

TUXFORD FAMILY OF ESKDALE

I AM GOING TO WRITE ABOUT THE TUXFORD FAMILY FROM A CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE.

This family farmed up the Eskdale Valley from the early 1870s. The parents, Albert and his wife came out from England in 1870. There were, to the best of my knowledge four sisters, named Edith, Elsie, Ethel and Mary. They had three brothers who were named Arthur, Harry and one other who died, I believe, in the WW1. Their spinster sister Mary kept house for them in the Wairarapa, during their whole lives. They had a very flood prone farm near the Esk River. Albert's brother Franklin Tuxford came out from England at the same time as his brother. He had a farm up the Esk Valley as well.

They were a very close family with daily routines carried out daily, weekly and monthly. Usually they all went to Napier once a week to get their stores and they corresponded with other relations in England by letter writing. Church was their other weekly outing. At the same time the family had a farm in the Wairarapa called "Glenlean" which was on the Stronvar Rd about 22 kms out from Masterton. I have no idea what the other sisters did with their time in the Esk Valley.

From the electoral rolls for the following 80 years it is obvious that the family all spent time in the Wairarapa as well as at the farm up the Eskdale Valley. I do not know what that farm was called. I followed Arthur right through and this is how he was registered: 1890/1900 Hawkes Bay. 1905/6 and 1911 Wairarapa. 1911/1914/1919 Wairarapa. 1935/1938/1946 all Wairarapa but in 1954 he was listed as back in Hawkes Bay – I have no idea where he was the rest of the time. Harry was 1914/1919/1928 Wairarapa and then 1948/1951 he was Hawkes Bay. Again I have no idea where he was in between.

Mary, who was the only sister I ever knew, lived mainly in the Wairarapa. She was a very quiet lady who did all the family cooking, cleaning and general housework. She told me once that she wished she had learnt to ride so she could have gone out on the farm. She did a lot of preserving and used to bring the odd bit of bottled fruit or preserves down to my Mother and Father further along the road at Stronvar.

Arthur, being the eldest, had the final say in everything and I remember his long flowing beard and tweed clothes he wore summer and winter. He was a very efficient farmer and managed the farm dogs very well. He used a very large shepherd's whistle to call and direct them on a string lanyard round his neck. He was always very polite and respectful of my Mother. His large bay horse used to be waiting patiently for him at any time – not tied up or anything but just standing there.

Harry, the younger brother also had a beard but was a much leaner man who walked most places – He only used the horse when he actually had to. He always walked

with a shepherd's crook as he had two artificial feet which he used to make himself from willows on the farm. I do not know how he had lost his feet but believe it was during an accident with a plough long before I met him. As a separate item I will link this piece about Harry with one or two postcards I received from him.

He always had boots on his feet to be laced tight around the ankles, to keep the artificial feet in place. He was very kind to me when I had my lower right leg off in 1953. He offered to make me a new leg. Mum and Dad were very pleased to be able to thank him but were able to tell him that I would be going to the artificial Limb Centre in Lloyd St in Wellington where the returned Servicemen had their legs made to get my new one. They asked him why he didn't do the same and he replied that he couldn't do that as Arthur couldn't spare him from the farm for so long and his feet were totally OK and he only had to carve out new ones every few years.

By the 1940s family had got fed up with the continuing flooding in the Eskdale valley and Arthur seemed to be based permanently in the Wairarapa. Harry complained that the willow trees down there weren't nearly so good for him to carve out his new set of feet. I think he just liked the chance to go back up to the old place. They still all went to town once a week to do the shopping and Mary still kept house for them. Church was once a month for them in this area. I do not know if my Father had met them when he lived up on his Father's farm at Devils Elbow in the 1920s. I think he must have.

Mum and Dad would ask them occasionally for drinks or a meal and Mary would ask them back about twice a year. I was about 10, in 1948, when I first met them that I remember. Mary always had something special or old to give me – one time it was a set of three silver hooks which she had used as a child to button her shoes or gloves in England and another time it was a small sewing type basket of odds and ends to interest me most of which I still have today. She had done several very small pieces of silk embroidery with proper silk thread which she wanted me to have for my children.

Arthur one time took a piece of ginger to eat and Mum was horrified to see him continually chewing it round and round his mouth as she then realised he didn't have teeth to properly bite into it. She finally nudged Dad to take Arthur and Harry out to see the garden so the poor man could get rid of it. He would never have admitted that he had a problem.

As each of the three died they had almost the same funeral service my parents told me. They, all three died in their late seventies.

Erica Tenquist.