



Preservation Post

Newsletter of the
Christ Church Preservation Society (Inc.)

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“Looking to the future to preserve our past”

Christ Church Taita

Upcoming Events:

Heritage Month Open Day

Sunday 15 September, 12.00 – 3.30 pm

Visits to Christ Church

Over the past couple of months our President, John Daysh, has had the privilege to promote Christ Church to local groups –

- St Michael’s school in Taita
- The Wellington Historical Society and Early Settler Association; and
- The Avalon Combined Probuss Group.



John Daysh with St Michael's school students

We look forward to hosting many more interested families and groups at the Heritage month Open Day on Sunday 15 September. Ian McCulloch will be conducting his famous graveyard tours and also providing one or two of his vintage cars.

After tending our roses for many years, John de Crom has moved to the Kapiti Coast and we are delighted to welcome Theresa Greally, who is now assisting Mary Stevens with the gardens.

165th Annual Service – 5 May

The sun shone for our annual service as descendants of the Buck family and others joined to celebrate their connections to Christ Church.

Aileen Long has researched the family history and gave a very informative and interesting talk detailing the life of

her great great grandfather **George Green BUCK 1.4.1818 – 11.10.1894 – a truly good guy.** Here is a precis of her presentation:

George Green Buck was born in (probably) Keynesham or Newton St Loe, Somerset England to Robert John Buck and Alice Gregory. He was the fifth child of thirteen siblings at least seven of whom survived to adulthood.

Little is known of his childhood in Corstan the County of Somerset except that the village was part of a very rural community, probably near to a coal mine. The Buck boys were blacksmiths, farm labourers or miners.

There he married Mary Ann Seldon Salmon on 8 March 1840 at St Mary's Church, Bitton, Gloucestershire. They were living in Corston, Somerset at the time of the 1840 Census. His occupation was then a coalminer. They lived with Mary Ann's mother and her children. In 1841, their first child Alexina was born. On her birth certificate, George states his job as a blacksmith. The mid 1830s, were times of economic recession following the Napoleonic Wars. At the same time, farm labourers were beginning to lose their jobs due to increasing mechanisation causing significant social unrest.

George, brother Henry and their wives Mary Ann and Elizabeth and their children embarked on the ship *Birman* from Gravesend on 13 October 1841 arriving in Wellington on 1 March 1842. On the passenger list, George's occupation was noted then as "smith and labourer", and Henry as a "miner".

The *Birman* had sailed around the African coast and stopped off at the Cape of Good Hope (probably now Cape Town). Here they found it a delightful place. A letter written by an unknown female passenger

to her relative in Scotland and stored At the Alexander Turnbull Library provides a vivid account of life as a sea borne immigrant on George's voyage.

She goes on to say, after leaving the Cape we had a good voyage until nearing NZ. The captain diverted from the right course and we were nearly wrecked and should have run on some reefs but a timely warning of a stranger who put off in a boat and was just in time to intercept us while within a few hundred yards of the sunken reef. (We presume this is Barrett's Reef in the Wellington harbour).

On getting on shore, we found what a wretched place we had come to. The building intended for our occupation had been appropriated by a ship load of emigrants (sic) who had the good fortune to arrive before us. The result was that we were crammed into a large empty storeroom, just like an old barn, filthy beyond description, and overrun with rats.

Here a space was chalked out for each family on the rough floor, and here our little property, together with rations for a fortnight were conveyed, and we were finally left for good and all to shift for ourselves. There were heartbreaking scenes. The most sanguine lost heart and many women wept and wrung their hands.

As in many early New Zealand stories, the local Maori were of great help. We found the natives a fine lot of people: dark brown skin and most of them tattooed in fanciful patterns, which suffices for clothes for some of them. Some are dressed in a loin cloth and tattoo.

In another of her letters she is less complimentary about her fellow migrants. Gross immorality prevails amongst the Colonists.

The country appears all mountains and vales. Trees everywhere which are always

full of leaf. Work is not too plentiful and auction sales take place on arrival of vessels. Some in good circles in England have parted with everything, lead miserable and degraded lives, skulking in the bush and drowning their sorrows in drink

The Bucks first settled in Wellington where George had procured 32 perches of freehold land on the corner of Hill and Molesworth Streets. Henry also settled in Wellington.

In these early New Zealand years, George and a friend Robert Kemble formed a party to explore the Wairarapa looking to settle and eventually bought land. The group became lost in the high fern and bush at Tauherenikau for 15 days, and nearly starved as they had run out of provisions. This was probably the area we now know today as the 40 mile bush. Fortunately they found a Maori Pa on the margin of what may have been Lake Wairarapa. The Maoris gave them food and ultimately bought them by canoe to Wellington by the way of Palliser Bay.

He also obtained 117 acres in Upper Hutt in 1853. [Presumably the Taita region which is what they refer to as Upper Hutt.]

In 1853 he built and owned and became the licensee of a Hotel which he named the *Travellers Rest* which he ran until 1868. The Hotel contained seventeen 17 rooms which *were exclusive of those required for family use*. It was a place that women and children could comfortably stay being described in the Australian and NZ Gazette as *equal in every respect to any respectable roadside inn at home. Providing double and single beds and well-kept stables.*

George was very well thought of in the Hutt and looked up to by other settlers. He

was known as *practically the father of the settlement.*

A new church and a school

In 1850 as community grew George wanted the children to have schooling. There was a need for a church and school. He established a shed on his land as an unofficial school which he called *Clevedon School*. He also found a teacher for the local children.

In 1853 there were 30 households of new immigrants living in the Taita region. Christ Church was built in 1853 and held its first service on 1 January 1854, and in 1861 a proper school was built on land that George donated. This was Taita's first official school. The settlers in the Hutt Valley provided the labour to erect these buildings and then asked the Provincial Government to assist in providing teachers for the school.

George and his wife Mary Ann had 7 children. They arrived in New Zealand with Alexina who was then 9 months old, but sadly died shortly after. The other children were Elizabeth, William, Alfred, George, Julia, Edward also known as Edwin, Douglas or Dudley. All the children have the name Seldon as their middle name which was from their grandmother in England.

In 1853 George was joined by another brother James Gregory Buck from England. His wife was another Mary Ann (nee Chivers) and children. Another brother Thomas Gregory Buck settled in Australia. Around this time George's sister Esther (Hester) joined him. Esther married George Silcock in Napier and died there in 1902.

The huge 1855 Wellington earthquake destroyed many houses and buildings. There is no mention how it affected the Buck family or their Inn. Some of the settlers left the area as there were many after-shocks and considerable social

dislocation. In 1852 and 1855 to add to the misery, the Hutt Valley suffered severe flooding. Many of these early settlers lost their sheep, crops and their livelihoods. It was no wonder that many left New Zealand to seek their fortunes in Australia.

In 1867 George's first wife, Mary Ann, died aged 49 years. On her death certificate she died of *convulsions*. This left George a widower with six children to raise. George's good friend Robert Kemble was widowed four years later when his wife died tragically in a fire. He also had four dependent children. These men combined to raise their families with possibly help from a housekeeper.

In 1868 George decided to sell his 7 1/2 acres and the Travellers Rest. He must have sold off land earlier as he had originally purchased 117 acres. He found land and built a house called *The Oaks* in the area now known as Naenae, just up the Valley from Taita. It was a large two storied house with stately verandas.

Ten years later, on 2 June 1877, George married Rebecca the widow of William Whitewood at the home of Isaac Plimmer.

William Whitewood had also owned a hotel in the Hutt, a small dairy farm and a 7 roomed house. He ran the hotel and farm till his death 20 May 1875 leaving Rebecca (nee Monteith) a widow with one daughter (another) Mary Ann. The families combined and lived at *The Oaks*.

William Whitewood was also buried here in the Christ Church cemetery.

George's new wife Rebecca had just one daughter Mary Ann. She married George's son Alfred on 24th July 1878 a year after the marriage of her mother and stepfather. They had two girls and a boy - Alice Mary, William Matson and Marjory.

Unfortunately, Mary Ann was widowed after only nineteen years of marriage as Alfred died on 10 April 1897 at the age of 47. He was gored to death by his pet bull.

Previously in 1885, George's son George Robert Seldon went to the Wairarapa to farm on some land that George had bought previously. Unfortunately, he was found drowned in the Wainuioru river near Masterton. George was unmarried.

Elizabeth Seldon married George Hale Pike; William Seldon married Ngaiwikau Huatu; Julia Mary Ann married William Henry Reynolds Dale; Edwin Douglas (Dudley) Seldon married Janet Ann Fox.

George lived out the remainder of his life in Taita with his second wife Rebecca and died in 1894 at the age of 76. He was ill for 5 months before he died with what was described as *Malignant Stricture of the Oesophagus* (oesophageal cancer).

His funeral was well reported on in the *Evening Post* and *The NZ Mail*. The reporter wrote - *It was regarded as an impressive funeral as the cortege wound its way beneath the trees along the country road, which was flanked by the settlers from all parts. The village church (Christ Church) bell tolled every minute. George was laid to rest (alongside) his friend Mr Kemble with whom he had borne the heat and burden of the "troubled" times of the first settlement of the Hutt Valley. Thus ends the history of one of our sturdiest and most generous pioneers.*

An obituary said, *He was always a most liberal-minded man, and always ready to assist those requiring help...He will be deeply regretted by a large circle of friends, to whom he had endeared himself by his many acts of kindness.*

Some of the mourners were well known in the community and are still names in the

Hutt today– Kemble, Daysh, Buck, Pike, Avery, Mabey, McKenzie, Balls, Dale and Welch. The Mayor of Wellington Dr Newman attended the funeral also Rev Staveren the Rabbi. There were a number of Maoris whom George held in high esteem. His grandsons were the pallbearers Messrs W, E and A Pike, and Mr Noler an employee of George's for quarter of a century. (At this time women did not attend funerals).

Rebecca died on the 13th Nov 1903. She was buried alongside her first husband William Whitewood near the back fence of the graveyard.

George was buried next to his good friend Robert Kemble and his first wife Mary Ann. He rests here amongst a number of his Buck relations and is surely at peace – a life well lived.

“Arthur and Polly Hansell and their Three Daughters” by Bob Stewart.

Copies of this book are available by contacting Bob Stewart, email stewart@sbp-journal.com. Payment by way of koha which will be forwarded to Christ Church Preservation Society.

Ashes Wall

A niche in our Ashes Wall costs just \$750.00 plus GST. Contact Janice Henson, Secretary, for further details.

Janice-klaw@xtra.co.nz



Weddings

29 June

Jane Thompson to Richard Williams

Christening

Claudia Sharma

Interment

Norma May Triplow-Sanders

The Society is grateful to Brother International (NZ) Limited for printing this newsletter

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