



Stratford Branch

New Zealand Society of Genealogists.

www.stratfordgenealogy.homestead.com

December 2012

Stratford Community House.

52 Juliet Street

Stratford 4332

PO Box 402

Stratford. 4352.

Phone. 06 765 0913 ext. 4.

Branch Contact-

Carol Spragg.



Convener's Comment

We're nearing the end of another busy, successful year. Many thanks to all of you for your support of the Branch this year, in so many different ways.

The holiday period gives us an opportunity to spend time with family so don't forget to take some photos. The photographic heritage we have is because our forebears remembered to record family occasions. We need to ensure this is continued for future generations and when it's too hot to be outside, why not spend an hour or two sorting and naming some photos. Your great-great grandchildren will be grateful you did!!

Merry Christmas everyone.

Carol

Also, Merry Christmas from the editor! Have a blessed and safe Christmas. See you all in the New Year.

Maureen



Inside this issue:

Page 2: Ulster Websites, and others; the beginnings of Christmas.

Page 3: Snippets; Quiz;

Page 4: Stratford Pioneer Cemetery

Editor:
Maureen Armstrong
Email:
arm-
strong21@slingshot.co.nz
Phone: 06 762 8837 or 027
630 9099

PLEASE NOTE: the rooms will close on Friday 7th December for the Christmas break. We re-open on Tuesday January 15th 2013 at 10am.

**Next Branch Meeting—Wednesday February 13th 2013
starting at 7.30pm.**

'What have you discovered over the holidays?'
Also, please bring suggestions for the Story Competition for 2013.

Branch Rooms

The Stratford Branch Rooms open
Tuesdays and Fridays from 10am – 3pm;
Saturdays 12 noon -2pm.

Our Branch Newsletter is now available each month
on our web page-

www.stratfordgenealogy.homestead.com



Web Sites



The Beginnings of Christmas:

When the early Christian Church was in its formative stages, a number of dates were suggested as being the most likely date of Christ's birth. The actual date had been forgotten over time. In 350 A.D. Pope Julius I decreed that from that time forth the 25th of December would be acknowledged as the date of the Nativity. All of Christendom accepted that decree

except for the Armenian church. To that denomination, the Nativity is celebrated on January 6 each year. It should be noted that Julius I's decree came only thirty-seven years after Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration which effectively legalized the Christian religion. Prior to that time anyone who professed the Christian religion were persecuted. In 303 A.D. the Nativity was "celebrated" by Emperor Diocletian by having nearly 20,000 Christians burned to death.

The 25th of December was chosen by Pope Julius I partly to counter or replace the festivals normally celebrated on or near that date. The day was commonly known throughout the Persian Empire as the Dies Solis Invicti Nati, or the Birthday Of The Unconquered Sun. The Romans celebrated the Saturnalia at that time of year because a solar solstice occurs about that time. In Mesopotamia, the people celebrated their god Marduk's struggle against the forces of chaos. The Greeks believed that the latter part of December was when the god, Zeus would renew his annual battle against Kronos and the Titans. The effort by the Christian Pope to counter these established holidays with a solemn celebration of the Nativity was intended to purge the world of the debauchery and raucousness that they induced in the general populace. The Saturnalia, in particular, was very hedonistic; people indulged in all manner of (often drunken) revelries and gaiety. They indulged in parties and exchanged gifts with one another.

The intention of the Christian leaders like Pope Julius I was not to force a sudden change on the common people. Instead, they hoped to gradually replace the "pagan" customs with Christian ones. Gregory the Great wrote, in 597, that the pagan rituals not be removed "upon the sudden", but rather be adapted "to the praise of God." As a result of this approach, many of the traditions we indulge in today come from sources originally not part of the Christian tradition. The lights on the Christmas tree are descended from candles, which descend themselves from the Norse belief in lighting fires to help Woden and Thor battle the evil of winter. Presents given out at Christmas descends from the Saturnalian practice of exchanging gifts. The decoration of our homes with evergreens descends from the early Celtic belief that the harsh effects of winter could be wished away with the plants that did not lose their green colour. The colours we cherish as Christmas colours, red and green, comes from the holly plant's berries and leaves. The holly plant was revered by the early Romans and hung about their houses during the Saturnalia, supposedly to ward off witchcraft. During the Medieval Ages the legend was spread that the holly first sprang up in the footsteps of Jesus as he was led to the cross; the spiny leaves symbolizing the crown of thorns and the red berries recalling His blood. The shiny, glittering balls that are hung on the Christmas tree are believed to derive from the bags of gold which the 4th century St. Nicholas gave to serve as dowries for three daughters of a poor man.

Ireland—Ulster Genealogy Websites: (from Gore November Newsletter)

www.nidirect.gov.k/gro For searches, which cost a fee, & certificates ordered from General Register Office of North Ireland, and the GRO of Ireland,

www.groireland.ie .

www.emeraldancestors.com is available for a membership fee.

County links are available at **www.from-ireland.net**. Ulster monument inscriptions **www.interment.net/ireland**

www.historyfromheadstone.com - for a fee

www.census.nationalarchives for original pages of 1901 & 1911 census - this is free

www.proni.gov.uk/index/seach_the_archives/will_calenders.htm. Will calendars (Probates) for districts of Armagh, Belfast & Londerry 1858—1919 & 1922 - 1943 with digital images for 1858-1900.

www.irishgenealogy -After 1753 you will find many Catholics marrying in Anglican churches, simply as the law required it.

freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~shipstonz/

This is the website of Hamilton based genealogist Gavin Petrie that he started back in the year 2000. It contains information about more than 4,600 Immigrant Ships to NZ 1835-1910. Details are provided about each ship and its voyages, with links in many cases to other websites that have passenger lists.

www.wrecksite.eu

This 11 year old website claims to be the largest database of shipwrecks from all around the world with some basic details of 131,480 wrecks. It has links to maps and may prove useful if any of your family were involved in a ship wreck.

www.searchforancestors.com/

This is a 15 year old USA-based website that offers the opportunity to explore free genealogy websites. It offers advice and links to searching under heading such as Surname Finder, Tools, Directories and Freebies, this latter being a very useful and comprehensive listing. (from Riccarton November Newsletter)

Do remember to save used printer Cartridges and hand them in to the group .

They provide an excellent fund raiser.

The sales of books on trademe are going well. Thanks to Carol for her efforts .



Snippets



New Zealand—November Anniversaries: (from Riccarton Group's November Newsletter)

- 11 November 1827:** First Wesleyan Church Service held by Rev Henry Williams at Hokianga.
- 4 November 1837:** Baron de Thierry ("Sovereign Chief of NZ") arrived at Hokianga.
- 10 November 1839:** Captain W B Rhodes arrived at Akaroa with a load of cattle.
- 1 November 1841:** First settlers arrived at Nelson.
- 1 November 1884:** Construction of The Hermitage at Mt Cook was begun.
- 2 November 1898:** Old Pension Act passed.
- 17 November 1921:** First radio broadcast in NZ, at Dunedin.
- 27 November 1935:** Labour Party won their first general election.
- 12 November 1960:** Haast Pass Road officially opened.

The first name on the Suffrage Petition – the Giant Roll – was that of Mary J Carpenter of Yaldhurst. Her will appears in the Kiwi index in 1920 and she was a widow.

Cremation became legal in 1884 in England, but the Pope did not lift the ban until 1963 for Roman Catholics.

100 YEARS AGO—1912

(From the archives of the Hawera Star)

"So far 90 new members have joined the Egmont A & P Assn."

"Newton King sold 120 horses at the Waiwhakaiho Yard."

The Wellington branch of the Commercial Bank of Australia opened for business with Mr E P Yaldwin as Manager."

"Eltham County Council: all outstanding rates will be sued for without further notice. No exceptions."

December Quiz: (answers next month)

1. **When did New Zealand first take part in the Davis Cup?**
2. **What iconic landmark in Auckland became a golf course in 1900?**
3. **What was Stratford's speed limit around corners when cars first arrived?**
4. **When was the Auckland Ferry building completed?**

Answers to November Quiz:

1. **Auckland Flour mill. Built by J Partington in 1850 was kept operating by his son, Joseph, until his death in 1941. Supplemented by electric motors for the last 10 years.**
2. **1931, replacing a 1902 wooden bridge.**
3. **Since 1939, when it was built as an aircraft factory.**
4. **Founder of Auckland Savings Bank, who built a grand home which later became Dilworth School. He died in 1905.**



(Contd from page 4)

Do not assume that you can visit your ancestors' graves, even in rural New Zealand; this may not be the case... What can we do about it? **WE NEED TO PRESERVE OUR CEMETERIES**— Form Friends of Cemeteries; Advocate for changes to the Cemeteries and Burial Act; Support the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand; Raise awareness of the loss of heritage headstones.

What does this mean to us as genealogists and descendents of pioneers whose headstones have been removed?

As family members, we assume that when we pay for a plot, and pay a consent fee to put on a headstone, that this is a long term arrangement. Nothing is ever mentioned about having to pay a yearly fee, or outlining that this is temporary, until the cemetery is closed and may be used for another purpose.

How can this happen culturally? Whatever culture you may be from, this is not ok.

Francis's great grandchildren are still alive, with many still living in Taranaki.

Stratford the township gives you the impression, as you approach the town, that it celebrates its history and Pioneer status, and has many areas and buildings of interest historically. It even has a Pioneer Village that is a popular place to visit.

Land is not in short supply; the town has beautiful areas all around it so why do such a damaging thing to a historical site?

I have a strong family and emotional connection with this area, so am deeply saddened by the disrespectful disregard of the Pioneers that founded this area and the desecration of their commemoration and final resting place.

Will this happen to our graves and headstones in the future? We need to stand up and say this is not ok.

Jenny Heywood

COMMEMORATION FOR NOW AND FOREVER Or just temporarily??



It was a lovely weekend trip up to Taranaki, taking the opportunity to visit the cemeteries with family graves along the way. This was a great way of showing the younger family members our family graves, and sites of interest; with their mother and grandmother narrating alongside.

My mother's great grandfather, Francis Wall went to live in Stratford with his wife and young family in the early 1890's to farm. Francis and his father and brothers were farming in Wanganui, mostly in the Brunswick area, for many years from the 1850's until he left for Taranaki in 1890. Seven children were born from 1880 till the eighth was born in 1896. Then tragedy struck. Francis fell from his horse, and broke his leg. Blood poisoning set in and he died suddenly, much to the shock of his family.

His pregnant wife and young children were left to run the farm in an extremely difficult situation. Even with this hardship, the extended family rallied around to have Francis buried and a headstone erected. Sad story, not uncommon in that era, affecting the family with Jane later remarrying and staying in the Taranaki region.

So, I was looking forward to stopping in to the Pioneer Cemetery in Regan St, in Stratford. Mum had never had an opportunity to see where Francis was buried, and with anticipation, we looked for the Cemetery. Finally, we found it

There is a Memorial Wall at the entrance and a headstone that we noted mentioned a few names. It seemed to be about a closed cemetery.



All of these headstones are gone

Stratford Cemetery in 1980 – the headstones no longer there in 2012

Then the shock of what we saw hit us, we noticed there were not many headstones, or marked graves. These were mainly on the perimeter, which also seemed odd. A few headstones were lying on a concrete block, which did not seem as if they belonged with that grave. We knew there were meant to be 500 or more graves, and I could not believe that so many graves would not have had headstones, or grave markings.

My mother said, "There is something very wrong here", and she just wanted to go back to the entrance, the feeling was hard to describe - or digest. I searched in vain, no sign of Francis and very little evidence of many others....

When we went out to the front, we noticed the brick wall, which we had assumed was something like a war memorial. It was in fact a memorial to those buried in the cemetery. It has brass plaques on it naming those buried there. The headstone was to commemorate a Cemetery no longer open, and now no longer in existence. This listed the people who had been buried there.

What had happened to the graves? What had happened to the headstones?

I researched this further only to find a staggering story of cemetery cleaning, and clearing, a "Cemetery Upgrade".

In 1980 it was decided with very little consultation that the cemetery would be 'cleaned up and cleared' to create a 'Memorial park'. The headstones and grave markings were removed from the site, maybe to enable easy mowing and maintenance, and the Memorial wall was erected.

The Stratford Cemetery (or Pioneer Cemetery as it is now known) was opened in 1885, and was Stratford's first official cemetery. The first recorded burial was not until 15 December 1886, when Mortimer Frederick Hassall was buried. Before this, the dead were taken to Midhirst, to be buried in the cemetery there.

I found that around 30 headstones were given to the Stratford Pioneer Village to enhance their Church display area, so that it looked as if it had a cemetery attached. I approached the Stratford Pioneer Village to see if Francis's headstone was among these. It wasn't. What had happened to the other headstones? Were they just dumped? Used for retaining walls? Or are they in storage somewhere? I have been unable to trace Francis's headstone.

Who asked the families/ descendants permission for any of this? Can this legally happen?

Has this happened in other areas?

- Gisborne historical cemetery – burial of headstones
- Changes in roading, changes to memorials
- Stratford Pioneer Cemetery
- Bolton St , Wellington

Just to name a few....

Unfortunately for descendants and family historians, this is a story that has happened elsewhere in our country as well. This year alone, Gisborne Historical Cemetery buried many headstones that they felt were in disrepair or were no longer standing safely, or were in areas that needed clearing.

We need to do something about this issue, as these sites are of historical significance, and we are in danger of losing more, and may not have very much information on the sites that have already been lost.

(Please turn to page 3)