

AN OLD LETTER ABOUT NZ FOUNDERS  
CHRISTMAS PARTY 1949

Contributed by Carolyn Johnston Rhodes, Auckland Branch

Beach Road  
Waikanae  
Wellington

10 December 1949

Dear .....

I thought you would be interested to know we are comfortably settled in our new home. My brothers are both members of the Founders Soc. and last night they took me down to the Christmas meeting.

I met many old friends and the meeting was most enjoyable. During the evening the ladies were given papers and told to write down the dates of their pioneers' arrivals. My date of W.T. Fairburn, 1819, was ten years earlier than anyone else, and I was called up and given a lovely Christmas cake. You can imagine my astonishment. Then *The Dominion* reporter came to get particulars.

In Auckland names of Pioneer women were wanted to put on the Ellen Melville Rooms. I think my great-grandmother's name would be the first, 1819. But Arthur Fairburn, my mother's first cousin, Mt Eden, would probably know her Christian name, we don't.

Best wishes to you all. I shall be rejoining the Founders Club here.

Yours sincerely  
M.M. Whitehorn

*Notes:*

1. *According to information supplied to the compilers of Auckland's Centennial (1940) Early Settlers Roll, William Fairburn and his wife, Elizabeth nee Newman, arrived at Kororareka on the ship Brampton, on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1819. Fairburn's name is commemorated in Otahuhu with a road and school named after him.*
2. *However, Mrs Fairburn was not the first pioneer woman to arrive, as Captain Hansen and his wife landed in Kororareka*

in 1814, followed by Charles Gordon and his wife in 1817, and no doubt there were others before the Fairburns.

The following item was obtained from *The Dominion* dated Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1949.

*"Descendants of early settlers were represented in the attendance from Wellington, Horowhenua, Wairarapa and Manakau at the NZ Founders' Christmas Dinner last night, 9<sup>th</sup> December.*

*Descendency from the earliest colonist was claimed by Mrs M.M. Whitehorn of Manakau, Horowhenua, whose great-grandfather arrived in Kerikeri in 1819.*

*Second place went to Mrs S.G. Reid & Miss Doris Williams, grand-daughters of Captain Peter Williams who arrived in Port Chalmers in 1829."*

Mrs Whitehorn's brothers referred to in the letter were Francis Selwyn Simcox, membership no 719, b. 17/6/1880, sheepfarmer; and Edwin Percivale Simcox, membership no 717, b. 9/7/1882 and William Martin Simcox, membership no 718, b. 2/9/1872.

#### **Following contributions by Keith Seagar of Wellington Branch**

#### **À GREAT MECHANIC · THE LATE MR GEORGE SEAGAR**

*(Obituary for George Seagar from Evening Post March 1935)*

George Seagar, one of New Zealand's best-known boilermakers, passed away in Wellington a few days ago at the age of 90 years. Mr Seagar was born in England of a family which for hundreds of years had been model-makers to the Royal Navy. He was trained in a ship-building yard at Southampton. With his three brothers Charles, Edward and William Seagar all of the same calling, he came to New Zealand. Charles Seagar became head of the Wanganui Steam Packet Company; Edward started a foundry in Wellington and William one in Auckland. The late Mr George, the

last surviving brother, worked first for "Ned" in Wellington, and was later foreman boilermaker for Luke Brothers. Mr Seagar was a mechanic of the highest order and held medals for models which are included in the exhibits at the Kensington Museum London. In the construction of actual machinery he was equally highly skilled, and with his brother Edward, was responsible for the construction of the first light locomotives to run between Foxton and Palmerston North. The rails were of wood and offered great difficulty at the curves, it being necessary after Mr Seagar had tried the engines out, to bring the wheels back to Wellington and turn the flanges down. He had other contracts with transport including the putting of 26 feet into the length of the old "*Stormbird*". He built in the Luke yards the *Tuna*, the *Matai* and other steamers. Indeed, at the funeral, when boilermakers and engineers were discussing the qualities of the fine old foreman, Mr C.M. Luke remarked that the deceased had lengthened more ships than any other man in New Zealand.

It is notable that engineering skills have been transmitted down by the original Seagar brothers to their families. Thus we find that Mr William Seagar of Auckland, who built the *Pukiki*, which was launched by the Hon. R.J. Seddon, left two sons who carried on the foundry, which was destined to frame several Auckland ferries and other steamers, and to provide careers for the third generation of Seagars. In Wellington where Messrs "Ned" and George Seagar were jointly responsible for pioneering work in the engineering industry, such as the installation of the first boiler for the *Evening Post*. The second generation of the family was represented by two engineering sons and the third by Mr Harold Seagar who stepped into his father's shoes as Chief Engineer at Staples Brewery and Mr Fred Seagar of the Public Works Electrical Department. An Auckland offshoot of the third generation living in Wellington is Mr George Seagar, foreman-boilermaker in the mechanical department of the Wellington Harbour Board. He was a good athlete won the amateur welterweight boxing championships of New Zealand, represented New Zealand at league football and won a number of championship rowing events.

The family of the recently-deceased nonagenarian included two sons George and Edward. Both were trained boilermakers. The latter was also foreman boilermaker for the Wellington Harbour Board. With Mr J. Chalmers, his brother-in-law, he was well-known in his yachting activities the pair having sailed the *Dauntless* to

victory on many occasions. Mrs Chalmers' son Jack, a third generation Seagar born in Wellington, was a member of the Island Bay Surf Club, and went as a youth to Sydney. There he rescued a man from the maw of a shark on Coogee Beach, such being the heroism displayed that a subscription of \$5,000.00 was made to mark the occasion. Mrs Chalmers also received a memento of the occasion. She has one sister, Miss Nellie Seagar of Wellington.

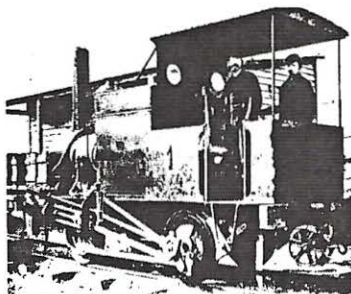
## WELLINGTON MAN'S MEMORIES: DROVE FIRST FOXTON-TO-PALMERSTON ENGINE

*Evening Post: Saturday, February 2 1935*

It was recently reported in the London papers that the Isle of Wight was shortly to lose the distinction of having the oldest passenger locomotive in the United Kingdom still in active service. The reference was to the old engine known as "No. W13 Ryde". This engine was built way back in 1864 by Beyer, Peacock & Co. of Manchester, and was one of seven engines employed in the Ryde-Ventner service. There is a connection between that engine and Wellington, in that Mr George Seagar, of Roxburgh Street, now in his ninetieth year, worked on the engine when he was 21 years of age, fitting her with a plate and new set of tubes at the Ryde Railway Workshops. Mr Seagar had just finished his apprenticeship at the P & O workshops in Southampton, and one of his first jobs at Ryde was to repair "No 13 Ryde" now to be scrapped.

But that is not all that is interesting about Mr Seagar. For his good work he was awarded the large bronze medal at the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Exhibition of Industry and Art 1866 and a certificate which are still in his possession. the year 1874 Mr Seagar decided to come out to New Zealand and made the long passage to Auckland on the ship *Hydaspes*. It was not long before he took a trip to

Thames but the prospects there were not encouraging so he came to Wellington by the steamer *Lalla Rookh* and joined his brother, the late Edward Seagar, who had secured a contract to build three small locomotives for the Railways



Department (NB Public Works Department). These engines, each of which were given a distinctive name were built at Seagar's Foundry (not so they were built at E.W. Mill's Lion Foundry that Edward was managing at the time, the year being 1875; he did not

### **Mills engine *Skunk* operating on the Foxton Branch**

*branch out on his own till 1878 N.B.-K.L.S.)* and when finished were taken to Foxton by the steamer *Lunn* then in command of Captain Fairchild afterwards of government steamers – *Stella*, *Hinemoa* and *Taranaki*.

Mr Seagar was the first engineer on the line and well remembers taking the first train, with three carriages into Palmerston North. He was there for eight months altogether, making one passenger trip morning and evening between the two points, and filling in the day hauling loads of timber.

## FIRST TRACTION ENGINE IN WAIRARAPA

After that experience with handling and transport of timber Mr Seagar turned his attention to sawmills and their equipment. He was the man who built the first traction engine taken into the Wairarapa. That engine, built by him when employed at E.W. Mill's Lion Foundry, was employed for years in the bush country round about Carterton in which district Mr Seagar was employed for some years equipping sawmills.

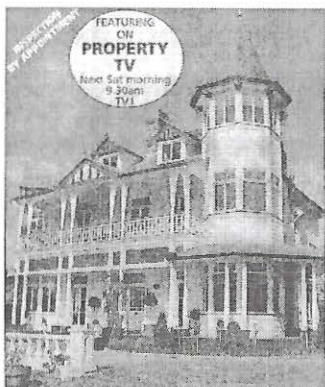
Mr Seagar also was personally concerned in the building of the tug *Westland* (NB Built by his brother Edward in his Victoria Foundry K.L.S.) still in active service on the West Coast and was also employed on the lengthening of the old steamer *Wakatu* which ran between Wellington and Lyttelton via coastal ports for many years under the command of the late Captain Wins.

Mr Seagar still enjoys good health and is quite energetic for his years.

*"I've seen a lot of changes in this neighbourhood, I can tell you"* said Mr Seagar *"the sea used to come up to Grainger Street sometimes in the old days and the fine of Wakefield Street marks the fine of the old beach. All the land seaward of that was reclaimed from land*

*shifted off the hill at Oriental Bay. There was only a twenty-foot road between Clyde Quay Hotel and the rocky foreshore at one time, but as they cut away the bank along Clyde Quay for reclamation purposes, more room was made for houses and roadway. The cliff along Clyde Quay was much nearer the water than it is now when I first came to Wellington, and there was only an isolated house or two around Oriental Bay. In those days the yachts used to be moored at Thorndon, but in the winter time they were docked on the rocks at Clyde Quay where Paul Coffey and Paul Chatworthy had their slips and sheds just about where the municipal baths are now. It's all changed now."*

**Contribution from Waikato Branch  
GREENSLADE HOUSE  
NO 1 WELLINGTON STREET HAMILTON**



The site was originally a Crown grant made to Isaac Coates, a Hamilton local body politician and businessman in 1874. Coates built a house there named Wairere but sold it in 1911 to Henry & Louisa Greenslade. Henry was born in Auckland in 1867 and grew up in Thames during the gold rush. Starting as an errand boy for the Thames Star, he later became Manager and Editor. He became Thames Mayor in 1898 still only 31. Investments in the gold mining industry made him a wealthy man. The family established a farming estate at Ohaupo where they farmed for 10 years. For six years from 1905 to 1911 he was Liberal MP for Waikato and became the owner

of the *Waikato Times* until it merged with the *Waikato Argus* in 1915. He remained as a shareholder and director.

In 1912 Greenslade House was completed at a cost of \$3500. The architect was John Warren and the builder J McKinnon. The timber used was mainly matai, rimu and kauri from the Mamaku Ranges. No expense was spared with roof tiles imported from St Helens, pressed metal ceilings from Germany and firebricks from France. The rose pattern on the glazed floor tiles of the foyer is repeated in stained glass windows. A curved mahogany staircase leads to the first floor with a narrow one to the second floor. Above the second floor is the distinctive tower, originally a small bedroom with fantastic views. Wooden archways are a feature throughout the house and unusually for that time, the original toilets are all inside and had a flush system. The house when built had gas lighting but was converted to electricity in the 1920's.

Unfortunately in next to no time Henry Greenslade began to drink heavily and gamble, thus losing his fortune. Louisa sold ferns which she grew in the conservatory and bred terriers for sale. She also edited the *Waikato Times* while being very involved in patriotic work during World War 1. She was awarded the MBE. They let rooms, eventually living in the maids room behind the kitchen. In 1934 they built a small house across the road and sold Greenslade House to the Pearsons of Pearsons Sandsoap family, who continued to operate the rooming establishment.

When the property was sold to builder Frank Edwards in 1952 the beautiful grounds of 2½ acres with a tennis court, aviary and fountain were sold and subdivided, only retaining the present ¼ acre. Edwards then sold Greenslade House which remained as a rooming establishment until 1970 when Tom & Shirley Muir bought and restored it to near original condition. It changed hands in 1994 and again in 2001. From the Waikato River the distinctive tower is a focal point during cruises on the *MV Waipa Delta*.

## **AVIATOR'S FAMILY PLOT RESTORED**

**Contributed by Sue Braggins of Wairarapa Branch**

The family grave of one of New Zealand's pioneering aviators, which had fallen into disrepair through age, has been restored by two of his descendants.

Masterton woman Sue Braggins and her sister Jocelyn Kinnell have had the memorial to Captain George Hood, for whom Masterton's Hood aerodrome is named, restored back to its former glory. The women are Hood's grand-nieces.

Hood and his friend and flying partner Lieutenant John Robert Moncrieff, who had migrated to New Zealand from Scotland, made worldwide headlines on January 10 1928, when they died trying to become the first men to fly the Tasman.

Born near Masterton, the son of early settlers Mr & Mrs F Hood, Captain Hood had always had a fascination with flying,

During World War 1 he was a sergeant with the 9<sup>th</sup> Squadron, Wellington Mounted Rifles. He served through the Gallipoli Campaign and after the evacuation served in France.

By the end of 1916 he realised a lifelong dream when he was drafted as a recruit into the Royal Flying Corps. He flew through the course and the following year was promoted to lieutenant.

While he was testing a new aeroplane from Lincoln, the engine failed and he nose dived from 2000 feet. He survived minus his right leg from the knee down.

He continued with his pilot training despite his disability and on his return to New Zealand he joined the RNZAF as captain.

According to old reports, secrecy surrounded Hood and Moncrieff's plans to fly across the Tasman. Several months planning went into the flight, which was finally revealed on December 14, 1927 when the monoplane – The Aotearoa – was being assembled.

Right from the start it was the pair's intention to prepare the way for commercial flights between Australia and New Zealand and not just for fame and glory.

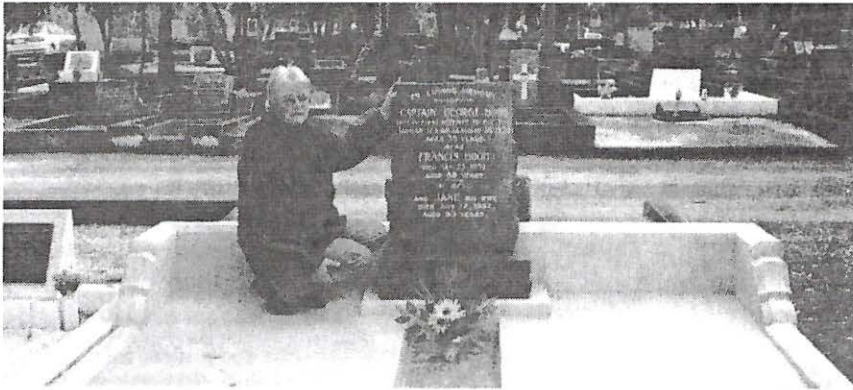
On December 30, 1927 the Australian Prime Minister at the time, Mr Bruce, said he did not approve of the proposed flight as, in the opinion of experts, the aeroplane was unsafe. He contacted the New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr Coates, who was of a similar opinion. It was finally agreed that the flights should take place with no responsibility to either government.

At 5.14am NZ Time on January 10, Hood and Moncrieff made a perfect takeoff from Sydney, heading for Wellington. Radio signals from the aircraft were received until seven hours later – at 12.15pm.



It was thought they would be about half way across at that time. Nothing more was ever heard from them.

On September that same year Charles Kingsford-Smith and his three-man crew became the first people to fly across the Tasman Sea in their monoplane, the *Southern Cross*.



GANNY PARKINSON

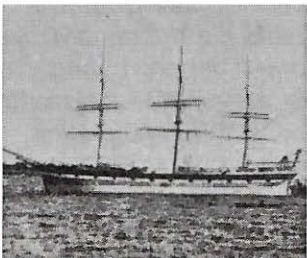
**Sue Braggins the grand-niece of New Zealand pioneering aviator George Hood at the restored family plot in Masterton Cemetery.**

**The headstone commemorates the pioneer aviator whose parents are buried in the grave. (Photo courtesy of *Wairarapa Times Age*.)**

## CAMERON FAMILY'S CLOSE WANGANUI REGIONAL TIES

**Contributed by Jack Glengarry of Wanganui Branch**

*This item is based on address by noted historian Athol Kirk for the Blenheim dinner at Purnell House on September 8, 1955 He had been assisted by Neill Corballis and Roland C Oliver in preparing his script.*



Tonight we are honouring our forefathers who arrived at Wellington on the ship "*Blenheim*" on December 27, 1840 after a

passage of 124 days from Greenock, Scotland.

The *Blenheim* has been referred to as the Scots ship and included among the passengers were representatives from the

**The ship *Blenheim***

Campbells, Camerons, Frasers, Grants, Mckenzie Mcdonalds McQuarries, McGregors, McConnels, McKinnons, Meleods, McLachlans, McNaughtons, McMasters, McMillans, McKays, Mitchells, Morrisons, Sinclairs and many others among the 213 recorded. passengers.,

Of these passengers, 197 came from near Fort William in Invernesshire, and were under the leadership of Laird Donald MacDonald. Another report of the ship's passengers states that they came from Lochaber, Morven and Skye, with a few Lowlanders. Conditions must have been very bad in the Highlands at that time, labourers being offered free passage and work in New Zealand with the hope of being able to eventually buy their own land.

John Crawford, in two days, chose forty of the party and the advertisement also offered free passages to shepherds, miners, gardeners, brickmakers, mechanics, handicraftsmen, and domestic servants. Passages were also offered to single females under the care of near relatives. The cabin passengers were those who had bought land orders. A Land Order consisted of 150 acres in the country and a town section of one acre, the price being one pound per acre. The passage money seems to have varied between 50 and 70 pounds. The *Blenheim* had the sleeping quarters divided into three areas.. Single women were placed aft and single men forward, but in between were the cabin passengers, being the married people and their children.

So let us read from the *Greenock Advertiser* of August 28th 1840.

*"On Monday afternoon the Royal Tar steamer left the Broomiclaw (the ferry wharf of the Clyde), with the Rev Dr. McLeod, Mr. John Crawford and other gentlemen on a visit to the ship "Blenheim" lying at the tail of the bank previous to a departure for New Zealand The emigrants are chiefly from Lochaber, Morven and Skye and a few lowlanders. They are all under the kind leadership of Mr. McDonald of Drimintoran, a genuine and highly respectable Highlander.*

*"Besides these gentlemen there is Captain Moses Campbell and his family from Lochaber, Dr Sutherland, Mr John Cameron, and Dr Campbell, the surgeon from Mull.. They were assembled below to*

hear an exhortation in Gaelic from the Rev McLeod of St Columba's Church, Glasgow, who seemed to be almost adored by his countrymen, The parting of friends is always one of the most melancholy events that can take place, and a parting such as this, which was almost without hope of ever meeting again, doubly painful "The women sobbed aloud and many a tear trickled down the cheeks of parents and children as they reminded themselves of their native glens and homes, and friends they had left behind. Before leaving, Dr. McLeod presented to the immigrants, from Mr. McLean, fifteen volumes of the most valuable books in the Gaelic language with the view to founding a Gaelic library in New Zealand under the superintendence there of the Rev. McFarlane.." (This ends the Article in the Observer).

We then go to Jessie Campbell's diary, the wife of Captain Moses Campbell, which covers each day of the voyage, and she starts :

*"Embarked this day on board the Blenheim and had a bad commencement to our voyage by getting drenched with rain waiting for a steam boat to take us alongside the ship. I was agreeably surprised at our good accommodation. A steam boat came at 11 o'clock at night to tow us out 20 miles; a beautiful calm night. Children slept wonderfully well considering the uncomfortable bed we had - Sailors astonished the children by the noise they made heaving up the anchor.*

*She goes on ;"I put five of the children to sleep in a berth in the cabin, and had a bed made for Captain Campbell and myself on the floor. The children slept pretty well.*

*Captain Campbell and I slept wonderfully well considering the uncomfortable bed we had."*

Another family on the ship was the Fraser family from Ardgour. They boarded the ship with a family of nine and on September 3, Mrs Fraser gave birth to a son. As the ship was rolling and pitching in the Bay of Biscay, it must have been most uncomfortable.

Conditions on the ship were far from comfortable. The only illumination was from an oil lamp or a candle. In rough weather the passengers were confined to their sleeping quarters.

Jessie Campbell has quite a lot to write about the lack of cleanliness of the Highlanders. She quotes Captain Grey as complaining of the indolence and filthy habits of the highlanders. She stated that the few Paisley (Brown) emigrants keep themselves cleaner and are

more easily managed. The captain took great trouble in getting the Highlanders on deck, and cleaning their accommodation.

When the pipers played in the evening the Captain got all the passengers dancing. Jessie Campbell was horrified to find that the Highlanders used their food dishes for other purposes at night, and considered it most unhygienic as she did not think they could be cleaned properly. She commented that she had a closet in her cabin which took care of the toilet.

When the ship got into the tropics it becomes obvious that the ladies fashions of the day became tiresome. First you read that Jessie Campbell shed her stays, then you read:

*" I am sitting at my table writing this with my clothes off down to my waist and the three cabin windows open. Have just had my tumbler of porter and am going to bed."*

However the warm weather did not last. When the ship got down into the roaring forties it encountered stormy conditions. Crockery was smashed and Jessie found it difficult to stop her possessions from rolling about in the cabin.

Sorrow came when one of the twins died and was buried at sea. The death of this infant created a gloom over those on board.

Captain Grey had never sailed to New Zealand before, as the *Blenheim* had been engaged in the service to Sydney. So when New Zealand had not been sighted by December 12 the emigrants started to grumble and say that the ship had missed New Zealand. Two days later Van Dieman's Land was sighted and the fears of the passengers put at rest.

They must have embarked a large number of sheep at Greenoch, for Jessie Campbell is frequently writing that they had killed another sheep and enjoyed fresh meat that day.

A passenger was Gregor McGregor, a single man of 21 years. He obviously met up with one of the daughters of Duncan and Marjorie Fraser, Catherine, aged 17 years. The courtship continued when they landed at Wellington, and they were married on November 6, 1841.

Gregor worked for several years around Wellington. With the unsettled conditions he decided to go to Australia, and in 1845 left New Zealand with his wife, daughter and son, and in Australia managed a property for Governor McQuarrie.

In March 1849, they returned to New Zealand and soon after, the family moved to *Ann Bank* at Turakina. In 1854-55, Gregor bought a

block of land at Matarawa where the seven youngest children were born making a family of fourteen. They later established *Aird* on No 2 Line and then Smithfield to the south of where we are tonight.

(NB this is the land from Durie Hill to the edge of Whangaehu).

Time does not allow me to follow the fortunes of all the *Blenheim* passengers, and I apologise to those sitting here tonight who have not been mentioned. However I want to finish with the story of one young Scot, Sandy Grant a bachelor of 30 years.

When leaving Greenoch he had watched Mary Cameron try to get ashore as she had left a sweetheart in Scotland and did not want to go to New Zealand. Sandy stopped her and as a result she would not speak to him on the voyage out. However they eventually married in Wellington, and their honeymoon was spent in New Plymouth where Sandy was engaged as a surveyor.



He had surveyed quite a part of Wellington, and Grant Road is named after him. They returned to this town, their eldest son having been born in New Plymouth.

On a trip to the Wairarapa he took a party of 40 men on a scouting trip. They killed a pig, which belonged to the Maori, and the party was besieged ~ Sandy grabbing a stick from the fire began scattering the fire in all directions. The Maori all thought he had gone mad and cried out "*pourangi*" and as they would not touch a mad person so they let the party go.

Mary Cameron, at the age of 26, who became Mrs Grant, was the daughter of Donald Cameron known as *Donald the Cooper* to differentiate him from other Camerons. When her parents settled in Turakina, no doubt this had some influence on her and her husband deciding to follow.

Alexander Grant sold his Wellington properties including the section opposite James Smith, formerly occupied by the Royal Oak Hotel for five pounds and set out for Turakina.

He hired a cart and set off up the beach to Scott's Ferry at the mouth of the Rangitikei River. Here he procured a couple of horses and while Mary Grant rode one, the four children rode the other.

His property was south of Turakina opposite his father-in-law. He named it *Tullochgorum* and they built their first whare on the flat saving the prime site where the house is today to be built on later. This property is farmed by Ewen and Roz Grant and their family.

There is no doubt that the passengers on the *Blenheim* were well picked and were of true pioneering stock. Their descendants total thousands today. I have glossed over the hardships and heartbreaks they must have suffered, but they have won through.

*You the descendants of that brave band who gave up their sheltered life in Scotland to voyage to the utmost part of the earth, must be proud of your forebears.*

On December 23, Cape Farewell was sighted and there was great jubilation. The Captain said they would be in Port Nicholson by the next evening but it was not to be. A squall blew up and the ship had to stand off, and was driven thirty miles off.

The voyage came to an end at last and on December 27 the *Blenheim* entered Wellington Harbour and anchored off Kaiwarawara. Accommodation had been built for the emigrants in the Kaiwarawara valley, and here the majority stayed for a number of years. It became known as Scot's Town.

It should be remembered that the Highlanders only spoke Gaelic and this led to difficulties on the ship. The Captain would give an order and the Highlanders would just took blankly. Captain Moses Campbell then had to be summoned to translate. It is also of interest to note that the church service held on board each Sunday was conducted in Gaelic.

The passengers consisted of 18 married couples, 87 single people, and 39 children under fourteen. There were numerous births on the voyage and several deaths including Isabella, a twin daughter of the Campbells, as previously referred to. A note of interest is that Jessie Campbell was a descendant of Cameron of Lochiel. With his wife and family including a baby son born in Wellington the family set sail for Wanganui on the *Clydeside*. As deck cargo the ship carried 50 of his cattle. On arrival at Wanganui the Campbells lived in a raupo whare on the riverbank, However the cattle were taken out to Captain Campbell's property at Wiritoa, the Maori owner having no objection, provided he eventually got paid for the land.

It is said that John Cameron, who became Campbell's partner, was so sick on the voyage over, that he would not take another sea journey, and walked from Wellington. He took possession of his Marangai property, but lived with the Campbells. (*footnote 1*) When in 1850 Turakina was opened for settlement, many of the *Blenheim* passengers took up land in the valley. The first to arrive was John

(*Mor*) Cameron with his wife and family of seven sons and two daughters. They had, after arriving in Wellington, gone first to the Wairarapa where they farmed near the lake for some years. Then they moved to Porirua for a short while and finally came to Turakina. To distinguish John from other Cameron Johns, he was known as Big John or *Mor* in Gaelic.

Donald McLean, on behalf of the Governor mediated the repurchase of the land between Wanganui and Whangaehu, known as the Marangai, thus settling the Maori grievances. John was able to concentrate on his farming, and also assist in organising the first race meeting in Wanganui in 1848. He was apparently the starter, and also a jockey, despite being a reasonably big man. He is also recorded as bringing the first horse to the area.



***The Clan Cameron Chief Neil Cameron Francis Corballis***

By 1855, the partnership with Captain Campbell ended and both families built houses and commenced independent operations. John spent much time in the Rangitikei, leasing large areas of land, and running cattle, usually owned jointly with others, some of whom were Mrs Boddington, Captain Sharpe, and Mr Simpson.

The 1860's saw more change and adventure in John's life. He married Anne Sutherland ~ of the Waipu landing --and became a family man, producing four sons and a daughter. As the Maori Wars began again, the Caledonian Rangers were resurrected and renamed The Wanganui Cavalry Volunteers, with John as Captain. being issued with a sword and a muzzle loading Colt six shot revolver. Somehow, despite several reminders, the revolver was never returned!

As a definite retreat, a blockhouse was also built on his farm. Known as the *Cameron Blockhouse* it is still standing today, restored and open to the public. Close by, the Campbells fortified their home by pouring sand into the walls, and fitting heavy shutters over the doors and windows

At Marybank, a settlement closer to the town, a third blockhouse was built, with visual contact to the York Stockade in Wanganui. This put all the blockhouses in contact, if an attack took place. Ultimately,

no attack came and the blockhouse was converted into a stable and hayshed, with the blacksmith facility attached. There was now a large population of horses, with draught, hacks and thoroughbreds on the property

The end of the wars was also the end of John's military career, probably much to his relief, as he wrote from camp at Kai Iwi that he was not enjoying the action at all, The British were far too cautious, his tent was wet, and the camp bed very uncomfortable, he recorded.

Later Jack and John fought in the 1914-18 war, both dying, one in action and one from wounds.

His eldest son Allan produced a grandson about six months before John passed away in 1893. Two of his sons, Jack and Hector, fought in the Boer war, as Allan carried on the farm, but sadly his eldest son died of diphtheria, and the land was eventually divided between his daughters.

Another family, which came out in the *Blenheim* was Duncan and Majorie Fraser, with a family of 10 children, one of whom was born while the vessel was being tossed about by a storm in the Bay of Biscay. After residing for 12 years in Wellington, the Frasers went to the Rangitikei in 1852. Their story has been told before.

### ***John Cameron of Marangai Born 1817 Died 1893***

The father of John, Allan Cameron owned land in the Highlands, and also served with the Fencibles in the Napoleonic wars with the rank of Captain. This land was not very profitable, so John as the younger son elected to try New Zealand, buying rights to land from the New Zealand Land Company, and set sail on the "*Blenheim*" in 1840.

As land around Wellington was well settled by this time, John decided on a block near Wanganui. In partnership with Captain Moses Campbell, who had purchased an adjacent block, he set about grazing cattle and harvesting flax for rope making, additionally working for a local surveyor. The time was 1841.

John spent his time learning Maori, and gradually expanding his cattle numbers, as the actual animals farmed were jointly owned by several settlers.

Unfortunately, relations with the Maoris deteriorated, due to the irregularities of the NZ Land Company and Maori discontent associated with it.



In about 1845 when Taupo and upriver Maori threatened Wanganui, and local Maori were stealing cattle, John formed the settlers into a mounted volunteer force known as the "Caledonian Rangers".

Two years later the infamous Gilfillan family massacre took place, and an attack was made by Maketu, an upriver chief. Maketu was shot dead early in the fracas, eyewitness accounts crediting John with the deed, and the attackers eventually withdrew.

This was the start of intermittent raiding and plundering, so John drove his cattle to grazing at Patea, and joined the settlers in the town, with the Rangers riding reconnaissance sorties around the outskirts. After the battle of St John's Wood, when much firing took place without great effect on either side, the Maori withdrew to plant their potatoes and kumara, and Wanganui embarked on twelve years of peace and development.

### **150TH CELEBRATIONS IN MASTERTON**

Heather Green, Auckland Branch

My ancestors, Michael Dixon and his youngest daughter, Emma, were in the first party to arrive and settle in Masterton, arriving on 21st May 1854 after a long trek from Wellington. Emma was to become my great-grandmother.

Michael Dixon with wife Sarah and five children arrived in Wellington on the *Arab* on 16th October 1841, settling in Karori. Sarah died in 1843. When Michael joined the Small Farms Association formed by Joseph Masters, there were only three children remaining – Emma, Michael junior who never married (died 1874), and Charlotte who married Samuel Skey, who became a member of the Provincial Council for Wellington but who died in 1861. They had one daughter. Charlotte re-married Robert Allan of the 65th Regiment in Masterton and they had eight children. He features frequently in early Masterton history. (To date I have been unable to trace any descendants.)

Meanwhile back in Masterton, my great-grandfather, William Adams, was farming for Collins at Te Ore Ore. He had arrived in 1846 with the 65th Regiment from Ireland and took his discharge in 1850. It was in William Adams' whare that Joseph Masters used for negotiations in Masterton. I have perused his handwritten account in a school exercise book in the National Library in Wellington.

On 1st August 1854, William Adams and Emma Dixon were married by the Reverend T.B. Hutton of Hutt, becoming the first white settlers to be married in Masterton. As she was under 16, she had to have the consent of her father. They were to have sixteen children most of who married, thus today providing many descendants of the Adams family.

For many years I held the Adams' Family Bible, which I have presented to the Wairarapa Archives. Since then many more Adams have been discovering their family history and meeting up with long-lost cousins and providing more research through the Internet.

**SOME IMPRESSIONS OF 150<sup>TH</sup> CELEBRATIONS IN  
MASTERTON, FRIDAY 21 MAY · SUNDAY 23 MAY 2004**  
Heather Green, Auckland Branch

On Friday, Jim and I attended the Pioneers Luncheon and Book Launch at Copthorne Resort Solway Park starting at 11.00 am with displays of some of Masterton's early family trees. These were mounted on board about 1 metre high. There was one of my great-great-grandfather, Michael Dixon, and another of William Adams, both complete with a picture and a brief history. The NZ Founders Society also had a display. Books and commemorative postage stamps were for sale.

*"The Look of Masterton"* by Gareth Winter was launched and available for sale. I had previously met Gareth Winter at the Wairarapa Archives when I presented the Adams Family Bible. He has written a number of books and articles and has had a personal interest in my family as he lives in Michael Street (formerly Michael Dixon Street) and had earlier made it possible for us to visit the original, now-restored house and property of my great-great-grandfather Michael Dixon who died in 1883.

Later we visited the Genealogical Society Rooms (next to Wairarapa Archives) in Queen Street who had a display of family trees and were open for research.

The highlight of the weekend was Sesqui-The Stadium Spectacular Show at 7.30 pm. Starting with *God Defend New Zealand*, Wairarapa school children dressed in costumes representing various

native birds danced about the floor, followed by Kapa Haka Nga Whaka-tipuranga O Nga Taumahekeheke O Wairarapa (the future generation of Wairarapa). The evening's entertainment kept flowing with items from the Masterton District Band Brass Band, Wairarapa Fern & Thistle Pipe Band and dancers, the Central Band of the Royal New Zealand Air Force, school choirs, displays – A Postal Story (through the years) – all covered in the report of the paper. The highlight for me was the singing of Auld Lang Syne with everyone clasping hands in friendliness, especially as we knew no one there personally. The massed bands, including the pipes, were a delight to hear. Altogether a wonderful evening.

#### **Saturday – 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade**

Once again a lot of preparation had gone into this. Some of the vehicles, animals, floats and costumed people had taken part the night before at the Sesqui. Starting at 12.30 pm the procession kept moving but unfortunately light rain set in before it was over. We went onto the Showgrounds at Solway to the Fair which were very muddy.

#### **Sunday - Air Pageant**

We drove to Carterton in the morning and visited the recommended Paua Shop (advertised on radio and TV) to fill in time before the Air Pageant starting at 1.30 pm. A good display of working vintage aircraft was presented but as it was very cold we left early and headed for home, having had a wonderful weekend. Thank you Masterton. *(I wonder what my forebears would have thought.)*

AN EXCERPT FROM FRIENDS OF BOLTON  
STREET MEMORIAL PARK NEWSLETTER 57,  
JUNE 2004

Contributed by John Webster, Auckland Branch.



#### **Exploring Biographies By Priscilla Williams**

One of the irresistible charms of an old cemetery is the snapshot given of peoples' lives and the inevitable curiosity this arouses to know more than just the limited inscription on each tombstone. Although writing biographies has never been a main objective for the

Friends of the Bolton Street Memorial Park, recording its history and research into the burial records have produced some fascinating tales about the people buried there. Margaret Alington's book about the Memorial Park, entitled *"Unquiet Earth"*, and the Friends' Newsletters, produced since 1977, provide stories of about 70 people who have been buried in the old cemetery. This information has been researched by members, or offered to us by relatives of the deceased. These stories are only a tiny proportion of the total number of 8,500 people believed to have been buried there. This article looks at the groups of people selected to date for biographical research and the recording of data. It also contemplates future directions in this regard that could be taken by the Friends.

The most obvious group to consider first are those who have played an important part in New Zealand's history. The Wakefield Family, Prime Minister Richard Seddon and Harry Holland, leader of the Labour Party, all have notable monuments or tombstones preserved in the Park and all have been well-served by historians. There are others who have contributed to the development of New Zealand in the nineteenth century and whose work has been acknowledged by their inclusion in the comprehensive Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. These people include Samuel Duncan Parnell, instigator of the 8-hour working day, Christian Julius Toxward, Danish architect, Charles Decimus Barraud, artist, and Alexander Turnbull, bibliophile and philanthropist. In all these cases, the Friends' focus of work has not been so much on biographical research, since this has been well covered elsewhere, but instead on ensuring that their memorials or tombstones are properly documented and displayed.

There are others who are less well-known on the national stage but who have contributed notably to the development of Wellington, such as Joseph Dransfield, its first Mayor, successful businessmen including Henry Blundell, Robert Hannah, John Plimmer and James Smith, as well as Jewish merchants such as Abraham Hort and Lipman Levy. Reflecting the mores of the time, women's contributions outside the home are rarely mentioned but one interesting exception is Jessica Pharazyn, song-writer. For fame by association, there is Gwendoline Beauchamp, the baby sister of Katherine Mansfield, and Ellen Taylor, whose cousin Mary was a friend of Charlotte Bronte.

Another natural focus for biographical research centring on the cemetery has been the recording of unusual or violent deaths. In

some cases the tombstone inscriptions have been the initial clue. Deaths recorded include: drowning in a storm, drowning by negligence, death by sharkbite in the harbour, father and son killed by Maori while tree-felling, death by exposure on the beach, a riding accident when a horse bolted, an officer killed in the New Zealand Wars, a family group killed in the 1848 earthquake, another group drowned on the Lake Wairarapa ferry crossing, a mother and five children dying in a fire, three killed in a tunnelling accident near Pukerua Bay. The saddest records are perhaps those of young children succumbing to disease, for example the Wallace family who lost six children to scarlet fever within a few months and the Duff family who lost five children to diphtheria in 11 days. The high number of children buried in the cemetery is striking evidence of how precarious life was for the early settlers' families. These biographies of otherwise unknown people provide valuable insight into Wellington's early social history.

Interest has also centred on those memorials notable for design or aesthetic merit, or that are simply unusual. One of the most striking is the Stafford/Tucker Masonic memorial. There are two statues and several bas-reliefs of angels, a cross with doves, and the only vault in the cemetery which all attract attention. Despite the heavy toll of vandalism, there are others noted by visitors because of their detailed carving or elaboration of detail. Biographical notes have been prepared on a number of such memorials, especially where relocation has made them more immediately visible.

The Friends have also been interested in the ethnic diversity of the cemetery. Their grouping into one area and their recent cleaning has made the Jewish memorials a notable feature. Less immediately obvious are the Maori graves, of which there are about 29 scattered in several locations. Some bio-graphical details of chiefs such as Rira Porutu, a signatory to the Treaty of Waitangi and uncle of the prophet Te Whiti, or Te Ropiha Moturoa, are available but tracing others is more difficult. There are few Chinese graves and even fewer records of their lives, especially prior to arrival in New Zealand.

Finally, the Friends aims to ensure that those close associated with the cemetery are remembered and recorded. This group includes sextons such as David Robertson, Thomas Carr and James Futter whose names have been given to pathways through the Park, and

also stonemasons such as Walter Helyer who carved many of the memorials.

Previous completion of the burial records into a single definitive listing marks a milestone in this work. Another milestone should be reached in the next few months when these records become accessible through the Wellington City Council's new website, and they are reliably reflected in the memorial book in the chapel. There will then be easy access for anyone to the names and locations of all those persons buried in the cemetery. The Memorial Trail leaflet, available at most entrances to the Park and in the Chapel, provides short notes on some of the most interesting sites. The next stage is to provide easier access to other biographical material held by the Friends, including cross-reference to the rich Turnbull Library holdings, the DNZB, family genealogy and other resources. Other historic cemeteries in New Zealand and overseas have developed comprehensive web-sites which include photographic and biographical material. The Friends will be exploring the possibility of adapting this means of recording in easily accessible form, both for serious researchers and also for the casual visitors to the Park.

Future research will probably be in reaction to specific enquiries either about tombs or about particular families. The Friends are happy to receive and research such enquiries. We are also interested in receiving any information about material held which relates to people buried within the Memorial Park.

The Friends would like to acknowledge the authors of its valuable research work over the years. In addition to Margaret Alington, mentioned earlier, contributors include Mac McCormick, Nick Perrin, John Daniels, the late Lady Margaret (Peg) Fleming, and Diane Comber. We would be grateful to learn from you of any omissions from this acknowledgment, for our records.

## THE PIG HUNT

Contributed by Thea Baigent-Still, Bay of Plenty Branch

Francis Whiteman, widower and sheep farmer, his two sons, George 13 and William 7 and daughter Jane 9, arrived at Wellington in the ship *Gertrude* on 31st October 1841. They were to be of less interest to local historians than fellow passenger, John Plimmer, the so-called father of Wellington, but they would have their impact.

The Whitemans came from Udimore, near Rye, Sussex, near the site of the Battle of Hastings. Church registers show Francis Whiteman, son of William and Mary Whiteman, was sixth in a family of 11.

In Wellington, Francis Whiteman was soon confronting the only options available to manual workers: road-building or forest-felling. The forest at hand was in the great valley behind Petone beach. An obvious site for sawmills was on the river or on a tributary. The Waiwhetu stream, navigable then, became the sawmilling strip of early Wellington.

When his sons joined him on the job it was as Francis Whiteman and Sons, pit-sawyers, located on the Waiwhetu Stream or further up the Hutt, in the days when scows could find their way to the Hutt Bridge. The river was ideal for moving timber into the harbour, the market was across the harbour basin.

With their bush-felling and milling the Whitemans moved north to Taita, at the entrance to the gorge that isolated northern valley from southern. About 1846 some of the family were pig-hunting, out of Stokes Valley in the Taita Gorge. George is credited with being the pig-hunter.



Following a pig over the hills, aged about 18, he found himself in a hitherto unknown valley, parallel to the Hutt valley – a glorious unspoiled valley of tree-clad hills. George Whiteman reported this find to the Governor, Sir George Grey, and it was called Whiteman's Valley. It is still a haven-like valley to the east of Upper Hutt where many small farms are to be found.

George Whiteman seemed to have the pick of the first 20 blocks, surveyed in 1846 according to a reference in family records to a '46 peg. The grant made to him was dated 1847, when he would have been 19. With his father he had cleared some land, as required in a condition of the grant, and had erected a dwelling – a punga whare. It was the first of a succession of dwellings erected by the Whitemans on the same property.

The family still lived in Taita in 1849 when George Whiteman, bachelor, and Eliza Hopper, spinster, were married at St James Church, Hutt, on 25 July 1849. She was 17 years and required consent of her parents to marry, and he was 22 years.

At this time, in 1849, the population of the greater Wellington area was about 5,000 people. George and Eliza Whiteman's first son

John, was born on 14th June 1850 and there is a report of him being rescued from the upper storey of their house in the big Wellington earthquake of 1855. Five more sons followed.

Bush-clearing remained the main occupation for the settlers, George had mills on his own place and other locations and was often away. Chief Surveyor for the Provincial Government, Robert Park, reported to the Secretary on 26 April 1859 on that part of the valley of the Mungaroa discovered by Whiteman. A copy of the report in its copperplate script still exists.

The land was reported as of excellent quality with very fine timber consisting chiefly of red, black and white pine and rata— no totara.

Many of the pines were tall and straight. Stream banks were high, affording good abutments for bridges.

Park considered it a valuable acquisition: were a road made into the valley the land ought to fetch from £5 to £10 an acre for the timber alone, being well adapted for water or steam saw mills.



Every landowner was required to leave four acres of bush standing, and a chain along each side of the river.

George took up the first State Advances loan – it is numbered 1 in the department's books. The title of which recognised his discovery of the valley.

Eventually the farm was well-organised, with fencing maintained and garden and orchard good producers. But George was not able to assist with the milking: as a sheepman, he insisted, he just couldn't do that, but he was good at carrying the cans of milk. And he was good with a gun if provisions were low.

In 1888 a grandson, then aged seven, had an early morning out with Grandpa and his gun. Grandpa had been sent out to provide a meat ration for the next few days for the big family. A grove of miro trees was favoured by pigeons. The hunters would sit down for a spell; Grandpa would pull out a plug of *Juno* and fill his clay pipe.

Before he had finished this day he jumped to his feet, his hand to his waistcoat pocket for a cap, the hammer cocked, cap in place, "*then Bang!*"

*and over the side of the ridge I go to retrieve a fine plump pigeon."*

Shortly after Grandpa stops and says, "*Did you hear that?*"

The boys answers, "*Yes, what is it?*"



Grandpa replies, "Bellbirds." He knew the sound, which was like hitting an anvil with a small hammer.

The boy asks, "Are you going to shoot them Grandpa?"

"No, son", he says, "Never shoot a bellbird, or a huia, or a tui."

*Compiled from Upper Hutt – The History and Family Records/Writings.*

*Thea Baigent-Still, 2004*

Ancestral Biographical Lineage:

Francis Whiteman

"

George Whiteman son

"

John Whiteman son

"

Gladys Whiteman-Baigent daughter

"

Thea Baigent-Still daughter

## ORUAWHARO STORY

### Contributed by Hawkes Bay Branch

The story of Oruawhoro, near Takapau, in the central Hawke's bay region began in 1853.

John Johnston (later the Hon. J. Johnston), successfully applied for a lease covering 9,280 acres of land. This followed a visit to Hawke's Bay with his cousin, Alex St. Clair Inglis and a friend John Harding. Additional acreage was added over the years and at one time the total property comprised 17,726 acres.

Johnston arrived in Wellington in 1841 on the 'Prince of Wales', bringing with him his wife and three children. After a period in business, he founded his own firm – Johnston and Co., general merchants, which is now part of the Dominion brewery empire. Wellington's Johnston Street recalls his name for present and future generations.

For many years, Johnston took an active part in public affairs – he served as example almost continuously from 1857, as a member of the legislative council and applied himself closely to his business interests. He was not personally associated with the Oruawhoro

property, having granted grazing rights to his cousin, Inglis and to Charles Gully (a relative of John Gully, the well known artist). When they went to their Springhill station (at Onga Onga) in 1865, John's second son, Sydney, took over the management of his father's property.

Sydney was born in Wellington in 1841 and educated at the Jesuit College of Stonyhurst, Lancashire. He was at Oruawharo at least as early as 1862 and lived in a primitive hut on the property for about three years until his marriage to Sophia Lambert, of the nearby Tangarawa Station in 1865.

Under Sydney's management, considerable changes were made to the property, including the ploughing of land for the first time; the growing of oats and wheat; the construction of a sheep dip; and the erection of fences. There was also some stocking of the property with cattle.

About this time, a cottage was erected, which was enlarged in 1870. Despite the demands of Oruawharo, Sydney Johnston was also manager of his father's 'Tamumu' station near Waipawa, which had been bought in 1865. He also managed another of his father's properties at Clive.

Major milestones were reached in 1879 when Sydney leased the Oruawharo property from his father and then, on 2 October moved into his new house – the present Oruawharo homestead. This was built primarily of Kauri and Matai with some use being made of pumice between the rooms for the absorption of noise. The local newspaper reporter wrote the following description...

"Mr. Sydney Johnston's new house at Takapau, now almost completed, is a spacious, solid and elegant building. It is sixty feet by seventy feet with a twenty-five foot stud. The front is beautifully set off with large bay windows and a balustrade in level with the upper story. On the side facing the railway there is a large balcony, with a floor three inches thick, and tightly caulked. A brick stair overlaid with concrete and having a splendid rail, leads to the entrance vestibule, next to which there is a large hall.

The building comprises twenty-one rooms, all firmly plastered. The nurseries were dadoed, as precautionary measures against juvenile tendencies to scratch plaster. To the upper story there is access by three different stairs. The culinary departments with apparatus of the most approved kind. Baths with warm water apparatus are also

provided. In short, everything that tends to administer to domestic comfort and convenience is provided.

The whole structure combines elegance of design with masterly workmanship and solidity. Mr. Tringham of Wellington was the architect and Mr. D. McLeoud of Waipukurau the contractor for all the work, the plastering being sub-let to Mr. McGuire of Wellington. The workmanship reflects the highest credit on Mr. McLeoud and all others associated with him. The house is situated about quarter of a mile from the railway line at the base of a gentle undulating ridge planted with trees. The situation can be made both beautiful and picturesque."

Despite the size of the original structure, Johnston enlarged it in 1899 by the addition of bedrooms and a billiard room, his last being provided with a magnificent carved ceiling and fireplace surround, the work being done by craftsmen brought out from Bavaria. It is perhaps not surprising that Oruawharo is one of the largest private homes ever to be built in New Zealand. By this time, Sydney Johnston was the owner of the property, having inherited the place on his father's death in 1887.

In the hey-day of Oruawharo, the Johnston's employed a domestic staff of twelve including a parlour maid, cook, lady's maid, chauffeur, kitchen maid and gardeners. The family owned a car – a Decauville – as early as 1907.

There are reports of guests for house parties arriving by train at the nearby Takapau Railway Station and then being brought to the house by horse drawn vehicles. Also the family had an objection to drying greens, consequently the family's wash was railed each Monday to a laundry in Palmerston North and back again on the following Friday. As early as 1879, races were held at Oruawharo and for a time, the town boasted two racecourses. Visitors attending the meetings came as a matter of course by rail.

Oruawharo was at the time, the venue of a Territorial Army training camp. Preparations were well underway at the end of 1913 when a site was surveyed sufficient to house 6,000 men under canvas. Several special trains brought the troops in April 1914 and took them away again after the exercise. Unfortunately bad weather caused considerable unrest among the participants. The exercise ended on the 6th May with the battle of Oruawharo being fought complete with the "big shots" of the day being present.

Over the years, the property had been reduced in size and during this period there were some 2,850 acres in the hands of the family, carrying some 10,000 sheep and 480 head of cattle.

Sydney Johnston died in 1917 while on one of his several visits to the U.K. The property went to his daughter, Miss Agnes Beatrice Johnston who, five years later, married J.C. Rolleston. Their son Christopher was born at Oruawharo in 1923. He went to England to finish his education in 1938, returning to New Zealand in 1947 after military service with the Grenadier Guards in Germany. He took over the management of the property in 1952. Early the following year he married Jennifer Hyde – their daughter being born at the end of the year. As 1953 was the centenary of the property, arrangements were well advanced to celebrate the occasion. But on 19 March, Christopher Johnston was killed in a tractor accident on the property. His tragic death caused a sense of shock to be felt throughout the district and the celebrations were immediately cancelled.

After the death in 1965 of Mrs. Rolleston (senior), the homestead and 62.5 acres of land were given to the Roman Catholic Church with the idea of eventually establishing a preparatory school for Roman Catholic boys. The last report on file has the house being used as a country restaurant with the balance of the farm lands being held in trust for Miss C.J.M Rolleston, daughter of Jennifer and the late Christopher Rolleston, who is living in England.

Edited from a transcript by D.M. Luke  
Assistant Research Officer  
N.Z. Historic Places Trust  
10 March 1978

G.R. FOULDS  
31A USHERWOOD CRES  
HASTINGS

### **Acknowledgements**

The Society's grateful thanks is extended to all our members from various branches who so willingly provided material and photographs for this 2004 Bulletin. A special mention is made of the work done by the National Secretary, Janet Robinson and the editorial team of Barbara & Glen Robertson.

Thank you all.

Story locations  
Branches bold

