

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	Message from the President
2	United Kingdom and Ireland
3	“ “ “ “ / May & Noel Thomson
4	Heritage Room/Library Update
5	Constable John Bagrie
6	“ “ “
7	“ “ “
8	Christmas Mail Mystery
9	“ “ “
10	Other Groups' news

Thompson House
4 Kent Street, Levin
Monday 24 November
2025
12noon
Shared lunch,
Secret Santa
and Quiz

COMMITTEE

Kevin Miles	021 1364 075 President
Brian Bernon	027 286 4186 Secretary
Prue Theobald	021 2010 052 Treasurer
Sharon de Boer	021 739 247
Michael Holland	021 2010 052
Ian Meyer	06 368 0602
Cathy Holmes	021 338 227
Lynn Williams	Librarian

Next meeting
Monday 26 January 2026
1.30pm
Members' Show and Tell

This is the last newsletter for this year. The next one will be in January 2026.

MESSAGE from the President

A special thanks to the work done during the year particularly with our Age on the Go stall and raffle. Also many thanks to those who helped man the raffle at New World. An excellent total of \$433 was raised. The winning ticket was number 267.

Thanks to Cathy and Prue for raising the profile of the group with stories in the local papers, publicity flyers and Prue and Sharon for the information on Facebook. Our meeting attendance has improved and our membership has increased. A special thanks to our guest speakers for their excellent presentations at our regular meetings.

I have been wrestling with the Website, having to change our website provider due to a substantial increase in costs. That has been achieved but more work is needed to go into the actual site. Hopefully it will be sorted in the new year.

It has been a more challenging year with the need to redo our Constitution to comply with new legislation. We also, as a committee, need to revise our Procedures Manual which will be completed early next year.

I wish you all a very merry Christmas and happy New Year.

Kevin Miles
President

October Meeting Report

UNITED KINGDOM and IRELAND a pilgrimage in 30 days

By Kevin Miles and Lynn Williams

In the middle of August, Lynn and I flew to London via Hong Kong. After two nights we took the train to Doncaster and then a hired car to Goole, near Hull.

Hull was the city where my grandfather was born and was the home of the Porter family. We stayed with Judy Armitage my 2nd cousin who gave me a folder of family information.

On we went to Kendal to stay with my great niece before travelling onto Scotland. We stayed in Dunbar and Glasgow for a few nights before flying to Dublin our first stop in the Republic of Ireland.

With our second hire car, we drove up to Dundalk for a night and then to Crossmaglen in Northern Ireland (the home of my Steenson ancestors in the first half of the 1880's before most of them immigrated to New Zealand).

From there we went to Galway where it rained, and then back across country and south to Duncannon and Waterford, where we enjoyed a fascinating visit to Ireland's oldest city. The weather was also much better.

From Waterford we went to County Wicklow and stayed in Aughrim. We visited Rathdrum where my newly discovered 2x grandfather farmed, and Newcastle north of Wicklow where he and other family members are buried.

Subsequent investigations have uncovered the fact that his oldest son Samuel moved to Callowhill to farm which is close to the Parish Church at Newcastle.

After a day in Dublin we flew back to Heathrow for car number three and drove to Wales. Our first stop was Cardiff and then St David's. Driving up the west coast of Wales, we stopped at Cardigan where my mother's Welsh family, the Rees and Thomas's can be traced back to the Picton's in the 16th century.



Newcastle Church Wicklow

We then travelled onto Caernarfon and Anglesey before heading south and east to Hereford and Swindon.

The Cotswolds is connected to Lynn's family tree. We visited Northleach where her great grandmother was born, Chedworth and Hazelton.

From there we drove to Godalming south of London to visit Lynn's eldest brother Bill and his wife Janet.

Left: St Peter and St Paul Northleach

3

My Miles family can be traced back to the 1600's at Leigh and Brenchley and my 3x great grandfather was born in Shipbourne (all near Tonbridge). He was publican in Whitley Row near Ide Hill. The pub was called the Woodman Inn (near Sevenoaks further north). It is now called the Pheasant Plucker, which we visited, and also the local church, St Marys. The family also had connections to Sundridge and Chevening.

We then visited Chichester and Winchester before returning to London and flying to San Francisco, USA.

We spent a couple of days with my oldest surviving cousin, George Lucas who will be 90 next year. I had the opportunity to find out much more about his fascinating life as a dancer, a tailor and great supporter of Opera in San Francisco. I look forward to sharing George's story in future newsletters.



Lynn with her brother Bill and his wife Janet.



The Pheasant Plucker pub.



Kevin (right) and his cousin George.

Horowhenua Historical Society

May and Noel Thomson: Their contribution to Levin

At this month's meeting a talk is being presented on this couple who made a significant impact on this town over 50 years from the 1930's through to the 1980's.

The pair was involved in banking, legal work and maintained a sizeable orchard in Weraroa Road, Levin.

They were both extensively involved in sporting, recreational and social aspects of the area but this involvement extended nationally.

May in particular was flamboyant and contributes to a fascinating story.

Sunday 16th November 2pm at Thompson House, 4 Kent Street, Levin. A gold coin donation is appreciated.



May Thomson in 1927

Heritage Room/Library Update

New donated books

“Ohau Hall 125th Anniversary”

“Levin Bowling Club The History” compiled by HFHG member Ken Hayward

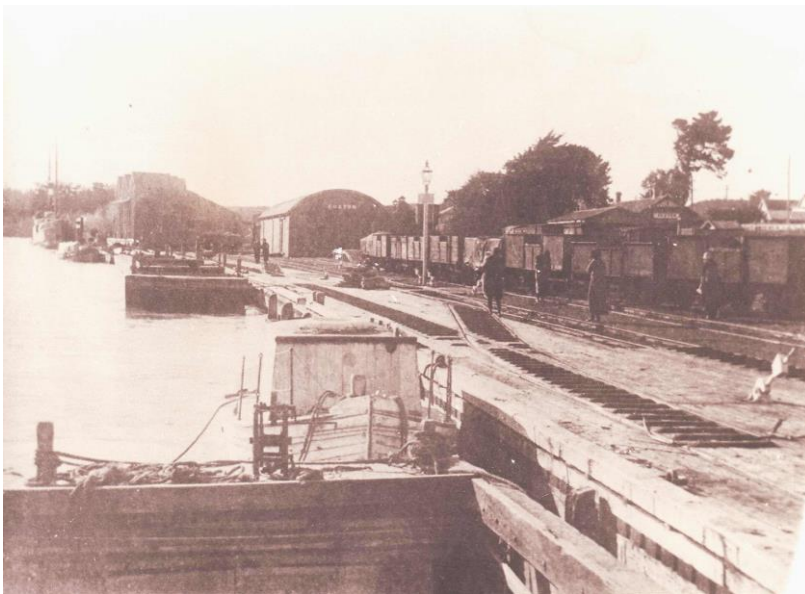
Massey University returned copies of photos, mainly connected to early railway in the Horowhenua District which once extended much further south. Some we had not seen before.

The Archive needs volunteers to help check if accessioned items are all on the data base and to add them if they have not been recorded.

The new items that have been accessioned also need to be added. I hope that during next year most of this work can be completed.

Foxton Railway

Following the very successful Exhibition on Mangahou, Kiri has found time to put up some photos about the old Foxton railway which many people have been unaware.



Above: Foxton railway station and port.



Manawatu's first railway was the Foxton-Palmerston North route – constructed in 1873 as a wooden tramway with horse-drawn wagons running along it.

But wooden rails were not durable enough to carry steam locomotives and as the first three eight-ton engines were ordered for the line – the Skunk, the Possum and the Wallaby – work began on replacing the wooden rails with iron.

The first train ran from Foxton to Palmerston North along the completed iron railway in April 1876.

Left: Foxton Railway station in 1910. The last train left the station in 1959.

*Photo credits: Foxton Historical Society
From library display at Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom
Foxton*

The life and times of Constable John Bagrie

by John Dixon

For 25 years, John Bagrie was the longest serving police officer in the Levin Area. During that time, he and his family became an integral part of the Levin Community not only as an Officer of the Law but in the day-to-day life of the town in his private activities. He was well respected as a fair, honest and reasonable man by the Community that he served.



Constable John Bagrie
*Original Mrs Arnold Bagrie to
Horowhenua Historical
Society*

John's Forebears

John's father, also named John, was born in Forgie, Scotland to Robert and Margaret Bagrie. Robert died in 1852. John's father came to New Zealand on the "City of Dunedin" departing Firth of Clyde on 5 June 1863 with his mother and siblings, his aunt, her husband and cousins.

His mother Margaret and aunt Christina Sangster, nee Dufton, both died from dysentery on the voyage out to New Zealand.

John was only 11 and would have lived with his uncle John Sangster in his early years. He took up farming and was one of the first settlers in Artherton, Southland.

He married Joan Turnbull in 1877. They had nine children including John. Joan passed away on 30 August 1928, John died on 6 August 1932. They are buried together in the Gore Cemetery.

Early Years

The young John Bagrie attended Artherton School. On leaving school he went farming with his father before joining the Police Force on 1 June 1900 as Constable 965.

He served in Christchurch for 18 months before transferring to Lyttleton where he served for the next five years.

While in Christchurch he married Jane Ethel Mile in 1902. Their first child was born in 1905 in Lyttleton followed by their second child born in 1907 before moving to the North Island to serve in Napier.

In December 1908, he was ordered to take up the post of Constable in Levin to replace a retiring officer. John Bagrie was appointed Clerk and Bailiff of the Levin Magistrates Court dated 15 December 1908.

Levin Years

Constable Bagrie and family moved into the Police House in Stanley Street, Levin. His duties were wide ranging. This was in the days of 10 o'clock closing for hotel bars, before WW1. He patrolled the streets to ensure that the bars were cleared on time, and the patrons went to their homes without disturbing the good citizens of Levin. He was charged with not only keeping the peace but was Inspector of Factories, Traffic Police, Search and Rescue Co-ordinator and Clerk of the Court.

There were several high-profile cases in which he was involved. The following three are highlighted:

Constable Bagrie arrested Hedley Nye on 5 July 1909 at the Levin Railway Station who had shot his father, Thomas Nye, in Foxton the night before. The accused still had the gun and cartridges with him when he was arrested by Constable Bagrie.

On 5 November 1926 Constable Bagrie called to the Sloman Poultry Farm in Weraroa Road to find that Mr Sloman had taken an axe to his family, His wife Margaret died in the ambulance on the way to hospital, daughter Rita died a fortnight later of her injuries and son Russell recovered. Mr Sloman had tried to poison himself but failed.

. On 22 November 1932 Constables Bagrie and Grainger were called to Mr Easton's Farm at Whirikino where, after an argument between two brothers, Jack aged 18 and Roy aged 16 ended in the death of Jack who was shot by his brother Roy. Roy fled the scene and was not apprehended until the following evening when Constable Bagrie took him into custody.

John Bagrie in his private life was a Past Master of the Masonic Lodge, a member of the Levin Racing Club and the Horowhenua A and P Association. He was also an Honorary member of the Levin Fire Brigade.

Retirement

John Bagrie's health was failing, and he applied for retirement on Superannuation which was granted effective from 31 October 1933. His service with the Police Force spanned 33 and a half years, 25 of those years in serving the people of Levin and surrounding areas.

A committee headed by the Mayor P W Goldsmith arranged a function and gave due recognition to the service of John Bagrie. Numerous community interests gathered at the Council Chambers where there were many speeches and a presentation to Mr and Mrs Bagrie of a grandfather clock with best wishes for his retirement.

The Bagries had purchased a property in Durham Street, Levin, the house being close to the Bowling Green and Croquet Lawn. John Bagrie had become a keen bowler but unfortunately did not get to enjoy his retirement due to continued ill health.

John Bagrie passed away at his residence on 17 June 1935 after a lengthy illness at the age of 57 and was buried in the Tiro Tiro Road Cemetery, Levin on 19 June 1935. He left his wife Jane, sons Wilfred and Arnold and daughter Eileen Beck.

Jane Bagrie survived her husband John and passed away on 23 October 1967; she was interred with him in the Tiro Tiro Road Cemetery.

Paperspast; Archives NZ; Familysearch; BDM's; Horowhenua Historical Society; HDC Cemetery Search

BAGRIE: JOHN**Born: 17 February 1878, Arthurton, Southland, New Zealand****Married 24 July 1902****To: Jane Ethel Mill (Born 21 April 1880
Died 23 October 1967)****Died 7 June 1935, Levin, New Zealand
Buried: Tiro Tiro Rd Cemetery, Levin, New Zealand****John Bagrie's parents were:**John Bagrie (b 25 Oct 1852 Scotland, d 6 Oct 1932 Gore)
andJoan nee Turnbull (b 2 April 1858 Scotland, d 30 Aug 1928 Gore)
John and Joan were married on 1 May 1877**John had 8 siblings:**

Thomas Robert (b 6 Aug 1879, Arthurton, d 29 Aug 1935 Auckland)

James Roy (b 1881 Arthurton, d 1 Dec 1958 Ashburton)

George Turnbull (b 17 April 1883 Arthurton, d 6 Nov 1926 Tolaga Bay)

Robert (b 1885 Arthurton, d 12 Sept 1948 Bydone)

Ellen Tait (b 1886 Arthurton, d 17 Sept 1969 Gore). Married Alexander McKenzie McDonald

Joseph Adam (b 8 June 1888 Arthurton, d 9 April 1957 Invercargill)

William Charles (b 29 July 1890 Arthurton, d 8 Feb 1976 Invercargill)

Albert Edward (b 2 November 1893 Arthurton, d 27 Sept 1916 France)

John and Jane had 3 Children:

John Wilfred (b 24 July 1905 Lyttleton, d 27 Oct 1979 Dunedin)

Married: Muriel Jane Hook 4 June 1930

(b 17 June 1904, d 27 Jan 1993 Taupo)

Eileen May (b 1 May 1907 Lyttleton, d 25 Sept 1997 Forest Hill Vic Australia)

Married: Thomas Nathan Beck 4 June 1927, All Saints' Church Kilbirnie,
Wellington. (Thomas Beck b 1 Jan 1897, d 1967)**Married:** Frank Henry Garner 1951

(b 4 Jan 1901, d 19 Oct 1972)

Married: Roydon Endicott

Herbert Arnold (b 16 October 1910 Levin, d 4 Oct 1988 Levin)

(1) Married: Muriel Julia Fay Robinson 9 June 1934 St Mary's Anglican Church, Levin
(b 29 Sept 1911, d 15 April 1991)**(2) Married:** Agnes Roma Gray 7 Feb 1942
(b 20 Aug 1911, d 26 March 2001)

A Christmas Mail Mystery



A postcard date stamped Levin, 25 December 1937 caused much interest and discussion in Te Takere's Heritage Room recently.

Member of the Horowhenua Philatelic Society Michael Christensen received the postcard from Jeff Mitchell, a fellow stamp enthusiast in Auckland who wanted to know if the postcard had been sent from Levin on Christmas Day 1937.

Michael brought the postcard to the Heritage Room, where Information Research Local History Librarian Kiri Pepene delved into the mystery.

The postcard, addressed to Randal MacDonald, Box 2, Weraroa, Levin, New Zealand, had travelled by Pan American's first mail flight from Auckland to Pago Pago American Samoa. It was returned to Mr MacDonald by sea in early January 1938.

The back of the postcard had the Horowhenua Philatelic Society stamp on it. Michael says it was likely that Mr MacDonald, a member of the Society, had posted the card to Pago Pago to obtain a postage date stamp on it from American Samoa on the return journey.

A Holiday Notice in the Levin Daily Chronicle 16 December 1937 advised the Post Office would be closed on Christmas Day and that no mails of any kind will be despatched or delivered.

Jeff had asked if the postcard was posted earlier but cleared on 25 December. He provided information on the Pan American Airways trans-Pacific airmail service between Auckland and San Francisco, a distance of 6,900 miles. A survey flight was made in March 1937 by Pan Am's chief pilot Ed Musick.

The first official New Zealand air mail to the USA left Auckland on 2 January 1938. The route was Auckland – Pago Pago (American Samoa) – Kingman Reef – Honolulu (Hawaii) by the Sikorsky A-42B flying boat, Samoan Clipper, with the pilot Ed Musick. At Honolulu the service connected with the weekly Pan American FAM 14 service to San Francisco.

The S-42B arrived in Auckland on 26 December 1937 but no official airmail was carried on the flight from America.

The first newspaper report confirming the flight and postage rates was in the Evening Post on 24 December 1937. The plan was for the clipper to leave Auckland at 4am on Wednesday 29 December with mail closing in Auckland at 8pm on 28 December.

A total of 15,000 letters had been received by the evening of 28 December. However, bad weather caused postponement of the flight until 4am on 30 December.

The closing time was extended to the evening of 29 December, when 5,000 more items were posted for the flight. Further postponements occurred and the flight finally left on 2 January 1938 with a total of 25,000 items.

The plane arrived in Pago Pago on 1 January 1938 (having crossed the international dateline), in Kingman Reef on 2 January and Honolulu on 3 January. Mail was then transferred to a Martin 130 flying boat, arriving in San Francisco on 6 January.

Jeff also sent Michael details of another postcard from Levin also dated 25 December 1937. He said he is inclined to believe it was posted on 24 December but cleared on 25th.

Kiri's search revealed information on Ranald MacDonald from Papers Past and Cemetery records.

Ranald MacDonald was born in Adelaide, South Australia in 1882. He came to New Zealand with his parents, where his father Mr Aloysius MacDonald became manager of the Bank of New South Wales.

Ranald took up farming in Levin where he continued to reside. In 1913 he married Miss Flora Campbell McDonald of Levin. They had one son Ranald and two daughters, Misses Mary and Ellen MacDonald.

Ranald MacDonald died on 20 July 1942. According to his obituary in the Levin Daily Chronicle 21 July 1942, he was actively involved in many social and public activities within the community. These included the Horowhenua A and P Association, the Horowhenua Scottish Society and local Philatelic Society.

Please contact Michael if you have any information that may help with further research on this subject. michael.christensen@xtra.co.nz

Papers Past, Horowhenua Cemetery records

Early British and Irish Census

The Bingham Young University in USA is compiling a database of early British and Irish census. Check them out at ebic.byu.edu. This project will bring various pre 1841 census into one searchable database. Census from 1801, 1811, 1821 and 1831 were not submitted to central government and are held in local archives across the UK. Records are being transcribed from digital images of the original records.

Has anyone got the paperback Tracing your London Ancestors and/or Tracing Leatherworkers? Please contact Carol 0272579969

ŌTAKI HERITAGE Newsletter

New online exhibit

You can now log into our website to view our online exhibits featuring a range of photos from our collection. They include sport, life at the beach, market gardening, health facilities and hotels, all parts of Ōtaki's rich history. You can also scroll through these at the museum. More will be added later.

<https://www.otakiheritage.org.nz/online-exhibitsA>

NELSON NZSG Newsletter

What is this **WIKI Tree** thing? <https://www.wikitree.com/> the following is from their website:

WikiTree is where advanced genealogists and casual family historians collaborate on a global family tree for our cousins and descendants to enjoy for free, forever.

WikiTree has been growing for 16 years from the grassroots up. We are now the most accurate & trusted collaborative family tree.

Today we have 1,266,143 community members and 43,132,192 ancestors and cousins on our tree, 15,390,439 of which have DNA connections. WikiTree is a free global tree, where one profile is created per ancestor that users collaborate on. The most popular global trees are FamilySearch, Geni, and WikiTree.

Advantages of working on a global tree are:

1. you have other people to share the work with and learn from
2. all the best sources and info and are combined into one place
3. gives the opportunity to see conflated information you probably wouldn't notice outside a global tree (for example, two profiles have the same date of birth and parents but aren't the same person, meaning further research is needed)
4. view relationships to other people in the global tree
5. other people are more likely to see your research vs. just having it in your own tree

While smaller than the other global trees, WikiTree focuses the most on accuracy and tries to enforce a standard of having at least one source per profile, and only using reliable sources for pre-1700 profiles. It is probably the most "serious" genealogy site of the three. It is not a records repository site like Ancestry or FamilySearch though. It's all free!

Everything on WikiTree is free for everyone, forever. Expenses are covered by unobtrusive advertisements. Members who sign the Honor Code don't even see most of the ads but can enjoy member benefits that cost money on other websites.

And a recent edition to the site, much like ASH Howison, a global way of searching.....

https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Space:WikiTree_Sourcer

WikiTree **Sourcer** is a Browser Extension developed by **Rob Pavay** and other contributors that helps the user to search for sources and cite them, thus saving a lot of time and manual typing.

It focuses on three goals:

1. From a WikiTree profile page it provides the ability to "**search**" other genealogy websites for relevant records.
2. From one of these genealogy websites' records page it can extract data and **build a citation**.
3. Also, from one of these genealogy websites records page it can **search other** genealogy websites for **similar records**. For example on an Ancestry page it can help find free versions of the same original source.