

Riccarton  
Branch

New Zealand Society of Genealogists

# NEWSLETTER



November 2020  
Vol. 35 No. 10

## NEXT MEETING

7.30pm on Wednesday 11 November 2020

November's meeting is a Members' Night on the topic of:

### “Occupations”

As it is the final meeting for this year we will also have some festive season food for supper

#### FROM THE CONVENOR'S DESK

Last month's meeting was a step back to normality and it was great to see all of those who attended. This month is our last for the year and as well as our members night talk it is also Christmas food/drinks. It would be great to see as many as feel comfortable attending. My own research has been moving ever so slowly and I was able to meet new family members in my search for connections. This connection came from a connection of a connection via our newsletter. This has highlighted the value of our society and group work. If you are looking for something, someone (genealogically speaking) or wanting to make a family connection consider asking Alan to make a note in the newsletter. Our group has many experts in genealogy so speak with the committee about what help you need and they are always willing to share in your genealogy journey. If you have any ideas to share our knowledge and work again, speak to one of the committee. As always be safe, be kind and I hope to see you at our next meeting. Kind regards, Lance

**Meetings:** 7.30pm on the second Wednesday of each month (Feb to Nov) at the Upper Riccarton Library, 71 Main South Road. Visitors are welcome.

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## **REPORT OF OCTOBER MEETING**

This was a most informative presentation given by former Funeral Director Barbara Terry, who is now the Manager of two of Christchurch's main crematoria, at Linwood and Harewood. The older one, at 455 Linwood Avenue, Linwood, is formally known as the Canterbury Crematorium & Woodlawn Memorial Gardens and began in 1937. A company named Cremation Society of Canterbury Ltd was formed in 1936 by the well-known electrical engineer, Thomas L Jones and he and his family owned the business until approx 15 years ago. Barbara brought along the first cremation register for us to view. This is a very large volume with the entries spread across a double page opening with 16 columns. The first entry was dated 2 July 1937 and this volume covered the period up to 1954. A lot of information is contained in the register, such as name of deceased, sex, age, date & place of death, names of doctor, undertaker, sexton and clergyman, date of cremation, how ashes disposed of, and name of family member or other person who gave the instructions to the crematorium (applicant).

Harewood Crematorium & Memorial Gardens, in Wilkinsons Road near Johns Road, was established in 1963 and was taken over by the Cremation Society of Canterbury Ltd 20 years ago. There are 20 acres of gardens at each crematorium, Linwood having 8,500 roses and Harewood with over 5,000 roses, standard roses being arranged with a single variety planted en masse in one plot area there.

Usually the ashes are interred at the base of a standard rose, or at the edges of a rose bed area or shrubbery garden. Small plaques are placed in these situations. Traditional upright monuments are also allowed, with up to 8 interments of ashes per headstone. Also offered are sloping upright concrete walls (known as books) which have affixed to them 24 plaques. Another option is an engraved brick paver in a non-garden area, which is often used in cases where the ashes have been scattered rather than interred. Designated scattering areas are provided.

Linwood has had over 80,000 cremations and Harewood more than 45,000. Around 900 per year are undertaken at each of the two crematoriums these days. The gardens are open all day every day of the year.

An interesting fact that Barbara mentioned is that artificial joints do not burn when cremated so these are salvaged and sent to US and Germany where they are melted down and re-used.

A common problem experienced by many New Zealand crematoriums and funeral directors is that no action is taken by a deceased person's family about their ashes and these are often stored for many years following the death. Here in Canterbury abandoned ashes are eventually interred in a known recorded position by the Cremation Society.

The details of cremations at both crematoriums from the first one up until the present day have been entered into a computer database. The Cremation Society is happy to help genealogists seeking information on their family members. For single enquiries telephone (03) 389 6282 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. For one or more events e-mail: [admin@cremsoc.co.nz](mailto:admin@cremsoc.co.nz)

In other places in New Zealand, crematoria are often owned by the local council and the cremation records may be in an online public database along with their cemetery records. If you are lucky, photographs of the plaques are also available online for downloading.

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## **ANCESTRY.COM: MORE GOOD NEWS**

**Free access** to Ancestry from home via the City Libraries website has yet again been extended and is **now available until Wednesday 31 December**.

Recently added were:

- Welsh Baptisms, Marriages & Burials (with images) from all 13 counties in Wales
- Australia RAAF Personnel Files 1921-1948 (4002 records, with images of the original files)
- Queensland Index to Government Railway Workers 1878-1946 (40,940 records)

The index is a typed document (images can be viewed) with information such as job title, station and dates.

## **FINDMYPAST UPDATE**

Christchurch City Libraries members can only access FindMyPast for free on a computer within a library. Databases added or updated recently are follows:

- Kent Baptisms from Woolwich, St Mary Cray and Sutton-at-Hone (7,000 new records)
  - Kent Burials from Eltham and Thames & Medway (5,000 new records)
  - Birmingham Burials 1874-2016 (90,000 new records)
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## **BRANCH LIBRARY UPDATE**

Our genealogical life is apparently back to normal – just in time for Christmas!

I have actively pursued a policy of not purchasing any books this year, but I do have a couple of donations to report: 'A Genealogical Atlas of England and Wales', and 'May Your Shadow Never Grow Less, The life and Times of Henry and Jane Holland, Canterbury, New Zealand, 1863-1945', the story of Sir Sidney Holland's family. This is a beautiful book, fully indexed, illustrated and containing comprehensive family trees. Not many of us have ex-Prime Ministers in our family trees, but the book could well inspire us all to do more with our research records and oral histories.

Thanks to the many who remembered to return library books at last month's meeting. I'd encourage everyone to have a check on their book shelves, under the bed or even in the smallest room for any Riccarton Branch NZSG library books that may have made themselves completely at home since they were borrowed.

I'd also encourage you all to check out our library during our meeting for essential reading for the summer break. We have wonderful books that are not always available elsewhere. Despite not having purchased many books during Covid, our library is as up-to-date and relevant as we can make it, and I am sure there will be something there that will appeal.

Kathy

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## **FUNERAL SERVICE SHEETS**

Many thanks to those who keep bring along funeral service sheets for our fast growing collection. Some of those handed to me recently have been for funerals held many years ago, so those who have not yet contributed please take a look in those drawers, etc where they may be lurking. I would also appreciate it if you could staple to the sheets any newspaper death notices that relate to the deceased person.

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## **THE RICCARTON PEOPLE PROJECT**

So far we have had over 35 contributions of short biographies come in about people who lived in the wider Riccarton area between 1840 and 1920.

A few members have compiled up to 4 different biographies and I am very appreciative of their efforts. I hope that some members who have not contributed will consider doing so as it not only improves your research skills but helps the project too. I will hand out more names of people at our next meeting in the hope that you will write these up over the next wee while.

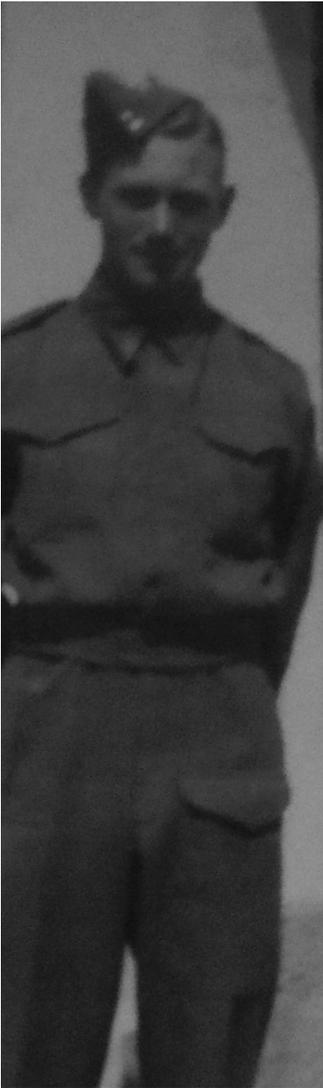
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## **WORLD WAR TWO ANNIVERSARY SERIES**

As you will see on the next page, I have yet again had to write about one of my relatives. The December newsletter will carry the last instalment in this series to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of WW2 but I have no more relatives to write about so I am ever hopeful that another member will make a contribution. We have yet to receive any stories for the anniversary of the Northern NZ Wars. If you can help then please send your story to Bill Schoch: bill.schoch@yahoo.co.nz

## WORLD WAR TWO ANNIVERSARY: PART 20

by Alan Tunncliffe



My uncle (my mother's older brother) Joseph John Lumsden WENSLEY, known as John (or Jack) was born on Friday 16 April 1915 in Invercargill, the eldest child of Louis Alfred Wensley and Gladys Wensley, née LUMSDEN. The family lived in Blenheim for about 12 years until November 1929 when they moved back to Invercargill. John worked as a cycle mechanic for Jack McKenzie's bicycle shop until enlisting in the Army in 1942. In October 1938 he married Violet McDONALD and eventually had a family of three sons. In 1945 John established his own bicycle business, Wensley Cycles, which he continued until retiring in 1973.

For some time he belonged to the Southland Highland Pipe Band and played the kettle drum. He was also in the Territorials. He owned his own rifle and used it for hunting rabbits, deer, pigs and ducks. John signed up for military service on 8 March 1942 but did not commence until 8 August that year. His total service was about two and a half years, all within New Zealand. He started out in a camp at Waiwera, in South Otago as Private No. 517725. He then moved north to Westerfield near Ashburton, followed by Burnham. During this period he was in the 5th LAFV (Light Armoured Fighting Vehicle) Regiment.

In April 1943 he was in Papakura, Auckland preparing to leave for overseas but when medically reassessed he was graded as unfit for overseas service. He then returned south to Burnham Military Camp and served two periods of temporary duty at Timaru and New Brighton in August-October 1943. Finally he was stationed at Alexandra. During this time he was in the Gun Ammunition Section. His last day of service was 16 April 1945, coincidentally his thirtieth birthday.

Army records show that he was five foot eleven and a half inches tall with brown eyes and brown hair. He stated that his preference for service was Motor Transport and that he could ride a horse. My uncle John died on 26 July 1982, aged 67 and is buried in the Eastern Cemetery, Invercargill.

