

# Horowhenua Family History Group Inc

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<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 25 May 2026  
1.30pm**

**Anne Jackman:  
"Growing an archivist:  
serendipity, mysteries, and  
endless rabbit holes"**

**Next meeting  
Monday 29 June 2026  
Heather Thomson:  
"Tell your stories"**

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## 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

## President's message

It was good to see such a good turnout at the April AGM and the interesting range of stories from the group about their involvement of family members in the World Wars. It was also good to gain new members to our group.

A reminder that subscriptions are due and that membership forms were sent out with the notice of the meeting. We would really like those returned so that our membership data base can be updated.

With the resignation of Sharon and Michael not standing again we have only three on the committee, apart from the Executive. Michael and Wendy will be no longer doing volunteering at the Heritage Room so we need to review our coverage of the volunteering time. Some new people getting involved would be helpful.

Carol Dyer needs some assistance with the local newspaper scrap book and I have small jobs that need doing in the Archive. Just one or two hours a month would be a big help. There's more about this in the Heritage Room section (p5) of this newsletter.

**Kevin Miles**

**GUEST SPEAKER Anne Jackman** says being an Archivist is all about connecting people and information and advocating for (and delivering) ways of making information accessible.

In her presentation "*Growing an archivist: serendipity, mysteries, and endless rabbit holes*" she will talk about how she got to where she is now, the part genealogy played over the years, assisting people with research, and the 'new kid on the Block', i.e. The Preserving Local History and Educational Trust, and its role with Papers Past.

Anne has worked in libraries and archives as a practitioner and manager. This includes 12 years as Manager of Research Services at the Hocken Collections in Dunedin, three years as Director of the Presbyterian Research Centre (Library and Archive), and six years as Regional Archivist (Otago and Southland) for Archives New Zealand.

## Sharing family war-time memories

Following the Horowhenua Family History AGM, members shared war-time stories.

**Michael Holland:** Michael's first cousin once removed, Bramwell Hollis, served on HMS Hood. He was killed in 1941 when the ship was sunk by Bismarck/Prinz Eugen. Out of the Hood's 1,480 crew, there were three survivors.

Bramwell was training to be a Presbyterian minister. Michael found an obituary in Papers Past.

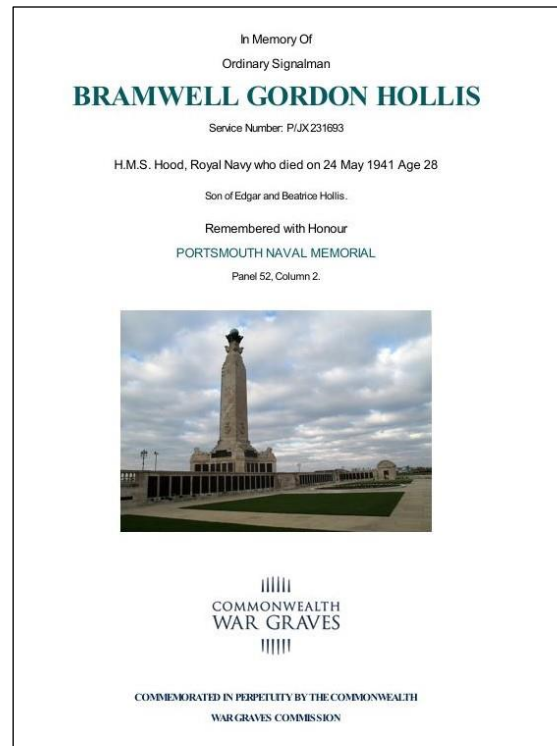
Uncle Edwin was a gunner in the Burma campaign and crossed the River Irrawaddy. He was discharged in 1946. Uncle William ("Billy") served as an airman in the Battle of the Bulge; he participated in a 1000-bomber raid on Cologne, where only the cathedral survived.

**Brian Bernon:** Brian's maternal grandfather Charles Warwick (pictured right) was a joiner and piano maker by trade. He worked for DeHavilland Aircraft during WW2 building the wooden bodies for the Mosquito twin engine bomber.

Brian's mother Gladys Warwick was a furrier before the war. Because of her skill of needlework she was recruited into making aircraft instruments and parachutes. She wore an identifier bracelet (pictured below) to indicate if she was bombed who the next of kin was. At this time it was her father.

Brian's uncle Charles Warwick (Gladys's brother) was a paratrooper. He was parachuted into France as part of the D Day invasion. He was captured and spent the rest of the war in a German Prison Camp.

Brian's father Bernard served during WW2 with the Royal Mechanical and Electrical Engineers based in Rugby working on developing radio and radar systems.



Brian's brother Ken was an RAF driver. He delivered aircraft parts, including to North Africa.

### Lynn Williams

Lynn's Great Aunt Nora Slater ("Queenie") was a nurse in WWI. She served on the African front and elsewhere.

She rose to the rank of Staff Nurse. She was mentioned in dispatches for meritorious conduct and received service and victory medals.

Nora returned to New Zealand on the 'Mokoia' in May 1918. She lived in Otane and never married. She died in 1933 aged 87 and is buried in Hastings.



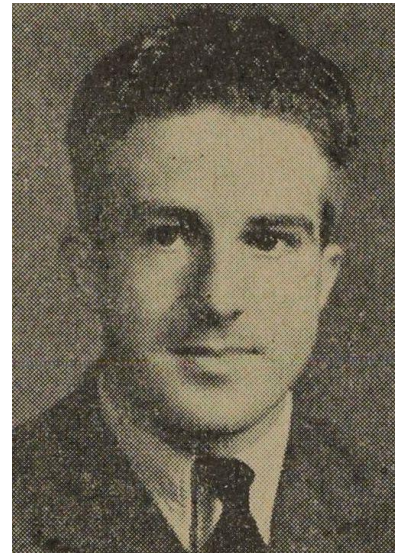
### Kevin Miles

Kevin's father served in New Caledonia. He was injured and reassigned to essential services. His uncle also served but did not see combat.

James Flers (father's cousin) was born in 1917. He married Alice Campbell in January 1941. His son James was born on 22 August 1941.

During WW2 James enlisted in the NZ Airforce in January 1940. He trained at the Airforce base on Kimberley Road Levin (now the site of Speldhurst). He then had further training as a wireless operator in Canada, before going to the UK. He flew 208 hours in Stirling bombers and was killed in action over Düsseldorf in 1942. He is buried in Holland.

*Research sources: KETI archive, Cenotaph, military records.*



James Flers

### Felicity Bernon

Felicity's great grandfather and his two sons were involved in WWI. The father served at Gallipoli. He returned to New Zealand but both his sons were lost.

Felicity's father joined the New Zealand Airforce as part of WWII (Squadron 75). Like Kevin's relative, he trained at the Airforce base in Levin and went to Alberta Canada for pilot flight training in Lancasters.

He arrived in England and whilst preparing for sorties the war stopped. He returned to New Zealand to civilian life.

### Carol Dyer

Carol's second cousin Erik served in the RAF during WW2. He was killed over Berlin at age 21, and is buried in the Commonwealth War Graves, Berlin, Germany.

Carol's father was called up in 1942 but did not serve due to being in an essential industry as a dental technician.

### John Dixon

During WW2 John's father Tom served with the 24<sup>th</sup> Auckland Battalion in Egypt, El Alamein, and Syria and was issued with the Eighth Army ribbon.

John shared his father's stories of camouflaging vehicles, being recognised as Kiwis, and organising camel races at Tura Caves.

He showed members a copy of a Tura Racing Club programme (pictured) with soldiers' names and humorous horse names.

### Prue Theobald

Prue's father Ernie Hutchison served during WW2 with the 23rd Battalion. He fought in the desert and Italy. He was awarded multiple medals (Africa Star, Italy Star, War Medal).

He was wounded; shrapnel and bullet wounds persisted. He died of war wounds in 1983. He became a carpenter post-war.

Uncle Jack Hutchison: not a blood relative but claimed as family, was a gay soldier. He was a potter and served in the medical/dental corps in Pacific. He created a souvenir ring and was a subject of books on gay soldiers. His artwork featured in publications.  
*Research via Archives NZ.*

### Marj Van Dyk

During WW2 Marj's mother was an ambulance driver in London and Home Counties.

Her father was evacuated from Dunkirk. He then served in Burma and did not see his son for over three years.

An uncle was captured in Belgium and spent five years in POW camps. He was involved in the Operation Olympia escape (three succeeded, 27 recaptured).



*Ernie Hutchison  
and Jack Hutchison*



### Heather Rutherford

One of Heather's grandfathers was colourblind and one was in the Home Guard at Otaki.

Her father's younger brother served in the NZ Navy during the Korean War.

Heather said her mother dated American soldiers in Wellington during WW2; Her father befriended Americans in Featherston during the riot in 1943

Heather's late husband was a Vietnam War veteran; a cousin and classmate also served (classmate killed in action). Her half-brother served in Vietnam (signals) and also served in Malaya and Singapore.

## Volunteers wanted in the Heritage Room

The Heritage Room at Te Takeretanga o Kura-hau-pō Levin Library provides a research service for people with information about family and local history. The room is run by volunteers who are members of the Horowhenua Family History Group supported by Kiri Pepene, Library Information Research & Local History Team Lead.

- The Heritage Room is open **Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday** 10.00am to 12.30pm; and
- **Thursday**, 10.00am to 3.00pm

Help is also needed for the compilation of local articles into scrapbooks that Gloy Deadman began many years ago.

She selected pictures and text from the local papers and stuck them in scrapbooks for perusing. Sitting in the archives room is a box of past Chronicles and some Horowhenua Stars. They need to be sorted for those items that would be of interest historically - events that focus mainly on people in the district.

Two or three people are required to go through the papers and select items, cutting out articles and dating them then sticking them, in order, into the scrapbook.

**Merv Judge:** During WW2 Merv's father: served in the Home Guard, Wellington, coastal defence.

His father's brother was a rifleman in the Pacific Islands.

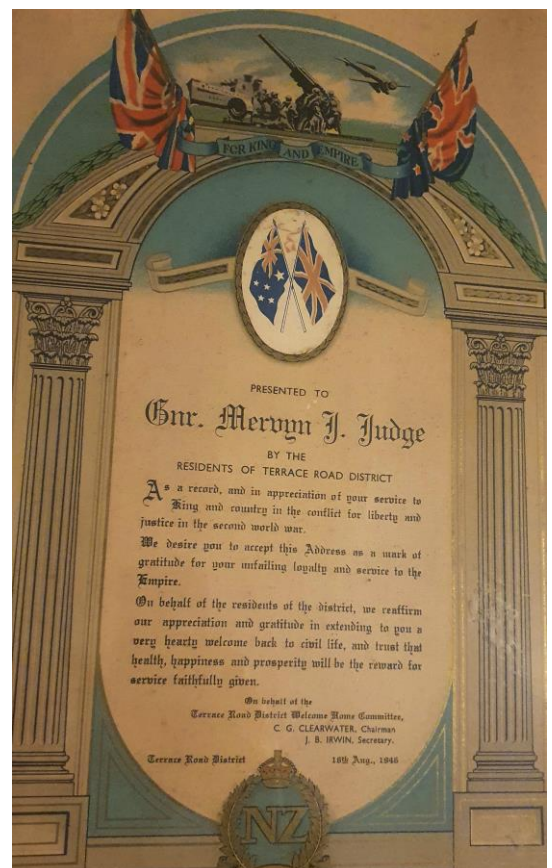
His mother's three brothers served in WW2: Jack (rifleman), Gordon (messenger, "Padre," mentioned in dispatches), Fred (cobbler, conscripted, served in Egypt, became carpenter post-war).

All four brothers survived and died of old age.

Pictured right: Merv's father's brother received this impressive certificate of thanks for his service, from the Terrace Road District (near Matura).



If you would like to volunteer in the Heritage Room – as a researcher or with the scrapbook project, please contact Kevin Miles 021 1364 075 for further information.



## Horowhenua Historical Society Pioneer Graves Project

By Linda Fletcher

A group of us had a small working bee at the Tiro Tiro Road Cemetery on Monday April 20 using a list of pioneers and former mayors I had researched. Many thanks to Bruce and Sharon Batten for their great effort on the day.

Discussions led to how to tackle a major clean up with a series of working bees, tackling a section at a time.

This would require lots of weeding, bush trimming and moss scraping and a fadge (garden waste bag) to collect the clippings. Tom is happy to dump it at his place.

A date for the first working bee has not yet been set but we would welcome helpers from the Family History Group. I will let you know when we have a date.

Please contact Linda if you would like to help. Email [linda.fletcher@xtra.co.nz](mailto:linda.fletcher@xtra.co.nz)

### Voices of the Victorian Poor website

We have received the following correspondence from Catherine Gower, Research Assistant at Nottingham Trent University, regarding a reference to the Voices of the Victorian Poor website ([victorianpoor.org](http://victorianpoor.org)) in our September 2025 newsletter.

“I am a research assistant at Nottingham Trent University working with Professor Steven King who was co-investigator on the Teaching the Voices of the Victorian Poor Project with Dr Paul Carter of the National Archives. As part of my work, I am investigating the wider impact of the Voices of the Victorian Poor website, particularly among local historians and family historians. I was especially excited to see the website being mentioned by a group based in New Zealand. Have any members of your group used the website and if so, how have they found using the resource?”

“I currently have an open survey for users to complete: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/sUQb2nuVSp>. The survey should only take 5 -10 minutes at most and all responses are anonymised. We would really appreciate hearing your feedback about the website, how you found using it and if there are any further topics or materials we can cover in future iterations of the site. We would really appreciate it if you could share the survey with members of your group.

“Submissions to the survey may be used as evidence to support Professor Steven King’s Impact Case Study for the next REF cycle. For more on NTU’s data policy regarding the collection and storage of data relating to Impact Case Studies, please see <https://www.ntu.ac.uk/policies/research/impact-privacy-notice>.

“In the meantime, please feel free to get in touch with me if you would like to discuss the website in more detail or if you have any questions or suggestions.”

**Catherine Gower**

Research assistant

Email: [catherine.gower@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:catherine.gower@ntu.ac.uk)

## ŌTAKI HERITAGE

Ōtaki Heritage Museum has a new exhibition about the early development of Ōtaki town: ***Te Tāone o Ōtaki: 1920 – 1989 / Ōtaki Town: 1920 – 1989.***

It includes themes such as changes in land use, community organisations, public amenities such as banks, library, theatre and municipal hall, iwi revitalisation, impacts of war, schools, churches, hospitals. Industry, people who had an impact on the town. The exhibition follows the earlier exhibition about the town from 1843 – 1920 and covers the period when the Ōtaki Borough Council was operating.

The Museum is open on Thursdays to Saturdays, 10am to 2pm at 49 Main Street, Ōtaki.

## FEILDING NZSG NEWSLETTER

ANZAC resources mentioned at the April meeting and others found

- Porirua war stories.com stories of servicemen and women from the Porirua District who served in conflicts from the NZ Wars to modern peacekeeping. Still under development.
- <https://www.facebook.com/people/Friends-of-Bolton-Street-Cemetery-Bolton-Street-Cemetery-Central-Wellington>. There are also a cemetery tour Hickety Pips and Others – Aspects of Military Matters in Colonial Wellington. Best to take the tour in Spring, or in warmer weather.
- <https://www.facebook.com/RandomSnippetsofHistoryManawatuandBeyond> has posts about Kelvin Grove's Roll of Honour that nowadays hangs in the foyer of the Kelvin Grove Community Centre, and horses that made it back to Australia and New Zealand from WWarOne.
- <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/media-centre/news/southland-brothers-in-arms-the-human-cost-of-warlaid-bare-on-gallipoli-peninsula/> Among the 2,779 New Zealanders who died during the campaign, there were at least 55 sets of brothers.

## Hair Family of Whanganui

A family reunion is planned for descendants of Jane (née Scott 1811-1879) and William Cockburn Hair (1795-1853).

They came to New Zealand in 1841 and settled in Whanganui, finally owning Virginia Farm, which included Rotokawau Virginia Lake, located in St Johns Hill, Whanganui.

A reunion is planned on 4 August 2029 in Whanganui to mark 150 years since Jane died.

It will also be a chance to create an extensive family tree and collect historical information about the family which can be shared with all the family, even those who can't get to the reunion. The children of Jane and William and their spouses: Ann Hair and James Alexander, Margaret Hair and Daniel Hughes, William Hair and Margaret McKenzie, Jane Hair and David Peat, John Hair and Mary Higgie, Robert Hair and Mary Fawns, Isabella Hair and Thomas Alexander and James Alexander Hair and Eliza Miller.

If you are interested in this project, please message Heather McKenzie who lives in Wai-kanāe <https://www.facebook.com/heather.m.mckenzie.5>

## PALMERSTON NORTH CITY COUNCIL

The Palmerston North City Library has recently become kaitiaki to Community Pages, a growing database of services, groups, organisations, and resources that support the communities we live and work in.

Horowhenua Family History Group is listed on the database.

It's for the public and service providers, and open to everyone, whether you're seeking support, offering help, or simply exploring ways to stay informed and connected.

By sharing accurate, trustworthy, and up-to-date information, we empower people to make informed choices, foster independence, and strengthen community ties.

This is a database of community services and groups across Palmerston North, Manawatū, Taranaki, Kāpiti, Horowhenua and beyond. There are portals for different geographic areas as well as the ability to browse or search the entire database.

As Community Pages goes live, we're calling on our communities to help us keep the information relevant and reliable. If you know of a resource that could benefit others—whether it's a local support group, a helpful organisation, or a community initiative—please take a moment to add it to the database.

Fill out the form by clicking "**submit listing**" to contribute to Community Pages and help make a difference in someone's life.

We will email you every 9 months to check your listing(s). We will make the information hidden until you've verified everything is correct. If a member of the public flags the listing wrong you may also get an alert.

#### LOST COUSINS MAY 2026

This is an important census release, being the first of the Post-Independent Irish Free State (now known as the Republic of Ireland). The main homepage is here: <https://nationalarchives.ie/collections/search-the-1926-census/>

For members who are relatively new to Irish ancestry, it is important to recognise that the timing and scope of the censuses were heavily influenced by the Irish War of Independence. The last Census covering the whole of Ireland was in 1911; the 1921 Census was not

taken in Ireland because of the War of Independence, so the 1926 Census represents a 15-year jump.

A Census was also taken in 1926 covering the 6 counties in Northern Ireland. While the household returns are understood to have been destroyed, there are reports and more information about that Census here: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2011-and-earlier-censuses/1926-census#toc-2>

Here is a list of all key Irish Census Years; sadly, quite a few were destroyed.

**All-Ireland (pre-Independence):** 1821, 1831, 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911.

**Missing Records:** 1861-1891 records were destroyed by the government; 1821-1851 records (except some fragments) were destroyed in the 1922 Public Record Office fire

**Free State/Republic (Post-Independence):** 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1956, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1979 (held late), 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2002, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2022.

**Most Recent Release:** The 1926 Census was released to the public on April 18, 2026.

WDYTYA Magazine has an in-depth article about the newly published Census: <https://e.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/c/1pf67GwD4FQgffi2krbPsyS5xYe>

**A 540-year-old love letter has been decoded with the help of AI:**

<https://www.dailymail.com/sciencetech/article-15755001/Worlds-oldest-love-letter-decoded-540-years.html>

The letter itself is intriguing and well worth reading, especially for the feminists among us. Would any of our readers who are more familiar with decoding very old documents be willing to offer an opinion on how accurate the AI effort is!