

Stratford Branch

New Zealand Society of Genealogists.

www.stratfordgenealogy.homestead.com

July 2013

Stratford Community House.

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Branch Contact-

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Convener's Comment

We've had two months of cold, damp, miserable weather. The month of May had the 4th least sunshine hours for May in 50 years in Stratford, and I doubt that June's statistics will be much better. On the positive side, it's been a good opportunity to use the extra time spent inside, to attend to some filing of family tree records and for doing some research on internet. If you've been using the revamped www.familysearch.org and would like to share your successes or problems, then this month's meeting on 10th July is an opportunity for you to do so.

Our August meeting will be a little different. It will be on Sunday afternoon, 11th August at 1:30 pm and we are trying a Sunday afternoon meeting to tempt more of you, our members, to join us for a couple of hours, and maybe do some research while we are at the Rooms.

There will be more details in next month's newsletter.

Carol

NB: the Branch will not be open on Saturdays July 20th and 27th

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Branch Meeting—Wednesday 10th July starting at 7.30pm.

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Branch Rooms

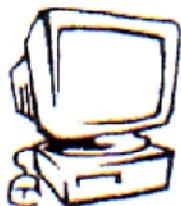
The Stratford Branch Rooms open

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

www.Dustydocs.com is a website which brings together all the online records of English births, deaths and marriages etc available for each parish.

(www.genealogyintime.com) has produced a handy list of abbreviations sometimes given for first names in documents such as censuses - it can be consulted at www.genealogyintime.com/dictionary/listof-first-name-abbreviations.html

www.irishgraveyards.i.e—for burials in north & South including Donegal, Mayo & Galway.

www.discovereverafter.com for County Londonery, working on Armagh, Leitrim, Louth & Tyrone.

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/burialrecords for Belfast city
The records for these cemeteries (Dundonald, Roselawn & City are free)

www.igp-web.com/igparchives for headstones across Ireland, particularly good for Dublin city - free

**Do remember to save used HP or Canon 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 .**

We have a collection of the NZ Genealogist Magazine from 1994 to 2008, mostly complete years with the Indexes. If anyone would like to browse through some of these, please contact Maureen. There are many interesting articles and items of interest in these magazines, and I have found a couple of family connections so far!
(Phone 762 8837, or email armstrong21@slingshot.co.nz)

ANCESTRY

The best time to use the Ancestry site if you want help with it, is to come on Tuesdays when there are usually 2 or 3 of us at the rooms to help. You can also come on Saturdays when Carol and Lesley are here.

As we said before, this is a full membership, not the limited one that you can use at the Public Library. At \$2.00 per hour to use, it's a very cheap source of valuable information. Ancestry are adding new files all the time, so just because you could not find something a year ago does not mean it's not there now!

*To forget one's ancestors is to be a brook without a source, a tree without a root.
(Old Chinese Proverb—from The Arboretum Newsletter)*

A modern mother is explaining to her little girl about pictures in the family photo album. "This is the geneticist with your surrogate mother and here's your sperm donor and your father's clone.

This is me holding you when you were just a frozen embryo. The lady with the very troubled look on her face is your aunt - she's the family genealogist." (from Wellington

"How long do you think it took to get a message from Taupo to Auckland in the 1860's??

If you said a few days, you are clearly thinking by horse or maybe foot. Would you believe 10 minutes?

By Heliograph! Can someone please confirm the route was from Mt Tauhara to Mt Maunganui to Mt Te Aroha to ??? then to Auckland. Amazing **isn't it! I wonder if it took longer at night? What happened in the weeks of rain and fog ? And also—"Did they have appointed times for the messages?"** (from *Tokoroa Group Newsletter*)

PURANGI—a brief history.

Purangi is a tiny settlement on the banks of the Waitara River in north-east Taranaki. The European settlement developed on the site of an ancient Maori settlement of the Ngatimaru tribe. The land was confiscated by the Government of the day after the Taranaki Wars as punishment for the Maori taking part in the wars. Many of the tribes people moved to Parihaka to join Te Whiti, and did not return, even when the government allocated land in their ancestral areas for them to use. It was not suitable land for farming and the people felt that it was just a token. Also, it belonged to them in the first place, and although called a reserve by the pakeha, it was not a reserve.

The first five young settlers arrived on 15th April 1891. They were William Hyde Hart, Austin Bell Leewch, Herbert Nelmes Silk, Whiteford John Paton and Francis John Webb. They had purchased sections adjoining each other. Descendants of these men still live throughout the Taranaki area. Until the first bridge was built, if settlers wished to cross from one side of the river to the other, they had to use a flying fox cable. The bridge was completed in 1899, and was the longest single span wooden bridge in the Southern Hemisphere and cost £2143 to build. Mr George Sangster of Stratford was the contractor.

Purangi Contd—In 1956 a new concrete bridge was opened. The news claimed it was one of the biggest bridge-building contracts in the province, and cost £30,000. The old bridge was demolished before work began on the new one, as its condition had deteriorated so much. The school at Purangi began as part of the Boarding House in 1901, and shared the teacher with Matau. The first school building was opened in 1909. (Taken from the history of Purangi compiled by Laurel Aitken and Meryl Webb)

Snippets

DID YOU KNOW? In the 16th & 17th centuries, before commercial fertilisers were invented, large shipments of dried manure was often shipped between countries. It was shipped dry because in its dry form it weighed a lot less than when wet. However once exposed to water it became a lot heavier. Of course at sea there was a high risk of exposure to water. If the manure did get wet the process of fermentation began again. One of its by-products is methane gas. As the barrels were stored below decks you can imagine what could (and did) happen. Methane began to build up below decks, and if someone went down into the hold at night with a lantern there was often an explosion. Several ships were destroyed in this manner before it was determined just what was happening. After that, the manure was removed from barrels and bound in sacks which were stamped with the term "Ship High In Transit," which indicated it was to be stowed high enough up in the lower decks so that any water that came into the hold would not touch this volatile cargo and start the production of methane. "Ship High In Transit" evolved the term S.H.I.T. which has come down through the centuries and is in use to this very day!

A Different Slant on an Old Theme

Mum used to cut chicken, slice eggs and spread mayo on the same cutting board with the same knife and no bleach, *but we didn't get food poisoning*. Our school sandwiches were wrapped in wax paper in a brown paper bag, not in ice bag coolers, *but I can't remember anyone getting e-coli*.

The term cell phone would have conjured up a phone in a jail cell, and a pager was the school PA system.

We played sport, and also did PE ... and risked permanent injury with a pair of Dunlop sandshoes (only worn in the gym or the sports ground) instead of having cross-training athletic shoes with air cushioned soles and built-in light reflectors. *I can't recall any injuries but they must have happened because they tell us how much safer we are now ...*

Flunking sport was not an option ... even for stupid kids! There were not many fat kids.

Speaking of school, we all said prayers and sang the National Anthem and got free school milk for strong bones and teeth, and staying in detention after school caught all sorts of negative attention. *We must have had horribly damaged psyches.*

We were allowed to play "Bullrush" in the school playground and our Mums often had to sew our shirt buttons back on afterwards.

I thought that I was supposed to accomplish something before I was allowed to be proud of myself.

I just can't recall how bored we were without computers, Play Station, Nintendo, X-box or 270 digital TV channels.

Not a single person I knew had ever been told that they were from a "dysfunctional family". How could we possibly have known that we needed to get into group therapy and anger management classes!

How did we ever survive?

100 YEARS AGO—1913

(From the archives of the Hawera Star)

The Hawera Borough Council received 51 applications for the position of Inspector of Nuisance.

The Borough Engineer reported to the Hawera Borough Council that the Water Tower had now reached an altitude of 96ft. The cost of the tower to date is £2927. 13s. 11d.

Heather House: comfortable board and lodging on Union St. Terms—20 shillings per week, or 18 shillings if sharing a room.

July Quiz: (answers next month)

1. **When did the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York tour the country?**
2. **When was the first traverse of Mt Cook?**
3. **Who was the fourth Maori King?**
4. **What was the name of the ship that was wrecked in Cook Strait in 1909 with the loss of 75 lives?**

June Quiz Answers:

1. **Joshua Morgan died in 1893.**
2. **W Gill was the first blacksmith at Whangamomona.**
3. **The first settlers arrived on 18 June 1895.**
4. **This bridge crossed the Waitara River at Purangi.**

We receive copies of branch newsletters from all over New Zealand. If anyone would like to see those we have at the moment, please email Maureen and I will send them on to you. If you don't have email let me know and I will get a copy printed for you. At the moment I have—Blenheim, Canterbury, Dunedin, Gore, Hutt Valley, New Plymouth, Sth Canterbury, Tokoroa, Wairarapa, Wanganui, Wellington for June & July. We also get Christchurch, North Canterbury, Hawkes Bay and Matamata.

This is the second to last of our February Cemetery Walk personalities.

Percy THOMSON (1884 -1962)

Percy THOMSON was born in Dunedin in 1884, the son of William and Elizabeth Sarah.

He was educated in New Zealand and Sydney, Australia.

He first visited Taranaki in 1900 to work with Herbert Halliwell, a Hawera lawyer, returning to Dunedin five years later. In 1910 Percy returned to Stratford and began his own legal practice. In 1912 he married Hilda SPENCE, and they had 2 daughters and 5 sons, one of whom, David Spence THOMSON, was a New Zealand politician of the National Party.

Percy Thomson owned a dairy farm from 1920, and was director of the Ngaere Dairy Company for 25 years. He also served on the Stratford Hospital Board, and was Chairman of the Taranaki Patriotic Council for some time following World War 2. He was also a long-serving member and chairman of the Stratford Domain Board.

In 1929 Percy Thomson became Mayor of Stratford and held this position until 1933. He lost the Mayoralty at the 1933 elections, after some interesting upsets during the voting, but was re-elected in 1938. This time he remained in office until 1947.

Other community involvement included being Vice President of the Taranaki District Law Society; executive of the Municipal Association; President of the Stratford Aero Club; an Elder of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church; and a member of several horticultural associations. There is a street named after him in Stratford, Percy Avenue. In 1946 Percy was awarded an MBE for his services to the area.

After the death of king George V in 1935, Percy was the driving force behind planting beech trees along Broadway South, and renaming it the King George V Memorial Avenue. He was responsible for many of the attractive plantings in Stratford's streets and domains. At his death in 1962, he left a large bequest to be used and applied towards the establishment and maintenance of an arboretum and herbarium of the native flora of New Zealand. This is to be found on Cloten Rd in Stratford.

Some of this bequest was also for the establishment of an Art Gallery in the town, and the Stratford District Council established the Percy Thomson Trust to manage these facilities for the benefit of the people of the Stratford District and the public generally. The Percy Thomson Art Gallery was opened in June 2002, and is a thriving centre for the arts in Stratford, holding many exhibitions, and providing work areas for local artists and art groups.

Helen Love



Members' Queries: Do you have any brick walls with which you need help? Don't know where else to look?

Well, come along to the Rooms at Stratford Community House, Juliet street, next to the Anglican Church. We are there on Tuesdays and Fridays from 10am to 3pm, and Saturdays 12 noon to 2pm. We'll do our best to help you find answers. We have a lot of local school, Church and cemetery records available, also Electoral Rolls for several years.