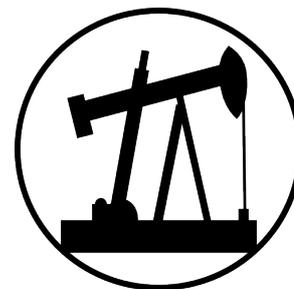




# NZSG New Plymouth Branch Newsletter



Number 259

August 2012

**Branch Library:** Open free to members. A small charge to visitors.  
**Opening Hours:** Monday: 10am to 3pm;  
 Wednesday: 12 noon to 3pm  
 Saturday: 10am to 12 noon  
**Computer Group:** every third Sunday every 2nd month at 1:30pm at the Branch Rooms  
 Open to everyone - \$2 door charge. Convenor – Bruce Bellini

## Computer Group 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The New Plymouth computer group is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on ;  
 27 & 28 October 2012.



This weekend event will include a branch open day on Saturday, an celebratory dinner that evening and the GCG anniversary on Sunday. There will be several interesting and useful presentations by guest speakers, including keynote speaker Jan Gow, QSM.

Information and registration form available from the branch website:

[www.genealogynp.com/gcg.html](http://www.genealogynp.com/gcg.html)

Registrations close 30 September 2012.

Next meeting: 7:30 pm Tuesday 7 Aug 2012

## Library Resource

The August branch meeting is a library resource evening.

Our branch librarian, Bev Mulqueen, will give a talk on what we have available at the rooms.

Over the years, the branch has built up a large range of documents and indexes. These cover Taranaki history, United Kingdom records and others.

Come along and learn what we have available to help you with your research.



**Convenor:**  
**Secretary:** Fay Eaton 751 1045  
**Treasurer:** John Berntsen 753 9188

**Committee:** Judy Berntsen  
 Anne Brophy  
 Margaret Gregory  
 Charles Le Breton  
 Ailsa McCrone  
 Bev Mulqueen

New Plymouth Branch  
 PO Box 429  
 New Plymouth 4340

**Meetings:** 7:30 pm, first Tuesday each month at branch rooms, Moturoa Shopping Centre access off Whiteley Street carpark

**Email:** [newplymouth@genealogy.org.nz](mailto:newplymouth@genealogy.org.nz)  
**Website:** [www.genealogynp.com](http://www.genealogynp.com)

## Last Meeting: Brick walls

At our July meeting, Annette Larsen talked about breaking down brick walls and distinguishing truth from fiction in genealogy research.

Annette's talk looked at a collateral line, where there is an interesting story, widely in circulation, concerning a Samuel Hall. She questioned this story and, after looking into many sources, found evidence to prove that a large portion of the information was incorrect or highly suspect. She is currently examining the possibility that Samuel was a convict shipped out to NSW in the early days. This looks highly likely, and the circulated story was a cover-up. Don't take anything at face value.

One of the ways Annette added to her knowledge of Samuel was through getting in touch with someone in Australia who is researching the Hall family. Finding this researcher involved serendipity and following up on the chance that presented itself, which has led to an enjoyable collaboration and sharing of resources.

One of the resources which helped break down a brick wall was registering on a mailing list on the internet for the Sheffield area, where Samuel Hall was born. Somebody eventually saw Annette's message and she was contacted with helpful information. Widening her search into the neighbouring county of Derbyshire instead of just looking in Yorkshire paid dividends. "Hawkbrookdale farm" in Yorkshire turned out to be Ockbrookdale farm in Derbyshire!!

Annette Larsen

Annette has kindly provided an article on brick walls that she referred to in her talk, and which she feels is quite useful. This is attached to this newsletter for members' reference.

## Family History Month

NZSG is promoting August 2012 as family history month, with the theme "Family history is cool, pass it on".

The idea is to encourage people to look at ways that you can share your family history and to pass on family photos, stories, heirlooms and memories.



## New Records on familysearch.org

A very useful set of records has just appeared on the LDS familysearch site. Hundreds of thousands of NZ probate records have been recently digitised and put online. I discovered a copy of the probate and will of the husband of one of my Fencible children.

It helps if you know the probate number. I was able to access this number from my NZSG Index. If not you certainly need to know the death year and use that as a guide.

[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

Go to the opening page of the site and click "Browse by Location". Then click on "Australia and New Zealand". Then click on "NZ Probate Records, 1878-1960". Finally click on "Browse through Images". At present the records are for Blenheim, Marlborough, Canterbury, Napier, Hawkes Bay, and Nelson regions. Digitisation of other records is ongoing, so keep an eye on this space!

Once you click on the region you are interested in, it comes up with Record type, Date Range and Volume number for you to decide on. On the right of the page is a scroll bar to scroll down (drag). You may have to exercise a bit of patience to locate your record as it is not name searchable.

There are even some death certificates in some entries, as well as a will and the probate.

Happy hunting!

Annette Larsen

## Congratulations !

John Berntsen has been awarded a NZSG service award for his work providing the First Families service.



## Filing Cabinet

Could the member who phoned Judy Berntsen with the offer of a filing cabinet please ring her again. Her phone number is 7539188.

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## Genealogy Funnies

My family coat of arms ties at the back ... is that normal?

My ancestors must be in a witness protection program!

How can one ancestor cause so much TROUBLE?!

I'm not stuck -- I'm ancestrally challenged.

Isn't genealogy fun? The answer to one problem leads to two more!

A new cousin a day keeps the boredom away.

Any family tree produces some lemons, some nuts, and a few bad apples.

FLOOR: The place for storing your priceless genealogy records.

Gene-Allergy: It's a contagious disease but I love it.

Genealogy is like playing hide and seek: They hide ... I seek!

Only a genealogist regards a step backwards as progress.

Heredity: Everyone believes in it until their children act like fools!

I'm not sick, I've just got fading genes.

Genealogists live in the past lane.

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## Donations

The branch gratefully acknowledges these generous donations to our resources.

- Michael Butler has donated Naval and Military Claims booklets.
- Glen Mune of Auckland has donated information on the KNUCKEY and ODGERS families.
- Peter McWilliam of Hamilton has donated NEWLAND and LEATHAM family trees, John NEWLAND's journal (1841 - 1873), the *Blenheim* tenders for passenger, accommodation and diet requirements and the Taranaki Mounted Volunteers 1860.
- David Winthrop has donated the PEPPERELL family book 1841 - 2000.

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## KIRKMAN

I read in No 225, July 2009 edition of the NZSG New Plymouth Branch newsletter that Bev Mulqueen researches the name Kirkman.

Could you please pass on that I have an extensive Kirkman Marriage database – mostly UK marriages, together with a transcription of all I can find regarding the name Kirkman in all of the UK published census.

These data may be of interest to anyone requesting such data (no charges!!!).

Brian Kirkman, Waikato

[bk1@orcon.net.nz](mailto:bk1@orcon.net.nz)

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## Exhibition at Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh 10 Aug – 8 Sept 2012

William 'Braveheart' Wallace has become a legendary hero to generations of Scots. This exciting exhibition explores the turbulent times in which he lived, and offers a once-in-a-generation chance to see the only two documents with a personal link to him.

[www.nas.gov.uk/about/120713.asp](http://www.nas.gov.uk/about/120713.asp)

Wallace emerged from obscurity in 1297 to play a key role in the Scottish Wars of Independence against Edward I, King of England. After the Battle of Stirling Bridge he served briefly as a 'Guardian of Scotland', then faded from view, only to re-emerge in 1303 near the centre of the action. The uncertainty surrounding Wallace makes the documents at the centre of this exhibition all the more important - and intriguing.

Held in the Scottish Parliament, the exhibition is free to attend and runs from Friday 10 August to Saturday 8 September (closed 12-13 Aug and Sundays). Opening times: 10am - 5pm (except 9am - 6.30pm, 4 - 6 September) or check the Scottish Parliament website.



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### Open Day 27 October 2012

In conjunction with the GCG anniversary, the branch is holding an open day on Saturday 27 October. No prior registration is required, just bring your lunch and \$5 entry. Morning and afternoon tea supplied.

- 09:00 doors open  
          morning tea
- 10:00 Jan Gow
- 11:00 Sharyn Guthrie
- 12:00 lunch (bring your own)
- 1:00 Michael Butler
- 2:00 Question time
- 2:30 Jan Gow
- 3:30 afternoon tea

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### Registration Indices

NZSG office folk have asked that everyone be reminded that the NZSG registration indices are just the index. NZSG does not hold the actual records or certificates.

Also, please note that the registration index is free to access at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org). This will give you the details you need to order a certificate.

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### NZSG Regional Meeting

The next Taranaki regional meeting will be held in Inglewood at 10:30 am on Saturday, 25 August 2012.

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### Library News

Magazines received;  
Your Family History (August)  
Family Tree (August)  
Memories (Aug / Sept)



Newsletters received;  
Canterbury, Hutt Valley, Nelson, Otaki, Palmerston North, Porirua, Riccarton, Stratford, Wairarapa, Wanganui, Wellington and BRANT (Ontario)

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### Computer Group

The New Plymouth computer group meeting was held on Sunday 15 July. Karen Crowe gave us an update from the recent NZSG conference, and we discussed some of the current computer based scams that have cropped up.



The next computer group meeting is at 1:30 pm, Sunday 16 September 2012, at the branch rooms.

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### Newsletter

If you have any comments or suggestions for the newsletter, please contact Peter Hewett at [peter.hewett@gmail.com](mailto:peter.hewett@gmail.com).



## Breaking Down Brick Walls

Annette Larsen

This article is a summary based on tips from a FindMyPast newsletter. It was used as the basis of a talk to the NZSG New Plymouth branch in July 2012.



### 1. Re-examine everything

The first step in overcoming a brick-wall is to re-examine how you got to this point in your research.

Going back over all of your research is an extremely useful course of action. Something that wasn't relevant when you found it months ago may provide an all-important clue. A previously unknown person on your family's census entry, someone with a similar name in the birth, death or marriage index that you had previously ignored, or ruled out. Check for clues in what you have amassed so far, as well as mistakes that you might have made first time round.

It is equally important to question everything that you think you know about the missing ancestor. Whether you are working on assumptions, hearsay or even information taken from an official document, it may well be incorrect. Mistakes can be found on a certificate as well as in a relative's testimony. Check for proof of everything that you think you know, double-check ages and places, spellings and dates.

You should look to get concrete evidence for yourself, from the records.

### 2. Search all available sources

Often a brick wall can be overcome by broadening your search. The first step is to try to locate all possible records for the person, try to find them in every relevant census, birth, marriage and death records. Make sure that you obtain the documents as proof. Double-checking and cross-checking details such as the name, age and place of birth is essential when you encounter difficulty.

There are a great number of resources available, both online and offline. Libraries and local family history societies may be able to help. You'll need to look in new ways.

Always note your sources. This will allow you to go back over what you have found, double-check and confirm that you have interpreted all of the information correctly.

### 3. Collateral lines

If you have tried all of the above and still not got any closer to overcoming your brick wall, do not give up.

Researching other lines of your family tree; the siblings of ancestors and other wider family, is not only an equally valid and vital part of one's family history, but also a good way of finding answers to problems on your direct line. Collateral kin, as these ancestors are known, may be the key to unlocking the secrets of your more immediate relatives.

Whilst collateral kin may seem remote, or perhaps even irrelevant, when viewed from a modern vantage point, there would have been a time when their ties to your own ancestors were much closer. Researching these lines may well lead you back to your direct line, from a new and interesting angle.

Perhaps the elusive ancestor you have been unable to trace was staying with them on the night of the census, perhaps they were mentioned in a will, appear as a witness on a death certificate or even married within the family. Marriages between cousins was not uncommon.

Researching collateral lines will provide you with a wider view of your family history, and help to put it into context. It will also allow you to uncover many relatives that you were unaware of, some of whom you may wish to meet.



#### 4. Other researchers

During your research you may have found new relatives, or got back in touch with others that you hadn't spoken to for a time. It is always worth asking any new relatives for help. Find out what they know, if they have photographs, stories or even research of their own to share with you.

It is also worth sharing your findings with your close relatives, particularly any to whom you spoke when you started to build your family tree. Something or someone that you have found in your family history research may spark a memory, or a connection that they had previously forgotten. They may have heard a story about the elusive family member which, however trivial it may seem to them, could be of enormous use in narrowing down places and ages.

With the prevalence of genealogy resources and message boards on the internet it has become possible to contact others who may have researched branches of your family. Whilst this can be of use it is always important to check for yourself, using someone else's research as a guide rather than taking it as fact.

#### 5. Name variations

The further back in time your research takes you, the higher the chances are that you will begin to encounter name variations and misspellings.

Name changes are not always accidental. Some people deliberately change spellings to Anglicise their name, preferred to use a middle name, or nickname, and some change their name in order to start again, or distance themselves from their past.

If you are having difficulty in locating someone try name variations. Try different vowels and any obvious possible alternate methods of spelling, search using known middle names or nicknames.

#### 6. Age variations

In the same way that a name you have may be noted slightly differently in the records, an age can also be a source of difficulty.

An ancestor may have deliberately altered their age at one time or another, for many reasons. Perhaps they needed to be older to enlist in the

military or to gain employment, maybe they were marrying someone much older (or younger) than themselves and wanted to reduce the margin. Misinformation stated in one record has a habit of creating a knock-on effect, making the job of locating them harder.

Age may also be different from what you would expect through no fault of the person in question. It was not unusual for a person to be unaware of their exact date of birth, whilst the age at death is a potential source of error due to it being reliant upon information given on behalf of the deceased.

#### 7. Social history

The history of your family is inextricably linked to the history of their time, and place. Part of the appeal of genealogy is discovering how your family lived, and how different their world was. Events of their day would have had a marked effect on their day to day lives, perhaps causing them to leave an area, pursue a different line of work or even causing their death.

Knowing that a deceased male ancestor was of fighting age in 1914, for example, would naturally lead you to check for his death in the World War One records.

On a smaller scale the industrialisation of the country led to marked changes in employment, as well as a large-scale movement of people. You may have an ancestor's dates of birth and death but what happened in between? Why did they live where they did, who did they move with, or towards? All of these questions can be useful when looking to trace a problem ancestor.

Understanding an area at the time when your ancestors lived there is key. You may find them in local newspapers, or in legal documents relating to land, property or local government. It will also enrich your understanding of where your family have come from, and tie you to an area you had never previously taken an interest in.



## Checklist

- Re-examine everything; a small error in your research can create a knock-on effect. An incorrect date, or name, may be the cause.
- Don't limit yourself to the birth, marriage, death and census records. There are millions of other resources, try them all.
- Be wary of name variations, particularly as you begin to go further back in time. Expect differences in spelling.
- Remember that people's ages may also vary, they may have been liberal with the truth, or simply not known their exact date of birth.
- Research collateral lines - investigating more distant branches of the family may lead you to solving the problems in your direct line.
- Discover more about the history of the area and time period in which your ancestors lived: understanding exactly how they lived is key.
- Continue to ask for help from your family, and the new relatives that you uncover with your research. Share your family tree online.

## Useful websites:

[ancestry.com.au](http://ancestry.com.au)

[findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk)

[paperspast.natlib.govt.nz](http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz)

[trove.nla.gov.au](http://trove.nla.gov.au) historic Australian newspapers

The historic UK newspaper section in the members area of the [NZSG website](#).

