James, aged 15, is a tailor's apprentice in Castle Street, St Martin-in-the-Fields, London.

Sarah Gough was the daughter of Richard Gough indentured as a tailor's apprentice in 1789. In the 1851 census, Sarah is a widow with only Richard and James, both listed as tailors, living with her, and a niece, Ellen, aged four.

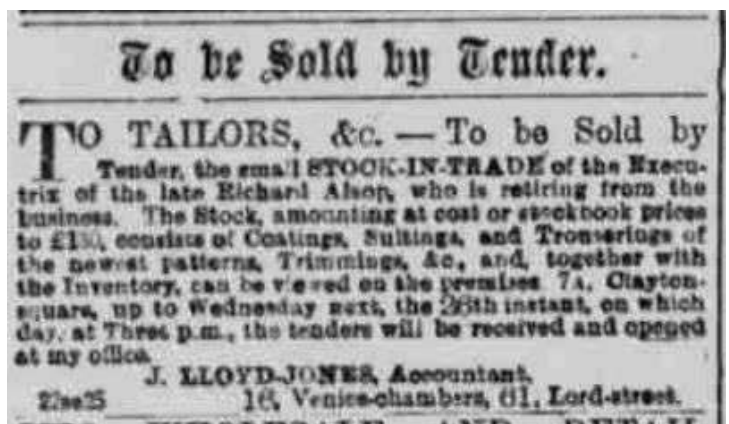
Tailoring should have been a lucrative business— when George died in 1844, the coroner returned a verdict on his death: 'visitation of God', his heart having stopped after eating a hearty meal. However, he left 13 children (so far, I

have only documented 11), and Sarah, a widow, all unprovided for.

Of their five sons three of generation **2** were also tailors:

Sons of George Alsop (1796–1844):

- a.** James Alsop (1823–1879) is a tailor according to censuses through to 1871, and on his marriage banns in 1859, when he married Harriet DEACON. So far, I have not found any evidence of issue.
- b.** George Alsop (1826–1882) is a tailor according to the 1851 census, he and his wife Sarah CURTIS residing in Westminster, London. He also has two sons and a daughter in the tailoring business.
- c.** Richard Benjamin Alsop (1831–1879) is a tailor in Liverpool. In 1879 Richard, my great-grandfather, died of apoplexy when my grandfather Alfred was only a few weeks old. I have recorded part of their story and so far, of the nine children, none of the three sons were tailors, although one daughter, Eleanor, was a dressmaker (1891 census). The widowed mother, Sarah Alsop, née GASKELL, carried on the tailoring business for around 10 years before placing advertisements in the newspaper for the sale of 'stock in trade to be sold by tender, including coatings, suitings and trouserings'. Sarah then became a licensed victualler in Liverpool.



Generation **3** of Alsop tailors:

- a.** George's (1826–1888) firstborn son, George Alfred Alsop (1856–?) is a tailor's assistant at 14 years of age. In the 1891 census, two nieces reside with George and his wife Annabella: Francis and Annabella CARSWELL. Annabella Carswell is listed as a dressmaker. Annabella MURRAY (George's wife), born in Lancashire, was the daughter of an Irish tailor and draper; her brother John was also a tailor. The later 1911 census shows George and Annabella's two sons described as tailors: George Alfred and Charles Leslie; their father, George, is still a tailor at the age of 64 in the 1921 census, listed as an employer in premises in Commerce Court, Lord Street, Liverpool. Commerce Court was a group of buildings at the rear of Lord Molyneux House. Built in the late seventeenth century for Lord Molyneux, and featuring his coat-of-arms, this townhouse would survive for 250 years before being destroyed by enemy bombs in the Liverpool Blitz of May 1941. From

before 1705 to the 1940s, the building had often been home to some of the town's leading jewellery manufacturers, and, I imagine, talented tailors.

b. The second son, Charles Thomas Alsop (1861–?), is a tailor in Westminster in the 1881 census.

c. Frederick William Alsop (1866–1954) is a civil service messenger in the 1881 census, and in the 1891 census he is a commercial clerk.

d. Annie Marie Alsop (1867–1951) is a dressmaker apprentice at 14 years of age in the 1881 census, and in a later census is described as a dressmaker, until she marries, then assumes unpaid household duties. Her daughter, Edith, listed in the 1911 census at the age of 18 is a dressmaker, so the mother has passed on her skills.

I do not know whether my ancestors would have done their work by hand, a tedious and time-consuming enterprise, however someone started thinking about trying to make the work easier by inventing a machine. The most successful one after many attempts was in 1851 when Isaac Singer built his well-known machine with a foot pedal and the up and down needle.

No more tailors have been found in the Alsop family. However, on a holiday in the UK a few years ago, we happened upon a very large portrait in a gallery in London and spotted this huge painting of Henry VIII with some of his courtiers. Tucked into the back left-hand corner, the name Alsop was seen captioned to one of the courtiers.

Titled 'King Henry the Eighth and The Barber Surgeons', the picture shows Henry VIII handing over a charter to Thomas VICARY, commemorating the joining of the Barbers and Surgeons Guilds, 1541, Hans HOLBEIN (Thomas Alsop extreme left). Believe me, the name is there; you will need

a magnifying glass to see it in this context. The actual portrait was more than life-size.

Thomas Alsop appears as the last figure on the right of the King. Tall, good-looking, with an oval face and hazel eyes, Alsop would have attracted attention in any company. He wears a fur-edged robe and a gold chain, perhaps a gift from his royal master.

I immediately claimed him as an ancestor and, using my Ancestry family tree, I leapfrogged the name Alsop, going back from my 2x great-grandfather and, using increments of 25 years or so, took my line back to Thomas Alsop, apothecary to King Henry VIII.

By 1540 Thomas Alsop had become chief apothecary to Henry VIII with the title of 'Gentleman Apothecary'.² Alsop was paid £6 13s 4d (10 marks) each quarter. His accounts are a valuable commentary on the practice of pharmacy in the middle of the sixteenth century. After the death of Henry VIII in 1547, Thomas Alsop went on to attend Edward VI, who was known to be a sickly child. The whole account totalled £127 3s 2d for the six months—Edward VI paid the first £100 at the end of May in the same year it was submitted (1547), and the balance at the end of June. Henry VIII did not forget Alsop's services. Under his Will, Alsop received 100 marks (£66 13s 4d). During Edward's reign Alsop retained the title of Serjeant of the Confectionary.

Thomas Alsop, described in the records of the City of London as 'grocer', became a Warden of the Grocers' Company in 1552 and remained a member of their Court of Assistants until 1557. Most apothecaries in London were, at that time, members of the Grocers' Company, though a



'King Henry the Eighth and The Barber Surgeons' Hans Holbein
barberscompany.org/the-holbein/

distinct section of it. Not until 1617 were they able to separate from the Grocers and form their own company or 'Society of Apothecaries of London', as they are more correctly styled. He profited, as did many of the servants of Henry VIII, when lands and houses belonging to monasteries and other Church establishments were



*Thomas Alsop. Etching after B. Baron after H. Holbein.
Wellcome Collection. Source: [Wellcome Collection](#).*

sequestered under the Act of 1537. In 1539 we find him and his wife Anne paying £285 for a grant of eight tenements in the parish of St Stephen, Walbrook, London.

Thomas Alsop died on 16 January 1558, and at the Inquisition Post Mortem on his estate two months later, these properties were enumerated, and reference was made to his service to his King. The properties carried the obligation of the twentieth part of a knight's service (then commuted for cash) and a yearly rent of five shillings. Thomas Alsop held other important properties in the City of London, in Deptford and in Greenwich. Their annual value was assessed at the Inquisition at £55, a considerable estate at that time. By his Will, he left his wife a life interest, with reversion to his nephews and to his wife's son by a former marriage.

Over the intervening time I have filled in a few gaps, charting the line back to Tudor times, but of course I have no definite proof that he is mine.

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- Find their local Branch or Interest Group
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This collection was set up as a repository for certificates that members had obtained, but found to be unrelated to their research. We now accept certificates and miscellaneous documents of any kind whether they are related or unrelated to your research. We welcome further contributions.

Certificates can be accessed either through our online email service or through our postal service. Details on how to access these are available on our website. An index is included in the Kiwi Collection.

First Families

First Families is a collection of information about families, where the family emigrated to New Zealand before and including 1901 and where partners were married in New Zealand before and including 1901.

An index has been compiled from family record sheets, contributed by both members of the NZSG and non-members. Each family record sheet includes the names of three generations and their spouses where known. It can include parents who may not have come to New Zealand, thus bridging the gap between New Zealand and the country of origin.

Surnames can be searched by members in the database accessible on the First Families page on the website. An index and images are also included in the Kiwi Collection.

Pre-1856 New Zealand Marriage Records

This is a collection of New Zealand marriages that took place before compulsory civil registration. The collection contains over 28,500 entries from sources including civil registration entries, church records, newspaper notices, family and social history publications, Māori Mission records, Bible entries, ministers' diary and journal entries and submissions from NZSG members to name a few.

Access is through Research Services or by subscription to the Kiwi Collection. Contributions can be made through a form available online which can be emailed or posted to us.

Pedigree Registration

This is a collection of Pedigree Registration forms submitted by members. Every surname on the forms is indexed. These names appear in the Kiwi Collection.

An online search request form is on our website. A contribution form can also be found there. Please note the submission requirements.

Funeral Service Sheets

One of our newer Collections, Funeral Service Sheets are collected by members all over the country. An index is included in the Kiwi Collection. Access is through Research Services.

NZSG (Griffis) Illegitimacies

This collection is a name-searchable database involving illegitimate births in New Zealand between 1877 and 1950 that were available in public records, either at local court houses or National Archives. Virtually all of these records have now been transferred to Archives New Zealand.

The database includes details of the child (if named) the mother and the father, the location of the event, the record type and repository. Query results provide basic information only. Researchers are encouraged to go back to the original source record for fuller details.

Access is only to records more than 100 years old and is through Research Services or by subscription to the Kiwi Collection.

New Zealand Cemeteries

We have produced cemetery transcriptions for approximately 1400 cemeteries nationwide, for burials from 1812 through to 2020. Most municipal cemeteries are included, but a significant proportion of this collection includes private cemeteries, Māori Urupa and remote burial locations. Access is through Research Services or by subscription to the Kiwi Collection.

Obituaries Collection

This collection includes contributions from members nationwide from sources such as national and regional newspapers, club newsletters and periodicals. An index is included in the Kiwi Collection. Access details are on our website.

School Records

These records are a valuable resource for family historians because they not only put families together in local communities, but allow us to trace their movements from place to place. The NZSG has been transcribing and indexing school APW (Admission, Progress and Withdrawal) records from their earliest beginnings and over time has accumulated records for almost 2000 schools nationwide dating from 1858 to present time.

An index is available on the Kiwi Collection. Access is through our NZSG School Records Officer— see website for current details, or by subscription to the Kiwi Collection.

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The Kiwi Collection is our major database of more than 16 million New Zealand sources, including indexes to many of our collections, as well as images for an increasing number of datasets. The Kiwi Collection is an online, subscription-based service available exclusively to NZSG members. See the online shop for details on how to subscribe.

Shipping Collection Project

Launched in May 2024, this collection aims to collect information on every voyage to, from and around New Zealand up to 1920. The project will be conducted over four phases to ensure as much information as possible is collected.

See our website for more information on progress.

An apothecary ancestor in Leith, 1820–1847

Antonia Jones

My 3x great-grandfather, Lewis McDONALD (1778–1847), was born in Banffshire, Scotland. There are no records of him until 1807, when, at the age of 29, he joined the local Inverness-shire Militia for a term of five years.¹ Militias were being raised all over Britain for defence purposes as Napoleon and his armies became a threat to the country in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Lewis was paid a shilling a day with extra allowances for beer and for being on the march. Sensibly, he chose payment instead of beer.

After his initial training near Nairn, Lewis was stationed in Edinburgh and mustered at the Castle until 1809. He was moved around after that, to Musselburgh Barracks on the coast, then later to Fort Cumberland and Hilsea, a few miles north of Portsmouth, until March 1810. Then he was transferred to Portsea and stationed there until his official discharge in December 1812. He was now 34. He had spent five years in the militia.

A document preserved in family records shows that on 12 June 1816, he was admitted as 'Burgess and Freeman of New Galloway' in the south-west of Scotland. It is possible that he started up a business of some sort, having perhaps accumulated enough savings over five years to do so. Lewis married Sophia MUNRO in 1819. They had one daughter, Isabella, in 1820.² In the same year, Lewis began a five-year apprenticeship as a 'servant' at the Royal Infirmary, which was founded in 1769. The Infirmary was also known as the 'Hospital for the Sick Poor' and was paid for by public funds. It became a major teaching hospital and medical centre.

At that time, the term servant was used for a state of training somewhere between an apprentice and a burgess (a freeman of a burgh with specific rights to trade). An apprentice apothecary was expected to train under a Master Apothecary, live with the Master and learn the trade through work in an apothecary shop. However, as Lewis was married and had three children by the end of his

apprenticeship, he would have lived in his own household while also attending lectures and learning the ins and outs of the profession. By 1825 he was ready to practise. At that time, an apothecary required a licence under the Apothecaries Act of 1815, but the Act applied only in England and Wales. In Scotland, unlike in England, there was no statutory restriction preventing apothecaries from practising medicine, and in many cases, they often functioned as general medical practitioners, particularly if they had surgical training. They were primarily responsible for preparing and dispensing medicines, but many also diagnosed and treated patients.³

The traditional distinctions between physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries existed in Scotland as they did in England. Physicians were university-educated and practised mainly in the cities. Their role was as consultants, diagnosing disease and prescribing treatment. Surgeons were the mainstay of medical practice, combining surgery, medicine and obstetrics, in both town and country areas. They were trained through a hybrid system combining apprenticeship, university teaching, and hospital-based clinical instruction. Apothecaries, by contrast, were trained by apprenticeship and operated from shop premises. Scottish apothecaries diagnosed illness and prepared medicines, advising and treating patients across all social classes. However, particularly outside the major cities, apothecaries often provided the first—and sometimes only—medical care available.⁴

Lewis McDonald's training consisted of both theoretical and practical experience. He studied *Materia Medica*, the science or study of drugs in pharmacological medicine. He learned how to recognise and prepare compounds using chemical substances, essential for both drug formulation and toxicology. He studied herbs and plants, often involving work in a botanic garden, to learn how to identify those with medicinal properties and to prepare traditional remedies from them. As well as this 'hands-on' experience, he attended lectures from various physicians, surgeons and other instructors at the University of Edinburgh Medical School. He went to classes and, as the tutor dictated the details for making medications or wrote them on a blackboard, he copied down the formula for each remedy. Each one was duly checked and initialled by the tutor. His working notebook full of hand-written formulae became an essential part of his work, which was added to over time.⁵ He gained clinical experience by 'walking the wards', like the modern 'grand rounds', with exposure to patients and their conditions, and learning from the diagnoses of the attending physicians.

Both his notebook and another continued by his eldest son, William (1822–1897), who inherited the business and later became a surgeon, have survived, passed down through descendants. They are a fascinating insight into the ills and remedies of the first half of the nineteenth century. There are 160 pages in the first notebook that Lewis used, and 74 pages in the second notebook. The notebooks are pocket-sized, easily carried and consulted, though there is no index



*The old Edinburgh Royal Infirmary
(from Old and new Edinburgh, Vol. 2, p300)*

to either of them. Several family members now have copies.^{6,7}

Lewis McDonald fits squarely within this tradition of the Scottish working apothecary, often also called a druggist in Scottish sources. As well as preparing and dispensing herbal and chemical remedies for physicians, surgeons and the general public, in practice, men like McDonald did far more than simply make up prescriptions. They gave everyday medical advice for common complaints such as toothache, skin rashes and coughs, and treated conditions that would in later years be handled by general or specialist practitioners, such as palsy and croup.



The Kirkgate
(from *Old and new Edinburgh*, Vol. 2, p213)

The Edinburgh directories online between 1829 to 1847 show that Lewis established a business in the thriving area of Kirkgate, Leith.⁸ He had premises at no. 106 from about 1830 to 1840 and then moved to no. 102 Kirkgate. He chose his area well. The Kirkgate in Leith was the main road between Leith and the busy harbour. It was a central area with many small businesses and shops and was surrounded by densely populated tenements. A vibrant working-class community, centred around the maritime area, was the core of his trade.⁹ It would seem that he found a ready and lucrative market for dispensing drugs in the area. Having a shop where his clients could call in meant that he did not need to follow the time-consuming practice of visiting them

at their homes, unless necessary. Although he trained as an apothecary, he was essentially a dispensing druggist by the end of his career.

M'Donald and Co. wine and spirit brokers and general agents, Dock gates—house 3 Pitt street
— David, tailor, Merrilees' close, Yardheads
— Lewis, druggist, 106 Kirkgate
— William, victual dealer, Sandport street

The directories also indicate that he and his growing family (10 children between 1820 and 1843) were housed variously at Watson's Place near the Union Canal, Primrose Street in South Leith and Spence's Place in the St Cuthbert's district in Edinburgh between 1830 and 1845.¹⁰ It is very likely that the older members of his family assisted in the shop, helping prepare the ingredients and mixtures, and delivering medications to customers. Two of his sons entered the medical profession in the 1850s and 1860s.

The very first formula in Lewis's notebook was for 'Show Colours'. These liquid colours filled the large decorative jars that lined most druggists' shop front windows to indicate the business within. The colours were purple, red, yellow, green and blue.



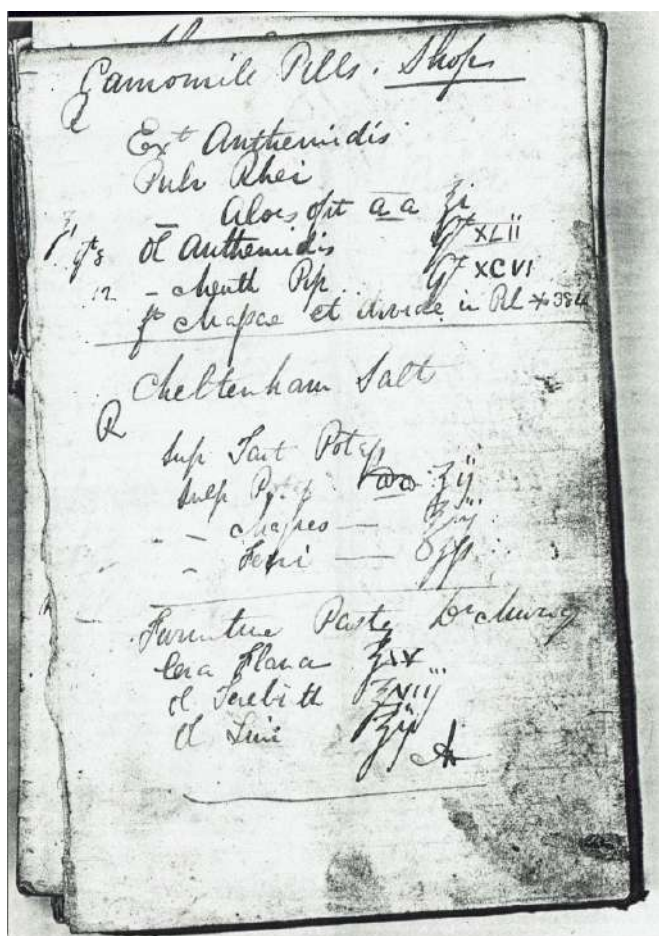
Apothecary show colours, www.sellingantiques.co.uk/

The pages of the notebook are an insight into the problems that beset the people of the nineteenth century. The remedies offered are typical of Scottish apothecaries serving mixed urban and rural communities. It is fascinating to browse through them and read that Lewis may have treated patients for chilblains, sore throats and fevers, the Black Drop (typhus), constipation, chorea, hysteria, women's problems, to name a few. He made up and stocked Epsom, Harrogate and Cheltenham Salts—named after famous spa towns. Toothache remedies and tooth powders were very popular, as well as gargles to keep the breath sweet and preparations for flatulence. There were plenty of preparations for 'strengthening decoctions', and if they needed something tastier, there were recipes for beer, ginger beer and raisin and ginger wines. In fact, there were so many recipes for ginger beer that I think it may have been a best-seller over the counter. There were many, many remedies for cough mixtures, opening and shutting the bowels, stomach aches and liniments for sore muscles.

Recipes included useful items for both sexes. For women, he offered lavender water, hair wash, cold cream, milk of

roses, lip salve, curling cream and elderflower ointment for skin care. For men, there were tonic powders, gout mixtures, shoe blacking, durable ink, sealing wax, a Pectoral Julep, and horehound (mint) candy for smokers. The old folk are not left out either. There are various rubs and liniments for lumbago and rheumatism, aperient mixtures, a 'Draught for Restlessness at Night', a 'Mixture for Urinary Complaints', and he recommends Dr HAMILTON's method for treating piles. Children were catered for with remedies for birthmarks, colic, croup, chickenpox, a treatment for 'suspended animation' in newborns and much else. For the household, he offered plate powder, liquid blue, 'currie' powder, spice powder, varnish and furniture oil. No doubt all were good income earners.

Lewis also provided a range of products that related to animals—recipes for horse balls (a liniment), horse blisters, tonic horse powders, dog mange, leather polish, a liquid for washing harness and a formula for curing skins.



Page from McDonald prescription book

I like the non-logical positions of some of the formulae, for example the treatment for Scrofula is on the opposite page to recipes for varnish for violins, cane chairs and boxes. Another one that stands out is Dr FORSTER's Eye Ointment opposite the formula for cold cream. The formula for 'Tinctura Odontalgia' is across the page from Shoe Blacking. The Ointment for Scrofulous Ulcers sits opposite that for Chronic Ophthalmia.

For nursing mothers he recommended this procedure for infants: 'Dr Campbell uses the following instead of mother's milk. "Take of skimmed milk two parts, of warm water one

part with sugar to make it palatable ... the child should also get a tea spoonful or two of soft meat thrice a day.'" (N.B. The Shepphards of Edinburgh were brought up this way, says Dr Campbell).'

It is interesting to read in a section on how to distinguish the lesions between chickenpox and smallpox, that he digresses into the use of vaccinations with cowpox. He quotes Dr BRYCE of Edinburgh who gives the following criterion 'We may judge if the inoculation of cowpox matter has affected the System. Suppose we inoculate a child on one arm, then on the fifth day afterwards inoculate the other arm. This last inoculation will run to maturity or become perfect at one and the same time as the first inoculation. This decides that the System is affected.' It would seem that if the first two inoculations haven't worked, then further vaccinations using a different source would be necessary.

As long voyages were frequent in those times, there is a useful recipe to preserve water at sea: 'add 20 drops of Nitric Acid to each gallon of water when it is put in the cask. The cask must be previously well washed, and all filth removed completely from there. Water with the addition of this proportion of Nitric Acid will keep sweet for years [vide Inaugural Thesis of the Surgeon of the *Meander*]'.

Lewis died in 1847 at the age of 67 after a full career and was survived by his widow, Sophia, and eight children. He had been an apothecary for 22 years. His eldest son, William, took over the business. He began a course of study at the medical school at the University of Edinburgh, becoming a Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in 1853. The 1855 Post Office Directory lists him as 'Surgeon and Druggist' at 42 Kirkgate, Leith.¹¹ He left in that year for a practice in Lanarkshire.

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Coming of age on the gold rush theatre circuit

Kim Hansen

Prepare for a story of journeys around the world, fortunes made and lost, imprisonment, close calls with the gallows, false names, marriages to aristocracy, orphans ... and a few clowns thrown in for good measure. This is not the description of a play, but the true story of the HOLT family and the birth of professional theatre in Dunedin.

Around the world, gold rush towns attracted people hoping to strike it rich. Along with the prospectors came industries looking to benefit financially from these boom towns. One such industry was the theatre. The gold rush began in Otago in 1861 and saw the region's population grow by 400 per cent between 1861 and 1864.¹

Among the influx of people during the gold rush years were my ancestors, the Holt family—parents and three children, aged 14, 12 and 11 years old—all actors and all fresh from performing on the stages of England, New York and the Victorian gold fields. So, what was life like in gold rush Dunedin? Was it a suitable place to raise three young adolescents? And what became of these travelling players when they reached adulthood?

Despite being established by Scottish Presbyterian settlers in 1848, Dunedin was still a very basic settlement when the gold rush began. In February 1862, an article in the *Otago Daily Times* described the arrival of 500 settlers: 'they must have conceived an extremely unfavourable impression of the town, with its wet, muddy streets and profound darkness'. Apparently, there wasn't even any light down at the jetty.² Those living in Dunedin at this time often complained about the lack of available entertainment. An article in the *Otago Witness* noted: 'The almost absolute lack of places of amusement has ... had a prejudicial effect, causing Dunedin to seem a gloomy place, in which there was no fun to be had—even the public houses being all by law obliged to close at 10 o'clock.'³

This desire for entertainment in Dunedin saw the FAWCETT brothers sign a lease in July 1862 to temporarily convert the stables of the JONES's Horse Bazaar into the Princess Theatre. The premises operated as horse stables during the day, but at night became a theatre, with kerosene lamps to light the stage (and an ample supply of water at hand, in case a fire broke out).⁴ That same month, Clarence and

Photo of Dunedin 1863, showing the Theatre Royal in the bottom right.

Photograph number: 18/35 of the Olveston Historic Home photographic collection

Marion Holt arrived in Dunedin with their three children and established the Theatre Royal.⁵

The entertainment offered at Dunedin's two theatres was varied—from burlesque to Dickens, pantomime to Shakespeare and everything in between. Across the course of his life, Clarence Holt described himself in different documents as an actor, tragedian, comedian, mime, clown and theatre manager. His approach to presenting theatre appears to be equally eclectic. He was prone to presenting Shakespeare in a novel fashion—alternating one line from the original play, followed by one line of his own. For example, when performing *As You Like It*:

All the world's a stage
(That saying has held good in every age)
And all the men and women merely players
(Perchance as kings or queens, anon as maids or mayors)
...

Although the citizens of Dunedin were generally delighted by the arrival of entertainment, in the form of two professional theatre troupes, the conservative clergy were not so sure. A month after the Theatre Royal was established, the missionary Reverend Mr SMITH preached to the Knox Church, 'that den of iniquity, the theatre ... the bottomless pit ... through which ... many passed, to the ruin of their souls'.⁶

Into this environment arrived the Holt's three children. The eldest was 14-year-old Ellen Elizabeth (known as 'Nellie'). She and her 12-year-old sister Elizabeth May (known as 'Little May') quickly became established performers in the emerging Dunedin theatre scene. In fact, newspaper reports confirm that 12-year-old Little May performed at least eight nights at the Theatre Royal during August 1862.

Unsurprisingly, I can find no record of the two Holt girls being enrolled in school while in New Zealand. It would seem that even as very young adolescents, they were engaged full-time in the family's theatrical business.

The youngest Holt child was 11-year-old Joseph Thomas (known as Bland Holt). Bland debuted on stage in England as a six-year-old. He attended Otago Boys' High in 1864, and there is no mention of him appearing on the stage in Dunedin during the family's time in New Zealand. Bland obviously inherited his parents' entertaining talents. After returning to England, he began his professional stage career at the age of 14 and toured the United Kingdom and the United States for a further nine years. He began his career as a pantomime clown and returned to Australia in 1876 to establish himself as an actor and theatre manager. His reputation was for elaborate sets and staging dramatic live scenes in his plays, such as real horses racing across the stage, flights of trained pigeons, and the first motor car to be driven on stage.⁷

In both his professional and private life, reports suggest that Bland's approach was much calmer than his father's. Regarding Bland, the Australian Dictionary of Biography states, he was 'quiet and hard-working, Holt maintained a harmonious theatrical company'.⁸ In contrast, his father, Clarence Holt, was described by one of his fellow actors in the following way: 'I think he was not a large man, but he appeared large; he was an autocrat of the most terrifying type ... He looked down upon his company from the dizzy heights of his own superiority. He was well known throughout the profession as having a greater vocabulary of bad language than any actor on the stage'.⁹



Image left: Clarence Holt—actor and theatre manager.

Coppin Collection. MS8827/13/PHO285. State Library of Victoria

Image centre: Marian Holt (née Browne)—actor and theatre manager.

Coppin Collection. MS8827/13/PHO312. State Library of Victoria

Image right: Sketch of May Holt—actress. State Library South Australia. B 16763/73

Bland also had a less eventful private life. His first wife was American singer and burlesque actress, Lina EDWIN. After she died, he went on to marry another actress, Florence Griffiths ANDERSON, in 1887 in Adelaide. The pair had a successful working relationship and were celebrated comedic actors in Australia. Bland Holt died in 1942, 'a much respected thespian and a wealthy one too'.¹⁰

Clarence Holt's wife of 30 years and the mother of his three children, Marion, died of chronic hepatitis in 1878. In 1883 Clarence fell through a trapdoor in his theatre and was badly injured. He was carried to the neighbouring hotel, where he was nursed by the principal chambermaid, Alice HAYES. Six weeks later, Clarence and Alice were married. I have not been able to establish whether Alice passed away or the couple divorced, but Clarence went on to marry Hannah HARRIS in 1893. Even in death, Clarence Holt was theatrical. He was buried 'in an inscribed, polished oak casket with brass fittings, which was carried on a glass covered funeral carriage'.¹¹

In a strange aside, despite Bland Holt's squeaky-clean reputation, his name did become associated with an escaped prisoner. In 1929, Bland Holt's great-nephew was arrested for indecent assault in Christchurch. The offender, Albert Holt-Harris, was a poor, itinerant comedian and entertainer who often went by the name of 'Bland Holt', presumably hoping to ride on his great-uncle's theatrical coat-tails. While on bail he absconded and was not captured for three years.

The middle child of the Holt family was 'Little May'. Considering Victorian era morals, one might have expected the good folk of Dunedin to be horrified that a young girl of 12 was working nights among adults, often singing and dancing in burlesque shows. However, newspaper reports suggest that crowds showed up especially to see her. At her benefit farewell concert, in October 1862, she was 'honoured with the best house there has been for at least

ten days'.¹² She was then sent by ship back to England ahead of the family, to continue her education in the theatre.

'Little May' debuted on the stage in England as an eight-year-old. Despite the limitations on women professionally in the late 1800s, May succeeded as an actress, playwright and theatre manager, both in Australia and England. In 1880 she married Reginald FAIRBAIRN, the youngest son of Sir Thomas Fairbairn, 2nd Baronet of Ardwick and six years her junior. While living in England, she gave birth to a daughter in 1882, Elsie Fairbairn, as well as suffering three stillbirths. The family moved to Australia in 1888.

During her marriage, May wrote six plays, the most successful of which was *Waiting Consent*, 'an unusual early "bedroom farce", it challenged assumptions about women and marriage'.¹³ Offstage, May continued to challenge society's expectations of women, but with considerably more controversy.

Between 1891 and 1908 May Holt worked in Adelaide under the name Madam Melissa HARPUR. This was not a stage name however, but an alias she used in her new career as a 'women's doctor', performing abortions for a fee. At that time in Australia, abortion was illegal. However, May was not the only person ignoring this law. In one 1896 Adelaide newspaper, there were at least 13 similar 'doctors' advertising on the same day.¹⁴

In a 15-year period, May Holt (aka Melissa Fairbairn as she was referred to in Court documents) appeared before the courts five times—twice for procuring an abortion and three times for murder. However, her only conviction was for manslaughter, for which she was imprisoned in 1897 for three years, with hard labour.¹⁵ Her well-to-do husband, Reginald, was working in the Adelaide courts as a barrister at this time. When his wife was imprisoned, he relocated to New South Wales to continue his legal career.

It appears that trouble was following Reginald, however. A year after his move, he applied to be admitted to the bar in Western Australia. Before he could make this move, he was convicted of using £120 in false cheques and sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. Upon her release from prison, May ceased her newspaper advertising but continued in her new line of work. In 1908, when May was charged with murder, her only child, daughter Elsie May, was also implicated. However, despite the victim identifying 'Madam Harpur' and her daughter as the cause of her injuries before her death, the prosecution was abandoned, and May Holt narrowly avoided death at the gallows.

In 1908 all three members of the Fairbairn family returned to England, travelling third class. Reginald died in 1921, followed by May in 1926. It is unclear what contact May had with her family during her years in and out of court and prison. Both her older sister and mother had already died, but her father, Clarence, was alive, as was her brother, Bland, who was living and working in Australia.

The eldest of the Holt's three children was Nellie. While she was a regular stage performer in Dunedin as a teenager, for some reason, she did not return to England with her siblings. In fact, in August 1864 her parents departed New Zealand, leaving 16-year-old Nellie behind.



Bland Holt, Theatre Programme
[National Library of New Zealand](http://www.nationallibrary.govt.nz)

The following year, Nellie became pregnant, and a few months later, she married a 22-year-old reporter from the *Otago Daily Times*, named Edward Thomas HARRIS (known as Eddie). Eddie had been in New Zealand for only four months so, it would seem, he was not the reason Nellie remained in the country when her parents departed. Their Intention to Marry stated that Nellie was 18 years old and that her surname was VAUGHAN. Neither of these things were true and were possibly done to enable the couple to marry, without having to gain permission from Nellie's parents.

Following the birth of their first child, Clarence Edward Holt Harris (Edward), Nellie continued to perform on the stage, appearing in Christchurch and Dunedin in 1867. Nellie and Eddie had another baby in 1868, but he died aged seven months. The couple then moved to the West Coast with little Edward. This move was presumably for Eddie's work, which saw him working as a reporter for several newspapers.

In 1869 Eddie became proprietor of the newspaper *Tomahawk*, 'a 12 page Saturday journal of criticism, commentary and satire'. Eddie apparently took his role as a public critic very seriously—the first edition of *Tomahawk* was headed: 'Of all the ways that wisest men could find to mend the age, and mortify mankind, Satire, well writ, has most effective proved'.

Tomahawk pulled no punches and openly criticised numerous local officials, public services and other newspapers. Perhaps this is why it faced a number of lawsuits for libel and did not remain in print for very long. Eddie went on to establish the *Westland Independent*.

In August 1869 Nellie performed 'for one night only' in a production on the West Coast. She gave birth to Frances Ellen (Nell) Harris in Hokitika in 1870.

Sadly for the family, Eddie struggled to manage his business finances. This came to a head when the family was living in Reefton, with Eddie running a pony express. On 10 March 1871, he was charged with misappropriating a cheque for £8. He represented himself in court and admitted the charge—the judge noting it was evident that the prisoner was a man of some education. He was convicted on 25 April 1871 and sentenced to 12 months in prison with hard labour, which he served in the Westport Gaol.¹⁶

From there, things got worse for the family. Seven months into his sentence, Eddie became very unwell. He suffered from 'loss of appetite, sleeplessness from mental despondency in consequence of the misconduct of his wife'.¹⁷ He had inflammation in the bowel and liver. Eddie wrote to the Attorney-General to request a remission of his sentence. His request was supported by the Gaoler and the Doctor.

His petition was granted on 5 December 1871, but sadly, he had already died earlier that morning. In a tragic final chapter, a storm in 1872 caused the Buller River to flood and wipe out the Orawhaiti Cemetery in Westport. Eddie's remains were lost, along with many others.¹⁸

While his father was in prison, little Edward was admitted to the Wallis Family Orphanage in Motueka at the age of five. He stayed in the orphanage for more than four years before he was returned to his mother. During his stay at the orphanage (and 18 months before he returned to his mother), his mother, Nellie, remarried. Why the child was not reunited with his mother earlier is unclear.

Tragedy continued for the family when, three years after Edward returned from the orphanage, his mother, Nellie, died at the age of 31 from tuberculosis. At the time of their mother's death, Edward was 13 and Nell only nine years old.

The childhood of the three Holt children was far from ordinary. Nellie was born in 1848, before Clarence and Marion were married. In the 1851 census for England, the couple were in their early twenties and were recorded as 'Manager & Manageress of the Norwich Theatre Royal'. The three infant children, a servant and a nurse were also noted in the household. It would seem that, as well as being immersed in the theatre from a young age, the Holt children were also left for long periods of time with a nurse, while their parents were on tour in England and overseas.

Clearly, the children's theatrical talents were due to their upbringing. One can only wonder what role their unusual childhood and adolescence played in their other triumphs and troubles as adults.

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Hangatiki- Waitomo Caves. FGR 450B.

Waitomo

Sarah Hewitt

In the December 2025 issue of *The New Zealand Genealogist*, I wrote about my great-grandfather, Harold Wilson BLACK, and his time in Eketāhuna. While it was interesting to discover more, I was also interested in discovering about his time in Waitomo because of the family stories I had heard.

Growing up, I had been told that my great-grandparents, Harold and his wife May Elizabeth née JOHNSTON, had 'hacked a farm out of the bush near Waitomo' when their son (my Grandad) was a child. In the early 1920s, unable to make a go of it, they walked off the farm and returned to May's home of Gisborne.

The big question was: where was the land? Grandad never recorded its location in his notes and never told anyone. Perhaps he did not know, as he was only seven when they left.

A tantalising hint came from the newspapers. The *New Zealand Herald* of 1 May 1914 noted in its 'Auckland Land Board' item that land had been transferred from T HITCHCOCK to H W Black of Gisborne. The answer was hiding in the Minute Books of the Auckland Land Board, held at Archives New Zealand in Auckland.

A summer road trip to Auckland to catch up with family (and visit Ikea) gave me the opportunity to get to Archives New Zealand's Auckland reading rooms. There, in the minute books, I found the reference I sought (see bottom line of the image on the next page). I needed to find out more about the Orahiri Survey District, Block XIII, Section 2.

Fortunately, the next stop was the NZSG's Family Research Centre. Luckily for me, Christine, one of the volunteers on

Image above:

Hangatiki, Waitomo Caves.

Radcliffe, Frederick George, 1863–1923 [Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 35-R0278](#)

Showing a group of men in a horse-drawn carriage standing next to a bridge on the Hangatiki

Road on the way to the Waitomo caves

- Transfers. - (continued) -

	Lease No.	Tenure	Section	Block	S.D. or Parish	Transferor	Transferee	Board's Decision
9	4667	ORP	2	XV	Maungatautari S.D.	J. McKenzie	E. Finall	Deferred at the
-	-	-	-	-	request of the applicant.			
10	1012	LP	59	-	Suburbs of Otah	J. Graham	P. Graham	Approved
11	1023	LP	17	VII	Whangape S.D.	E. Lurren	J. Urya	"
12	1164	"	15	VII	"	"	"	"
13	1105	LP	3	V	Hastings S.D.	J. J. Wilson Jr	P. H. Wilson	"
14	1232	LP	2	XIII	Orahiri S.D.	T. Hitchcock	H. W. Black	"
15	222	LP	1					

**Clip from a minute book of the Auckland Land Board,
held by Archives New Zealand at their Auckland Reading rooms**

duty, knows a lot about land records, having learnt from the NZSG's Land Research Services Officer Pam WHITE.

She dug into the maps and records available on Archives New Zealand, as well as QuickMaps, and before long, had found the location of the block of land. It is a little off Tumutumu Road, not far from the Ruakuri and Aranui Caves.

Christine also found a reference to the land record in the *Survey District Book [Index]*.¹ It listed Orahiri as an area. Starting on page 366, we went through the digital images to find Block XIII. And there were the title details. It was issued a Torrens Title, so I did not need to go through the Deeds books. (NB: A Torrens title is a land registration system where the state maintains a register of land ownership, guaranteeing the title and providing conclusive evidence of ownership.) The funniest thing was that, despite being in modern terms in the King Country, the records were listed as 'South Auckland'. Geography is everything when you are looking for these records!

I ordered the file from LINZ, and it completed the information on my family's ownership of the land. Harold officially bought the land from Thomas Hitchcock (whom he knew from Eketāhuna) on 25 May 1914. He registered a mortgage to Thomas the next minute (literally on the title).

The next entry is dated 1 February 1921, where William DIBBLE is granted the land by the Registrar of the Supreme Court due to a default on the mortgage. Things had not gone well for the Black family.

While at the Family Research Centre, I had a look through the books to see what might be there. I found an interesting book *A History of Waitomo* by Vaughan MORGAN written in 1982 about the area and the remembrances of those who had been there.²

Ned DAVIS (born 1887) described the land being compulsorily acquired from the local Māori and the work undertaken to put a road through, and the on sale of the land to various Pakeha settlers in the early twentieth century. Hugh and Harriet STUBBS arrived in 1914, around

the same time as the Black family, to find the bush still being felled and burnt and the roads still clay and very narrow.

It was a hard life for these early settlers. Supplies had to be ordered from Auckland and were expected to last a year, although you could live off the land, especially if you had a dairy cow. If you were lucky, you lived near a school. The Black family did not, and so May homeschooled my Grandad.³

There does seem to have been a community. There were dances at the Waitomo Caves Hotel. Harold is listed as a member of the Waitomo Branch of the Farmers Union, which was formed in 1916. They seemed to have a great interest in train timetables and rabbits.

Morgan also noted the economic slump in 1920, which put many off the land, a decade before the Great Depression impacted many more. The Black family were not the only ones to walk off the land at this time.

It has been wonderful to finally put a location to where my Grandad spent his young childhood. As an only child and homeschooled by his mother, it must have had its positives and its negatives. As we have no idea who else was helping to work the land, he was possibly the only child there.

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Kiwi brothers in arms—Rifleman Peter Kean's legacy in Le Quesnoy lives on

Scott Kara

Three of the KEAN boys from Southland served in Europe during World War I but only two came home.

Private Denis Kean fought in Gallipoli and then, in 1916, was wounded at Ypres on the Western Front. After being wounded a second time at Passchendaele in 1917 he returned home to New Zealand. Denis's younger brother, Private Jack Kean, was wounded on the Somme and older brother, Rifleman Peter Kean, was wounded at Messines in 2017. All three brothers were captured in a photo while on leave in London in June 1918—the last time they would be together.

'They would have enjoyed meeting each other in London while on service leave. It would have been special', says Peter's great-nephew Steve TRITT whose grandmother, Walterina Mary Kean (known as Lily), was Peter's little sister. 'Jack was badly disfigured when he was shot in the face during the Somme advance. He returned home, married late in life at 50 and had two children. Sadly, Peter went back to the Front and was killed during the Liberation of Le Quesnoy on November 4, 1918.' Peter's story lives on thanks to Steve. He has documented Peter's life during war time in a special story he has written for his children, grandchildren, and their children.

Rifleman Peter Martin Kean never made it inside the ramparts [of Le Quesnoy] and never heard the cheering

crowds', writes Steve. 'He died outside the walls, on the day of the liberation. It is believed to be in front of the ramparts sometime after 9am. It is possible that he was seriously wounded and taken to an aid station, which might explain why he is buried at CWGC Cross Roads Cemetery, grave IF28, at Fontaine-au-Bois, which was a site chosen to gather up and concentrate the scattered dead from the small cemeteries and churchyards that mark the route of the final advance.'

The telling of Peter's story has also revealed an incredible connection to a Le Quesnoy local. The name Peter Kean was familiar to New Zealand Liberation Museum—Te Arawhata Museum Director, Elizabeth WRATISLAV, after uniform items labelled with his name were displayed in a pop-up exhibition by the Le Quesnoy History Society. The great-grandfather of Le Quesnoy resident Christian BASUYAU found the items, including a drink bottle, D-shaped mess tin, webbing belt and gas mask bag labelled '23/799 P. Kean'. Today, Christian is the secretary of the Le Quesnoy History Society and the items are displayed in an exhibition space at the Centre Lowendal (five minutes from Te Arawhata). 'How incredible, after more than 100 years, it is to see the items that Peter carried into battle and to know they are being well looked after, on display, and telling their own story', says Steve. 'On their own they are remarkable, and with the family story added, it's just unbelievable serendipity.'

For Christian the objects are much more than just military equipment. 'They carry the memory of a man who came from far away to defend a land that was not his own', he says. 'In their humble way, they also symbolise the bonds that unite people separated by thousands of kilometres but brought together by history. I like to think that it was this idea that inspired my great-grandfather when he found them at the end of the fighting.'

Peter was 37 when he died and posthumously received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Steve remembers the words of Private BASHFORD in Christopher PUGSLEY's book: *Le Quesnoy 1918 New Zealand's Last Battle*, where he said: 'From the first days of war until the last, men will die, and to those concerned an equal misfortune, and yet there must be more sympathy for those who so nearly finish the course, but fall at the last fence.'

The Kean family has a rich Irish history. 'In 1981 we attended a Kean family wedding in Gort, County Galway. It was fantastic to meet cousins and other relatives', remembers Steve. Peter and Lily's dad, Denis Kean, was born in 1838 in County Galway and left in 1857 for the Australian Goldfields in Ballarat. When gold was found in New Zealand he was part of the Dunstan gold rush in 1862 and later worked the Shotover River and Gabriel's Gully. When land became available for settlement via the Deferred



Peter Kean
Gore Historical Museum

Payment Plan in 1875, Denis secured 200 acres and bought an adjoining 200 acres in Otaraia around 70km north-east of Invercargill.

Denis's wife, Maria Josephine CORCORAN, who was also Irish, had thirteen children between 1878 and 1896, although sadly five died either at birth or were stillborn. Peter was born on 30 October 1882 and was the second eldest. Maria died in 1896 aged 40 when Peter was just 14.

Following the death of his wife, Denis Snr and oldest daughter Margaret cared for 10-month-old Jack, Denis (two), Lily (three), Julia (five), Maria (10), and Kate (12). As a 14-year-old, Peter worked with his father on the farm. The family farm was sold in 1908 and Denis moved to Waikaka, also in Southland, where he died aged 72 in 1910.

Before the war, Peter worked as a farm labourer at Wedderburn Station, located on what is now known as the Central Otago Rail Trail. When he went to war, he was much older than traditional soldiers, says Steve. 'I'm not sure what motivated him. He wasn't married so I can only assume, for him, it was an adventure like it was for so many.'

Peter, a Rifleman with the 1st Battalion NZRB, 7th Reinforcements, first saw action at Masah-Matruh on the Western Egyptian Front on Christmas Day in 1915. After heavy fighting with the New Zealand Division in the Armentières sector and the Somme he was in good health. However, on 7 June 1917, while taking part in the Messines battle, he was wounded in the right shoulder. As Peter's death notice in *The Ensign* on Monday 25 November 1918 documents:

After spending some months [recuperating] in England, he returned to France and joined his comrades in helping to stem the German advance towards Amiens. He again took part in the British advance from Hébuterne and was present at the captures of Gommecourt, Cambrai, Bapaume, Serre and Prussieux Ridges.



100 year commemorations

From L to R: Mike Pettit, Mayor of Waipā District; Steve Tritt; Grahame Webber KSM; former Waipā District deputy mayor, Brigadier Jon Broadley MBE. (retired)
Kara family collection

He finally was killed at Le Quesnoy on November 4 when that town was stormed and captured by the New Zealanders, this being the last battle in which the New

Zealanders took part prior to the signing of the armistice with Germany.

'I knew about Le Quesnoy long before I knew that great-uncle Peter fought in the liberation of the town', says Steve. His sister-in-law, Cath MITCHELL, and her husband, Warwick, travelled with military historian Herb FARRANT, the founder of the Trust behind the New Zealand Liberation Museum—Te Arawhata, on numerous tours to the Western Front battlefields, including Le Quesnoy.

Steve followed the progress of Farrant's museum project and the conversion of an historic mansion house, which was the local gendarmerie headquarters, into Te Arawhata with a visitor experience by Wētā Workshop. 'It is a wonderful triumph of perseverance', says Steve of the museum which opened in 2023 after Farrant first proposed the idea in 2000. Steve also worked at Waipa District Council, meaning he worked in Cambridge which is a sister town to Le Quesnoy.

Because of his family connection through Peter and working at Council, Steve and his wife travelled to Le Quesnoy in 2018 for the centenary of the Liberation. 'We paid our way and went with the Council delegation to the commemoration. It was a fantastic honour to be more than just a spectator especially because of that deep family connection with Peter.'

I loved walking through the town with everyone. It was surreal to be standing outside the walls, with the French and New Zealand officials, where Peter had died 100 years before.

That's when I thought of Peter who died outside the walls, he didn't make it into the city, and he did not celebrate with the locals.

At the official dinner in Le Quesnoy on 4 November 2018—which also happened to be Steve and his wife's wedding anniversary—they remembered and celebrated, by raising a glass of champagne to Peter.

Knowing Peter's story gives a historic point of reference for my family, my kids and their kids. These days fewer people have a direct connection with the war, so keeping family stories alive is important.

So documenting Peter's story offers a personal connection with one of the world's most significant events and hopefully means that family coming after, will know about it and remember it.

Scott Kara
E: scott@boydpr.co.nz

Sources:

Pugsley, Christopher. *Le Quesnoy, 1918: New Zealand's last battle*. Oratia, Auckland, 2018



What's New on the NZSG Website

New menus

Big changes have happened on the NZSG website since the last issue of *The New Zealand Genealogist*. We have rearranged the menus (again). In moving similar content together, we hope the menus will be more intuitive to you.

While the Quick Links on the homepage and the [Site Map](#) are two easy ways to find the vast array of content on our website, the menu at the top of the page is also very important. Our new menus are as follows:

About

This holds information about our Society. It is where you will find documents relating to Society administration, the BIG Gateway, and the Site Map. We have added our pages on our Affiliations and NZSG Awards to this menu.

Membership

As a member, you may not need this menu very often. Please tell your friends who are not members about it!

Skills

This is where everything we have on how to improve your skills as a family historian is kept. It includes the 'Getting It Right' resources, sources, keeping organised and our course offerings.

Resources

This is the menu we have made the most changes to. Notably, all our Skills resources now have their own menu heading. We have also made a change to the Kiwi Resources and Kiwi Guides by merging them into one. They are now the 'Kiwi Resources—National' and 'Kiwi Resources—Local'. It is much easier to explain. In addition, this is where you will now find *The New Zealand Genealogist*, the Library Cat and newsletters/magazines/journals from our Branches and other family history organisations.

New content

More information has been added to the Kiwi Resources, including two new pages as listed below. We have updated the Civil Registration/Births, Deaths and Marriages page to include more information about legislation around name changes. We have added a section on Deed Poll name changes, as this comes up a lot.

A new page on Higher Education has been added. This gives you information on New Zealand's ever-changing tertiary institutions and where you might find their archives. Farming is the title of an all-encompassing page about New Zealand's agriculture, horticulture, viticulture, forestry,

Get Help

Our research and purchasing services are now under this menu heading.

Collections

We have moved our physical collection held at the NZSG Library in with our other collections. If you are looking for the records we hold, they are all now in one menu.

DNA

We have not made any changes to this menu. It is where you will find the Online DNA Interest Group and some of our DNA resources.

Connect

We had to shorten 'Get Involved' so we could fit the menu on your computer screen. You will still be able to find information on your local Branch, Interest Groups, Memlist and our Forum. We have added our Members Interests here so you can connect with other members researching the same families.

News & Events

This menu remains largely the same. It is where you can find what is happening as well as look at old versions of e-KIT and the *BIG Picture*. Our journal, *The New Zealand Genealogist*, has moved to under the Resources menu heading.

Shop

Still there for your shopping pleasure. Don't forget we do gift memberships!

We hope you will find lots of useful resources and records. We will be surveying members in 2026 to see if there are any other improvements we can make.

fishing and more. This will give you general sources about these industries, which may lead to more specific records about your family.

Please log in!

Our huge array of resources is hidden behind the login button. Please log in, or you will only see the tip of the iceberg!

Seamstress, soldier, shepherd: A glimpse into ancestors' working lives

Kelly Dix

Unlocking family history through employment records

For family historians, piecing together the lives of ancestors often goes beyond birth, marriage and death certificates. Employment records offer a fascinating glimpse into how people lived, worked and contributed to society. Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga Archives New Zealand holds a wealth of employment-related material that can help you uncover stories about your ancestors' working lives.

Most of the employment records at Archives are records of employment by government ministries, departments and agencies—a considerable proportion of the country's workforce when you consider historic government employers in sectors such as forestry, communications and the military. Non-government records held by Archives, such as company or licensing records, also provide insights into private employment.

Where to start your research

Begin by visiting Archives New Zealand's online catalogue, [Collections search](#). Gather as much information as possible before you start, such as name, approximate dates of employment and location.

Use the search box to search by name or keyword (for example 'railways employment'). If there are no results, this doesn't indicate that your ancestor's records are not in Archives; it will just require another approach.

The Archives research guide '[Employment](#)' organises records by government department or occupation, for example, the Fire Service or Customs. To find my ancestor's employment record, I looked at the Post Office Dead classification cards. ('Dead' refers to people who had left

the service when the records were transferred to Archives in 1988.) Knowing that my ancestor's card would be in that group, I ordered the record to view at the Wellington reading room. The card included her name, date of birth, role, starting and finishing dates and her salary.

Ordering Archives records

Some records are digitised, but many require an in-person visit to the Archives office that holds the record—located in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

Before you visit the reading room, order your records. The [How to use Collections search](#) web page explains how to do this. If you need help with searching or ordering records, [Ask an Archivist](#).

Why employment records matter

Employment records provide more than just job titles. They reveal social status, mobility and even personality traits. They can show career progression—starting as an apprentice and rising to a managerial role, economic conditions—wages and working hours reflect the economic climate of the time, and personal details—some records include age, marital status, physical descriptions, injuries and even disciplinary notes.

They also reflect historical events. My ancestor's employment records show her return to work at the Post Office, alongside other married women called back for 'work of national importance' during WWII.

Privacy and access rules

Employment records may contain sensitive information. Generally, files older than 70 years are open. More recent



*Composing Room in the Government Print Office,
c 1900.*

*Out of Copyright
(New Zealand).*

Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga reference: R21572926.

[www.flickr.com/photos/
archivesnz/53412726861](http://www.flickr.com/photos/archivesnz/53412726861)



records may require permission or proof of relationship. Always check the access conditions listed in the Collections search.

Interpreting old job titles and wages

When you find employment records, you may encounter unfamiliar job titles or wage figures. Many roles have changed names or disappeared entirely. For example:

- **Navy:** A labourer working on railway or road construction
- **Telegraphist:** An operator sending messages via telegraph
- **Clerk, third grade:** Indicates a junior administrative position in the public service hierarchy.

Pay rates in old records often seem tiny by modern standards. To understand their value, compare wages to the cost of living at the time (for example rent, bread, clothing). Look for annual reports or departmental scales, which often list salaries by grade. Online inflation calculators can help translate historical wages into today's money. Some appointments were reported in the

newspaper, so check Papers Past too. This is how I discovered that, in 1923, one of my ancestors received a salary of £325 per annum, as well as a house and half-acre section to rent for £1 per week and a flat rate charge of 10 shillings per month for gas.

Other sources of employment information include local council archives, the *New Zealand Gazette*, and the telegraph and post office, railways, and public service staff lists (aka Stud Books) that were published each year, from the early twentieth century until the mid-1980s. These are available to view in the National Library's Katherine Mansfield reading room in Wellington.

The website DigitalNZ includes thousands of staff photos. Individuals are mostly unidentified, so if a name search brings up

no results, try searching by employer. You could find a photo of your ancestor at work.

Bringing stories to life

Imagine discovering that your grandfather was a railway guard who survived a major train accident, or that your great-grandmother was one of the first women to work as a university professor. These details transform family trees into compelling narratives.

Employment records are more than administrative paperwork—they are a window into the daily lives of your ancestors. Although they can be trickier to access than other genealogy records, it is worth persevering to help build a richer narrative of your family's past.

Kelly Dix, Online Engagement Manager, Digital NZ
E: Kelly.Dix@dia.govt.nz

Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga



Image above:

Postmen leaving from Christchurch Central Post Office, c 1900.

*Out of Copyright
(New Zealand).*

Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga reference: R24205896.

www.flickr.com/photos/archivesnz/46858591244

Image Right:

Otago Hospital Laundry, 1930.

CC BY 2.0.

Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga reference: R1427294.

www.flickr.com/photos/archivesnz/32155952091



Tō Tātou Pōneke—Our Wellington

Adrian Humphris

When Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui reopens in March 2026, it will once again be an integral part of the beating heart and life of the capital city. It will be a modern, uniquely Wellington space that brings our mana whenua history and stories back to our waterfront. It will house integrated Library, City Archives, and Capital E services and be a space for everyone, with each experience a window to exploration, discovery, connection and belonging.

For Wellington City Archives (City Archives), the reopening coincides with longer-term work relocating from our current location on Barker Street to two new homes in the city centre—Te Matapihi, and the new Wellington City Council premises on Jervois Quay. Once moved, the archives collection will be accessible both online and in person in Te Matapihi.

In moving to Te Matapihi, City Archives are integrating with the library heritage collections and services to create a new heritage hub—Tō Tātou Pōneke (Our Wellington). The name Tō Tātou Pōneke literally translates to 'Our Wellington', reflecting a shared sense of belonging and connection. The name acknowledges the people, the taiao (natural environment) and the unique identity of Wellington.

Located on Level 2, Tō Tātou Pōneke brings City Archives and the library's Māori and heritage collections together into a single accessible space. This is a place to explore our identity as the people of Pōneke within Aotearoa, and dig into the city's past, present and future. Visitors will be able to use our extensive local and national heritage collections to find out more about Aotearoa and its rich heritage. Consolidating the services of the Libraries and City Archives in the one location, as well as some new offerings, will improve accessibility and widen the pool of resources researchers will be able to draw from.

Tō Tātou Pōneke as a space contains several different areas—a central desk where you can talk to staff; a reading room for viewing protected material and doing quiet research or study; stations for accessing content on microfiche; and dedicated PCs to access heritage resources online.

In this space you will also be able to browse the Aotearoa New Zealand and Māori reference collections and access the Council's archives. While the whole archive collection is too large to fit into Te Matapihi, everything can be searched via Archives Online, where you can also view digitised content. The collected community archives will be held onsite, while the corporate collection will be housed just over the road in Council's new premises in Jervois Quay. Appointments can be made at Te Matapihi to view physical archives in both locations.

City Archives have created research guides that provide context to the collection and support your research. Guides available at opening cover rating and valuation records, cemetery records and property research, with more to be added over time to support self-service and accessibility. You will also be able to access a range of digital tools and databases at our public PCs—providing easy access to online resources for family history, archives, local heritage stories and historical newspapers.

An exciting new service we will be offering is the ability to bring in and digitise your own heritage material at our digitisation stations. You will be able to create digital copies of your family documents, letters, scrapbooks, photos and negatives, 35mm slides, audio and VHS tapes. As a largely self-service facility, it will be available for anyone to book, free of charge.

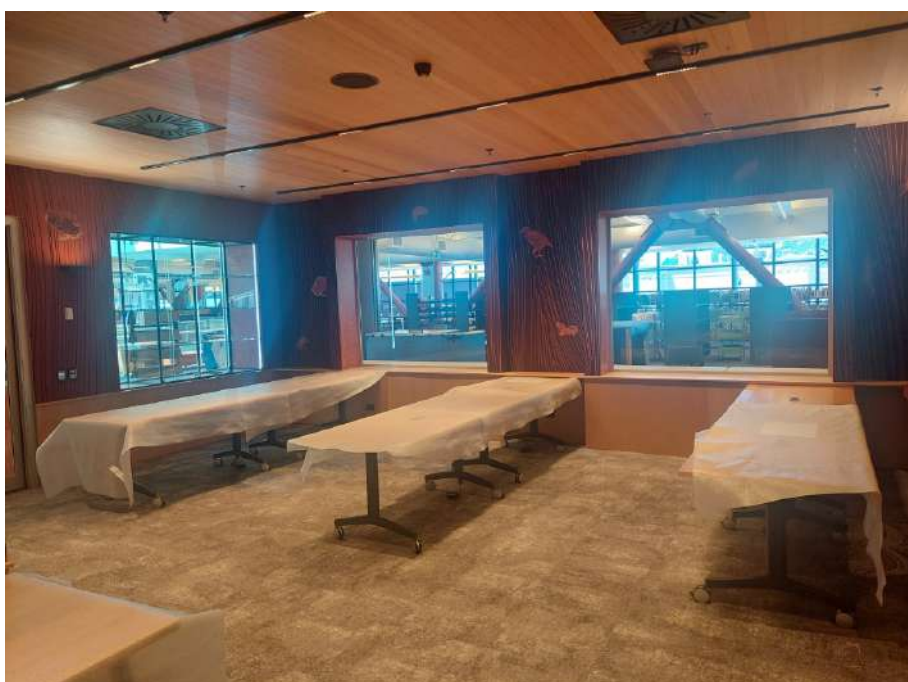
Adding a rich visual element, a small but engaging exhibition space is also located here which will showcase material from the collections and invite community voices to be part of the story.

We are looking forward to welcoming people into Tō Tātou Pōneke when Te Matapihi opens on 14 March and kicking off this new integrated service. Keep an eye on the Council's social media channels for more information about the opening weekend, and all the excitement planned!

Adrian Humphris
Team Leader, Wellington City Archives
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Reading room—a work in progress



Book Reviews

Te Kooti's Last Foray

By Ron Crosby

This is the story of TE KOOTI's 1870 abduction of two Whakatohea communities into the Waioeka Gorge and how Whanganui's pursuit won the day but never the credit. From the foreword by Justice Sir (Tā) Joe WILLIAMS, we learn that the author has written about Te Kooti in two earlier publications. Firstly, 20 years ago in *Gilbert Mair: Te Kooti's Nemesis*, then 10 years later in *Kūpapa: The Bitter Legacy of Māori Alliances with the Crown*. This time, as the title suggests, his focus is on the endgame (at least militarily) of that chapter of Te Kooti's life.

With an extensive preface and a chronology in the first pages of this story, CROSBY makes it easy to follow the events of 7 March 1870 and what happened leading up to the abduction. Part One of the book gives us more details of the background. Part Two then takes us from the Ōpape raid and the pursuit of Te Kooti by Government forces, almost all of whom were Māori. Part 3 then covers the end of the campaign, the development of the myth around the man Te Kooti, the impact of the war and the fruits of the war.

There are detailed maps, photos and drawings throughout this book that give a greater understanding of the area affected by these actions. From Whanganui to Te Kuiti and then east from Taūpo to Whakatane, and south-east to Mohaka, Wairoa and Gisborne. This was not hospitable country to travel and this story takes each of us on the journey.

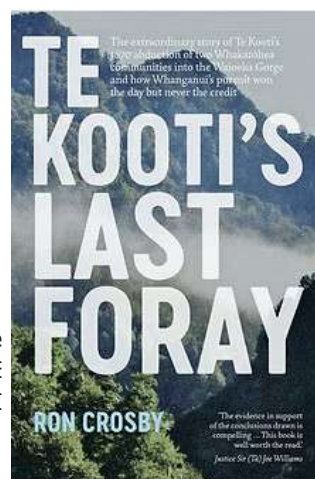
This book corrects the stories that have been written before, whereby Whanganui pursuers under Te Kapa are now given the credit of their interventions, rather than the received history of Ngati Porou's Ropata Wahawaha leading the way.

Ron Crosby's knowledge of Te Urewera, his relationships with the people on the ground and the discovery of the diaries of Samuel AUSTIN have opened paths for renewed research into this period of the Te Kooti war.

The appendices, acknowledgements, endnotes and a very detailed index make for a very comprehensive view of this period in our history. At a time when school curriculums are calling for more New Zealand history to be taught, this book is one to read and hold onto.

This book, published in 2023, has been donated to the NZSG Family Research Centre by the NZSG Māori Interest Group.

Reviewed by Lorraine Rice
FRC Shelf label: NZ.MAO.BIO.TE
KOOTI



Karakariki 1860–1960: The History of a Waipa Valley

By Anthony Armstrong

2nd edition, 2025. 185 pp. Illus, maps.

The author has lived and farmed in this western Waipā valley in the Waikato for nearly 50 years, giving him a deep, personal connection to its land and people. A former schoolteacher, he brings both insight and clarity to the valley's rich past, from its origins and early exploration to Māori settlement and the lasting impact of the Land Wars.

The story follows the changes in the valley as it evolves through flax and flour milling, river transport on the Waipā to roads, logging, coal mining, and sheep farming. After the hardships of the Great Depression, land settlement accelerated under the Bryant Trust for enhancing wellbeing in the Waikato, and the community of Karakariki took shape.

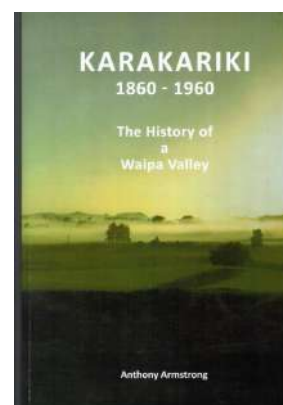
Drawing on interviews with many of the original Trust settlers and illustrated with a remarkable collection of

historic photographs—including rare images of early farm sheds and rural buildings—this book is a vivid, engaging portrait of a valley and the people who shaped it.

It includes a name index and a useful reading list. There are particular references to families connected to the author, the BARKERS of Aldborough, Yorkshire and of Harapepe, Waikato, and the ROLLOs of Currie, Midlothian and of Karakariki.

This book is available for purchase from the author at aiarm@xtra.co.nz for \$50 + postage.

Reviewed by Antonia Jones



Tracing ancestors who worked on the canals and rivers

By Wendy Freer

Researching those who plied the canals and rivers can be challenging. Understanding the work and lives of the men, women and children on the boats is key to your family history.

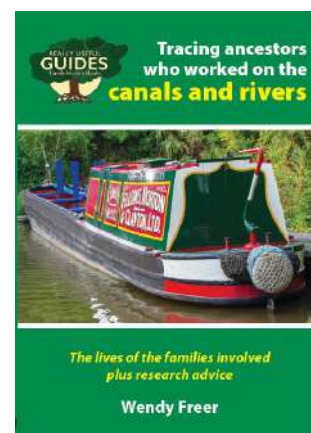
The author explains difficulties involved in achieving the simplest of tasks in everyday life afloat, including the lack of education for children and limited medical provision, especially for pregnant women. And if you don't know what an 'Idle Woman' was, then you need to read this book!

There is a chapter on pertinent records, plus a specialist websites list and targeted further reading. This book will be of interest whether you have family 'on the cut' or are just curious about the itinerant lifestyle of those working on the waterways.

Review with permission from the Family History Federation *Really Useful Bulletin* No. 65, January 2026.

The Family History Federation are offering NZSG members a 15% discount on all books published by Family History Books titles on the www.familyhistorybooksonline.com website from 1 March 2026 to 30 April 2026. The code to use at the checkout is CAN-NZ.

Below is the link to the Family History Books page.
www.familyhistorybooksonline.com/publications-from-family-history-books-289



Members' enquiries and notices

This section is free to members for enquiries of a genealogical nature but is not available to non-members. Please be precise and state clearly what you want to know. For submission guidelines see the front of this journal. Where no details of a query are given it is presumed that the inquirer would be grateful for any information. When someone has taken the trouble to write to you with reference to your request for information, please acknowledge their letter whether the information they have shared is of use or not. It is customary to repay their postage.

Photograph wanted

'When shall we see her like again?'

Nurse Mary Matilda CUPPLES was one of the leading maternity nurses in Dunedin for about 30 years. She was born at Orepuki and after training at Seacliff Mental Hospital, she qualified as a maternity nurse at St Helen's Hospital, Dunedin.¹

She established her own maternity hospital known as 'Nurse Cupples Maternity Home' and later 'El Nido' in Dunedin, and had a reputation of being an outstanding midwife. Many birth announcements in newspapers mentioned her name and at her death in 1937 she was referred to as a 'Good Samaritan'—always willing and ready to help her sisters in distress and especially the elderly and

the children of the neighbourhood. She was loved by many. Her passing was said to be a calamity and people asked, 'when shall we see her like again?'²

I am researching Nurse Cupples (known as Polly Cupples) for a family history and was wondering if anyone might have a photograph of her, perhaps with one of the many babies she delivered.

Pauline Weeks
E: pauline.weeks@gmail.com

References:

1. *Otago Daily Times*, 31 July 1937, p15
2. *Otago Daily Times*, 7 August 1937, p26

Wanted to buy

Dating Nineteenth Century Photographs by Robert Pols or *Dating Old Photographs 1840–1950* by Robert Pols

Deborah Shuker
E: deborahshuker@gmail.com

Send your enquiry or notice to
editor@genealogy.org.nz

Branch News



Franklin Branch Roll of Honour project

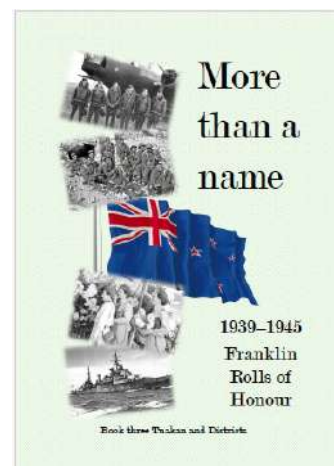
A brief outline of our project

To recognise the sacrifice of the men and women and their families, whose names appear on the various WWII Rolls of Honour boards and memorials throughout Franklin. In total, there are 1400 names on 32 different boards. Each name is recorded with an initial only, making it challenging to find the right person.



We have divided the task into five geographical areas and have completed two books, with the third currently at the printers. The first volume contains 288 stories from the nine Roll of Honour Boards and Memorials in the Pukekohe area, and the second volume has 198 stories from the six Boards and Memorials in the Central Franklin area. We have printed a limited number of each volume, gifting copies to various libraries, museums and local history groups, including the Family Research Centre. They are also available free to read on anyflip.com/bookcase/udte. The third book will contain 315 stories from the Tuakau and Districts Boards and Memorials and will also be available soon in the FRC.

We wanted to ensure that their stories were told and that they are remembered as real people who fought for our country and, in some cases, gave their lives. We have called this collection of stories 'More Than a Name' to recognise that they are indeed more than a name in gold lettering on a board.



Each story covers before the war, their service and life after the war, and the content varies depending on what records can be found, or if we have been able to contact family members. We have developed a good rapport with the New Zealand Defence Force and have access to military records. We use electoral rolls, birth, death and marriage records, Papers Past, NZ Ancestor Search Helper, family tree sites, school records and local history books, along with many other resources.

We have a team of 20 people who research, write, proofread or format the stories for the book and have been working for almost two years on the project. One of our greatest challenges is to find photographs of the men and women who served.

The final two books will cover Bombay and settlements further east and the Waiuku area. If you had relatives in those areas who might be on the WWII boards, we would love to hear from you.

Heather Maloney

Project Coordinator, Franklin WWII Rolls of Honour Project

Franklin Branch

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Find your nearest Branch
under *Connect* on our website
www.genealogy.org.nz

Hawke's Bay Branch: Norsewood Pioneer Museum

Norsewood celebrated 60 years of the Pioneer Museum on 13 December 2025 with a Heritage Village Market. Kathryn MULINDER of the Norsewood Museum Committee invited the Hawke's Bay Branch along to assist with a genealogy 'hub' that they were setting up in the Community Hall in Coronation Street, with the aim of helping visitors who were interested in finding out more about their family history.

Five branch members gave up their day to support the 'hub' and our grateful thanks go to Sonia COOM (Convenor), Robyn FORSYTH, Warwick ANDERSON, Marcia MURTAGH and Margaret De La HAYE.

Writer and researcher Una CUNNINGHAM from Stockholm was the museum's special guest for the day. Una was there for the purposes of researching family stories of the original families and was interested to know how the next generations had managed. With access to the internet, Una assisted visitors in researching their family. She was in great demand, and she was so kind and patient with everyone who got the opportunity to talk to her.

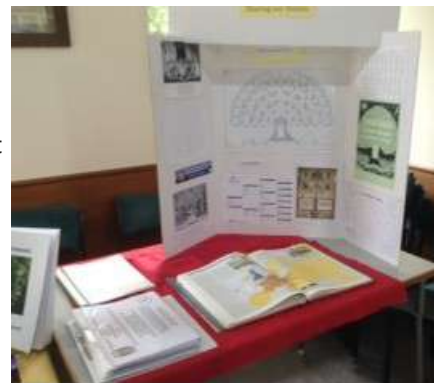
The branch had the use of the whole hall and set up eight tables with cloths of blue, red and yellow coverings, which represented the colours on the flags of the three countries of Scandinavia—Sweden, Norway and Denmark. On top, stand-alone display boards, each with a different theme—immigration, travel, occupation, and 'things to add to your family story'—were displayed. Sonia had taken some of her personal books, which were of great interest.

Besides a table for Una, Sonia and Robyn set up their laptops and tablets assisting enquirers, while Marcia, Margaret and Warwick, who with local knowledge, were often surrounded by families. Sonia connected to a researcher in Norway, who zoomed in to offer his assistance.

After the official welcome and the introduction of the Norwegian Consulate, followed by traditional dancing by school pupils and their families, the fair was declared open. Several colourful craft stalls and playground games had already begun.

It was pleasantly surprising to see the enthusiastic chatter from all who 'popped in for a look' and then stayed to share stories. Several groups formed to ignite their connection with the area. A few visitors, who were associated with the museum, came purely to see the updates to their old home.

Also on display was a huge map of the area showing landowners' sections as drawn up by people who had not seen the area. Of course, the immigrants were led to believe it was flat, fertile land ready for cropping. History tells us that the area was actually covered in huge standing 100-year-old trees and impenetrable bush. It must have been very difficult for families to make a garden to grow vegetables.



It was an enjoyable research day out, and Kathryn and the museum team were delighted with our efforts. Each member who attended was gifted the book *Johanna's World* in appreciation.

Submitted by Margaret De La Haye and Margaret Elms
E: genealogyhb@xtra.co.nz



Feilding Branch: Motor vehicle number plates

Following on from a speaker on dating photographs by hairstyles and clothing at the Feilding Branch October 2025 meeting, Peter, one of the Branch members, provided a chart to help date photographs by the number plates of motor vehicles in them; colours and symbols like dots, diamonds, squares and stars were used on the number plates to denote the years of registration. This chart was put in the November 2025 newsletter. A colour chart showing the symbols on actual plates was printed in the Ōtaki Family History Society Inc. newsletter October 2025.

The original can be seen at West Coast New Zealand History Recollect westcoast.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/24172

The first regulations to register motor vehicles in New Zealand started in 1908 and required each local authority to carry out this task. In 1918 a revised list was released naming 104 local bodies from throughout New Zealand and detailed the letters and numerals to be used in each region.

The New Zealand government took over registration of all motor vehicles in 1925, and the registration year started 1

July 1925 and ended 31 June 1926. The 1925–1926 number plates were pressed in the USA and had NZ stamped on them as well as the numerals. All subsequent plates were pressed in New Zealand and did not have NZ on them. This yearly cycle continued with new plates being issued each year until 30 June 1941, when the need to conserve steel for the War effort brought about a five-year cycle of number plate replacement, e.g. 1941–1946, 1946–1951, 1951–1956 and so on until 1963/1964. Vehicles were still required to be registered yearly and now had an adhesive label to put on the windscreen which indicated that the required registration fee for that year had been paid. This label changed to a different colour each year. Five-yearly number plate replacement continued until 1963 for some vehicles and 1964 for all others, with the introduction of 'Permanent Number Plates'.

Janet Doyle, Fielding Branch
and Peter Thomson, Thomson Motorcycle Museum
feilding.co.nz/address/travel-tourism/thomsons-motorcycle-museum.html

A week before, reading the newsletter, a member had obtained help at our Wednesday morning session in Feilding library to scan some slides taken by her father during her childhood. Amongst these, Janet Smith had seen herself with the family car, a VW Beetle, taken c 1963 in Tawa, Wellington, and shared the photo with members in the December newsletter, proving the system worked.



Palmerston North Settlers' Collection

The Palmerston North Settlers' Collection was started in 1989, almost four decades ago, by members of the NZSG Palmerston North Branch. In 2025 a new branch project began, which aims to identify links between the Palmerston North Settlers' Collection and images on the Manawātū Heritage website run through the Palmerston North City Library.

The Settlers' Collection contains information about people who lived in or near Palmerston North, and consists of documents, photographs, references from books and newspapers, and information contributed by families. If you have ancestors who lived in the Palmerston North area, this is an important local resource that could help you with your research, and it is available online.

It was accumulated over more than 30 years and was collated by Noeline PENNY. Other members (particularly Dawn ISLES and Shirley HATFIELD) typed the information onto cards in preparation for indexing on microfiche, and later Mary SKIPWORTH replaced the card index they developed with a digital database.

The Palmerston North Branch history book records that the collection was originally named the Palmerston North Early Settlers Index, but over time it became much more than this. By 2022 it comprised more than 8000 items and included information on 3500 people. It is primarily concerned with Palmerston North's earliest residents but is not strictly limited by area or date.

You can view a pdf of the multi-page database via Manawātū Heritage at: manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/783360b3-1e1d-4e61-ba05-2c2b304e05d0

Some entries in the database are very brief, while others are quite extensive. Sometimes there is a reference to 'supplementary sheets in file', and copies of these can be obtained by sending an email to: PalmerstonNorth@genealogy.org.nz.

Settlers Collection, Palmerston North, NZ

Date 19-Nov-17

LEARY Joseph Poulter

File AG

Born/About / Died: 1841-1921 Occupation: printer, editor, publisher

Supplementary sheets in file: 10

Parents: Isaac and Phoebe LEARY - refer their entries

Spouse 1: Mary LEARY, nee AUSTIN - married 1868 - refer her entry

Daughter: Phoebe LEARY 1869-1893

Spouse 2: Mary Elizabeth LEARY, formerly CARTY - married 1886

1875: founder Manawatu Times with J L Kirkbride, sold paper to John Dungan in 1878.

1879: among the first 361 PN ratepayers - see The birth of Palmerston North / I R Matheson 1971

1882-84: Borough councillor

1884: job printing establishment in Square [Manawatu Times 24 Nov]

1893: Mrs J P Leary, College St, signed petition for women's franchise

1906: musical instrument importer

Borough Councillor 1882-84

Sources: Not Entirely Legal / L P Leary

Cyclopedia of New Zealand Vol 1 Wellington Provincial District 1897

A second important local resource is Manawatu Heritage, hosted by the Palmerston North City Library, manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/. This contains many photographs of businesses, events, local people and more. It also contains a range of scanned documents that could be very helpful for both family and local research. For example, many rate books from the 1870s through to the 1920s are included, and in addition to names arranged alphabetically, these include section numbers or addresses. As a second example, a search for 'Terrace End School'

turns up the informative booklet for the 75th School Jubilee in 1959 and some early school logbooks.

During 2025 a new branch project began with the aim of making the Settlers' Collection resource more easily found online. Current branch member, Margaret RIORDAN, became concerned that the database for the Settlers' Collection was underused, even though so many hours and years of work had gone into compiling it. She embarked on a branch project to find photographs on Manawātū Heritage that could be linked to people listed in the Settlers' Collection. A document with these matching links has now been completed, and ways to make the links more obvious will be explored in 2026. (At present, our branch research officer holds a copy of this document, and on request, she can search for a name from the Settlers' Collection to see if matching photographs have been identified.)

Heather GLASGOW, the archivist at Palmerston North City Library, has also been thinking about ways to make the Settlers' Collection database more visible. In 2025 she was able to extract a list of all the surnames from the Collection, and now when someone searches for any of these names on Manawātū Heritage, an icon for the Settlers' Collection appears within the search results.

Heather's work is an example of the ongoing collaboration the branch is pleased to have with the Heritage section of Palmerston North City Library. Several branch members are currently preparing material for the upcoming Heritage Festival, a small group conduct monthly drop-in sessions called 'Connecting the Dots' for those with genealogy

queries, and new member workshops are regularly welcomed there.

If you have not yet explored these Palmerston North resources, you might like to check out the family name BATCHELAR as an example of what can be found. The Batchelar surname comes up on pages 52-53 of the Settlers' Collection document with information about four members of the family, including lists of the children in two connected families. On Manawātū Heritage a search finds images including family photos, pictures of their farm, and some souvenirs from the sons in wartime. A superb Batchelar family photograph was created by Bunting Studio in 1895.

NZSG Palmerston North Branch
E: PalmerstonNorth@genealogy.org.nz

Sources:

- *Genealogy in Palmerston North 1972–2022: History of the NZ Society of Genealogists Palmerston North Branch*, by Beth Hunt and the NZSG Palmerston North Branch
- Palmerston North Settlers' Collection—Compiled by NZSG Palmerston North Branch. PDF available to view on Manawātū Heritage: manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/783360b3-1e1d-4e61-ba05-2c2b304e05d0
- Manawātū Heritage—a Palmerston North City Library initiative administered by the Heritage Team: manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/



Mr and Mrs J O Batchelar and family 1895

Bunting Studio

[Manawātū Heritage](https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/)



Online DNA Interest Group A FREE benefit of NZSG membership

Sandra Metcalfe and Lorna Henderson on behalf of the ODIG Planning Committee

Whether you are new to DNA and its application to genealogy, or already experienced in its analysis, the ODIG Classroom offers a wide range of **free resources** for NZSG members at all levels of experience.

To register for ODIG, or for further information on accessing the Google Classroom, visit the ODIG section under the DNA tab on the NZSG website. For assistance, email onlinedna@genealogy.org.nz. See also ODIG articles in the March, June, September and December 2025 editions of *The New Zealand Genealogist*.

This month we explore the advantages in using Y-DNA and/or mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) as **companion tests** to the more common autosomal DNA (atDNA) test.

DNA testing has become an essential tool for genealogists with an estimated 40 million people worldwide having been tested, but what are your options when the most commonly -used autosomal DNA test from Ancestry or MyHeritage does not solve your research question?

One option is to add value with a **companion test** such as Y-DNA and/or mitochondrial DNA.

Each of the three types of DNA tests—Y-DNA, mtDNA and atDNA—has distinct strengths and limitations, yet none of them can answer every research question on its own.

Identifying the right test to use depends on your research question.

- If that question is to do with a particular male ancestor, then possible male testers in the direct line of descent need to be identified
- If that question is to do with a particular female ancestor, then possible female or male testers in her line of descent need to be identified

FamilyTreeDNA Discover tools

Every Y-DNA or mtDNA test taken enables scientists to update the Tree of Mankind (or Womankind) down from 'Genetic Adam' or 'Genetic Eve' respectively. The resulting tree branches for both genders now reach down into timeframes where supporting paper records may exist for many of the branches.

The many explanatory tools, and resulting Y-DNA and mtDNA genetic trees, are freely available online at discover.familytreedna.com, with branching and timeframes on each being refined as more information is discovered.

These discoveries come from the ever-increasing databases of DNA tests, as well as published, verified, archaeological discoveries.

What each test does well

Y-DNA follows the direct paternal line (father → son) and remains largely unchanged over many generations. It is uniquely powerful for:

- Tracing surname lines where surnames are inherited through an unbroken paternal lineage
- Distinguishing between men with the same name living in the same place (potentially!)
- Reaching beyond traditional records into the 1600s or earlier
- Corroborating or disproving whether two men share a common paternal ancestor

The primary limitation of Y-DNA testing is that it applies only to males, and to just one ancestral line out of many. An entry-level Y37 test can be an excellent starting point for checking surname patterns amongst matches, but the more expensive Big Y700 test is needed for in-depth analysis and precision.

Mitochondrial DNA follows the direct maternal line (mother → daughter/son) and, like Y-DNA, represents only one ancestral line at a time. It changes very slowly over time and is useful for:

- Corroborating a direct maternal line across generations
- Excluding a suspected maternal-line relationship with certainty—something autosomal DNA alone cannot always do

However, mtDNA has important limitations that need to be considered. For example:

- Many people can share the same mtDNA haplotype without a recent common ancestor
- mtDNA matches often cannot be placed within a specific genealogical timeframe

Without strong documentary support, Y-DNA and mtDNA tests are rarely helpful for identifying which specific ancestor is shared. They are most effective as confirmatory or exclusionary tools, rather than primary problem-solvers. It is true that haplogroups are becoming more and more refined as more and more people test, but lots of tested candidates are still needed to precisely pin down an ancestor to an exact match.

Autosomal DNA tests all ancestral lines and is excellent for:

- Finding cousins across both maternal and paternal branches
- Confirming relationships within approximately six generations
- Identifying unknown parents or grandparents
- Supporting documentary research through triangulation or shared matches

The main limitation of autosomal DNA is time-depth. Because DNA inheritance is random and dilutes with each generation, more distant relationships can become hard to prove due to the myriad of possibilities.

Y-DNA vs mtDNA as a companion test to autosomal DNA

When deciding which test best complements autosomal DNA, the difference in practical usefulness can be significant.

In most genealogical situations, Y-DNA is the stronger companion test, offering advantages that mtDNA generally does not, such as:

- Surname correlation: Y-DNA tracks surnames on any of the direct male lines
- Higher resolution: Modern Y-DNA testing (such as Big Y700) can distinguish between branches within a few generations
- Project structure: Y-DNA surname and geographic projects at FamilyTreeDNA are highly developed and encourage participation
- Problem-solving power: Y-DNA is particularly effective for resolving non-paternal events, surname origins and differentiating men with identical names

When paired with autosomal DNA, Y-DNA can both identify a paternal lineage and help place it accurately within the family tree by analysing shared autosomal matches.

mtDNA can be the better choice when:

- The research focus is strictly on any maternal-line ancestry
- You have a target family to check from your autosomal DNA matches
- No suitable male tester is available for Y-DNA testing
- The research goal is corroboration or exclusion, rather than pinpointing a specific ancestor

Why one test alone is often not enough

- Autosomal DNA alone may show that two people are related, but not how or through which ancestral line
- Y-DNA and mtDNA alone may identify a lineage, but not recent relationships

- When used together, these three tests compensate for one another's weaknesses and reinforce their strengths
- Combined testing bridges deep ancestry and recent family history, providing stronger, more independent lines of evidence

Recommendations

All Y-DNA and mtDNA tests contribute to our increasing understanding of our maternal and paternal family lines. There is no single 'best' test in all situations, but for most genealogists:

- Autosomal DNA + Y-DNA is the most powerful and precise combination in trying to prove or disprove a hypothesis. An autosomal test provides breadth, the Y-DNA provides paternal depth and structure
- Autosomal DNA + mtDNA is useful, more limited but confirmatory in trying to prove or disprove a hypothesis. An autosomal test provides breadth, the mtDNA provides maternal depth, structure and continuity
- All three tests together provide the strongest possible combination of DNA evidence contributing to a more complete and confident family history

Familytreedna.com (FamilyTreeDNA) is currently the only testing company that offers Y-DNA, mtDNA, and atDNA along with multiple projects, tools and shared matching. There are several other companies offering Y-DNA and mtDNA tests without the range of genealogical tools offered by FamilyTreeDNA and without the ability to accept uploaded results from other companies.

In testing with FamilyTreeDNA, only one DNA sample is required. A male tester who initially takes an entry-level Y-DNA test (such as Y-37) can later upgrade to Family Finder (autosomal), Big Y, and mtDNA testing without submitting another sample. FamilyTreeDNA keep samples for up to 25 years, and providing the sample is still viable, then other tests can be run from it.

The FamilyTreeDNA autosomal database is smaller than those at Ancestry and MyHeritage, the preferred testing sites for a standard DNA test. However, FamilyTreeDNA still has the benefit of accepting free upload files of your test results from other sites. Its database pre-dates those of Ancestry and MyHeritage, so may include matches that are not on either of the newer testing sites.

ODIG Classroom resources relevant to companion testing

The ODIG Google Classroom features two presentations by Lorna Henderson: *The New Mito Tree* (August 2025) and *Look What DNA Did to My Tree* (November 2024), both found under Recorded Monthly Meetings. Additional resources are available under the Mitochondrial DNA and Y-DNA topics in the Classroom.



**Inspired by what you've read?
Have a story to share?
Send it to:
editor@genealogy.org.nz**



Irish Interest Group



Ireland Census 1926

The National Archives of Ireland is proud to announce a major public programme to mark the centenary release of the 1926 Census Population, the first census conducted following the foundation of the Irish Free State. On 18 April 2026, this remarkable collection of over 700,000 individual household returns, documenting 2,971,992 individuals, will be made freely and fully searchable online, offering an intimate and vivid portrait of Irish life 100 years ago.

A dedicated section of the National Archives website will be regularly updated with the latest news, resources, and announcement related to the Census 1926 release. Stay tuned for more details. Visit:

nationalarchives.ie/engage-and-learn/census-1926-public-programme/

[Extracted *Irish Roots*, Issue 136, 2025.]

National Archives Ireland

Alongside the release of the 1926 census returns, the National Archives and the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport will launch exhibitions in Boston, London, Dublin and across Ireland, a new RTÉ documentary, a theatre production with ANU Production, a book titled *The Story of Us: Independent Ireland and the 1926 census* and a new learning resource and teacher's pack for schools. The National Archives is also seeking 'centenarian ambassadors'—people who were recorded in the 1926 census and are still living to share their stories. Report from nationalarchives.ie/

Northern Ireland Census—update

For those with ancestors in Northern Ireland, there is bad news. The 'destruction' precedent in place since the 1880s, continued post-1922. This saw the original census returns taken in 1926 and 1937 destroyed after statistics has been extracted. The earliest extant set of census returns in Northern Ireland dates only from 1951.

[Extracted *Irish Roots*, Issue 136, 2025.]

Accredited Genealogists Ireland (AGI)

View the AGI news bulletins detailing Ireland's census records on our webpage.

genealogy.org.nz/filescust/CMS/Interest%20Groups/Accredited%20Genealogists%20Ireland%20-%20CENSUS2.pdf

genealogy.org.nz/filescust/CMS/Interest%20Groups/AGICensusForms.pdf

Presbyterian Research Centre New Zealand

The Archives and Library for the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand are held in Dunedin. View their Digital Collection at pcanzarchives.recollect.co.nz/

Irish Lives Remembered

Irish Lives Remembered, Ireland's premier genealogy magazine, is a FREE digital magazine which offers a wealth of articles on Irish lives, recent and distant, and a trove of genealogy tips to help with your research. Their latest issue no. 63 contains 83 coloured pages and is now available to view online or download at:

www.irishfamilyhistorycentre.com/product/irish-lives-remembered-issue-63/

Irish in Argentina—The Southern Cross

The Southern Cross 1875–2026: 151 years

Director: Guillermo MacLoughlin / Editor-in-Chief: Julián Doyle.

'With legitimate pride, we celebrate this Friday, January 16, 2026, the 151st anniversary of our newspaper, giving thanks to God for such a long existence.

Throughout 2025, we have received numerous expressions of affection on the occasion of our sesquicentennial, from the then President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, and His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, to Irish ambassadors, the Federation of Argentine-Irish Societies, numerous community organizations and academic institutions, national and international newspapers... and even descendants of Irish people scattered throughout the country, in Ireland, and in other nations who, with warm messages, have acknowledged the long and fruitful history of *The Southern Cross*.

Today, on this anniversary, we renew our commitment to continue being the voice of Irish-Argentines, as well as the beacon illuminating a part of Ireland on the subcontinent, where a significant portion of the diaspora resides.

This year will be one of renewal for the newspaper, with a commemorative book marking 150 years and changes to the newsletter's design, accompanied by a print edition. To achieve these goals, we will need the support, as always, of subscribers, advertisers, and people of goodwill who wish to see a vibrant *The Southern Cross* flourish and strengthen, a newspaper whose new motivations will include striving for the definitive reunification of Ireland. Here's to many more years! Invoking the blessing of Saint Patrick, I remain, Guillermo MacLoughlin, Director.'

g.macloughlin@macloughlinyasoc.com.ar

Irish Roots

Irish Roots magazine no. 136 fourth quarter 2025; among the articles in this issue are: *DNA Testing in 2025: A Review* by Donna Rutherford; *Local Resources for Family History Research Co. Meath* by James G. Ryan; *Census 1926: The Story of Us Begins Here* by Zoe Reid; *Genealogy in Reverse Finding the Living* by Cheri Hudson Passey; *Surnames of*



County Meath by Seán Ó Murchadha;
*The Sad Decline of Ireland's
Traditional Gaeltacht Practices,*
Eamon Coyle; *Clan Gatherings: Best
Practices* by Michael Crowley and
Australian Irish Connections by
Jennifer Harrison. Check out their
website entries LATEST FROM THE
BLOG. *Irish Roots* is also available in
digital format:
www.irishrootsmedia.com/

Geraldene O'Reilly, Convenor, Irish Interest Group
E: IrishSIG@genealogy.org.nz
Website: genealogy.org.nz/Branch-details/11084-s1100100/



Update from Auckland City Libraries

Family history research workshops 2026

Whare Wānanga, Level 2 Central Library, Auckland City
Centre

10.30am–4.30pm

This workshop series focuses on researching within
'countries of interest'.

Upcoming workshops:

England and Wales:	Saturday 7 March 2026
Scotland:	Saturday 2 May 2026
Ireland:	Saturday 1 August 2026

Please bring your own laptop and your research relevant to
the 'country of interest'.

Bookings essential:

www.eventfinda.co.nz/2026/family-history-research-workshops/auckland

Workshop Programme:

10.30am–1pm: Presentation: Research and resources on
the shelves and online (includes tour of family history
collection)

BYO laptops to practise live-guided searching

Interactive discussion about difficulties encountered, and
tips and tricks for overcoming them

Discuss discoveries found

Learning from each other—family historians are very
collaborative and enjoy working together

1pm: Tour of Research Centre

1.30pm: Lunch

2pm: Research: After lunch, join us for a hands-on
research afternoon where attendees are welcome to stay
and continue their research, assisted by staff if needed.
Learning by doing, allowing attendees to reinforce what
they learned in the morning.

Research Centre closes at 5pm.



**Need help with your sources?
Check out Resources/
Research Skills
www.genealogy.org.nz**

Branch and Interest Group Services

NZSG has over 50 Branches and Interest Groups throughout the country.

You can find your nearest group on the [Branches, Interest Groups & Area Contacts page](#) on our website.

HĀWERA

The SOUTH TARANAKI BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX consists of school admission records; newspaper birth, death and marriages; Anderson's memorialist records; funeral sheets. Request by surname. Send SAE and donation to: Jill Williams, Fairfield Road, Hāwera 4610 or email peter.williams@xtra.co.nz or julesmar@xtra.co.nz.

HAWKE'S BAY

HAWKE'S BAY BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX. Request by surname. Mail service only. Include contact telephone and/or email address. Send SAE and donation to Branch Secretary, c/o 200 Pakowhai Road, Frimley, Hastings 4120.

IRISH INTEREST GROUP – LOWER NORTH ISLAND

We hold education and research days locally, and across the Lower North Island region on request by branches and groups, and can also provide presentations and a helpdesk at genealogy events. Enquiries to Irish.LowerNI@genealogy.org.nz

NELSON

A database of half a million entries covering the wider Nelson area, from indexes and books in our library, Ancestors Attic. Includes pre-1856 marriage index, including Māori, passenger shipping lists 1840–1914 to and from Nelson and from the UK and Australia. E: nelson@genealogy.org.nz or PO Box 1879, Nelson 7040.

NORTH SHORE

Lookups for births and deaths c 1940 to date from *The New Zealand Herald*. Email request to northshore@genealogy.org.nz, or to Dennise Cook, Research Officer, North Shore Branch NZSG, PO Box 89045, Torbay, Auckland 0742. A small donation to the branch will be welcome, depending on results.

OAMARU

Oamaru Cemeteries CD Headstone Transcriptions. For both the Old and New Cemeteries. The Old Cemetery records have been updated. Cost \$25 including p&p. Enquiries to Oamaru@genealogy.org.nz.

PALMERSTON NORTH

Our SETTLERS DATABASE 1870–1900 contains 3,000 names or family groups. Cemetery headstone transcriptions; BDM newspaper clippings; school admissions transcriptions—20,000 and growing; funeral cards. Enquiries to: palmerstonnorth@genealogy.org.nz. Include what you already know. A small donation is requested.

PAPAKURA

The PAPAKURA AND DISTRICTS BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX includes Alfriston, Ardmore, Ararimu, Clevedon, Drury, Karaka, Kawakawa Bay, Maketu, Ramarama, Slippery Creek, Springfield and Wairoa South. Enquiries welcome, mail service only with SAE and donation to NZSG Papakura Branch, PO Box 72–993, Papakura 2244. E: papakura@genealogy.org.nz.

TE AWAMUTU

Booklets of MEMORIAL INSCRIPTIONS FOR ST JOHN'S and ST PAUL'S ANGLICAN CHURCHES including full transcriptions from cemetery and church interiors, plans, histories and index. Also digital images of inscriptions from both cemeteries, lookups for local school admission registers (varying dates) and local newspaper family notices (1911–1974). Enquiries to teawamutu@genealogy.org.nz.

WELLINGTON ARCHIVES RECORDS REQUESTS

While Archives New Zealand have suspended their digitisation programme, NZSG Kilbirnie Branch is available to do lookups for the Wellington Reading Rooms. Please provide the R reference from Archives NZ's Collections Search. A small koha is appreciated. Enquiries to Kilbirnie@genealogy.org.nz.

Contributions from branches and interest groups are always welcome in the journal—especially if you can pass on useful information from your area that may assist other members. Events, projects, new repositories and services, ways you have engaged in the community and given something back. Contact the Editor, E: editor@genealogy.org.nz



Lost your family? Follow the children with our extensive school records!

Available on the Kiwi Collection

(additional subscription)

NZSG Certificates Collection

The NZSG's collection of over 130,000 Certificates is now available via an email request service, in addition to our postal service.



Explore with our Library Cat(alogue)



Help with the Shipping Collection!

Find more information on these services and more at
www.genealogy.org.nz