

Horowhenua Family History Group Inc

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Location: Te Takere Heritage Room 10 Bath Street Levin

SUBSCRIPTIONS are now due. \$30.

HFHG bank account.38-9008-0466762-00.

Name as reference or cash to Treasurer.



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COMMITTEE

Kevin Miles 021 1364 075 President

Brian Bernon 027 286 4186 Secretary

Prue Theobald 021 234 5621 Treasurer

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Lynn Williams Librarian

**Thompson House
4 Kent Street, Levin
Monday 31 August 2026
1.30pm**

**Sarah Hewitt: "How did
Winifred survive. Using Land
Records in Research"**

**September meeting
Monday 28 September 2026
1.30pm**

**Lisa Lightband
*How AI can help Solve
Family Mysteries
and bring Ancestors' lives to
life***

President's Message

Following up on last newsletter's notes for our October fund raiser, donations of non-perishable items can be brought to the monthly meeting on 31 August or 28 September. Alternatively they can be dropped off at the Levin library Heritage Room, when a volunteer is on duty, Tuesdays to Fridays, 10am to 12.30pm, and put in the box in the Archive Room.

A roster sheet will be at the meeting for volunteers at Age on the Go on 16 October 10am to 2pm. We also need volunteers to sell raffle tickets at New World Levin on Tuesday 20 October 10am to 4pm. Please put your name and contact details on the list if you can help.

The Wellington New Zealand Society of Genealogists groups are running an interesting research day in Tawa. See the information in the newsletter.

Our committee is looking to plan a trip, for those interested, to the Ohakea Aviation Museum and then to the Alexander Library in Whanganui. A November date is yet to be confirmed.

Kevin Miles

Guest speaker



Sarah Hewitt, New Zealand Society of Genealogists, is the guest speaker at Horowhenua Family History meeting on Monday 31 August.

Sarah's talk "*How did Winifred survive. Using Land Records for Research*" will look at the ups and downs of the life of her 2xgreat-grandmother and how land records cast a new light on her life. She has discovered that land records can add new context to her family's stories and looks forward to sharing stories and information on how to search for them.

Remembering our school days

Members shared their memories of school days at our meeting last month.

Common experiences included corporal punishment with the strap or cane, strict uniform rules, milk monitors, Arbor Day tree planting, and school closures during the polio epidemic. Several people later became teachers or had family members who worked as teachers.

Friendships formed during the early school years often lasted a lifetime, although some were lost because of family moves or emigration.

Major historical events also shaped many of these school memories. Many reflected on how their school experiences influenced their later lives, including their career choices and attitudes toward education.

Zoe attended two small church schools in rural Wiltshire, England. She walked more than three miles to school.

The school buildings, which were made of stone and were centuries old, matched the local churches. They have since been demolished or converted.

Zoe has fond memories of travelling to school in a neighbour's bubble car. She later attended high school in Melksham. In 2001, she reconnected in New Zealand with childhood friends who had emigrated in 1966.

Prue attended Hornby School and then Hornby South, a new school that has since closed. She remembers planting trees on Arbor Day.

Mr Rooney was a memorable teacher. She also remembers music assemblies and playing the recorder. Prue later transferred to Leeston, which involved long, dusty bus rides, and then attended Southbridge District High, which has also closed.

She enjoyed cooking classes, meal preparation, and learning how to set a table. She later attended Rangiora High School.

Lorraine attended St George School in Invercargill and then Tweedsmuir Intermediate. After moving to Lower Hutt, she attended Hutt Intermediate and Hutt Valley High School.



Kevin began school in 1959 at Te Aro School on Abel Smith Street in Wellington. He remembers a traumatic first day when a classmate was injured by a broken glass Coca-Cola bottle.

His only other clear memory from that time is attending a fancy-dress parade in a Chinese outfit that his father had brought back from China (pictured above).

He enrolled at Seatoun School at the end of 1959.

In 1960, the 9.4-magnitude Chilean earthquake led to the school being evacuated to Seatoun Heights because of tsunami fears.

In 1962, Barry Davenport, a former Seatoun pupil who swam Cook Strait, visited the school.

Kevin later enrolled in Form 1 at Evans Bay Intermediate, in the school's second year after opening.

School days memories

Gillian attended Dyer Street School, Naenae Intermediate, and Naenae College, in Lower Hutt where she started in 1959. She recalls being bullied by another student. Following her parents' advice, she punched him, and the teasing stopped.

Notable events from her school years included Wahine Day and the 1967 Inangahua earthquake.

Her sister was Head Girl. Gillian was teased because of her surname, Orange, but her mother had prepared her to handle it.

Dawn attended Terrace End School in Palmerston North. After the Second World War, the school had more than 1,000 pupils, although it now has fewer than 100. The principal, Mr Thompson, dealt with discipline by making students pay for stolen fruit and apologise to neighbours.

Dawn experienced the polio epidemic, when the school closed for two to three months and students completed lessons by correspondence. She maintained lifelong friendships from her school years.

Merv began school at Petone Central School. He remembers the Chilean earthquake and preparing for a possible tsunami evacuation. He attended Naenae College, Lower Hutt, from 1962 to 1966.

He noticed a clear difference in discipline between primary and secondary school: the strap was used at primary school, while the cane was used at secondary school. He also remembers caning incidents, including some from his time as a prefect.

Merv took part in annual fancy-dress parades, and his school reports described him as "inclined to clown."

Liz attended Titahi Bay School, a tiny two-room school known as "Golf House." Her family farmed sheep and dairy cattle.

She moved to Levin East School, which had recently opened, and she biked to school. Her reports often said that she "could try better."

Liz attended Horowhenua College, where Panama hats caused problems in strong winds.



Brian (pictured above with his mother) started school at Roseneath School at Point Jerningham, Wellington in 1955.

His memory of his first day is not a happy one, and he remembers wearing gloves that were attached by string.

In 1957, he attended Kura Street School in Titahi Bay. He also remembers the dental clinic and his fear of the dentist.

Brian lived in the United Kingdom for a year and attended Westwood Secondary School for Boys. He found the strict separation of boys and girls, the subject-specialist teachers, and the overall environment intimidating.

Returning to New Zealand, he attended Mana College in Porirua in 1963. The years 1963 and 1964 were the final years of military training, and students learned to shoot with .303 rifles.

His science teacher was Ray Henwood, who later became an actor, and Brian remembers a lampblack experiment that went wrong. In the sixth form, poet Sam Hunt taught poetry.



Carol first attended Karori School, Wellington, where she walked long distances with her mother and sibling. In Standard One, she was strapped for being “over-enthusiastic.”

She moved to Hataitai School, where she found the transition difficult. She felt embarrassed about being seated next to a boy and struggled to make friends.

Later, as a teacher, Carol focused on helping new students settle in and integrate. She played sports, including tennis, cricket, and hockey, and took part in the choir and orchestra, where she played the viola. She valued daily assemblies with hymns and readings, both as a student and later as a teacher.

Pictured above: Carol refereeing basketball, or netball, in a staff versus students’ game at Rai Valley in 1965.

Lynn attended Kaikoura District High School, where her father was the deputy principal, although he did not teach her.

For her senior years, she attended Christchurch Girls’ High School as a boarder. Later, she preferred co-educational schooling for her own children.

A notable event from her school years was a visit from Governor-General Lord Cobham. Because Lynn was wearing brown shoes instead of black ones, she was placed in the back row with the boys, which prompted Lord Cobham to speak to her.

Later, as a teacher’s spouse, she taught at Double Hill, a sole-charge school, and met Queen Elizabeth II during a school trip.

Margaret was schooled in Leicester, England. She attended Coleman Road Primary and then another primary school after her family bought a sweet shop.

She later attended an all-girls secondary school, where she had positive experiences with kind teachers and communal hot lunches.

She emigrated to New Zealand in 1973 and became an early childhood teacher.

Noeline began at Boulcott School in Lower Hutt in 1946. Because she was left-handed, a teacher strapped her hand until her mother intervened through a doctor.

Noeline later moved to Levin School, which had more than 1,200 pupils and was New Zealand’s largest school at the time. Classes were held in places such as a church hall and the Regent Theatre. At Levin East School, students picked stones from the fields, and Noeline attended cooking lessons at Levin School.

She spent three years at Horowhenua College before becoming the principal’s secretary. She disliked the school milk, which curdled in the sun, and she felt embarrassed riding her grandmother’s bike.

Ruth remembers that her father was left-handed and received the strap at school. She also recalls that one of his friends was punished for speaking Māori.

Ruth, the youngest of seven siblings, attended St Augustine School, Mairehau School in Christchurch, and then Burwood School. She enjoyed being the milk monitor.

Years later, she returned to Burwood School and found that it had been damaged by an earthquake, with the newer part condemned.

Ruth attended Aranui District High in its first year of opening. Her only real trouble at school came from sliding down the banisters, for which she was punished by having to write “I am a lady” 100 times.

(continued on page 5)

School day memories

Sheila was educated in England. She passed the 11-plus examination and attended grammar school, although it did not suit her. After years of undiagnosed vision problems caused by measles at the age of five, she was eventually found to be very short-sighted.

Sheila sometimes pretended to be ill to avoid school because she preferred reading at home. She attended Middleton Street Primary, Cottesmore School, where boys and girls were strictly separated, and Manning Grammar School for Girls, which has since closed.

Marg was schooled in then-Rhodesia. She boarded at a school that had originally been built for Polish refugees from the Second World War.

All of the students were farmers' children, and boarding was standard because families lived in rural areas. The headmaster included African history, bush survival, and nature walks in the curriculum. Art lessons focused on African subjects, and Marg once kept a pet snake in her desk. Students who stole fruit were punished with cod liver oil.

One serious incident occurred when a classmate was badly burned by a Jumping Jack firework, which led to fireworks being banned at the school. Marg was active in the Young Farmers Club.

The school food was supplemented by day scholars, and although the swimming pool was unfenced, students followed the rules because the consequences were clear.

Ian began schooling near Bennydale in the South Waikato and then attended Marton District School. For a short time, he also attended a school near Kai Iwi.

He recalled the Tangiwai disaster and was deeply affected by the radio coverage at the time, which made him ill. Ian later returned to Marton, and in 1958 Rangitikei College was built.

When the new school opened, students had to carry their desks, bags, and books one kilometre to the new site.

Ian's sister and a neighbour contracted polio, and he remembers the vaccinations that followed.



Pictured above: Peter Dyer and Chris McLennan at the Hutt Valley High School 100th year Reunion, on 8 August. Peter attended the school from 1952 to 1956 and Chris was there from 1960 to 1963.

PAPERS PAST WHAT'S NEW Latest additions to Newspapers (June 2026):

- Hawera Star (1936-1950)
- Hutt News (1949-1960)
- Matamata County Mail (1953-1965)
- Matamata Record (1951, 1953-June 1954)
- Matiere Gazette (1920-1921, 1924-October 1936)
- Ohura Mail (July 1917-1921, 1924-October 1936)
- Waikato Times (1946-1950)
- Wairarapa Times-Age (July 1944-1950)
- Wanganui Herald (1921-1927)

For more information visit the website

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>

Heritage Room news

The Historical Society meeting in conjunction with the Library Railway Exhibition on Saturday 8th August was a great success with 59 attending.

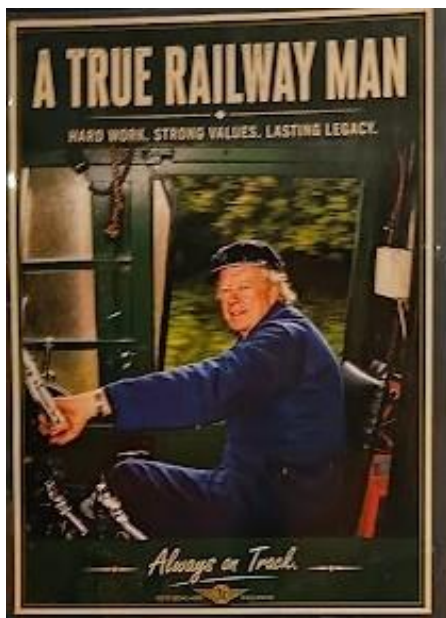
We were delighted to hear Neill Atkinson's excellent talk on the Wellington Manawatu Railway and welcomed several local railway enthusiasts, including Jim Oliver whose story as a railway man (from 1959 to 2010) features in the exhibition. The exhibition runs until the end of this month.

Just a reminder to everyone. If you wish to take a book out of the Heritage room you simply need to use your library card. Any public member is allowed to borrow the books except for the Reference ones.

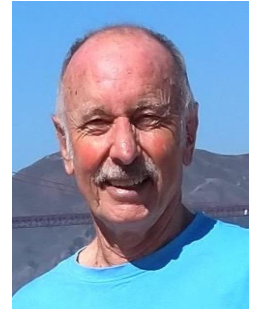
If you are looking for individuals in smaller or obscure cemeteries in New Zealand (often not held in Council websites) there are microfiche in the top draw front right. At the beginning are two fiche which provide an index.

Kevin had two interesting inquiries about Leo Court who started the first Levin ambulance service in Levin and a Dr Rosa Collier in Shannon (both from the 1950's). Please let Kevin know if you have information of Dr Collier in Foxton or Shannon that can be passed on.

Kiri and Kevin are running the Discovering Family History course again in the library. The first one is Tuesday 6 October (1-3pm) on using DNA in your research.



Committee Profile: President Kevin Miles



I was born in the Hawkes Bay but grew up in Seatoun, Wellington. I started as a teacher at Manawatu College in 1978 and from 1981 to 2003 at Horowhenua College.

Mainly a Biology teacher, I was very keen on coaching and participating in soccer, athletics and cross country running. Over the past seven years I have resumed my interest in tramping.

I joined the Family History Group in 2019, taking over as Treasurer. The following year I became President.

I have used Ancestry since 2012 and did my DNA soon after it was offered. I have been a member of NZSG for a number of years and am currently the Horowhenua Area contact.

I grew up knowing a lot of my mother's family history, the Rees-Thomas from Wales, Porters from Yorkshire and Radford/Mannington families in Sussex. A wonderful record written by my great aunt, provided a lot of research for me and the Mannington line traces back to the 1500's.

My father's paternal grandparents (Billington and Miles) came from Birmingham and Kent, mainly the area around Sevenoaks. The maternal side is Irish, Steenson and Gilchrist from Armagh/Monahan, Edge and Grundy from Wicklow.

The trip to the UK and Ireland last year, following new information from DNA, has helped strengthen my family tree knowledge.

Family History Research Resources – Archives New Zealand

Information provided by Anne Coury at Otaki FHG originally from NZSG

Are you a family history researcher seeking to fill in your family tree? Perhaps you need some guidance to locate the connections between an individual and a family, or maybe you just want to know how to discover some unknown facts about your relatives: where did they live, what did they do, and who do they connect to?

Die in New Zealand?
Grow up in New Zealand?
Have Māori Whakapapa?
Migrate to New Zealand?
Come from outside the British Empire?

Family history research often begins with a little reflection - did the person you're researching:

Die in New Zealand?

If your relative died in New Zealand, there is a chance that a court probate was created to process their estate at death. These types of records often contain a copy of the deceased's will.

In situations where the cause of death was not immediately clear, or there was suspicion of foul play, the Coroner would carry out an inquiry. Coroner's inquest records can contain a large amount of information including statements from witnesses, legal and official documents and the Coroner's verdict on the cause of death.

Check out our [Life Events](#) research guide for more information about probates and inquests.

Grow up in New Zealand?

While there is no one complete source on individual childhoods, we do hold primary school class schedules, or classification lists. Although these do not contain a great deal of biographical information, it is often possible to locate an individual or family group of children in the same school at the same time.

More information about class schedules can be found in our [Education](#) research guide.

Have Māori Whakapapa?

The records we hold that relate to Māori mostly begin in the 20th century. Before then, the records that do exist are sporadic and usually only name rangatira and hapū, and do not specifically discuss whakapapa.

An exception to this rule is the [Māori Land Court Minute Books](#). These records detail the minutes of the Māori Land Court's proceedings. Along with information on land, adoptions and probates, the minute books also include whakapapa given by witnesses and successors in order to prove their entitlement to land.

Take a look at our [te ao Māori research guides](#) for has further information.

Migrate to New Zealand?

While Māori origins can be traced through whakapapa, formal Pākehā migration recordkeeping began with the New Zealand Company, settlement from 1840, and with the formation of British government after the Treaty of Waitangi in the same year.

Family history resources – Archives NZ

For many immigrants, particularly those who travelled directly to New Zealand from the United Kingdom, passenger lists offer a fair chance of finding a record of a person's journey. We hold a variety of shipping lists. All of our Wellington held shipping lists have been digitised and are available free-of-charge through FamilySearch.

Click through for more information on [searching passenger lists](#).

If your relative's immigration was connected to an organised immigration scheme or a later identifiable immigration draft there may well be further paperwork about individual immigrants. Post-World War Two, New Zealand welcomed migrants and refugees from war-torn Europe - almost 300 Yugoslavs; about 1,000 Greeks mostly displaced from Romania, Bulgaria or Turkey; and another 700 Poles arrived in New Zealand.

For more information on 20th century immigration, see our [Migration](#) research guide.

Come from outside the British Empire?

From 1840 until 1 January 1949, most people in New Zealand, including Māori, were British subjects or citizens. Those from outside the British empire were known as 'aliens' and alien registration files were created to track non-British subjects in New Zealand. If the person chose to become a British subject, the process of naturalisation was undertaken and records created.

Our [Citizenship](#) research guide has more information about naturalisation records.

What we've detailed above are all great places to start when researching your family, but there are many other records to consider. Visit our [Search the Archive](#) page for further research guidance, or feel free to [contact us](#) for help.

Excerpt from a [Blog Post on Archives NZ](#) – discover <https://www.archives.govt.nz/discover-our-stories/family-history-resources>

PALMERSTON NORTH NZSG

Untold Stories -from Tania Kopytko Celebrating Our Stories 2026 - the first national gathering of descendants of displaced persons (DPs) and those few DPs who are still living. It takes place in Palmerston North (Sat 17th) and Pahiatua (Sun 18th) October 2026. The gathering is conference-like in Palmerston North, and in Pahiatua it will be commemorative, as we will visit the camp site (now a farmer's field and airstrip), the marae and the museum.

To register go to: <https://www.event-finda.co.nz/search?q=Celebrating+our+stories>. Also Untold Stories has a Facebook site with many fascinating stories relating to this large migration: <https://www.facebook.com/untold.stories.237746/>.

Email untolds626@gmail.com for more information - Tania and the Untold Stories Team.

WELLINGTON NZSG NEWSLETTER JULY 2026

The Wellington combined branches Family History Month event takes place on Saturday 29 August, 10am-4pm, at Tawa Union Church.

The theme of the day is 'Round the Isles' with talks on England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, as well as an overview of Probates and Wills.

Entry is free, and there will be exhibitors from various organisations, as well as raffles.

NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF GENEALOGISTS Scottish Interest Group – Greater Wellington

Saturday 12 September 2026 1.30-3.30pm
Tawa Union Church, 6 Elena Place, Tawa, Wellington

Speaker: Donald S Murray: The resurgence of the Gaelic language in Scotland

This Scottish writer has been awarded the 2026 Scottish Writing Fellowship with Mātai Airana, Mātai Kotirana – the Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies (CISS) fellowship at the University of Otago)

A wee door fee of \$5.00 applies to cover costs.

Afternoon tea will be served after the meeting.

For further enquiries please contact Doug Miller on 0204-645 537 or at sigwellington@gmail.com