

Chapter 3

The Norgroves

And so we come finally to the Norgroves, the last of my maternal branches. Much like the Neals, the Norgroves were among the very earliest settlers to New Zealand; William Norgrove and his wife, Sarah King-Hall (or just Hall, it's not so clear) came to Wellington in 1841, just one year after the arrival of the *Aurora*, the first of the New Zealand Company settler ships. The Norgroves moved soon to Nelson and then to Blenheim, mined for gold, set up businesses to do various things, but never made it big. Actually, they seemed to have made it rather small. Kate Norgrove, who married John Frederick Neal (page 43), was the granddaughter of William Norgrove and Sarah Hall, the first settlers.

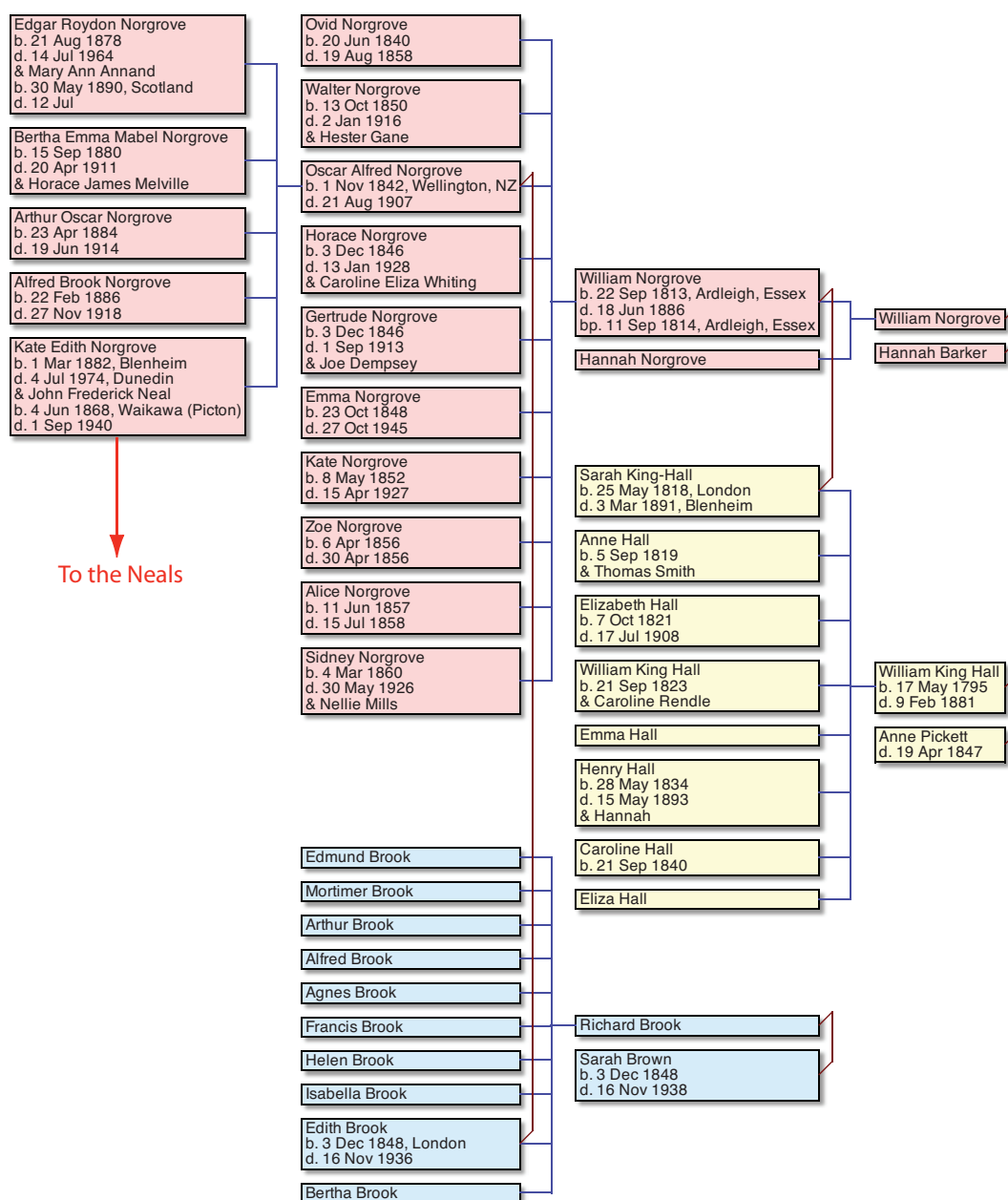
William and Sarah left many descendants, of whom a number have been particularly helpful to my genealogical researches. In particular I owe a great debt of thanks to Joan McNaught and her daughter, and to Ian Melville, from whom I have learned many things. At one stage Joan McNaught hired a professional genealogist in England to search for Norgrove records, whence comes a lot of our current information. But even this professional was defeated by the complete unimportance of the Norgroves' English ancestors, and very little is known about them.

Arrival in New Zealand; William Norgrove and Sarah Hall

William Norgrove was born in Ardleigh, Essex, on the 22nd of September, 1813. His parents were called William Norgrove and Hannah Barker, and that is the sum total of everything we know about the England part of William Norgrove's life. Well, that's not entirely true. We know he was educated at the Foundation School in Colchester, where he subsequently worked as a plumber and a painter, and that he married Sarah King Hall (or King-Hall) in Bow Church, Middlesex, on the 22nd of September, 1839; William was 26 (they married on his birthday), and Sarah was 21. They met, we are told by their granddaughter, Kate Norgrove, while Sarah was tying up a pig.

We know that his family was very poor. His mother, Hannah Norgrove, was on the official list of parish poor¹ in Ardleigh, in 1825. This was when William was only 12, and it may well have been that his father had died by then. Certainly, to have his mother's name appear but not his father's would imply this. Funnily enough, William's parents were married in Colchester (on the 17th of October, 1783 according to the parish records) but William himself was born and baptised in Ardleigh. Possibly William and Hannah Barker were from Colchester originally and moved later to Ardleigh, where poor old Hannah ended up on the poor register. Possible, but by no means certain. Kate Norgrove claimed that William Norgrove's father had died after being bitten by a rabid dog. She also said that William broke his leg while saving a child from a runaway horse and carriage. He was taken to an inn and whilst recovering, talk came around to ghosts. That night the 'ghost' came visiting, and William nearly killed him with his walking stick! It's not clear how old William was when these things are said to have happened, as Kate never said, but I'm guessing it was before he left England. I could be wrong.

¹Because each parish was legally obliged to look after its poorest members, they didn't want any interlopers, poor people coming in from foreign parts and sponging off the locals. Sort of like Winston Peters in miniature.



The Norgroves.

Since he was sent to the Colchester Foundation School we can infer that William was bright enough to be noticed, and thought to be worth educating. Later in life William was clearly a well educated and intelligent man, so the Foundation School must have been effective.

And that really is everything we know about William Norgrove in England. Rather unimpressive, if you think about it.

We are almost as ignorant about his wife, Sarah Hall. Her parents were William King Hall and Anne Pickett, and she had two brothers and five sisters. One of her sisters married a Richard Fowler in New Zealand, and so must have emigrated also. But I say “almost”, for a reason, as we are in the fortunate position of having something that she wrote about herself.¹ From this we learn that she

¹Let me emphasise this, just in case the point has escaped anyone. The things that we write ourselves, at the time, hot off the press so to speak, will, if they survive, be the most precious things in the collections of our genealogically-minded



William and Sarah Norgrove. These are the only photographs I have of them. Thanks to Joan McNaught for sending me the photo of Sarah.

was married in a silk gown not a bridal dress, at 10 o'clock in the morning, and that her blind little brother Harry was upset that she was marrying, as he wanted to keep her all to herself. We learn that her Granny was a little out of it and didn't quite understand what was going on, and that it rained just a little bit as they were leaving the church after the ceremony. We learn that she cried when she was married, feeling lonely, but that she hadn't really wanted a big fuss so she had gone to the church in the coach alone. These details are priceless. My sister Mary will no doubt call them "borese", but she is wrong; they are priceless.

Anyway, I shouldn't tell you what's in the poem, I should just give you the poem. So here it is.

This verse written by Sarah Norgrove (King-Hall) in 1889 to her Family. Blenheim N.Z.

Fifty years ago my children, fifty years ago
 Since your Father and I were married in that quaint old Church at Bow¹
 It was on a Sunday morning ten o'clock the time
 September the twenty-second eighteen hundred and thirty nine.
 I had no bridal dress I wore my best silk gown.
 We wished to avoid all fuss I sent to the Church in the coach alone.
 There was no one in the Church only your Father my Brother and I
 The Clerk had gone for the Parson he was somewhere close by.
 I felt so lonely, when the service was over I began to cry.
 As we were leaving the Church the minister kindly said goodbye.
 When we got out in the road there was a slight sprinkle of rain.
 Your Father put me into a coach I was drove to Ilford again

descendants, should we have any. The two poems of Sarah Hall are worth more to me than any number of dry parish records. So that is why I have included the short things that my mother has written. It's why I have insisted that each of us children contribute their bit about themselves and their family. Because, in later years, these are the things that will be treasured. So stop whining and write your damn bits already.

¹Yes, I know the poetry is absolutely dreadful. I don't care. Anyway, I can hardly complain. The only 'poetry' I've ever written is an obscene limerick.

It is five miles from Ilford to Bow there was only a little shower
 Your Father and Brother walked home in little more than an hour.
 My Grandmother came from Church, my Father and others to Chapel had been
 I gave her a kiss and said Grandmother look at my ring.
 Granny did not know we were married she was eighty old that day
 She had walked to Church and back the Church was a mile away
 We had a nice large cake made by a cousin of mine
 She sent us some apples and grapes and a bottle of home made wine
 There was my Father Mother and Granny Cousin Robert your Father and me
 All my Sisters and Brothers how very happy were we
 My Dear little blind Brother Harry would not shin from my side
 He said Sarah, why did you marry? I want you myself and he cried
 In the evening by the bright moonlight, we left for our snug little home
 With kisses from all and good night.
 Our Lord has taken your Father, he has only gone before
 I often fancy I see him I hear his steps at the door
 He said he was tired and weary so feeble he wanted to go
 I remember him young and cheery fifty years ago
 When he and I were married in that quaint old Church at Bow.

Questions: This not really a question, more of a false lead that entertained me for a number of years. My G-grandmother, Kate Norgrove, said that her grandmother, Sarah King-Hall, was part of the famous King-Hall family that contributed a line of Admirals to the British Navy. The story was plausible initially, as Sarah was born at the right time, in the right place, and all those things. However, although I looked and I looked, I couldn't find any evidence that she was actually born into that family. Indeed, all the children of that family are fairly well known, and she *wasn't* in it. I was puzzled for a long time by this. Finally, Joan McNaught showed me that Sarah King-Hall was (fairly definitely) born into quite a different family. It's an interesting thing, though. Did Kate believe this story about being connected to the famous King-Halls? Did she make it up herself, to create some grand rellies for herself? Did her grandmother make it up and tell everybody? I wonder. But I guess I'll never know.

On the 19th of June, 1841, less than two years after they were married, William and Sarah sailed from Gravesend on the *Gertrude*, to arrive in Port Nicholson on the 30th October, about a year after the first New Zealand Company ship into Wellington. Once again we are fortunate to have a first-hand account of the landing, written in Sarah's distinctive poetic style.

This verse written by Sarah Norgrove to her family about her arrival in New Zealand. Ovid the first son died at the age of 18.

On the twentieth day of June, at two o'clock in the morn
 Eighteen hundred and forty our first little son was born.
 On the twentieth day of June eighteen hundred and forty one
 We were in the ship Gertrude, bound for our New Zealand Home.
 The voyage was weary and long, we were twenty weeks in the ship
 We all landed safe and strong, on the beach at Kaiwawas slip
 the second day of November eighteen forty one
 we came on shore and commenced to make our new home.
 Your Father lighted a fire and boiled fresh water for tea
 Our shipmates said what a treat, will you give some to we.

He said you are welcome my friends, mine is a large kettle you see.
 The clearest of water close by enough for you and me.
 When your Father began to unpack saw, hammer and nails
 There were some who stood by him and said we ought to have brought they ourselves.
 He said mates we must all set to work for our dear little children and wives
 You know they must all have food, I feel sure you have brought knives.
 They said how funny you be, you have cheered us a bit today
 And we will let you see us try to do as you say.
 When your Father a table had made, a clean cloth on it I spread.
 We thankfully sat down to tea in that old Kiwarawara shed.
 Our darling had fresh new milk, on the voyage he had feed from my breast
 Father said Ovid must learn to eat, Mother must have a rest.
 Your Father walked to the town early the very next day
 He hired an old mud wara the floor was only clay,
 Three rooms – a toitoi thatched roof and rent sixteen shilling per week
 A shipmate shared it with us, when it rained how the roof did leak.
 No glass where the window should be some calico nailed up tight
 Through the crevices came the wind, and some of the bright sunlight.
 The Wandī was on Thorndon flat before the winter had gone
 We were living on Lambton Quay, where our dear little Oscar was born
 He was only nine days old, when a fire broke out on the beach
 Father took us onto the Terrace and placed us out of it's reach.
 The fire commenced at midnight, at Loyds the Bakers store
 All did their best to put it out, the sea was close to our door
 Many houses were burned and shops that were nearly new
 It was November the ninth, eighteen hundred and forty two.

So William and Sarah's first home in New Zealand was a three-room mud wara hut, which cost them 16 shillings a week. Doesn't sound too comfortable to be honest. However, it's clear that William and Sarah were energetic and intelligent, and took a leading role among their peers. Indeed, William must have had a keen interest in many things, as in 1849 we find him on the board of the Wellington Mechanics' Institute. This Institute, or its predecessor at least, was born before the first New Zealand Company ship even sailed to Wellington, when a committee was charged with the duty of making some provision for the "literary, scientific and philanthropic institutions" of the settlers. The settlers put together a rudimentary library and some bits of scientific equipment, and the first meeting in their new home occurred on the 1st of December, 1840, very soon after their arrival. It occurred, appropriately enough, at Barrett's Hotel, i.e., in a pub. I'm not surprised. Anyway, the initial Port Nicholson Mechanics' Institute Public School Library went defunct as people didn't pay their subscriptions, so another attempt was made in 1848 to revive it, under the new name of the Wellington Mechanics' Institute.

William Norgrove was on the board of this new Institute in 1849, and at a meeting on the 6th of November it was noted that "A drawing class has been ably and usefully conducted by Mr. Norgrove, who has cheerfully devoted a large amount of time and attention to his pupils¹. The progress made has been very satisfactory, and already affords very pleasing indications of future utility. Want of suitable accommodation has prevented the formation of other projected classes, but these will no doubt follow the opening of the Hall." Indeed, I have to admit that I was both surprised and delighted to discover that William's drawing class is considered to be one of the few successful examples of early adult education in New Zealand.² I have to wonder what kind of drawing he taught. 'Linear drawing' according to the local newspapers which doesn't sound like it was of the young lady variety, but was it just technical drawing? Certainly, his later career shows that he was a talented painter of all kinds of things, from flags, to coats of arms, to signs. So, as I said, I wonder.

¹Of whom there were twenty. *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 30 June 1849, Page 71.

²I kid you not. William has even been mentioned in scholarly articles (to wit, [23] and [24]).

Given his later actions in Nelson and Blenheim, it's likely that William took an active interest in the affairs of Wellington. We know he was on the electoral roll in the 1840's, at which time they were living on Thorndon Quay, although that by itself tells us little. I suspect that he cannot have been very successful, as by the early 1850's William was in the goldfields of Victoria; I know nothing about his time there but it is clear that any success he had there was also marginal at best. I'm not surprised. By January of 1855 he was back in Wellington, just in time for the famous earthquake, the largest ever recorded in New Zealand. My G-grandmother Kate would tell of how the great earthquake broke all the china, and the family had to travel up the hill to get water until her grandfather (i.e., William) made a pump.

It was maybe this earthquake (not to mention the earlier ones of 1848 which wouldn't have helped) that motivated William and Sarah to leave Wellington. Whatever the reason, by October 1855 the family had moved to Nelson, where William set up a new business in Bridge St., opposite the Wakatu Hotel, as a "Plumber, Glazier, House and Sign Painter", with the added attractions of "Baths of every description, Pumps, Beer-engines, Water-closets, &c, fixed and repaired. White and Sheet Lead, Zinc, Window Glass (all sizes), Oils and Colours of every description."

We can trace a lot of his life in the pages of the Nelson and Blenheim newspapers, and it is clear that he was, well, an interesting man one would have to say¹. Not a reliable one, oh no, but certainly an interesting one; educated, widely read, charismatic, tremendously talented and intelligent, an excellent public speaker and organiser, a born performer, very good at building and making things, but, even with all that, unsuccessful. One has to wonder why. By far the most likely explanation is mental disease. Given that William's son Oscar was committed to a lunatic asylum, and that one of Oscar's children, Bertha, committed suicide, it's a good bet that William had mental troubles of his own. I have no idea what they were, exactly, although one can speculate. Oscar would clearly get manic; it was during one of those bouts that he was committed. Bertha, on the other hand, committed suicide in a fit of depression. Putting this all together, one is tempted to conclude that manic-depression ran in the family, and that William also suffered from it, at least to a certain extent. I speculate, but not without foundation.

It's fascinating to contrast William Norgrove with the Neals and Buschs we saw in the previous chapter. They were solid farmers, bordering on miserly, uneducated, and every time they appeared in the records they had worked a little harder, bought a little more land, and got a little richer. They are so much the opposite of William it's funny; every time he appears in the newspapers he's had another bright idea, painted another sign or flag, appeared in another amateur theatrical, chaired another meeting, made another speech, and got a little poorer.

His time in Nelson, which lasted from 1855 to 1861, is really his life in miniature, or so it seems to me. Great initial success, elected to the Town Board, public performances and meetings, all followed by decline, bankruptcy and flight to Blenheim. Indeed, we see the same kinds of things appearing in the life of his sons as well; inventors, businessmen, entrepreneurs, builders, sailors...and bankrupts.

William was elected to the Board of Town Improvement, he was instrumental in organising the Fire Brigade, he served on the Board of the Nelson Literary and Scientific Institution, he was active in the Agricultural Society (various Miss Norgroves regularly won prizes for their flowers) and he served on the Nelson Local Committee. In particular, he was full of ideas for how to improve Nelson's water supply. Some of these ideas were even taken up; in 1868, a decade later, when the Nelson Water Works were officially opened, the official speaker said that it was only right that Mr. Norgrove be properly acknowledged as it was all originally his idea. This was a common theme in much of William's life. He was clearly interested in water, how it flows, how it can be controlled and used. He was an engineer through and through.²

Another of his projects, again connected with water, was the Public Baths. In 1858 William

¹Actually, one of the first indications of this is his children's names. Who on earth calls their sons Ovid, Horace and Oscar? This made me believe, many years ago, that our William and Sarah were not an ordinary couple.

²Just as a side note, I can't resist quoting a verse from an immortal hymn that was composed by the Bishop to be sung on the occasion of the opening of the Nelson Water Works. To wit: "Praise Him, rivers, lakes, and oceans // Depths unfathomed, air unseen, // Beauteous forms in rest or motion, // Tempering day's too glittering sheen. // Bow of Heaven! the sky transforming, // Pledge of hope on stormy day; // Silent dew-drops nightly falling // On each blade and grassy spray!" Oh dear.

and a couple of business partners “proposed to erect a BATHING ESTABLISHMENT in Nelson, combining Hot, Cold, Vapour, and Swimming Baths, with all necessary conveniences, both for ladies and gentlemen.” A family ticket was going to cost £2 per annum and a warm bath was 2s. 6d. extra. I’m guessing the project wasn’t a great success, as no more is heard about it. Tickets were being sold at one stage, but it disappears without any further traces.

Amateur theatricals was yet another of William’s interests. In 1857 we find that he performed the part of Colonel Damas in the *Lady of Lyons* (an 1838 romantic drama by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, one of the most popular plays of its time). The theatre critic rather liked William’s performance: “*Colonel Damas* was rendered by Mr. Norgrove with all that bluff *bonhomie* pertaining to the old soldier, and still with the tact of an actor, that pleased us much.” The play, apparently, was much improved from its first performance, as the actors knew their parts this time, and acted well. As opposed to the previous performance one imagines.¹ A year later William was calling a public meeting to try and get a proper theatre built in Nelson, “expressly suitable for theatrical performances, concerts, balls, &c.” I don’t think that anything came of this theatre proposal either.

Every so often, when searching through old newspapers, the voice of William can be heard quite clearly (sometimes pleasant, sometimes not), and it is these extracts that tell us, most accurately, the kind of man he was. These, to me, are the real treasures.² In a meeting held in 1856 to discuss the new Education Act:³

Mr. Norgrove said that, like *Marmaduke Magog*⁴, it was not often that he spoke in public, but he must beg permission to say a few words on the subject of education. He remembered attending a Chartist meeting about 25 years ago, at which one of the great reasons urged for the passing of the people’s charter was that the Government did not make proper provision for the education of the people [hear, hear]. He remembered that one of the speakers on that occasion had alluded to the mill girls of Manchester, who toiled from morning till night at the mills instead of going to school, and had remarked that the wonder was not that they were bad, but that they were so good [hear]. The same speaker went on to show that without education a people could become neither wise nor good, and that it was the duty of the state to care for the education of the people [hear, hear]. He (Mr. Norgrove) was sorry to find that the question was so mistaken here, and that people forgot that in paying this tax for the support of a scheme of education, they were investing for posterity [hear, hear]. He had seven children, and he should some day be gathered to his fathers and leave a name behind him – it might be an indifferent one, but at all events it would be a name – and it was his earnest desire to see his boys receive a better education, and earn a better name than himself [cheers]. Should parents toil on day after day and leave their children what they considered a competence, without giving them some education to take care of that which, if they were ignorant and uneducated, some plausible scoundrel might come and chouse them out of [hear, hear]? He was sorry to hear no argument on the other side; he wished to see the measure fairly tried, and he had no doubt that some day or other they would all be the better for it [vehement cheering].

You can hear that William cared, really cared, about education. He was less fond of religious bigotry, and the Catholic Church in particular⁵:

Mr. Editor, – A letter appeared in Thursday’s *Times* signed “Catholicus”, one paragraph of which applied to myself as a private individual. I have therefore to ask the favor of space for a few lines by way of reply.

“Catholicus” says my children were educated at the Catholic schools, and asks when did I change. He might have gone further and said I subscribed to building the Church.

¹In an uncomfortable juxtaposition, this theatre announcement appears in the newspaper directly beneath an account of the death of a step-daughter of John Busch (page 55), who was burned to death when her pajamas caught fire.

²Apart, of course, from the announcement that “Beda, the one-legged gymnast is in Blenheim and purposes giving performances at Ewart’s Hall.” You couldn’t make that stuff up.

³Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle, 21 June, 1856

⁴A parish constable character in a popular 1834 melodrama by John B. Buckstone.

⁵Marlborough Express, 23 October, 1875

My answer is that was my private affair. The funds of the Borough Schools are public property, and for the proper expenditure of which to the public alone am I responsible. As to why I sent my children to the Catholic schools, – I have read that if you go to supper with the Devil, take a long spoon; or, of two evils, choose the least. The Catholic schools at that time were the best in the town; that was my reason. As to when I changed, – I answer that I have not changed; that ever since the so-called Œcumenical Council, and the declaration of the Infallibility Dogma, I find that the Catholic Clergy have been making all over the world strenuous exertions to have a finger in the political pie, to prop a falling Church; hence the troubles in Germany.

I, for one, wish to see all sects and creeds at liberty to follow their own particular views; – favor to none. This it seems does not suit with the dogma which demands a blind unreasoning credulity. Those have ever been my views; I demand the right to think freely, and speak fearlessly, so I say “Watch.” – I am, &c.,

W. Norgrove.

And he really didn't like the Chinese:¹

CHINESE IMMIGRATION

A public meeting was held at the Courthouse, Nelson, on Thursday last, for the purpose of considering “what steps should be taken to prevent any Chinese immigration into the province”; W.L. Wrey, Esq., in the chair.

The Chairman briefly stated the objects of the meeting, and said that it was his impression, that of all the debased people on the face of the earth, none equalled the Chinese in their immoral, wretched, and he might say diabolical habits [hear, hear]; and he thought the people of Nelson were called upon to endeavour to prevent such a race of beings from landing on these shores. He was glad to find by the large attendance that it was a matter in which the inhabitants interested themselves, and he should like to hear the opinion of any one present upon the subject.

[There follows a series of statements from attendees, all vilifying the Chinese in no uncertain terms, and volunteering to be the first on the beaches to take arms against the foul invaders should that prove to be necessary. Then our William had his say.]

Mr. Norgrove, from some experience in Australia², could testify to the filthy and degrading habits of the Chinese in that country. The people in Australia were now very anxious to get rid of these people; and, as prevention was better than cure, he thought that the people of Nelson would be justified in doing all in their power to prevent the contamination to which an influx of the Chinese would expose them [cheers].

[The meeting continued in a similar vein.]

Clearly, William's rational liberality extended only to Europeans. Not surprising I suppose; in that he was a man of his times. Still, unattractive.

He suffered from rheumatism:³

Sir, – Permit me to thank you for inserting in your journal the information that a cure for rheumatism had been discovered in the shape of caustic ammonia. Having suffered for a long time, and tried nearly every remedy to little purpose, I procured from Dr. Cleghorn's shop, a small phial of the solution; two drops of which, applied with the point of a camel hair pencil, almost instantly removed the pain. Trusting that all my fellow sufferers will find it equally efficacious. – I am, &c.,

William Norgrove.

¹Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle, 15 August, 1857

²Remember that William went to the Australian goldfields in the 1850's.

³Marlborough Express, 1 July, 1876

Blenheim, June 30th.

[We may add to the above letter, that we had ocular demonstration of the value of the remedy in Mr. Norgrove's case, who exhibited the wonderful ease with which he could swing his arm about, that a few days ago was full of pain, and which he could not lift to his head without using the other for the purpose. The remedy in question is very simple, painless, and inexpensive, – Ed. *M.E.*]

And for cricket fans, it appears that our William Norgrove was a participant in that noble sport. In fact, he even played against the Neals once! And won! Hallelujah! It was on the 26th of April, 1873 that the Spring Creek cricket team challenged the Blenheim team to a match. Not a wise move. A certain Mr. Wix on the Blenheim team was a mean bodyline bowler: "Of the bowling of Mr. Wix we can say but little; we would recommend that gentleman to practice straight bowling, as it was very evident in many cases he mistook the batsmen for the wickets." Wix took 11 wickets in the match, including the scalps of T. Neal (for 3) and R. Neal (for 0), our old friend Thomas Nelson, and, presumably, his brother Robert. Another Neal brother, Francis, was run out for 1. It cannot be claimed that the Neal brothers distinguished themselves in this particular match. Still, the Spring Creek total was only 38, of which 22 were byes, so the Neal brothers, with 4 runs between them, scored 25% of the runs that came from the bat.

In return, the Blenheim team creamed the Spring Creek bowling. Nasty Mr. Wix made 19, while the inestimable A. Budge made a phenomenal 23, for a total of 103. Our William made 2, not out.

I am sad to relate that Thomas Nelson Neal did even worse in the second innings, with only a single run to his credit, although brothers Robert and Francis did a little better, with 14 and 7 runs respectively. Curiously, a certain W. Barker was stumped *and* bowled by the nasty Mr. Wix. Is this even possible? I wouldn't have thought so. One can't help wondering. Anyway, our William made 3 (not out) in the second innings, and the Blenheim team cruised to a comfortable victory.

But together with the fine speeches, the public meetings, and the grand ideas, were debts. Lots of them, it seems. Already by 1857 William was in court, being required to pay £58.6.10 to a certain Barrett. The judge made a telling remark, that the judgement was for the plaintiff "as in former cases". Clearly this was not the first time William had been in court for not paying up. Other things went sour as well. William had been elected in 1858 to the Board of the Nelson Literary and Scientific Committee, but in the 1859 election he came in last, with only four votes. Was this an indication that people were getting sick of him? Possibly. It's hard to be sure. Certainly, at the beginning of 1859 he gave up the struggle in Nelson, and sold up everything to pay his creditors, including the Baths which he had built. It's not clear what he did then, as it wasn't for two more years that his family left Nelson. However, on the 15th of May, 1861, he put his wife, seven youngest children, 26 boxes and 14 packages of effects on the schooner *City of Nelson*, headed to the Wairau, while he and his two eldest boys (Horace and my GG-grandfather, Oscar) walked across the hills. Because of the weather the *City of Nelson* couldn't cross the Wairau bar, so they all had to be taken to shore in a whaling boat. That would have been a nasty trip. Crossing the Wairau bar in bad weather, in an open boat with seven young children. Not for the faint-hearted, that's for sure.

Their first house in Blenheim was on Bradford Quay, where the fire station is now; Blenheim was still very small, with only about 52 houses. Later, in 1864, William and Sarah built a house in Dillon St. According to Joan McNaught the timber for the house was white pine from the Big Bush at Grovetown, and rimu from Dalton's Mill on the Picton Road. The roof was originally covered with shingles, but these were later replaced with iron. Unsurprisingly, given William's interest in horticulture, it had a beautiful garden; even before the house was built William put up a glasshouse to shelter some cherished grape vines. Seeds were sent from family in England¹ and also grown in the glasshouse. After both William and Sarah were dead, this garden was looked after by two of their daughters, Kate (not my G-grandmother, but her aunt) and Emma. Aunt Emma, as my mother always called her, was blind in her later years, and would navigate around this garden by hooking

¹It's fascinating to get a glimpse of the fact that either William or Sarah kept in touch with their relatives back in England. I'd love to know who it was.



A photograph and a painting of the Norgrove's house on Dillon St. According to Joan McNaught: "The coloured painting of Dillon St. was done by an unknown painter and obviously well before my time. The garden was not so extensive or well kept after Aunt Emma lost her sight. A Blenheim friend was visiting and saw the painting hanging and recognised it. The owner had no idea of its background, but once she was told, and that there was still family in Blenheim, it was given to our friend who was asked to give it to family – my Mother and sister. My sister Dorothy Norgrove is in a home in Blenheim and has the painting on the wall of her room there."

her walking stick over the clothes line. She and her sister Kate operated the Maxwell Road general store, which had been built by their parents around 1884. The store sold groceries and sweets, and its proprietors were known to all as “the fat and the thin Misses Norgrove”. I’m not sure which was which. When her sister Kate died, Emma struggled on in the house until, after living there for over 76 years, she had to move out and live with her nephew Ted Norgrove, in Redwood St. The house was pulled down soon after, in 1941. Aunt Emma lived to the ripe old age of 97, the last 17 of which she was blind. Norgroves lived on the Dillon St. property for over 10 years, until the last of them, William and Sarah’s G-grandson Alf Norgrove, left Blenheim in 1966.

William’s public life in Blenheim followed a similar pattern as in Nelson. He was elected to the local Council (in 1873) where he made many a speech about how best to improve Blenheim’s water supply. His ideas were ignored for years; it wasn’t until 1885 that anything was done about them, by which time William was too old and infirm to attend the meetings. This was noted with regret. He served on the Blenheim Education Board, appeared in many performances of the Literary Society (giving readings of various things mostly, it seems), and was active in the Agricultural Society, as he had been in Nelson. He even invented a novel gate-fastener which was entered into the Marlborough Agricultural Society 1875 Annual Show. It wasn’t generally admired.

Gold was a recurrent interest, for both William and son Oscar. In 1878 William was able to combine his interests in water and gold when he went to the Wakamarina gold field to try and design ways in which the claims could be drained. His interest was a share of the profits; one would suspect there weren’t any if it weren’t for the story that Oscar’s daughter, my G-grandmother Kate, told, of how her father had made £300 in three weeks at Wakamarina. Do we believe her? I’m not entirely sure I do. We don’t even know for sure that William’s visit to Wakamarina had anything to do with Oscar; still, it would be very surprising if it didn’t, so, on balance, I’m willing to allow William at least partial credit for a possible £300 profit.

As he got older, William’s health declined¹ and he stopped attending public meetings. Eventually, on the 18th of June, 1886, he died, leaving behind this obituary in the Marlborough Express:

It is with sincere regret that we record the death of Mr William Norgrove, an old and respected Wairau settler, which took place at three o’clock on Friday afternoon, at his residence, Maxwell Rd². He was in his 73rd year, and the debt of nature was paid through general debility and decay. Mr. Norgrove was born in Ardleigh, Essex, and educated at the Foundation School, Colchester, in which town he afterwards served his time as plumber and painter. Having resolved to emigrate, he landed in Wellington, from the ship Gertrude, on the 31st October, 1841. When the gold fever broke out early in the fifties he went over to Victoria, where he stayed two or three years. On his return to New Zealand he settled for some time at Nelson. Whilst there he was a member of the Town Board, and the first and prime mover in the establishment of water works, a fact which was prominently acknowledged at the inaugural banquet some years ago. Determining to shift his fortunes to Marlborough, Mr. Norgrove arrived in the Wairau in March, 1861, and, at the time of his death, had therefore been a resident amongst us for upwards of 25 years, and a Colonist of upwards of 45 years standing. He formerly occupied the position of a Borough Councillor in Blenheim. Wherever he resided he worked at his trade, adding to it the practice of letter writing and cutting; the Tua Marina Memorial on Massacre Hill being an abiding specimen of his work. During the last three or four years he had been infirm and unable to carry on his business, but it was not till about a fortnight ago that he took to his bed with the last illness from which he never rose again. His familiar figure will be greatly missed from Blenheim. Mr. Norgrove was a man who took an active part in all local improvements and ideas; he was full of information and geniality; and possessed a fund of fertile and ingenious ideas. It will be remembered to his honor that he was remarkable for the breadth, liberality, and

¹Well, doh, of course it did! What else would you expect? Still, this is the kind of obligatory sentence that people always use.

²Yes, it says Maxwell Rd. not Dillon St. The house was on the corner of Maxwell and Dillon, with the garden originally extending south to Stephenson St. and west to Percy St. It was a big section.

tolerance of his opinions. He was married at Ilford Church, Essex, and his widow and seven children – four sons and three daughters – survive him.

After having so much to say about William, it is disappointing that we know so little about Sarah. However, such is the burden of the genealogist; women just don't appear. She survived William by a few years, and died on the 3rd of March, 1891, leaving an obituary in her turn (in the Marlborough Express):

Another old colonist has passed into the silent land.¹ We refer to Mrs. Norgrove, who breathed her last at her residence, Maxwell Road, early this morning. The deceased, who was the relict² of the late William Norgrove, was married at Bow Church, Middlesex in 1839, and with her husband came out to the colony by the ship Gertrude, landing in Wellington on November 1st, 1841. They removed to Nelson in 1855, and afterwards came to the Wairau in May, 1861. Of a kindly and benevolent disposition, though quiet and unobtrusive in her mode of life,³ the deceased lady was highly esteemed, and perhaps by no one will she be more missed than by the many children of her acquaintance, of whom she was particularly fond, and whom she entertained by many a simple tale. The memory of her many virtues, and her cheerful demeanour amid the later years of an invalid life will be cherished by her numerous friends. She leaves a large family of grown up sons and daughters, to whom we extend our sympathy in their bereavement.

William and Sarah had ten children that I know of.

Ovid Hall (1840–1858). He was born in England and came to New Zealand with Sarah in 1841, at the tender age of 1 or so. He died when he was 18, of what I don't know. I'd very much like to find out more him. The death notice in the Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle, 21st of August, 1858, says only that he was the son of W. Norgrove, plumber, and that he was 18 years old.

Oscar Alfred (1842–1907). More on him next, as he's my GG-grandfather.

Horace (1846–1928). There's also quite a lot of information about Horace in the following few pages, as he was a business partner of Oscar for a number of years, mostly in the coastal shipping trade.

Gertrude (1846–1913). She married Joe Dempsey, a saddler, on the 26th of April, 1862. By 1889 they were living in Wellington, when one of their sons, Walter Norgrove, married a lady with the rather impressive name of Agnes Ann Amelia Le Couteur. They also had a bunch of other children (seven boys and two girls, according to my G-grandmother, Kate), but I don't know anything about them. Well, except that the eldest, John, was apparently the manager of Wiseman's Saddle Shop in Auckland.

One descendant, Gertrude Dempsey, was the author of *The Little World of Stewart Island*, published in 1964 by A.H. and A.W. Reed, as well as a number of other books about Stewart Island. You can still buy them, although I never have.

Emma (1848–1945). A great gardener, and lived in the house in Dillon St. for many years, even after she became blind in later life. Never married. According to the Nelson Examiner of the 26th of December, 1860, she won a class prize in the 1st Class, while her sister Kate won a class prize in the 4th class. Always good to know these things. She and her sister Kate operated the Maxwell Road general store, which had been built by their parents around 1884. The store sold groceries and sweets.

¹This is quite an assumption here. How does the writer know it's silent? For all we know it might be very noisy. Mind you, if it does exist, I do hope it's not *too* noisy. That wouldn't lend itself to a peaceful eternity.

²Don't you just love the fact that a widow is called a 'relict'? I do. Makes me giggle every time.

³Quite at variance with her husband, one imagines.

Walter (1850–1916). He appears with Oscar in the Wainuiomata settlers' roll. Also, in 1889, according to the Marlborough Express, Walter applied for a patent for scutching and cleaning flax, entitled "The Anti-friction Scutcher and Cleaner". Sounds painful. He married Hester Gane, or Esther Gain according to G-grandmother Kate, and they had a daughter on the 30th of September, 1882. No name is given, nor any other details.

Kate (1852–1927). With her sister Emma, a proprietor of the Maxwell Road General Store. She was either the fat or the thin Miss Norgrove, but I don't know which. Never married.

Zoe (1856–1856). Died young. As you can see for yourself without me telling you.

Alice (1857–1858). Died young. Ditto.

Sydney (1860–1926). Married Nellie Mills, the third daughter of Thomas H. Mills, from Hopai in Pelorus Sound. I don't know anything else about him.

Oscar Norgrove and Edith Brook

The second son of William and Sarah was Oscar, but he was the oldest to survive into adulthood, the eldest son, Ovid, dying when he was only 18. Oscar was born in 1842, a year or so after his parents arrived in Wellington, and his brother Horace was born four years later. Oscar formed various business partnerships with Horace, and later with another brother Walter, although I have to admit that it's not always clear which brothers are meant when the Norgrove Bros. are mentioned. Possibly all three of them.

One of the earliest jobs (at least that I know of) that the Norgrove Brothers did was in 1868 (Oscar would have been about 26), when they were contracted to do the painting and paperhanging at Mr. Ewart's new Hotel. It sounds like they initially followed in their father's footsteps; I imagine Dad helped out. However, even at this early stage they didn't restrict themselves to a narrow and blinkered approach, as shown by the fact that they also made fireworks for a Blenheim celebration. (They organised a big fireworks display in May 1868, and made the fireworks themselves, or had them imported.) It seems like they did everything they could get their hands on. However, despite their well-rounded efforts they were as unsuccessful as their father tended to be. On the 21st of November Oscar was charged and fined for obstructing a bailiff. Clearly he hadn't been paying his debts, somebody sent the bailiffs around to cart away his possessions, and Oscar had a go at him. Dear oh dear.

On the 20th of March, 1868, they also advertised in the Marlborough Express to sell eight sections on Maxwell Road, Blenheim. "The Land is securely Fenced with a live quick hedge, and planted with a choice selection of Fruit and Forest Trees, together with Dwelling House and Vinery, stocked with choice Grapes. A well of excellent water and a stream of water runs through Paddock and Garden."¹ It is hard to know whether or not this sale was related to the huge Blenheim flood of February, 1868, but it might have been. At any rate, the Norgrove Brothers were seen to play a hero's role in that flood, as they rowed around saving a number of people. Their career almost came to an untimely end if the account in the papers is to be believed²; apparently the Norgrove Brothers were rescuing a boatload of people but got washed away downstream, past the two-story Marlborough Express office and the Literary Institute. They managed to get out of the current when they reached some shoals formed by drays, and thus survived the day, to receive at least two sets of grateful thanks in the following week's newspaper.³

In the 1870s the Norgrove Brothers were heavily involved in the coastal shipping trade. In the late 1860s they built (and Horace sailed) a ketch called the *Amateur*, but by 1873 he was sailing the *Unity*, a vessel that the Norgrove Bros. had built in Picton, the first to have been built there.

On the morning of Saturday last, one of those pleasing events which mark the progressive prosperity of the Province came off in Picton, namely the successful launch of the

¹I assume that this was selling off parts of the original Dillon St. section, but I have no direct evidence of this.

²Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle, 11 February 1868.

³From H. Pritchard and H. Honnor, if anybody cares.



Left: the Norgrove Brothers. It looks to me like that is Oscar seated and Horace standing. Right: Edith Brook, possibly taken before her marriage to Oscar Norgrove, although I'm not sure of that.



Top: Oscar and Edith's four eldest children in what looks to me like a fake Sylvan glade. Edgar is in the middle, with Kate on his right and Bertha on his left. Arthur is sitting down. Bottom: Oscar and Edith Norgrove and their two oldest children, Edgar and Bertha.

first vessel built in Picton proper, and but the second within the precincts of Queen Charlotte Sound;

... The skill and enterprise of Messrs. Norgrove Bros. have thus far been crowned with a well-deserved success and we most heartily wish the gallant little bark a long and prosperous career.

... the general plan of her construction has been similar to that adopted by Messrs. Norgrove in the first schooner they built, the *Amateur*, with such further improvements as experience and careful forethought could suggest.

... Having thus far described her, we have now to state that punctually at the hour appointed the shore dogs were knocked away, and in a few brief moments the labour of seven months was entrusted to the care of Old Ocean, amidst the cheers of the assembled crowd, and took her seat upon the water like a bird. Just as she glided away Miss Norgrove broke the accustomed bottle and named her the *Unity*. She is intended for the general coasting trade, and we hope her spirited builders and owners may long have the pleasure of seeing her “walking the waters like a thing of life”.¹

As captain, Horace was a busy lad, sailing in and out of Wellington, Blenheim, Havelock, Patea, the East Coast, Wanganui, and probably many other places as well. Oscar, with family in tow, must have done an awful lot of sailing also. Oscar’s daughter Kate (my G-grandmother) remembered how her early life revolved around boats; up to Wellington, back to Blenheim, up to Wainuiomata, back to Blenheim again. It is easy to underestimate just how fluid life could be at that time. I have often fallen into the trap of thinking that, because they didn’t have cars and planes and nice paved roads, they must have stayed put most of the time, moving only in desperation, and that not often. Because of this it took me a long time to realise just how much the Norgrove brothers moved around. For example, for many years I was confused because the Norgroves appeared in the Wainuiomata records while I thought they lived in Blenheim. What I didn’t realise was that, to them, it was all closely connected, and they were perfectly happy to zip from one place to the other on a regular basis.

In typical fashion, the Norgrove brothers’ fertile minds were not restricted to traditional ship-building channels. On the 20th of May, 1892, a most interesting letter appeared in the Marlborough Express:

Dear Sir:— In your Tuesday’s issue you published an article referring to the new patent for three-keeled ships, and under it a letter from Mr. F. M. Levin, dated May 6th, in which he claims Mr. O. A. Norgrove as the original inventor.² I must ask you for space to state the facts. Twelve years ago I made the first model, and at once saw all the advantages to be derived from ships and steamers being built on those lines. My brother Oscar Alfred Norgrove visited me when I lived in Broadway, about the time I was satisfied with the success of my experiments. As may be expected, I took him into my confidence and showed him all the possibilities, and this is where he first got his ideas. If my brother is asked he will not deny this. I further developed the invention into a submarine steamer, and three years ago I took my crude drawings to the Defence Department with a model of the same. I have now full drawings and specifications that have been laid before the English Admiralty, bearing the stamp of the Agent-General’s office, returned to me with a letter stating that the plans and specifications were not accepted by the Admiralty – that I must construct and demonstrate. Being a poor man those conditions were an impossibility. If there is any claim for the first invention, I claim it against all comers. – I am, &c, Horace Norgrove, Picton, May 18th, 1892.

Well, well, a submarine steamer. It rather boggles the mind how this would work. We see here the fertile Norgrove imagination in full flight, coupled with an almost paranoid determination not to be cheated by anybody.

¹Marlborough Express, 19th of February, 1873.

²Apparently, so says the letter from Mr. Levin, the idea originally came to Oscar Norgrove after he observed the flight of the albatross. I have to admit the connection between an albatross and a three-keeled ship is not immediately apparent to me.

However, three-keeled ships and submarine steamers notwithstanding, in 1874 the Norgrove Bros. went bankrupt and dissolved their partnership. Horace continued sailing the coastal trade, and opened a fish curing works in Blenheim in partnership with the Whiting Brothers; Horace married Caroline Eliza Whiting and had two boys and four girls. One of the girls, Eliza, died in 1876, aged 5 weeks, and his eldest son, Horace, may also have died young. The other son, Harold, survived to become a market gardener in Auckland, or so my G-grandmother Kate said. By 1886 the fish curing works was worth £4,000, had six permanent employees and produced around 10,000 cases of fish annually.

Horace appears many times in court records of the day as he was a remarkably litigious man, always suing or being sued over money paid or not paid, conditions fulfilled or not fulfilled. In a typical case¹: “The adjourned case of Owen (as trustee) v. Norgrove – a claim for damage done to goods while being conveyed in defendant’s vessel, the *Amateur*, to Terawiti – was heard, Mr. Brandon appearing for the plaintiff, and Mr. Travers for the defendant. Mr. Travers called Mr. Kebbell for the defence, who, on examining a sample of the damaged flour, (on which the claim was principally based), said he did not think the damage could be so extensive as was alleged – 30s a ton would, he considered, cover it. He did not think it possible that the damp from the green timber could have penetrated to the centre of the bags; in the case of the *Falcon*, which sank alongside the wharf, witness had half a ton of flour on board, and, though it was actually under water, yet it was only wet a small distance round the outside of the bags; had the flour damaged in the *Amateur* been sifted, the greater portion of it would have been fit for use.” The case was adjourned, to be later settled on Tuesday, 8th of March, with the award of £37, 7s to the plaintiff, with costs of £9, 10s. Horace didn’t have too much luck in court.

Oscar seems to have been less successful. We have already seen how he went to the Wakamarina gold rush and earned £300 in three weeks (page 67), but I doubt this money lasted long. He and his brother Walter had a business venture in Wainuiomata, where they operated a sawmill (or possibly a flax mill), and appear on the 1884 list of original settlers. They also had 400 sheep in 1884, so their activities were not confined to milling alone, but since they had no sheep at all in 1885 I doubt they were notable sheep farmers.² Oscar also continued in his father’s trade as a painter until at least 1900, when he won a tender to paint some new buildings in Blenheim. The mill at Wainuiomata was the cause of at least one quarrel between Oscar and Walter, in which Walter punched Oscar on the nose. The scoundrel! It seems that Oscar thought that Walter’s wife, Esther Gain, hadn’t been pulling her weight, and hadn’t been feeding the men at the mill properly. Walter took offence. Well, who wouldn’t?

On the 18th of June, 1878, Oscar married Edith Brook, born in London on the 3rd of December, 1848, who had come to New Zealand for her health, as she had rheumatic fever. Edith Brook’s father was a candlemaker called Richard Brook, and her mother, Sarah Brown, kept a school for young ladies after the death of Richard (which happened I don’t know when). They lived at 20 Bridge St., Southwark, Surrey, at some stage. According to Kate Norgrove (Edith’s daughter), young Edith could remember being held up to the window to watch the soldiers marching to the Crimea. Crummy, the maid, was crying because her boyfriend was going. The Crimean War did for more than Crummy’s love life; it also ruined the candle factory.

Oscar and Edith had five children.

Edgar Roydon (1878–1964), was born in August, 1878, which, the observant reader will no doubt notice, is considerably less than nine months after June, 1878. Naughty Oscar and Edith. Edgar married Mary Ann Annand, and one of their children was Joan Norgrove, later Joan McNaught, who has been such a help to me in finding out information about the Norgrove family. Edgar was a volunteer fireman, with a day job as a builder. Mary Ann was from Scotland, according to my mother, spoke in a broad accent, always wore a pinny, and had a big bosom and a large bum. My mother is not very polite.

¹Evening Post, Saturday, February 12, 1870

²Yet another point of difference from the Neals.

Bertha Emma Mabel (Tots) , born in 1880, committed suicide (by drowning) in 1911. Bertha married Horace James Melville, had a son, Eric Jack, who had a son, Ian, in turn. Ian Melville is another person who has sent me an enormous amount of information about the Norgroves, and another to whom I owe a considerable debt.

Kate. Their third child was my G-grandmother, Kate Norgrove (who married a Neal, as described in Chapter 2). After her were two more sons, both of whom died young.

Arthur Oscar (born in 1884) died on the 19th of June, 1914; he “fell down the hold of the collier Kauri at the Queen’s Wharf¹ this afternoon and was killed. The doctor of HMS Psyche went to the man’s assistance, but death had been instantaneous. Deceased was single, about 24 years of age, and belonged to Blenheim.” According to his sister Kate he went to sea in the *Temple Knight* and was on the first boat to pick up signals from the Titanic.² He had intended to settle down, and went to Auckland to look for a job. He picked up a temporary job on a coal hulk, but while helping a friend to close a hatch he fell 45 feet and broke his neck.

Alfred Brook. The youngest child. Born in 1886, died in 1918 during the flu epidemic.

On the 22nd of May, 1886, something occurred that throws enormous light on the entire history of the Norgrove family in New Zealand. The Marlborough Express writes:

At the R.M. Court this morning, before Mr. Allen, R.M., Oscar Norgrove was brought up as a person of unsound mind, and unfit to be at large. In support of this view the evidence of Drs. Porter and Nairn was taken. Norgrove protested to the Court that he was not mad, though very excited about certain inventions for electric ships and perpetual motion which had occurred to his mind, and stated that, if liberated, he would go steadily to work and calm down. He admitted, however, that the Court in dealing with him was acting for his good, though he protested that it was mistaken kindness. He also complained that he had been taken to a cell yesterday, and had not been supplied with any tea. Mr. Allen said that in Norgrove’s present state of dangerous excitement it would be necessary to send him to an asylum for a short time for medical treatment. His Worship added that it was for his good, and not by way of punishment. Norgrove admitted that was so, but hoped that “Valentine Vox”³ treatment would not be dealt out to him, and that his inventions would not be burked and the public hoodwinked. The unfortunate man was then removed.

Then again on the 5th of March, 1888, again from the Marlborough Express:

Mr. Oscar Norgrove was committed to the Wellington Lunatic Asylum on Saturday by Mr. Allen R.M., Drs. Cleghorn and Nairn having certified to his being insane. The poor fellow brought to our office a few days ago some models, very cleverly designed, with which he had been working out the theory of perpetual motion. Great sympathy is felt for his family.

And there you have it. The explanation, I think, of why the Norgroves, so energetic, so intelligent, so talented, so creative, were so unsuccessful. I cannot read those newspaper entries without feeling enormous sadness for Oscar Norgrove; teetering on the brink of insanity but well enough to realise that he wasn’t well, terrified that his idea and inventions would be stolen and unable to get them out of his mind although he realised that this was a sign of insanity, well enough to be terrified of the lunatic asylum (and who wouldn’t be, given the conditions in which the inmates of such places lived?), and yet well enough to know that he had to go.

Poor Oscar. And poor Edith and the children, even more so. How must it have been for them, with their husband and father, probably their only source of support, becoming gradually worse over

¹In Auckland: Evening Post, 20th of June, 1914.

²I doubt the accuracy of this particular story, as I can find no independent confirmation.

³Henry Cockton’s *The Life and Adventures of Valentine Vox*, which was published in 1839, was one of the first Victorian novels to consider the poor treatment of the mentally ill, or not so ill.

the years (as he almost certainly did), until finally they could no longer cope, the community could no longer cope, and such drastic measures became necessary? One cannot imagine.

Note the dates. Oscar must have been in and out of the Wellington Lunatic Asylum at least twice, a couple of years apart, and possibly more often. We know he was working again in 1891 and 1900, when he got more painting contracts, and it may be that he recovered well enough to lead the rest of his life in a normal fashion. I hope he did. But I have little doubt that Oscar, and most likely his father before him, was a man who, for most of his life, struggled to survive on that knife edge; the genius of ideas on the one hand and crazed obsession on the other¹. My heart goes out to him and Edith. They cannot always have been happy.

Questions: I must admit that Oscar's illness raises a number of questions for me. In the court records he didn't sound too deranged. Indeed, he was clearly well enough to make literary references, and to understand well what was happening, and where he was going and why. So why was such drastic action taken? Was his family unable to cope? Unwilling, maybe? Was he dangerous to others or to himself? How long was he in the asylum, and how many times? Do medical records of his visits exist? It's unlikely that we'll ever be able to answer all these questions. However, I do know that there are extensive records of the early Wellington asylum, and I bet that a detailed search would turn up more information about Oscar. Yet another thing I have to do.

We know for sure that, whether or not they were happy, they were certainly poor. You can see the poverty clearly in a photograph of Oscar, Edith, and their two eldest children, Edgar and Bertha, which must have been taken around 1888 (page 71). Their house was unkempt and simple, the garden untended, with wood and branches in an untidy heap. Oscar is holding some unidentified thing, dressed in his working clothes, and looking as scruffy as I usually do, and his family look undeniably grim. It's hard to avoid the conclusion that they were poor as a result of Oscar's mental illness; although this must have affected Kate greatly, she never made any mention of it. Ever. Kate would tell stories of being sent down to the store to get food on credit as they couldn't afford to pay for it, and how she was dressed in a coat and bonnet made from her father's old overcoat turned. Her 6d wooden doll was a treasure and her fancy shoes had brass toecaps; her mother's bedside table was a packing case draped with white muslin. I suppose that poverty was no shame to her, but a father's illness was more difficult to cope with.

In August 1907 Oscar finally gave up the struggle, or had it given up for him I suppose, to be more accurate. His horse was frightened by some cans a boy was carrying, and threw Oscar off the trap, rupturing his liver. Oscar lingered on for ten days before finally giving up the ghost. Oscar's obituary appeared in, of all unlikely places, the West Coast Times:

The late Mr. Oscar Alfred Norgrove who died recently at his home in Blenheim, from injuries received from being thrown from a trap, was (says an Exchange) born in Wellington in the year 1842, and was the eldest son of the late Wm. Norgrove. In the year 1854 he took up his residence in Nelson, where he resided with the rest of his family till 1861, when he came to the Wairau. In 1868, in conjunction with his brothers, Horace and Walter, he built the ketch *Amateur*, of 25 tons register, on the banks of Lockup Creek, near where Clouston's stables now stand in Wynen St. For some years subsequent to this he followed the sea. A second boat was built at Picton, of 60 tons, called the *Unity*, in 1872. He sailed this boat for a time, and then he and his brothers gave up the sea, and deceased went to the Wakamarina goldfields, but returned shortly after to Blenheim to work at his trade, which has claimed his attention ever since.

Edith herself lived for a good long time after Oscar's death, dying in 1936, two weeks before turning 90. One wonders if she found it more peaceful; I know nothing about what she did in the last 30 years of her life, and I ought to know more. Maybe one day someone will tell me.

And that brings our Norgrove story to an end. It is continued in the story of Kate Norgrove, who married John Frederick Neal, as the interested reader can read on page 43.

¹There are quite clear signs that other members of the family also suffered similarly. Horace exhibits signs of paranoia in his letter about the three-keeled ship and his incessant litigation, while Bertha's suicide cannot plausibly be unrelated.