

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 28 September 2026
1.30pm**

**Lisa Lightband
*How AI can help Solve Family
Mysteries
and bring Ancestors' lives to
life***

**October meeting
Monday 26 October 2026
1.30pm
Members share their
findings on land records
research**

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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

I hope that for the October meeting that members will take the opportunity to look at some land information records so they can share their results at the meeting.

One of the interesting things I took out of Sarah Hewitt's presentation was the use of timelines to look at family school records.

I was able confirm my grandparents' address, when my father was born, and to more closely trace the many moves they made during the 1910's and 1920's.

I also checked my mother's siblings and discovered that Newtown School records are incomplete. However an interesting discovery was her eldest brother Arthur, started school at Island Bay for nearly a year and then went to Nelson for a few months before returning to that school.

Further investigation revealed that he had gone to stay with my great uncle who had recently married a descendent of Bounty mutineers from Pitcairn.

Thanks to those who have volunteered to help with selling raffle tickets. We do need more however, so that each slot has two people on. **We need a lot more items donated for the raffle prize.** Please bring them to the monthly meeting on 28 September or leave them in the Archive room at Te Takere (Tuesday-Friday 10am to 12.30pm).

Kevin Miles

How did Winifred survive: research using land records

Guest speaker Sarah Hewitt gave members a fascinating account of how land records helped her uncover the story of her great-great-grandmother, Winifred Alice O'Callaghan née Baker (*pictured right. Hewitt Family Collection*).

What began as a question about a family will and a Christchurch lane became a wider story of migration, widowhood, women's property rights, and the value of following every clue in the records.

Sarah's research centred on three generations of women in her family: Emma Baker, her daughter Winifred, and Winifred's daughter Greta.

The Baker family emigrated from England to New Zealand in 1851 aboard the *Duke of Brontë*. Emma's husband, Charles Baker, was a market gardener and served as the ship's surgeon's mate during the voyage, earning £10, a significant sum at the time.

Life in Canterbury brought both opportunity and hardship. Three of Winifred's older siblings died young, one in England and two in Christchurch soon after the family's arrival. After Charles died in 1868, Emma was left a widow with children to support.

Emma emerged from the records as a literate, capable, and assertive woman. Newspaper reports showed her involved in legal disputes and willing to stand up for her rights, even representing herself and others in court. Her background was not without difficulty: her father, James Goodman King, had gone bankrupt and abandoned the family, and Emma herself had worked as a servant before marrying Charles.

When Emma died in 1889, her will raised an intriguing question. She left property to her eldest son, Henry Francis Baker, and to two of George Baker's children, but several surviving children — including Winifred — were not named as beneficiaries. Had they been disinherited, or had Emma made other arrangements during her lifetime?



To answer that question, Sarah turned to land records. She demonstrated how nominal indexes, primary entry books, and deed index books can be used together to trace ownership and transactions. The process can be painstaking, but it can reveal details that do not appear in wills, newspapers, or family stories.

The Baker family's main property was Lot 20 in London Street, Lyttelton. Sarah also investigated Bakers Lane, later renamed Gladstone Terrace, and found that it was indeed connected with the family. The lane was named for Henry Francis Baker, who had sold land to Emma.

The land records showed that Emma had made provision for her children during her lifetime. Portions of land were transferred to family members, while Winifred's share was held in trust for her benefit.

(continued on p 3)

This arrangement appears to have been a practical safeguard. Winifred's husband, Jasper Finer Callaghan, had experienced bankruptcy, and the trust protected Winifred's property from creditors.

Winifred and Jasper had nine children in twelve years, and all survived. When Jasper died of stomach cancer in 1895, Winifred was left a widow in her early forties.

School records, property records, and family recollections together suggest a woman who worked hard to keep her household going.

Family memories describe her sewing to support the family and living in one of Emma's cottages.

In 1907 Winifred sold the Antigua Street property, with the consent of all nine children because it had been held in trust.

She purchased 15 Packe Street and, remarkably, took out mortgages in her sixties.

Sarah noted that this opens another promising research question: how did women of that era obtain mortgages, and what can these records tell us about their independence and resourcefulness?

Sarah's talk was a reminder that land records can do far more than identify owners and boundaries. They can reveal family relationships, financial pressures, trusts, legal protections, and the decisions people made to care for one another.

Deeds records, Torrens titles, maps, newspaper reports, school records, cemetery information, and family memories all contributed to a fuller picture of Winifred's life.

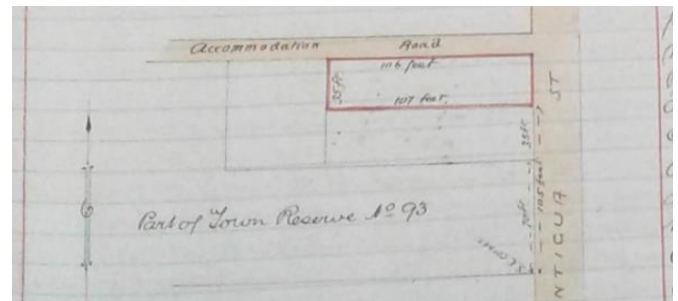
For anyone researching New Zealand families, the message was clear: do not overlook land records.

They may answer questions that will leave unresolved, confirm the origins of local place names, and bring to light the quiet determination of earlier generations.



Above: Aerial photo of 15 Packe Street from <https://canterburymaps.govt.nz/>

Below: Map of Winifred's section in Bakers Lane/Antigua Street from the Deeds Book (held at Christchurch Archives)



Deeds and Torrens titles

Transition from the deeds system to the Torrens system is explained:

Deeds system: original, complex, required tracing through multiple documents.

Torrens system: introduced in 1871, became absolute in 1924, consolidated all information on one title.

Deeds system and Torrens system ran in parallel from 1871 to 1924; property could be transferred between systems, sometimes decades after Torrens became standard.

Deeds are held regionally by Archives New Zealand; many are digitized, but not all.

Torrens titles can be ordered online via Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), with a fee (\$8 as of the talk).

LINZ records are searchable by address; prior references may need to be traced for older properties.

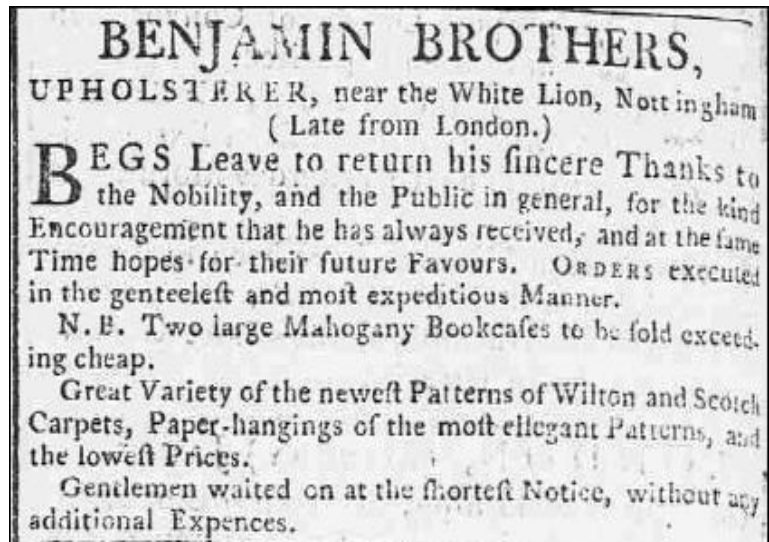
NZSG (New Zealand Society of Genealogists) has a land research team to assist with difficult searches.

Brothers vs Lord Byron

by John Dixon

My 4 x Great Grandfather Benjamin Brothers born circa 1746 was an upholster by trade having served his apprenticeship with Benjamin Compton and Co, Paper Stainers of St Martins in the Field, London, England.

After serving his apprenticeship he moved to Nottingham and opened a business as an upholsterer situated in the Long Row.



Derby Mercury, 29 December 1780

On 7 April 1759 Benjamin married Mary Kirkman in St Giles Church, Cropwell Bishop, Nottinghamshire. His occupation was given as an upholsterer and he was 25 years old.

In 1808 Benjamin Brothers took on the refurbishment of some of the rooms at Newstead Abbey for Lord Byron who by 1809 had departed England on his Grand Tour of Europe mainly to escape his creditors, not returning to England until 1811.

While he was away, Byron's mother resided at Newstead Abbey fighting off his creditors, one of them being Benjamin Brothers who by 1810, having completed the refurbishment was owed the amounted sum of £1,513.2.00. by Lord Byron.

The ensuing battle to receive payment put Benjamin on the verge of bankruptcy with him resorting to Legal Action by placing an Execution on Newstead a Legal Writ for seizure of the Ancestral home.

Joseph Murray, a long-serving servant, was so incensed at having the Writ pasted up on the Abbey door that he, being aware of the law and the consequence of tearing it off, covered the offending Writ by pasting a large piece of brown paper over it. It was also said that the stress on Lord Byron's mother over these debts caused her death in 1811.

The ongoing stress and worry may have instigated Benjamin's early death, passing away 30 April 1812 at the age of 66. He was laid to rest in the Castlegate Church Cemetery.

His wife Mary continued to run the business presumably with the assistance of her sons William and Benjamin Octavious.

Lord Byron had left England permanently in April 1816 amid intense public scandal, debt, and the breakdown of his marriage.

Mary and her sons continued pursuing the debt until it was finally paid with accumulated interest in 1824, just a month before Lord Byron died in Greece.

Committee Profile: Lynn Williams



I was born and grew up in Kaikoura. My mother and both her parents (my maternal grandparents) were also born there.

My schooling was at Kaikoura District High School, Christchurch Girl's High School for my final two year's. I graduated from Otago University in 1970 and had a year in Auckland attending the post primary teacher's education college. In 1990, I completed my certificate in librarianship in Wellington.

I have had varied careers – teaching preschool, intermediate and secondary; public and corporate librarian and management; managing library and record services for a government department; specialist recruitment services for information management and finally in administration services for a planning department in local government (more information and records classifying and retrieval).

The ship *Skiold* brought Maria Lange (my maternal 2x great grandmother) from Germany to Hope (Nelson) in 1844.

Heritage Room news

by Kevin Miles

Doug has commented on how busy he has been with recent enquiries. I have had a regular number to follow up. A number have related to searching for items in our Chronicle newspaper collection. I had success locating a photo from 1990 related to the Telethon of that year. I did have to look through nearly every paper of that year to locate it.

I have had less success trying to locate an obituary for an early town midwife Nellie Maud Watson. She died in 1958 but the obituary was recorded as being written in 1960.

The Archive continues to get a regular stream of items to be considered for storage. The most recent are the records of the Rebus group. It contains many photos and it is good to see the majority of them are named.

Maria married Johann Schroder in the Lutheran Chapel there in 1854 (which I visited in 2023).

Last year I followed up my paternal great grandparents by visiting their birthplaces in the Cotswold district at North Leach and Chedworth. *Pictured: Church of St Peter and St Paul North Leach.*



September 19: Suffrage Day

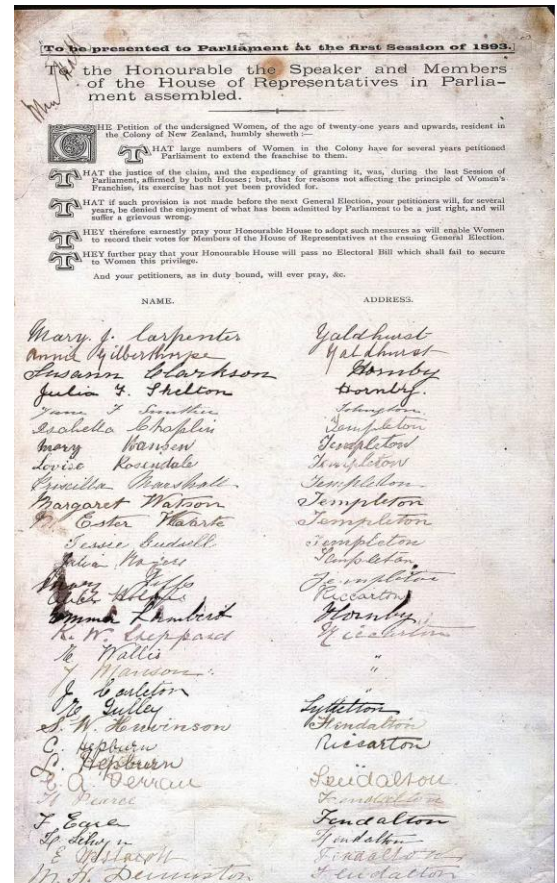
Women's Suffrage Petition did your ancestors sign the petition – how to find out - information provided by Hutt Valley NZSG and HFHG

Each year on 19 September New Zealand marks Suffrage Day. Women across the country were involved in the suffrage movement fighting for the right to vote to elect members of the New Zealand House of Representatives. Signatures were collected during a seven-year campaign; the largest petition of 25,519 signatures is the only one of the 13 that survived and is now on display in the He Tohu exhibition at the National Library of New Zealand.

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.

Members of the public are encouraged to submit biographies of women who signed the petition to the database. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/page/1893-suffrage-petition-database> There is a downloadable guide to what to include in a biography.

The 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition is on the UNESCO Memory of the Word NZ and International registers of documentary heritage.



Horowhenua Historical Society Meeting
Sunday 18th October
Thompson House 2pm

Speaker Bruce Batten

Bruce has just finished a book on Ron Frost who contributed much to Levin in respect of Motor Racing.

For this talk Bruce will focus on another of his local activities which involved farming mushrooms. Gold coin donation appreciated.

Te Takerere Levin Library
Discovering Family History
1-3pm

Tuesday 6 October:

DNA Ancestry with Kevin Miles

Tuesday 13 October:

Births, Deaths & Marriages

Tuesday 20 October:

Papers Past & other resources

Tuesday 27 October:

Ancestry, Family Search & My Heritage etc.

Delivered over 4 weekly sessions, free. All welcome.

NZSG

Upcoming Genealogy Congress

The 18th AFHO Congress on Family History, hosted by NZSG 11-14 February 2027 (first time in Wellington since 2009).

- Keynote speaker: Johnny Pearl (DNA Painter website, from Wales).
- Panel discussion with Catherine Bishop ("Women Means Business"), Charlotte McDonald ("Garrison World"), and Julia Bradshaw (women in the goldfields).
- Early bird registration: \$395 until mid-November; day registrations available. <https://affhcongress.org/>
- Congress coincides with NZSG's 60th anniversary, Congress's 50th, and Ancestry's 20th in Australia/NZ.
- Attendees encouraged to share learnings with the group; event is rare and significant for New Zealand genealogists.

WELLINGTON NZSG

Branches Without Descendants

Demographics are changing and the proportion of adults in New Zealand who do not have children is increasing, and it has been rising steadily for at least two decades.

It is difficult to get exact data, but an approximation can be found in Stats NZ family-type data shows a long-term rise in couples without children as a share of all families.

- 2001: ~35%
- 2006: ~37%
- 2013: ~39%
- 2018: ~40%
- 2023: ~41.5%

It is now the largest family type in the country.

Not leaving descendants is not a new phenomenon. War, disease, not finding the right person or not wanting children has meant our family trees have many such individuals. Often these people are forgotten from a genealogy perspective. It is even more important to document these people and their stories as they have no descendants to do so. Ed.

HUTT VALLEY NZSG September 2026

Letters Out Loud

National Library Wellington

Saturday 3 October 2026

An evening of historical texts brought to life by famous voices. Tickets to this gala fundraising event include a souvenir programme and refreshments.

Speakers include Tanea Heke, David O'Donnell, Dame Juliet Gerrard, Tabatha Killick, Tamati Moriarty, Karen O'Leary, John Schiff, Chris Tse. Vaughan Slinn, Jennifer Ward-Lealand,

This will be an evening of poignancy, laughter, and connection with Aotearoa New Zealand's past.

All profits go to support grants for research at the Alexander Turnbull Library. The Friends of the Turnbull Library (FOTL) offer grants of \$20,000 available to scholars whose research involves the use of the collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library. More information about these grants can be found here: [Research Grant \(turnbullfriends.org.nz\)](https://turnbullfriends.org.nz/research-grant)

Catering from 5.00pm, readings begin at 6.00pm, event concludes approx 7.15pm. Book online bit.ly/letters-out-loud-2026

Wellington Heritage Festival 24 October – 15 November 2026 <https://wellingtonheritagefestival.co.nz/>

What's New? A unique archival collection, the 'Searancke Papers' are now available through Hamilton City Libraries Heritage Collections Online. They provide insight into the life and career of William Nicholas Searancke (c.1817-1904), who arrived in New Zealand in 1842.

Over his varied career, Searancke worked as a trader, surveyor, District Commissioner for

the Land Purchase Department, Resident Magistrate, land agent, interpreter, coroner and electoral returns officer. The correspondence documents Searancke's move from Wai-kato to Whangarei in 1862 and his return in 1865 as Resident Magistrate. Searancke later acted as a land agent for local Maori, negotiating agreements and managing land revenues. Frequent letters from his father, Francis, describe everyday life in Ireland. <https://heritage.hamiltonlibraries.co.nz/objects?query=Searancke>

There is a new Chrome extension for Ancestry users, Shoebox Plus Organizer, that will help researchers search, sort, and filter items saved in their Ancestry Shoebox.

Rare Taranaki Gazettes now online thanks to local donation: The digitised Taranaki Gazettes can now be viewed online through Te Rangi Aoao Nunui, Puke Ariki's digital home for Taranaki stories, collection items and research resources.

Latest additions to Magazines and Journals (July 2026) on Papers Past Broadsheet (Auckland) (1972-1997) Dunedin Punch, Gas, Humor (1865) New Zealand Punch (Auckland) (1899-1900) New Zealand Punch (Christchurch) (1866) New Zealand Punch (Dunedin) (1888) New Zealand Punch (Wellington) (1879-1880) NZ Motor & Cycle Journal (1905-1915) War Cry (1883-1900).

PALMERSTON NORTH NZSG NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2026

Untold Stories

Celebrating Our Stories 2026 - the first national gathering of descendants of displaced persons (DPs) and those few DPs who are still living. It takes place in Palmerston North (Sat 17th) and Pahiatua (Sun 18th) October 2026. To register go to: <https://www.eventfinda.co.nz/search?q=Celebrating+our+stories>

Also Untold Stories has a Facebook site with many fascinating stories relating to this large-migration: <https://www.facebook.com/untold.stories.237746/>.

Email untolds626@gmail.com for more information - Tania and the Untold Stories Team.

British Newspaper Archive-BNA- has a newly designed website that works a bit differently when you search it: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.com/blog/new-edition-british-newspaper-archive>

A Blog Post by Paul Chiddicks

The Ten Deadly Sins of a Genealogist- and how to avoid repeating them. <https://chiddickstree.substack.com/p/the-ten-deadly-sins-of-a-genealogist>

Tracing your Dutch ancestry

An up to date, step by step guide, to tracing your Dutch ancestry. Hat tip to Jo Buckland. <https://inlovewithnetherlands.com/2640/how-to-trace-your-dutch-ancestry-step-by-step-guide-2026/>

Tāmīro- Massey University

Tāmīro is the digital gateway to Massey University's heritage archival collections, rare books and manuscripts, photographs, museum objects, oral histories and exhibitions. These taonga are being digitally described, and researchers can explore primary sources remotely.

See <https://tamiro.massey.ac.nz/> Hat tip to Feilding newsletter

Lincoln University 150th anniversary

Lincoln University's 150th celebrations are being planned for July 2028, including producing a 150th

Anniversary Book. <https://livingheritage.lincoln.ac.nz/nodes/view/42117>