

Horowhenua Family History Group Inc

Email: horofhg@gmail.com

Postal: HFHG 44 Rimu Street Levin 5510

Website: <https://www.horowhenuafamilyhistory.org.nz>

FaceBook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/horowhenuafamilyhistory>

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.



Levin Post-office 1903

**Thompson House
4 Kent Street, Levin
Monday 27 July 2026
1.30pm**

**Members' stories from their
School Days**

CONTENTS

Page 1 President's Message

- 2 Writing your story – Heather Thomson
- 3 “ “ / Cousin Brydon's road trip
- 4 Cousin Brydon's road trip
- 5 Heritage Room/ Exhibition
- 6 Committee Profile: Prue Theobald
- 7 Unveiling Ethel Dement's headstone
- 8 Family History Month workshops

COMMITTEE

Kevin Miles	021 1364 075 President
Brian Bernon	027 286 4186 Secretary
Prue Theobald	021 234 5621 Treasurer
Ian Meyer	06 368 0602
Cathy Holmes	021 338 227
Lynn Williams	Librarian

August meeting

**Monday 31 August 2026
1.30pm**

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

President's Message

It's hard to believe we are now into the month of July. Where has the year gone? Our monthly meetings have had interesting and knowledgeable guest speakers and excellent contributions from many of you in the members' sessions. We look forward to more of these activities in the months to come.

August is Family History Month. During this time many people use our local library's Heritage Room to find out more about their families from days gone by. Our volunteers will be on duty to help with these requests – more details are in this newsletter, together with activities in other areas.

Looking forward, as usual, we have a table booked at the Age on the Go event at the Event Centre, Victoria Street, Levin on Friday 16 October from 10am to 2pm. This is a good opportunity to try and get new members and also promote the Heritage Room. It is valuable time to run our main fundraising event, the Laundry Basket Raffle. Volunteers are needed to help on the day. Donations for the raffle prize will be collected in August and September. Please let me know if you can help at Age on the Go or with the raffle prizes.

We also have a day at New World Levin, booked on Tuesday 20 October 10am to 4pm to sell tickets for the raffle. Again volunteers to help needed.

Once again thank you to all who help with our activities. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

Kevin Miles

Writing your story – guest speaker Heather Thomson

Our June meeting guest speaker Heather Thomson introduced herself as the writer behind *Tell Your Story* and emphasised the importance of documenting personal and family histories.

She said that writing memoirs preserves stories for future generations, offering a tangible link to loved ones and a sense of belonging.

Heather said that personal histories are often lost within two generations if not documented.

Stories provide insights into family roots, medical history, and understanding of past challenges. Writing can be cathartic and healing, especially for sensitive or difficult experiences.

Heather shared her diverse life experiences, illustrating the richness of personal stories. Her father's passion for anthropology, history, and writing inspired her to launch *Tell Your Story*.

She said her father's memoirs became invaluable after his sudden passing, serving as a lasting connection to him.

She reminded us that sensitive information can be tricky to navigate but should not be entirely omitted.

Family myths or embellished stories can be included with disclaimers, e.g., "The story goes that..."

Memories are fluid, and different family members may recall events differently.

Heather shared advice for starting memoirs:

Begin as early as possible to avoid memory loss due to aging or health issues.

Write in small increments—jot down memories, events, or even lists (e.g., houses lived in, jobs held, concerts attended). Include sensory details (e.g., smells, sights, feelings) to bring stories to life.



Name and date photos to preserve their context for future generations.

She said memoirs can be written chronologically or as collections of memories.

Books can be printed in small runs or kept as electronic PDFs.

Audio recordings of interviews can preserve the voice of loved ones.

Heather offers services to write, edit, and design memoirs, ensuring the client's voice is preserved.

Her Action Items include:

1. **Start Writing:**

Begin documenting your life story or family history in any format—chronological, thematic, or memory-based.

Use tools like exercise books or memory-prompt books (e.g., *Mother's Memories for My Daughter*).

2. **Organise Photos and Documents:**

Name and date photos to ensure their context is preserved.

Categorise files and folders for easy access.

3. **Encourage Others:**

Persuade family members to document their stories, even if they feel their lives are "ordinary." (*continued on p3*)



Pictured: A young Heather Thomson (front right) with her siblings and mother.

Writing your story (from page 2)

Avoid rewriting someone else's story. Respect their voice and style.

4. Consider Professional Help:

If overwhelmed, seek assistance from professionals like Heather Thomson to record, edit, and design memoirs.

5. Preserve Audio Memories:

Record interviews or conversations with loved ones to capture their voice and stories.

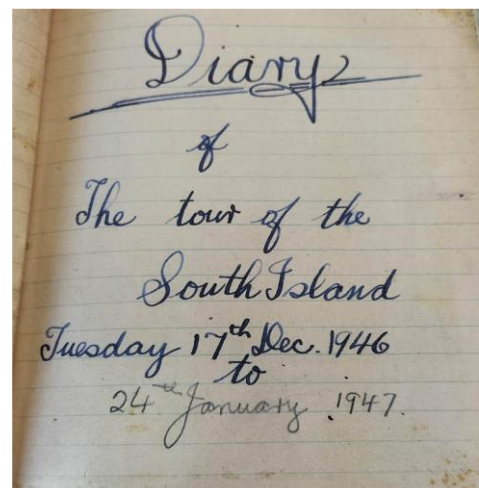
Heather encouraged us to start documenting our stories, emphasising that even "ordinary" lives are fascinating to others.

She shared examples of her work and the profound impact memoirs can have on families.

The presentation sparked interest and discussion among attendees, highlighting the universal value of preserving personal histories.

Cousin Brydon's bicycle South Island road trip 1946/47

Following Heather Thomson's presentation, HFHG member Lorraine Wright, assisted by Linda Fletcher, shared memories from her cousin Brydon "Beef" Baxter and his friend Ron Jarden's cycle trip round the South Island at the end of 1946.



The memories came from Ron's diary of the trip. (continued on Page 4)

Cousin Brydon's South Island bicycle road trip 1946/47

The diary was transcribed by Ron's daughter, Jennifer, who added detailed footnotes to provide context about places, farms, and businesses mentioned.

The tour was a 39-day cycling journey from December 17, 1946 to January 24, 1947 around New Zealand's South Island, covering 1217 miles (1958.5 km). The longest day's ride was 80 miles, from Invercargill to Dunedin.

Ron and Brydon ("Beef") were both 17 years old and had recently graduated from Hutt Valley High School, Lower Hutt.

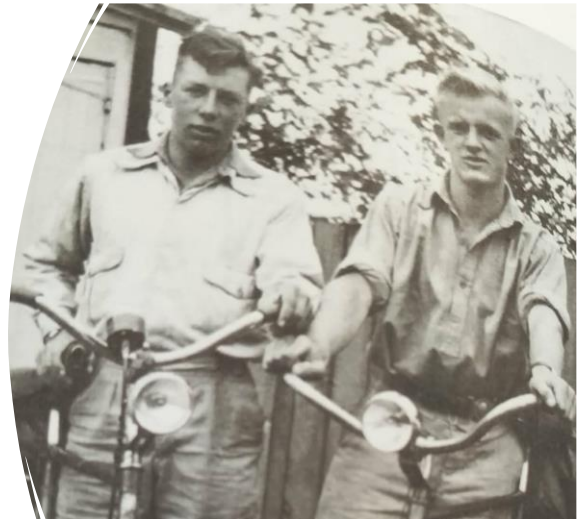
Ron had a new BSA bike, while Beef assembled his bike from two old ones. They made pannier bags from horse rug canvas and purchased saddlebags for their sleeping bags.

They left Lower Hutt on December 17, 1946, and took the ferry *Matangi* from Wellington to Nelson.

Notable stops on their journey included Westport, Christchurch, Queenstown, Invercargill, Dunedin, and Picton. They encountered various terrains, including gravel roads, soft clay, and bitumen.

The weather ranged from sunny skies to heavy rain, headwinds, and even snow.

Meals included Weet-Bix, bacon, eggs, chops, and custard. They often visited the movies and milk bars in towns they stayed in.



Ron Jarden (left) and Brydon Baxter ready to start on their tour of the South Island.

Mishaps included punctures and a major bike issue when Beef's handlebars and front wheel came off.

Christmas Day was spent in Christchurch, with family, enjoying a large meal and festive activities.

New Year's Eve was in Queenstown where they celebrated with ice cream, clear lake views, and Auld Lang Syne at midnight.

Travelling onto Invercargill, they stayed with Lorraine's family, did laundry, and visited a cemetery to see a relative's grave. They returned to Wellington via the ferry *Tamahine*.

Below is the list of what they took on the journey.

We had a lot of trouble in deciding what to take and what to leave out, and after a lot of thought the following list was compiled:

Personal Gear		
Ground sheet	Shoes	Ration books
Pyjamas	Tennis shoes	Anti-Mosquito
Raincoat and hat	Toilet gear	Camera
Khaki shirt	Mess gear	Diary
Sleeping bag	Towels	Letter cards
Flannel shirt	Pencils	Money
Light shirts (2)	Books	Watch cover
Jacket	Rope and string	Support
Khaki shorts (2)	Handkerchiefs	Torch
Longs (1 pair)	Bathing togs	Plenty of socks
Thick jersey	Safety pins	Sheath knife
Boots	Darning outfit	Singlets

Bike Gear		
Mending Outfit	Tools	Extras
Razor blade	Small shifting spanner	Tube
Patching	Small BSA spanner	Nuts and bolts
Tyre levers	Cone spanner	Cotter pin
Cement	Screwdriver	Connecting link
Tyre for blowouts	Pliers	Axle
Scissors	Oil	Cone
Sandpaper	Vaseline	
Camping Gear		
Hatchet	Matches	Rags
Entrenching tool	First aid kit	Candles
Three billies	Tin opener	Toilet paper
One hikers tent in two sections		

Heritage Room News

by Kevin Miles

Our new member Zoe has kindly offered to help as a volunteer in the Heritage Room at Te Takere o kura-hau-pō, Levin Library.

The roster has been changed. Volunteers are available on Tuesday to Friday, 10am to 12.30pm. The Volunteers' Guide has been updated to include these changes.

I am pleased to have been able to get the three years (2022 to 2024) of the Chronicle bound. The cost has been shared with the Horowhenua Historical Society.

Te Takere exhibition

The major exhibition this year relates to the Railways.

It will be set up on 4 August and run for the month.

The bulk of the displays are being provided by a local who has been an avid collector of memorabilia.

His father was until recently a train driver. This will be a fascinating collection to check out.

RAILWAYS PRESENTATION

Saturday 8 August

1.30pm

Te Takeretanga o kura-hau-pō
(Levin Community Centre)

Speaker Neill Atkinson
Chief Historian/Manager of
Heritage Content at Manatū
Taonga Ministry for Culture and
Heritage, Wellington



To support the library exhibition on the Railways, Neill will talk about the planning, construction and history of the Wellington and Manawatu Railway, New Zealand's most successful private railway venture, and explore how it helped transform the Horowhenua, Kāpiti and Manawatū regions in the late 19th century and beyond.

As Chief Historian/Manager of Heritage Content at Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Wellington, Neill oversees the Ministry's heritage websites, including Te Ara Encyclopaedia of NZ, Dictionary of NZ Biography, NZ History, and 28th Māori Battalion, as well as commissioned print histories and other projects.

He has written, co-written or co-edited nine books, including two, *Trainland* and *Railways Studios*, on aspects of New Zealand's railway history.

Committee Profile: Prue Theobald, Treasurer

My interest in family history began in 1981, when my husband, Mick, and I planned a trip to England with our first-born son, Chris, to visit Mick's family.

Around that time, my father, Ernie Hutchison, told me about his grandmother, Amy Napier, who sailed from England on the *Mystery* in December 1858 and arrived in Lyttelton in March 1859. Her parents were Richard and Amy Clark, and we found this information at the Canterbury Museum.

Tracing Amy Clark's life has been a rewarding part of my research. Through Papers Past, I found articles about her family in Christchurch from the 1860s to the early 1900s, including records showing her resilience after being deserted by her husband, John Napier.

On later trips to London, I purchased certificates from St Catherine's House, which added important details to my research.

Family history was set aside at times while I worked, raised a family, and served on committees, but my interest remained strong.

After Mick and I returned from Brisbane, Australia, I joined the NZSG Wellington Branch in about 2012 and became more active in my research. I became treasurer in 2013, later served as secretary and convenor, and remained involved with Family History Month and several NZSG conferences.

A highlight came in 2015, when Mick and I visited Hertford, England, where my grandfather, John Ernest Price, had lived. At the local historical society, I found a photograph of my great-grandfather, John Price, whose likeness to my grandfather was striking.

I have also discovered family connections in Melbourne and located the cemetery where my great-great-grandmother, Ann Napier, née Arbuckle, is buried.

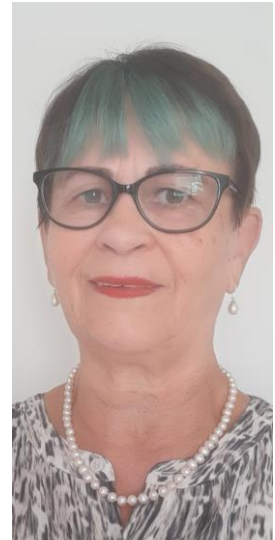
Our family is now spread internationally, with one son in Melbourne, another in Saudi Arabia, and four grandchildren in Denmark and Melbourne, which makes recording family history even more meaningful.

In November 2023, Mick and I moved to Speldhurst Country Estate, Levin, where I have joined several groups and serve as treasurer for the Social Committee.

I joined the Horowhenua Family History Group in February 2024, became a committee member later that year, and now serve as treasurer. I value being part of another active family history community and encourage anyone interested to speak with a committee member.

I am on the planning committee for the 18th Australasian Federation of Family History Organizations Congress, to be held in Wellington at Victoria University's Rutherford House campus from 11 to 14 February 2027.

Prue Theobald #25272



Unveiling Headstone for Sister Ethel Dement

by Linda Fletcher

"It was a great afternoon on Saturday June 27 at the unveiling of the restored headstone of one of New Zealand's pioneering nurses Sister Ethel Maude Dement.

She was buried 70 years ago in the Tiro Tiro Road Cemetery but without her military honours - Mentioned in Dispatches (MID) and the Associate Royal Red Cross (ARRC) Medal.

Ethel married William (Bill) Thomas who was the first principal of Horowhenua College.

it was wonderful to have Horowhenua College Principal Grant Congdon, along with the Head Boy Te Hokotuku Gardiner-Hokianga and Head Girl, Imogen Williamson attend to help commemorate this important part of the college's history.

We were also delighted to have Captain Sarah Maassen (Clinical Training Nurse) based at Linton Army Camp read the Nurses Ode.

The head students unveiled the headstone and Te Hokotuku read the Ode in Reo.

The commemoration was one of many being arranged by the New Zealand Remembrance Army (NZRA) to put right similar errors in headstones around the country."



*Above left: Captain Sarah Maassen.
Above Right: Horowhenua College Principal Grant Congdon, Head Girl, Imogen Williamson and Head Boy Te Hokotuku Gardiner-Hokianga.
Left: Te Hokotuku Gardiner-Hokianga, Imogen Williamson, Sarah Maassen, Linda Fletcher and Simon Stromborm NZRA.*

WELLINGTON NZSG NEWSLETTER JULY 2026

The Wellington combined branches Family History Month event takes place on Saturday 29th 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.

Auckland Family History Expo Friday 9 October to Sunday 11 October 2026 King's College, 41 Golf Avenue, Ōtāhuhu, Auckland.

The Expo brings together family historians, genealogists, industry organisations, and researchers from across New Zealand, Australia and beyond.

Attendees will have the chance to connect with a wide range of organisations and expert.

These include: Ancestry, Auckland Council Archives, Auckland Libraries Business Writing Services, Chinese Poll Tax, Heritage Trust, FamilySearch, Family Tree Maker Mentis, MyHeritage, National Army Museum, Waiohuru, New Zealand Fencible Society, Micrographic Services, New Zealand Society of Genealogists—including interest groups: England, Māori, Pacific Islands, Scotland, Ireland, Asian, the Genealogical Computing Group and NZSG Online DNA Interest Group Wales, New Zealand Family History Society.

For more information see our webpage: <https://genealogy.org.nz/Auckland-Family-History-Expo/11491/> Follow our Facebook page and re-share our posts:

<https://www.facebook.com/AFHExpo/>

PALMERSTON NORTH NZSG

Palmerston North City Library and the Palmerston North Branch of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists are marking Family History Month with a practical series of workshops for anyone keen to explore, preserve or share their family story. The three workshops will be held at Palmerston North Library

Accessing online resources at the City Library, introduces family history websites available free at the library, including Ancestry, British Newspaper Archive, Findmypast and MyHeritage. Sessions will help create accounts and learn the key features of each site. This workshop runs on Thursday 6 August 4pm, Friday 7 August 11am, and Sunday 9 August 2pm.

Preparing your family history for publication, designed for people ready to turn their research into a family history project. Facilitators will help participants think about structure, presentation and next steps. It will be offered on Thursday 13 August 4pm, Friday 14 August 11am, and Sunday 16 August 2pm.

Using the digitisation tools at the City Library, invites participants to bring a photo, negative, slide or document and learn how to use the library's digitisation station. Those with Palmerston North material can also learn how to create a Manawatū Heritage account and upload images. Sessions run on Thursday 20 August 4pm, Friday 21 August 11am, and Sunday 23 August 2pm.

The workshops are suitable for new and experienced family researchers. Places are limited, so bookings are essential. Presentations linked to the workshop themes are open to attend without booking.

Register through the Palmerston North City Library events page as a guest using your name, email address and phone number, or sign in with your library card number and PIN. Or phone the library on 06 351 4100 or visit the Central Library and ask staff to make a booking for you. Book only one session time for each workshop.