

# Chapter 1

## McPhersons, Clarks and Peddies

My mother was born a McPherson, so that is where we shall start. She was actually only the second generation of McPhersons to be born in New Zealand, although her grandfather had come to New Zealand when young, and her McPherson ancestors had lived in Dunedin, or in Manuka Creek (between Lawrence and Milton), for many years. They were miners, for coal in Scotland and for gold in New Zealand; poor before they came to New Zealand, and poor after.

### Arrival in New Zealand; Robert McPherson and Marion Waugh

The first of this McPherson branch to arrive in New Zealand was my mother's G-grandfather, **Robert McPherson** (see page 6), who arrived in Port Chalmers on the 5th of October, 1861, on the *Robert Henderson*, from Clyde. He was accompanied by his wife, **Marion Waugh**, and five children<sup>1</sup>.

Robert and Marion came to New Zealand from East Stirlingshire, one of the major coal mining areas in Scotland at that time. Robert himself was born in about 1821, in Wallacetown, Ayrshire, now a suburb of the town of Ayr<sup>2</sup>. In the early 19th century, Wallacetown was a relatively new arrival, only in existence since about 1760, due to the discovery of coal nearby. True to form, Robert's father was a coal miner, but I know nothing more about either of his parents, apart from their names (Benjamin McPherson and Janet Smith). At some stage, Robert must have moved east, to the districts of East Stirlingshire, as it was in the parish of Muiravonside (pronounced Moranside) that he married Marion Waugh, in 1847. Marion herself was born in Redding, very close to Muiravonside, and was about 24 when she married Robert. Redding was the site of the one of the large Polmont coal mines, so it's likely that Marion also came from a mining family.

In about four years, around 1851, they had their first son, Benjamin, who was born in New Monkland (a few miles off to the southwest, towards Glasgow), they had a daughter, Margaret, in 1853 at Muiravonside, another daughter, Marion, in 1855 at Stonerig (in Stirlingshire), and another daughter, Janet, in 1860 at Bathgate, West Lothian.<sup>3</sup> The family was obviously moving around a lot; the West Lothian 1861 census lists Robert's occupation as "brusher in mines", so we can be pretty confident that he went wherever he could get a job, maybe as an itinerant miner.

The 1840/41 Statistical Account for Stirlingshire has some lovely tidbits. The population of Muiravonside was around 1700, included one insane person under restraint, and three too weak in mind to be employed in labour.<sup>4</sup> Coal mining was clearly a major activity, and the people were poor. However, according to the Reverend James McFarlan, Minister, who wrote this account, "The people are industrious, sober, and kind, especially to other in distress." Yeah, right. In neighbouring Polmont "The people, on the whole, are orderly and peaceable. Among the colliers, there has been

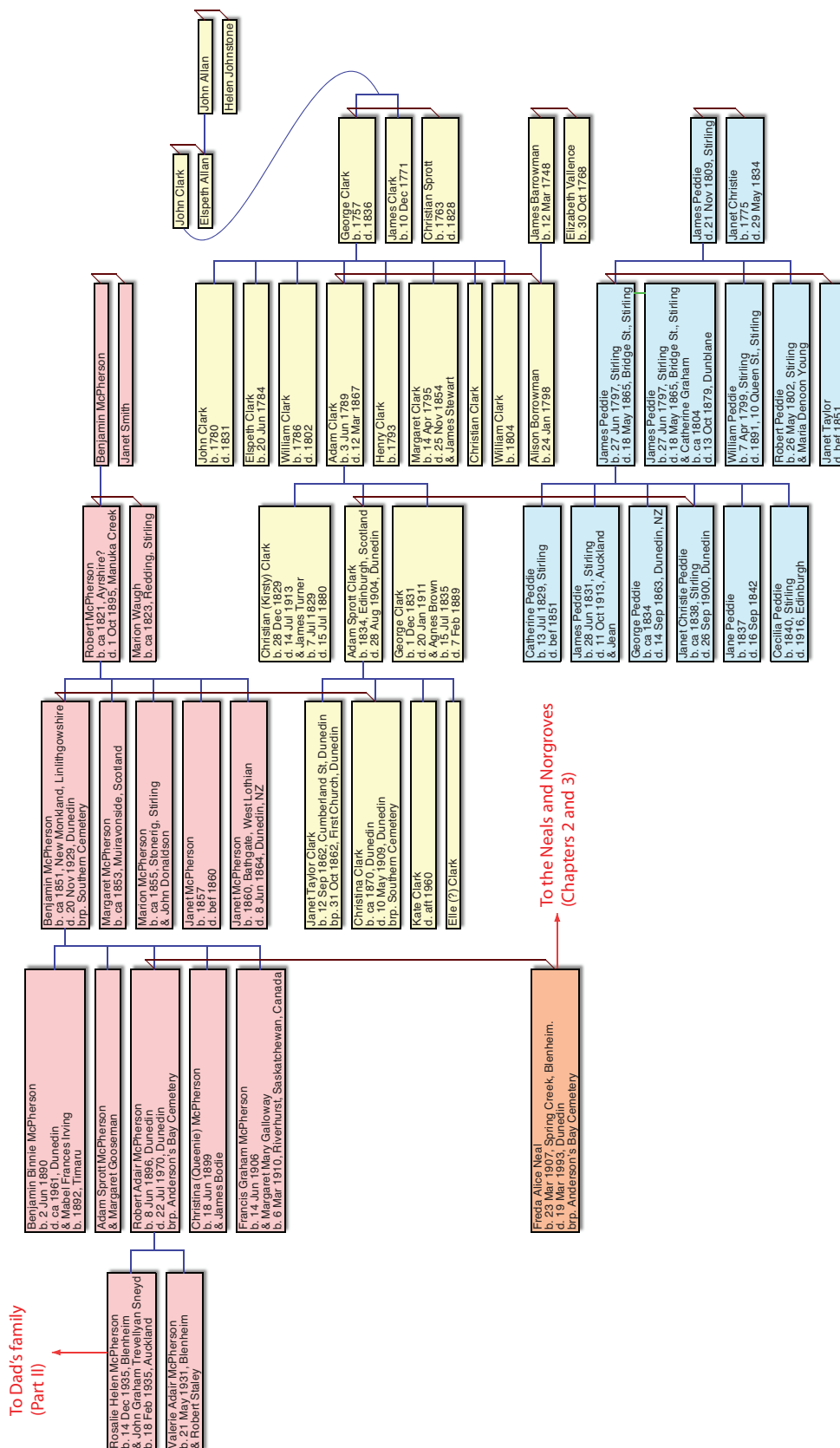
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<sup>1</sup> According to the shipping list they were all daughters, but they certainly were not. More on this later.

<sup>2</sup> Actually, it's not so clear. The 1861 census says that Robert was born in Wallacestone, Stirling (a town close to Polmont and Muiravonside in East Stirlingshire), but his death certificate says he was born in Ayrshire. I've gone with the Ayrshire Wallacetown.

<sup>3</sup> Another Janet was born in 1857, but died young

<sup>4</sup> Teenagers, obviously.



The McPhersons, Clarks and Peddies.

a perceptible improvement during the last few years – more attention being paid to the education of the young.” How nice that must have been.

In May of 1861, Gabriel Read discovered gold in what came to be known as Gabriel’s Gully, in Otago, thus leading to the Central Otago gold rush. Is it a coincidence that Robert and Marion, together with their children, left Scotland on the 11th of July that same year, and went straight to the Otago goldfields? Probably it is. They traveled as assisted passengers (i.e., the provincial government paid for their fare over – the Otago provincial government was a great encourager of Scottish immigration), which seems to indicate that they didn’t just follow the gold trail. And the fact that the whole family came would seem to indicate the same thing. Nevertheless, whatever their original intentions, the gold fields is where they ended up.

They came on the *Robert Henderson*, famous for her quick passages of around 80 days, the usual time being 100 to 130 days. It was her third voyage from the Clyde to Otago. Thomas Reid, who sailed to Bluff in the *Robert Henderson* in 1862 left a detailed diary account of the voyage, which makes interesting reading in spots (although mostly rather dull, to be honest). Robert’s and Marion’s experience must have been similar in many respects, with the difference, of course, that Thomas Reid was a rather wealthy young gentleman, while Robert definitely was not. The diary lists day after day of good weather or foul, ship concerts (which poor Thomas didn’t enjoy much), horrible food (with advice to future travellers on what to bring), a lot of sea sickness, and a lot of damp.<sup>1</sup> The 1861 voyage was described in the *Otago Witness*<sup>2</sup> as follows:

This beautiful Clipper Ship arrived at the Heads on Saturday, at 9, a.m., after one of her usual rapid passages, this being the third voyage she has made from the Clyde to this port with Immigrants. She left the Tail of the Bank on Thursday evening, the 11th July, and experienced fine weather to the Line, which was crossed on the 31st day; the Cape was passed on the 30th, and the Snares was sighted on Friday last, thus occupying 84 days from land to land, and 85 days from port to port. The weather experienced in the South Sea was blustery and changeable, with a good deal of rain and a very low Barometer – on one occasion it went down to 28°, the ship being hove to at the time to a N.E. gale. There was thus no opportunity of testing the high rate of speed of the ship, the greatest distance made during the course of any one week being 1,750 nautical miles. The passengers have been remarkably healthy, the only casualty being the death of one of the females from consumption. This doubtless arises from the excellent arrangements made for their comfort. The utmost harmony has been maintained amongst the passengers, and the conduct of all has been excellent. A series of concerts were given during the fine weather, and amongst other startling novelties a band of Ethiopian Serenaders caused much amusement, both to young and old – the hearty laughter on those occasions doing more good than the contents of the medicine chest. The state of health of the children has been very satisfactory; an extra quantity of farinacious [sic] food and milk, put on board by the agents, have been found very beneficial. After arrival, Captain Logan, in addition to a valedictory address signed by all the passengers, received a more substantial token of the respect and esteem in which he is held by them in the shape of a purse of sovereigns. Dr. Somerville, the Surgeon, was also presented with an address, marking the kindly feelings created by his uniform attention to the wants of the passengers.

Not all voyages were so uneventful, by any means<sup>3</sup>. For those who are interested, on board the *Robert Henderson* were 29 ploughmen, 19 shepherds, 36 labourers, 2 farmers, 2 wrights, 1 smith, 1 dyer, 2 slaters, 1 shoemaker, 3 painters, 1 grocer, and 25 domestic servants. What a haul for the colony. I have no idea how Robert and Marion McPherson were classified.

<sup>1</sup>One bit that made me giggle was that poor old Thomas was too bashful to bathe on deck, using the fire hose. He preferred to go to the night heads after dark, and have a couple of buckets of water thrown over him. Sounds nasty. I think I’d go for the hose, myself.

<sup>2</sup>*Otago Witness*, 12th of October, 1861, page 5.

<sup>3</sup>See page 36.

According to the shipping list he and his wife had five daughters with them, but this is certainly untrue, as Benjamin, the eldest son, was on that ship also. That there were at least three other daughters is likely (Margaret, Marion and Janet), but who the fifth child is, or if there was one at all, is unclear.<sup>1</sup> There were also two other families of Waughs on board, and I suspect they were related to Marion. I have no reason to think this, I just do. It was common for extended families to emigrate together.

**Questions:** Marion Waugh is a real puzzle. I have not been able to find her death certificate, or any record of her in New Zealand apart from her mention on Robert McPherson's death certificate. Did she live in Dunedin? When and where did she die? Was she related to the Waughs who were on the Robert Henderson also? How many children did she have, and when? According to Robert's death certificate, at the time of death he had living two sons (45 and 24 years old) and 5 daughters: 50, 43, 40, 29, and 27 years old. Benjamin was obviously the 45-year-old son. However, who was the 50-year-old daughter? This is very unclear. The West Lothian census lists Benjamin as the oldest, then Margaret, then Marion, then Janet. At Robert's death they would have been approximately 45, 43, 41 and 36. The first three ages match well with the death certificate. But the claimed oldest daughter is a real puzzle. For example, if she was 50 years old in 1895, she would have been born in 1845, two years before Robert and Marion were married. I suspect clerical error. And then, what about the last three children listed? If they were 29, 27 and 24 at the time of Robert's death, they would have been born when Marion was 42, 44 and 47 respectively. I reckon this is way too old for a woman with her kind of life to have children. But then, if the West Lothian census is correct, and Marion was born in 1828, then she would have been 37, 39 and 42. Just possible, maybe.

The trouble with Robert and Marion is that, once they land in Dunedin, they pretty much disappear. It's a very good bet that he, at least, headed out to Central Otago to look for gold, but we don't know this for sure. He was certainly a gold miner for the rest of his life, but he wasn't very successful, as he appears in two debtors lists, one in 1872, the other in 1869. In both lists he owed £67 for his assisted passage. Clearly he didn't pay it off in a hurry. It is also possible that he was on the Dunedin electoral roll in 1865/65, although he certainly wasn't on the roll in 1862. When Robert died in 1895 of pneumonia and chronic bronchitis, he was living in Manuka Creek (a site of one of the major gold mines), and his occupation was listed as miner and gardener.

I know almost nothing about what their children did. When Robert died he had two sons and five daughters living, as this is what his death certificate says (see the question box above). One daughter was called Margaret, another Marion. Marion married John Donaldson on the 24th of July, 1873, probably in Dunedin, and had two daughters, Elizabeth and Amelia. Mum says they were called Ada and Milly, and were a couple of old tricks. They owned the Excelsior Hotel for a while, and at some stage they lived up High St. When over seventy they set up a shirt-making business that went rather well. According to their membership cards in the Otago Settlers Museum they died unmarried.

And that's all I know about the other children of Robert and Marion.

## Benjamin McPherson and Christina Clark

Benjamin, the eldest son, followed in his father's footsteps, and was a gold miner. His official profession on his death certificate was "Engineer", but I am quite sure this just meant a mining engineer, which seems to me to be a fancy title for a gold miner.<sup>2</sup> He married Christina Clark in Dunedin, on the 22nd of December, 1887, and seems to have lived there for most of his subsequent

<sup>1</sup>Records are to be distrusted always, even something as simple as a shipping list. I'm sure it wasn't easy to get all the details correct as everybody rushed to get the hell off that damn ship.

<sup>2</sup>Not to mention that I know for sure that he worked for a gold mining company as a dredger in the Kawarau river (see page 9)

life.<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Binnie was born in 1890, followed by Adam Sprott, Robert Adair (1896), Christina (1899), and Francis Graham (1906).

Benjamin and Christina seem to have been reasonably prosperous in the first few years of their marriage. A photograph of them (page 10) that must have been taken less than ten years before her death<sup>2</sup> shows a well-dressed couple that don't look like they are starved of cash. However, this didn't last. Benjamin speculated, Mum thinks, and was most likely an alcoholic. Given Benjamin's interest in gold, it's a pretty safe bet that the speculations were in gold mines. At that time in Dunedin there were huge numbers of speculative investments in gold mines, most of which went bellyup quickly. At any rate, they lost all their money and ended up living on the wrong side of the tracks, down by the wharfs. At some stage they lived at Riverton. And close to the Oval in Dunedin, opposite the pub on the south side (Robert Adair, as a child, would take a sandwich and sit under the trees in the Oval).

It must have been not long after their descent into poverty that Christina died, aged only 39, when the family was living at Howard St.<sup>3</sup> She was seven months pregnant when she dropped dead very suddenly. Robert Adair remembered her complaining about a pain in her chest. They found her with little Graham, aged about two, sitting next to her on the floor, crying. The coroner's report, dated the 12th of May, 1909, reads:

An inquest was held yesterday afternoon by the coroner (Mr. H. Y. Widdowson) touching the death of Christina McPherson aged 39 which occurred suddenly at her residence Howard Street on Monday afternoon 10th May.

Wednesday 12th May.

Dr. Roberts gave evidence as to having known the deceased for last 20 years. She suffered from heart trouble and the cause of death was Syncope due to rupture of the right ventricle of the heart. Benjamin McPherson Husband of the deceased stated last Sunday more particularly she complained about her heart, but was up and about the house on Monday. She cooked the breakfast and attended her household duties as usual. Witness came home from work noon deceased looked ill and witness advised her to go to Dr. She said she would do so this evening, if she felt no better and he went back to work. A little child was left in the house with the wife. The others at school. He was summoned from work at 3.30. His wife lay dead on floor. He believed deceased last consulted a Doctor 2 Years ago. Ben Binnie McPherson. Eldest son of deceased stated that the question of his Mother consulting Dr. about her heart had often been discussed by family. Deceased had always postponed doing so. She was cheerful and otherwise in good health. Witness was brought from work by his Sister on Monday afternoon and finding his Mother on the floor apparently dead, went to bring his Father and then go for Doctor. A Verdict was returned in accordance with the Medical evidence.

Robert Adair said that his father spent his last £60 burying Christina. Christina's unmarried sister, Aunty Kate, came and looked after the children. Aunty Kate subsequently married and lived in Auckland. She came to Mary-Jane's christening (my older sister) and Mum has a photograph of her. She died not long after.

The most interesting bit of Benjamin's life to have survived was a letter written by his son, Robert Adair, to his own brother, Adam.<sup>4</sup> The letter is written on paper with the letterhead of H. Charleston & Co., Manufacturer of Ladies' and Gents' Whalebone Hair Brushes, 20th April, 1947. (This is the letterhead of Robert Adair's Blenheim business, but more on that in due course). The letter reads:

Dear Adam,

<sup>1</sup>Mum thinks he probably lived in Manuka Creek when he was younger, which is very likely, but there's no direct evidence for this.

<sup>2</sup>Why do I think this? Well, we have other photos of Benjamin, taken in 1899 when they already had four children, in which he looks quite a bit younger. Since she died in 1909, this makes this photograph between 1899 and 1909, I reckon.

<sup>3</sup>The only existing Howard St. in Dunedin is in Macandrew Bay, but Mum is quite positive the family never lived there. She says there used to be a Howard St. on the corner of the Oval.

<sup>4</sup>Joyce McPherson has the original copy. I took a photograph of this letter in 2008 when I visited Joyce in Christchurch.



Top: A pencil sketch of Benjamin McPherson done by his son, Robert Adair. Bottom: Benjamin McPherson and Christina Clark. I think this photograph was taken between 1899 and 1909.



Top: Benjamin and Queenie playing the fool in typical McPherson style. Bottom: Benjamin and Christina with four children. This must have been taken in 1899, the year that Queenie was born, as that's her as a baby. My grandfather, Robert Adair, is the cheeky little bugger sitting on the right.

With reference to your enquiry regarding the gold claim this lies in the Kawarau river. Dad was working a dredge there & the Directors were working a slinter [?] re the gold. Apparently they had or were putting one over the dad & he also objected to the dirty way they were putting it across the public with the shares.

At this time he broke a false bottom & a white pipe clay came up. In his own words you could see the gold in the clay in the buckets & he picked a nugget worth £3 [?] then off of the lip of a bucket as it passed. He was stubborn as you know & rather than see the directors carry on as they did he immediately worked the dredge off of the gold. The company finally went bankrupt & he said he would damn well lose with them rather than continue under such conditions.

This is the very plan he marked with me sitting in the Kitchen in Howard St. & I treasure it for its memories. Please look at it & return it immediately.<sup>1</sup>

The gold lay 10 yds below the old coal pit under the wash Dad said. If ever you get the money, put a dredge on it.

Send me some figures 1 to 10, small & large. I am struggling away valiantly trying to make them. I moulded the others in Plaster. I will send them all back when finished with.

Please do not show this plan to anybody. I think we should keep it a strict secret. Dad did not want it known beyond us.

We break up for term holidays May 9th & would come up with you then if you are not going before.

Regards,

Bert.

Well, well, what a revealing letter this is, accompanied by a real live treasure map (page 13). Not only do we learn that Benjamin was a dredge operator for a gold mining company working on the Kawarau river close to Cromwell, we also see that he was a gold miner at heart, and for the rest of his life had a dream of one day getting back to hit the jackpot. We can also see he was an ornery old bastard. No surprises there, given his progeny.

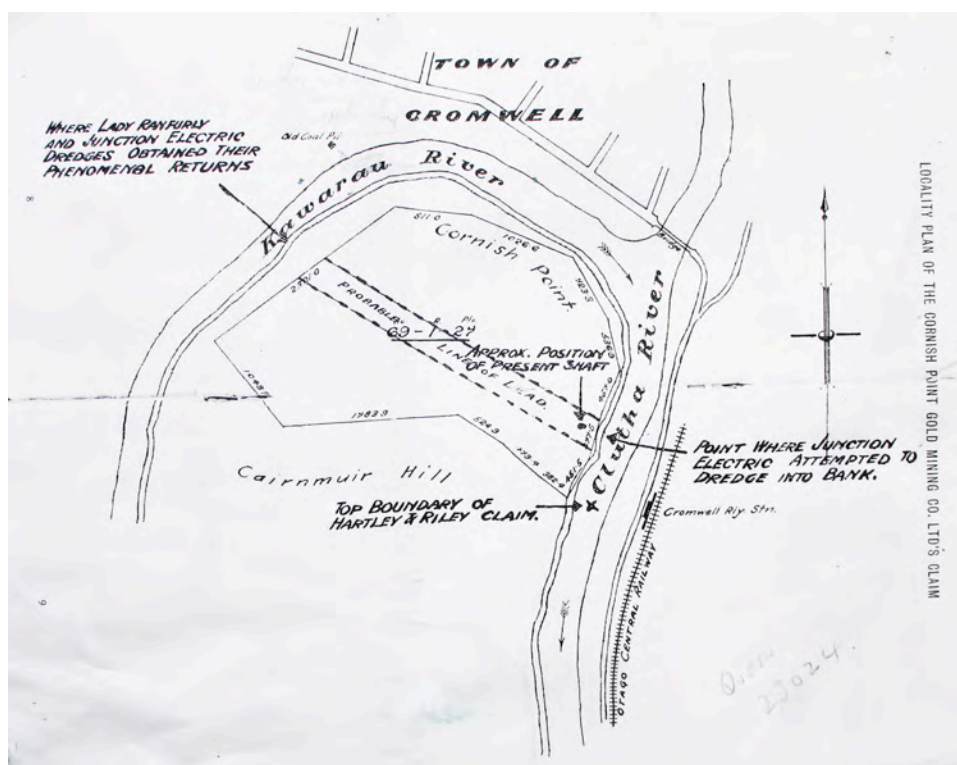
Benjamin died from “senile mycarditis” on the 20th of November, 1929, aged 79 and was buried in the Southern Cemetery alongside Christina. At the time of his death he was living at 7 Forbury Crescent. He had five living children at the time of his death (4 males, 39, 36, 33 and 23, and 1 female, 30).

**Benjamin Binnie.** The eldest child, born in June, 1890, died around 1961. He married Mabel Frances Irving on the 3rd of July, 1916, at the Pedrazzis Hotel in Mawheraiti (up the river from Greymouth, on the West Coast). He was a mining engineer, she was a dressmaker (born in Timaru in 1892, the daughter of Robert Leedham Irving, an accountant, and Mary Ann Austin). Mum always called her Auntie May and recounted some very salacious gossip about the actual father of their first child – they had three; Benjamin, Frank and Mick – but I probably shouldn’t repeat this in print. Also according to Mum, he wrote to Auntie May and proposed by saying “Come on over, let’s get married”.

**Adam Sprott.** I really should know his birth and death dates but I don’t. He married Margaret Gooseman and had a son, Graham, and a daughter, Rona. Rona married a butcher, says Mum, somewhere in South Dunedin. But then after some years she ran off with somebody else, and lived on the West Coast; her father cut her off and never spoke to her again. What a silly bugger. Graham, the son of Adam Sprott, married Joyce Ewart, the famous Joyce McPherson whom I met in Christchurch and who has been such a help to me in finding out stuff about the McPhersons. In return I fixed her range hood; I hope it stayed fixed, but knowing my skills I doubt it.

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<sup>1</sup>Since this letter was passed down to Adam’s descendants, he obviously didn’t return it to Robert Adair, as requested. Naughty Adam.



Benjamin McPherson's treasure map, as sent by Robert Adair to Adam Sprott.

Anyway, Graham died from a coronary at his daughter's wedding reception. The story goes that Glenda, another of the daughters, said to him "If you'd wanted to create a stir, why didn't you just stand on the table and down trou." They carted him out to the ambulance, and the last thing he said was "If I'd known this was going to happen, I would have changed my underpants." He died soon after.

In the second world war he had the same rifle number as his father did in the first world war. Quite a coincidence.

Mum says he was very funny, great repartee, and very slick talker. Lovely man, apparently.

Graham and Joyce had three daughters, Margaret, Glenda and Christina. Margaret died of a bone tumour just before she turned 50, Glenda married a Thomson and her son is Adam Thomson who played last year for the All Blacks (and didn't do too well; I doubt he'll get selected again this year) and I don't know anything more about Christina. Obviously, all I have to do is ask Joyce, but I haven't done that yet. Naughty me.

**Robert Adair.** My grandfather, about whom more shortly (page 20).

**Christina (Queenie).** She was born on the 18th of June, 1899, and died very suddenly in her sleep in her forties. She married Jim Bodie and had two daughters, Mavis and Tui. Mavis married her cousin, Mick McPherson, the son of Benjamin Binnie and Mabel Irving, but died in her 30s of a malignant melanoma. When Mavis died, the grandmother (Mabel, the wife of Benjamin Binnie) looked after the children (about four girls) for a number of years, before they finally went back to their father. Or so says my mother.

Queenie's other daughter, Tui, was born in the early 1930's, but died in her 60's from bowel cancer. She lived for a time in Pauanui and also for a time in Auckland, where she had a shop in Parnell. Mum remembers her as having a real sense of style, and being very smart. She married a Gibson (maybe called Guy) and had two children, Lee and Gray. I don't know anything more about them.

**Francis Graham:** The youngest child of Benjamin Binnie and Christina Clark, Francis was born on the 14th of June, 1906, and married Margaret Mary Galloway, who was born on the 6th of March, 1910, in Riverhurst, Saskatchewan, Canada. According to Mum “Francis Graham had no children. He died fairly young (40s) of some sort of motor neurone disease in my early days at Medical School. I remember him as a nice, small, gentle man. Not bolshie like Dad. He worked for a firm of tent and other canvas goods maker in Princes Street. He married Margaret Galloway. (I had 3 Aunty Margarets – this Aunty Margaret, Aunty May, (Ben’s wife), and Aunty Mag (Adam’s wife). Sam stayed with her in Middletom Road the night before our wedding.”

## The Clarks

Before I write about Robert Adair, my maternal grandfather, I shall take a somewhat lengthy detour around the family of his mother, Christina Clark, the wife of Benjamin McPherson.

Although Adam Sprott Clark is a fairly unusual combination of names, which makes it a little easier to identify him unambiguously in the records, it was still not until 2009 that I found out very much about him. It was then that someone called Clark Saunders contacted my parents from Winnipeg, saying that he was a descendant of the Clark family and was anybody interested. My parents passed his address to me, and I wrote, to receive in return an enormous amount of information about the family, including old photos and copies of legal documents [22].

### The early Clarks

The earliest known ancestor of my Adam Sprott Clark was one **John Clark**, who, in the 1750s, married **Elspeth Allan**, who was herself born in 1735.<sup>1</sup> John Clark was from Crichton, a small village just southeast of Edinburgh. There’s a well-known castle there, called (yes, you guessed it) Crichton Castle, and an old collegiate church, established in 1449, to the southwest. I very much doubt that any of my Clarks had anything to do with the castle, although they probably attended the church. They were certainly buried there.

We know almost nothing about John and Elspeth. It’s highly likely they lived in Crichton for all or part of their life, but even that’s only a guess. Her parents were John Allan and Helen Johnstone, but that alone doesn’t help a great deal. We do know that John and Elspeth had a son, George, in 1757, and a son James in 1771, but that’s it.

Their son **George Clark** was clearly educated to some extent. In 1827, at the age of 70, he could write his own name in a rather stylish manner, as we know from a surviving document. We also know from this same document that he was a joiner – a high-quality carpenter specialising in detailed work such as cabinet making.

George married **Christian Sprott** (an early form of Christina), which is how the rather strange name Sprott comes into the family, as well as the name Christina. They had at least seven or eight children, and possibly others.

**John** (1780–1831) became a doctor according to the family tradition. As [22] points out, it would be rather unusual for the son of a joiner to become a real doctor, so it’s most likely he was just a ship’s doctor, which required very little training at all. John certainly served at sea, in a whaling boat, as he brought back as souvenirs a marine telescope, a model of a four-masted ship, and his weighing scales. These were still in the family several years later, although not with John’s direct descendants, as he didn’t have any.

**Elspith** was baptised on the 20th of June, 1784, but then disappears completely.

**William** was born in 1786 but died young, when he was only 16, it’s not known from what cause.

**Adam.** Next, in 1789, came Adam, the father of Adam Sprott and my 3G-grandfather, so I’ll deal with him separately.

<sup>1</sup>According to the Crichton parish registers. This is the earliest recorded birth of any Clark ancestor in the records.

**Henry**, born in 1793, became a surveyor and married a Miss McKane, sister of a certain Martin McKane, whoever he is. They must have done rather well, as later in life they had two oil portraits painted, Henry holding a pair of dividers. These paintings were passed on to Henry's nephew, George, and to his wife's brother, so clearly they had no children.

**Margaret** (1795–1854) married a James Stewart who died of asthma in 1854, aged 60

**William**, born in 1804, was named after his older brother who had died earlier.

**Christian?** There is one additional child whom, although not known for sure to be a daughter of George and Christian, is almost certainly so. In 1817, a Christian Clark was married in Crichton to William Langlands. A number of factors point to her being the daughter of George and Christian. Her name, obviously, but also the fact that young George Clark (the son of George and Christian) was assisted in the early stages of his career by a joiner named William Langlands. Easily explainable as his auntie's husband helping him out, which would make everything tie together nicely.

One reason we care about this (apart from the fact that we are genealogical geeks) is that the son of Christian Clark and William Langlands was another William Langlands (born in 1817) who emigrated to New Zealand and became a prominent politician in Otago. According to the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*<sup>1</sup> William Langlands was a Justice of the Peace and held the position of Provincial Engineer and Architect. Just another interesting New Zealand connection. He would have been Adam Sprott Clark's first cousin, but I doubt they moved in the same social circles.

## Adam Clark

The third son of George Clark and Christian Sprott was **Adam Clark**; born in 1789 in Pathhead, he became a joiner, like his father. Although we know he was born in 1789, he disappears from the records until the 6th of November, 1827, upon which date he bought a two-storey house in Pathhead, at 110 Main St. Adam, described as a "Joiner in Pathhead", paid £60 to a labourer called James Montgomery, but also had to pay 12 Scots shillings to the landowner, a William B. Callander, a member of one of the rich families in the district.<sup>2</sup> The house<sup>3</sup> was built in 1776 for a woman named Janet Meek. When he bought the house Adam was eligible for the same privileges as the previous owner, and subject to the same restrictions. He had access to the local stone and lime quarries for repairs to the building, but had to share the cost of maintenance of the mutual gable between his house and the building to the west. He was not allowed to construct any other buildings on the property and was not allowed to leave rubbish lying around.<sup>4</sup> The purchase document was witnessed by Adam's father, George.

A year or so later, Adam extended his holdings by buying an adjoining long one-storey building, which had also once belonged to Janet Meek. He paid the previous owner, John Inglis, £110 10s. Inglis (or his agent) met with Adam at the property between 1 and 3 pm on the 29th of December, 1828 (the same year that Adam's mother, Christian Sprott, died) to give him, according to an old custom, some earth, a stone, and a handful of grass and corn, in token of the transfer of ownership.

Four weeks later Adam married **Janet Borrowman**, the daughter of a ploughman in Pathhead. One presumes that this wedding was not unrelated to the purchase of the house and adjoining workshop.

<sup>1</sup>Volume 4. Published in 1905. The *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* was published in six volumes between 1897 and 1908 by the Cyclopedia Company Ltd. Each volume deals with a region of New Zealand and includes information on local towns and districts, government departments, individuals, businesses, clubs and societies. Individuals could pay to get included, and they wrote their own entries, so it's easy to imagine what lots of them are like; honesty was in less demand than self-promotion.

<sup>2</sup>Under the Scottish feu system there is an annual payment in money or in kind in return for the enjoyment of the land. The crown is the first overlord, and land is held of it by crown vassals, but they in their turn may feu their land, as it is called, to others who become their vassals, whilst they themselves are mediate overlords or superiors; this process of sub-infeudation may be repeated to an indefinite extent. Feu is the Scottish version of the English fee.

<sup>3</sup>Which is still standing according to [22]; I'd love to see it. I've been to Edinburgh, but at that time I didn't know this part of the family history

<sup>4</sup>I could so easily make a remark here about my teenage children, but I shall refrain from doing so.

Poor Janet had three children in quick succession (Christian in 1829, George in 1831, and **Adam Sprott** in 1834) and promptly died. We don't know when she died exactly; all we do know is that she was dead by 1837, when Adam remarried, to **Christian Brydon**, from the neighbouring parish of Cranston.

In 1853 Adam made his will, in an attempt to "prevent all disputes and differences amongst them after my death". He left everything to his wife, but only for her lifetime. On her death, the two-storey house was to go to his elder son, George (described as a joiner in Edinburgh), the neighbouring workshop to Adam Sprott (also described as a joiner in Edinburgh), and a third property, a "dwelling house and yard, in the Village of Pathhead, with the Garden belonging thereto, and Barn and Stable at the back thereof", to his daughter Christian ("presently servant to James Montgomery Esquire of Lillington, near Leamington"). This third property was likely one Adam had inherited from his father, George the Joiner, who had died in 1836.

Of the three children of Adam and Christian, the younger Christian, or Kirsty as she was called, left home young to become a domestic servant to some family in Leamington, in Warwickshire, down in England. She married a James Turner and had a bunch of children, some of whom are described briefly in [22]. The second child, George, is the main subject of [22] as he is the direct ancestor of Clark Saunders. However, I shall move on quickly to Adam Sprott, my own direct ancestor.

### Adam Sprott Clark

Born in Edinburgh in 1837, Adam Sprott learned the joiner trade from his father (presumably) and by the time he was 19 he was working with his brother, George, as a joiner in Edinburgh. However, not long after, he emigrated to Dunedin on the *George Canning*, in 1857, where he worked as the Chief Engineer on a number of steamers, including the P.S. Geelong, under Captain Boyd.<sup>1</sup> The Geelong was a paddle steamer, subsidised by the Otago Provincial Council to run to Oamaru, Moeraki and Waikouaiti, and James Parker Boyd was its Captain from 1860 to 1863.

Adam Sprott Clark married Janet Christie Peddie (about whom more below) on the 26th of April, 1861, at MacLaggan St., Dunedin, at the house of one of Janet's older brothers, James. It's likely that Adam worked with James Peddie in his draper's shop along Cumberland St. (see page 18), and possibly lived on Cumberland St. until at least 1885.

Adam was about as successful as the McPhersons, and was declared bankrupt on the 14th of August, 1875, according to the *Otago Witness*. In fact, poor Adam's iniquities are recorded for posterity in the pages of the *Bruce Herald*, reporting from Tokomairiro.<sup>2</sup>

The decision of His Honor Mr. Justice Williams recently, in the case of Adam Sprott Clark, a bankrupt, must commend itself to every right-thinking mind as an essentially just one. The particulars of this case are very brief, but they reveal a state of affairs which we would fain hope do not occur often in this Province. In November last the bankrupt was indebted to the extent of £40, against which his assets were £15 10s. The bankrupt entered into a contract with one Pearce for the erection of a house, to cost £250, on land belonging to his wife. The builder was given to understand that the land was the property of the bankrupt, but it would appear that he was misinformed on this point, we presume by the bankrupt himself . . .

His Honor suspended the bankrupt's discharge for two years, and in doing so used the following forcible language:— "Now, the effect of the bankrupt's conduct had been this: without paying his debts, he had got improvements made on his wife's property to the value of £100. His other debts amounted to about £20, and by the course he had taken he proposed to come to this Court to relieve himself of these debts, and at the same time to retain for his wife the benefit of the improvement effected. It was a monstrous thing that a man should use his wife or his wife's property as machinery to cheat his creditors.

<sup>1</sup>Or possibly Boyce. However, Boyd was a known captain of the Geelong, while Boyce appears nowhere I can find.

<sup>2</sup>2 November, 1875. The *Bruce Herald* was published in Milton from 1864 to 1971, making it one of New Zealand's longest running country newspapers. And I'd never heard of it before.

The order of the Court was that his discharge be suspended for two years.” Although the language used by his Honor is not so ornate as that indulged in by his Honor Judge Ward in Reid’s case, still, it is sufficient to lead us to expect that all dishonest bankrupts will find it no trifling ordeal to obtain their discharge at the hands of Mr. Justice Williams.

So naughty old Adam tried to put a house into his wife’s name and thus get it built for him while he was bankrupt, defrauding the builder in the process. Seems like something people do all the time nowadays. But good old Justice Williams got him, and was clearly awfully proud of himself.

Adam Sprott’s father died sometime between 1857 and 1873, and Adam inherited a property in the village of Pathhead, as described above. In 1885, after a couple of years of to and fro with Scotland, he sold it to a Doctor of Medicine, Archibald Craig, for the sum of £85. Interestingly, Adam Sprott spells his name Clarke in his signature, and is described as living in Cumberland St. I guess the money came in too late to help him with his bankruptcy.

In about 1898, a statement by Adam Sprott on his F98 form (I’m not entirely sure what this form was for, but it contained details of his career, family and arrival in New Zealand) said that he had two sons and two daughters living, two daughters married, and four grandchildren. Three of these four grandchildren must have been the children of Christina Clark and Benjamin McPherson.<sup>1</sup>

Adam Sprott died on the 28th of August, 1904, at which time he was living at 61 Union St. His father was listed as Adam Clark, Builder, and his mother’s name was unknown.<sup>2</sup> At the time of his death he had two surviving sons (aged 40 and 37) and three surviving daughters (aged 34, 26 and 23). Christina (who married Benjamin McPherson; see page 8) was obviously the eldest surviving daughter, but I have no idea who the other children were, or what they did, which is rather a shame. There was an older daughter, Janet Taylor Peddie Clark, born only a year after Janet and Adam were married, but she wasn’t alive in 1900, when her mother died. She may well have died young.

**Questions:** I need to pull my finger out and track down the children of Adam Sprott Clark and Janet Peddie. It shouldn’t be all that hard to do, and I’ve just been lazy. I’m pretty sure that one of his sons was called Adam Sprott Borrowmay (sic; probably a misreading of Borrowman) Clark, who married Margaret Joyce in 1901 in Dunedin, but I’m not even absolutely certain of that.

## The Peddies

Adam Sprott’s future wife, Janet Christie Peddie, born in Stirling in 1838, arrived in Dunedin in December, 1858, on the *Gloucester*, travelling with her brother George<sup>3</sup>. Not steerage, oh no. They came out Second Cabin. Very fancy. She was 20, he was 24. According to the arrival notice “. . . although they met with a severe gale in the Bay of Biscay, at the commencement of the voyage, all allow that during the passage every comfort that a ship can give has been liberally afforded to them.” Most of the arrivals, of which there were more than 100, were “stout, healthy, young people”. Jolly hockey sticks, eh what? Only two deaths, which wasn’t so bad. Even more exciting than the passengers were the two Spanish Merino Rams and the two Cotswold Rams, who get a whole paragraph to themselves. Very proper priorities, giving the sheep more attention than the plebs.

George became a draper in Dunedin, probably in business with his brother James, but didn’t live for long, dying in 1863 of dropsy. Janet, her husband Adam, and her brother George were all

<sup>1</sup> Possibly all four of them were, as Christina’s fourth child was born in 1899, and the date of 1898 for the F98 form might not be quite right.

<sup>2</sup> Well, one supposes that Adam knew it, but I guess nobody asked him in time. Mind you, it wasn’t on his marriage certificate either. It’s tempting to speculate that, since his birth mother died when he was very young, and he was raised by his stepmother, there may be a reason he didn’t tell people his mother’s name. It certainly seems a little strange.

<sup>3</sup> As well as “6 pkgs. rope, 1 box saddlery, 52 pkgs. wire fencing, 5 chests, 22 half-chests, 1 box tea, 2 cases slate pencils, 1 box wearing apparel, 83 casks beer, 26 casks brandy, 50 drums oil, 30 barrels tar, 50 casks cement, 200 bags salt, 150 tons and 15 hhds. coal, 1110 flooring boards, 5 barrels soap, 1 bag coffee, 1 parcel sheep netting, 2 glass cases plants, 10 cases implements, 1 case seeds, 3 rams, 1 dog, 1 case paperhangings, 16 boxes, 6 bales, 211 cases, 183 casks, 17 qr.-casks, 3 hhds., 10 barrels, 75 kegs, 30 crates, 88 coils, 16 bags, 10 bundles, and 70 packages merchandize.”

buried in the same grave in the Southern Cemetery. She, of course, was buried later, as she didn't die until 1900, when she was 62. According to her death certificate, she died of "Bright's Disease of Kidney – 6 Years; Uroemie [sic] coma – 48 Hours"<sup>1</sup>; the cemetery record merely says she died of "dropsy". Bright's Disease is now known to be an acute or chronic nephritis (it was obviously chronic in Janet's case) and can arise from a number of specific causes; we don't know what the specific cause was. However, since her brother George also died from "dropsy", which might well have been related to a kidney ailment also, not to mention that her daughter Christina died young of a heart condition, it's tempting to speculate that something ran in the family.

Their brother James also came out to New Zealand from Stirling, and lived for a time at MacLaggan St. in Dunedin. We know this, as Janet and Adam Clark were married there. James lived to the ripe old age of 83, before finally dying in Auckland in 1913. He married Jean, and had an only daughter Annie, who married William A. Justice Dutch in Wellington, on the 25th of April, 1901, at which time James was still living in Dunedin. However, when he got older he must have moved up to Auckland to be with his daughter, as he died at her home.

James was a draper, most likely in the same shop as his brother George, on Cumberland St. He and George didn't start off as drapers, they started out in even more lowly positions, as they were recorded in a jury list on the 2nd of February, 1861, as a gardener and a clerk respectively. However, by the time of his death in 1863 George was a draper (according to his burial record), and James remained a draper for only a short time after that. Presumably, once his brother died he lost heart and moved on to other things. He was still a draper on the 2nd of October, 1864, but was only "... lately a draper ..." by the 1st of July in 1865. How do we know this? Well, James and his brother-in-law, Adam Clark, had a little excitement in 1864, when James's drapery store was burgled by a certain William White who had gone on a burglary spree, stealing tools from a house in Anderson's Bay, clothes from James Peddie's drapery store in Cumberland St., blankets and a tent from Black Jack's Point<sup>2</sup>, a gun and a lamp from Vauxhall Gardens, and a desk and some jewelry from a house in Stuart St. Quite a haul. According to the *Otago Witness*<sup>3</sup>:

James Peddie, lately a draper, carrying on business in Cumberland street, stated that on the 1st of October, 1864, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, he locked up his shop and left all right. He returned to it at about twelve o'clock the same night, when he observed that the lower sash of a window at the back of the building had been forced in. Accompanied by his brother-in-law [Adam Sprott Clark], he entered the store and found that a quantity of his drapery goods were strewed over the floor, and he missed a quantity of goods which had been hanging on the wall, consisting of Crimean shirts, one white linen shirt, one cotton shirt, one pair of cotton drawers, one pair of Tweed trousers, and a number of other articles. He immediately gave information to the police. He positively identified the pair of Tweed trousers shown him as part of the property stolen from his store. He knew that the name of the tailor who made them in Glasgow was stamped on the buttons. He never sold or disposed of these trousers, and he saw them hanging on the shop wall when he locked it up on the day of the robbery. The good stolen were valued at £60. He could not swear positively to any of the other articles; but he identified a large number of the goods shown him as being similar to these which were stolen from his store.

The poor jury – in defiance of the judge's summing up – got a little confused and tried to convict William White not only of stealing the tweed trousers, but also of receiving them as stolen goods. From himself, presumably. I guess they thought that the more they could get him on, the worse they could punish him. However, receiving them from himself wasn't allowed; "In order to sustain a conviction for receiving, there ought to have been some evidence that the property was in the

<sup>1</sup>Obviously, Uremic coma is meant here, but somebody transcribed it incorrectly. Copies of BDM certificates now come neatly typed up; somebody reads the original entry and makes their own interpretation. This is a really annoying way to do it, as all it does is introduce additional errors from idiot transcribers.

<sup>2</sup>Which is, I discovered, right where the Ravensdown fertiliser factory thing is, just at the beginning of the road out to Port Chalmers. I had no idea this was called Black Jack's Point. The things one learns.

<sup>3</sup>*Otago Witness*, 1 July 1865, page 8.

possession of some other person before it came into the possession of the prisoner.”<sup>1</sup> Well, quite so. The conviction was quashed.

Interestingly, Cumberland and Gt. King Streets seem to have had drainage problems. James Peddie applied to the council to get his portion of the Great King St. “swamp” reclaimed. His property was probably between Great King St. and Cumberland St. as he had previously asked to have his part of the Cumberland St. “swamp” filled up. It was going to cost £30 and James was only contributing £10 so the council declined.

One intriguing thing about the Peddies is that Janet’s father was called James Peddie, Esq., writer from Stirling. In this context, a writer is an old Scottish word for a lawyer<sup>2</sup>. No wonder he was called an Esq., which is not something you see very commonly in the old records from Dunedin. Well, at least not when you’re looking for McPhersons and assorted other gold miners. None of my McPhersons were called Esq. that’s for sure. The fact that he was a lawyer is consistent with the fact that Janet and George came out Second Cabin. Clearly they had a bit more money than the peons in Steerage. So who was this James Peddie, lawyer, from Stirling, and why did his children emigrate?

This was a bit of mystery to me for many years. I was sure that the ‘Esq.’ and the ‘writer’ meant something, but I couldn’t find out what. Eventually, however, I wrote to the Central Scotland Family History Society to see if they could throw any light on the family, and (to my great surprise and even greater delight) a researcher called Mary replied with a great deal of information. Since it agrees with what I already knew – everywhere it intersects that is, of course – I trust it.

It seems that Janet’s grandfather was another James Peddie, James (i) we’ll call him, a brewery master, who married a Janet Christie in 1796 in Stirling – hence our Janet’s middle name. They had three sons; James (ii), William and Robert.

**James (ii)** (1797–1865), the eldest, married, first, a Janet Taylor, and had six children with her. All six children were alive at the 1841 census, and living in Broad St., Stirling, where James (ii) ran his lawyer’s business. However, by 1851 two of his daughters, Catherine and Jane, were dead, as was his wife. So in 1854 James (ii) married again, this time to a farmer’s daughter by name of Catherine Graham, who was 50 years old (he was 57). Four years later three of his children, James (iii), George and Janet, left Scotland and emigrated to New Zealand. You do have to wonder why. Was it related to his second marriage? Did they detest the second wife? Did the family fall on hard times? It would be nice to know. His last daughter, Cecilia, remained in Scotland and never married, dying in Edinburgh in 1916, presumably living near her cousins, the children of her uncle Robert.

**William** (1799 – 1891) became a bookseller in King St., Stirling. He had a son named Edwin (born in 1821) but never married the mother, Janet Haugh. Edwin died unmarried in 1868. William died aged 92 in 1891 at 10 Queen Street, Stirling. In his will William Peddie mentions his brother James’ children in New Zealand; James (iii) Peddie in Dunedin and Janet Peddie (Mrs. Clark) who were both to receive £100 each. (George was dead by this time of course). Cecilia their sister was of independent means which probably her father arranged when he remarried. William also left two nieces £100 each; they were Catherine and Caroline Peddie, children of his brother Robert.

**Robert** (b. 1802) was a writer, but stopped practising after he took over an ironworks in Edinburgh. He married Maria Denoon Young in 1845 in Edinburgh. She was the author of such gems as *The Dawn of the Second Reformation in Spain* (1871), *Experiences in Christian Life and Work: First Series* (1886)<sup>3</sup>, *The family Protestant: A series of true narratives for families and congregations: in evidence of the work and success of the Jesuits in this kingdom of Great Britain* (1882), *Prayer and its answer, or, How a believer may know whether his prayer will be answered* (1871). I think she might have been religious. Their first two children, a son and daughter, were born in Stirling when Robert was a writer, and another five daughters were born in Edinburgh.

<sup>1</sup>*Otago Witness*, 11 November, 1865, page 11.

<sup>2</sup>For years I thought it meant an author, as in someone who writes books. What a twit.

<sup>3</sup>I know of no evidence for a Second Series; the world is grateful.

## Robert Adair McPherson and Freda Neal

Gummy and Ma, my mother's parents. I remember them well, although Ma rather better than Gummy; Gummy died when I was about eight, Ma when I was about 31. The sad thing is, of course, that I can only remember them as old people, so although I think I know them, I don't really. Not at all. Mum knows them a lot better, but then she's not writing this, I am.

Robert Adair was born in Dunedin on the 8th of June, 1896. When young he was called Bert, and later on was always called Mac. He was never called Robert. His family became poor soon after his birth, and his mother died when he was only thirteen. It's something that affected him greatly. According to Mum, he always put enormous value on family, and was always patient with his mother-in-law (Kate Norgrove; page 43), even during the extended periods that she lived with them. I'm told that on his death bed he said how much he wished he had had more of a mother.

I know little about his early life, although I'm sure that a lot more could be found out, by asking Mum or by looking through old school records. One thing we do know is that he very nearly drowned when he was 14 or 15. His mother had recently died, Robert felt down, went off to the wharfs for a walk, tried to catch some fish, and promptly fell in. He was rescued, so the story goes, by Bill Potter, a member of the Shackleton expedition. Many years later Robert wrote a story about what happened which is too long to give here, but I include in an appendix instead (page 261).<sup>1</sup> We know from this story that they must have been living close to the wharfs, and so must have moved from Howard St.

He left school at 16 to work as an apprentice patternmaker at Cossens and Blacks (Dunedin) from August 1912 to August 1917. He then worked as a patternmaker at John McGregor & Co. Ltd. (Dunedin) before being laid off in July 1918. Then four months as a patternmaker at J. Sparrow & Sons, Engineers and Ironfounders (Dunedin). All this time he was also attending a part-time course at the Polytech, more correctly known as the Otago Education Board School of Art and Design. He was there from 1914 to 1919, studying Mechanical Drawing, Machine Construction, Light and Shade, and Drawing from the Cast (whatever that means).

When he was 22 he took a break from being a patternmaker in Dunedin and headed off to Christchurch to be a patternmaker there; he first worked for a few months as a patternmaker at Andersons Ltd., but possibly didn't like that job much, as he left of his own accord and went to work at Booth MacDonald & Co, another Christchurch company, from June to August, 1919. There's a bit of a gap in his employment records, maybe because he couldn't find work, but by 1921 he was back in Dunedin, working at Reid & Gray for seven months, as well as for A. & T. Burt, off and on until January 1922.

It seems that Robert was finding it hard to get steady work in Dunedin, so he headed off again, this time to Dannevirke, where he worked as a foreman for Collett & Son, Engineers and Ironfounders, from February 1922 to February 1928, the longest stretch of work he'd had yet in one place. He was a patternmaker mostly, but when patternmaking was slack he helped with erecting and fitting the shop and foundry.

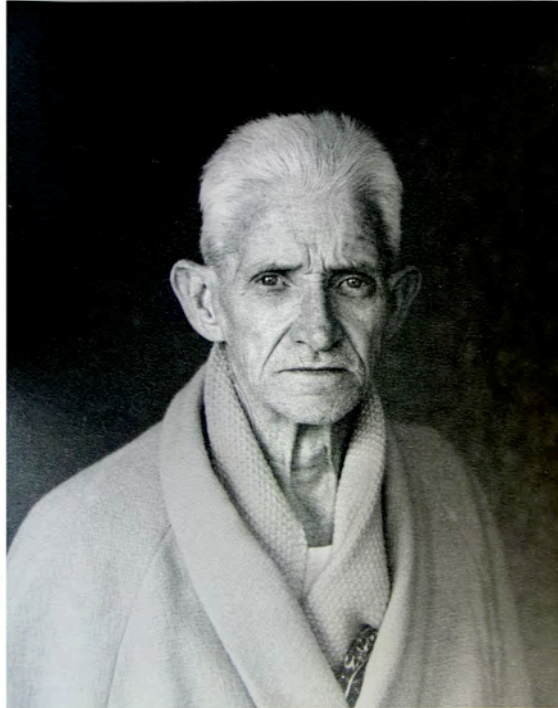
And from there it was off to Marlborough, to teach metalwork at Marlborough College. That's where he met Freda Neal, whom he married in 1930. She was the Home Economics teacher, 23 years old. He was 34. And she was two months pregnant, ho ho ho. She was married, says Mum, in a pale ice-blue dress, not white at all. Deary me. How the respectable Neals must have cringed.

Robert and Freda lived in Blenheim for quite a few years, until about 1953 or so. They had two daughters; Mum, of course, and her elder sister Valerie. Valerie has always been Auntie to me; not Auntie Valerie, just Auntie. I have an Auntie Heather, and an Auntie Fiona, but only one Auntie. She married an Englishman, Robert Staley, I'm not sure exactly when, and adopted three children, Sam, Susie and Michael. Sam is up Lake Tekapo way, the officer in charge of the Tekapo military training area; Susie is a lawyer in Dunedin; and Michael is a photographer and magazine publisher in Hong Kong. I knew them very well when I was younger, but don't see them so much nowadays. Auntie and Uncle now live in Lincoln, just out of Christchurch; I don't see them as much as I ought, which I regret. They have always been very kind to me and my family, and I have always felt close to them.

Anyway, back to Robert and Freda. He made hair brushes out of wood and lots and lots of pieces

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<sup>1</sup>Mind you, something isn't right about that story as the dates don't match.



Robert Adair McPherson. The top photograph is how I remember him, and must have been taken not long before he died. The bottom photograph is him playing silly buggers, pretending to be the captain of a ship. He wasn't.



Robert Adair McPherson. In the top photograph you can see how his violin is set up back-to-front.  
The bottom photograph is him with his father, Benjamin.



The staff at Marlborough College. Freda (Mum's mother) is back row, 2 from right. Her husband, Robert McPherson is middle row, far left, with his hair standing up as it always did. The lady in the middle of the middle row, with a white collar (Mrs. Forbes), told my mother that she was going to grow up into a bad woman. She was right. Mum went home and told her parents, who were furious. Back row, far left, is Jim Allport, Beverly Hugget's father. Beverly was Mum's best friend for many many years. Three days older than Mum, and lived opposite for eight years.

of split whalebone (for the brush hairs). I had one for years before it finally fell apart. He started a company in Blenheim, called H. Charleston & Co, which was certainly in existence in 1947 (as I have a letter, signed by Bert, on his company letterhead). Harry Charleston did the donkey work in the factory all day, while Bert did the organising and thinking. Plastics were short during the war, and hence the need for the company. They started with wooden combs, but then went on to splitting whalebone; Robert made the machines to do this. The whale bone was obtained from Gilly Perano (a well-known whaling family, down by Tory Channel, or somewhere that Mum can't exactly remember). The tradename of the brushes was Macarl (a combination of Mac and Charleston.)

They also went on to start a popcorn business which made quite a splash in its time. At the height of the business Macarl was employing 18 people, at three sites around New Zealand, had 50 acres of corn, and were making about 15,000 bags a week. Not only that, but they also collaborated with Freda's half-brother, Norman Neal (child of John Frederick Neal's first marriage; see page 43), who was a Professor of Agriculture at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and developed new varieties of popping corn that were better suited to New Zealand conditions. There's even an entire article on the company and the corn in the New Zealand Journal of Agriculture, in 1951 [28]. Apparently, several varieties of corn were used before Norman and Robert found a good variety, and eventually much of the hybridisation was done in New Zealand, rather than importing the seed from the U.S.A. Mr. J. Broughan, a Blenheim farmer, "... showed a truly venturesome spirit in agreeing in 1946 to devote some of his valuable land to this unconventional crop ...". In 1947 they planted 4 acres of specially crossed seed and it was such a success that 40 acres were planted in 1948, and 80 planned for 1949. It was obviously a pretty big business. Not even Mum knew this until she found the newspaper clipping and the journal article. Isn't it cool what you find when you look? Mind you, Mum was well aware of the existence of the popcorn business as, when she was around 10 or so, she had to do "pea rogueing", i.e., pulling out the weeds, around the hybrid corn on Broughan's farm out by Woodburn airport.


Macarl must have made a reasonable amount of money, which paid for Robert and Freda's trip

**POP CORN: A Marlborough Venture**

By S. FREW, Orchard Instructor,  
Department of Agriculture, Blenheim.

**F**OR many years pop corn has been known in New Zealand, usually as a novelty form of foodstuff made up as an attractive confectionery, sold generally at booths at agricultural and pastoral shows and holiday resorts. Recently, however, the industry has been placed on a more substantial footing, and the production of a suitable corn for this trade, and its subsequent processing, has been the successful venture of a small group of Marlborough farmers and businessmen. The story of this development is interesting and gives a further proof that initiative, painstaking trouble, and confidence of success in new fields are still qualities to be found in New Zealanders.

**T**HE production of pop corn in Marlborough was first introduced by Mr. R. A. McPherson, of Blenheim, who, knowing the tremendous expansion and ramifications of the business in the United States of America, saw possibilities in the development of both the growing and processing of pop corn in New Zealand. Taking into account the fact that the Marlborough climate approximated that of the corn belts of the United States, he decided to grow a small trial crop. In 1945 he obtained his first small sample of good hybrid corn seed from the



[Snapshot House photo.  
Close-up of pop corn plants.]

**THE SOUTHERN CROSS, SATURDAY, MAY 13, 1950.**

## They make money from putting the pop in corn

YOU could describe R. McPherson and H. Charleston, of Blenheim, as enterprising businessmen with a sense for giving the right thing a pop! Just now they are specialising in corn—popcorn. After five years of experiment and hard work the result of their efforts can be bought for sixpence. It is known as Macarls popcorn, a combination of the two names.

Top: The beginning of the article in the New Zealand Journal of Agriculture [28] describing the popcorn business of Robert Adair McPherson and his buddy, Harry Charleston. Bottom: self-explanatory, really.

to the US (in about 1951). They were away for six months, which can't have been cheap. But the company didn't last; I have no idea why it folded, but fold it did, leaving Robert and Freda little richer than when they started, or so I suspect. They were certainly not wealthy a few years later, when I was a child.

Robert was a keen musician; I still have his copy of Helmholtz' book *The Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music*. He took violin lessons while in Dannevirke, but had to travel quite a distance on his motorbike (maybe to Hastings) to get them. He strung his violin around the wrong way, and learned to play back to front, as he'd lost the fingers on his fingering hand.<sup>1</sup> The 3/4 size violin that Mum learned on, that I learned on, that my children learned on, and that my siblings all learned on, was his originally. I'm told it was originally used by his sister Queenie who refused to practise, whereupon she and the violin got thrown down a bank. I believe it.

When I was young we lived at 20 Cliffs Rd., St. Clair (Mum and Dad still do), just down the road from Ma and Gummy, who lived at 150 Ravenswood Road, halfway up the hill, in a house that Gummy had built. It had a huge window looking down the hill and over St. Clair beach. My earliest memory of Dunedin is my fifth birthday, where I got a brown leather satchel for carrying my books to school. I opened the present sitting in front of this window. My strongest memory of Gummy is him sitting in one of the blue chairs in the dining room in Cliffs Rd., with a budgie on his shoulder. I'm not actually sure he ever brought a budgie down<sup>2</sup>, but that's how I remember it, true or not. He was always very keen on education. According to Mum he claimed that it took two generations to get a family out of poverty, and the way to do it was by education. He believed passionately that Mum should go to Medical School, at a time when very few women did so, and must have been the proudest father at the graduation ceremony. Another vivid memory of him is his death, when Mum cried. I was young enough to wonder why, and old enough to remember.

I want Mum to write a page or two about Gummy, so I can put it in here. Let's hope I can persuade her to do so. If there's any justice in the hereafter he's sitting up there somewhere beside Dad's mother, needling her and grinning from ear to ear, enjoying every second of her disapproval and foul temper.

Ma. Freda Alice Neal. I remember her a lot better, as she didn't die until I was 31. I was overseas, living in Los Angeles, when she died, so I missed most of her last years. Her health bothered her a lot and boy did she complain. Not always free with her money. She would collect those free soaps from hotels and airlines and then give them to us kids as Christmas and birthday presents. We thought it was absolutely hilarious, as I remember. But I also remember her making efforts to be kind to us. I'm quite sure she loved us in her own way; she was just unable to show it, I think, or other imperatives got in the way. Dad would tease her about her legs being like those of a plucked chicken. She kind of brought it on herself, telling Dad that he had a figure like an S, which annoyed him. She's buried in Anderson's Bay cemetery and I have never visited her grave. That's rather sad, I suppose.

Ma came from two old New Zealand families, the Neals and the Norgroves (Chapters 2 and 3), both based in Marlborough and Nelson for three generations. Born in Spring Creek at her father's farm, *Burnlea*, she attended Marlborough College before going down to Otago University to do a Diploma in Home Science. She stayed at Studholm Hall, and was the youngest in her class. After graduating, she taught up in the North Island for a while (either Napier or Hastings) and then came back to teach Home Economics at Marlborough College, where she met Robert Adair McPherson.

She insisted that we always wash our hands before doing any cooking. "First", she would say, "wash your hands". As I remember, we never listened to her. I still can't cook.<sup>3</sup>

Ma's parents, Kate and John Neal, didn't approve of Gummy at all. They called him Simpkins. Don't know why.<sup>4</sup> In retaliation, Gummy's father called Freda, Freezer. What a giggle they all must

<sup>1</sup>Part of three fingers of his left hand were gone. He lost his fingers in his father's workshop, in a circular saw, when he was 13. When he got back to school he got the strap, and the teacher burst all the stitches.

<sup>2</sup>I suspect my Dad would have had a fit.

<sup>3</sup>i.e., won't cook.

<sup>4</sup>I mean, I don't know where the Simpkins came from. I'm quite sure I know why they didn't approve. Gummy was boisterous, fierce-tempered, and from a poor family. Everything the Neals were not. Not to mention that he got their little girl pregnant as what he shouldn't have.

have had. Ma only met Gummy's father once, because he died shortly after they met, when Ma was 22.

To be honest, to describe Ma I can't do any better than include a few pages which Mum wrote, in the early 2000's sometime.

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Freda, my mother, must have been happy once. I have an old photograph album with tiny snapshots of her having fun among groups of friends at University, and newspaper cuttings of capping processions. Before that, as a girl, she was a keen horsewoman and champion show jumper, and represented Marlborough at hockey. So she must have had fun then too.

But not when I knew her. Pictures of her laughing face do not gel with the joyless mother I remember. My memories of her begin when she was in her early thirties. She was a devoted mother, capable rather than imaginative, admirably egalitarian and tolerant and even sociable in those early days. She was also kind to her mother. Later, when we moved, my grandmother, disinclined to live away from her only daughter, literally turned up on our doorstep with her bags, and my parents put another bed in the room my sister and I slept in and took her in without hesitation. Freda was not political, not religious, not musical either, but she encouraged my sister and me in our musical activities and sent us along to Sunday School. Although of average height and thin, she came from solid stock and was big-boned. Her big hands were dexterous and she knitted, sewed, even tailored, beautifully. Having studied Home Science (as it was then) at Otago University she was good at all facets of keeping house. "Your mother is a dutiful girl," my father would often say,

However, duty, a house and two little girls were not enough for her. Books could not fill the gap – she was not a reader – but she was intelligent and I believe bored. She seldom laughed and gradually her thoughts turned inward until hypochondria blossomed into her *raison d'être*.

My father worried. "Freda's not a well girl."

Then a perceptive doctor suggested she get a job and the 'doctor's orders' gave her the courage to flout the convention of the 1940s and return to work, teaching sewing and cooking (baking mostly) at the local High School. She tried to teach me these housewifely skills too at home. When she was baking she'd say to me, "See how I place the butter and then fold the pastry and roll it." I'd watch impatiently, wanting to do it myself, which wasn't allowed because I got flour on the ceiling. Then, "Look over my right shoulder, dear," she'd say as she sewed. It didn't take – although I still hear her voice as I press every seam on the now rare occasions I sew. She made pretty dresses for my sister and me in the days after the depression when money was still tight then during the shortages of war, and dressed herself smartly too, often from a one-and-sixpenny remnant of material.

Strangely enough her flair didn't extend to interior decorating. Our house was 'shop window' style, although it was possibly the tidiest and cleanest in town. I didn't play much at home; I made my mess at Diane's or Beverly's.

My mother was a good manager and stretched money like nobody I knew. Nothing was wasted. If we couldn't, despite urging, eat all our dinner she reheated it later. We teased her about the time my sister left an apple core on her dinner plate and Freda accidentally dished it up next day in the lunchtime hash.

Despite her horse-riding and hockey and being brought up on a farm, my mother didn't like being out of doors. Her beautiful red-gold hair (which didn't show a trace of grey until she was well into her fifties) and green eyes came with a pale complexion, which burned and freckled easily. But that wasn't the sole reason. One got grubby outside and Freda liked things clean; the house, the food, me, everything. Picnics were out.



Robert Adair McPherson and Freda Alice Neal.



Robert Adair McPherson and Freda Alice Neal. The two children are Valerie (the larger one) and Rosalie (the smaller one, and my mother).

Being fussy – fastidious my father called it – she loved America where, in the 1950s, she first saw food wrapped in cellophane in supermarkets.

‘Routine’ was my mother’s favourite word . Every morning at seven o’clock on the dot, I would hear her pull up the blinds in her bedroom to begin the set routine of her day. ‘Procrastinate’ came a close second. “Don’t procrastinate. Do it now,” was her mantra. Another favourite saying was, “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing well,” and she was meticulous in everything she did. ‘Methodical’ and ‘efficient’ were right up there too in her lexicon and the house ran like clockwork. There was not much leeway for spontaneity and seemingly no desire for fun. Poor Freda. Later, when I married, she despaired of my slovenly habits.

My mother, unlike my father, was even-tempered. She wrote in my childhood autograph book in her fly-away untidy writing – at odds I feel with her passion for order – ‘Dignity and temper are sisters hand in hand. Dignity steps back a pace when temper takes a stand.’ My father shouted and confronted; my mother quietly manipulated. And who won? A stalemate, I think, of hostile dependency.

And yet I don’t know. My father worried about her health and unhappiness and gave her lots of sympathy which she enjoyed. And love? Did they love each other? In my teens I searched anxiously for signs of it, but I’ll never know. She undoubtedly loved my sister and me but was not demonstrative and couldn’t show it; possibly didn’t know how to. And I’m sure she craved love herself but didn’t know how to get it. To give her a hug was like embracing a brick wall and I didn’t try often enough.

Could I have made her happy? Who knows? Doubtless I could have done better. Flowers gave her pleasure and sometimes when I dashed in to see her she would want to show me a particular rose in bloom, but as often as not I’d rush off without looking at it.

Gradually, as she got older, and especially after a small stroke which was triggered by over-enthusiastic medication and which left her with disabilities for the last 22 years of her life, the miasma of unhappiness thickened and what had enabled her to run a tight ship before developed into obsessions – hand-washing, food, thriftiness. However, despite her irritating clutch on the pennies in her purse she could dole out lump sums unseen from the bank and I was one grateful recipient.

So what sparked off my mother’s descent into seven shades of despondency? Life should have been plain-sailing for her – my father and sister and I were healthy and happy, we had enough money, she had great talents. Maybe her marriage was even less satisfactory than I knew.

But I do know that life does not submit to such order as she wanted and maybe this was at the root of some of her discontent. I know too that she was profoundly affected by her younger sister’s death. Maybe I, who haven’t experienced it, underestimate the lasting effect of such things – his mother’s early death on my father, her sister’s even earlier death on my mother. She was 19 and home from University. Apparently all the family were staying in Blenheim and her father and mother took turns sitting by her nine-year-old sister’s sick bed in hospital. The day both parents came home together she said she knew her sister had died. It was a full moon that night and ever afterwards she maintained her chronic insomnia was worse on a moonlit night.

My mother just didn’t seem to have the grit for life, and when my father and grandmother died and my sister was living elsewhere, I was the only person to feed her over-riding desire for sympathy. I rationed this, with the gut feeling that too much could destroy what little coping ability she had left and plunge her into worse misery. I believe she lived at least the last half of her life inside out. Instead of directing her thoughts outward and then looking inside herself first for answers to her difficulties, she concentrated on looking inwards and only looked outwards to other people to solve her problems. Whatever, she couldn’t escape the straightjacket of her anxieties and obsessions. A pill, or rather a multitude of pills could, in her mind, cure any problem and the

doctors duly prescribed. She couldn't recount a consultation with her doctor without an involuntary smile. Anyway, for all her ill health she lived to a ripe if miserable old age.

I did not inherit my mother's unhappiness; by good luck I am messy and happy. (Yes, I know the rationalization is obvious.) I'll never really understand her. The best I can claim, with the perspective of time, is a little more insight and compassion, albeit cheap and easy compassion now the problem has gone.

My abiding memory of her is her rare, forced, phony laugh and my failure to make her happy.

What a waste of a life!

Finally, we come to Mum. Born in Blenheim, went to Marlborough College, and lived for many years at 9 Dillon St. when young. (This house was sold around 1952, after Mum's parents came back from their six-month holiday overseas, and before they went off to teach at Taumaranui). At Marlborough College her father, Robert Adair McPherson was known as old Mac, Mum as young Mac. When she was 16 she stayed with her grandmother Kate when her parents went overseas for a trip for about six months. (This was the trip financed by the popcorn sales.) When they returned it was Mum's 7th form year, and her parents got jobs at Taumaranui; they had to give up their Marlborough College jobs, I suppose, to take such a long break.<sup>1</sup> So Mum went to boarding school for a year, the nearest place being New Plymouth Girls. Mum didn't start until after the beginning of the year, and she was the last to leave (from Kate's home in Blenheim) so there were no suitcases. She put all her stuff in an apple box, tied it up, and went off to boarding school. Sister Valerie was teaching also at Taumaranui; she hated it.

After New Plymouth, Mum went to Dunedin to do Medicine. Her parents came down too, to make sure Mum kept at it.<sup>2</sup> Gummy, as I said before, was dead keen on Mum going through Medical School. Fortunately Mum was too. She decided to do Medicine while Ma and Gummy were on their long overseas trip, and changed all her subjects to match. Ma and Gummy got jobs at Macandrew Intermediate, teaching Home Economics and Metalwork respectively, as at Marlborough College. They also used to go down to Owaka for two days in each week, to teach at the school there.

The family lived in several places in quick succession in Dunedin, as accommodation was very hard to come by, and finally lived in a flat along Forbury Road, just by the corner. Grandmother Kate sold up in Blenheim and came down to join them, and took over the flat in Forbury Rd when the house in Ravenswood Road was all built. That's where Kate lived when I knew her. When I was a kid I used to play on the roof of the bus shelter, just outside the flat. I remember thinking I was very brave.

Mum married Dad on her birthday, only five days after her final medical examinations. She wasn't too interested in the wedding details; her sister Valerie chose and bought the material in Auckland, and a neighbour, Mrs. McKinney, chose the pattern and made the dress. Mum and Dad then started work in Auckland, at midnight on the 1st of January, 1960. Mary was born that September. Count the months. Mum was lucky or careful.<sup>3</sup> The wedding announcement in *The New Zealand Free Lance*, on Wednesday, January 8, 1960, read: "Two doctors recently capped, Dr. Rosalie McPherson and Dr. Graham Trevellyan Sneyd<sup>4</sup> were married in Trinity Methodist Church, Dunedin. Both have accepted positions as house-surgeons at Auckland Hospital."

And there we shall leave them for now. They can tell their stories themselves a little later (page 257).

<sup>1</sup>According to Mum, "Dad had to resign from his job at Marlborough College when he went overseas on holiday because the Headmaster, Bert Insull (Dad called him Bert Insult) would not give him leave of absence. Other precedents had been set and Dad was furious, but they hated each other so it was no wonder Insull took the opportunity to get rid of him. I've since learnt (only a couple of years ago at a reunion actually) that Insull was widely regarded as a disaster, so the bad feeling between them may not have been Dad's fault."

<sup>2</sup>I wonder what they thought they could have done, had she not wanted to continue. In my experience, one's children just do whatever the hell they want, thank you very much.

<sup>3</sup>I very much doubt she was good.

<sup>4</sup>Note how the John is missing. I'm betting his mother put that notice in.



Mum. What? You want more details? Well, OK. Top left; Mum on a slide. Like you couldn't guess that one. Bottom; Mum trying to smell a flower with her eyes. Somewhere in Blenheim. Top right; Mum in uniform, off to New Plymouth Girls for her last year of high school.



Mum. Top; from left to right, Mum, her father, her mother, Kate (her maternal grandmother) and her elder sister Valerie. This looks like it was taken outside the flat in Forbury Road, and so Mum must have been at university then. Bottom left; you have to guess who this one is. Bottom right: Mum and sister Valerie. Neither of them improved.