

New Plymouth Genealogy

ISSUE No 51

Total Membership 133

September 2026

Open day a success, New Plymouth in the 1850's, This month's speaker, DNA and Facebook, New Plymouth's Soap Story, The Month's Picture Quiz, From the Archives, for your information, The Back Page.

Our Open Day was a great success!!

Saturday August 8th's open day at our rooms went really well, we saw new faces and a number of our members grabbed the opportunity to get some "one on one" guidance through their various genealogical brick walls.... The gods smiled on us with a lovely sunny day



Hi everyone. I was reminded today to write my Convenors Report for the next newsletter. I was surprised as it only seems a few days ago that I was writing the last one. Time seems to be speeding up!

First up some very sad news. One of our past members Graham Cowling has passed away. Graham has spent time on our committee, was handy with a hammer, and his wife Carol always brought goodies to anything they attended. We offer our sincere condolences to Carol and her family. Graham had been battling dementia, it finally took him on the 24 th August

September is getting close and so then is Spring. Daylight saving time ends on the 27th of September, and we'll be well on our way to Christmas again.

Keen genealogists in New Zealand and Australia are very lucky this year as we have the Auckland Family History Expo run by the New Zealand Society of Genealogists coming up in October. Sharyn Guthrie and I go every year, and there is always so much to learn and people to reconnect with. They always have an array of speakers from all over New Zealand and Australia, and the subjects are widely diverse. From learning what is new in Ancestry and My Heritage, to talks about DNA, AI, researching in places like Ireland and much more. It's a new venue — so hopefully Sharyn and I won't get lost too much!

Once we get over that and Christmas, we are then looking forward to the 18th AFFHO Congress on Family History which is taking place in Wellington from the 11th to the 14 th of February 2027. Also hosted by the New Zealand Society of Genealogists. Again, there are speakers from New Zealand and Australia and beyond. This year (much to Sharyn Guthrie's delight) the key note speaker is Jonny Perl of DNA Painter fame.

As for us locally, our team is always trying to make sure that the talks we present to you are interesting and of use to the family historian. If there is any subject you think would make a great talk, but are not keen on doing the talking yourself, let someone on the Committee know the subject. I'm sure one of our presenters could then organise the talk.

Happy hunting for those ancestors! *Gail Tanner*

We only had one correct entry to last months quiz !!

This month's quiz is fairly easy so please give it a try — you'll find it on page six together with the answers to last month's quiz. The Chocolate Fish winner will be announced at this months meeting.

Society Library: Open free to members. A \$5 charge to visitors. Opening Hours: Every Monday and Saturday: 10 am to 12 Noon Other Times by appointment
Meetings: 7:30 pm, first Tuesday each month at society rooms, Moturoa Shopping Centre — Access is off the Whiteley Street car park. Email: newplymouthgenealogy@gmail.com
Website: www.genealogynp.com



New Plymouth in the 1850's



This is one of the earliest photographs taken of New Plymouth. The photo is an ambrotype, meaning it was taken on glass and not photographic film. The view is of Marsland Hill/Pūkākā with St Mary's Church and was taken some time between 1855-1860.

THIS MONTH'S MEETING



**Graeme Jury will talk about our
Taranaki Biographical index.
This is a brilliant resource and
Graham will explain how to
navigate it and get the
best results**

7.30pm Tuesday Sept 1

NP Genealogy rooms Moturoa



Chairperson: Gail Tanner 027 376 0630
Secretary: Sally Morch
Treasurer: Lois Lovell
Committee: Lorraine Austin Peter Hewett
Sharyn Guthrie Glenys Krutz Russell Smith
Newsletter Editor: Hamish Guthrie
Sub Editor and contributor Sharyn Guthrie



Raffle winner—last meeting:

Sharyn Guthrie



Genealogy is sometimes about proving that bad family traits came from the other side of the tree!

In case you hadn't heard



HAVE YOU BEEN RELUCTANT TO DO YOUR DNA?



If so, now is the time - look at this price \$59.00 Australian for the kit & usually \$30.00 for shipping for the first kit.

I don't remember seeing it this low before. It's a good time to buy a kit - or even more than one as the shipping price drops usually to \$10.00 for each subsequent kit.

Legacy Family Tree Webinars - <https://familytreewebinars.com/>

Legacy family tree webinars have made a few changes to their website. There is a 'Quick Links' menu making it easier to get to the topic you are looking for, plus they have introduced a section called "Learning Paths".

These learning paths are hand-picked by their expert speakers — the best webinars on a topic, in the right order, leading to a certificate of completion. Or, create your own personalized learning path.

Quick Links

AI

DNA

Beginners

Methodology

Best of ESM

TechZone

NEXT DNA MEETING FOR OUR SOCIETY

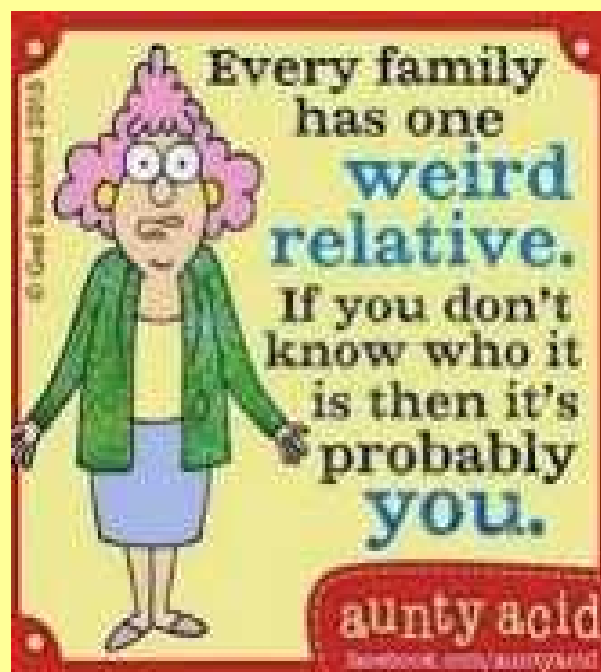


Sunday Sep 20th at 1.30pm at our rooms. All welcome no matter your level of experience. As always it is a place you can come with your questions, or if you just want some pointers to help you understand more about your DNA. I do have an email list I so if you do not get an email from me it means you are not on my list - sharynguthrie@gmail.com to be added

Library Duty



Sat 5 Sept Karen Crowe
Mon 7 Sept Charles Le Breton
Sat 12 Sept Russel Smith
Mon 13 Sept Lorraine Austin
Sat 19 Sept Jeff Grange
Mon 21 Sept Annette Larsen
Sat 26 Sept Lea Bellini
Mon 28 Sept Graeme Jury
Sat 3 Oct Karen Crowe



Can a first cousin once removed be returned?



DNA CORNER

The August DNA Interest Group meeting was well attended. We covered several aspects of Ancestry including having only one tree, making sure that you have yourself identified as the home person in the tree and your DNA test linked to you in that tree. If you manage other tests like I do for my husband, siblings and cousins you can also have their DNA tests linked to the same tree.

We had several queries from those attending and several helpful suggestions were given for viewing different aspects of your family tree as well as points to do with your DNA test.

I also talked again about the New Zealand Society of Genealogists Online DNA Interest Group (ODIG). I am a committee member on this group and I would encourage anyone who is an NZSG member to consider registering for this great group. We are a small committee but each month we have a Presentation through Zoom that anyone who is a member can view. We are now onto our 2nd Pilot Course for learning about DNA online and planning on doing a Beginner's Course next year.

Previous Presentations include - DNA Painter & Chromosome Mapping, Those Tricky Little Chromosomes, Am I a Davenport?, Lessons Learnt and Working with Polynesian DNA. We have done many Case Studies, Q&A sessions and many other topics.

If you are interested go to the NZSG Website and join. ODIG is free to join as long as you belong to NZSG.

Website—<https://genealogy.org.nz/>

To Register for ODIG - <https://genealogy.org.nz/NZSG-Online-DNA-Interest-Group/11380/>



FACEBOOK

Did you see my post about Jonny Perl being the Keynote speaker at the AFFHO Conference in Wellington in February 2027?

Jonny Perl is a huge favourite of mine and I'm so thrilled to finally have a chance to meet him in person. Jonny started the DNA Painter website to launch his amazing piece of software for Chromosome mapping, this helped me enormously when I was fairly new to DNA. This first foray into software development to help with Genealogy especially DNA was almost 10 years ago now, and he has developed his website exponentially. It is full of many helpful tools - it's where you will find the Shared cM Project that Blaine Bettinger manages and Jonny turned into an interactive tool. This helps us try and work out potential DNA match relationships.

The site also has WATO - the "What are the Odds" tool that can help you try and work out where a mystery DNA match fits into your family tree, another tool I like is the Coverage Estimator that helps you work out how much of an ancestor you may have covered through your DNA matches. His ancestral trees have several functions. Go and look at his website - <https://dnapainter.com/> - you won't regret it!

Sharyn

Obituary: Graham COWLING (1949-2026)



It was sad to learn of the death of Graham, one of the long time members of our Society. As well as being a very supportive member of our society he did lot of work for the Taranaki Volunteer Coastguard Service and other organisations. He has been unwell for a wee while so we have not seen him recently, our condolences to Carol and his family.

New Plymouth's Great Soap Story

"Crusader Soap"



"Add a little fairy to your tub" Taranaki households were urged during the 1940s and 1950s - or how about **"A Tiki in the bath?"** New Plymouth's Crusader Soap Products were used on wash days throughout the province.

Fresh home from fighting behind enemy lines in World War Two Walter Rail and his mates didn't know what to do - so they made soap. Walter served with the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) in the Middle East before returning home with his new wife Audrey to life in New Plymouth in 1945. "There were four of us come out of the army: Phil Stokes, Jim Hastie, Ted Burberry and me, and we didn't know what to do. We heard that the Crusader Products factory was up for sale so blindly we said 'We'll have a go at this!'" says Walter. Rehabilitation scheme money from the Government helped pay for the factory.

Bacon to bubbles - A former bacon factory, the huge concrete building on the edge of the Waiwhakaiho River had been supplying soap to the New Zealand government to be sent overseas during the war. Walter and Audrey moved into the little house next to the factory, wedged between the Waiwhakaiho River, the main road, and the railway line that ran along the embankment behind the home.

Walter put his hand up for the position of chief soap maker at the factory. "The others said to me 'Would you like a go at it?' I said 'Yeah, I'll have a go at anything!'"

The manager from Lever Bros - the company that made Sunlight Soap - came up to check the factory out for the men before they bought it. "He asked me - 'Do you know anything about soap?' I said 'Other than that you wash with it - no!'" The manager invited Walter down to Wellington for a couple of weeks to work in the factory and learn the intricacies of soap making. "I came back and they said - 'Do you know how to make soap now?' And I said 'No! But I'll give it a go!'"

A recipe for soap - Each week 12 drums of tallow from the Waitara abattoirs, Borthwicks, would be melted down in a large tank. This would be pumped into a vat where caustic soda was carefully added. "You then turned the steam on to get the mix boiling but you had to be very careful you didn't overdo it - otherwise it would come over the top of the vat!"

One day someone forgot to turn off the steam - the thick porridge-like liquid soap boiled over and oozed over the factory floor before anyone realised. "What a mess to clean up! It took us about a week to do it - but everything turned out alright."

Once the caustic was mixed through, the soap would be pumped into a mixer where soda ash was added as a neutraliser. The soda ash had been dug out of five big tanks by pick and shovel.

From the mixer the soap was poured onto a trolley where it would be left over the weekend to cool and set into a half-tonne slab. Before the boys came along everything at the factory was done by hand - including cutting the soap into bars or tablets. The new owners modernised the factory - cutting out a lot of the time consuming tasks.

Tiki and fairies - "We used to make a carbolic soap, sold in long bars, and Tiki soap." The men imported a German stamper to imprint the word Tiki on the tablets of soap.

Then there was Fairy Wonder - the soap powder with the slogan "Try a little fairy in your tub". Walter said: "We thought that wouldn't be very politically correct today!" Another slogan used was "Makes clothes white as Egmont snows".

Continued next page



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How well do you know Taranaki?



The year is 1909 what Taranaki town is this
it's not New Plymouth or Stratford.



A place in New Plymouth has been named after
this person Who is this?

The editor will award a luxury Chocolate Fish to the first correct answer—all other correct answers will go into the draw for 2 more chocolate fish. Email your answers to the editor at : hamishg1@gmail.com Entries close September 30 2026

Last month's answers



Pioneer Village, Stratford



D V Sutherland, Mayor of New Plymouth 1968 - 1980



Wreck of the Gairloch, Oakura,

New Plymouth's Crusader Soap—continued

Sales were good - so good that the little company needed a new steam boiler to cope with the workload. A huge second hand boiler was found in Opunake, dismantled and brought home on the back of a truck. "A local engineer came out and said 'Who are you going to get to put it together?' We didn't know anything about boilers but said "We'll do it ourselves!"

After the new boiler was put in Jim suggested putting a whistle on it. "We used to watch people come home about 5 o'clock at night and to work early in the morning and we'd blow the whistle on the boiler - of course they'd stop their cars because they thought a train was coming - once they realised what it was they'd call us all the names under the sun! They were good days.

The Queen's tour of New Zealand in 1953-1954 was a time of great excitement for the people of New Plymouth. Crusader Products joined in the fun. "She came across the Waiwhakaiho Bridge into town so we decorated the factory with ponga fronds and spelt "Welcome" in the hedge with hydrangea blooms" recalls Walter. "We all stood out the front and stood to attention."

As New Zealand recovered from the war Phil and Jim went off and got other jobs. While Walter made the soap Ted took to the streets and sold it. Competition in the soap industry was fierce. At that time Lever Bros had the New Zealand market washed up and were not happy when the little company from New Plymouth tried to enter the Auckland market. They rang up and more or less told us not to encroach on their territory. They could do that at the time - they were giving away washing machines and that sort of thing - well, we couldn't cope with that. But local people were really supportive especially considering the amount of competition out there."

The little factory diversified into selling soda crystals to local dairy factories - the crystals were used to sterilise vats. Then they made bone dust - grinding down bones collected from local butchers to make fertilizer.

After ten years competition proved too tough and the men decided to close the factory. Walter went on to work on the dredge for the Taranaki Harbours Board. But he never forgot his time as a soap maker. "We could do anything - that was our attitude, everybody was like family, it was a good life."

If you don't know who the family black sheep is, it's probably you.



New Plymouth Genealogy 10th Anniversary October 2002



Betty Lark Judy Kirkland Noeline Carey Judy Thompson



Bruce Bellini Shirley Fraser Kim Jones (Elgar)



Jan Gow and Hamish Guthrie



Anne Evans and Jan Gow



Heather Hall Noreen Potts Karen Crowe



Anne and Murray Evans



Betty Lark Judy Thompson Gail Tanner Ann Evans



Murray Evans and Bruce Bellini

SUBSCRIPTIONS WERE DUE BY 7 JULY 2026

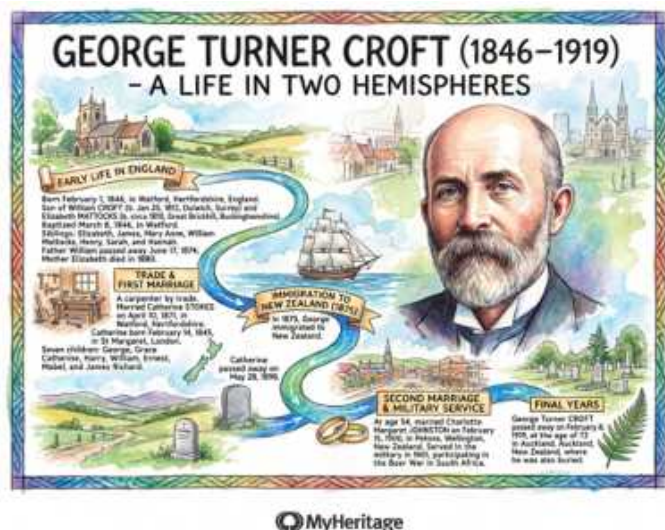
*If unsure of amount or bank account, go to our website
(www.genealogynp.com) and details are on the new member form*



MY HERITAGE INFOGRAPHICS

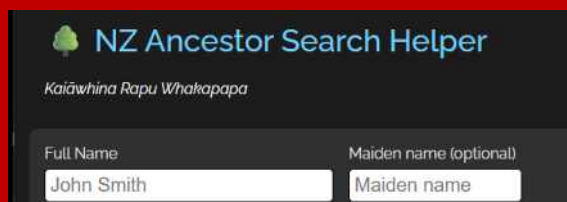
Have you discovered this in your My Heritage Menu? If you provide them with a photo and biography of your ancestor they design an infographic around the person.

You find it under the "Family Tree" tab—Family Infographics.



HAVE YOU USED THIS WEBSITE YET?

<https://ash.howison.co.nz/> Luke Howison has created this search helper for us in NZ. It goes to multiple sources and gives us an amazing amount of information.



Library News Magazines received:

Who Do You Think You Are (July & August) *Family Tree* (July & August)

Newsletters received: Canterbury, Nelson, Otaki, Palmerston North, Riccarton, Southland & Whanganui

If you would like an email copy of newsletters from another genealogy society or branch, please contact Peter Hewett
Email: newplymouthgenealogy@gmail.com



Diane Pickett and Nigel Crean

The Back Page

Hi everyone

It was great to see a good turn out at our "Open Day" a good collection of new and old faces with lots of help on hand from our committee. The success of this day provides a worthwhile platform for us to build on and make the next one even better.

Last month's quiz must have stumped a lot of people as I only received one correct answer. This month's quiz is a lot easier ...hint, to work out the mystery town look closely at the shop lettering. Once again we'll be giving away another Luxury Chocolate fish and another couple of fish to the next two correct answers—you'll find it on page 6. Do have a look and a think, then email me your answer.

Through the years our society has hosted an interesting range of speakers, understandably some have been more popular than others depending on your particular interest, however I think a maximum time limit could make it a lot easier for some to sit through if it's a talk that doesn't hold your interest.

Finding worthwhile speakers on a regular basis is not an easy task so if you know of someone who you think would be great, do have a chat to a committee member and tell them all about it.

*Comments and suggestions are always welcome - my email is hamishg1@gmail.com or 027 608 3074
Till next time Hamish*



Genealogists don't get Alzheimer's, they just lose their census.