

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.

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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



Levin Post-office 1903

Thompson House

Monday

29 September 2025

1.30pm

Guest Speaker Luke Howison

Lower Hutt based website developer Luke Howison will talk about three free websites that he has created to help researching family histories.

October Meeting

27 October 2025

1.30pm

Guest speaker Kevin Miles on his visit to the UK and Ireland.

AGE ON THE GO

FRIDAY 10 OCTOBER 2025

From 10am to 2pm

Horowhenua Events Centre,

33 Victoria Street, Levin

Our major fundraiser is our Laundry Basket Grocery Raffle. To organise this for *Age on the Go*, please bring your donations to the September Group meeting or leave at the Heritage Room when a volunteer is on duty. We appreciate your help.

We hope to run another sales day at New World.



Overcoming Brick Walls: Who is the lady in this photo?. Find out more on page 2.

August Meeting Report

Brick walls and how to overcome them, was the theme of our meeting on 25 August. Members shared their experiences of these stumbling blocks and ideas on how to solve them.

Issues discussed included: different or wrong spelling of first names and surnames; difficulty in finding places where ancestors were born and lived; dates of birth, marriage and death; how to find photographs of elusive ancestors and tracking information about people in those photographs.

The following are some of these brick walls and suggestions on how to overcome them:

Brian says to look at various spellings of surnames, not just the one you know as this could have been incorrectly transcribed on documents.

Dawn was searching for where one ancestor was from but had no success. She put the Christian name into the search engine and got a hit. The surname had been spelt in different ways. She knew the location and time period.

Dawn recommends trying Ancestry Wild Cards using symbols in place of unknown letters in a word. They can be used in searches where you don't know an exact spelling.

Ian had a problem with double names where children had been named after a prominent person in the army.

Merv was looking for a surname and eventually came to the conclusion that it had been transcribed as another spelling.

Michae said that his father had changed his surname from Sharples to Holland three weeks before he came to New Zealand.

Michael searched the London Gazette and uncovered some further information. His father had made a further change later on.

(continued on p3)



Who is Bessie?

Merv was looking through old photographs when he found one labelled Bessie Martin, Christmas 1916 (pictured above).

So who was Bessie Martin, he wondered. By looking on FamilySearch, he discovered she was Rachel Elizabeth Martin, born 1902. He also found mentions of her in school records and the 1928 electoral roll and then there was nothing more.

Some years later he googled her name and came up with Bessie Martin on a site called Mum's Story and photo in a diary Shipboard 1928 going to Ethiopia. "Mum" was a missionary going to Ethiopia as part of the Sudan Interior Mission. He contacted the Mission and they sent a couple of articles mentioning Bessie and a poster with her on it. The Poster included the names of all who went to Sudan. Her name had an asterix (she had passed on in 1935).

Merv found a death notice in the Southland Times. "Mum's" site has been taken down.

From page 2

Michael says the London Gazette notices are very specific. He found the surname included Sharples and Holland. His father had dropped Sharples. He had registered Michael's birth certificate as Michael Johh Holland.

Michael says to take care with names on documents. Wild Card was helpful. He found his Uncle Albert under Hoblis (instead of Hollis).

Michael recommends having your DNA done to help connect with family members.

Other useful research sites include: GENUKI which has a list of local historical societies you can contact.

Prue advised to write to local Family History Societies asking for help with research. You do get replies.

Carol says rootschat.com is worldwide. You can put in questions and get answers.

Family History Federation: There could be a problem if you don't know where someone was born, location, what to do next.

Brian was doing a person's life story. They mentioned visiting a place in the coal mining area of Midlands – Alison Biwater. This came up as Aliton Biwater.

Prue was researching Uncle Jack. He was not officially adopted and had changed his name by deedpoll. Prue says use Facebook as a tool.

She also recommended playing around with jonnyperl DNA Painter.

Ian was looking for an ancestor Edmund Sterling Button – born out of wedlock not officially adopted side of the Myers family.

Gillian's maternal grandmother lived in Levin. She married Nils Johanssen who lived in Tonga. She tried different search areas including FamilySearch. The spelling of names was different. She says keep looking and going back as people put more information on sites

Carol's son Michael was a Dyer. When he married, he and his wife combined their names to Dylan (a combination of Dyer and Dolan).

Carol was contacted by someone in USA whose grandmother was Ivy Cowie but she is Carol's great aunt. The connection was a floating tree and we don't know how to link them. It does not show up on DNA.



Cathy was looking for photos of her father's mother Maude Christina Cosgrove who had died in 1925 aged 32 when her father was seven.

She didn't have any photos of her and wondered where she could find some.

She mentioned this to a cousin and his wife when she was visiting them.

Her cousin left the room and came back with a large, framed photo (above) of Maude and her husband James Anthony Guettenoire Cosgrove on their wedding day in April 1909. The photo had been left to her cousin by an aunt.

It was a remarkable find, by talking to other family members. Since then they have shared other family photos.

Cathy also found FindMyPast helpful when looking for information on how her mother's family came to New Zealand from Scotland in 1922.

Her mother Margaret Walker McDonald, aged 3 years, travelled with her parents James and Maria McDonald and brother Alexander aged 1 year, from Southampton UK on the SS Suffolk in August 1922, arriving in Auckland in November 1922.

The Levin Suffrage Women

by John Dixon

In 1892 and 1893 the women of Levin signed the Suffrage Petitions calling for the right to vote in New Zealand elections. In 1892, 43 women signed the petition and in 1893 there were 44 signatures.

Twenty-three women had signed both of the petitions. This winter I have been attempting to complete profiles on all of these women who are in the main ignored in the contributions they made to the settling of Levin and District.

Using Paperspast, Intentions to Marry, FamilySearch, BDM's, Ancestry, Archive New Zealand and numerous District Council Cemetery records so far the majority of the women have the basics of their profile complete.

The next step is to attempt to give some idea of their contribution to Levin. Some of the women have been easy as they had obituaries that gave an insight into their lives.

The back stories for Emma Ostler, her daughter Helen Wilson nee Ostler, Ellen Hewitt and the Mesdames Prouse are pretty well recorded. However, the other women are overshadowed by their spouses and were generally mentioned as the Widow of or Relic of their husband.

For a majority of the women I have established their date of birth, maiden name, parents' names, date married and death date and burial place.

It has been hard to establish most of the above details for a few of the women as they just seem to have disappeared after signing the petition. I assume they have either married if single or changed their names for some reason. I have had difficulty in establishing the burial places for Isabelle Borreson, Ada Elizabeth Neaber and Emma Louise Hobbs as they do not appear on the NZSG Burial locator.

The next step is to attempt to give a back story to them all, including the number of children that they had, and their involvement in the community.

So this an ongoing project with a lot of work to be done and certainly will not be completed this winter.

The resources used on the article were: Ancestry, FamilySearch, Archives New Zealand, Paperspast, Intentions to Marry, HDC Horowhenua Cemetery records, Free BDM's UK.

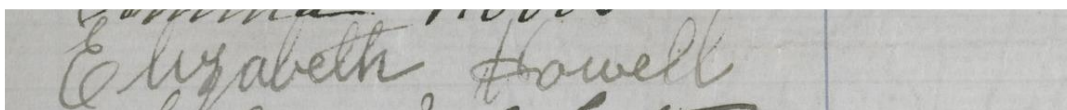
In 1893 New Zealand became the first country to give women the vote. September 19 is Women's Suffrage Day. The following articles remember the women of Levin who signed the Women's Suffrage Petitions in 1892 and 1893.



Clara Prouse nee Sedcole with her husband in 1879. She signed both the 1892 and 1893 petitions.



Mrs Emma Ostler who signed both 1892 and 1893 petitions and her daughter Helen Wilson nee Ostler who signed the 1892 petition. Photos from Horowhenua Kete



Elizabeth Howell's signature on the 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition

Elizabeth Howell nee Lang signed both the 1892 and the 1893 Suffrage Petitions circulating in Levin and also registered to vote appearing on the 1893 Electoral Roll for Ōtaki.

Elizabeth Lang was born in the Mumbles, Glenmorgan, Wales in 1860 to Benjamin and Jane Lang nee Holland. After her father died in 1880, Elizabeth her mother Jane, sister Mary and brother Edwin and young nieces Bessie and Alice Brewer departed the United Kingdom on the "Oxford" on 26th April 1883 from Plymouth arriving in Wellington on 23 July 1883. They made their way north to Waitotara in the Whanganui area. Also on board the "Oxford" was Jane Howell who was joining her brother John (Jane Howell later married Elizabeth's brother Edwin).

Elizabeth Lang was married to John Howell at his property on 28th April 1884 by the Rev Peter Cameron. Not long afterward they moved to the Weraroa area where John worked on the new Wellington to Longburn Railway, building the Ohau Railway bridge and laying levels for the lines.

Elizabeth would have lived in rather primitive conditions (probably a tent) surrounded by forest and bush with very few other Pakeha women in the surrounding area. Levin was not even a name on the map, being dense forest and not even surveyed. The nearest shops, etc. would have been either Ōtaki or Foxton.

As Levin became established Elizabeth along with her husband took an active part in the establishment of the Anglican Church, St Mary's and the Anglican Hall at Weraroa, the Levin Racing Club and the A&P Association. Elizabeth was a good friend of Harriett Emma Bowen and was involved in the various fundraising activities during the First World War and catering for many functions.

Elizabeth and John celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary in 1934 before John passed away on 11th May 1934. The couple didn't have any children.

In 1942 Elizabeth supplied funds for seats to be installed at Weraroa and outside the Levin Carnegie Library in her husband's memory and gave in trust to the Borough Council a sum of money to have a seat installed outside the Levin Post Office once the alterations were complete.

Elizabeth died in the Awapuni Home on 11th November 1945. She is buried with her husband in the Old Levin Cemetery, Tiro Tiro Road. In her will she made Harriett Emma Bowen the executor. She left her home in McKenzie Street Weraroa to Harriet Emma and the rest of her estate to her sister-in-law Jane Lang and niece Alice Waters.

It's hard to envisage all the changes that Elizabeth saw in her lifetime: moving halfway across the world, the establishment of Levin, women getting to vote, the invention of the telephone, aeroplanes, motor cars, electricity. She lived through two World Wars, an Influenza epidemic and the great depression.

By John Dixon

The resources used on the article were: Ancestry, FamilySearch, Archives New Zealand, Paperspast, Intentions to Marry, HDC Horowhenua Cemetery records, Free BDM's UK.

The 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition is housed in Wellington at the National Library's He Tohu permanent exhibition area together with the Treaty of Waitangi and 1835 Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand.

The 1893 Petition is inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World's International and National registers of documentary heritage.

Exhibitions

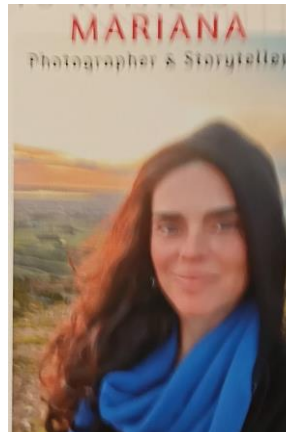
Te Takeretanga o Kura-hau-pō Levin Library

Matenga Kainga Tahi Oranga Kaiga Rua – When One Door Closes, Another Opens

A new exhibition by documentary photographer and storyteller, Mariana Waculicz.

Through 20 plus large photographs, the exhibition highlights how Muaūpoko iwi welcome former refugee families from Colombia and Venezuela to Taitoko (Levin), including house blessings, aroha shared at the marae, and the simple gestures that create a sense of belonging.

The exhibition runs until 29 September. Free entry, all welcome.



Ōtaki Heritage

Ōtaki: from Kāinga to Township – Part 1: 1843-1920

Ōtaki: mai i te Kāinga ki te Tāone Iti – Wāhanga 1: 1843-1920

The Ōtaki Museum's latest exhibition about the early days of what became Ōtaki town has attracted a lot of interest.

If you haven't already visited, call in and find out more about how the town developed.

The exhibition concentrates on the period up to 1921 as there are so many interesting stories to tell.

The period of 1921 onwards will be covered in the next exhibition.

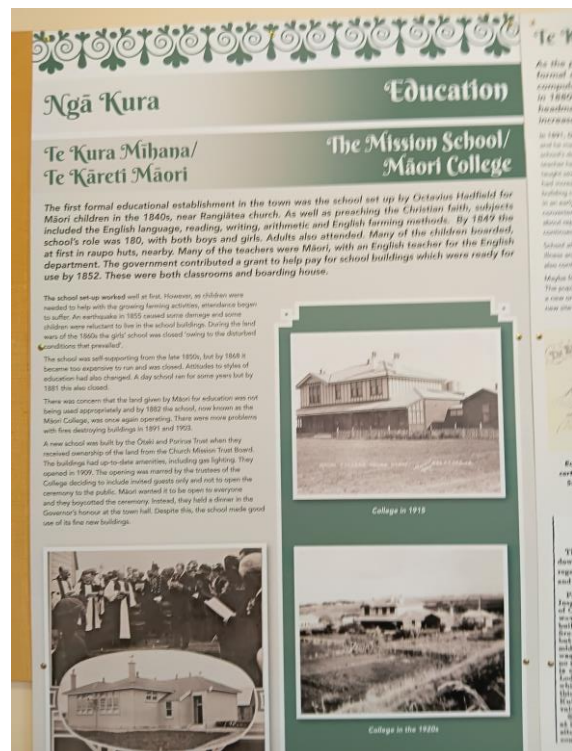
Ōtaki Museum

49 Main Street, Ōtaki 5512

Open Thursday- Saturday 10am-2pm

Entry free

<https://www.otakiheritage.org.nz/>



FHF April 2025

Websites for trade directories Historical Directories of England & Wales

This website has changed its URL over the years but you can still use the easy-to-remember one below.

This project is hosted by the University of Leicester and has many directories dating from the 1760s to the 1910s.

Note that the collection is now also available within Ancestry. <https://le.ac.uk/library/special-collections/explore/historical-directories>

Scottish Directories:

This collection, compiled by the National Library of Scotland, offers more than 700 digitised directories covering most of Scotland and dating from 1773 to 1911, all for free.

The directories can be searched by place, year and name. www.nls.uk/family-history/directories/

Irish Directory Database Shane Wilson and Joe Buggy have compiled this useful database which has links to more than 1,000 historic trade directories for Ireland – some of those are free online, others at paid-for sites or, indeed, on CD (the database indicates which have to be paid for).

www.swilson.info/dirdb.php

Getting started with researching your ancestor's occupation by Andrew Chapman

Family History Federation Really Useful Bulletin April 2025

HUTT VALLEY NZSG Newsletter

Some Genealogy Records Have No Names

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFi1fhmaI0>

5 Reasons You're Not Finding Your Ancestor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUIMdEoC8Zg>

PORIRUA NZSG Newsletter

Cambridge Museum Website

If you have ancestors who lived in Cambridge, NZ, check out the Cambridge Museum website which has a page devoted to Cambridge people, with information on Mana Whenua, soldiers and militia, ratepayers, women, and other historic Cambridge residents.

UK Railway Worker Accidents Database The University of Portsmouth, National Railway Museum and the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick have joined forces to create a database of railway worker accidents in Britain and Ireland from the late 1880s to 1939. The database is available as a downloadable spreadsheet from their website, Railway Work, Life & Death.

GENEALOGIX August 2025

Untold Stories – Early Notice The Palmerston North Branch newsletter features an early notice for a 2026 gathering for Displaced Persons (DPs) and their descendants which will take place on October 17 and 18 in Palmerston North and Pahiatua.

Untold Stories is a project run by group of volunteers in Palmerston North (some are members of the NZSG Palmerston North Branch) whose parents were DPs. The gathering will have speakers, workshops and opportunities to meet, greet and share stories and visit Pahiatua and the DP camp site.

About 5000 displaced people came to New Zealand after World War II and the team expects a wonderful mix of nationalities and generations. There is no database and the team is asking people to pass on information about the gathering through their networks. For more information email untolds626@gmail.com

HUTT VALLEY NZSG Newsletter

Random Useful Websites

A handy guide to finding, ordering and interpreting birth certificates for England and Wales, from the General Register Office (GRO).

<https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/images/Birth%20Cert%20PDF.pdf>

Based in London, The Wiener Holocaust Library is the world's oldest and Britain's largest collection of original archival material on pre-war Jewish life, the Nazi era and the Holocaust.

A one-place study on The Lying-in Department, Destitute Asylum, Adelaide.

Welsh Mariners Index: An on-line index of 23,758 Welsh merchant masters, mates and engineers active from 1800 to 1945, compiled by Dr. Reg Davies.

An open database of letters from paupers, the wider poor and their advocates written between 1834 – 1900: <https://www.victorianpoor.org/>

Social Bodies: Examines the way that 18th-century letter-writers described a broad range of bodily experiences including walking, eating, travel, dancing, sexual contact, childbirth, ill health, ageing, and death. Hundreds of letters and transcriptions are available on their Letters Page including letters from the Jerningham family. (Edward Jerningham Wakefield's connection to the Jerningham family is through his grandmother Eliza Middleton who was the half-sister of Emily Middleton who married Edward Jerningham 1774-1822 in 1804).

<https://www.deathindexes.com/> A directory of links to websites with online USA death indexes, listed by state and county. Included are death records, death certificate indexes, death notices and registers, obituaries, wills and probate records, and cemetery burials.

Dependent Children Registers: records relating to children who were admitted to NSW (Australia) State care between 1883 and 1923. They record where the dependent children were placed (whether with foster parents or guardians), with some children being eventually adopted.

WDYTYA magazine has a guide to French parish and civil registers.

The largest source of French civil records, censuses and historical archives is Filae a commercial pay-to-view site.

Archives Nationales has finding aids and digitised records.

France's Military Archives: <https://www.memoiredeshommes.sga.defense.gouv.fr/en/>

Legion of Honour Dossiers: <https://www.leonore.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/ui/>

Can you trace your family origins back to 17th-century France? Maybe you have Huguenots in your family tree? The Huguenots were members of the French Protestant Church, many of whom, in the 16, 17 and 18 centuries, left their homes in France to escape persecution.

The State Library Queensland in their comprehensive guide on Discovering Huguenot Ancestry says that general signs include:

- a French-sounding name, e.g. you may have an ancestor with a name like "Emma de Leuty".
- a family tradition of a French connection, possibly aristocratic.
- Anglican or non-conformist religious affiliation.
- a connection to known Huguenot trades.
- The Huguenot society UK: www.huguenotsociety.org.uk

NZ contact is Marion Heap Huguenot@genealogy.org.nz or PO Box 31814, Milford, Auckland 1309

What's New?

Your life story in three certificates: Work stories from the office of births, deaths and marriages by Ben Fagan on The Spinoff is well worth a read.

Ordnance Survey Name Books and tax rolls are now available to search on Scotland's People. <https://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/news-and-articles/discover-your-scottish-heritage>

The People's Dispensary: A new free new online resource about charitable medicine in Edinburgh. <https://www.rcpe.ac.uk/peoplesdispensary/index.html>