

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



Levin Post-office 1903

CONTENTS

Page 1 President's Message

- 2 Felicity's rewarding 'rabbit hole'
- 3 St Helen's chip shop raid/Chinese cards
- 4 Occupations and more memories
- 5 Heritage room changes
- 6 Lost Cousins founder/ Irish 1926 Census
- 7 Groups News
- 8 Groups News

COMMITTEE

Kevin Miles	021 1364 075	President
Brian Bernon	027 286 4186	Secretary
Prue Theobald	021 2010 052	Treasurer
Michael Holland	021 2010 052	
Ian Meyer	06 368 0602	
Cathy Holmes	021 338 227	

Lynn Williams Librarian

President's message

I recently received a notice of resignation from the committee of Sharon De Boer. Work pressure and some other changes have meant she is unable to continue. I would like to record my thanks for her service to the group during the past year. At this stage she is happy to continue with her slot volunteering in the Heritage Room.

At the end of last year, Maria Moxham, who has been doing a Thursday afternoon slot at the Heritage Room for a long time, has stood down from that involvement. She has done a fantastic job recording all the information on the Funeral Sheet database as well as being a great researcher, assisting a number of individuals. I have appreciated her help.

It is a timely reminder that our AGM in April is not far away. I would ask members of the Group to consider if they might volunteer some time to being involved with the activities that we engage in. It does not mean a commitment to joining the committee but perhaps taking on a small job assisting with some activity or a role within the group.

Kevin Miles

Thompson House
4 Kent Street, Levin
Monday 23 February 2026
1.30pm
Brian Bernon: DNA: Am I a
Huguenot? Oh my goodness, a
new cousin!

Next meeting
Monday 30 March 2026
1.30pm
Rodney King: World Tour of
Family Graves

January Meeting Report



We had a great lineup of memories and photographs to share at our January meeting, from vintage vehicles to secret agents, and much more.

Marjorie shared photos of her grandfather's taxi business based in Molesworth Street, Wellington. Pictured above: Albert Charles (George) Wonnocott driving his 1914 Scat taxi (made in Italy) the second motorised taxicab in Wellington.

More Memories continue on pages 2-4

“Felicity’s Rewarding Rabbit Hole”

Brian told us that Felicity has been researching into extended members of her paternal grandmother’s lineage.

Felicity came across a Raymond Philip Pelham Neres (known as Philip Neres) who was a British Special Operations Executive (SOE) officer whose courage and ingenuity played a vital role in the clandestine escape networks of occupied France during the Second World War. His work helped Allied airmen and agents evade capture and return to safety.

This information gleaned from his wartime memoirs. A lot of the following information comes from these memoirs available on the web.

Philip was born to an Anglo-French family. He was a student at Cambridge University at the outbreak of the war. His bilingual background and academic cover later proved invaluable in clandestine operations.

Philip was recruited into the DF Section of the SOE, which was responsible for clandestine communications and escape lines across occupied Europe. His mission: was to establish safe houses and escape routes from Belgium through France to the Spanish border.

On 19 February 1943, Philip was parachuted near Ambérieu, France, to take control of an escape organisation and expand routes into Spain. Despite discovering that one of his key contacts had been arrested by the Gestapo, he successfully rebuilt networks, recruited helpers, and facilitated the escape of numerous Allied personnel.

On 17 May 1943, Philip was arrested by the Gestapo. He endured seven interrogations and severe privation in prisons at Biarritz and Bordeaux. By maintaining his cover story as a history student, he secured his release—despite having lost over two stone in weight. After release, he walked 54 kilometres to Langon to rejoin his network.

After four weeks of recovery, he resumed operations and strengthened the escape lines he had built. He left France in October 1943 via the Pyrenees, was arrested by Spanish authorities, escaped from prison, and eventually reached Portugal. Neres continued SOE work, including postings in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1944–45, contributing to escape and intelligence operations in the Far East.

For his bravery, leadership, and resilience under extreme danger, Neres was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) on 15 November 1945.

Raymond Philip Pelham Neres exemplified the courage and quiet heroism of the SOE. His work saved lives, strengthened Allied resistance efforts, and demonstrated extraordinary determination in the face of interrogation, imprisonment, and physical hardship. His legacy remains a testament to the vital role of clandestine operations in securing Allied victory.

Felicity got severely off track at one point and was a little bit glad she did. And just how far off track did Felicity get? If she has got her research correct Philip Neres seems to be the stepson of a 4th cousin once removed.



A picture taken about 1950 with Philip Neres in front of his mother (Madeleine) and stepfather (Lev Rabeneck – Felicity’s 4th cousin once removed). Philip would have been around 28 years of age when the photo was taken.

Chinese Christmas treasures

Carol shared three treasured items from three groups of Chinese students from the 1999 Christmas that her husband Peter and she were in China.

She says “I’ve not seen such different Greetings which were clever graphic art designs, recognising that many people celebrate Christmas.

“I was intrigued with the enormous, decorated trees in the centre of the malls! Not expected!”

St Helen’s chip shop raid

Michael’s Great-aunt Jane with her husband Albin Bond, ran a popular chip shop in the English town of St Helens. A newspaper reported that on 24 October 1917, St Helen’s Police raided Albin Bond’s chip shop in Higher Parr Street, after spending several days keeping watch. The bobbies had seen lots of people going into the shop but not many of them came out carrying chips!

When the police entered the premises, Albin Bond wasn’t there. However his 17-year-old son of the same name was found in possession of betting slips and football coupons. Several punters also walked in while the police were in the house and all were arrested.

Michael says Albin Bond who was caught home alone in that infamous police raid was recorded in the 1921 Census as working as a ‘chemical plumber’ at the United Alkali Company. Later on, the United Alkali Chemical Company morphed into Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd.



*Pictured above: the chip shop Higher Parr St.
Below: Kurz Works, United Alkali Company*



Michael’s research into his Almond relatives has revealed a 1st cousin (1X removed) Clara was the daughter of his Great-aunt Elizabeth Almond.

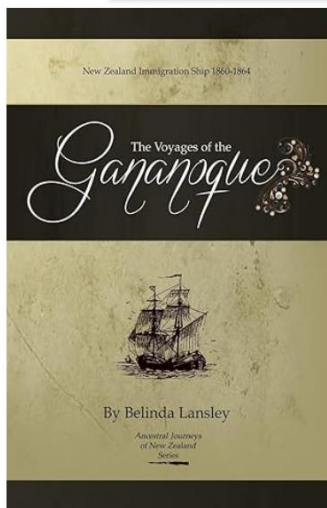
Clara worked initially as a cashier at the Hippodrome Cinema in St Helens and later became the Manageress.



The Voyages of the Gananoque by Belinda Lansley

Lynn Williams says: The trip to the United Kingdom last year stimulated me to find out how my great grandparents travelled to New Zealand.

On researching passengers lists I discovered that my maternal great grandmother Eliza Howard (nee Leatherdale) arrived in Lyttelton on the *Gananoque* with her brother George on 9 May 1890. This was the clipper's first voyage to New Zealand made in the fastest time of 90 days.



Eliza married John Howard in 1863 at the age of 21 and gave birth to 9 children – seven lived until adulthood. At the end of sharing this information I discovered that one other member of the group also had ancestors who travelled on this ship, but on a separate voyage to Auckland.

Occupations

1871 Census

Kevin Miles: My great grandmother Mary Ann Miles (nee Billington) was born in Birmingham in 1854. She grew up in a family who were all workers in a Brass Foundry.

Her job in 1871 was as a whip cleaner which was I believe related to removing brass filings out of moulds.



Mary Ann Miles c. 1905

The following year to this census her father died and two years later she married a fellow worker (whose father had died in 1873) and then came to New Zealand on the *Waimea*.

The death of both fathers so close together must have been a great encouragement to find a new life away from the factories of Birmingham.



Merv's late wife won this silver bowl in an International Toastmistresses Speech Contest in San Francisco, California USA on 17 July 1978. She represented NZ Toastmistresses at the competition and won 3rd place.

Noelene spoke about a silk scarf which her father had worn to Saturday sports events at Athletic Park in Wellington in the 1940s. It is thought the scarf was about 100 years old. No photo but we were amazed at its good condition.



This cup and saucer set was a prized possession of Prue's grandmother Jean Ann Watson from Christchurch.

HOROWHENUA HISTORICAL SOCIETY Meeting

Kapiti US Marines Trust on US Marines in Kapiti, 1942-44

Speaker: Anthony Dreaver

Sunday 15th February 2 pm.

Thompson House, 4 Kent Street, Levin

A gold coin please

Recent changes in the Heritage Room

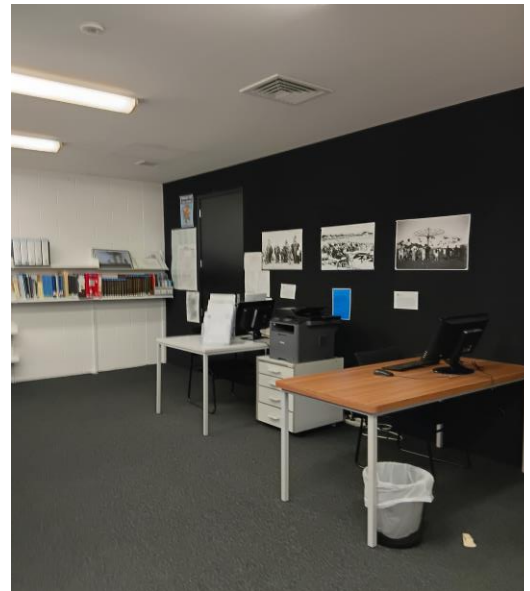
There have been several changes in the Heritage Room recently. The diorama scene has been moved over and the Land Court Records turned around to enable a book display of Heritage books to the left of the entrance.

The wall cleared behind the microfiche readers that are on new tables. The microfiche have been moved closer to the readers.

The computers are placed so there is a clear view of the library. The Horowhenua Collection, Cemetery and Early Pioneer collections are now on the wall behind computer 1 and there is room for more shelving to be set up.

The Funeral sheets have been moved to the beginning of their row and the scrap books shelved upright.

More posters are to go up on the back wall and some new signage will be introduced.



Discovering Family History sessions

Four free sessions to help you explore your family history will be held at Te Takere Tanga o Kura-hau-po, Levin Library.

An engaging introduction to family history research with **Kiri Pepene**, Library Information Research and Local History Team Lead and **Kevin Miles**, President, Horowhenua Family History Group.

Session 1: **DNA & Ancestry** with Kevin Miles. Tuesday 17 February, 1-3pm

Session 2: **Births, Deaths & Marriages**. Tuesday 24 February, 1-3pm

Session 3: **Papers Past & Other Resources**. Tuesday 3 March 1-3pm

Session 4: **Libraries & Archives**. Tuesday 10 March 1-3pm

Registrations are essential. You can register at your local Libraries Horowhenua.

Lost Cousins founder dies

Lost Cousins Founder Peter Calver has died recently. He wrote wonderful newsletters, family history oriented, but with other interesting snippets about life and happenings in UK. His wife Sian sent a very moving tribute to the thousands of members who received his regular newsletters. This is only part:

"Peter died early on Monday morning (19th January).

He will be remembered by former colleagues in the computer games industry; the tens of thousands of people who grew up playing the software and video games that he master-minded; his remarkable group of friends from his childhood and early adulthood; the many business collaborators he worked with around the world; his siblings, step-siblings, nephews and nieces, our neighbours and friends – and by the many thousands of Lost Cousin members who have inspired Peter to make it his biggest passion (after me, that is!) over the past two decades.

"I have lived with Lost Cousins since its birth; like a lot of Peter's best ideas, it was conceived out of frustration at the lack of accuracy of sites like Genes Reunited, and the low uptake of computer technology to augment largely paper-based methods.

He wanted to create something better, so that serious family historians would not be wasting so much of their time. Lost Cousins was primarily designed as a "social project", more for social good than for profit.

*We handed out leaflets in the hot sun, courted interest from data providers, magazines and a few celebrities- and with the addition of his masterclasses and newsletters, Peter's dream took flight. A simple system which enables individuals to find, meet and share information with their "cousins" to save precious time. **Because we never know when that time might run out.**"*

Release of the Irish 1926 census

The first conducted after the establishment of the Irish Free State, from the details stored in almost 1,300 boxes and containing more than 700,000 return sheets. The returns are due to be released in April, exactly a century after the taking of the census. The overall population was 2,971,992, a decrease of 5.3 per cent from the 1911 census.

The opening of this material will facilitate all sorts of research. It was a time 61 per cent of the population lived outside cities, the majority of land holdings were small and land transfer and redistribution remained a contentious issue. Only 5.6 per cent of married women had a professional occupation compared to 14.5 per cent in Northern Ireland.

The census revealed that there were 800,000 people living in overcrowded conditions. What many will find of immense value is the chance to place their own family stories and ancestry within these overall themes and contexts, by looking at individual household returns, allowing them to embrace history in a personal and meaningful way.

Abridged from **THE IRISH TIMES** January 2, 2026

KAPITI GENEALOGY Newsletter January 2026

What's new online?

Familysearch.org has expanded its collections of three different groups of New Zealand records:

- New Zealand Cemetery Transcriptions 1835 - 2006,
- Archives New Zealand Passenger Lists, 1839 - 1974
- Archives New Zealand Probate and Miscellaneous Records, 1842-1998.

You can access FamilySearch records from home without charge, but you will need to create a log in.

It's that time of year when the **Scotland's People** website releases records that are now old enough to be in the public domain.

The 239,000 'new' records include:

- births in 1925
- marriages in 1950
- deaths in 1975

You can search the indexes from your home computer at no charge but will need to buy credits to view the records.

www.Scotlandspeople.gov.uk

MyHeritage now offers the England & Wales Probate Index (1858 – 1995). It says it has indexed relatives mentioned in the documents, not just the main individual.

They've also added to their indexes of OldNews.com, which can be searched by names, events and stories from newspapers in France, Estonia, Austria, Argentina, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, USA and Uruguay.

PALMERSTON NORTH

Websites

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/life/relationships/family/what-should-i-do-with-piles-of-old-photos> If you have loads of albums stacked up, here's how some experts suggest organising and sorting them.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?HamiltonWarHorse>. The life-size bronze statue in Memorial Park Hamilton, which honours the 10,000 New Zealand horses sent to World War One.

OFHS

Research Items of interest:

NEW ZEALAND

[Papers Past](#), latest additions Press (1990-1995)

UNITED KINGDOM

[The Genealogist](#) is pleased to announce the release of the 1871 Burke's Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland, now fully searchable online.

This important reference work contains hundreds of thousands of names linked to the principal landed families of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, often tracing lines back several centuries. Researchers will find detailed pedigrees, family connections, heraldic information and references to estates, a rich resource for anyone with roots in the British and Irish gentry.

Newly digitised service records of non-commissioned ranks who served in the British Army during the Second World War have been added to genealogy website [Ancestry](#).

In late 2024 Ancestry released its first tranche of WW2 service records with a much smaller collection of records from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) amongst others. This new release will include 106k service records with a total of over one million pages digitised and 247k records created (including family and next of kin).

This tranche of records comes from the WO 422 collection. The complete collection is made up of more than two million service records for other ranks (not officers) from the British Army. It covers those who were discharged as over age between 1939 and 1959. More records are expected to be added to the collection over time as Ancestry continues to digitise the MOD records.

The records include military attestation forms that contain personal information about each soldier, including parents and spouse, although details of children has been redacted due to privacy concerns.

Medical records will also not be included. Details of which regiment a relative served in and movements will enable family members to explore historical accounts of actions that the regiment were involved in, giving unprecedented insight into their ancestor's WW2 experience.

RICCARTON BRANCH NZSG Newsletter
February 2026

Changes to NZSG Website

There have been a number of changes made to our website since it was updated with the technology changes in 2021.

We have added a lot of new content and have rearranged the menus that help you find that content.

We have rearranged the menus again. This time, we have moved similar content together in a way that we hope will be more intuitive to you.

A Quick Tip from NZSG If your ancestors originated in the UK and you are new to researching your Family History or stuck in a rut, consider searching the National Archives of the UK.

This is not a daunting task as might be imagined. On our NZSG Website under Resources and then Overseas Resources is Discovery, the Online Catalogue of the records held by the National Archives.

With more than 11 million records held, it is a significant treasure trove. Discovery holds more than 37 million descriptions of records held and 9 million records are available for downloading including the Colonial Office, Home Office and more. Go directly to the NZSG Website page.

Use your membership number to log in and access download for free - another major advantage of being a member of the NZSG.

A video overview provides an introduction to Discovery. It's well worth a trawl around when you get a chance.

FEILDING BRANCH NZSG Newsletter
February 2026

<https://genealogy.org.nz/Pacific-Islands/11368/>
Resources for research in the Pacific Islands on the NZSG website. Samoa and American Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Niue, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands.

Papers Past has newspapers from the Cook Islands and Samoa. Trove has some newspapers

from Nauru, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Philippines. Included in their international newspapers are the Government Gazettes of Papua New Guinea from 1906-1971. [NZSG e-KIT 268. 16 January 2026]

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/>

Sound and Screen history digitised

A major project called Utaina to digitise more than 400,000 at-risk audiovisual items in the care of Nga Taonga Sound & Vision, Archives New Zealand and the National Library was finished in October 2025.

The material could have been lost forever due to tape deterioration and obsolescence of the original playback technology. To watch or listen to all the material digitised from Nga Taonga collection alone would take decades.

The archivists who undertook the work at now working with the rights holders of the material to enable it to be shared with New Zealanders.

<https://www.thepost.co.nz/culture/360897190/utaina-digitises-decades-NZ-sound-and-screen-history>

New Book on Colonial Soldiers in New Zealand

Historian Charlotte Macdonald has written a book called *Garrison World: Redcoat Soldiers in New Zealand and across the British Empire* which is published by Bridget Williams Books and spans the decades from 1840 to 1870.

Twelve thousand colonial British soldiers were brought here to protect British interests and fought in the New Zealand Land Wars. Later around a fifth of the soldiers applied to take their discharge from the Army in New Zealand, becoming 'soldier settlers'. [Porirua Branch NZSG Newsletter Feb 2026]

Random tip

Do you use your 'real' name? Or do you use a diminutive or a nickname? In the notes section of your entry on your genealogy software indicate why you used the name you did. Future genealogists and relatives might like to know why you used it. [Papakura Branch NZSG Newsletter December 2025]