



# Apr 2026 Newsletter

**MEETING:** Johnsonville Bowling Club, 34 Frankmoore Avenue, Johnsonville 7 FOR 7:30 PM

| WEDNESDAY 15 Apr 2026   | WEDNESDAY 20 May 2026                                       | WEDNESDAY 17 Jun 2026   |
|---|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>All Aboard for a New Life</i><br/>By<br/>Maggie Gaffney</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">AGM and members' stories</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">The Tong Boys of Tawa<br/>By<br/>Howard Tong</p> |

Pre-meeting Discussion Group, 15 Apr, 6:00-7:15pm, Johnsonville Bowling Club

## CONVENOR'S CORNER

Greetings members



We have started the year with two very interesting talks by members of our branch. We are a very talented group. Thank you Gill for still talking to us despite your injury and what a fascinating talk. If any of you have a story to tell do let us know as we are always looking for both short and longer talks. And I think it is great to showcase our members.

I have just had a few days in Wairoa, Hawke's Bay as my son Ben has been visiting, as he has whakapapa there, to create art for his Master's degree and this time I was able to go. Ben took us to the urupa (family cemetery) where he has ancestors. There are many urupa in the area, all looked after by family.

We also went to the old Wairoa cemetery, and I was able to find the graves of cousins from both the parents of my husband's grandmother. This is an interesting headstone. Mary Taggart (who died in 1923) is the mother of Elizabeth Margaret (who died in 1951). Elizabeth was the mother of Eric John (died 1913 age 8) and the grandmother of Ronald who died after only 5 hours in 1931. I wish I'd taken the photos after pulling out the weeds!



Figure 1: Taggart family headstone, weeds digitally removed.

I'm looking forward to Maggie's talk and hope to see many of you there.

Geraldine Needham-Girven,  
Convenor, Wellington Branch

# Family Experiences of Wartime

The following articles describe a snapshot of what family life was like back at home during wartime. It involved anxiety about soldiers at war, restrictions and the stress of living in different difficult circumstances. It was also a time of helping neighbours and the community and a time when family bonds were strengthened.

## Thank Heavens for the New Zealand Army's Postal Corps

By  
Tom McGrath

My grandparents, Frank and Elizabeth McGrath lived at 81 Liverpool Street in Whanganui most of their married life, which covered all the years of the World Wars. By May 1941, when World War Two had been going just over 18 months, all their offspring were overseas – and in harm's way. My aunts Joan and Mary were in England and my father Hugh was with the NZ Division in North Africa. My grandparents' own siblings were mostly in England, although Frank's younger brother, Harry, was living in Jersey, which was under German occupation. Though over 70, my grandfather was still teaching full time at Whanganui Collegiate.

Between mid-1941 and July 1945 the grandparents were alone in NZ but, in the times long before email and other online tools, busy writing letters and sending parcels to my father and aunts and especially benefiting from the army's postal corps. This branch of the military operated with headquarters overseas and sections attached to units operating near front lines. Its job was to ensure that letters and parcels from home were promptly delivered to troops and that soldiers' letters in turn were posted by airmail or ship to family back in NZ. Ensuring regular communication with family back home, was considered essential by the army for maintaining the welfare of serving personnel, and the Chief Postmaster in 2 NZEF (the New Zealand Division) was told more than once during the war that he could have all the personnel he wanted for postal service work.

While my grandparents' letters didn't survive the war my father's letters home did, and in several places referred to what their lives were like in Whanganui in the period 1940-45.

My father Hugh, writing home in January 1942 to my grandparents, had this to say:

*"I do hope you have had quiet enjoyable holidays. How lucky you are to be happy at your home and to have the garden. How rotten it would be to live in some cold poky house in Wellington with no sun, no view, and*



*Figure 2: My grandparents Frank and Elizabeth McGrath, and their dog "Jock" in their garden at 81 Liverpool Street, Whanganui*

*no garden especially when you are tied to your own locality due to the curtailment of transport services. It is also fortunate that you both can see the funny side of these emergency measures. War is an equaliser of class distinctions, isn't it?"*

In a time of petrol rationing, Hugh went on to suggest riding a bicycle down to Castlecliff beach for a swim – for a break.

By August that year he was commenting on my grandfather Frank's weekend back yard efforts that had resulted in the construction of a dugout, for use should Japanese Air Force planes bomb the town, and he had these words:

*"Like yourself Mum, I hope you and Dad will never have to use the dugout he's made, but I would like to think you regarded it as the real refuge it is. From the design Dad's given me I'd be very happy down there and it'd be a chance in a 1000 to suffer any injury there in an ordinary air attack."*

I have no doubt my grandmother had mixed feelings about the dugout. As well as the ongoing worry about having all three offspring overseas she now had the bother of a garden with attractive flowers and shrubs excavated to make way for a bomb shelter.

Parental worry became a problem the following year – no matter the frequency of correspondence or the fact that the course of the war had turned in favour of the Allies. My father's February 3, 1943, letter, written from Tripoli where the New Zealand Division was based, touched on the subject:

*"Mum dear, you must get out of your mind this continual worrying how and where I am. If ever I was unlucky enough to get wounded, you would be advised by cable by the army. Otherwise, you can assume I'm OK."*

The worry didn't go away and in August that year my father was querying my grandfather's work arrangements and whether some of his workload at Collegiate could be lessened:

*"Dad, will you please give me again a detailed statement of your finances and then any good or valid reason why you should not drop the book room. It's blood money of 50 pounds a year. Mum says it eats out your holidays and takes up evenings you could otherwise spend with her at home and puts an unnecessary strain on your health".*

My grandfather was evidently coping with stresses of life under wartime conditions, by escaping from home and being a workaholic.

Granddad didn't retire from his work till the end of 1945, but he and Granny kept on writing letters despite their worries. They not only sent aerograms to my aunts who were in England but also wrote at the rate of one a week to my father right up to VE Day. Like other families, they also sent parcels containing all sorts – pyjamas, pullovers and even cakes and shortbread – most of which reached its destination without too much delay.

"The McGraths were great letter writers", was a comment my late mother, Gladys, once made to me. What she should have added was that the letter writing habit was honed through the war years and made successful with the tireless work of the Army Postal Corps.

# “Simple Words, but Oh! God! How they hurt!”

By

Martin Garcia

News of family members serving overseas during the First World War was learned through local newspaper reports, letters sent by soldiers or nurses, and from official military telegrams. Families could wait weeks for news. The sight of a telegram boy cycling down a street would cause curtains to twitch and fears to intensify that he might draw up to their door. Families feared the worst news - “Killed in action.”

My great-grandmother Annie Munro was living on the family farm in Woodville when two of her sons left for the war in 1914 – Ray and Walter. She would hear only occasional news of their exploits.

Those left behind in New Zealand waiting for news were however far from idle. I have no doubt that Annie, like many women at the time, was involved in fundraising and supplying items for parcels sent to service men and women overseas. “From the



Figure 3: Crowd farewelling troops embarking for duty, World War One. *The Press* (Newspaper): Negatives. Ref: 1/1-008393-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22582849



Figure 4: Fuller, Edwin Murray, 1892-1933. New Zealand Patriotic Society: “Queen” carnival. Combined schools’ concert. Souvenir programme [cover] / [Ephemera relating to World War I. 1915. Folder 1]. Ref: Eph-A-WAR-WI-1915-1-01-cover. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22676713

beginning, patriotic societies supported soldiers’ families as well as the soldiers themselves.

In some cases, they supplemented government allowances for soldiers’ wives, widows and elderly parents. They also identified worthy cases in the community which they thought the government should assist.”<sup>1</sup>

Annie received a letter from son Walter commenting about the importance of New Zealand newspapers to those overseas. “On Tuesday [17 August 1915], Mrs Anderson [Munro], of Pinfold Road, received a letter from her son at the Dardanelles. He particularly thanked her for a copy of *The [Woodville] Examiner*, the reading of which was a great joy to him and his chums. He specially commissioned his mother to inform the proprietor of the paper that *The Examiner* was printed on the best paper of any they receive, and that after passing through the hands of 300 soldiers from trench to trench it was still readable.” - *Woodville Examiner*, Volume XXVIII, Issue 4627, [Friday] 20 August 1915, Page 2

By the time Annie received Walter’s letter however he was already dead from wounds received in the August 1915 advance on Chunuk Bair, Gallipoli.

<sup>1</sup> Overview: 1914-1919, URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/supporting-war-effort/overview>, (Manatū Taonga — Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 19-Dec-2014

The waiting for news must have been agonising. Annie knew from newspaper reports that her son was serving in the Dardanelles and that there was fierce fighting. Reports were optimistic however as in this report on 12 August 1915 titled "The Dardanelles. Substantial Progress Made." "A footing on Chunuk Bair and a portion of Sari Bair was also gained. One crest was occupied after fierce fighting, and the successful storming of strongly held positions. The enemy's losses were considerable."<sup>2</sup>

News reports came through in September 1915 that Walter had been wounded. The family, including his brother, my 10-year old grandfather Martin Munro, could only hope that Walter was alright. Then months later, sad news arrived -

"In a recent casualty list the name of Pvt. W. Munro, of Woodville, appears as having been previously reported wounded and now reasonable to suppose died of wounds on or about August 7th, 1915." - Woodville Examiner, Volume XXXII, Issue 4727, 31 March 1916, Page 2



PTE. W. A. MUNRO,  
Otago Inf. Batt.,  
Wounded.

Woodville, appears as having been previously reported wounded and now reasonable to suppose died of wounds on or about August 7th, 1915." -

Woodville Examiner, Volume XXXII, Issue 4727, 31 March 1916, Page 2

Walter is memorialised on the Levin Cenotaph/Stone of Remembrance, because he attended school there, and also at the Chunuk Bair (New Zealand) Memorial. Walter appears in Linda Fletcher's book, Horowhenua and the Great War 1914-1918.

Walter's death did not stop a third son of Annie's joining up in 1916 - Bill Munro. Bill, serving in a machine gun section, was wounded in 1917. Fortunately, both Bill and Ray returned home. Walter's resting place is somewhere out on the slopes of Chunuk Bair. Their mother, Annie Munro, died in 1934 and lies at Terrace End Cemetery, Palmerston North.

#### IN MEMORIAM

MUNRO.—August 7th, 1915, at Gallipoli, Walter Alexander Munro, fourth beloved son of Annie Munro, of Woodville; aged 23 years.

"Reasonable suppose killed in action," so the cable said, simple words, but Oh! God! how they hurt.

—Inserted by his loving mother, sisters and brothers.

Figure 5: Woodville Examiner, Volume XXXVI, Issue 5483, 6 August 1919 at <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/woodville-examiner/1919/08/06/2>

<sup>2</sup> Manawatu Times, Volume XL, Issue 13172, 12 August 1915, Page 5 at <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/MT19150812.2.29.7>

# From Kalimpong, Northern India to New Zealand-a family history emigration story

By Robin Mossman

A precis of the fascinating talk given by Gill Percy at the March 18<sup>th</sup> Branch Meeting.

Gill was intrigued by a story about a friend's grandmother who had emigrated from Kalimpong, Northern India to New Zealand in the early 1900's. During her research into this story she found and bought an excellent book called the "Kalimpong Kids" by Jane McCabe. Imagine her surprise when paging through this book to find that her husband's uncle, George LANGMORE, had taken many of the photos and was a 'Kalimpong Kid' himself!

Gill's talk covered her discoveries about this little-known piece of New Zealand family history starting from her description of Kalimpong as it is today and her visit to the Reverend Doctor Graham's Home (still standing but repurposed as a boarding school). The original files (including letters from New Zealand) are still there and available for research.



*Figure 6: Kalimpong, India. Kalimpong is in the far north of West Bengal, India, located in the eastern Himalayas near the borders of Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tibet. It sits on a ridge above the Teesta River at roughly 1,200–1,300 m elevation.*

The Reverend Doctor Graham, from Scotland, set up the Home in Kalimpong for Anglo-Indian children who could not be brought up in the long term by their English tea planter fathers or their Indian or Nepalese mothers. Mixed race children were not accepted by either culture. As New Zealand, at that time (before 1938), was open to accepting immigrants who were well educated and could work as domestic servants or farm labourers, it was decided to send the children here. Doctor Graham had links to the Presbyterian church in Otago who helped place 130 young people (including many siblings) into positions in the Dunedin area. The scheme ran from 1908-1938.

Babies through to teenagers were admitted to the Home. They lived in cottages with housekeepers to care for them. Some of the children had contact with their parents during the holidays. However, the father's were on 10-year contracts to manage the tea plantations, they were not permitted to marry for 10 years and could only marry non-Indian women, so ultimately the children were left on their own. Interestingly, at

least five of the fathers visited their children in New Zealand later in life and several stayed here with their families for their lifespan. There were strong ties amongst the Kalimpong community in their new land with regular gatherings. Doctor Graham kept in contact with the children and visited New Zealand in 1937 to attend one of these events.

George (Gill's husband's uncle) was one of the few that we know about, who went back to his homeland and visited Kalimpong in 1927 with his wife Ellen. He arrived in Dunedin from Kalimpong in 1911 and worked as a farm labourer and later as an attendant at Seacliff for over 20 years. He married Ellen Percy in 1918 in Dunedin. George's father, Gilbert, was never married and stayed in the Darjeeling area. Future research may determine whether George's father supported him financially during his lifetime or perhaps left him a bequest (to enable the trip to India). Gilbert was part of a large family with links to the British Indian Civil Service over several generations.

The descendants of this special group of immigrants have spread throughout New Zealand and their stories are slowly coming to light. Gill's talk was a fascinating insight into the group. She recommends the book "Kalimpong Kids- The New Zealand story in pictures" by Jane McCabe as a great insight into the scheme and a great place to start your research from.

It was a most enjoyable evening. Many thanks Gill.

## **Visit to the NZ Defence Force Personnel Archives and Medal Section, Trentham**

By

Kaye Batchelor, with contributions by Philippa Parsons, Paul Willams, Nicola Fraser and Max Kennedy,

After showing our ID at the sentry gate and receiving our visitor passes, we eventually drove down to the Personnel Archives and Medals (PAM) office and parked there. Robert Henry from PAM showed us the archive rooms and explained about the types of records kept there. Nearly all WWI military records are kept at National Archives. Defence Archives holds files for WWII and subsequent military actions NZ was involved in (Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, etc).

After WWII, records were purged by order of a top military man, with the justification that space was needed for WWII. Since the 1950s there have been other purges of files, so that the average WWII file for an individual soldier may only have 4 sheets of paper in it. Some files were microfilmed before some of the later purges though, and these are more complete. In terms of digitization of records, many WWII war medals have never been applied for, and Archives will not digitize active files, and until those medals have been issued, the files remain active.

Robert showed us some of his favourite finds. These included rescued records from a Taranaki militia building (?) where items had water and mould damage, an armourer's logbook of his training (not meant to be kept normally but found and handed in) and some medical records of General Freyberg that had not been previously known.

The latter was very interesting and makes me want to read a biography of him. When General Freyberg was operated on to remove shrapnel from his neck in 1944, the doctor found shrapnel there from WWI. So, he had been struck twice in the neck in 2 wars and survived each time. We saw the Doctor's handwriting and a diagram of where the WWII shrapnel entered and exited his neck. And he was struck in the chest by the tail tip of a plane.



*Figure 7: Paul Williams, Robert Henry (from PAM) Nicola Fraser, Kaye Batchelor, and Philippa Parsons at the archives, Trentham, 02 Apr 2026.*

From Philippa, “the scale of the archives was impressive but disappointing to learn that so many records had been culled. The highlight was seeing and reading the file of Sir Bernard Cyril Freyberg”.

From Nicola “I was itching to open some boxes and look for myself. Now I am aware that most records ordered will likely have gaps because of the gargantuan cull over decades. The suggestion of [about] a 90% cull of records to create more space at the Defence Archives, must inevitably lead us to find a story rather than the truth upon receiving records of soldiers”.

From Paul “We, who love ferreting amongst old records, cherished the time spent in archivist Robert Henry's company at *New Zealand Defence Force Personnel Archives and Medals – NZDFPA and M* for short, albeit still long – at Trentham Camp. I am being presumptuous by using “we” but do so with confidence based on the many comments, questions, expressions of rapture and silences when Robert spoke of his work. From the scores of archival cabinets which contain a trove of service personnel records, Robert shared one which he obviously treasures – the extraordinary medical file of Sir Bernard Fryberg. That alone was worth the visit”.

From Max “The records most affected by the culls were those of the Home Guard. AI (Gemini) states *“Significant quantities of New Zealand military records from the First and Second World Wars were destroyed in culls (official disposal) or accidental fires, particularly in the decades following World War II. While many personnel service files survived, large amounts of operational and administrative documentation were lost.*

*Key types of records destroyed or damaged include:*

- *Army Medical Records (Post-WWII): Many individual soldier medical files were destroyed in the 1950s and 1960s during a large-scale disposal of army records.*
- *WWI Soldiers' Records (WWII Fire): A substantial number of World War I personnel records were destroyed by a fire at the Base Records building during World War II.*
- *Administrative and Unit Records: Many war diary duplicates, administrative correspondence, pay books, and logistics records deemed “non-essential” were destroyed, limiting the available detailed documentation on specific unit movements in some cases”.*

## Member Profiles Wanted

Below is the profile of new member Nik Mounter. Nik, welcome to our branch and thanks for submitting this profile. I would encourage other members to do the same as the more we know about each other the more we can help with your genealogy interests. Send your details and a photo to [wellington@genealogy.org.nz](mailto:wellington@genealogy.org.nz)

### New Member Profile: Nik Mounter



*Figure 8: Nik Mounter*

I have always been interested in Family history as a kid but really got into it about 10 years ago when I got my DNA done. I thankfully have a few cousins and 2nd cousins who have been researching the family history over the years so have been able to share research with them. I have also been touching base with older relatives to tap into their memories and stories while this is still possible.

I try to work on my family tree weekly slotting in between shift work (as a nurse) and wrangling a husband and 3 teenagers and life.

My particular interests are the arrival of family members to NZ over the last 160 years - mainly from Scotland or England - many via Australia and also one branch that is proving the most difficult from Kolkata in India which has been shrouded in mystery and wrong stories for years!

I look forward to meeting you all.

# Last Month's Photographic Mystery

By Martin Garcia

Max has asked me to comment on the two unknown photos he put forward last month. I've used Microsoft Copilot, my own research and a new tool from MyHeritage to formulate my comments. MyHeritage claims that [Scribe AI](#)<sup>3</sup> is "a powerful new feature that transcribes, translates, and interprets historical documents and photos."

Max explained that the only man in the first photo is his great-great grandfather Albert Wells and the photo is "potentially taken in Te Aroha or Point Wells." Max would like to know "what year it was taken, the names of the people and what was the occasion that would require one man among many women."

Scribe AI's view is that the photo "likely captures a women's community organization, such as a church auxiliary, women's institute, or a local club" and is circa 1938-1945, based on the subjects'



clothing. Copilot suggests the photo was likely taken in the 1940s outside a community or church hall, school room, or clubroom. Copilot suggested the group was attending an annual meeting, a club gathering, a women's institute or ladies' guild, a church women's group, or a Red Cross or patriotic society (especially if in the 1940s).

Copilot explained that "groups like this were central to community life in the 1940s. Women's organisations often met in simple halls just like this to organise fundraising, support wartime efforts, run social events, coordinate community welfare and maintain local traditions." It considered the group was likely the Te Aroha Methodist Ladies Guild or the Te Aroha Women's Institute meeting in the local Methodist Church Hall or the Te Aroha Women's Institute Rooms.

Why was Albert Wells the only man? Copilot again: "Albert Wells was: a long-established Te Aroha resident, a respected elder, involved in community affairs, the sort of man who would be invited to speak, present, or represent a committee." He may have been a guest of honour – "That's why he stands slightly apart, on the edge, but still included. It's not an accident. It's a social signal."

The next photo was of an unknown rugby team, possibly from the 1920s. MyHeritage's Scribe AI confirmed our suspicions that the photo captures a victorious rugby team celebrating a cup win in the 1920s. "The mix of jersey styles (especially the heavily striped one on the left versus the solid ones) could suggest a representative team drawn from multiple clubs, or simply a local club with non-uniform kits, which was not uncommon in amateur sports of the era."



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.myheritage.com/scribe-ai>

MS Copilot described the trophy as “typical of regional rugby competitions in New Zealand ... the classic inter-club or inter-sub-union trophy style that proliferated after WWI, when competitions resumed and communities invested in new silverware. from roughly the 1910s–1930s.” Despite further research, I was unable to identify the trophy.

## This Month’s Unknown Photo

### A Boxing Mystery

By  
Martin Garcia

Context is very important when trying to identify people and places in mystery family photographs. When digitising my grandfather’s photo album I filed each photo by page number and order, in case the surrounding photos provided clues to any mystery photos, such as location, particular family or time period.

This mystery photo appears in my maternal grandfather’s photo album, but we do not recognise the people pictured. Microsoft Copilot has not been able to solve the mystery, other than explaining that the medals and trophy relate to a boxer who had an award-winning career, likely in the 1930s or 1940s. Who is this boxer? Is he the younger person, or is the boy a cornerman or second? Is the suited-man the boxer or a coach or manager?

The context for this photo:

- My grandfather, Martin Munro, was a boxing announcer from the 1930s to the early 1950s for the Northern Wairoa Amateur Boxing Association in Dargaville
- Surrounding photos in the album were taken in Raetihi (Nation family), Dargaville (Munro family), and Auckland (Martindale & Phillips families).



Can you identify the people, the medals or trophy? Perhaps you know a boxing historian or Facebook page where we could seek assistance? Any suggestions on how to solve this mystery would be appreciated to [martingarcia.nz@gmail.com](mailto:martingarcia.nz@gmail.com)

# The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Immigrant Ship Gutenberg's arrival in Wellington

By  
Max Kennedy

The 150th anniversary of the arrival of the ship Gutenberg was held in Wellington on 22 Mar 2026. 165 Scandinavians, Poles, Germans, Italians, Swiss and one Austrian arrived in Wellington on 23 Mar 1876 on the 'Gutenberg' after 96 days at sea. The event was splendid, with a ferry tour of Wellington harbour, a guided tour of Wellington Museum and then the formalities of the event, which included speeches from the various nationalities and settler groups, and the launch of a reunion book. The overall atmosphere was one of friendliness and a shared bond. The amount of work involved in organizing such reunion events is significant, so thanks to Terry Alve for doing all the hard work.



Figure 9: Details of the Gutenberg reunion



Figure 10: Italy compared to an 'upside down' New Zealand.

As a member of the Italian group (a descendant of Carlo Turchi) I gave a short speech on the Italian experience in their new country. 30% of the passengers were Italians, most coming from Northern Italy. It is interesting to see the advertising and sales pitch that was used to attract Italian immigrants. The agent showed the Italians a map of Italy and one of New Zealand upside down, emphasising how they looked alike and how New Zealand was Italy in the south.

When they arrived in Wellington the passengers of the Gutenberg stayed in the barracks in Buckle St. Getting jobs was

difficult and the Italians were the last to leave. About a third of the Italians stayed in Wellington or went to other towns. In this group were those with professions suited to towns eg hairdresser, draftsman, piano tuner, or engraver. Two thirds went to the Vogel Scheme settlement of Jackson Bay. The 2/3rd of the Italians going to Jackson Bay were labourers or those with horticultural skills. The Jackson Bay settlement was one of two Vogel Scheme Settlement Schemes on the West Coast. The other was Karamea. Both special settlements were unsuccessful.

“On arrival at Jackson Bay, West Coast they were transported by horse and gig etc to Okuru. This is 16 miles (25.5 km) from Jackson Bay, north to the area settled by Italians from earlier expeditions, giving a population of some fifty-three Italians. The purpose of their work here was for the Turchis to grow grapes, mulberry trees and produce, but all rotted in the ground due to climate conditions”. The summer was not long enough to let the produce mature.

Conditions soon turned dire. Carlo states “Also in case of our running short of provisions in the Government Store which we have already experienced since we have been here. I find that many promises that were made to us, have not been fulfilled and after all these promises we are still living in tents. On the 20th Sept we had floods and the water was about 1m deep through our tents, and we have had to take refuge in Mr Joseph Collyer’s house where we were most kindly received” The Turchis were the largest family on the Gutenberg with 9 in the family, and hence the most vulnerable in Jackson Bay with so many mouths to feed.



Figure 11: The Gutenberg reunion group, details of who is who can be found at <https://www.alve.nz/gutenberg150.html>

A description of the 1878 weather states “Unfortunately the settlement was plagued with bad weather in its early years, which made growing crops difficult; some were ruined such as potatoes. In 1878 the district had 259 rainy days [71%] with a total of 134 inches [3.4m] of rain and suffered severe flooding” “In one month alone, Mar 1878, rainfall was 92 cm... The bridge at the Turnbull River Crossing had hardly been erected before it was carried away by a flood”

Within three years, most of the settlers had departed”. The reasons were

- Severe weather leading to floods.
- The lack of enough government work and wages until the sections could produce enough for families to survive.
- The large debts at the government store that were necessarily accumulated just to survive.
- No creation or fostering of any local industry due to the lack of establishment of the necessary infrastructure (roads and wharf).

On leaving the West Coast a lot of the Italians went to Taranaki. Of the Italians on the Gutenberg, 1 returned to Italy and about 1/3rd ended up in Australia. Their lives covered the spectrum from failure to success. 2 committed, or tried to commit, suicide, 2 ended in mental asylums (1 woman drowned her child). However, many led solid lives and several turned into civic leaders and were well respected in their communities. 1 family adopted a child. Giovanni Federli helped Bragato set up the wine industry and was also passionate about establishing a silk industry in New Zealand.

War impacted the Italian families like the rest of New Zealand. Before coming to New Zealand 2 of the Italians had served with Garibaldi in the unification of Italy. Ateo Frandi served in the New Zealand army during WW1 and died in Gallipoli. Bell 30, called Frithia, in the Wellington Carillon is dedicated to him, as well as a Frandi Street in Wellington.

Language was a barrier. There seemed to be only 1 Italian in the immigrants who spoke English, Pietro Corrado, and he acted as an interpreter. Some changed their first names to be more English sounding and

familiar to others. Some had their names changed for them, Turchi being an example as it is pronounced Turkey in Italian, but Turchee in New Zealand. Louisa Turchi, my great grandmother, lived her life in New Zealand only speaking a little English. She married an Englishman so communication must have been a struggle at times.

The speeches from the other groups were excellent with a lot of common experiences and hardships. We remember and thank our ancestors for their courageous move to New Zealand.

The book about the reunion and the immigrants is "From Bremerhaven to Wellington. The 1876 Gutenberg Immigrants to Aotearoa", by Terry Alve. The book details and description of the reunion can be seen at <https://www.alve.nz/gutenberg150.html>

### References

Ronald Wattam, "Turchi Family History 1550-2010", Mar 2011, ISBN 978-0-4763-18444-5.

Karen Moratti, "La Famiglia Moratti", 2018.

Irvine Roxburgh, Jacksons Bay a Centennial History, Cadsonbury Publications, Christchurch, 1997.

Julia Bradshaw, "The Far Downers", University of Otago Press, 2001



## **18th AFFHO (Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations) Congress**

**NZSG has launched a [website for the 18th AFFHO Congress on Family History](https://affhocongress.org/) (<https://affhocongress.org/>) which will be hosted by the NZSG and held in Wellington 11-14 February 2027. Put the dates in your diary!**

**NZSG members will be sent further information as it becomes available. If you're interested in speaking or exhibiting, please complete the form on the website, so they know to keep you in the loop!**

## Announcing the NZSG Digital Archive



**Today we are launching a new service to members – the NZSG Digital Archive!**

**Are you worried about how to store your most precious digital documents and images in perpetuity? The NZSG Digital Archive gives you 1GB of online storage to preserve, back up and share your most precious digital documents and images.**

**This service is free to members.**

**To find out more, including the terms and conditions and how to access a Digital Archive for your precious records, see the [Digital Archive webpage](#) (you will need to be logged in).**

## Editorial

In the April Newsletter, **I would like to publish stories on the topic of Education of Yesteryear**. Do you have any stories in your family about attending school in the “old days”. Were any of your family teachers who left memories of what teaching was like long ago? Were any of your family truants? What did they do when not at school? Do any of your family get a qualification that was unusual for the time? Did any ancestors have alternate forms of education such as apprenticeships, or the school of hard knocks? Did a teacher or education change the life of an ancestor of yours?

Many of us have photos without an identity, location or provenance. Martin Garcia has made progress on last months and there is a new photo this month. **I would like to run such an unknown photo every month and enlist the members’ help in identifying the photo**. Pls send your unknown photo or education stories to [wellington@genealogy.org.nz](mailto:wellington@genealogy.org.nz) by the end of April 2026.

Max Kennedy

**Irish Interest Group (Lower North Island)** to be advised, check NZSG website.

Contact [Irish.LowerNISIG@genealogy.org.nz](mailto:Irish.LowerNISIG@genealogy.org.nz)

**Scottish Interest Group (Wellington)** - to be advised, check NZSG website.

Contact: [SIGWellington@gmail.com](mailto:SIGWellington@gmail.com)

**English Interest Group (Wellington)**

The group meets from February to November on the 4th Saturday each month, from 2:00pm to 4:00pm in private homes. Contact: [annballnz@gmail.com](mailto:annballnz@gmail.com)

## DIRECTORY Committee



|                      |                          |              |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Convenor             | Geraldine Needham-Girven | 021 180 5166 |
| Secretary            | Robin Mossman            | 021 1587848  |
| Minute Secretary     | Kaye Batchelor           | 027 2276734  |
| Membership Secretary | Robin Mossman            | 021 1587848  |
| Speakers’ Program    | Kaye Batchelor           | 027 2276734  |
| Technical Support    | Mhairi Thompson          | 021 337989   |
| Treasurer            | Liz Newport              | 021 815 846  |
| Newsletter Editor    | Max Kennedy              | 021 246 5483 |

| KILBIRNIE   | PORIRUA   | HUTT VALLEY   | KAPITI  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Thursday 07 May, 10:00 am   | Wednesday 08 Apr, 7:30 pm                                     | Thursday 16 Apr, 7:30 pm  | Tuesday 28 Apr, 7:30pm                                      |
| Charlotte Macdonald<br><i>The Garrison World of the mid-19th century - family and other histories</i> | Members’ Stories<br>Military ancestors who served in WWI/WWII | Bryan Mulligan<br>A Brush (or Two) with Death                             | Graeme McVerry & Patrick McCabe<br>Royal Irish Constabulary |
| Matairangi Room, Ākau Tangi Sports Centre, 72 Kemp St, Kilbirnie, Wellington                          | Helen Smith Room<br>Pataka Art + Museum, Porirua              | Senior Citizens' Rooms, Forsyth Barr Building, 45 Knights Road Lower Hutt | Coast Community Church, 57 Hinemoa St, Paraparaumu.         |