Alfred Masters

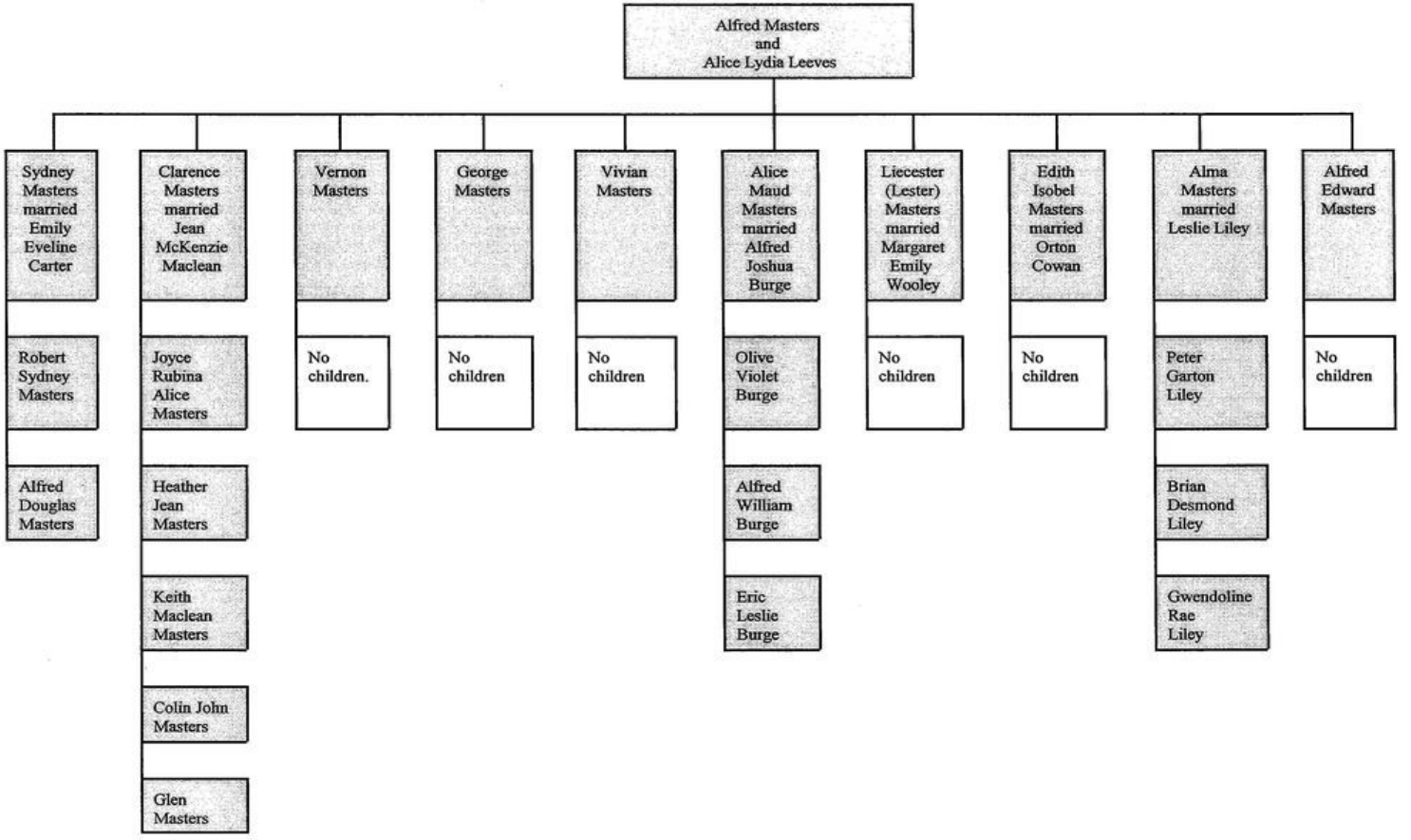
&

Alice Lydia Leeves

and their children.

Alfred Masters & Alice Lydia Leeves

their children, and their grandchildren.



Family Album

Alfred Masters
b.1847 in Ham Street, Kent, UK
d.1937 in Hastings, NZ.

Alice Lydia Leeves
b.5 Apr 1862 Framfield, Sussex, England.
d.1939 Hastings, NZ.

Children of Alfred Masters and Alice Lydia Leeves

Sydney Masters
b.1878 in Chertsay, Kent, (Ref 2a. 35)
d.16 Aug 1936 in Hastings, NZ.

Clarence Masters
b.1885 in Hastings, NZ.
d.1978 in Auckland,NZ

Vernon Masters
b.1889 in Hastings, NZ.

George Masters
b.1 Aug 1890 in Hastings,NZ.
d.3 Apr 1917 in France.

Vivian Masters
b.1891 in Hastings, NZ.

Alice Maud Masters
b.27 Jul 1893 in Hastings, NZ.
d.23 Oct 1969 in Hastings

Leicester (Lester) Masters
b.12 Apr 1894 in Hastings, NZ
d.22 Mar 1961 in Hastings,NZ

Edith Isabel Masters
b.24 Jun 1896 in Hastings,NZ.
d.1975 in Havelock North, NZ.

Alma Masters
b.7 Nov 1900 in Selwood Rd, Hastings,
d.23 Jan 1995 in Hastings,

Alfred Edward Masters
b.22 Jun 1902 in Hastings, NZ.
d.30 Oct 1917 in Napier Hospital

The Masters Family Group Photograph
Circa 1914

Standing in the back row:

Sydney Masters Aged 36 years Market Gardener/Orchardist	**Alice Maud Masters** Aged 21 years. Clerk	**Edith Isobel Masters** Aged 18 years. Bank Clerk	**Clarence Masters** Aged 29 years. Accountant

Seated in the middle row:

Alfred Masters Aged 67 years. Husband of Alice Lydia Masters. Hop Grower.	**George Masters** Aged 24 Years. Accountancy clerk.	**Leicester (Lester) Masters** Aged 20 years. Hop Garden Worker/Shearer.	**Alice Lydia Masters** Formerly Alice Lydia Leeves. Aged 52 years. Wife of Alfred Masters.

Seated in the front row:

Alma Masters Aged 14 years. Probably a pupil of Hastings High School.	**Alfred Edward Masters** Aged 12 years. Probably a pupil of Hastings Central School.

The original photograph from which this print was reproduced did not indicate the year in which it was taken. Therefore it has been necessary to estimate the year in which we see the family here. To make such an estimate, the risk of error is diminished by considering the age of the youngest in the group, and with the aid of known birth-dates, the year of the photograph and their respective ages can be calculated.

The youngest of the family is Alfred Edward Masters who is seated at the front-right of the group (as we view the photograph). The young Alfred Edward Masters in the photograph is estimated to be twelve years of age. He was born in 1902. This suggests that the year is 1914. His sister Alma who is seated in the front-left is estimated to be fourteen years of age. Alma was born in the year 1900. Again, this suggests that the year is about 1914. It is certainly not beyond the year 1914 because George Masters departed for England in 1914 to become a theological student, and later in the same year he volunteered for military service while in England. It is feasable that the family was prompted to arrange the group photograph because of George's plans to depart for England.

At the time of the photograph the family was living at 113 Selwood Road (now Windsor Avenue) Hastings, NZ. Their home was set about a hundred metres from the road frontage. The building featured an oblong two-storey brick structure (the dwelling) but with a hop kiln incorporated at each end.

The Masters Family Group Photograph

The photograph was taken in 1931 on the occasion of the *Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary* of Alfred & Alice Masters at their home at 207 Selwood Road, Hastings. Those in the photograph are listed below from left-to-right as **you** view the photograph.

The arrangement of the people in the photograph is such that Alfred and Alice Masters are seated in the centre, and with their children seated to the left and to the right of them. On that basis, the gentleman who is standing at the extreme right (Lester Masters, a son of Alfred & Alice Masters) should have been seated, but presumably the household was unable to produce the eighth chair needed.

The vegetation on the lap of Alma Masters and Alfred Masters is a vine of hops. Hops were grown by Alfred Masters (and later on the same property by Sydney Masters) and were a significant element in their lives.

Back row standing:

Name Maiden name has been used in the case of married women.	Orton Cowan	Jean McKenzie Maclean	Leslie Liley	Joyce Rubina Alice Masters	Emily Eveline (Pem) Carter	Alfred Joshua (Bob) Burge	Leicester (Lester) Masters
Relationship	Husband of Edith Isobel Masters	Wife of Clarence Masters	Husband of Alma Masters	A daughter of Jean & Clarence Masters	Wife of Sydney Masters	Husband of Alice Maud Masters	A son of Alfred and Alice Masters

Middle row seated:

Name Maiden names of daughters have been used.	Edith Isobel Masters	Clarence Masters	Alma Masters	Alfred Masters	Alice Lydia Masters	Sydney Masters	Alice Maud Masters
Relationship	A daughter of Alfred & Alice Masters. Wife of Orton Cowan.	A son of Alfred & Alice Masters. Husband of Jean Masters.	A daughter of Alfred & Alice Masters. Wife of Leslie Liley.	Husband of Alice Lydia Masters (née Leeves).	Wife of Alfred Masters.	A son of Alfred & Alice Masters. Husband of E.E. Carter.	A daughter of Alfred & Alice Masters. Wife of A.J. (Bob) Burge.

Seated on the ground in the front row:

Name	Alfred Douglas (Fred) Masters	Eric Leslie Burge	Robert Sydney Masters	Peter Garton Liley	Olive Violet (Molly) Burge.	Keith Maclean Masters	Colin John Masters	Alfred William (Bill) Burge
Relationship	A son of Sydney & Pem Masters	A son of Maud & Bob Burge.	A son of Sydney & Pem Masters	A son of Alma & Leslie Liley	Only daughter of Maud & Bob Burge	A son of Clarence & Jean Masters.	A son of Clarence & Jean Masters.	A son of Maud & Bob Burge.

Alfred Masters & Alice Lydia Leeves

and their children.

Alfred Masters was born in 1847 in a village by the name of *Ham Street*, which is situated about thirteen kilometres south of Ashford in the Romney Marsh area of Kent. He was the son of Frederick Masters and Sarah Masters (formerly Sarah Cobb).

Alice Lydia Leeves, who became the wife of Alfred Masters, was born 5 April 1862 in Framfield, Sussex (near Uckfield) approximately mid-way between Brighton and Tunbridge Wells. She was the daughter of Jabez Leeves, a farm labourer, and Fanny Leeves (formerly Fanny Smith).

Marriage: Alfred Masters and Alice Lydia Leeves were married in 1881 in Wilsborough, which is situated about two miles south-east of Ashford.

The Kent and Hawkes Bay connection: Alfred Masters, had worked for *The Lands & Survey Dept* in Kent, and is understood to have been a surveyor. Prior to migrating to New Zealand, Alfred Masters appears to have had contact with Thomas Tanner, who was a pioneer settler of the Hastings area. Tanner's affairs were to have a pivotal effect upon Alfred Masters, and therefore his background is of some relevance here.

Thomas Tanner, born 1830, had migrated to New Zealand in 1849 on the vessel *Larkins*. Tanner purchased large tracts of land from the Maoris, and became embroiled in disputes regarding the legitimacy of some of the purchases. Tanner had borrowed heavily from The Bank of New South Wales and from The Northern Investment Company during his expansionary phase. The heavy borrowing coupled with inadequate returns resulted in Tanner falling into arrears with interest payments. The Riverslea Block, comprising 5,332 acres (2,158 hectares) was progressively subdivided in 1879, 1885, and 1889, thus enabling portions to be sold to settle debt arrears. Around 1882 Tanner had developed a block in hops, and about 1883 he had a financially disastrous attempt to export hops. Also In 1883, Alfred Masters arrived as a new immigrant to manage the hop gardens. Tanner's financial problems were compounded in 1885 when a heavy infestation of Red Spider (Red Mite) ruined the vines and the year's crop of hops. By now he owed his lenders £80,000. Tanner's desire to ease his escalating financial problems, and his manager's interest in acquiring property, resulted the sale of 100 acres, which incorporated the hop gardens, to Alfred Masters.

The migration: In the year 1883 the family of Alfred Masters, Alice Lydia Masters, and their 15 month old son Sydney Masters, migrated from the village of *Ham Street,* Kent, England.

New Zealand records of assisted immigrants who sailed to New Zealand in 1883 show Alfred Masters, whose occupation is recorded as *shepherd*, and his age (erroneously) as 34 years. It is doubtful that Alfred masters was ever a shepherd, and it is thought that he had stated his occupation as *shepherd* to improve his chances of becoming an assisted immigrant under the scheme then applied by the government of New Zealand. The same entry in the shipping record also shows Alice Lydia Masters aged 22 years, and their son Sydney aged 15 months, as having sailed from London on 29 December 1883 on the vessel ***S.S.British Queen***. The vessel reached Wellington, New Zealand on 17 February 1884. A journey of fifty days. The

ship's migrant register for the journey vaguely scheduled its ports of destination as *"Wellington, Canterbury, and small ports west"*.

The ship carried a significant contingent of migrants who were listed as destined for Hawkes Bay, but it would appear that the *S.S. British Queen* did not convey them between Wellington and Napier. An abbreviated record in the Napier Museum shows that Alfred Masters, Alice Lydia Masters, and their son Sydney Masters travelled to Napier on the *Southern Cross* on 20 February 1883. It is not clear whether the 20th February was the date on which the vessel departed Wellington, or the date on which it arrived in Napier.

The fare (in regard to the Masters family) from England to New Zealand was subsidised by the Government under the *Public Works and Immigration Act 1870*, commonly referred to as the *Vogal Scheme*. The total fare was £39-0-0. Alfred Masters paid £5-0-0 in London, and the balance of £34-0-0 was paid by the New Zealand Government. On the voyage, the *S.S.British Queen* carried an assortment of migrants, most of whom were financially assisted. There were: 163 English, 72 Irish, 19 Scotts, 3 Germans, 1 Swede, 1 Dane, 1 French, 1 Italian.

Brother of Alfred Masters: On the same voyage of the *S.S.British Queen* was another **Masters** family who also emanated from Kent. The other **Masters** family was comprised of: Edward Masters, shepherd, aged 31 years; Catherine Masters aged 26 years; and children: Catherine aged 6 years; Alfred Masters aged 4 years, and Evelyn an infant. This family was also among migrants destined for Hawkes Bay. Edward Masters first appears on the *Hawkes Bay* Electoral Roll in 1893 as a labourer, and later (variously) as labourer, or rabbiter. Edward Masters was a brother of Alfred Masters. The brother Alfred is not to be confused with infant son of Edward Masters who bore the same name. Edward Masters' infant daughter Evelyn was to later marry Steven Jarvis, and their children (John Jarvis and Bundy Jarvis) were to own and operate an orchard in Jarvis Road, Twyford.

Employment: As mentioned earlier, Alfred Masters' first employer was Thomas Tanner who had, among other properties, a block of about 100 acres [40 Ha] on the northern side of the Hastings - Havelock Road and which extended back from the road for ten chains [about 201 metres], between Selwood Road [renamed Windsor Avenue] and St Georges Road.

The Hop Garden Property: Thomas Tanner established the Riverslea hop gardens on the 100 acre property in Hastings about 1882 - 1883 but appears to have used only 35 acres (14 hectares) for hop growing. The hop kilns (oast houses) had been built by Tommy Tanner from heart native timbers that came from Tanner's own saw mill in the bush at Maungatereteré, and built of bricks from Fulford's brick kiln at Havelock north. A hop press was also installed. One E.J. Whibley appears to have performed in a management role for Tanner during this phase. Establishment costs are recorded at £120-0-0 per acre ($296.00 per hectare) and as such it was an expensive venture to establish. For comparison purposes, £120-0-0 equated to a year's income of a well paid skilled labourer.

The oak trees that still stand (in 1997) on the properties along the northern side of the Hastings-Havelock North road were planted by (or for)Tommy Tanner during that era.

From around 1885 when the hop plants were producing fully, 250 hop pickers were required. Some of the employees camped on the property, and others, including women and children,

were transported to the property daily by horse drawn coach. Because of the contribution of children to the hop picking, and the significant way in which they augmented household income, summer schools did not re-open until late March.

The cooling and storage floors of the hop kiln building were used for social events, the most important of which was the hop pickers' annual ball held at the close of each season.

Tanner sent a bale of hops to the *Indian and Colonial Exhibition* in 1887, and were said to compare favourably with the best of hops produced in Kent.

Tanner got into financial difficulties, and as a temporary measure, the property was taken over by a syndicate (presumably lenders or acting for lenders). By now Alfred Masters was managing the property, and the syndicate then leased the property to Alfred Masters, and later the property was sold by the syndicate to Alfred Masters.

Alfred Masters had converted the central portion of the hop kiln building into accommodation which his family used for twenty years until 1913 (at which time a home was built in Selwood Road for the family). The main access to the property was from 113 Selwood Road, and it was some two hundred yards from (and through) this point of access that the two hop kilns were situated. The two hop kilns were positioned at each end of a long two-storied house in which the Masters family were to live until 1913.

Hop Growing: The hops were grown up 5-6 six metre Manuka poles which had the base end sharpened, dipped in tar to preserve the timber, and imbedded into the into the ground in a similar manner to a fence post. The picking season became a labour-intensive operation. Families of seasonal workers camped in tents on the property, and entire families would become involved in the work. Hops were picked into hessian *pokes* [ten bushel bags]. Each hop picker would have his *poke* of hops measured by a bushel [about 20 kg] container, and would be paid according to the bushels picked. The hops then went by dray [a heavy-duty two-wheeled horse drawn vehicle] to one of the kilns. The kilns were for drying the hops. The kiln itself was a two-metre high raised platform with a base which was comprised of slats of spaced timber. The slats were covered with a large (expensive) horse-hair mat. A fire was lit underneath, and hops were spread over the mat. At the Masters hop kiln, the ***dryer*** was a person by the name of William Crawford. The dryer held a very responsible position on the property during the season. He tended the kiln fire, turned the hops on the drying floor at the correct times, and ensured that the correct temperatures were maintained during the various stages of the process. He made the decision as to when one batch of hops was taken off and another was put on. William was very fussy about his responsibilities and refused admittance to almost everyone while drying was in progress. Lester Masters described him as a nuggety little Kentish man with fierce looks and gruff manner. The demeanour was a façade to spare him any unwelcome intrusions or interference. His area of operation was out of bounds to children at picking time. If any were to venture that way, William Crawford would address them loudly, but would soon reveal his gentler nature by inviting them to have a look while he stocked up the kiln fire. Then he would hand out confectionery or nuts. Sometimes he would hand out potatoes that had been baked on the hot bricks. The baked potatoes would be sliced with a knife, and liberally buttered and sprinkled with salt and pepper.

After the hops were dried, they were pressed and packed, and sold under the brand name of ***Riverslea Hops***. The name *Riverslea* was borrowed from the district in which the hop gardens

were situated. The hops were principally sold to the *Sunshine Brewery* Napier, run by Jack Stevens. Some were exported to London, and some were sold locally in half-pound and one-pound packets through local stores for home brewing. Each packet was printed with the following home brew recipe:

Boil six gallons of water, then add ½ pound of hops and boil for one hour. Now add six pounds of sugar and boil for half an hour, strain, and when blood-warm put in a cup of brown sugar, the whites of two eggs, and half a pint of yeast. Let ferment for 30 hours, and then put into a wooden keg, leaving the bung out. when well fermented, bung tight. This beer is fit for use in about twelve hours.

Apart from William Crawford the hop dryer, there were other characters who worked at the hop gardens. Mr Piper, old Jim Brown, and Billy Spud. Mr Piper was a Crimean War [1841] veteran who had fought in the battle of Alma. On the slightest provocation he would give a vivid account of it. On one occasion Mr Piper accompanied Alfred Masters to Napier to collect cash from the bank. The cash was to be used to pay employees at the conclusion of the harvest. To a complete stranger sitting alongside in the railway carriage on the return journey, Mr Piper confided that "although it did not do to talk to strangers of money matters, it might surprise him to know that the little brown bag alongside his mate was full to the brim with gold and silver coins." To Alfred Masters, the custodian of the bag, it was an unwelcome disclosure.

Old Jim Brown was a very big man with a squeaky voice. He lived alone in a cottage on his own section near the Oast House. Jim refused to pay rates, and he refused to appear in Court for the non-payment of them. He contended that by doing so he would be helping to pay white collared men to occupy easy jobs.

Billy Spud acquired his name because of his ability to dig potatoes. However, according to Lester Masters, Billy Spud was not so well endowed when it came to reasoning powers. Billy the Spud could get himself into needless difficulty with the greatest of ease.

In the early 1900s, the drain (the Makirikiri Creek which drained into the Southland Drain) that served the gardens became blocked downstream from the property. The blockage caused flood damage to the hops, and in 1894 Alfred Masters brought a civil action against the Borough Council for damages. It was the opinion of Alfred Masters that the Borough Council was responsible for keeping the drains clear and that through the Council's failure to do so had contributed to the circumstances that had resulted in the damage to the hop vines. Alfred Masters won his case in the Magistrate' Court but lost it again in an appeal case brought by the Borough Council in the Supreme Court. His solicitor, David Scannell, expressed the view that Alfred Masters had a case that could be taken to the Privy Council [the next level in the court system]. However, Alfred Masters considered that he had spent enough on legal fees and let the matter lapse.

Alfred Masters was awarded a Gold Medal for his hops at the Christchurch Exhibition of 1910. In the early years Alfred Masters shipped some of the hops to the London market.

The area occupied by the hop garden was later reduced to about eight acres in the vicinity of where *Appledore Orchard* stands (since owned successively by Sydney Masters, Alfred Douglas Masters, and Anthony Harold Masters).

Reminiscences: Not long after arriving at the property, Alice Masters was astonished to see deer in the hop gardens. Two years later in 1886, they heard loud explosions. Because a Russian invasion was regarded as imminent, the explosions were presumed to have come from a Russian fleet bombarding the coast. Several days later, news reached Hastings of the Tarawera eruptions, and the cause of the explosions was correctly explained.

The Electoral Rolls: When gathering information on the Masters family, it was useful to search the Electoral Rolls. These provided a regularly spaced formal record of where the family was located at a particular time and the nature of Alfred Masters' employment. These served to reinforce, or occasionally correct, anecdotal information.
The record of Births, Deaths, and Marriages has also been the source of some of the information used in this record.

The 1887, 1890, and 1893 *Hawkes Bay* Electoral Roll records show:
Alfred Masters, Hastings, Labourer.
In 1885 their second son Clarence was born.
In 1889 Alfred Masters purchased the Riverslea gardens from Thomas Tanner. The purchase included the two oast houses (hop kilns) and the living quarters within the same building construction.
In 1889 Vernon Masters was born. Vernon was to die as a toddler.
In 1890, George Masters was born.
In 1891 Vivian Masters was born. Vivian was to die as a toddler.
On 27 July, 1893 their daughter Alice Maud Masters was born.
In 1894, their son Leicester (Lester) Masters was born. Although registered as *Leicester*, the name was informally spelled as *Lester* in most records.
In 1896 their Daughter Edith Isobel Masters was born.
The 1896, 1897, 1900, 1902 *Hawkes Bay* Electoral Roll shows:
Alfred Masters, Hastings, Hop Farmer.
Alice Lydia Masters, Hastings, Domestic Duties.
In 1897 the Heretaunga Plains flooded and some families were driven from their homes. The top floors of the Oast House were used as a dry refuge by many of the flood victims. It was during this flood that Sydney Masters rowed a boat from the Selwood Road property to central Hastings without grounding it.

Children in those days did not have bicycles and most of their local excursions had to be undertaken on foot. Anything that made the task easier found appeal. One such ploy was to grasp the rear of a horse drawn cart or dray for a tow, or to secretly climb on board. Sydney Masters once climbed on board the rear of a butcher's cart and was confronted by the sight of a pile of sausages. That gave him something to think about as they progressed along the road. Being a boy, and being fond of sausages, he seised a sausage and proceeded to slip off the rear of the cart with it. However, the sausage proved to be the first in a string of sausages. The butcher, who heard suspicious noises, turned to look behind. He saw a boy departing with a couple of metres of sausages trailing behind him. The cart was stopped, and the butcher gave chase, but Sydney proved to be a little more athletic than the butcher. Sydney headed through a plantation and then made his way for a shack in St Aubyn Street that was occupied by a bachelor acquaintance by the name of Geezer Smith. Geezer Smith was a former convict from Tasmania and obviously had little compunction about giving shelter to young Sydney and his string of sausages. A frying pan was produced and a hearty meal followed.

On 17 November 1900, their daughter Alma Masters was born.

Also about 1900, Sydney Masters was enrolled at Central School Hastings. He had vivid memories of negotiating a swamp with ducks on it. That swamp was where the Hawkes Bay Electric Power Board offices were later constructed in Heretaunga Street.

"Granny Masters" (Alice Lydia Leeves) was a person who was fond of domestic activities that gave her a chance to work outdoors. Given the size of her family, her indoor responsibilities would have been very demanding, and some relief from them would have inevitably been welcome. She was reputably not a fussy housekeeper, but was particularly skilled in the craft of crochet, and would seize opportunities to work at the craft. Apart from a wide range of small items produced in fine white lace, she would crochet pillow-slips and bed covers. Such items were a major undertaking. Evenings in the lounge were an obvious time to do crochet work, but she would also sit at the dinner table (during the after-dinner conversation at the table) and work assiduously at the craft.

In 1902, Sydney Masters [at the age of 24 years] is shown on military records as having joined a New Zealand contingent of troops which eventually departed to the war in South Africa (*The Boer War*). Sydney Masters returned from the *Boer War* and lived in Hastings.

In 1902 their son Alfred Edward Masters was born.

The 1903 *Hawkes Bay Electoral Roll* reference to the family is unchanged (except that the occupation of Alfred Masters is simply changed from Hop Farmer to Hop Grower).

The hop picking season in March each year was an important event for the families that would avail of the employment (and consequent income). Because entire families would camp on the property for the duration of the hop picking, the Hastings District School would close for several weeks during March until the picking was finished.

The 1908 *Hawkes Bay Electoral Roll* shows:
Alfred Masters, Hastings, Hop Grower.
Alice Lydia Masters, Hastings, married.
Sydney Masters, Warren Street, Hastings, Gardener.

In 1913, the family moved into a new home in Selwood Road.

In 1911 and 1914, more of the family's names appear on the *Hawkes Bay* Electoral Roll:
Alfred Masters, Selwood Road, Hastings, Hop Grower,
Alice Lydia Masters, Selwood Road, Hastings, Married.
Sydney Masters, St Andrews Street, Hastings, Gardener. [A new address]
George Masters, 113 Selwood Road, Hastings, Clerk. [The address of his parents]
Clarence Masters, 113 Selwood Road, Hastings, Clerk. [The address of his parents]

In 1916, imported Tasmanian hops were cheaper, and new stock was needed at the *Riverslea* hop gardens if it were to continue production. It was decided to cease hop production, and to convert some of the property into orchard. On Sydney Masters instructions (while he was in camp during the First World War) Lester Masters was instructed to remove the last of the hop plants.

On 30 October 1916 Alfred Edward Masters (a son of Alfred and Alice Masters) died at the age of fifteen years.

World War I (1914-1918) period:
George Masters was engaged to marry one Violet Bargrove of Christchurch. Immediately before joining the army, George Masters was an Anglican theological student. George served as a soldier in the Galipoli campaign (western Turkey), and despite the high incidence of casualties among troops who served in the débâcle, George Masters survived the experience. With ill health he was transferred back to the British encampment in Egypt, and subsequently transferred to active service in western Europe. On 1st March 1916 he was promoted to the rank of Second Lieutenant. On 27th October 1916 was sent to France (initially attached to 5 Squadron of the *Royal Flying Corps,* but soon transferred to 11 Squadron*)*. On 15th March 1917 while serving as Observer/Gunner (probably in an FE2b aircraft) he and the pilot engaged and destroyed an enemy aircraft over Bailleul, in Belgium. On 24th March 1917, as Observer/Gunner in an FE2b aircraft (No A5442) George Masters and his pilot engaged and destroyed a German Albatros D111 aircraft while over Croisilles, France. However, shortly afterwards, while still in the vicinity of Croisilles, their FE2b was damaged in air combat with another enemy aircraft was forced to crash-land. The pilot was injured, but George Masters was unhurt. On 3 April 1917, while serving as Observer/Gunner in an FE2b (No A808) over German lines, their aircraft received a direct hit from ground-to-air gun-fire. The aircraft crashed with the loss of the lives of both George Masters and the pilot E.T.C. Brandon of South Africa.
His fiancé Violet Bargrove never married, and served as a church missionary in China (until the establishment of Communism in China circa 1949), and lived in retirement in Christchurch until her death at the age of about 88 years.
George Masters completed several diaries during World War One, and these provide an insight into both his personality and the events affecting him during this period. Where available, these diaries have been reproduced elsewhere in this genealogical record.

From about mid-1917, the Oast House building was used as a school for about eighteen months until the Parkvale School was opened in 1919.

In 1921, the Hawkes Bay Electoral Roll shows:
Alfred Masters, Selwood Road, Hastings, Labourers' Agent [New Occupation. Now aged 73 years]
Alice Lydia Masters, Selwood Road, Hastings, Married.
And their son Clarence Masters is now shown on the Taihape Electoral Roll as an accountant, resident in Taihape.

The occupation of Labourers' Agent is understood to be the equivalent of what we currently refer to as an Employment Agency. His roll was to maintain lists of employers seeking workers, and to refer workers to them. Presumably, he received a referral commission from the employers who accepted the workers.

About 1921 Lester Masters purchased a six acre property from Alfred Joshua Burge (who had married Lester's sister Alice Maud Masters). The property purchased by Lester fronted onto Thompson Road, Twyford (on the southern side of Thompson Road) and was situated approximately 500 metres from Twyford Road. Lester planted the orchard, and some of the original plantings of pears (Winter Cole and Winter Nellis varieties) remain on the property

as productive trees now (1996).

In 1922, the *Hawkes Bay* Electoral Roll shows:
Alfred Masters, Selwood Road, Hastings, Labourers' Agent.
Alice Lydia Masters, Selwood Road, Hastings, Married.
Sydney Masters, Havelock Road, Hastings, Gardener. [A new address]
Alma Masters, Selwood Road, Hastings, spinster.
Lester Masters, 113 Selwood Road, Hastings, farm labourer.
[Refer to the substantially expanded notes on the life of Lester Masters for a insight into his activities and interests.]
In 1925, Alfred Masters is still shown on the Electoral Roll as Labourers' Agent.

In 1925, 1927, and 1930, the *Hawkes Bay* Electoral Roll shows:
Alfred Masters, 207 Selwood Road, Hastings; Retired. [The address has changed from 113 Selwood Road to 207 Selwood Road, and the occupation has changed to *Retired.* He is now aged 78 years.].
Alice Lydia Masters, 207 Selwood Road, Hastings.
Sydney Masters, Havelock Road, Hastings, Orchardist. [This orchard was later owned by his son Alfred Douglas Masters, and later again it was owned by Anthony Harold Masters.]

Clarence Masters is shown on the *Taihape* Electoral Rolls of 1921, 1925,1927,1930,1936, as an accountant, resident in Taihape. In 1940 he shows as accountant, 12 Burgess Road, Auckland. An Auckland telephone directory of 1955 shows him as *Accountant, 22 Buchanan Street, Devonport, Auckland.*

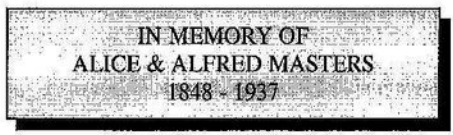
In 1927 the hop kiln building and curtilage was sold to the Anglican Church and was used as the St Barnabus mission hall.

In 1931, during the Hawkes Bay earthquake, the tall brick towers at each end of the building (housing the kilns and drying floors) were badly damaged. However, the building was no longer owned by the Masters family.

In 1937 Alfred Masters died, and was buried at the Hastings Cemetery (at Stortford Lodge).

In 1939, Alice Lydia Masters died, and she was also buried at the Hastings cemetery.

Commemorative Plaque: In the St Matthews Anglican Church, Hastings, on the back-rests of the pews are brass plaques (one to each pew) commemorating eminent members of the parish. Included is a plaque to Alice and Alfred Masters. When entering the main door (at the western end), the tenth pew from the door on the left of the aisle features the small plaque. The text is in the following format:



The plaque appears to have been applied as an acknowledgement to the Masters family for funds donated to the church for the installation of long pews. At a meeting of the church committee

on 20th February 1950 a minute was recorded as follows:

"Letter received from beneficiaries of the Masters Estate offering a gift of £70 from the estate towards the provision of new pews for St Matthews Church. A letter of Acceptance to be sent."

Later, a further entry records: "Masters Family Auckland: Reported that £74 has been received as donation for seating accommodation and deposited to the No 2 a/c. The Masters Family offer a sum of £700 to form a trust in assistance in educating prospective theological students of Hastings. The vicar is to reply after consultation with the Bishop." This trust was to become the *George Masters Trust*, and it still exists in 1997.

On 2/1/47 the old Oast House was the site of the wedding of Lester Masters and his Canadian bride Margaret Emily (Meg) Wooley. It was the only wedding to have taken place in the building.

In 1950, fire destroyed the wooden part of the building.

The Era: The lifetime of Alfred and Alice Masters was an era of accelerating change. During their childhood, horses were extensively used for transport and in agriculture work. However, steam power was becoming more widely used so that in the late nineteenth century (late 1800s) steam power was commonly in use in ships, railways, and traction engines, etc. When Alfred and Alice Masters and their son migrated from England, the ship on which they travelled was steam powered. Road vehicles powered by petrol or diesel engine were not a regular sighting in New Zealand until the years immediately preceding the First World War. At this stage Alfred Masters was over sixty years of age. Horse drawn vehicles were still in use at the time of his death. It has been difficult to ascertain what mode of transport the Masters household used (other than bicycles).

Alfred Masters was known to be a sociable person, and a part of his socialising included visits to a pub in Hastings. Although, as a hop grower, he had good cause to take an interest in the beer that was produced locally from his hops, he is known as one who occasionally sampled fairly generously. Such socialising could at times placed him in a condition that rendered the bike ride homeward a little hazardous. An occasional fall from his bike was a part of the price that he paid for his socialising. At least, such evidence suggests that he was well satisfied with the quality of the products made locally from his produce.

In 1886 they were residents of Hastings when it was declared a Borough and the name Hastings was formally adopted. The name Hastings had been suggested by his former employer Thomas Tanner.

Alfred Masters first appeared on the Hawkes Bay Electoral Roll of 1887, but it was not until after 1893 when woman were granted the right to vote that we see Alice Masters appear on the electoral roll (for the first time in 1896).

In 1898 the *Old Age Pension Act* was passed by Parliament. At this time New Zealand was the only country that had legislation that provided a retirement income from the Government. Alfred Masters was then 51 years of age, but it was many years before he fully retired. It was not until 1925 that the Hawkes Bay Electoral Roll shows his occupation as *"retired"* (by then he was aged 78 years).

They were to witness the transition from candle and gas lighting to electric lighting. Similarly, wood or coal range stoves and ovens were replaced by gas cooking appliances, and later they were to be witness to the introduction of electric cooking appliances.

Theirs was an era in which the news media was limited to a daily copy of the local newspaper. The daily newspaper was a significant element in the daily routine of most households. It was not until the 1920s and 1930s that the household radio added a further dimension to the contact with the outside world. Public entertainment was limited to theatre, a few sports such as Rugby, boxing, and horse racing, and in the 1930s cinema added to the range of choices. Television was still unheard-of in the life-time of Alfred and Alice Masters.

By comparison with what is available today, the household appliances available during their era may have seemed very limited, and home entertainment near non-existent. However, their lives were far from inactive or boring. The lack of sophisticated domestic appliances meant that a housewife was additionally busy because of the additional time that was required to accomplish quite basic chores. Alfred and Alice Masters had a large family, and that factor inevitably added to the complexity and intensity of their daily routines.

Given the achievements of Alfred Masters and Alice Lydia Leeves, it is reasonable to assume that their's had been a home and family life in which the essentials to a healthy and comfortable existence were generally available. However, none of that was achieved without hard work, sound judgement, some sense of adventure, and a ready sense of humour to give balance to their daily lives. The Masters children all reflected those traits, and a refined but unpretentious quality demonstrated the healthy balance of their background.

Their children were all physically active and sound, and each in their own sphere of interest and activity were to become successful and interesting people. That is in itself a testimony to the achievements of Alfred and Alice Masters.

A.W. (Tony) Rule. 17 June 1997

Hop pickers and their families at the Masters' hop garden in March 1900.

Descendant Report for: Alfred Masters

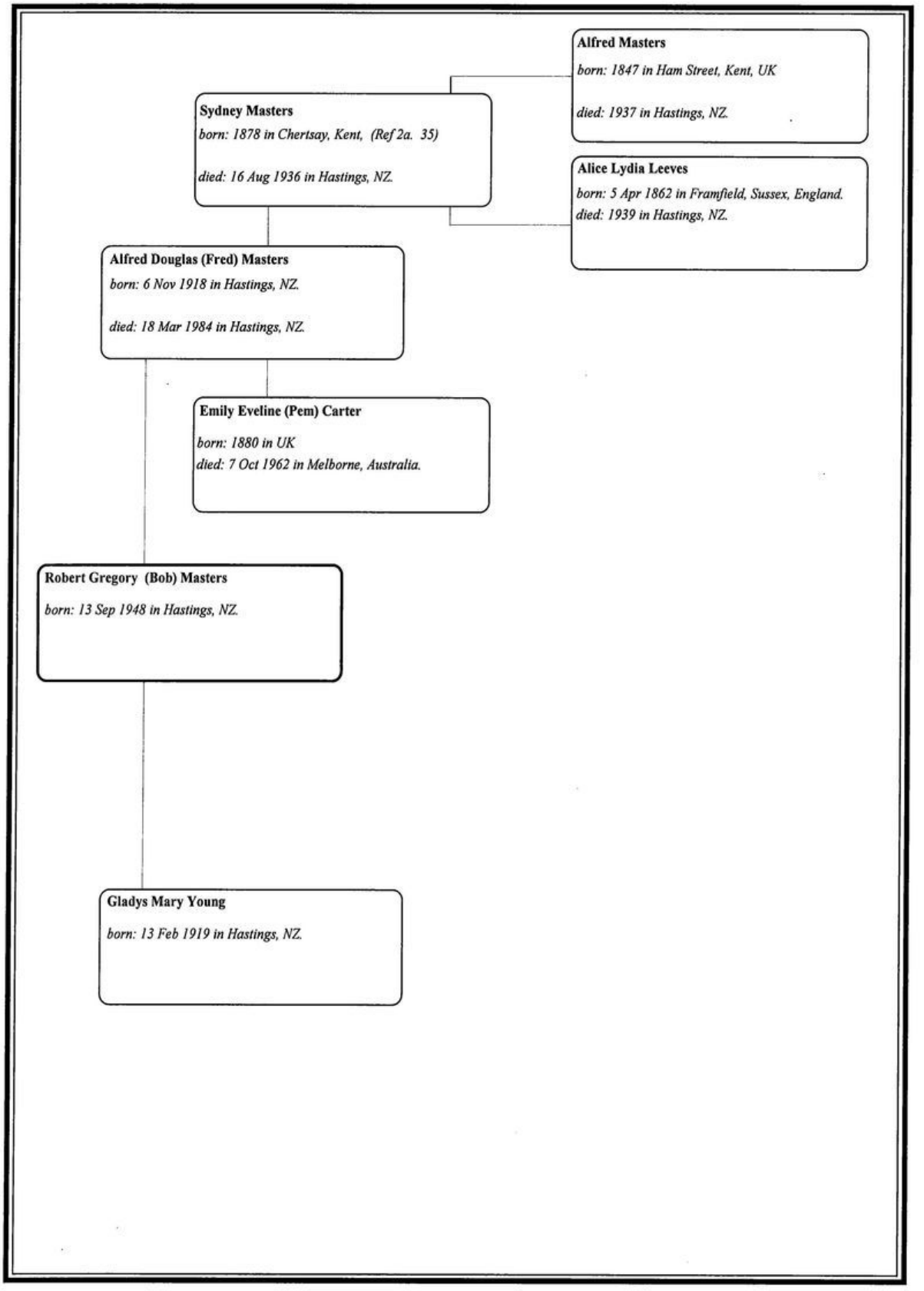
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Alfred Masters (b.1847,d.1937,m.Alice Lydia Leeves)
. Sydney Masters (b.1878,d.1936,m.Emily Eveline (Pem) Carter)
. . Alfred Douglas (Fred) Masters (b.1918,d.1984,m.Gladys Mary Young)
. . . Pamela Jill Masters (b.1942,m.John Montgomerie Haywood)
. . . . Christina Ann Haywood (b.1973)
. . . . Karen Elizabeth Hayward (b.1976)
. . . Barbara Nancy Masters (b.1945,m.Kenneth Champney Slade)
. . . . Fiona Juliette Slade (b.1973)
. . . . Belinda Elizabeth Slade (b.1975)
. . . Patricia Evelyn Masters (b.1946,m.Robert George Elliott Moore)
. . . . Melanie Sarah Moore (b.1973)
. . . . Caroline Louise Moore (b.1974)
. . . . Anabel Clare Moore (b.1980)
. . . . Charlotte Mary Moore (b.1981)
. . . Robert Gregory (Bob) Masters (b.1948,m.Judith Anne Vesty)
. . . . George Robert Masters (b.1983)
. . . . Rosemary Elizabeth Masters (b.1985)
. . . Anthony Harold (Tony) Masters (b.1951,m.Heather Margaret Chisholm)
. . . . Timothy Hugh Masters (b.1976)
. . . . Amanda Anne Masters (b.1978)
. . . . Suzanne Mary Masters (b.1981)
. . . . Rodney Frederick Masters (b.1985)
. . . Kerry Douglas Masters (b.1955,m.Sally Leeves)
. . . . Rachel Masters
. . . . Benjamin Douglas Masters (b.1979)
. . . . Felicity Masters (b.1981)
. . . . Hannah Lillian Masters (b.1984)
. . . . Edward Denby Masters (b.1985)
. . Robert Sydney Masters (b.1920,d.1941)
. Clarence Masters (b.1885,d.1978,m.Jean McKenzie Maclean)
. . Joyce Rubina Alice Masters (b.1916,d.1995,m.Samuel William Keats)
. . . Hugh Forbes Keats (b.1941,m.Janice Ann Scott)
. . . . Grant John Keats (b.1966,m.Branka Injac)
. . . . Craig Alan Keats (b.1968)
. . . . Michelle Ann Keats (b.1972,m.Rhys Nolan Puru)
. . . . . Tyler Forbes Puru (b.1993)
. . . . . Carl Mansell Puru (b.1994)
. . . John Maclean Keats (b.1946,m.Brenda Rosalie Bryers)
. . . . Renee Naomi Keats (b.1972,d.1994)
. . . . Blair Anaru Keats (b.1976)
. . . . Erana Danielle Keats (b.1979)
. . . Alan Grant Keats (b.1949,m.Kaye Elizabeth Powell)
. . . . Damon Bryce Keats (b.1979)
. . . . Willow-Ann Melissa Keats (b.1981)
. . . . Laurel Ilana Keats (b.1983)
. . . . Brook Samuel Keats (b.1986)
. . . . Jasper Keats (b.1989)
. . Heather Jean Masters (b.1917,m.John Hayes)
. . . Jenifer Lindsey Hayes (m. Brock)
. . . . Lianne Gail Brock (b.1963)
. . . . Kiren Lea Brock (b.1966)
. . . Christina Lianne Noad (b.1962,fath.William C. Noad)
. . Keith Maclean Masters (b.1924,m.Ines Isabel Munro)
. . . Lesley Kay Masters (b.1954)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

. . . Robyn Louise Masters (b.1957,m.Rodney Keith Palmer)
. . . . Kelly Louise Palmer
. . . . Olivier Brook Palmer
. . . Grant Maclean Masters (b.1961,m.Lynette Ann Gaskin)
. . Colin John Masters (b.1927,m.Josephine Ann Horman)
. . . Twin infants (decd @ 1-3 days) Masters
. . . Gregory Maclean Masters (b.1957,m.Lynne Judith Mossiter)
. . . . Samuel John Maclean Masters (b.1993)
. . . . James Alexander Campbell Masters (b.1996)
. . . Iain Alistair Campbell Masters (b.1960)
. . . Colin Scott Masters (b.1962,m.Rebecca Anne Sunderland)
. . . . Georgina Alice Masters (b.1992)
. . . . Libby Jane Masters (b.1994)
. . . . Harry Colin Masters (b.1995)
. . Glen Masters (b.1928,d.1931)
. Vernon Masters (b.1889)
. George Masters (b.1890,d.1917)
. Vivian Masters (b.1891)
. Alice Maud Masters (b.1893,d.1969,m.Alfred Joshua (Bob) Burge)
. . Olive Violet (Molly) Burge (b.1918,m.Leonard William (Len) Rule)
. . . Vernon John Rule (b.1941,m.Jeanette Leonie Thompson)
. . . . Lianne Rule (b.1963)
. . . . Grant Michael Rule (b.1965,d.1986)
. . . . Danene Rule (b.1970)
. . . Anthony William Rule (b.1944,m.Glennis Margaret Kemp)
. . . . Michelle Anita Rule (b.1968,m.David Wood)
. . . . . Hayden David Wood (b.1991)
. . . . . Natasha Louise Wood (b.1992)
. . . . Angela Lisa Rule (b.1969)
. . . . Philip John Rule (b.1972,d.1992)
. . . Lorraine Elizabeth Rule (b.1946,m.Clive William Garland)
. . . . Christopher Aaron Garland (b.1971)
. . . . Gavin Clive Garland (b.1972)
. . . . Paul Michael Garland (b.1974)
. . . Michael Adrian Rule (b.1947,m.Susan Margaret Thomson)
. . . . Adele Melissa Rule (b.1976)
. . . . Melanie Jane Rule (b.1978)
. . . . John William Rule (b.1981)
. . Alfred William (Bill) Burge (b.1920,m.Jean Hudson)
. . . Allan Eric Burge (b.1943,m.Gay Julie Campbell)
. . . . Sophie Dale Burge (b.1964,m.Ian Craig Foote)
. . . . . Hallam Foot (b.1985)
. . . . . Haemia Jean Foote (b.1986)
. . . . . Caleb Foote (b.1988)
. . . . . Seth Foote (b.1990)
. . . . . Jesse Foote (b.1992)
. . . . . Miriam Reyna Foote (b.1994)
. . . . . Sheahan Foote (b.1995)
. . . . . Leam Foote (b.1996)
. . . . Suzanne Gay Burge (b.1965,m.Sean Michael Martin)
. . . . . Daniel Elisha Martin (b.1993)
. . . . . Elya Beth Martin (b.1994)
. . . . . Ethan Thomas Martin (b.1996)
. . Eric Leslie Burge (b.1921,m.Moira Elizabeth Cassin)

. . . Colleen Margaret Burge (b.1949,m.Rodney Webb)
. . . . Ashley Shane Webb (b.1970)
. . . . Larisa Ingrid Webb (b.1972)
. . . . Aiyana Ambra (b.1983)
. . . . Timothy Vardon (b.1985)
. . . . Joshua Lawrence (b.1992)
. . . Gary Kenneth Burge (b.1951)
. . . . Fritha Wyn Burge
. . . . Morwenna Simone Burge
. . . Brent William Burge (b.1953)
. . . . Thomas James Burge (b.1983)
. . . . Jessica Burge (b.1985)
. . . . Richard Conrad Burge (b.1987)
. . . Marlene Louise Burge (b.1955)
. . . Gail Patricia Burge (b.1957,m. Paterson)
. . . . Emma Jane Paterson (b.1980)
. . . . Ann Beth Paterson (b.1982)
. . . . Kim Francis Paterson (b.1985)
. Leicester (Lester) Masters (b.1894,d.1961,m.Margaret Emily (Meg) Wooley)
. Edith Isabel Masters (b.1896,d.1975,m.Orton Cowan.)
. Alma Masters (b.1900,d.1995,m.Leslie Liley)
. . Brian Desmond Liley (m.Gareth Marell Jones)
. . . Simon Liley (b.1962,m.Raeleen Fay McLaughlin)
. . . . Jason Kerry Liley (b.1988)
. . . . Claira May Liley (b.1990)
. . . . Charlotte Rita Liley (b.1996)
. . . Joanna Kim Liley (b.1964,m.Merrick Walter Mullooly)
. . . . Jenna Helen Marell Mullooly (b.1988)
. . . . Luke Desmond Joseph Mullooly (b.1991,d.1995)
. . . Angela Claire Liley (b.1966)
. . Peter Garton Liley (b.1929,d.1996)
. . Gwendoline Rae Liley (b.1932,m.Charles William Sheppard Couch)
. . . Sally Linda Couch (b.1965,m.Dean Frederick Mildenhall)
. . . . Tyler Thompson Mildenhall (b.1996)
. . . Philippa Sarah Couch (b.1969)
. Alfred Edward Masters (b.1902,d.1917)


Alfred Masters
born: 1847 in Ham Street, Kent, UK
died: 1937 in Hastings, NZ.
Sydney Masters
born: 1878 in Chertsay, Kent, (Ref 2a. 35)
died: 16 Aug 1936 in Hastings, NZ.
Alice Lydia Leeves
born: 5 Apr 1862 in Framfield, Sussex, England.
died: 1939 in Hastings, NZ.
Alfred Douglas (Fred) Masters
born: 6 Nov 1918 in Hastings, NZ.
died: 18 Mar 1984 in Hastings, NZ.
Emily Eveline (Pem) Carter
born: 1880 in UK
died: 7 Oct 1962 in Melborne, Australia.
Robert Gregory (Bob) Masters
born: 13 Sep 1948 in Hastings, NZ.
Gladys Mary Young
born: 13 Feb 1919 in Hastings, NZ.

Sydney Masters

(The eldest son of Alfred Masters & Alice Lydia Leeves)

Sydney Masters was born in England, and migrated to New Zealand with his parents. New Zealand records of assisted immigrants who sailed to New Zealand in 1883 show Alfred Masters, whose occupation is recorded as *shepherd*, and his age (erroneously) as 34 years. The same entry in the shipping record also shows Alice Lydia Masters aged 22 years, and their son Sydney aged 15 months, as having sailed from London on 29 December 1883 on the vessel ***S.S.British Queen***. The vessel reached Wellington, New Zealand on 17 February 1884. A journey of fifty days.

The ship's migrant register for the journey vaguely scheduled its ports of destination as *"Wellington, Canterbury, and small ports west"*. The ship carried a significant contingent of migrants who were listed as destined for Hawkes Bay, but it would appear that the *S.S. British Queen* did not convey them between Wellington and Napier. An abbreviated record in the Napier Museum shows that Alfred Masters, Alice Lydia Masters, and their son Sydney Masters travelled to Napier on the *Southern Cross* on 20 February 1883. It is not clear whether the 20th February was the date on which the vessel departed Wellington, or the date on which it arrived in Napier.

The fare (in regard to the Masters family) from England to New Zealand was subsidised by the Government under the *Public Works and Immigration Act 1870*, commonly referred to as the *Vogal Scheme*. The total fare was £39-0-0. Alfred Masters paid £5-0-0 in London, and the balance of £34-0-0 was paid by the New Zealand Government. On the voyage, the *S.S.British Queen* carried an assortment of migrants, most of whom were financially assisted. There were: 163 English, 72 Irish, 19 Scots, 3 Germans, 1 Swede, 1 Dane, 1 French, 1 Italian.

The family moved directly to Hastings to the property owned by Tommy Tanner between Selwood Road (re-named Windsor Avenue) and St Georges Road. This property was purchased from Tommy Tanner by Alfred Masters in 1889, and continued in use as a commercial hop garden.

Hastings was established in an area that featured several wetland (swampy) areas, and Sydney Masters had reflected upon his early school days by describing an occasion on which he had negotiated a swamp, complete with ducks, at the site where the Hawkes Bay Electric Power Board later stood in Heretaunga Street (between Hastings Street and Karamu Road). It is presumed that when Sydney negotiated the swamp, it was the voluntary diversion of an adventurous schoolboy rather than the normal route to be taken.

The school to which he was going is understood to be Hastings Central School situated in Karamu Road south.

Children in those days did not have bicycles and most of their local excursions had to be undertaken on foot. Anything that made the task easier found appeal. One such ploy was to

grasp the rear of a horse drawn cart or dray for a tow, or to secretly climb on board. Sydney Masters once climbed on board the rear of a butcher's cart and was confronted by the sight of a pile of sausages. That gave him something to think about as they progressed along the road. Being a boy, and being fond of sausages, he seised a sausage and proceeded to slip off the rear of the cart with it. However, the sausage proved to be the first in a string of sausages. The butcher, who heard suspicious noises, turned to look behind. He saw a boy departing with a couple of metres of sausages trailing behind him. The cart was stopped, and the butcher gave chase, but Sydney proved to be a little more athletic than the butcher. Sydney headed through a plantation and then made his way for a shack in St Aubyn Street that was occupied by a bachelor acquaintance by the name of Geezer Smith. Geezer Smith was a former convict from Tasmania and obviously had little compunction about giving shelter to young Sydney and his string of sausages. A frying pan was produced and a hearty meal followed.

In 1897, when a severe flood extended across much of the Heretaunga Plains (around Hastings) Sydney Masters was a teenager. He amused himself at one stage during the flood by rowing a boat from his parents' property to what is understood to have been the vicinity of Hastings Street on the eastern boundary of the Hastings retail area, and returned to home without once grounding the dingy.

From about April 1901 until 9th April 1902, Sydney Masters had been attached to D Company of the North Island Battalion. His unit in April 1902 was the Hawkes Bay Mounted Rifles. (Personal Military No 8978.)

On 9th April 1902, while at Trentham Military Camp in the Hutt Valley, Sydney Masters enlisted for service (as a volunteer) with the ***Tenth Contingent*** for active service in South Africa in the conflict against the Boers.

His application form described him as aged 20 years (not necessarily his correct age), 5 feet, 6 inches tall (167 centremetres tall), weighing 9 stone, 5 pounds (59.4 kilograms), he had brown eyes, brown hair, and dark complexion. His civilian occupation was recorded as "gardener".

Ten contingents of *New Zealand Volunteer Mounted Rifles*, comprising (in total) 6,500 men and 8,000 horses went to South Africa. The ninth and tenth contingents arrived a short time before the conflict ended and saw little action. On May 31st 1902 the *Treaty of Vereeniging* was signed by the opposing forces, and the New Zealand Tenth Contingent of Volunteer Mounted Rifles (including Private Sydney Masters) returned home.

On 31st August 1902 Private Sydney Masters was granted discharge from the army, and resumed employment on the family property in Hastings.

The 1908 Hawkes Bay Electoral Roll shows Sydney Masters as resident in Warren Street Hastings, and his occupation is recorded as *gardener*. Sydney is by now aged twenty nine years. It is unclear whether Sydney was a commercial market gardener, but he is believed to have been comprehensively involved in the various seasonal commitments associated with the growing of hops on the property (hop garden) owned by his father.

Sydney Masters commenced planting the orchard on the property in 1905 - 1908.

In the 1911 and 1914 Hawkes Bay Electoral Rolls he appears as resident in St Andrews Street Hastings, and his occupation continued to be recorded as gardener. Sydney's younger brothers George and Clarence are both shown on the Electoral Roll as employed as clerks, and both entries feature the address of 113 Selwood Road, Hastings (also the address of their parents).

In 1916, at the age of thirty seven years, Sydney Masters was again in the army. However, no reference has been traced to his having served abroad during the First World War, and presumably Sydney served as an Army Instructor during this period.

It was while he was in the army in 1916 that he gave his younger brother, Lester Masters, instructions that the hop plants at the Selwood Road property were to be up-rooted. This implies two things: Firstly, that Sydney was the person who was principally responsible for the management of the hop garden, and secondly, that Lester Masters was at that time an employee on the property.

In 1916, Sydney Masters appears on the National Archive records as having married (ref No 3748) to Emily Eveline Carter (known as Pem).

In 1922, The Hawkes Bay Electoral Roll shows Sydney Masters as resident in Havelock Road. The property then occupied by Sydney was a part of the original tract of land which his father had purchased from Tommy Tanner. However, the block occupied by Sydney was planted in orchard. [This property was later owned or operated in succession by his sons Robert Sydney Masters, Alfred (Fred) Douglas Masters, and Anthony Harold Masters.]

Sydney's brother Lester Masters was also orcharding at this time. Lester had, about 1921, purchased a six acre block in Twyford (about eight kilometres west of Hastings) and had developed it as an orchard.

Sydney Masters married Emily Eveline Carter (known affectionately by relations as Pem). They had two sons: Robert Sydney Masters and Alfred Douglas Masters.

Sydney Masters was to die on 16 August 1936 at (or about) the age of fifty seven years. The orchard was operated by his sons. However his son Robert Sydney Masters flew for the Royal Air Force during World War II, and lost his life in combat in 1941 while flying in Tunisia, during the North African campaign.

The orchard was then operated by Alfred Douglas Masters (aged 23 years) for his father's estate. Alfred Douglas Masters was to later own the property.

This group are, from left to right (as YOU view the photo) Clarence Masters, Alice Maud Burge (née Masters), Francis Thompson and his new wife Edith Isabel Thompson (née Masters), Alma Liley (née Masters), Leicester (Lester) Masters. They are at 918 west, Heretaunga Street, Hastings, the home Alice Maud Burge.

Clarence Masters

(Son of Alfred Masters & Alice Lydia Leeves)

Clarence Masters was the second son of Alfred Masters and Alice Lydia Leeves. Clarence was the first of the children to be born in New Zealand, and the event occurred in Hastings in 1885 and about two years after the arrival in New Zealand of his parents and his older brother Sydney.

Clarence spent his childhood at the property in Selwood Road (re-named Windsor Avenue) Hastings.

As a six-year old child, Clarence was involved in an accident that resulted in the loss of a leg. He is understood to have been amusing himself by clinging to the rear of a dray (a heavy duty two wheeled horse drawn vehicle). The dray driver had halted the dray, and unaware of Clarence's presence, proceeded to un-latch the mechanism that would enable the tray of the dray to tilt to the rear and allow its load to slide from it. When the tray tipped, Clarence's leg became trapped between the underside of the tray and the ground. The severity of the injury necessitated amputation of the leg. It was a very sad end to what had been a little boy's moment of fun.

Although Clarence regained the ability to walk through the use of a peg-leg, it remained a restrictive disability, and one that was to eventually influence the choice of his occupation. He was encouraged to align his schooling to a sedentary occupation, and to gain academic qualifications. He chose accountancy.

Initially, he was employed by George Roach who owned a retail shop at the corner of Heretaunga Street and King Street Hastings (south-eastern corner). Roaches retailed groceries, Manchester, ladies' wear, men's wear, fabrics, and shoes. Roaches also had branches at Parongahau, Havelock North, and at the corner of Warren Street and Heretaunga Street Hastings.

George Roach had indicated to Clarence Masters that he found appeal in the idea of bringing Clarence into the business as a partner. The idea also appealed to Clarence, but it appears that George Roach procrastinated with forming such a partnership. Clarence had a healthy ambition to progress occupationally, and was not prepared to wait interminably for Roach to decide whether or not he was going to form a partnership. Clarence considered that with his accountancy qualifications and experience, he was in a position to establish an accountancy practice, and by doing so could satisfy his aspirations for a more challenging occupation. He ended his association with Roaches around the period 1814 - 1921. He appears for the first time on the Taihape Electoral Roll, as an Accountant, in 1921.

During the time in which Clarence was in practice in Taihape, he was concurrently secretary for the dairy company at Utiku (about eight kilometres south of Taihape).

Clarence appears to have married around 1920. His bride was Jean Maclean who was born

on 27 September 1889 in Dornock in north-eastern Scotland, and later moved with her family Cromarty (at the northern tip of the Black Isle, overlooking the channel between the Moray Firth and Cromarty Firth.) Jean had a sister and two brothers. Her father was a sea captain who spent many years sailing a merchant vessel to and from the Baltic. Jean Maclean migrated to New Zealand at the age of eighteen years (about 1907) with an arrangement to be housekeeper for an uncle in Hastings, NZ. The arrangement was for the uncle to send her home at the end of the two years, but he did not do so. As a consequence, Jean remained in Hastings and in due course met Clarence Masters, and their marriage ensued.

Their family of four children: Joyce, Heather, Colin, and Keith are understood to have been all born in Taihape, and to have attended schools there. However, Clarence and Jean considered that the formal education of their children would be better served if they were to all move to Auckland. In 1938, when Clarence was fifty three years of age, the family moved to 12 Burgess Road, Auckland. It was also the year in which Clarence and Jean undertook a trip to England and Scotland. They were to later move to 22 Buchanan Street, Devonport, Auckland.

Despite having to contend with the physical limitations imposed by an artificial leg, Clarence was an energetic person. He moved with vigour, and he thought with vigour. His speech was lively, and he frequently exhibited the lively sense of humour which was also characterised his brothers and sisters. While he appears to have inherited, or learned by observation, his father's courageous and enterprising approach to life, Clarence was far from being an exclusively serious person. He was in fact capable of astonishing and amusing his company by spontaneously engaging in fun activities which might normally be regarded as the preserve of much younger people. For example, about 1960 while visiting a niece (Olive Violet Burge) in Twyford near Hastings, the neighbouring (Burge) children, who were also related, arrived in a whirl of activity with a home-made children's trolley. The trolley was constructed of pram wheels (and axels) mounted at each end of a plank of timber. Seating was by way of a wooden box nailed to the rear end of the trolley, and padded with a jute sack. To provide steering, lengths of chord extended from the front swivelling axel, to be clasped and pulled left or right as required to achieve a left or right turn. Clarence immediately recognised the contrivance as the source of some practical fun. Despite his age (about 75 years) he disengaged his conversation with his hosts and fellow guests, and recruited the services of the Burge children to give him a ride on their trolley. Clarence was soon securely in the seat with steering ropes firmly in hand. With Colleen, Gary and Brent Burge pushing from behind, Clarence embarked upon a boisterous and noisy hundred meters escapade along Jarvis Road (and back to his starting point).

Clarence must be regarded as a very successful businessman and family man, and a person with an endearing and engaging personality.

Alice Maud Masters

(The first daughter of Alfred Masters & Alice Lydia Leeves)

Alice Maud Masters (known as Maud) was born 27 July 1893 at the residence which was incorporated at the hop kiln building at 113 Selwood Road (re-named Windsor Avenue) Hastings.

Schooling: Maud attended primary school at Hastings Central School in Karamu Road Hastings, and on 3rd February 1908 at the age of 14½ years enroled at the Hastings High School in Karamu Road. [The high-school later became Hastings Boys High School.] Maud completed two years at High School, and on 17th December 1909 at the age of 15 years and 5 months she left school to begin *"home duties"*.

New Masters' Home: In 1913 the Masters family vacated their residence at the hop kiln where they had lived for some twenty nine years, and moved into a new home in Selwood Road with a street frontage. Maud was by this time about twenty years of age, and her father and mother sixty five years and fifty one years of age respectively. It appears that her father was still growing hops on the Selwood property, but by this stage assisted by their eldest son Sydney.

Employment: Upon completion of her schooling, Maud was employed at *Roach's* of Hastings. *Roach's* retailed groceries, linen goods, cotton goods, fabrics, ladies' wear, men's wear, and shoes. Her employment with *Roach's* appears to coincide with her brother Clarence's employment with the firm. She was also employed by Sommersill's General Carrying business at Ongaonga (west of Waipawa). Maud was also employed in Hastings with the solicitors Hallet O'Dowd in Queen Street. Her employment in each instance appears to have been in a clerical role, and all occurred prior to her marriage to Alfred Joshua Burge circa 1916.

The Burge family: From about 1908, the Burge family had lived in Louis Street, Hastings, where they had established an orchard and had built a family home (which is still standing now in 1996). This property was some five hundred metres from where the Masters family were living in Selwood Road. Alfred Joshua Burge (always referred to as Bob) had been variously employed as a home decorator, a bush feller in the Tokomaru district, a farm hand, and self-employed in the supply of flax to a Tokomaru flax mill for £5-0-0 per ton during his former years in Tokomaru.

Farm Properties: At the time of their marriage, Alfred Joshua Burge owned a cropping property in partnership with an acquaintance David Patrick Henry Thompson. David Thompson was also a former resident of Tokomaru. The partnership property was in Twyford Road, Twyford. That was sold around 1919, and Alfred Joshua Burge then purchased a farm of about 36 acres in Jarvis Road Twyford. (David Thompson then also purchased a property in Jarvis Road). The couple (Alice Maud Burge (née Masters) & Alfred Joshua Burge) moved onto the new farm property about 1920, but lived in temporary quarters constructed within or adjacent to an existing shed (which still stands in 1996). During 1920-1921 a new three-bedroom home was constructed with a frontage onto Jarvis Road (also still standing in 1996,

but modified).

Dairy Farming: The farm in Jarvis Road Twyford was principally used for dairying. For the era, the dairy herd was of average or small size with about twenty five productive cows. [Fifty years later an average - small size herd comprises about 150 cows.] The milk was *separated* on the farm. This was a process by which the milk was run through a *Separator* machine to segregate the cream from the skimmed-milk. The cream was sent to the dairy factory at Stortford Lodge, Hastings, and the skimmed milk was fed to pigs.

Winter feed supplements were produced by way of hay and silage, and a 2½ Ha paddock was permanently in lucerne. Lucerne was drought-resistant, and was particularly significant as a stock feed during drought conditions.

Grass Seed: An important adjunct to the dairying operation was a commercial crop of rye-grass grown annually for seed. The farm produced rye of a particularly high standard. It was largely free of other types of grass seed, and was well regarded by the seed merchants in Hastings. Alfred Joshua Burge had commented to me that he had received very good prices for his rye grass seed.

Farm Machinery: Draft horses were used for hauling farm implements and the farm sledge. Seed thrashing was undertaken by a contractor with a seed-mill powered by a *Traction Engine* [a steam-engined tractor].

Although petrol engined tractors existed, they had not completely displaced draught horses (or Traction Engines) until several years after the Second World War. Farm transport requirements were served by either the traditional horse-drawn farm sledge or a dray. A dray was a heavy duty two wheeled horse drawn vehicle. Both of these latter items were used by A.J. (Bob) Burge until retirement in 1953.

The Orchard: Progressively during the first fifteen years of occupation of the farm, the south-western side of the property was converted into approximately five acres (2½ Ha) of orchard. The trees included Winter Nellis pears, Delicious apples, Sturmer Pippin apples, Dougherty apples, Ballarat apples, and Granny Smith apples. Golden Queen peaches, Sultan plums, Coxes Orange Pippin apples, and Santa Rosa plums.

Before the Second World War, all fruit was sold to merchants who would call at the orchard properties and offer a price for the fruit. A price and quantity would be agreed between the orchardist and the merchant. Alfred Joshua Burge generally dealt through two particular merchants, but others would also appear on the property and enter into deals. An occasional rogue merchant would take fruit and not pay for it on the pretext that he couldn't sell the consignment. During the Second World War fruit was almost exclusively supplied to an American Armed Services ordinance organisation that was required to supply the American Armed Services based in the Pacific. The American ordinance organisation was a reliable payer, and an effective means through which growers could market their fruit. After the war, the Internal Marketing Division replaced the American Ordinance buyers, and that in turn was replaced by the NZ Apple & Pear Marking Board.

Family Transport: Perhaps of minor passing interest is the family transport used during the years when Alfred Joshua Burge and Alice Maud Masters were at Twyford: Until about 1926 the family used a *Trap* which was a light two-wheeled horse drawn vehicle pulled by one horse between shafts. A *Trap* had no canopy. It seated two people in the forward-facing seat. A storage tray was situated beneath the seat and had a similar function to the modern car boot. Their first motorised family transport was canvas-top Chrysler car of mid-late 1920s vintage. This was followed by a 1938 Chevrolet car, and a 1953 Morris Oxford car.

Clubs & Societies: Alice Maud Masters became involved with the Hastings Red Cross Society during the Second World War, and continued her association with the Society until the mid-1950s. She was also involved with the Twyford Country Women's Institute, and served as its president for several years. Alice Maud Masters was also involved with the Heretaunga Bowling Club for many years, and was president of the club for three terms. Her association with the bowling club involved occasional travel to other towns during tournaments or in attending to administrative matters.

Retirement and Travel: The year 1953 was a year of considerable change. It was the year in which they retired. A new retirement home was built at 918 West, Heretaunga Street, Hastings. Bob and Maud also undertook an overseas trip in 1953, and sailed by Passenger Liner via Suez principally to England and Scotland. They are known to have visited relations in Perth (Australia) who are presumed to have been members of the Leeves family. The Liner is also known to have called at Italy. Their tour later included a tour of France, and Germany.

Retirement years were dominated by bowls, friends, children, and grandchildren.

Alfred Joshua Burge died on 1st February 1960, and Maud continued to reside at 918 w Heretaunga Street Hastings.

About 1966 Alice Maud married Jim Taylor who was an acquaintance from the Heretaunga Bowling club. Alice Maud pre-deceased Jim Taylor by about two-and-a-half years.

Tony Rule
2/3/96

Edith Isabel Cowan (née Masters) at the age of fifty years.
The infant is her grand-nephew Anthony (Tony) William Rule, aged two years.

They are at the wedding of Edith's nephew Eric Leslie Burge to Moira Elizabeth Cassin on 22nd May 1946.

Edith Isabel Masters

(The second daughter of Alfred Masters & Alice Lydia Leeves)

Edith Isabel Masters was born on 24th June 1896 at the residential accommodation incorporated in the hop kiln building at 113 Selwood Road (re-named Windsor Avenue) Hastings. Given the attributes of her parents (Alfred Masters and Alice Lydia Leeves) there is every reason to believe that their home was adequately appointed, however, the Masters children found amusement in modestly declaring themselves to have been born in a hop kiln. The notion fitted well with the distinctive sense of humour that was so characteristic of Edith (and of her brothers and sisters).

School: Edith Masters is believed to have followed her older siblings and attended school initially at Hastings Central School in Karamu Road. On Monday 7th February 1910, at the age of 13 years and 7 months Edith enroled at Hastings High School. The school was then co-educational but was later to become the *Hastings Boys High School*. Edith attended High School for one year, and on Thursday 15th December 1910 at the age of 14½ years, she left school to take up "*home duties*".

Employment: From the time that Edith left school, about 6½ years elapsed before she began her next known mode of employment. On 19th May 1917 she joined the *Bank of New South Wales in Hastings, at the corner of Heretaunga Street and Market Street. At the time of her joining the Bank of New South Wales she was aged twenty years and eleven months, and commenced with a salary of £75-0-0 per annum. Following two months as a probationary employee, she was elevated to *Full Service* status on 19th July 1917, and the event was marked with a pay increase to £100-0-0 per annum.

Edith was employed in a general clerical role. If her relatively regular pay increases were an indication of her performance, she is presumed to have met or exceeded expectations as an employee. The pay structure and the very frequently stepped increases that applied during the era are interesting when compared to similar types of employment of many decades later. Her new or revised pay levels were applied from the following dates and for the amounts shown:

19/5/1917	19/7/1917	19/1/1918	19/7/1918	19/1/1919	19/7/1919	19/1/1920	1/4/1920	1/7/1920	1/1/1921
£75-0-0	£100-0-0	£105-0-0	£110-0-0	£115-0-0	£120-0-0	£125-0-0	£135-10-0	£145-0-0	£156-0-0

During the 4½ years from the date when she joined the bank's employment on 19th May 1917 and until the date on which her resignation applied on 14th January 1922, ten different pay levels applied.

During her era, staff of her level were entitled to two weeks leave per annum for each full year of service. She availed of leave for two weeks from 22/10/18, and another two weeks leave from 7/2/1919, and two weeks from 8/12/20 (being the only **full** years of service).

On 14th January 1922, Edith resigned from the Bank of New South Wales to get married. The

wedding occurred ten days later on 24th January 1922. Given that Edith and her new husband both lived and worked in Hastings, and were to remain in Hastings after the wedding, it might seem odd that she should resign to get married. However, the resignation was imposed by the banks' rules of employment. The banks' ruling arose from the fact that her husband was **employed by another bank** in Hastings. He worked for the *Union Bank of Australia*. The banks were then uncomfortable about the elevated risk of a husband and wife committing a breach of confidentiality on matters pertaining to their respective employer banks. In the case of Edith and her husband, the husband's employment was granted precedence by the couple, and Edith elected to resign her employment from the *Bank of New South Wales*.

[*The *Bank of New South Wales* subsequently merged with the *Commercial Bank of Australia* to become *Westpac Banking Corp*, and later merging with *Trustbank* to become *Westpac Trust*].

Edith's future Husband (William Orton Cowan): Orton Cowan was born 27th March 1896, and grew up in Lyttelton, Christchurch. He joined the *Union Bank of Australia* at its Lyttelton branch on Monday 21st October 1912. Orton was then 16½ years of age, and commenced as a probationary employee on a salary of £40-0-0 per annum.

On Tuesday 5th January 1915, immediately after the statutory New Year holidays, Orton commenced duties at the bank's Wellington office as a clerk earning £80-0-0 per annum. His time there was relatively brief as he was transferred to the bank's Gisborne office as a clerk on 11th October 1915. The First World War had begun about a year earlier, and Orton was required to undertake compulsory military training [Military No 30471 GNR. W.O.Cowan]. He attended a compulsory military camp from 6th April 1916 to 15th April 1916.

On Sunday 19th August 1916, while still officially attached to the Gisborne branch of the *Union Bank of Australia*, he was enlisted for full-time military service. He remained in the Army until well after Armistice Day (11th November 1918), and it was not until Wednesday 21st May 1919 that he was discharged from the army. On the day of his discharge he began one month of leave. This leave was without pay from either the army or the bank. On Monday 23rd June 1919 he commenced clerical duties again with the *Union Bank of Australia* but at its Hastings office, and now on a salary of £145-0-0.

Marriage: His transfer to Hastings was a significant event. It was while in Hastings that he was to meet his future wife Edith Isabel Masters. At that time she was employed at the *Bank of New South Wales* in Hastings. Approximately 2½ years later on Tuesday 24th January 1922 Edith Isobel Masters married William Orton Cowan. She was age 25 years and seven months at the date of her marriage. (Refer to National Archives reference No 1688 for marriage details).

They were to have only a further four months in Hastings. His employment was now a dominant element in their lives. He accepted a transfer to Christchurch and commenced duties there as a clerk on 2nd June 1922 on a salary of £260-0-0 per annum.

In 1931 they were known to be living in Rolleston Avenue in central Christchurch (on the eastern side of Hagley Park, and opposite the Botanical Gardens). On 29th September 1938 Orton had been promoted to the role of Sub-Accountant at the Cashel Street branch of the

Union Bank of Australia. The following day the branch manager wrote of him as follows: *"Good ability. Quick. Accurate. Neat. Duties very well performed."*

He was again promoted on 27 November 1939. This time he assumed the role of Branch Accountant at Cashel Street, Christchurch, and now with the more useful salary of £425-0-0 pa. A Branch Accountant was responsible for daily, weekly, monthly, and annual reconciliation processes, plus the supervision of subordinate staff, and the direct supervision of all other operational aspects of the branch's activities.

Correspondence from Edith shows that in August 1939 they were resident at Flat 2, Salisbury Street, Christchurch. That address is again used on correspondence in December 1941. Their flat was in the top storey of a two story building which backed onto a manse.

Edith shared her brother Lester's affinity for recreational pursuits in the high-country. Edith enjoyed tramping in the Southern Alps and is understood to have engaged in such activities in the Arthur's Pass area. Public transport from Christchurch to Arthur's Pass was made easy by the regular rail passenger service between Christchurch and Greymouth.

Whether Edith herself was continuously employed during these years is unclear.

As at 30th September 1941, while still the Branch Accountant at the Cashel Street offices of the Union Bank of Australia, his annual report noted:

"Good appearance, personality, address [speech]. Conscientious, intelligent, efficient & reliable. Has good general knowledge and good control of staff. Keen in bank's interests. Warrants promotion to higher rank. [Suggested] Small Branch Management."

On 16th January 1942, Orton was appointed to the role of Audit Officer on a salary of £470pa.

The role of Auditor involved travel throughout the country, and on some occasions Edith would accompany Orton while his Auditing assignments took him away from Christchurch (particularly those that involved audit work at the Hastings office of the Union Bank of Australia. These would give Edith an opportunity to spend a few weeks with her brothers and sisters.)

In 1949 Orton Cowan was transferred to the position of Manager at the Bank's Feilding Branch. There they lived in the Bank-owned residence which was within a 10-15 minute walking distance to the centre of town. They were also provided with a Bank Car. (An Austin Devon of about 1951 vintage.)

It was while resident in Feilding that I stayed with them on about three occasions. I have memories of Aunty Edith showing me the livestock saleyards which were reputedly the largest in New Zealand. We would regularly walk into town on shopping errands, and on occasions the route would involve crossing the railway marshalling yards by way of a pedestrian over-bridge. The marshalling yards were a source of endless noise, activity, and fascination, and it provided Aunt Edith with a ready-made source of interest for her visiting six-eight year old grand-nephew. The livestock saleyards were a hub of activity at least once each week, and the

sounds of livestock (particularly pigs) drifted for several blocks as they protested at their being bustled through holding-pens, and to and from railway trucks.

Orton Cowan died of a heart attack in 1952 while manager at Feilding branch of the bank. There were no children to the couple, and after attending to post-funeral matters etc, Edith gravitated back to Hastings to where she had strong family connections.

Following the death of Orton Cowan, Edith embarked on several overseas trips. One such trip involved a bus tour along the then notorious Birdsville Track in mid-east Australia. The Birdsville Track was then (about 1956) a very primitive public road and with all the obstacles and hazards offered by the arid Australian outback. On one occasion, their bus became deeply lodged in soft sand and dust, so much so that it was impossible to open the bus doors to allow the passenger to exit the bus. A bus window was opened sufficiently to enable passengers to get out and assist the bus with a push to get it clear of the obstacle.

About 1959 she re-married while at the age of about 63 years. He was Francis Thompson of Christchurch. They purchased a home at 37 McHardy Street Havelock North where they lived their remaining years in a very comfortable and pleasant environment.

During our years in Dunedin (1972-1976) we received a visit from Great Aunt Edith. It is relevant to note that at the time of her visit, Aunty was about 78-79 years of age. She was part-way through a tour of the South Island, and as a part of the tour she had recently been in Central Otago. Given her age, I was somewhat surprised when she mentioned that Included in her choice of entertainment (while in Queenstown) had been a jet-boat trip in the Shotover River with several other people from the tour. The jet-boat rides of Central Otago are high-speed, wild escapades along winding rocky gorges, and are only suited for people with very steady nerves and a tolerance for dramatic activity. More remarkably, it was soon evident that she had greatly **enjoyed** the jet-boat excursion. There was only one thing that seemed to detract from the adventure: She expressed irritation at the incessant screaming from some *"silly young ladies"* who had accompanied her in the jet-boat. During the discussion I ventured that the young ladies might have perhaps been in their teens, but was promptly corrected. The *"silly young ladies"* were about **thirty or forty** years of age. Aunt Edith was a person with cool nerves, and an enduring sense of fun.

Tony Rule
24 November 1997

This is a family group photograph of those attending the wedding of Edith Isabel Cowan (née Masters) to Francis Thompson circa 1958 The couple are the elderly pair standing at the centre-front of the group.

They are gathered at the home of Alfred Joshua [Bob] Burge & his wife Alice Maud Masters. The home was situated at 908w Heretaung Street, Hastings about midway between Townsend Street and Davis Street.

Those in the photograph are listed below. Their names are listed sequentially from left-to-right as we view the photograph (commencing with the girl wearing the white cardigan) :

Name	Identifying Feature	Relationship
Colleen Margaret Burge	Wearing white cardigan.	Daughter of Eric Leslie Burge & Moira Elizabeth Burge (née Cassin).
Moira Elizabeth Burge (née Cassin)	Wife of Eric Leslie Burge	White hat and white apparel.
Brent William Burge.	Infant wearing a jersey with horizontal bars.	A son of Eric Leslie Burge & Moira Elizabeth Burge (née Cassin)
Gary Kenneth Burge	Boy wearing a jersey without patterns.	A son of Eric Leslie Burge & Moira Elizabeth Burge (née Cassin)
Evelyn (Pem) Masters (née Carter)	Elderly lady with black hat.	Widow of Sydney Masters.
Barbara Nancy Masters	White hand-bag under her arm.	Daughter of Alfred Douglas (Fred) Masters & Gladys Mary (Molly) Masters (née Young)
Gladys Mary (Molly) Masters (née Young)	White hat and black hand-bag.	Wife of Alfred Douglas (Fred) Masters
Pamela Jill Masters	Only head and shoulders visible.	Daughter of Alfred Douglas (Fred) Masters & Gladys Mary (Molly) Masters (née Young)
Clarence Masters	Elderly man in dark suit Palm of hand open.	Brother of bride.
Jean McKenzie Masters (née Maclean)	Elderly. White hat. Partly obscured.	Wife of Clarence Masters.
Francis Thopmson	Hands held in front.	Groom of Edith Isabel Cowan (née Masters)
Josephine Anne Masters (née Horman).	White lapel.	Wife of Colin Masters. Colin is a son of Clarence Masters.
Edith Isobel Thompson (née Masters)	The bride. Elderly woman holding bouquet.	New spouse of Francis Thompson.
Colin John Masters	Side view of face.	A son of Clarence & Jean Masters
Gwendoline Rae Liley	Younger woman with bouquet	Daughter of Alma Liley (née Masters)
Hugh Forbes Keats	Tall teen-ager with dark hair.	Son of Samuel William Keats & Joyce Keats (née Masters)
Alma Liley (née Masters)	Broad brimmed hat.	Sister of bride.
Alan Grant Keats	Boy at front. Wearing jacket, tie, shorts.	Son of Samuel William Keats & Joyce Keats (née Masters)
Leonard William Rule.	Tall man at rear. Light toned jacket.	Husband of Olive Violet Rule (née Burge). She is a Masters descendant
Brian Desmond Liley	Dark suit. Full crop of hair	Son of Alma Liley (née Masters)
Liecester (Lester) Masters	Short man with bow tie.	Brother of the bride.
Joyce Rubina Alice Keats (née Masters)	White hat, glasses, pearls.	Daughter of Clarence and Jean Masters.
Margaret Emily (Meg) Masters (née Wooley)	Elderly. White gloves. Dark handbag.	Wife of Lester Masters
Eric Leslie Burge	Tallest man at rear. Dark hair.	Son of Alice Maud Burge. A Masters descendant.
Samuel William Keats	Lower face obscured	Husband of Joyce Keats (née Masters)
Alice Maud Burge (née Masters)	Elderly. White hat. Pearls.	Sister of the bride.
Alfred Joshua Burge	Elderly man at rear.	Husband of Alice Maud Burge (née Masters)
Lorraine Elizabeth Rule	Girl at front. Horizontal bars on frock.	Daughter of LW & OV Rule (a Masters descendant).
Vernon John Rule	Youth in back row. Dark hair.	Son of LW & OV Rule (a Masters descendant).
Olive Violet (Molly) Rule (nee Burge)	White hat & dress. Ear-ring visible.	Daughter of AJ & AM Burge. Masters descendant.
John Maclean Keats	Boy at front right. Watch visible.	Son of Samuel William Keats & Joyce Keats (née Masters)
Anthony William Rule	Youth at extreme right-rear.	Son of LW & OV Rule (a Masters descendant).

Alma Masters

(Youngest daughter of Alfred Masters & Alice Lydia Leeves)

Alma Masters was born 17 November 1900 at the family home which was incorporated within a building that featured two hop kilns at 113 Selwood Road Hastings. (Selwood Road has since become Windsor Avenue.)

Alma and her brothers Lester and Alfred were childhood playmates and all very attracted to opportunities for fun and nonsense. Sometimes their antics continued at the dining table. There was occasionally a price to pay and, not infrequently, the giggling trio were deemed an unacceptable disturbance and were ordered from the table.

Early in her life, Alma appears to have occasionally demonstrated an independent and practical trait that would lead her to a few decisions that might not have met with full parental approval. For example, as a little girl she found no value in the customary long hair of the Victorian/Edwardian era, and took the liberty to experiment with a different style. Suitably equipped with a pair of scissors, and under the convenient concealment provided beneath the dining room table (covered by a table cloth which draped well over the sides) she proceeded to give herself a haircut. Of no concern to little Alma was the fact that beyond the draping tablecloth her mother entertained guests at one of her customary afternoon tea parties.

On another occasion when her mother was also entertaining guests, one of the invited asked to see little Alma. Following a brief search, Alma was discovered in the pantry. Alma's presence in the pantry was not to contemplate the array of cooking ingredients and what could be made from them, but to assuage her appeal for sweet things by way of the contents of the treacle tin. Treacle and a little girl were predictably a very messy combination.

Schooling: Alma followed her older brothers and sisters in attending primary school at Hastings Borough School, in Southampston Street (later known as Hastings District School, and currently as Hastings Central School). She later attended the Hastings High School (which has since become Hastings Boys High School). She enroled at Hastings High School on Tuesday 2nd February 1915 (at the age of 14 years and 2 months). Although the hop kiln building was used temporarily from 1917 as a school (while awaiting the construction of Parkvale School, which opened in 1919 with a role of 203 pupils.) Alma's schooling had been concluded by this time, and she would have narrowly missed the unique distinction of being born, raised, and educated in the same building.

Alma and Lester somewhat inappropriately under-rated themselves as young scholars. They regarded the older members of their family as being a little more clever than they were, but of course older siblings are often perceived as smarter. Their older brothers and sisters did in fact perform with distinction and achieved first and second rankings in their respective classes, but Alma and Lester still achieved rankings as fourth, fifth, or sixth. That was a very satisfactory achievement in classes of about ninety children.

Norman Fippard, who was to become an accountant in Hastings, was a class-mate of Alma. For the purpose of amusing Alma and her own young family in later years, Norman Fippard would occasionally recount an event that humorously cast aspersions over Alma's performance as a cook. The girls had a cooking class on the first floor, and as they descended the stairs after cooking classes carrying the items produced during cooking class, the boys would cheekily snatch the jars of cooked items and enjoy a free snack. However, early in the series of school cooking classes, Alma had been less than successful with a particular cooking effort, and the boy who had snatched her jar of biscuits (or whatever it was) found the sample fairly unpalatable. From that occasion onward, whenever the girls were descending the stairs with their wares after cooking classes, someone would call out: *" Here comes Alma. Let her passed!"* It was a tease to suggest that Alma's cooking may not be a wise choice for those hoping to snatch a free snack. Despite the fact that her reputation as a cook suffered a bad start, she did in fact develop into perfectly capable cook. Alma and Norman Fippard were to remain close friends throughout their lives.

Alma left school on Friday 28th July 1916 (at the age of 15 years and 8 months) and proudly stepped from school with a *School Leaving Certificate.*

The Epithet of *Tommy:* Alma acquired the epithet of *Tom* or *Tommy,* and it was a reference that was used for many years. It is thought that because there were no other girls of her age in the vicinity during her childhood, she was content to play with her brothers Lester and Alfred, and cousin Larry Leeves. Girls who showed contentment with boyish activities were at times dubbed *Tommy.* It was a nick-name that wouldn't have greatly bothered Alma. She was as feminine as any of her peers, and more significantly she was commendably unpretentious.

Alma was never engaged in full-time long-term employment, and after leaving school in July 1916, she became responsible for the care of her elderly parents. When Alma was aged fifteen years, her father was sixty eight years of age. He was also slightly crippled from an old foot injury that he had accidently inflicted upon himself with an axe while cutting down an willow tree in the back yard several years before. Alma's mother was then fifty three years of age. Alma was the youngest among her siblings (her younger brother Alfred jnr died in 1916). As indicated earlier, she was in fact a capable cook, and she was also an unpretentious and practical person. Alma was therefore a strong contender to be called upon to assist her elderly parents.

During these years Alma became a regular tennis player and included in her tennis venues were courts in Havelock North. As with most sports, her involvement with tennis provided a social environment, and among those social acquaintances were Daisy McKissick and Edith Nimon. The Nimon and Liley families were family friends, and it is possibly in this social circle that Alma was to meet Leslie Liley (her future husband). Les was born about 1895 (five years older than Alma).

Les Liley had served in the 1914-18 World War in the trenches of Western Europe. He was gassed during combat (a process in which the German troops poured highly noxious clorine gas into the Allied trenches), but Les survived the experience without evidence of long-term damage.

Leslie lived in Havelock North, and Alma lived in Selwood Road Hastings (now Windsor Avenue). To meet his girlfriend, Leslie Liley would ride on a Nimon bus from Havelock North to Hastings, but to deny Joe Nimon (the driver) the satisfaction of knowing the purpose of his trip, Les would get off the bus at different places on each occasion (even if it meant that he would have to walk extra distance).

Alma was also imaginative in perusing the courtship in a way that gave little opportunity for others to learn of her intentions or whereabouts. She deemed it helpful to slip quietly from home un-noticed (for the purpose of spending time with Les). The strategy was to open the lower drawer of her *Dressing Table* and thereby prevent the door to her room from being opened by another family member who would otherwise have discovered her absence. She would then climb out of the bedroom window and meet Les a short distance away at the new Parkvale School.

In 1924 Alma married Leslie Liley of Hastings. [National Archives record No 6998]. They purchased a bare residential section in what was then open country. This section was purchased from Clarrie Masters who was an older brother of Alma. Les and his brother then constructed a home on the section, and Les and Alma occupied it at an early opportunity despite having very little furniture at that stage.

Recreationally, they were both still very active tennis players, and this appears to have been a dominant interest over the first five years of their marriage. Their first child, Peter was due at about this time (in 1929) and obviously tennis was no longer an activity that could be persued. In correspondence to me in 1996, Peter was to observe that his arrival was followed by the *Great Depression*. However, he hastened to add his arrival and the advent of the *Great Depression* were probably not connected. Happily, Peter is exonerated! The *Great Depression* was of course an inter-action of ailing economies around the world.

The years of the *Great Depression* were to have a profound affect upon the lives of millions of people internationally, and no less the citizens of Hastings and so too the young Liley family. The incidence of unemployment increased rapidly, and, caught in a contracting local economy, Les Liley lost his full-time job. However, he occasionally found odd jobs as a labourer, but such employment lacked the security that was so desirable for any household (particularly those with young families). Peter Liley reflected that he could never look at the old Carlson Flats without remembering his father arriving home exhausted after each day of mixing and laying concrete manually at the building site.

Household vegetable gardens became a very significant factor in easing unwelcome pressure helping a household budget. The home at Ferguson Street had a comprehensive garden, and continued to be well maintained beyond the *Depression* years. The combination of raising a young family and the lean *Depression* years was a time in which the extended families rallied to assist each other. The *family* did just that.

As economic conditions gradually improved in the mid-late 1930s, Les was again able to get back into his trade as a plumber. The business grew from strength to strength, and it became desirable to take on a partner. The partner was to be a former apprentice by the name of Harry Horton, and the plumbing partnership of *Liley & Horton* became very synonymous with the

plumbing trade in Hastings. They operated from a premises in Heretaunga Street east, Hastings.

Alma was a person with a buoyant personality and one who possessed the *Masters'* sense of humour. As with her brothers and sisters, she relished humorous occasions and was quick to find fun and share a laugh. Alma was particularly comfortable in the company of her brother Leicester (Lester) who was himself very quick to find or create amusement from an otherwise ordinary situation.

In Lester Masters' book *Back Country Tales*, he makes reference to an occasion on which Alma and her husband Les Liley accompanied him into the northern Ruahine Ranges on a hunting trip (to what is believed to be *Shute's Hut)*. Lester commented that being in such a lonely place for the first time in Alma's life made no difference to her happy-go-lucky sense of humour, and a lot of foolery went on between the three of them. One such antic began with Lester acting the role of a butcher delivering supplies to a customer (Alma). Lester would knock on the door of the hut, and prompt Alma to appear at the door. She was obviously quick to enter into the spirit of the charade. Lester would adopt exaggerated aires and enquire of Alma: "And what meat would madam like today?" Alma seized the opportunity to act the role of a cantankerous and complaining housewife and rebuke the butcher (Lester) about the unsatisfactory quality of his products and service.

In 1952 events took an unexpectedly sad path when Les died at the age of 57 years. Alma had the affairs of the plumbing business to become involved in, and to wind up. The event had a significant influence upon the direction of the lives of the family, and adjustments and new directions developed.

Alma sold the family home in Ferguson Street, and purchased a residential section at 233 Mayfair Avenue. The section adjoined Walkers Nurseries and the Mayfair Dairy at 1028 Karamu Road. With the support of a family friend, Geoff Knuckey, who was a builder, and her youngest son Brian *(Podge)* Liley, a new home was built on the property. Brian completed the plumbing, the drain laying, and laid out the gardens and tennis court.

Ralph Liley, who was Les's younger brother and trustee, encouraged Alma to buy the Mayfair Dairy. Her eldest son Peter, and daughter Rae, left for England at this time for the great overseas experience, so Alma rose to the occasion with the true Masters spirit and operated the Mayfair Dairy with an existing employee by day, and in the evenings and weekends she was assisted by her son Brian. When Rae returned from England, she also assisted in the Dairy.

Rae's assistance in the shop was to free Alma for other things. Alma and her sister Edith sailed for England where they were to join Peter. Alma's love for travel developed from this time.

From the 1950s Alma travelled extensively. Among her travels were numerous Pacific Island trips, a trip to Norfolk Island, to Bali, there were about five trips to Australia, and at least one trip to North America. One of the trips to Australia included a traverse (by commercial tour) of the then notorious *Birdsville Track* between Birdsville in inland Queensland to Maree near Lake Eyre in South Australia. One of the Australian trips appears to have taken her well up

into Northern Territory.

Alma was always a very capable swimmer, and that affinity for water emerged again on her travels: "She made a name for herself for swimming in any bit of water larger than a puddle that they came to. An ever-brilliant swimmer, there was a cruise in the Yasawa Islands north of Fiji where they were all swimming in a vast sea cavern when someone mentioned that there was a further cavern beyond, but only reachable through an under-water passage-way. However, it wasn't recommended for anyone but the young and strong swimmers. Alma, and a sixteen-year-old got through and back comfortably. She was aged 75 years or so then."

Her last trip was to North America, but a fall during the tour resulted in a broken pelvis. Alma completed the tour with the aid of a wheelchair. Although she had plans to return to North America, a combination of declining investment returns and inflation denied her the opportunity to undertake another trip.

Despite her pelvis break, she remained very active and agile. To her younger acquaintances and less agile contempories, the manner in which she gained access to the rear seat of a **two-door** Mini car was the source of amazement and amusement. Access to the rear seat was of course via a front door of the car, and was made easier by tilting a front seat forward. However, the process of fiddling with the front seat and sliding it forward to alow direct access to the rear seat was deemed to involve more fussing about than suited her. Even in her eighties she found it easier to climb in the front and slither over the upright back-rest of the front seat and thereby deposit herself onto the rear seat.

At about this time of her life she played the card game of Bridge. Bridge is a game that requires a good memory and it is usually a game in which the players are fairly serious about how they perform. An observer of the Bridge games (in which Alma was involved) wrote: "At this point these old dears were still playing what must have been quite hilarious Bridge. None of them could remember a thing, let alone what was trumps or whose house they were at."

"Despite all this activity and her early prowess as a tennis player, her throwing ability was a family joke." It is tempting to suggest that the inability to throw has been genetically carried down the family line. "None of us are capable of throwing with accuracy or sense of direction at all. Mum's efforts were spectacular. Crusts for the birds [thrown with the intention of landing on the lawn] ended up on the roof behind her.

"Even in those later and more dotty years, that mad Masters' sense of humour came through. As a family we gathered stupid family sayings and expressions. There was one classic relating to one of the Liley cousins who had her mother-in-law staying her. They lived at the fire station. The siren went [and the cousin said of her mother-in-law]:
" and the nosey old bitch shot out onto the back verandah to find out what was going on and next thing she'd gone *arse-over-kite* down the back steps."
"Anyway, only three years or so back [when Alma was aged about 91 and ailing], Ma and I were sitting out in the sun when there was a lot of activity next door. Mum was out of her chair and across the lawn like a rocket to peer through [the thick boundary vegetation] to see what was going on. I called out, " Careful or you will go *arse-over-kite* down the back steps."

She looked around with eyes wide open and the vacant look gone. She had recognised it. She got the giggles. We both did. That sense of humour never left her, even when she didn't know who we were.

"I don't think that anybody could have asked for a more caring, kindly, helpful, loving and lovable mother. She had a sort of magic charisma. She was also very demanding in a way you couldn't fight back. It is no wonder that Dr Hopkirk, once wrote in his notes "This is one tough old lady."

Perhaps Dr Hopkirk was alluding to the physical **resilience** of the diminutive Alma in her latter years. Although she was a small person (about 1.3 metres tall and lightly built) she was more importantly the person summarised in the first sentence of the previous paragraph, and she was a person with a healthy sense of adventure. She was a person who possessed that 'Masters' sense of humour. Collectively, those various attributes gave her a fulfilling life and made her a very memorable person.

Lester Masters

(A son of Alfred Masters & Alice Lydia Leeves)

Lester Masters (whose birth is registered as Leicester Masters) was born 12th April 1894, probably at the residence of his parents which was attached to a hop kiln in Selwood Road (re-named Windsor Avenue) Hastings, New Zealand. His home during his childhood and adolescent years was at the property in Selwood Road.

The property owned by Lester's father extended from Selwood Road to within about 200 metres of St Georges Road to the east. It was used principally for the production of hops which were mainly sold to the *Sunshine Brewery* in Napier (owned by the Stevens family).

For a brief period during the Boer War (about 1901 and possibly coinciding with his mother's pregnancy with Alfred Edward Masters) Lester attended Otane school (about 33 kilometres south-west of Hastings). He stayed with a Mr & Mrs Crayford who were employees of John Buchanan (owner of Elsthorpe Station). During the school holidays, Lester travelled by stage coach from Otane to Elsthorpe and stayed several for happy weeks at the farm property of William & Sarah Cheer. Lester recalls that his most vivid memory of his time with his hosts was an occasion on which he assisted in a bush burn-off. The bush on the Mangatiki Hill portion of the property had been felled in preparation for burning. On the memorable day, Lester rode with William Cheer to the felled bush, and he was given a lighted torch to assist firing. Lester commented that for a seven year old boy, it was a great thrill to set alight such a fire. Sparks and great chunks of burning vegetation sailed high into the air, timbers creaked and groaned and fell among the flames. In later life he was to reflect how abhorrent it would be to see native bush being destroyed in such a way.

According to his sister Edith, Lester was always a kid who was quick to take advantage of an opportunity to create fun. That attribute was also very evident in Edith, Clarence, and Alma. The fun would arise within the home environment and at school. Edith recounted an instance in which Lester (as a kid) had been dismissed from the dining room table (for clowning) and sent into an adjoining room until the remaining members of the family had finished their meal. Apart from being a disciplinary measure, it appeared to be designed to enable the other children at the table to continue their meal without disruption. However, Lester chose to open the linking doorway sufficiently to be observed by his sister Edith and others (but not visible to his parents) and proceeded to make comical faces through the narrow gap for the purpose of stimulating them into another bout of giggling. Lester's mischievous objectives were successful.

Lester was a person of very slight build, and as an adult stood five feet (1.5 metres) tall and weighed seven stone (44.4 kg). His build appears to have been of minor consideration when choosing or engaging in physical activities. He commenced employment as a general farm hand. He was also blade shearer, and as such worked on Hawkes Bay farms, in Canterbury, and Otago.

The following material on Lester Masters has been gathered mainly from the two books that he wrote. They have been invaluable as a source of information on his life, his occupations, his travels, and his recreational pursuits. The books also give an appreciation of his character, his views, and his attitudes. However, the books were a mixture of his own exploits, and the exploits of others. In compiling data for this record, it

has been necessary to sift material from the books that pertained directly to Lester's activities.

Additionally, if this record were to recite the text of his books verbatim, it would not do him justice. The books appear to have been printed without first being edited. Consequently, grammatical and typographical errors abound. If reproduced here word-for-word, a reader would occasionally have difficulty understanding what Lester meant.

Also, Lester used a style of speech that was rich in the colloquialisms, idioms and slang that were current during his years. Typically, such vernacular changes from being current and fashionable within a few years or decades. It is gradually displaced by new colloquialisms, idioms, and slang in the constant and comparatively rapid process of change that is associated with informal English. Hence, the informal English used by Lester would, in many instances, not be understood 30-40 years later if read by a young person.

The difficulty now is to reproduce his material in such a way that the atmosphere and substance is fully and faithfully reflected. Adjustments have been made were necessary to remedy the typographical errors, and the more obvious grammatical errors. I have also replaced selected colloquialisms, idioms, and slang (that would now cause confusion) with slightly more formal English so that the material will be understood, and will acquire a more durable quality. However, such changes have been kept to an absolute minimum, and great care has been taken to keep as closely as possible to the way in which Lester wrote it. The intention is to ensure that all events and observations recorded by him are faithfully reflected.

In 1917, Lester worked on *Ngamatea Station*. Despite the advent of motorised vehicles at this time, the coach service on this route was still provided by horse-drawn stage coach. Little is recorded of Lester's time at *Ngamatea Station*, but it may be reasonably assumed that he was engaged as a general farm worker and involved with stock work, mustering, shearing, and general maintenance. He was then about 23 years of age, and modestly refers to himself as a "*green looking type of young fellow.*" By that he suggests that he was comparatively inexperienced. A paragraph in his book *Back-Country Tales* makes reference to a discussion with an elderly acquaintance while on *Ngamatea Station* about an unusual local geographical feature known as Mt Aorangi. He writes:

An old-timer, pointing to the table-topped, cliff encircled, Mt Aorangi in the distant Mangaohane country, remarked that no man had yet been able to climb to the top of it, and its table-top was populated by herds of wild pigs. Just how he knew there were pigs up there, or how they had managed to get there, had me whacked (since according to the old-timer, no-one had ever been up there). Lester humorously suggests that it all happened on one of those days when supposedly *pigs fly*.

In 1917 Lester visited Arrowtown, Otago.

1918 on Waiwhare Station: During the time of the international influenza epidemic (toward the close of the First World War [circa **1918**]) Lester was a shearer at *Waiwhare Station* [45 kilometres north-west of Hastings on the Hastings-Taihape Road]. While there, influenza reached the station, and strangely the first person to be afflicted by it was a rabbiter based at the *Black Whare* [built 1860] which was miles away from other habitation. A packman taking supplies to the hut discovered the ill rabbiter and took him back to the station. Soon most of those at the station became afflicted by the flue (including Lester). Four of the shearing gang

at the station died from the virus. Mrs Ensor, the station owner, nursed the affected but appeared not be afflicted by the virus herself at any time. Similarly, the station cook escaped illness.

In the early 1920s, Lester developed an interest in hunting, and made his first trip into *Nomans Hut,*(4,500 ft asl in the Northern Ruahine Ranges) which was built about 1918 for the Hawkes Bay Rabbit Board.

Just as Lester arrived at the hut, George Freemantle and Jack Hickey, both rabbiters, arrived off the range. George started fiddling about in an attempt to get the fire going. A cloud of smoke came oozing out into the hut. "Does the chimney smoke" Lester enquired with a mischievous taunt. George gave a whoof like a wild bush boar, and staggered back a few paces. He rubbed his eyes and in assertive bush language confirmed that the fire did smoke. Within a few seconds Lester was also engulfed in smoke, and he too shared the same strong opinion on the matter.

The following afternoon, Lester and George decided to venture along Herricks Spur to look for a stag. The weather was quite rough, but they proceeded as planned. After travelling for some time without hearing or seeing anything, they parked themselves in the shelter of some rocks. A stag started roaring in a patch of bush beneath them. They roared back at the stag in the hope that they might entice it up toward them and get an easy shot at it. However, their roaring was to no effect. After a lot of barracking as to which of them should go down to the stag, Lester took his rifle and went down into the bush to try for a closer look at it. The stag was not sighted and Lester returned to where he had left George. To his surprise, George was not there. Another stag roared from well down an open rocky spur, and on glancing down he noticed George stalking it. Even more remarkable, between Lester and George was yet another stag walking unconcernedly toward Lester. Accordingly, Lester concealed himself behind a rock and positioned his rifle up ready to shoot. However, George was visible beyond the stag and for safety reasons Lester could not shoot the approaching stag. George then disappeared from view behind a rock and shortly fired a shot. Lester aimed at his stag and fired. Down it went. It proved to be an even ten-pointer and was later mounted and displayed in his home at Twyford.

George had been equally successful. In the deteriorating weather they compared their trophies and exchanged excited chatter, but the wind made it difficult to hear what was being said. They gathered their respective loads, and rifles and headed for the distant *Nomans Hut*. As they neared the hut they were heartened by the occasional whiff of appetizing venison stew. It was dark when they arrived and they were bitterly cold. However, George and Lester could not resist giving Jack a yell to "come out and look at what they had got while he had been lazing around camp".

"Lazing eh, and who do you think has been getting the tucker ready?" Jack roared, coming forward with a grin and a big wooden spoon held in mock aggression. Lester and George dropped the stags' heads and backed off a bit. Jack glanced at the heads, then without another word, brushed past to appear a moment later with a beautifully even twelve-pointer. It was a Royal. [A ***Royal*** is a stag bearing antlers with 12-13 points.] George and Lester stood there in amazement. "There, said Jack, holding it out for better inspection. And you fellows call

yourselves stalkers. You go blundering around all afternoon in a blizzard and come back here with just a couple of ten pointers. All I did was to go down by the horse paddock while the stew was coming to the boil and bowl this one."

From about 1921, Lester resided at the address of his married sister (Alice Maud Burge) in Jarvis Road, Twyford. This remained his basic address until about 1930 when he purchased a residential property from *Mulholland* in Thompson Road, Twyford. His residential property was only about half a hectare, and was quite separate from the six acre orchard property situated some 400 metres eastward along Thompson Road.

In 1923 Lester planted the six acre property in fruit trees.

About 1923 Lester visited the Otago goldfields with a view to earning a living (or better) on a gold claim. He mentioned that all he got for his toil and trouble were a few measly colours (specks) of gold. In fact, he also mentions that he went broke while in Lumsden and had to contact home so that (presumably his parents) could send him cash to resolve his predicament.

In early 1924 he set out with his pack horse *Dandy* to spend some time deerstalking with Alex Shute [whose name is lent to Shute's Hut]. Lester and Alex were going to hunt at the Taruarau via *Big Hill Station* at the northern Ruahine Range. While on their way through *Big Hill Station* they were asked to keep a sharp look-out for a man by the name of Frank Marshall (or signs of him). Marshall had left Kereru Station ten days earlier to cross the range via Herrick's Spur to Shute's Hut. It was suspected that Marshall had lost his way in foggy conditions. He was never found, but Lester had an experience later that year which offered a possible clue to the fate of Marshall. One morning, some days after arriving at the hut, he left Alex Shute at the hut and made his way to the tops. There he shot a good eleven-pointer red stag. The trophy was stashed in the bushes to be collected later, and he then proceeded along the spur leading to *Noman's Hut* (down which Frank Marshall should have come). Stags were roaring well down in the Te Koau Gorge, so after wandering about the tops for a while, he worked his way down toward them. He stalked several stags, but none of them complied with licence requirements (which stipulated a minimum of ten points). By the time that he had reached the bottom, the day was well advanced and a sleety drizzle had set in. His return route required him to climb back up, and before he was half way it began snowing. He hadn't gone far when he got a very strong whiff of something dead and decided to investigate. On suddenly breaking through the undergrowth in the very poor light, he nearly went over the face of an almost sheer slip. He decided to abandon the search. His intention was to get back to the hut, but he was in an unfamiliar area and he began to realise that he had left it too late. As a consequence, he was forced to spend the night trying to keep warm by a fire in a patch of bush. Next morning everything was blanketed with fog, and it took him until almost mid-day to reach the hut. Old Alex wasn't worried about Lester's absence. He said that he had seen Lester put some biscuits and salt in his pocket before leaving the hut on the previous day. [Biscuits and salt would be a poor definition of a survival kit in those conditions.] Bleak conditions persisted for a further two days, but by the third day a slight improvement enabled them to leave the hut.

Lester returned to the same area the following season with his mate Bill Holt. A boar was seen mooching about the bush edge just ahead of them and invited a shot. The shot appeared to

miss, and the boar turned around and moved directly toward Lester and Bill. Another shot was fired and this time the boar went down. That boar head was taken to the taxidermist and mounted on a shield. That intimidating head guarded the lintel between the dining room and lounge of his home for the remainder of their time at Twyford. However, the eleven-pointer of the previous season was never recovered.

Lester continued to hunt in the area each season throughout the ensuing twenty years. Many of those trips were done alone. These were during the years when it was necessary to have a licence to hunt. Licences cost £2-2-0 ($4.20) but was then the equivalent of two-three day's pay for a labourer. The licence permitted four stags to be shot, and only mature stags with ten points or more could be taken.

On one of his lone trips, he was at *Shute's Hut* for over three weeks. During that time he had several attempts at stalking a good ten-pointer that would often move into an open ridge near the hut with his harem of hinds in the early mornings and late evenings. However, the stag would change his habits sufficiently to mean that new strategies would have to be adopted each time a stalk was attempted. The entourage of hinds would sometime detect Lester and bark a warning of his presence. He decided to adopt the practice of deliberately making himself visible (and seemingly harmless) in the hope that the stag and hinds would become accustomed to him. Such a strategy might then enable him to get in closer for a shot at this revered ten-pointer. With this ruse in mind, he left the hut one morning with the intention of fly-camping and doing a few days hunting along the tops. There were a few wild sheep along the route and just as he heard an old ram give a warning grunt, he looked up he caught a glimpse of what appeared to be the revered ten-point stag dashing into an isolated patch of bush. Oddly, the stag had no hinds with him. Lester dropped his pack and scrambled onto a little knoll from which he could get a clear view of anything attempting to move out of the little patch of bush. Nothing happened. He waited for some time, then decided to generate some activity by throwing stones into the patch of bush. Still nothing happened, and he began to doubt that the stag was anywhere in the vicinity. With that, Lester got to his feet and turned to return to his pack on the ground. The sound of braking dry twigs prompted him to look back to see the ten-pointer about to disappear over the opposite ridge. The rifle was brought up and a hurried shot despatched at the stag. Almost simultaneously the stag was lost from view over the ridge. It was worth investigating further. As Lester arrived at the scene, the stag was giving his last kicks. The head of that deer reached a taxidermist also, and it too was mounted and became a proud display in his home at Twyford.

One day while out on the tops above the Te Koua gorge, he noticed one of the Macdonald brothers, the first man that he had seen for weeks, working his dogs on some sheep on a side spur. He wasn't far away and Lester felt that he could have easily have gone down for a yarn. Ironically, Lester shied from bidding him good-day and having a natter. It rained heavily that night, and as he lay on his bunk thinking, he came to the conclusion that because he had evaded Macdonald, it was time that he headed back down-country before reclusiveness became a problem. Next morning the creek in front of the hut was in flood and barred any attempt at crossing it with horses. The rain persisted for the next two days, but by the third night it cleared, and by morning the creek was down sufficiently to attempt a crossing. He packed his gear, caught the horses, and proceeded across, and emerged after some anxious moments. When he reached Bald Hill, the track was impassable because of slips. There was no safe way

of getting around or over it because of rocks or cliffs. However, earlier he had noticed a steep narrow shingle slide extending down from the top, and decided to use this. Problems began when he started to lead the horse down the shingle slide. There wasn't sufficient depth of shingle on the base rock to enable the horse to obtain a reasonably stable footing. As a consequence, the horses began to slip and went down on their hindquarters with their front legs spread. Lester leaped clear from his vulnerable position in front of the horses and grasped a rock outcrop. The horses continued down at an increasing pace but luckily their movement was arrested by scrub at the bottom of the shingle shute. By the time that Lester had reached them, they were back on their feet, trembling slightly, but not showing any signs of injury. After straightening the packs, they had to push their way through the scrub until back on the track again. The water in the Te Koau stream was in high flood and very discoloured. Although the stones on the bottom could not be seen (because of the discoloured water) they could be heard knocking about as they were tumbled along by the heavy current. The way back was blocked. Although he had got down the shingle shute, it would be impossible to get back up it with the horses. Ominous black clouds were moving across from the south and threatened more heavy rain. There seemed to be two options: Either he unpacked the horses and made a camp, and wait for the water level to recede, or he could attempt the crossing. He chose the latter. He mounted the saddle horse, but kept his boots out of the stirrups to prevent becoming entangled (and trapped in the stirrups) in the event that the horse fell during the crossing. The horse battled his way over without slipping and stumbling on boulders on the bottom. *Dandy* the packhorse was not so fortunate. He stumbled and fell and the current began to sweep him downstream. He whinnied, glanced pitifully toward Lester and his mount which were by this stage standing on firm ground. Slightly downstream was rock wall that threatened to seriously complicated matters, but Dandy regained his footing, battled gallantly and scrambled out on to safe ground.

The experience necessitated a pause for a while to recover. Ahead was a zig-zag climb, and despite the fact that it had started snowing, there seemed little that Lester could think of that would now prevent them from reaching the *Ruahine Hut*. It was evening and still snowing when they arrived at the hut. In bitterly cold conditions the packs and saddles were removed from the horses so that they could move away into the shelter of the bush.

Lester's next task was to get the fire started in the hut for a hot drink and meal, but cold conditions had made his fingers almost too numb to strike a match. When the fire did begin to burn well, a billy of water was suspended over it. However, a dollop of snow that had been lodged somewhere up the chimney dropped onto the fire and instantly extinguished it. After staring at it for a minute or two, a shovel and bucket were engaged for the task of clearing the mess, and the fire eventually re-started.

By morning the weather had cleared, but the ground was still covered with snow. The horses were caught, loaded, and they departed for *Big Hill Station*. Deep snow had filled the track rut, and although it hindered progress, steady progress was made and eventually they reached the station.

Lester had also visited *Shute's Hut* with his sister Alma and her husband Leslie Liley. Alma and Lester, with their characteristic Masters' affinity for fun, inevitably created an entertaining hunting trip out of the occasion.

In late 1924, Lester had done well with cropping on the Twyford property and felt that, with about £100 uncommitted, he was in a position to embark upon some adventure that would offer an interesting interlude. He had panned for gold fairly unsuccessfully in Otago about eighteen months earlier. Although he considered that his poor luck in Otago should have cured him of any future desire to return to gold panning, he noted with interest that a new gold strike had been discovered in New Guinea. He became tempted, and mentioned to his parents (with humerus exaggeration) that he would go to New Guinea "to collect a few bags of gold". His mother took a dim view of the idea, but his father's response was that if he were the same age then he would probably want to do the same thing.

The trip to New Guinea would necessitate a boat trip via Australia, and so he booked his fare. The trip to Sydney which, as he recalls, cost him £6-0-0. On calling into the shipping office in Sydney to book a passage to Port Morsby, New Guinea, he was informed by an official that unless he could show at least £750, or obtain a bond for that amount, he would be prevented from proceeding to the goldfields. It was explained by the official that the goldfields were three *jungle weeks* inland. The idea of going to New Guinea was sounding less attractive. Apart from the genuine risks of becoming afflicted with tropical disease or of being speared by New Guinea natives, he would have to strike payable gold within about six weeks or face the prospect of becoming destitute.

Lester had a cousin in Brisbane (Vernon Leeves) and vaguely hoped that by visiting him and re-examining the situation from there, the problem regarding the £750 might not be an obstruction any longer. However, the matter did not look any better from the Brisbane perspective, and he decided to turn his attention elsewhere.

He had always had a desire to see and live first-hand what he described as the "real Australian outback country", and "took a look at a map of Western Queensland." Roma sounded like a nice name, and in the circumstances that was sufficient reason to board a train and see what the journey and Roma offered. The route took him across the vast flat (and at times drought-stricken) Darling Downs. He was amused to hear one Aussie telling another that it was the best land in the world and could carry a [cattle] beast to the acre. Lester had come from the Heretaunga Plains, NZ, where stocking rates were higher, but discretely chose not to intrude on the conversation between the Aussies to correct the assertion that the Darling Downs was the best land in the world. A big Australian sitting next him engaged Lester in a conversation and early during the opening patter said that he thought that all New Zealanders were big blokes. (Lester was about five feet tall.) It was a good humoured remark, and Lester's own quick wit prompted him to reply with "That's right, they are. I was the only little one, so they sent me over here."

His room mate in the hotel in Roma was a young Australian named Bill. Together they went around the stock and station agents in Roma to see what farm or station work was offering. The only jobs offering were for a blade shearer or a rouseabout at a place called Quilby's Siding. Bill was a rouseabout and Lester had experience as a blade shearer, so they took the jobs.

The train stopped at Quilby's Siding, where the only building was a little shelter shed. Lester and Bill climbed down from the train with their swags, and the train departed into a mirage.

There they were left standing in a dry plain with no roads and nothing in sight but gum trees, and wheel tracks leading out into the distance at all angles. The only sign of life were cockatoos and magpies.

The agent in Roma had instructed them to take the track leading eastward, but there were numerous tracks in that general direction. They shouldered there swags, and took what appeared to be the most used track that headed eastward. However, the track chosen divided and had other tracks leading from it on either side. It became difficult to judge which of the various options they should take. Lester commented that "the mirage was bad, the heat terrific, and the flies worse." The track became less distinct, and just as they were about to abandon their objective and return, a lone horseman approached through the mirage. They waited for him to come to them. The horseman informed them in raw language that they were miles off course, but gave them a drink from his canvas water bag, and sent them in the appropriate direction. Some time after leaving the horseman, a man driving a Buick car came tearing along through the gums and stopped alongside them in a cloud of dust. When the dust settled, the driver was informed of where they were going. They were soon told to chuck their swags aboard and get in. The driver was going in the same direction. As they careered along dodging stumps and branches, the conversation somehow got onto the subject of fishing. Given the arid nature of the country that they were in, it amused Lester that they should have found cause to discuss such an improbable subject as fishing.

It was nearly dark when they arrived, and the driver stopped where a dim side track led towards a bark hut. The hut was to be their accommodation for the next two weeks. It was fairly common during the era for such huts in the outback to be clad by bark. The bark is stripped green from trees in slabs, stacked flat on the ground with weights on it. When it is dry, it retains its flat shape and is ready for use as weather-boarding or roofing shingles.

Their boss was described as a tall sun-dried Aussie, who showed them around the crude establishment. There was no shearing shed, and instead they used the corner of a rough sheep yard with a split slab shearing board. The shearing board was roughly roofed with eucalypt boughs to give some protection from the sun.

There were about six hundred sheep to be shorn, but their fleeces were congested with sand and bindi. Water for the stock was artesian, and in that part of the country a system of *bore drains* radiated out for miles (from the bore) to distribute the water for the stock. Often the water was a milky colour and unsuitable for human consumption until allowed to stand for several hours in containers of wood ash to remove the impurities. The water supply was a crucial feature of this particular property, as without it neither the stock nor men could have survived.
The shearing at the station was finished within two weeks, so Lester and his mate returned to Quilby's Siding and took the first train that came along. It so happened that it was travelling further inland. Charleville was their alighting point. Within two days, Lester, Bill and a third station hand were offered a free lorry ride to a station [west of Charleville] on the condition that they opened all the gates and helped with loading. The three of them sat on the deck behind the cab among sheaves of oats and bags of maize grain. There were no formed or fenced roads on the route, and the driver charged along at what seemed an unduly lively pace through the bush where he had to swerve erratically around trees, stumps, and logs. Eventually they

emerged on a treeless plain. From out of a mirage, came the sound of sheep bleating, men yelling, and whips cracking. Soon a big mob of starving merino sheep materialised, and followed by several drovers who were having difficulty moving the mob forward. The boss drover, who was a fierce looking bearded bloke, galloped up to the lorry. He roared "Better get started." The lorry driver immediately began zig-zagging across the plain, while Lester and his two acquaintances, as previously instructed, dribbled the oats and maize over the side onto the ground. The starving sheep streamed after them, licking up the maize, and initially ignoring the oat straw.

Hardly had they completed the task when *Whiskers* the boss drover galloped alongside again. "Any of you blokes want a job," he roared, fixing each of them with his blue eyes. Lester replied with a simple yes, but the other two seemed disinclined to respond. "Ever done any droving?" he asked. "Not much," Lester replied, and added that he was off a farm. "Where?" he enquired sharply. "New Zealand", went Lester's response. That seemed to stall *Whiskers* for a moment. "Can you ride?" was *Whiskers* next query. "Yes, but I'm no buckjump rider," said Lester. *Whiskers* got off his horse. "Alright," he said, starting to grin. "Jump on and head those sheep back." Lester got down from the truck deck, and mounted the horse. The stirrups were too low so he put his feet into the straps and galloped off. After doing as he was instructed he turned back, but noticed with concern that the lorry was moving off. There was no hope of catching it, and he galloped back to *Whiskers* to say that his swag is still back in Charleville. *Whiskers* grinned. "That's alright," he replied. "We'll be there in a couple of days, and you can have half mine until then." So for the next six weeks Lester was a Queensland drover, supplied with a horse, saddle and bridle, and drawing eleven shillings and eight pence ($1.17) per day and found.

Lester commented that he soon learned that droving in the drought stricken inland country was a far different thing to what it is in New Zealand. Instead of holding paddocks as in New Zealand, at the end of a droving day in Australia, a *break* (a temporary yard) was formed by attaching white calico or rope netting to perimeter stakes. While on droving assignments involving several days, the *break* had to be dismantled in the morning, packed, and reassembled at wherever they stopped during the evening. It was part of the cook's job each morning, after the sheep had been let out, to dismantle the *break*, load it and all the other gear on the waggonette. He then had to drive to the next pre-arranged camp site, and have the *break* erected and a meal ready by the time that the drovers arrived that evening.

There were two sheep dogs with the outfit, but they were seldom used. Their performance was limited by the heat and the needle sharp bindi that got into their feet.

Normally merino sheep were good travellers and required very little noise to start them moving or to keep them moving. However, the five thousand odd that they were droving were starving and required a lot of effort to keep them moving. They were being driven across drought stricken country to Charleville, from where they would be railed south into better country.

There were four riders (including Lester) and a cook. The first night after he joined the outfit, they camped among some scattered gums near a bore drain. The sheep were safely in the *break*, the horses were fed and hobbled, and the droving team had their evening meal. Although the days were terrifically hot, the nights were quite cool (especially towards the

morning). Fred the cook, Quart and Bluey (his two riding mates), and Whiskers each brushed the ground clear of bindi before rolling out their swags. Lester observed a good sized log lying a comfortable distance back from the fire, and prepared his sleeping sight for the night there. That night the Australians amused themselves by telling their new Kiwi acquaintance a few yarns about the hazards of snakes. Quart casually remarked that snakes favoured hollow logs to rest in and were liable to move about at night and park in a man's boots if he hadn't taken the precaution to place them upside-down. Equally unappealing was the revelation that snakes would crawl alongside a man on the ground to gain the benefit of his body heat. The yarns were sufficient for Lester to move away from the log and to turn his boots upside-down. He reckoned that he wasn't for taking any chances with snakes. The conversation then shifted to New Zealand and earthquakes. The Aussies seemed to have the impression that New Zealand was in an almost continuous state of tremor. Bluey asked how many really bad shakes a year would be experienced. Lester grinned and replied "Probably as many as you fellows get bitten by poisonous snakes." Discussion for the night closed with *Whiskers* telling a yarn about a joker who escaped a pursuing Tiger snake by climbing a tree and by pulling the tree up after him. Subsequent experience with his Australian mates on the matter of snakes prompted Lester to observe that they were more inclined to chase a snake and break its back with a stick (rather than run from it). On such occasions Lester always got smartly out of the way and left them to deal with any snakes.

The next day they left the open country and moved for several miles through tall scrub. The stock route followed a dried water channel with fences either side. As commonly practised in Australia, the fence wires were not stapled to the posts, but rather were passed through a hole that had been drilled through the post. This prevented drovers lowering the fence wires to enable hungry cattle or horses to graze on the cockies precious feed. However, as the drovers on this occasion found, the fence was not sheep proof. Just as they got the mob moving along the lane (stock route) a violent wind storm developed and caused leaves and twigs to flutter to the ground. This put the starving sheep into a feeding frenzy, and they soon spread out in all directions picking up the leaves and twigs that were being blown down. Despite the efforts of the drovers to stop them, they also streamed through the fences and continued their pursuit of falling leaves and twigs. The four drovers dismounted, climbed through (the horse-proof) fence and rushed about, yelling, swearing, and whistling, in a fairly unsuccessful effort to get them back into some sort of mob. Had not the feed lorry arrived at a critical moment, and laid a decoy trail of maize grain on the open plain, they would have lost several thousand sheep (instead of just several hundred).

On the second night they camped handy to Charleville by the Warrigo River. Next day they found that because of a shortage of railway trucks, the mob would have to be railed in two lots. *Whiskers* and Fred went south on the train with the first draft of sheep, while Quart, Bluey, and Lester camped with the horses and gear and kept the remaining mob under control.

A party of aborigines were camped not far from the drovers. On the second night at the rail head, Lester retired for the day early. Just as Quart and Bluey were about to do the same, the sheep began to make a lot of noise. With thoughts of sheep stealers in mind, Quart and Bluey each grabbed a waddy and rushed away to investigate. Not wishing to be left out of activities, Lester hauled on his trousers and boots and followed. In the darkness as he was sneaking around the break, a low whistle came to him. He hesitated to respond and was unclear as to

who had whistled, or why the whistle was given. He couldn't tell whether it was his mates or the presumed sheep stealers. Again the whistle sounded, but this time Lester responded. Hardly had he done so when a couple of forms leaped at him in the darkness. Soon he was on the ground with a couple of hefty jokers on top of him. During the ensuing silent tussle he managed to get in a few telling kicks. Help was needed so he yelled to his mates. They weren't far away. It was in fact his mates who had jumped on him in the darkness (assuming Lester to be the intruder). No trace of the true intruders was found, and by next morning the aborigines had gone and with little evidence of their camp showing.

After the second draft of sheep had been railed, Lester, Quart, and Bluey went back and camped in the lane (stock route) and made an attempt at mustering the sheep that they had lost on the way through. All they managed to get were seventy four sheep. Quart was left in charge of them and would also make further efforts to recover more. Lester and Bluey headed back to the station with the horses, waggonette, and gear. One night on the return trip to the station, they camped at a place called *Broken Dam*. This was a muddy depression of several acres and, at the time, contained the only water available for miles. The bush was populated by great flocks of Galah, Cockatoos, and other birds. In the morning their screeching and whistling was terrific. At breakfast time while Lester was reaching over for his mug of tea, a Butcher bird swooped from an overhanging branch, grabbed the piece of meat that was on his plate, and flew off with it. Since that breakfast ration was the last of the meat, the departing Butcher Bird was chased by a barrage of hostile language.

Later in the morning as they neared the bush edge with the horses and waggonette, they spotted three mature kangaroos out on the plain ahead. Lester had heard much of the speed of kangaroos, and since he was mounted on a fast *Thoroughbred* mare, he decided to test the speed of the kangaroos. Bluey waited at the bush edge with the outfit. Lester cantered quietly forward at a bit of an angle, but the 'roos soon lifted their heads to look for a minute or so. When they started to leisurely hop away, Lester dug his heels in and directed his mount straight at the 'roos. For a while he was gaining on them, but when they realised that the pressure was increasing, the 'roos increased their effort to a maximum and soon widened the distance between them. By this time the *Thoroughbred* had entered into the spirit of the chase, and Lester couldn't pull her up. Into the bush went the 'roos, and the mount after them. Lester commented that he was stooped low over the mare's back, trying to pull her up and at the same time endeavouring to dodge overhanging branches so as to not get knocked any sillier. Eventually he managed to get her back out into the open plain again, but not before getting his cloths ripped and acquiring a few bruises.

The morning after their arrival back at the station, they set out with another mob of about one thousand sheep for the Charleville railhead. On this occasion they had with them a young jackaroo who would take charge of the waggonette and do the cooking. The jackaroo had with him a battery powered wireless set (radio receiver), and during evenings he would run an aerial to a tree, fit the amplifying horn and tune into a broadcasting station. Back in those days, a wireless
was a new thing, and Lester reflected that to be sitting by a wagonette under the stars and away out in the western plains listening to music was magic.

Every third day, the food lorry from Charleville would meet them, and after feeding out for

the day, sufficient maize grain would be piled into the wagonette to keep the sheep going for the next two days. They met their first spot of bother one evening when about two miles short of Broken Dam. The mob were too dehydrated and fatigued to go any further. For the horses, sufficient water was carried in canvas collar bags which were slung around their necks. Water for the riders was carried in canvas saddle bags. There had been no opportunity to water the sheep since the morning of the previous day and the situation had become critical. Next morning the sheep were got moving again and they made progress toward Broken Dam. However, the stockmen could not allow the sheep to approach the dam as one complete mob. To do so would result in the sheep at the rear blundering frantically into the sheep already drinking, and result in a mass smother. To avoid such a disaster, the mob was halted well back from the dam. The jackeroo and Bluey held the main mob while Lester took a small cut quietly forward and tried to ease them down to the water. However, as soon as the sheep approaching the water could scent it, they began bleating and rushing forward. Lester said that he managed to keep them fairly well spread. Things would have gone according to plan had the main mob not heard the bleating. Soon the entire main mob stampeded forward and the drovers' efforts to check them failed completely. All they could do was to spread the sheep as much as possible around the dam. The thirst crazed animals scrambled over the top of each other to get at the water. The drovers dismounted and rushed about getting as many as possible back on their feet before being smothered. Despite their efforts, thirty sheep smothered.

Later, when within two days of Charleville, they had to again camp before reaching water. This time nature gave a helping hand. During the night, a rainstorm delivered a deluge, and every little depression of ground had been filled with a sheet of water. That did not prevent a dozen from perishing overnight. For them the rain had come too late. Word was brought to the stockmen during the day to turn the mob back to the station. Within two days of the rain the red soil areas were green with new grass. For the first few days the famished sheep rushed from one patch of green grass to another, and created some difficulty in keeping the mob together. Later, with plenty of good grass and water along the route, the return trip seemed like a picnic.

Lester's droving commitments ended when they arrived back at the homestead. After dinner, on the evening of their arrival back at the station, Jack, Bluey, and Lester went down to one of the water-holes that had been filled by the recent rain. While enjoying themselves in the water, an old-man kangaroo (a station pet) came hopping along the bank. After sitting on his haunches watching the stockmen in the water for a few minutes, he hopped over to where their cloths were lying. He then picked up Lester's trousers in his mouth and casually hopped away with them. Despite Lester's efforts to distract him from his course of action by yells and whistling, the 'roo continued. Lester scrambled hurriedly ashore to pursue the kangaroo, and Bluey and Jack climbed onto the bank, laughing and yelling useless advice. With Lester's trousers still in his mouth, the 'roo hopped out into the open until well within view of the homestead. Someone in the homestead gave a whistle, and 'roo dropped the trousers and hopped over to the homestead. It was an awkward situation. There were women at the homestead and not a skiver of cover that would enable Lester to retrieve his trousers unobserved. He retreated to the water-hole, collected his shirt, and tied it around his waist in the manner of a kilt. Now that he was no longer indecently exposed, he was confident enough to walk out into the open to collect his trousers from where the kangaroo had dropped them.

Mischief was in the making: Lester sneaked back once more to the water hole where Jack and Bluey were still enjoying themselves in the water. Lester collected their cloths and deposited them where the kangaroo had left his trousers. For obvious reasons, Jack and Blue did not arrive back at the homestead until after dark, and for equally obvious reasons Lester kept well away from them for the remainder of that evening.

Next morning the boss handed Bluey and Lester their cheques, and Jack drove them back to Charleville. While having a few beers in Charleville, Bluey put some effort into trying to persuade Lester to go to Gympie with him. The idea did not fit with Lester's intentions, so after a couple of days of wandering about Charleville, Lester told Bluey that instead he wanted to head south for Starlight, the bush ranger's last stamping ground near Cunnamulla. Next morning, Lester caught the train and began the trip to Cunnamulla. However, at every little indication of a siding, the train would stop to do a bit of shunting or something. Occasionally it would stop in the middle of the bush to put something off where a bit of rag hung in a tree or post. At one part the train stopped for no apparent reason. The guard leisurely got out, placed a letter by the stump of a tree, put a stick on it to prevent it from blowing away, had a yarn with the engine driver, climbed aboard again, and away they went.

The morning after arriving in Cunnamulla, Lester and a new acquaintance did the rounds of the stock agents in an effort to find a job. All that was offering was a lamb marking job at Widgegoarra Station which was situated about eighty miles away. A coin was tossed for the job, and it was Lester that won the toss.

Transport to Widgegoarra Station was by the mail truck. The agent informed Lester that he hadn't much time before the truck left town, so he would need to hurry. Lester dashed back to the hotel to gather his things, but before he was ready, the truck arrived to collect him. To stall for time, Lester called out to the driver and lone passenger with him to come in and have a drink while he finished rolling his swag. To his surprise, when Lester later entered the bar to announce that he was ready, he discovered that the lone passenger was a Parson. He was having a long shandy. "The journey is long and rough," said the Parson in a precise way and laying a florin (a two shilling coin) on the counter, "so we had better have another." So they did.

It transpired that the truck was a *Model T Ford*, and it became obvious why the Parson has suggested the second drink. There didn't appear to be a single part of the contraption that hadn't at some time been either broken or badly buckled, and then crudely patched up. Lying in a handy place on the tray among an assortment of goods and gear was an axe and a shovel (which seemed to indicate what the journey ahead might be like).

When the parson took his seat, he picked up a parcel and placed it carefully on his lap. That parcel contained a wedding cake that was also headed for Widgegoarra Station where there was to be a wedding.

[It is presumed that Widgegoarra (as spelled in Lester's book) is the same place as is referred to on my contemporary map as **Widgeegoara** (to the east of Cunamulla) and that **Widgee** is the same place but with the name abbreviated in accordance with local practice.]

The driver fiddled with the controls of the Model T Ford and performed mysterious

adjustments, then stepped around to the front of the truck and gave a few heaves on the crank handle. Then he climbed back into the cab, grated the gears, and away they bounded for Widgegoarra eighty miles away.

[Vehicles of that era did not have starter motors, and their engines had to be started by making appropriate settings (from the cab) to the spark timing, the fuel mixture, and throttle. Then it was necessary to fit a crank handle into the front of the engine (to externally connect with the crank shaft) and to rotate the handle vigorously. With a bit of luck, the engine might respond by starting.]

Rain had fallen a few weeks earlier, and there was an abundance of feed everywhere. Emus were numerous. The silly birds would often race alongside the truck as though trying to race it, then suddenly cut off at right angles. After chugging along in good order for about fifteen miles, a flooded stream brought them to a halt. The muddy, slow moving water was about half a mile wide. Another vehicle was stranded on the other side. The driver called out that he had a couple of jokers on board who were wanting to get to hospital. Lester and company decided to wade across. The Parson was anxious that he shouldn't get his trousers spoiled by the muddy water, removed them and waded in. Lester did the same, and the pair of them held their shirts up when necessary to keep them from the water. One of the passengers on the opposite side had a broken collar bone, and the other was bleeding from the mouth through having hauled out some aching teeth.

Their driver had cut a thick wooden wedge from the bush, and was driving it under the front cross-spring of his Model T Ford. The purpose was to keep the engine as high out of the water as possible. When he had got it to his liking, he started the engine, lay sacks over the radiator [to minimise the amount of water thrown against the engine] and proceeded into the floodwater. Lester and his fellows waded along behind, but soon the water got in and the engine stopped before they had reached half way and so the vehicle was pushed to the far side. Their engine did not take long to dry when on the Cunnamulla side, and it was soon re-started. It was then the turn of the mailman to get his *Model T Ford* across, and did so successfully. That night they stayed at a station some 20 miles short of Widgee. [It is presumed that *Widgee* is an abbreviation of the name Widgeegoarra.]

Next morning they met a couple of stockmen. One of them, a fellow named Harry, was the father of the bride to be. The other bloke was called Mac. The wedding was to take place that night at Harry's place , which was a boundary rider's cottage about eight miles from Widgee homestead. Harry invited Lester to the wedding, and when it was established that Lester would get their in Mac's gig (a light two wheeled horse drawn carriage) Lester agreed to go. After work that day, with both Mac and Lester, in their best attire, set off across country for Harry's place. Soon after their arrival, Harry, the Parson, and the groom bailed up Lester and asked him to be the *Best Man*. Initially Lester declined, but after it had been explained that the only other two eligible blokes for the task were Mac and a kangaroo hunter, both of whom were illiterate, it was preferable to have someone who could sign their name. Lester duly agreed to the assignment.

The Groom handed Lester the ring, then they all lined up, and operations started. The main ceremony did not take long to complete, and the signing of the papers was completed in the back room. The *Wedding Breakfast* was set in the kitchen (since it was the largest room in the house). Although confetti had been forgotten, wine and cigars had certainly not been. Dad

took charge and soon had things going with a bang. The toasts were short but plentiful.

When the Wedding Breakfast was over, the table was cleared and Dad came to light with a concertina, and the kangaroo hunter sang a couple of songs, to be followed by Dad with another. He then started playing a waltz, and so the room was cleared and an attempt made at dancing, but it didn't work out too good. A kerosene lamp got accidentally knocked over and set alight some curtains. Dad threw the concertina aside, hauled down the curtains and started stamping the fire out. The kangaroo hunter grabbed a bucket of water from somewhere and heaved it into the middle of everyone. The fire went out alright, and so did the kangaroo hunter when he saw the state we were in. Dad's roars, until he started to run out of breath, and until the Parson interrupted, nearly set the place alight again. Drinks were hurriedly served around, and the Parson told a couple of funny stories. Dad started roaring with laughter and the party went merrily on again. Dad however announced that dancing was off for the night and called upon Mac for a recitation. Mac obliged with *The Man From Snowy River*. Hardly had he finished when someone called out that the bride and groom were on their way. Everyone rushed out onto the starry night, but the pounding of horses hooves receding in the distance indicated that they were too late.

The Groom had a *Selection* [a small farm] about a hundred miles away. He had driven through for the wedding with camping gear aboard. While the wedding was in progress, Mum had loaded a goodly supply of food aboard the waggonette. The Groom had planned that they would slowly honeymoon their way back to his *Selection* with his bride. As they journeyed they would camp wherever night happened to overtake them.

Everyone trooped back into the house and the party came to a close, After a couple of drinks with Dad and the kangaroo hunter, and a few farewells, Mac and Lester harnessed the old horse into the gig. With Dad's help to get the horse and gig pointed in the appropriate direction, they let the horse have its head [navigate the route for itself and at its own pace] and they duly arrived back at Widgee.

The morning after the bush wedding, Mac and Lester were not feeling so good. However the lamb marking job had to be done despite their condition, despite the heat, and despite the flies. The lambs were half grown merinos, with a big percentage of rams among them. In the struggles by the rams to escape the grip of Mac and Lester (while being held for the boss) occasionally the horns of the young rams delivered an unpleasant jab in the face of the two men. Some days while on the Widgee job they did a bit of mustering, but it was not much better than the marking job. They had no dogs to head the fast moving merinos. The mustering was undertaken in flat ten-mile-square paddocks which had no landmarks, and mirages tended to distort things. Apart from the odd patch of scrub, the paddocks all looked alike. More than once Lester went too wide on his beat, which tended to make things more difficult for Mac and Harry, but no-one complained. They were first class cobbers to work with, but Lester was not sorry when the mustering and marking was finished and he was on his way again.

His next destination was Cunnamulla [about 200 kilometres to the south of Charleville, and to which he presumably travelled by train.] where he booked into a hotel. His intention was to pause there until he found another job, but there was nothing offering. The main form of entertainment was the

old Aussie gambling game of *Two-up*, and the main playing area was the road in front of the hotel. There was hardly a minute of the day when the pennies weren't spinning into the air. Standing in the blazing sun continually swiping hoards of flies from one's face didn't appeal to Lester. Another distinctive thing about Cunamulla was the high incidence of men with eye infections or injury caused by the soldier flies.

A few days in Cunnamulla looking at men with bung eyes and trying to see which way the pennies fell greatly disenchanted Lester. A new acquaintance by the name of Bill Smith shared the same reaction to the place and suggested that they roll their swags and head through to the town of Bourke in New South Wales. [Bourke was about 250 kilometres further south.] Next morning, with swags, tucker bag, a new billy and canvas water bag, Bill and Lester set out **on foot** on the long trek to Bourke. They walked twenty five miles [40 km] that first day, which they considered to be a very satisfactory day's performance. They camped the first night in a patch of gums near the Warrego River [a tributary of the Darling River]. Given the problem with mosquitos, they held some reservations about camping so close to the river. Bill was not coping well and talked dejectedly about his plight. He admitted that he was not accustomed to the outback, and that his home was in Brisbane. His girl had jilted him and that appeared to be somewhere at the basis of is discontent.

Their tucker bags were starting to get a bit light, so on reaching a station they called around at the cookhouse to see if they could get a mug of tea and something to replenish their tucker bags.

[They are now estimated to be about 3-4 days from Cunnamulla, still generally heading south, and in the vicinity of Tinnenburra, but appear to have crossed over to the western side of the Warrego River.]

When the cook came to the door, he handed them the standard *rations* which were comprised of a spoonful or two of tea, some sugar, and a cup of flour each. He then told them to get going, which they did. That was a shock to Lester, but he was to discover that such treatment was common practice at almost every station cookhouse at which they subsequently called. Swaggers had apparently been making quite a nuisance of themselves along the track, hence the *rations*. Once or twice they were handed a piece of raw meat, and one cook gave them some baking powder which was helpful when making doughboys in the ashes. One day they met a droving outfit. The cook gave them a lump of plumb duff, a chunk of cooked meat, a lump of camp-oven bread and a bit of butter. They lived like kings on that lot for a few meals.

Every evening Bill would relapse into one of his depressed moods and mumble something about cutting his own throat. To contrive a distraction from such ideas, Lester would sit up, gaze earnestly about, and suggest that Bill should defer cutting his own throat until they got to a more suitable place [where-ever such a place might be].

Often of a night on that dreary track, Lester would dream of cool waters and fern-draped streams of the Ruahine Ranges of Hawkes Bay (NZ). However, all he would see upon waking in the grey dawn would be the ghostly gum trees, the desolate never-ending plains, and an embittered Bill nearby with his throat still in good order. There was that to be thankful for.

Whenever they met other swaggers, they would stop for a yarn. On one such occasion they

met a fellow whom Lester described as "a tough looking joker" who was frying a string of sausages. The tough looking joker offered them some sausages and Bill and Lester accepted (discretely omitting to enquire as to where he got the sausages and the frying pan). Another joker reckoned he was heading for Adelaide for the fruit picking. Given that Adelaide was about a thousand miles away, Lester was tempted to ask just which season he reckoned to get there. Another swagger (a real posh one) had a horse and *trap*. [A *trap* is a light two-wheeled horse drawn vehicle similar to a *gig*.] However, the rims of the wheels were lashed on with fencing wire. The *trap* was fitted with a nice little water tank and a tucker box. He also had a dog which looked just the type to get a bit of mutton for his master and himself. That joker said that he had been wandering about with the *trap* for two years looking for work. He had not had any luck, but felt sure that he would find something suitable soon.

One morning, as they neared the New South Wales border, a lorry driver stopped and offered a lift on the condition that Bill and Lester did all the gate opening. Bill and Lester chucked their swags and gear aboard, and climbed on. At one part, as they were careering along through a patch of gums, Lester observed what he thought was a stick lying on the road. The driver made a deliberate effort to drive his wheels over it, but missed. The stick was in fact a snake. The truck was stopped with a jerk, and the driver got out, grabbed a small branch, persued the snake, and broke its back with a downward blow, climbed aboard and drove on.

Bill and Lester had intentions of only going as far as the border with the truck, so on reaching it, they got out, grabbed their swags, and the lorry went on its way down the road. Not until it was too late was it realised that their water bag was still on the truck. They were fully aware that to be in that type of country without a water bag could be dangerous. All they had in their tucker bag was tea, sugar, and a bit of cooked meat. There didn't appear to be any water about, so they began walking.

[They appear to be in Queensland, on the western side of the Warrego River and following the Queensland-New South Wales border-fence in an easterly direction.]

The border fence runs for hundreds of miles in a straight line. It was supposed to be rabbit-proof, but where they were, the rabbits were just as thick on one side as they were on the other. Soon after starting out, they came upon an evil smelling swamp, and despite their desperate need for a drink, could not drink the water. It was decided instead to take their chance on finding something better, and proceeded on. As they got to the far end of the swamp, a mature goanna rushed across in front of them and tried to climb the fence. Bill was all for having a bit of fun with the fearsome looking thing, and poked at it with a stick. It turned its head and poked out its long and ugly tongue at them in an intimidating gesture. Bill's current idea of fun did not appeal to Lester, and Lester continued walking, and predictably, Bill soon followed.

They wandered along the boundary fence in the blazing heat, each waving a stick in front of his face to discourage the tenacious little bush flies from settling. Thoughts were constantly about water, but the only thing resembling it were the great hazy sheets of mirage. At one stage they believed they saw two men wandering about by a tent on the shore of a beautiful tree-fringed little lake. The scene looked sufficiently real to induce them to quicken their pace. Some trees interrupted their view for a few minutes, but when they had moved past the

obstructing trees, the vision had vanished and left them intensely disappointed. Bill started mumbling. Lester briefly speculated that Bill was mumbling about his throat again, but was in fact suggesting that they should find a bit of shade and have lunch. Lunch consisted of a few bits of cooked meat that had been carried in their bags. Without anything to drink, it was not easy to eat. They proceeded along the never-ending border fence again, occasionally stopping to sit on their swags for a spell. Throats were too dry and they were too exhausted to talk. Towards sunset, Bill suggested that they stop for the night, and if they did not find water early the following day, they should leave their swags and go on. They sat down to think that one over. A bird called from a nearby gum tree, which to Lester sounded like a kingfisher. Lester sought Bill's opinion on the identity of the bird. However, Bill was from Brisbane city and didn't know or even care [nor realise why the presence of a kingfisher was highly significant in the context of their predicament]. Again the bird-call sounded. Lester concluded that it definitely was a kingfisher, and decided to immediately check the area for water. He got to his feet, hoisted his swag over his shoulder, and collected the billy. Bill just stared without comprehending. Lester informed Bill that the bird wouldn't be here if they weren't near water. Within about ten minutes they reached the Warrego River! It did not take long to get the raw edge of their thirsts. The evening meal consisted of flour and sugar doughboys mixed with a bit of bark cooked in the embers, and good old billy tea.

Soon after crossing the river next morning, they reached the main road and the gate leading into New South Wales. [It is presumed that they were now back on the main route between Cunnamulla and Bourke, in the vicinity of Barrington]. Just through the gate was a bush pub called *The Grass Hut*. It was a dilapidated shanty, but to Bill and Lester it was as good as a five-star hotel. They had a few drinks at the bar and then went into the dining room and had a feed of bacon and eggs.

[Bourke was situated about 140 km to the south of the border. A fit person might cover the distance within four days.]

They wandered on toward Bourke for several days. One morning they saw a drovers outfit approaching, but it never reached them until the afternoon of the following day. The mirage had thrown the drover's picture over the horizon. They eventually reached Bourke.

[Lester's book *Back Country Tales* is unclear on events beyond reaching the Darling River except to say that he left Bill at a hotel ("to carry on softening his throat") and caught a train to Melbourne.]

He watched the Melbourne cup, made an unsuccessful punt on a New Zealand horse called *The Banker*. From Melbourne he went to Sydney, and stayed a few days there, then boarded a boat for New Zealand.

In January-February of 1925, Lester worked with a shearing gang in northern Canterbury NZ. One of the gang's commitments was to shear sheep at *The Lakes Station* which is situated in the upper Hurunui and encompasses Lake Sumner, Lake Taylor, and Lake Sheppard. Access to *The Lakes Station* is in a north-westerly direction from the township of Hawarden. After leaving the plains of the Hawarden district, the road crosses Jack's Saddle in the Seven

Hills, and soon runs adjacent to, and high above, the Hurunui River on its southern side. Lester described the access (in 1925) as a *bridle track* (which was a standard expression for a route that was only suitable for use by horses).

[At the time of my visits to *The Lakes Station* in the years from 1981 to 1983, the road had certainly been improved from a bridle track. However, I would have to describe it as a primitive and torturous route. It was of adequate standard for use by car if taken quietly.]

The following article, was written by Lester in his book ***Back-Country Tales*** and describes events while on *The Lakes Station* shearing job. Occasionally, the original punctuation, or sentence structure has been amended to ensure that the text will be understood.

SHEARING TIME AT LAKE SUMNER

"Merinos off the Nelson Tops," I heard old Jimmie swear;
"A blankey man can plough through sand, but stones he cannot shear."

In 1925 I rode with a shearing gang up the Hurunui River in North Canterbury, along the twenty eight mile bridle track to *The Lakes Station.*

On our first sighting the station buildings, by the shores of the lake at the foot of the Brothers' Range, the wool classer turned to me and said with a grin, that seemed to be a permanent feature of his face: "Race you to the gate." Being a blade shearer, and therefore a representative of a pastoral craft that dates back to pre-biblical times, even though, as it turned out later, I was only a drummer (slowest shearer) of that particular gang, it would never have done for me to ignore such a challenge.

I gathered up the reins, gave my horse a touch in the flank, away we went neck and neck. As we rounded a bend, a washout appeared in the track right in front of us. The wool classer had the inside running, and there was just sufficient of the track left for him to get around in good order. I was not so lucky. My mount pulled up pulled up with a sudden jerk, the ground gave way and his front feet went over the two foot drop. I did a sort of flying trapeze act, but somewhat out of practice with that sort of thing, didn't make a very happy landing.

Being just an average human, directly I realised that my only hurts were a few bruises, I scrambled back onto the track to make sure that the undignified manner in which I had dismounted had not been observed by the remainder of the gang. I led my horse over to where the wool classer was waiting, mounted, and the two of us rode forward again in a sedate manner. "Pity your judgement was so faulty, you may have had a sporting chance otherwise," the wool classer remarked in a condescending way. I looked at him, then turned in the saddle and started back as though deeply absorbed in something that was happening behind us. The wool classer fell for the trick and also turned. Directly he did so, I dug my heels into the horse's flanks, shot away again, and the race was mine. Of course, I later remarked to the wool classer, had his judgement not been so faulty, he may have had a sporting chance.

Frank Nurse and the musterers, with the usual astuteness of their kind, kept the tough old

sandy-backed wethers out of sight and gave the five of us, who comprised the actual shearing gang, some nice little hoggets to start on. As I was much the smallest man in the gang, height five feet, weight just on seven stone, I was immediately loaded with the name Lofty, and given the pen at the far end of the board. The man next to me was an Irishman who soon became known as *Jim the mad artist*. Jim was a great yarn spinner [story teller.] It was one of his habits, if a sheep was giving trouble, to keep muttering (until he had it out the porthole) such things as: "Bad cess to you. May a curse be upon you. May ould Scratch [Satan] himself take you."

If [Jim was] interrupted accidentally while spinning a yarn, or as he often was purposely by one of the others, he would exclaim: "Where am I now. Where was I last. I'll go and find out."

Arthur Sykes, who was also one of the gang, was known as the *Big Gun* (very fast shearer) and was given the [sheep holding] pen next to the wool [sorting] table. I had heard many tales of Sykes' ability with the blades [hand shears], and had thought some of them exaggerated until I saw him in action that year at *The Lakes Station*. He was a nuggety built [lean but strong] man about five feet seven inches in height, with big and powerful arms and hands. I don't think I ever saw another shearer work with his shears pulled back [opening widely] as far as Sykes had his, and I am quite sure I never saw another who kept his shears so constantly filled [with fleece] to the hilt, or was able to cut off such wads of wool when in action.

To see the wool billowing onto the board about Sykes, when he went properly into action undressing a merino wether, seemed to me to be a sight that would have merited one of the world's great artists capturing it on canvas.

I think I would be right in saying that when in his prime, as he was when I met him, Sykes was never beaten in any shed in a full day's shearing contest. Although, as the *Drummer* [slowest shearer] of the gang, I headed him off for a few sheep one day. That was done by strategy, not by ability. My catching pen happened to be filled [with unshorn sheep] just on smoko time. In it, I noticed right near the front, one *rosella*. A *rosella* is a sheep bare of wool except for a few tufts around the neck. In the pen were several others that appeared to be bare-bellies. On strolling along and casually glancing into Sykes' catching pen, I noticed that he had eight tough looking old sandy backs in it.

Almost before the starting bell had finished ringing after smoko [a ten minute pause in work for refreshments], I had the bare-belly [sheep] on the board and slewed around so that the bare patch couldn't be noticed, and started shearing. I soon had the body wool off that sheep, skipped a few trimmings, and dumped it [the sheep] out the porthole. When I looked along to Sykes, he was just turning to come down the last side of the sheep. I grabbed another bare-belly sheep from the catching pen and worked fast at getting its wool off. By this time, the rest of the gang, realising what was happening, started barricking for the "little big gun."

Sykes started to roll the wool off in earnest, drew level and pushed his second sheep out the porthole just as I did mine. I let him get his third sheep on the board, then grabbed the *rosella*, hacked a few tufts of wool off and dumped her out the porthole. The gang gave a yell for the little fellow. I rushed in and grabbed what appeared to be a good shearing sheep, but it was

instead a sticky old jinny [aged ewe] that would have made excellent bait for shark fishing. I was just going up the neck of her as Sykes pulled his fourth onto the board. He soon started to overhaul me. The gang yelled at me to stick to it [persevere]. I plugged away, got the body wool off, skipped the trimmings [head and lower legs] and pushed her out the porthole. I had just managed to straighten up as Sykes pushed his out the porthole.

Sykes was a great sport, and I feel sure he hung back [deliberately delayed] to let me get that fourth sheep out ahead of him. He looked along at me, pretended he was gathering his gear and said with a grin, "Seeing there is a new ringer [fastest shearer] at The Lakes, you and I had better change stands."
"Well I don't know," I replied, grinning back at him. "Perhaps we had better wait until the end of the run and see how things are going then."

Of course, when the time came, his tally was, as usual, nearly double mine. Sykes went to Hitler's War to help quell [General] Rommel's men, and now sleeps somewhere in Egypt's sands. It is often said that old soldiers and old shearers never die. If that be so, as well it might, the spirit of Arthur Sykes will still be roaming the shearing sheds and homestead paddocks of the high-country of the South Island.

When the sheep were too wet for shearing, as often happened, some of the gang would go off with rifles for a spot of pig hunting. Sometimes, after such expeditions we had trout for breakfast. Considering the manner in which I conducted myself during the horse race and the little shearing contest, it would hardly be in keeping for anyone to think I would go fishing with a rifle, even though fond of trout.

The cook, who happened to be a real good one, suggested that if we cared to pick some of the bountiful crop of black currents, he would see that we got black current pie, and plenty of cream to go with it. We did pick the currents, and one of my most vivid memories of *The Lakes Station* will always be the delicious black current pies and lashings of cream.

With Sykes amongst us we knew at the start that we would be seeing a champion in action. However, we did not know that before the shearing was half way through, we would be seeing two champions in action at one of the world's oldest forms of sport. After work of an evening, we often went into the lake for a dip. There were several good swimmers on the station, but none, as far as we had noticed, of outstanding ability. One evening when we were sitting around talking, something was said about swimming as a sport. One of the musterers who had arrived from the back of the station that day challenged everyone on the station to a swimming race over a distance of a hundred yards. The prize was to be £1-0-0 ($2.00). A shearer we called the Chatham Island fisherman, and one of the wool pressers took him up [accepted the challenge]. The latter suggested that the stakes be raised to £5-0-0. The mustered would not agree to that however. The cook was appointed stake holder, a course was marked to the satisfaction of the contestants, side bets were made, and a starter appointed. The contestants stripped off and the race began. The shearer got away to a flying start, but after going well for about twenty yards [about 20 metres] he was badly left behind and pulled out [retired from the race]. The other two shot through the water like a pair of trout set on getting one particular fly. At first one, and then the other was in the lead. As they drew near the line, the wool presser, who was slightly ahead, put on a magnificent effort and just managed to finish ahead of his

opponent.

It was not until the stakes were handed over that the leading two swimmers revealed their history in the sport. The wool presser was Val McTigue who had competed in provincial championship events for Canterbury, and the mustered was Rex Baily who had competed in provincial championships for Marlborough. Rex said that when Val asked him to raise the stake to £5-0-0 (without knowing Val's ability in the water) he thought that £1-0-0 was enough to take any mug down.

The owner of *The Lakes Station* was Leslie McFarlane who was a very big man. He had arrived to assist with the mustering of one block. When the stud merino rams were brought in he came over to the shed and wandered down to my end of the board. Whether my style had fascinated him or that he thought it wise to be on hand in case a ram and I got into a bit of an argument, I do not know. I suspect that he was concerned that I would have difficulty extricating myself from an argument with a ram. Anyhow, he stayed nearby, and as soon as I had finished one ram, he would have another on the board ready for me. The routine that he adopted denied me any opportunity to have a rest on the pretext of sharpening shears. I was lucky with those rams. I managed to get them all out the porthole in good order and without having to be rescued from a battle with a struggling ram.

The following story is also from the book ***Back-Country Tales*** by Lester Masters.

It is February 1925 and Lester is about thirty one years of age. He now undertakes a solo crossing of *Harper Pass* at the head of the Hurunui River in North Canterbury and crosses into Westland. The old track over the Pass has become indiscernible, and he has to determine his route according to how he reads the terrain confronting him. Given the nature of the terrain, the possibility of adverse weather developing very suddenly, and the distances involved, a solo crossing was a remarkably courageous enterprise.

In regard to the old Hurunui - Harper Pass track and its history, I note that in late February 1865, two parcels of gold containing 1,375 ounces and 1,000 ounces, were sent from Hokitika to Canterbury. By March gold fever had hit Canterbury. Within a week 1,000 prospectors, traders, and drovers are estimated to have passed through Kaiapoi and were headed for *Harper Pass* and the west coast gold diggings. The track up the Hurunui was formed in 1862, and was improved at the beginning of 1865, but became almost impassable within that year. The deterioration was attributed to the heavy use made of the track (during the gold rush). For example, the run-holders of the then *Lake Taylor Station* and *Lake Sumner Station* took large mobs of sheep and cattle across the Pass. Between 1865 and 1866 some 4,400 cattle were driven over it. Natural degeneration would also have contributed significantly to its deterioration.

As mentioned previously, the book ***Back-Country Tales***, from which the article is taken, appears to have been printed without being edited, and consequently the text contains many flaws that compel correction. Accordingly, some amendments have been made to punctuation and to sentence structure where there exists a risk that the text would not be understood in its original form. It is Lester's story, and changes have been minimised so that the character and detail are preserved.

ACROSS THE SOUTHERN ALPS.

> There's a trail they said o'er the ranges, but the way of it none seemed to know.
> Yet the urge for to try was upon me, so I knew I would just have to go.

I had heard tales of a route to the west used by Maori in bare feet seeking greenstone [jade] in ancient times, and in the days of the West Coast gold rush it was a track used by men in hobnail boots on their way to the gold rush. The tales had intrigued Arthur Sykes and me while on the shearing job at *The Lakes Station*. We planned that when the shearing was finished we would pack our swags and climb over the range [at Harpur Pass] and descend into Westland. However, as sometimes happens with schemes in which I am involved, things did not work according to plan. The day before the cut out [completion of shearing] word arrived, much to the disgust and disappointment of us both, that Arthur was urgently required elsewhere.

The track since the old gold rush days had seldom been used. No one on the station at the time

had been over it or knew of its exact whereabouts. In any case slips and overgrowth of bush were likely to have obliterated it and made it impossible to follow.

Although the cook had handed me a full tucker bag, I took my fishing rod with me with the idea that it might help provide a meal should things go wrong. It proved to be a troublesome thing and did not catch any trout. It did however assist in an unexpected way to extricate myself from a difficult situation.

Charlie, a musterer, brought me a station horse that I would use to take as far as a horse could go. For a few moments, the pair of us stood gazing at where a string of riders were vanishing around a bend on the old bridle track that led eastward to the downlands and plains below. Shearing was over, and with the exception of myself, the shearing gang was on its way out. I picked up my fishing rod and mounted. "You could easily overtake them, " said Charlie looking up with a grin.
"Maybe," I replied, giving the reins a flick and leading my mount in the opposite direction.
"Well, the best of fishing anyhow, and don't forget what I said about woman and fogs," he called. Meet me sometime in the Culverden," I retorted. [The Culverden refers to the pub at the north Canterbury township of Culverden.]

My destination that night was a hut at the top fork of the Hurunui River. It was a glorious day and it was all mine in those quiet upper reaches of that mountain valley of lakes and river. As I rode leisurely toward the head of Lake Taylor, I noticed flocks Canada Geese. The sun was well above the ranges when I reached Loch Katrine, which was the next of the lakes along the route. The still clear water looked good and cool to me. I dismounted, stripped, and dived in, but turned and scrambled out again. That water wasn't just cool. It was icy.

My next stop was at the *Lake Sumner Hut* [1.5 kilometres beyond the western end of Lake Sumner] where I boiled my billy and had a mug of tea. Until the run was cut in two, around 1875, the hut had been a two storied homestead of *The Lakes Station,* and surrounded by English trees, flower and vegetable garden, orchards, etc. In 1885 the two stations again became one, but the orchard and garden were left to languish. About 1910, a portion of the house was removed and taken to a site at Lake Taylor.

Some years back my mustering friend Charlie Wilks was deer and kea hunting in the area. He was making his way through from *The Poplars Station* which is north of *The Lakes Station.* Charlie was following a snow buried track, and at a particularly hazardous place one of the horses panicked and leaped over the packhorse and onto Charlie. Charlie got a broken leg but managed to reach The Lake Sumner Hut, unpack the horses and let them go. He had plenty of venison and some other provisions. The people at *The Lakes Station* were aware that Charlie was on his way through and also aware of his [good] ability as a high-country man. Thinking that he had probably pulled up [paused] somewhere to do a spot of hunting, they did not worry unduly or start looking for him until he was a week overdue. When they found him at the hut he was in no state to be moved, and he had to be cared for there for another week before moving him to a more comfortable place.

Six miles [9¼km] further up the valley where the hot spring comes bubbling down from a bush-clad face, the musterers had developed a bathing pool with an inflow of hot water from the spring and a channel of cold water from the creek. This enabled the temperature of the pool

to be regulated. I again dismounted, and after a bathe in the hot pool I boiled my billy and ate my lunch.

A hut has since been built near the spring. The first night after its completion, it was occupied by the owner and the station manager, and I believe a most unpleasant time was had by all. An earthquake caused dead limbs and trees to fall in all directions. A tidal wave from Lake Sumner swept westward up the valley for about a mile (1.6 km). Tracks were opened up by cracks in many places, and buried beneath slips in others.

This evening, the sun's setting gold was tinting the high ranges, and bellbirds were beginning to sound their evening calls as I arrived at the *Top Hut*. The outer covering and chimney were of corrugated iron, and there was a small window. These parts were conveyed to the site on packhorse for forty four miles (70.7 km). That was possibly something of a record for the building trade of this country. While adzing timber for the beams, one of the party sliced his foot. The casualty disdained assistance, and rode non-stop over the twenty four miles (38.6 km) over rough tracks and river-bed to the Lake Taylor homestead. The hut was washed away some years back, and has since been replaced.

When I arrived at the *Top Hut* I let my mount go (to find his own way back to the station) and hung the saddle to be collected by station staff later (as had been arranged). I lit a fire and made myself comfortable for the night.

Before dawn next day I had the fire going and a billy of water hung over it. The sky gave promise of another fine day. It was too early for me to be feeling hungry, so after a mug of tea and a round of toast, I shouldered my little swag and tucker bag, and with my fishing rod in my hand I headed out for the top [of the Harper Pass Saddle].

Before departing from *The Lakes Station*, the manager had shown me a map of the area so that I was able to get the lay of the country. As far as I could judge, the best course for me to take was to follow up the right-hand branch of the Hurunui as far as possible, and from there decide upon the quickest and easiest route to the Harper Pass Saddle.

I hadn't gone far up the stream before I was having to scramble over great piles of rough boulders and up small water-falls. After travelling for some time in this manner, the stream petered out, and I entered an area of thick stunted alpine scrub which severely inhibited progress. It caught on my clothing, my swag, and my rod, as though determined to hinder me for hours. I eventually emerged through it, climbed onto a rock, lit a smoke [cigarette] and gazed back at the bush-fringed valley of glittering water through which I had come. Despite the ingress of settlers with their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, the landscape appeared to have been changed little since the first explorers came that way nearly a hundred years before.

I glanced around, and noticed fog drifting in from the *Nelson Tops*. My experience in the Ruahine Ranges in the North Island had taught me the dangers of being caught in mountainous country in fog. However, it was Charlie's friendly advice regarding the dangers of woman and fog that flashed through my mind then. I shouldered my swag and made for the top. From the top I could see the silvery ribbon of the Taramakau River far below to the west. Between me and the river lay a great sweep of rugged bush-clad spurs and gorges. Down to my right

I could see a creek which, judging by the lay of the country, must eventually empty into the Taramakau River. The first grey wisps of grey of the fog were beginning to encircle me. Without due thought to the difficulties that might be encountered on the route chosen for the descent down the steeper western side of the Main Divide, I headed for the creek to my right. I hadn't gone far along the creek when it entered a gorge, and my way was blocked by a waterfall. Tethering my rod to my pack, I clawed my way along the almost sheer face, passed the water-fall, and down to the creek again. Had I been heavier than my seven stone body-weight [44.5 kg], some of the foot and handholds that I had trusted, would surely have given way. That would have caused me to descend in a much quicker manner than would have been good for my health. I came to many more falls. These I had to either bypass as I had at the first water-fall, or climb up the face of the gorge then along and down again. In one place, the gorge narrowed to a canyon. Between the sheer rock walls I had to wade or slide down on my back in the swift current. My rod caused me much inconvenience. Several times I felt like discarding it, but perhaps obstinately, I held onto it.

Only a few months previously, while droving starving sheep across the drought stricken plains west of Charleville in Queensland, I had often thought of cool, clear running streams of the high hills of my homeland. Now, here I was saturated with uncomfortably cold water from one such stream, and wishing for a little of the warm sunshine and drying atmosphere of the Australian inland. I suppose that proves that I am a type who is never satisfied. The canyon ended with a small water-fall that I was able to negotiate. From there it opened in a narrow sunlit valley of terraces and ledges, most of which were carpeted with alpine lilies, and to tread underfoot such fragile beauty seemed almost a sacrilege.

Tributaries had joined the creek, and it was now carrying a significant volume of water. The little valley of lilies ended in a gorge, and I soon came to another water-fall with a shingle spit at its base. I was able to lower myself onto the shingle spit, but before me was a deep walled-in pool about fifteen feet [5 metres] across. The only way to get to the other side would be by swimming. I pushed my rod in to float over on its own, then rolled a log into position ready for launching. The intention was to push it over with the rest of my gear on top, while I swam behind. Before entering the water I glanced around to see how my rod was faring. To my surprise and consternation, it was being drawn down, vertically, and soon disappeared altogether in a whirlpool that was partly obscured by spray from the waterfall. I stood watching. It did not surface again. I threw sticks in and they followed the rod. I launched the log and it followed. It appeared that most of the current was escaping down through the stream bed. Had I not initially sent my rod across ahead of me, I would not have noticed the whirlpool, and would have met the same fate as the rod and the log. I scrambled smartly out of that place.

As I was climbing the steep face of the gorge to bypass the pool my swag slipped around. While trying to right it, my tucker bag rolled free and fell into the stream just above the waterfall. It was near mid-day, and all I had eaten since leaving the *Top Hut* were a few dates. Back down I went, but all I was able to salvage were a few pieces of soppy bread (which I ate). This was quite different from the three good meals and four smokos each day that had been the custom as a shearer back at *The Lakes Station*.

I climbed back up, sidled around well below the level of the fog and onto the crest of the ridge.

I stayed with the ridge until it brought me out onto the Taramakau. I crossed and recrossed the river several times to either avoid bluffs, or to gain access to whatever appeared to be the easiest travelling. Once, with thoughts of nice juicy grilled chops, I made a desperate effort to corner a wild lamb among some rocks. My only reward for that exhausting effort was a badly barked shin. Later, I tried to knock some wild pigeons from their perch with stones.

By the time that I reached the junction of the Taramakau River and the Otira River, I was very tired and very hungry. It was dusk, and the prospect of a crossing of either of those rivers then did not appeal to me. I made a supperless camp the best that I could and had a good sleep. Next morning, with the aid of a pole to steady me against the current, I crossed the Otira River without mishap. I had hardly left the water when I came upon horses hoofmarks, and a while later a well beaten track leading through the bush. Suddenly, on rounding a bend in the track, I emerged upon a road. A little way up the road was a building with five large letters painted on it. I doubt if anyone, after crossing the range, could have gazed upon anything more pleasing than those letters were to me. Those five letters were HOTEL. [Presumably the Aiken Hotel.]

Evidently, I had not followed the old [prospectors'] route, nor had I taken the easiest route down the West Coast side. The route was better suited to a party with mountaineering equipment (not a fishing rod). It was not a suitable undertaking for a man on his own.

About 1928 Lester purchased from a brother-in-law Alfred Joshua Burge a six acre [2.4 Ha] property in Thompson Road Twyford, and planted it in Pears, Apples, Plums, and Peaches. A packing shed was constructed on the property (and remained standing and used as a storage facility in the late 1990s).

In 1929 Lester travelled to Singapore.

In what is assumed to be the 1930s, Lester did a trip over the Hastings-Taihape road on a horse called *Hobo*. He is presumed to be travelling to Taihape where his brother Clarence lived.

On the way he called into the roadman/rabbiter's huts just east of the *Te Mahanga Station* turn-off to stop for the night. The occupant of the hut was an Irishman by the name of Jimmie Monahan. Jimmie had a reputation for a great deal of blarney (nonsense talk) and for extracting a drink (of alcoholic beverage) from visitors by devious means. The drink was regarded as a fee for his hospitality to anyone who stayed with him. Lester had taken with him provisions for both himself and the horse *Hobo*, but had neglected to take the necessary contribution in a bottle. Lester was censured for his omission but promised to put the matter right on his return trip.

On the return trip Lester had the mandatory donation ready, but had also shot two turkeys which he did not want Jimmie to have. The turkeys were duly packed out of sight Upon

arrival, Lester removed the saddle and bridle and concealed the bag containing the turkeys by placing it beneath the saddle. He then stepped into the hut and, with the intention of keeping Jimmie's mind off such things as turkeys, greeted Jimmie with the whisky. But the ruse didn't work. Afterwards Lester suspected that possibly some evidence of the turkeys (such as a feather on his clothing or gear) had been detected by Jimmie. According to Lester (in his book *Tales of the Mails*) Jimmie downed the whisky then set about to shift attention to the turkeys. He did so by giving a sniff and said in his Irish accent,

"Glory be to God, tis a grand thing the turkey. With the sage, the mint, the onions, pieces of bacon, breadcrumbs and all that I could be gettin' . An' the kanuka logs with the glow of the embers for the bakin' . Furthermore there's the potatoes, the parsnips, not forgettin the onions for puttin' on the soids of it. An' rashes of bacon I'd be puttin on the top of it. An' the bastin' an' turnin'. An' the smellin' of it, with the lift of the lid. Arh. When the roastin' is over an' done with, that is the time. An' the crispy brown of the outer of it, an' white and tenderness of the meat, with the stuffin' and potatoes an' parsnips, an' rich brown gravy an' all. Arh. Tis a feast fit for a king there should be to all Oirland. If only we had a turkey for the camp oven."

Lester commented that the blarney of this lad had got him. He poured another whisky and said that he would go and see if he could find a turkey while Jimmie should get the camp oven and the stuffing ready. Lester duly returned with one of the turkeys and they duly dined off a beautifully cooked turkey that appeared to answer fully to Jimmies expectations.

The following text is reproduced from an article written by Lester Masters, and which appeared in the Hawkes Bay Herald Tribune (daily newspaper) on Saturday 4 April 1959. The article describes a hunting trip in the northern Ruahine Ranges in 1935 with his nephew Eric Burge. The text is quoted verbatim.

Ruahine Hut Has Disappeared, But Memories Linger

by Lester Masters

In a sheltered beech glade 3,540 ft above sea level on one of the northern spurs of the Ruahine Ranges, stood until it collapsed recently from old age, what has been one of the oldest and most picturesque back-country whares in the North Island-the Ruahine Hut.

It was built in the early 1860s to accommodate shepherds and wild dog hunters soon after Mr J.N.Williams and Colonel Herrick took up the huge Keruru run and put sheep on that part of the range.

It withstood the snows and storms of the mountains for close on a century before it collapsed-proof positive that no jerry-builder had any hand in the gathering of materials or in the construction of its red beech framework, its slab walls, tussock thatched roof and rock fireplace.

I doubt whether any more pleasing sight could have been found along the whole length of the ranges at Christmas time than the old whare, when that most beautiful of our native flowers, the scarlet mistletoe, hung in festoons from the sombre beeches that encircle the glade.

Names and initials, with accompanying dates, ranging from recent times to as far back as 1870 were carved all over the timber work, clear witness of the many shepherds, hunters, trampers and other wanderers of the mountains whose callings or pastimes had taken them to the old whare.

The sight of the Ruahine Hut must have gladdened the heart of a lost, weary,or injured wandered wanderer. And could its wall but speak, what yarns of the hunt, adventure, success and disaster they could have spun.

Favourite Haunt

THE OLD Ruahine, in my more youthful hunting days was one of my favourite haunts, and as with the many others. It has provided shelter, and it holds many memories for me.

My most vivid memory of it concerns a deerstalking trip in 1935. My mate that year was my nephew, Eric Burge, who, though a big lump of a lad, was only twelve years old. One afternoon while at the hut, we saddled up, and with me on the high packhorse, with pack straps for stirrups, and Eric on the pony with an ordinary riding saddle, we set out for what is called the Third Spur, some distance away. We got a couple of deer. As we were making our way through the scrub on the way back, a pig jumped out hard in front.

My mount shied, gave a mighty sideways leap, and unseated me. I managed as I was falling to get my foot clear of the far side of the pack strap stirrup, but wasn't quick enough with the nearside one, with the result that the strap twisted tightly round my boot and tied me to the saddle.

My already badly scared mount panicked properly. With me hanging head down he rushed madly hither and yon , kicking, bucking and tearing me through or over whatever came in his line of flight, and catching me with his steel shod feet in the chest, back, head and face.

Often I could see his feet coming at me but there wasn't a thing I could do about it, so I just had to take it.

I thought for sure I had come to the place of no return, and wished he'd give me a good one that would put me out of my misery.

It's strange how thoughts flash through one's mind at such a time. I thought of Eric. I had never told him what to do in case of an accident. I wondered what the poor kid would do.

The horse stopped for a second, Eric came up and tried to lift me. I felt sure the horse would start again. "Stop, cut the strap," I gasped. He did. The horse tore off again and I collapsed.

After a spell during which I probably blacked out, I scrambled to my feet, with Eric's help, and hung onto a scrub bush. I was bleeding from the head and face and my chest felt as though it was busted in. I knew from the feel of things that I had ribs broken both in front and back.

Eric cut a rough crutch, and with his help I started out for the whare a mile or more away. It was a terrible journey.

On arrival Eric got things going and tried to bathe my wounds but the blood kept oozing, so we decided to leave it and let it congeal.

Eric got hot food but I couldn't eat. He wanted to head off in the darkness for the station for help. I told him to wait until daylight and see what could be done then, and try and get some sleep as he would probably need all his strength.

I couldn't sleep that night and I don't think Eric did.

Came dawn, Eric did what he could for me and set out for the station. He did the journey in almost record time.

Mr Hewett, the station owner was away, but the three station men Jimmie Retter, Les Rosvel and Jim O'Tool, on hearing Eric's story went into action. A ring was put through to Eric's mother, Mrs A.J.Burge, and my old hunting mate Don McNab. They got in Don's car and started for the station, and the station men got horses and set off for the Ruahine.

After Eric left me I wondered if he would make it to the station. The only time he'd been on the track was on the way out, and it was foggy that day. I felt that in having allowed him to go, I had thrown his life in the balance. But three hours later I was relieved to hear the station men approaching.

After some discussion on ways and means, the station men rigged up a stretcher, but before they could get going Don came panting into the scene. He must have run a lot from the station.

When the phone message had come he had new boots on and never thinking that he would have to go right out to the hut, he hadn't bothered to change them, with the result that his feet were blistered. He took his boots off and ran the last part of the journey in his socks.

Owing to the rugged nature of the track, it was evening before I had been got down to the Big Hill valley and by that time the four men who were doing the carrying, were just about all in.

Jimmie went back to the station to ring Kereru for more men. The others got a good fire going and laid me by it to keep warm.

There seemed a terrible weight on my chest. I didn't realise it, but I'd got pleurisy. Don came over and peered down hard at me. I am sure he thought I was going west. "It's alright," I muttered, peering up at him. "I'm still here."

Jimmie arrived back with Steve Miller and Wolf van Asch. With these two fit strong young men to assist the nightmarish journey to the station over the 2,200ft high hill was started.

My main memory of that part of the journey is how broken ribs seemed to be sticking into me each time I was set down, as I had to be ever so often for the men to have a spell. How long the journey took I do not know but it seemed an awful long time.

The back of the car had been got ready, and on arrival at the station I was placed carefully there. It was more comfortable. My sister brought food, but I couldn't take it. My one desire was for a drink of milk, to those who know about me.

However, it was found, owing to the upset, that cows hadn't been milked and there was no milk in the house. Jimmie Retter, as exhausted as he was, started out into the night. My sister asked him where he was going. "Lester asked for milk. I'll try to find a cow." And he did, but wasn't I ever grateful for that glass of milk when it did arrive.

It was three o'clock the following morning, 36 hours after I had been hurt before I was eventually got to hospital, but I was too grateful to those who had got me there while I was still able to whisper "thank you" to know about time.

Later while Don sat yarning by my bed when he came to visit me, I told him I would

never go into those darned ranges again. All the same, when word came the following season that the stags were starting to roar, I thought I might as well just slip over and let Don know. He grinned at me and, of course, wanted to know if my hunting gear was still in good order. It was. So a few days later the pair of us were back at the old Ruahine, as keen as ever to stalk the first takeable stag we could lay our eyes on.

And never once since that time have I missed a hunting trip into the ranges at stalking time.

Footnote: On page 29, Lester stated:

"The horse stopped for a second, Eric came up and tried to lift me. I felt sure the horse would start again. "Stop, cut the strap," I gasped. He did. The horse tore off again and I collapsed.

In January 1999 (63 years after the event) in a letter to me, Eric Burge reflected that the above text by Lester was not entirely accurate, and stated :

"In Lester's Back Country Tales, the bit about him being dragged by the horse Dandy is not too accurate. We stayed out 'till dusk hoping for some venison for Twyford. No deer to be shot. Lester was jerked across some rough ground. When Dandy came my way, I called out whoa, whoa, and was given enough time to untangle his foot. No strap was cut. No crutch was cut from the scrub. I held him and we walked together back to the hut."

Names on Door

A year or more back, realising that it would only be a matter of months before the old Ruahine would collapse altogether, I remarked to Jim Milligan and some other of my younger hunting mates, that the door which was still reasonably sound, should, considering the names carved on it, and associations it held, even though it was a replacement made about 1905, be brought down and handed to a museum or some such institution for preservation.

Months later I heard the hut had completely collapsed. I had got past the stage of being able to do anything about it, and although my mates had heartily agreed to my suggestion about bringing the door down, I thought they must have forgotten all about it.

I seldom meet up with Jim Milligan more than two or three times a year, and it was a big surprise to me, when early one morning recently in answer to a knock, I went to the door of my home in Twyford and found Jim standing outside.

I noticed he was holding his neck on side, but did not comment.

"I've brought you a present. You had better come out and have a look," he said with a grin on his face.

I went and there to my amazement and pleasure stood the door of the old Ruahine hut leaning against the wall.

Jim said he was in a hurry. He'd got to get to Napier for an appointment, and was running late. With which, in his characteristic way, he swung round and took off leaving me staring at the door of the old hut.

I found later he had lumbered that heavy cumbersome door, down on his own off the range to the Big Hill valley on his back, then got it up over the 2,200ft Big Hill with a tractor,

and down in a lorry to my place.

The lumbering of that door down off the range by one man , as I am sure all who know the country that had to be traversed, will agree [was] a remarkable feat, and enough on its own to warrant the door, even without the names, initials, dates and historical associations that it holds for it to be a museum piece.

The door is now safely stored in my shed until some decision is made about what is to be done about it.

During the autumn of 1946, in which Hawkes Bay had suffered a big drought, Lester visited the ***Nomans Hut*** in the northern Ruahine Ranges with a chap by the name of Andy Ormond who was then manager of *Big Hill Station*. The drought had induced the station's sheep to venture further into the ranges for feed, and Andy Ormond wanted to determine how many sheep were in the Nomans area.

The following article, was written by Lester in his book ***Back-Country Tales*** and describes events while on an assignment in the *Nomans Hut* area. As mentioned previously, the book ***Back-Country Tales*** appears to have been printed without being edited, and consequently the text contains many flaws that compel correction. Accordingly, some amendments have been made to punctuation and to sentence structure where there exists a risk that the text would not be understood in its original form. It is Lester's story, and changes have been minimised so that its character and detail are preserved.

I journeyed up from the Ruahines to *Noman's* with Andy Ormond who was then manager of *Big Hill Station*. Andy wanted to get an idea of what sheep were there. On one big tussock block we counted sixty sheep, and saw more in other places. Andy had two dogs with him, so on the way back he managed to collect eighteen sheep and get them down into the Big Hill valley. He later returned to Noman's with four musterers to collect the rest of those sheep. However, fog defeated the gang. After four days in foggy conditions they returned to *Big Hill Station* without a single sheep. Andy did go back and get a few at a later date, but most of the sheep perished in the snows of the following winter.

During that drought year, for the only time in my experience, I noticed pheasants and wild turkeys on the country well above the *Ruahine Hut*.

One particular feature about the Noman's country, is a place called Swamp Spur. In normal times there are between 30 and 40 little lakes and ponds. Towards the end of the drought in 1946, only three of the sheets of water remained. A hunting mate of mine, Kingi Mason, was a Government employed deer culler. Kingi crossed over the centre of the spur during the drought, and told me that with every step the ground shivered and shook for about twenty yards around him. I once attempted to take a short cut over what appeared to be a firm neck of the spur. Had I not quickly slashed the circingle [pack-saddle belly strap] with my knife and got the packs clear, I would probably have had to stand helplessly by and watch my horse sink slowly out of sight in the morass.

In the early 1920s, by a patch of bush near the edge of the *Swamp Spur*, I came upon the remnants of a stockyard. From appearances, it must have been built at least fifty years earlier. There were a few wild sheep, but no domestic sheep within miles of that place. It was certainly a very strange place to find a stockyard. I knew sheep used to be turned out on the tops in the early days, but it still seemed a queer place for yards. An old timer had since told me that, back in the early days, a couple of fellows shore five hundred sheep in those yards with the blades [hand shears] and packed the wool out on horses.

The few birds that inhabit the country about Noman's in summer seemed to move off to warmer places for winter. Noman's in winter is a very silent place indeed. To walk along a bush track on a calm day during the winter makes one almost afraid to breath for fear of breaking the utter silence. To step on a twig and break it is a startling thing to do.

However, Noman's has something other than its silent winters, or its mysterious stockyard, the uncanny *Swamp Spur*, and tales of old timers. It has grandeur. The views from its tops would be hard to surpass in elsewhere in the North Island. A few paces from the door of *Noman's Hut* are little ridges that overlook the steep eastern face of the range. Spread thousands of feet beneath lies the foothill country and the silvery threads of rivers and streams wending their way through green valleys. Also on view are the Heretaunga Plains, Hastings and Napier, and the glittering waters of the Bay extending from Mahia Peninsula to Cape Kidnappers. Much of the coastline and hill country to the south can also be seen. From other points a little further afield, the Otupae and Mangaohane country can be seen. Also Ngamatea and the central inland with its volcanic peaks are included in the panorama.

Some years back, my wife Margaret and I made a journey on horseback up to *Noman's Hut*. For most of the way, the track leads along the crest of the main ridge, and for several miles passes through an area of native mountain beech forest. At one part in the forested section, the track makes a sudden descent into a little saddle. It then passes along the edge of a tarn. The waters of the tarn, reflect in perfect detail the surrounding trees, shrubs, ferns, mosses, and mountain violets. To anyone coming upon it unexpectedly, as Margaret then did, the secluded little tarn can be something of a breath-taker. That was the affect that it had upon Margaret, and we stopped and sat gazing at the scene.
"You never told me of this. What is it called?" Margaret enquired, looking across at me.
"Don't think it's got a name, though maybe it should have one," I replied. She gazed back as though fascinated by the reflections in the still water. A pair of dainty mountain *Rifleman* [tiny birds] hopped onto a tree at arm's length and twittered and whispered as they made their way up the trunk. From high in another tree a *Bellbird* sounded its silvery call. Margaret looked back at me.
I said with a grin: "Margaret's Tarn. I think that would suit," She smiled.
"Do you mean that? And who of the few that pass this way would know of, or think of calling it such a name?" she quietly enquired.
"Well, two Humans at least, and maybe a pair of mountain Rifleman and a Bellbird, I replied. The horses started to move forward again as though eager to get to wherever we were bound. We let them have their heads [do as they wished].

On Thursday 2nd January 1947, Lester married Margaret Emily (Meg) Wooley at the old Masters' home (hop kiln building) in Windsor Avenue, Hastings. The wedding reception was held at the home of his sister Alice Maud Burge (née Masters) in Jarvis Road, Twyford, about eight kilometres north-west of Hastings. Until the marriage, Meg lived in Canada. She was in fact related via Lester's mother through the Leeves family.

In 1948, in the company of a party of sheperds from *Ngamatea Station* (Ashley Watt,Darcy Fernandes, and Tom Harker) Lester did a two day trip from the *Ngamatea Station* homestead to *Boyd's Hut*. They were all keen hunters, and all carried rifles, yet despite keeping a sharp lookout for deer they did not see any, nor any recent trace of deer. The situation was attributed to the efforts of Government deer cullers. Within a year deer had returned to the area.

In late 1951, in the company of John Groome of the State Forest Service, Lester made another trip into the Ruahine Hut. He writes:

Not until we were well on our way up the range did we notice any deer sign. Soon afterwards, as we approached the little gorge of the Waitutaki Stream, we caught a glimpse of three deer as they were disappearing over a knoll. John held the horses, but all I could see on topping the knoll was a trail of freshly made hoofmarks that entered the bush. It was a beautiful day in early summer. I stood for a few minutes basking in the scene and listening to the occasional silvery notes of the Tui and Bellbirds, and the background murmur of the stream that drifted up to me from the gorge.

A low whistle came to me from the track. It was John, and no doubt he was wondering what I had been doing. I hurried back down.
"Seems I should have brought a rifle too," John remarked in his quiet way. "A couple of hinds have been gazing down at me from just over there for quite a while. They fled when I whistled."

"Don't know," I replied with a grin. "Maybe it's just a matter of deciding better as to who should have the rifle when we get parted."

In the chapter Lester also records an anecdote in which he reflects upon an earlier trip into the area. On that occasion he went hunting with a recent arrival from the UK. He writes:

On one of my hunting trips I took a gentlemanly sort of new chum Englishman named Jim along. Jim was very keen to get some sort of trophy to take back to England with him. Initially, we stayed in a recently vacated fencer's camp in Big Hill valley. We got lots of pigs, but try as I did, I couldn't get Jim to go in with the holding dogs and stick a pig. He would not even approach a sucker. He reckoned that a man needed experience before coming at that sort of thing. How he reckoned he would get experience by standing away back had me whacked.

Wekas, for some unaccountable reason, have long since vanished from the area, but at that time they were reasonably plentiful. A pair of them had made themselves at home about the camp. One day I remarked to Jim that I hadn't seen them about.

"Dash it all, they're about all right. Look there's one now," he responded, and pointed to a Hawk that was circling low overhead. I smiled. Of course Jim being a new chum didn't realise the difference between a Hawk and a flightless Weka.

Because of Jim's *stand clear* tactics, he had not been able to get a pig hunting trophy for himself. We therefore went up into the Ruahine Ranges in quest for deer. Upon arrival, Jim went off to get firewood and I went for water to boil the billy. Jim came bustling excitedly back with a few twigs in his hand, and wanted to know if there were any wild horses about, or if Shute the rabbiter had left any horses behind.
"No! Get your rifle," I said, also grabbing my own. But by the time that we got to where Jim had been, all we saw was a stag vanishing into the bush. (Jim's wild horse.)

In the early 1950s Lester sold the orchard property in Thompson Road, Twyford (to a hunting acquaintance by the name of Jim Hall of another Twyford family). He retained the other block that he owned in Thompson Road on which his residence was sited.

About 1952, Lester Masters (now aged about 58 years), with Jack Hall, Fred Masters, and Dr McPherson, made a Wapiti hunting trip into the North-West Arm of Middle Fiord, Lake Te Anau. They travelled by boat from the Te Anau township jetty to the limits of the North-West Arm. From there they carried their gear in a north-westerly direction for about 400 metres over the saddle between Lake Te Anau and Lake Hankinson. There, at the edge of Lake Hankinson, they camped for two nights while waiting for the dingy to be delivered by a hunting party that was already in the area.

As arranged, the other hunting arrived with the boat, and by mid-day Lester's party had installed itself in the Hankinson Hut. This hut was situated at the opposite (north-western) end of the lake, and about 300 metres from the shoreline and adjacent to the Wapiti River. Jack Hall explored up-river, spent the night at the Thompson Hut, and returned next afternoon to tell of a Wapiti Bull with six cows. The bull was however only an eight pointer, and accordingly was left undisturbed.

The following morning, Jack Hall and Fred Masters set out for George Sound via the Henry Saddle (a distance of about fourteen kilometres). As they departed, Jack called back to Lester, "I'll bring you back a Blue Cod." To which, Lester gave a sceptical response. However, in the time that the two were at George Sound they caught twenty Blue Cod. The largest of the catch was partially smoked by placing it up the chimney of the hut, and taken back to the two older members of the party at the Hankinson Hut. Lester fried his in butter and breadcrumbs, and regarded it as the nicest bit of fish that he had ever tasted.

One bright day while Jack and Fred were away, Doc McPherson and Lester Masters headed up for the tussock tops above Canyon Creek to see if they could find a suitable Wapiti bull.

It was a tough climb. They had not ascended far when they were having to make as much use of their hands as their feet. Night caught them not far from the open tussock top and while still attempting to negotiate their way around a bluff. They hurriedly pitched their two-man tent (on ground that was far from level) and got the little primus stove going. Soon after retiring to their sleeping bags for the night, a pair of Moreporks [NZ owl] began their night-time calls. Later Keas [mountain parrots] delivered a tirade of their own. In the morning it was raining and dense cloud blanketed the area. Since they had only taken sufficient food for one night out, they packed their gear and returned to the Hankinson Hut.

The entire party then moved up to the Lake Thompson Hut. Although the location did not yield any trophy stags, they spent several pleasant days sightseeing and photographing. However, they were conscious of the fact that time was running out and that a special effort was needed to locate a trophy bull. Fred and Lester returned to the Hankinson Hut to re-stock the hut with wood and get everything organised. Meanwhile Jack and Doc climbed to the open tops above Lake Barrier to check for Wapati. Three days later, with no sign of Jack and Doc, Lester and Fred decided to return to Lake Thompson to check whether assistance was needed. However, they met Jack and Doc on the track and with Jack carrying a well balanced set of Wapiti antlers. It was not a record-breaker, but a worthwhile trophy.

In 1953, as an Honorary Forest Ranger, Lester Masters accompanied John Groome (of the State Forest Service) and assistants Athol Geddes and Bill Andrews to the Aorangi Block on the north-western flank of the Ruahine Ranges. The purpose of the visit was to broadly assess the environment and the stands of timber that grew (and may in the future be grown) in the area.

By the time that they had arrived at the campsite on the western bank of the Rangitikei River, it was past midday. After lunch, John and his Great Dane called Dick, plus Athol, set off inspect the country on the other side of the river. Bill and Lester (now aged 57 years) stayed in camp to attend to chores.

The following morning, all four members of the party, each carrying packs, crossed the Rangitikei River. The crossing was made on a flimsy and primitive bridge comprising poles cut from the bush and laid across a narrow section of the river, and about nine metres above the water. Lester described it as no crossing place for a nervous person. They later deposited their packs on a little terrace of ground above a site known as Aka-rata-whiti which was a former camp site of Maori bird hunters. There they boiled the billy for a brew of tea before proceeding to a specific one acre site to analyse the bush composition and millable timber. Trees were measured, soil samples were taken, and records were taken of other vegetation and even of bird and insect life. The area was reputedly the last place at which the Huia bird was last seen, but none were observed by those in the party. The Huia has been confidently regarded now as extinct for many years. It was near to dark when they returned to where they had deposited their packs earlier in the day. Their work in the area was concluded the following day.

Also in 1953 Lester spent three weeks in the Holyford Valley with Jim Hall (a hunting acquaintance from Twyford), Fred Masters (a nephew), and Bob Anderson (a farm manager from Big Hill Station). Their initial base was the Lower Holyford Camp owned and operated by Dave Gunn and his son Murray. Dave Gunn owned the cattle run at the coastal end of the Hollyford. It was forty five kilometres to the coast, and Lester and his party were on a hunting trip down the Hollyford by horseback.

Lester's mount was a high-spirited gelding by the name of *Mandrake*. Conditions were very wet. The Hollyford River was frequently in flood, but still had to be had to be crossed frequently. It is a river that is susceptible to rapid rises in water level, and in full flood is imposable to cross. It is also a river that experiences a rapid reduction of water volumes in phases of 2-3 days of clear weather. About half way between Gunn's Hollyford Camp and the *Hidden Falls Hut*, flood conditions imposed considerable difficulties upon the party. The first such problem arose where the track, submerged beneath about 30 cm of water, led around the base of a rocky bluff. It was a narrow ledge strewn with gravel and boulders between the bluff and the swirling water of the flooded Hollyford. The packhorse refused to set foot on the ledge. Lester rode around the packhorse to lead (by example) in the hope that his mount would accept the challenge, and by doing so would make the packhorse sufficiently confident to follow. For a few seconds, *Mandrake*, Lester's mount, stood gazing down as though in deep thought. *Mandrake* then proceeded forward without showing concern about the shingle and boulders that moved from under his hooves.

They tried again to encourage the packhorse to follow, but she would not do so until they had relieved her of her load. The packs had to be manhandled over and re-loaded. A short while later they were confronted by a deep wash-out. Again the packhorse balked. Lester dismounted and led Mandrake forward. Down he went, through the water and up the opposite side. However, the packhorse remained unimpressed and would not proceed until the banks had been broken away to make it easier for her.

The most menacing hazard that day was an unavoidable crossing of the Hollyford River. The party assessed the situation. Although the packhorse was of sufficient size and weight to make the crossing, the little *Mandrake* was less likely to succeed. An alternative would be to climb a rocky saddle to bypass the bluff and river crossing. Jim Hall mounted the packhorse (behind the packs) and urged her forward into the water. It suddenly deepened, and for an anxious moment there was concern that both the packhorse and Jim would be swept down-stream to the rapids below. Slowly the packhorse made her way forward. The water shallowed and Jim turned with a grin. Jim waved the others back toward the foot of the walking track. The gesture indicated that they should not cross the river, and instead should take the somewhat precipitous route over the ridge. Doubts about *Mandrake's* ability to climb the bypass track were soon gone. By the time that Lester and the others had reached flat ground on the opposite side of the ridge, Jim Hall had made his way down the far side of the river and had again forded the river to place him back on the same side as the remainder of the party.

A moment of excitement came later when rounding a bend, Lester noticed a deer ahead. He

dismounted, grasped the rifle and prepared to shoot. However, the deer vanished into the bush before the shot could be released. Jim dashed forward, and shortly a shot rang out. It was a yearling and as such would be excellent meat.

As they neared the *Hidden Falls Hut*, the welcome scent of smoke drifted to them on the evening breeze. On arrival, they were greeted by a party of three deerstalkers. The three deerstalkers had been down the valley, and were on there way back to the Hollyford Camp. They had been prevented by floods from getting through to the Hollyford Camp and were overdue.

That night as they sat around the hut fireplace talking, the two parties arranged to exchange packhorses. The result would be that Lester's party would acquire the use of the more sturdy and reliable packhorse by the name of *Homer*. Jim Hall was already acquainted with *Homer*. He had used him on a trip into the area while on a three-month skin-hunting trip in 1951.

After leaving the Hidden Falls Hut, they proceeded further down the Hollyford to Pyke Hut. It was a day without notable incident except that Bob sighted deer along the track, slipped forward and bowled an eight-point stag. That night, and for the next two days it rained as only it can in Fiordland. Opposite the Pyke Hut lay the Hollyford River, and beyond the river were high rocky escarpments. During the periods of heavy rain, the escarpments were awash with misty white waterfalls that spilled down their sheer faces.

The flooded Pyke River now barred their further progress down the Hollyford Valley. At the best of times, the Pike River crossing is dangerous. An attempted crossing here in earlier years by a party of three men resulted in two of them drowning, and the third being carried down to an island where he was stranded for eight days without food.

As the weather looked beautifully clear on the third morning at the Pike Hut, they decided to hunt for deer. Each went in a different direction. Jim and Bob climbed onto the high tussock top behind the hut. Fred Masters went in the direction of Hidden Falls, and Lester took the track leading around Lake Alabaster.

On returning to the hut in the early afternoon, Lester met a party consisting of a tour guide by the name of Johnny Nelson who had in his care four girls. They had depleted their stocks of food, and had been unable to get their packhorses over flooded river-crossings. They were hiking back to Hollyford Camp (overdue). Johnny advised that the boat that was to be used by Lester's party to get to the far end of Lake McKerrow was in fact already at the far end of the lake. As such they were denied the ability to venture along Lake McKerrow. Johnny also expressed the view that it would be too dangerous to get the horses over the Pyke River for several days. (The foot party had crossed the Pyke River by means of the over-head cable and cage system.)

Soon after Johnny's party had departed for *Hidden Falls Hut*, Lester returned to the Pyke Hut, and was followed shortly by the appearance of Fred Masters. Fred gad shot a stag. Then Bob arrived. Then Jim came hobbling in with an injured heel. Jim had also shot a deer and had a haunch of venison.

Next morning, the Pyke River remained too flooded for them to attempt a crossing. Despite his injured heel, Jim Hall decided to walk to Lake McKerrow in light canvas shoes, and proceed around the lake on the *Demon Trail* and on to Martins Bay. His intention was to arrange for the boat to be at the head (inland end) of the lake so that it could be used as intended.

Next night, two of Dave Gunn's men arrived at Pyke Hut with the news that Jim Hall had reached Martins Bay in very quick time. Next day the remainder of the party proceeded to Lake McKerrow. It appears that they did succeed in getting the horses across the Pyke River, and had left them at the head of Lake McKerrow. They then used the boat to travel the fifteen kilometre length of the lake and to be greeted by Jim at the northern jetty.

Most of their time at Martins Bay was spent fishing or undertaking excursions on foot to places of interest. One such excursion was to Seal Point (in the direction of Big Bay) to visit a seal colony. On another occasion they used a boat to cross to the southern side of the river. While one of them was flounder fishing in the lagoon, the others tramped up through the sand-hills to the abandoned McKenzie homestead for a closer inspection. As was customary, their evenings were spent playing cards or telling yarns.

On their return trip up the lake, they followed a flapper swan. Jim leaned over the side of the boat and hauled it aboard. Lester skinned and dressed it while travelling along in the boat, so that by the time that they arrived at the McKerrow Hut the bird was ready for cooking. There it was cooked in Jim's pressure cooker and duly provided a satisfying lunch. After lunch, the party headed for Pyke Hut and spent the night there. The following day they moved on to the *Hidden Falls Hut*. Fred and Bob went via the Little Homer Saddle, and Jim and Lester took the horses along the river route. Several times during their crossing of the Hollyford River, the little *Mandrake* had to swim. Jim shot a very large stag that ironically had a very poor set of antlers. At the *Hidden Falls Hut* Lester found a gold pan, and predictably, such a device could not be left idle without putting it to use. Fred and Lester washed several pans of gold but nothing showed. So their hopes for making a quick fortune were put to rest when the pan was returned to where it had been found.

Next morning it was raining heavily, and to avoid the risk of being flooded-in for longer than suited them, they packed their gear and departed *Hidden Falls Hut* in great haste. On arrival at High Falls Creek, they tethered the horses and scrambled over a rocky bluff to gain a better view of the 300 metre falls that descend in three mighty leaps. They arrived back in the Hollyford Camp during the following afternoon.

In 1996, forty three years after their trip into the Holyford, my brother Michael and I were casually discussing with Jack Hall the group's 1953 trip. Jack reflected upon an incident that occured during the trip that Lester had discretely omitted from his book. One of the party (Bob Anderson) had revealed some lazy habits that had begun to cause irritation among the others in the group. One particularly wet and squally evening when the others of the party had arrived back at the hut they found Bob Anderson sitting in front of the fire enjoying its

warmth. Bob was very dry and comfortable, but upon arrival of the others (who were clearly cold and wet) he made no effort to allow them adequate access to the fire so that they might warm themselves and change into something dry in comfort. Nor had he made any effort to use his time in the hut constructively by commencing preperation of the evening meal (as would be expected of someone who had arrived back at the hut early). Lester, who was by far the smallest of the group, spontainiously concieved an idea that would have a highly dramatic effect upon Bob's inconsiderate occupation of the prime position in front of the fire. Lester grabbed a handful of .303 rifle cartridges and tossed them into the fire in front of Bob. Bob's reaction was instant. He immediately charged out of the hut to escape the prospect of being hit by exploding cartridges. When the appropriate number of explosions has occured, the cold and wet members of the group calmly wandered back into the hut to occupy their rightful place in front of the fire.

Tony Rule.

In 1955, a fellow orchardist from Twyford by the name of Jack Hall, who was also a member of the Hastings Deerstalker's Association, wanted to develop an air-strip somewhere in the Ruahines to improve their access for hunting. An initial flight was undertaken by a couple of club members, and later a ground party was to go in to make a closer inspection of some of the sites that had looked suitable from the air. Because Lester was very familiar with the areas, he was included in the ground party.

On arrival at *Big Hill Station*, Lester and another of the team were given a horse to ride into the ranges. Other members of the party got to the top of Big Hill in Lester's truck, but had to travel the remainder of the distance on foot. The sites were measured and appeared to provide adequate space for an airstrip, however, the proposed landing sites would require bulldozing work. It appears that the cost of the bulldozing work rendered the idea unworkable. Heavy rain developed while they were still up on the ranges, and it became imperative that they returned to Big Hill Station quickly. On their return Jim Hall bowled a good porker, but that is about where the fun ended. By the time that the foot party had reached the top of Big Hill where the truck had been parked, the track had become very slippery. It was sufficiently slippery in places that the party who would otherwise have been riding on the truck, were instead used to hold the truck on the track with the aid of ropes as the truck proceeded slowly down.

In 1955 (at about the age of 61 years) Lester visited the *Lawrence Hut* (in the eastern foothills of the Kaweka Ranges) with Morrie Robson who had constructed the hut earlier that year. On the day of the visit it was very hot, so after letting the horses go, they pulled their knife belts off (assuming that there would be no pigs handy) and went to the creek for water. Their intention was to make a brew of tea, but just as they were heading back to the hut, the dogs bailed a pig in the nearby bush. They put the water billies down and raced to where the dogs were. Morrie Robson grabbed it by the hind leg, threw it on its back and felt for his knife. It wasn't there, so he asked Lester for his knife, but his wasn't there either. With Morrie holding the pig, Lester rushed back to the hut to retrieve a knife. Just as the first pig had been stuck, the dogs bailed yet another. Morrie's immediate suggestion was that while he dressed

the first pig, Lester should go and stick the second one. Of course they had only one knife between them, so Morrie abandoned the first pig and rushed away to get the second. Lester scrambled along behind but noticed from the way the dogs were barking that the pig broke [made an escape dash from the dogs] so he sat down to await developments. A minute or two later a pig started squealing, which was a sure sign that Morrie had got hold of it. Soon the dogs were onto a third pig, but Lester decided to return to the hut and boil the billy for a brew of tea. That might have been a good idea, but he had only taken a few paces when a fourth pig started grunting close to where he was. Morrie's pack of four dogs had split into pairs and were working on different pigs. Lester proceeded to where the nearest pair of dogs were barking and discovered that they had bailed a hefty young boar. He picked up a stout length of wind-fall timber with the intention of stunning it and holding it until Morrie arrived. As soon as the dogs saw him with the timber they released the pig and scampered away (assuming that it was going to be used on them). The pig viewed matters differently and decided it was time to address the latest intrusion and charged Lester. Lester grabbed an overhanging branch and pulled himself clear. The dogs were called back onto the job and duly rushed in and re-gained a hold of the pig. Lester dropped to the ground and returned to the hut for his knife. However, by the time that he had returned, Morrie had already arrived and despatched it. They made their way back to the hut, tied up the dogs and finally got the much needed brew organised. They had had enough of pigs for the day.

In later years, Lester and three hunting acquaintances from Twyford decided to hunt in the vicinity of the *Black Whare* at the southern end of *Happy Valley*. He was accompanied by Jim Hall, Ewan and Brian MacDonald. The MacDonalds owned a donkey and it was decided to recruit the services of the donkey to carry their load. On the morning of the appointed day it was raining heavily, so Lester suggested that the hunt be deferred until the weather improved. That did not suit the others who suggested that although it was raining at Twyford, it was possibly sunny in the area of the Blowhard some 45 kilometres away to the west. Lester owned a 15 hundredweight Chevrolet pick-up truck which was to transport them all and their gear (and the donkey) to the *Happy Valley*. However, they had assigned themselves a major task when choosing to take the donkey. After rushing about in the rain and mud they managed to corner the donkey and get a rope around its neck. There was no loading bank in the vicinity, so they acquired a stout scullery door, laid it between the ground and the rear deck of the truck to use as a loading ramp (up which the donkey should happily walk). The donkey wanted no part of these unfamiliar antics and despite various forms of persuasion, it refused to climb up the ramp. Eventually a rope was extended around his rump and the beast was hauled and pushed onboard. They then got the pig dog Brave up to accompany the donkey in the crate, latched the crate door, tossed on their gear and headed for the Blowhard. When they arrived at the *Blowhard* it was still raining heavily, cloud hung low about them, and there was a lot of water lying about underfoot.

After getting under way, they discovered that a pony riding saddle was not a suitable thing on which to load their gear. Because a donkey has a small withers, the saddle would shift forward or down one side thus requiring many stops to make adjustments.

Lester felt smug about the fact that he was the only one who had the sense to wear gumboots, and imagined that he was destined to be the only one that would have dry feet all day. However, it was not to be. Lester was assigned the task of leading the donkey, and eventually necessitated having to cross a creek in flood. Lester waded into the water until it was near the top of his gumboots and then leaped the remaining distance so that he landed on the opposite side on firm ground. He turned to his mates with an elated grin, but just as he did so the donkey gave a snatch on the lead-line. That tipped Lester off balance and he landed back in the water about midstream with water flooding over the top of his gumboots.

The donkey was given a lively address on what Lester thought of him. After emptying the water from his gumboots, the task of leading the donkey was given to the others. They were to soon discover how a donkey will not be bustled by people.

Shortly after arriving at the *Black Whare*, the pig dog *Brave* rushed away in pursuit of pigs and soon began barking down in the foggy valley. The donkey's lead-line was pushed back into Lester's hand and the three others hastily departed in the direction of the barking. That suited Lester. By the sound of the barking *Brave* was onto an old boar. The donkey was tethered to a big manuka tree. Lester entered the hut, got a fire going, put a billy on, pulled off his boots and socks and started to warm up. Shortly, Lester glanced out the door to see how the donkey was faring. He was partly hidden by the bush, but somewhat resembled a deer. Despite the trouble that he had been, no-one would want him mistakenly shot for a deer, and was re-tethered near the hut in the hope that he would be better recognised for what he was.

As they were sitting back after lunch discussing which way to go to get a bit of venison or pork to take home, an unearthly noise rent the air. They all made a rush and jammed the doorway. The donkey had his head in the air and was braying for all he was worth. If there had been any game within hunting distance after that lot, they would be fortunate indeed.

Lester commented that the return trip from the hut to the road was markedly easier than what they had experienced on the way in. The donkey clearly sensed that they were all going home, and eagerly made his way back out along the track. When it was time to load him onto the truck, the loading ramp (scullery door) was laid into position and the donkey trotted up it without hesitation.

Shutes Hut had been a port-of-call for Lester and his hunting acquaintances for many years. It is a very picturesque area, and hunting was not necessarily the prime reason for a visit to the location. It is simply a pleasure to be there. Whenever Lester visited Shutes Hut, he had normally approached from the eastern side of the ranges by horse via Big Hill Station, the Ruahine Hut, Noman's Hut, and then on to Shutes Hut. It is a substantial journey by that route and was usually completed in two stages (over two days).

In later years Lester, and his much younger hunting companion Jack Hall, visited Shutes Hut from the opposite side (from the north) via the Taihape Road, through Timahanga Station,

down the Taruarau River (south of *The Comet*) and up the relatively short distance remaining to Shutes Hut. One of the reasons motivating the visit was the knowledge that a bee colony had become well established in the hut and that a significant amount of honey had been accumulated by the colony. The prospect of harvesting a generous supply of bush honey appealed to them, so they arrived at the hut well equipped with large cake tins which would be used for carrying out the honey.

Taking honey from well bred and relatively quiet commercial bees is sometime a hazardous pursuit, but native honey bees are notoriously bad tempered. Jack and Lester's assignment had to be handled with great care. The colony's brood-comb and honey-comb had been built by the bees in such a way that it was fully accessible from the inside of the hut. The bush bees had begun to use the interior of the hut in a similar way to which domestic bees use the interior of a bee hive.

To pacify the bees (and preferably to stupefy them) they would need to be smoked. Jack and Lester entered the hut and took good care not to disturb the bees. Somewhat audaciously, they used the hut as they required (despite the risk that any brisk movement or accidental disturbance in the vicinity could rouse the bees into sudden aggression). The final task during Jack and Lester's visit was to set about extracting the honey. To pacify the bees they established a vigorous fire in the hut fireplace, tossed on large quantities of dried vegetation, blocked the chimney, and waited for the hut to fill with smoke. Dense smoke soon packed the hut interior, and after a suitable lapse of time Jack and Lester entered the hut again and sliced out large sections of honey-comb and packed them into the cake tins. For their purposes it was a very successful mission. However, shortly after departing the hut they met three chaps who explained that they were going to stay the night at Shutes Hut. It was later learned that, when the three visitors arrived at the hut, the bees had significantly recovered from the effects of the smoke and were crawling all about the hut in great numbers and posing a substantial threat to anyone foolish enough to step inside. Given the highly intimidating mood of the recovering bees in the hut, the three visitors took little time to decide that the hut was totally un-useable, and had no option but to spend an uncomfortable night sleeping under the stars. Their opinion of the departed honey-gathering expedition was fairly uncharitable. Perhaps needles to say, Jack and Lester were well pleased with their visit and their bounty of bush honey.

Lester travelled to Singapore, to the USA and Canada. It was during a trip to Canada that he met his future bride circa 1940. She was Margaret Emily Wooley, who was employed in the Parts Division at Chrysler Corp of Canada Limited, Windsor, Ontario. Her occupation is thought to have been an Industrial Nurse. (She was employed as a nurse during World War 1 for thirteen months until 27/1/1918 at the County of Middlesex War Hospital. The couple were married in 1947 in the former family home (the hop kiln building in Windsor Avenue, Hastings). Her wedding ring was made from raw gold mined in Macetown, Central Otago, NZ.

Lester and his wife Margaret (Meg) lived for the remainder of their lives on a property

(separate from the orchard block) in Thompson Road, Twyford.

Lester was a sociable person, and maintained regular contact with his family in the Twyford and Hastings area. In earlier years, he also frequented the Stortford Lodge Hotel as a patron of its Public Bar. It appears that, on occasions, when the affects of refreshments had put him in a particularly cheerful mood, he would be encouraged to climb onto (or be lifted onto) the bar and dance an Irish Jig for the amusement of his raucous audience (and himself).

Lester was fond of rural social events. However, he sometimes surprised his acquaintances by disappearing part-way through such gatherings to have a nap. He would be discovered in some out-of-the-way closet or obscure corner sleeping soundly, but in due course awaken and ready to re-join the party.

Lester became widely known in Central Hawkes Bay for his deerstalking and pig hunting exploits. The general awareness of him was assisted by broadcasts on the Napier radio station (2YZ) during which he would give readings from his articles and books on early Hawkes Bay rural life. Lester wrote two books: The ***Tales of the Mails*** [1959] which gave an account of the stage coach mail runs of central Hawkes Bay and connected events. He also wrote ***Back-Country Tales*** [1960] which was an anthology of yarns and anecdotes based upon life in rural Hawkes Bay. He was also a capable poet and produced a booklet entitled ***Unfenced Country and Other Poems***. His poetry was of a commendable standard, and reflected his commendable views of his fellows, and of the country in which he had hunted. His hunting was undertaken mainly in the Ruahine Ranges mostly in the North-Eastern end via Kereru and Big Hill Stations.

In his retirement years, a half-metre wooden silhouette of a running boar was installed by friends over the front gate archway of his Twyford property. It was inscribed with the word/s: ***Dunroamin.*** [Implying *done roaming*]. While Lester was noted for his adventuresome spirit, his heart progressively faded in his latter years and denied him the ability to do the things that he enjoyed. His acquaintance Dr Bathgate (physician and naturalist) likened Lester's ailing heart to a slowly fading wick on an expiring candle.

Lester died 22nd May 1961 at the age of 65 years and 40 days. It was his wish that his ashes be scattered over the area between the Ruahine Hut and the Noman's Hut in the northern Ruahine Ranges of Hawkes Bay, NZ. It is an exceptionally picturesque area that features a broad and rounded topography on the range tops. It is interspersed with expanses of golden tussock, patches of deep green Mountain Beech, steep gorges, vast views across Hawkes Bay, views of the inland ranges, views to Whanawhana Station, Omahaki Station, Kuripapango Station, Timahanga Station, and Ngamatea Station. It is a location that is beautiful and very humbling. Lester chose well when deciding upon where his ashes should rest.

His former hunting acquaintance and fellow orchardist from Twyford, Jack Hall, explained that on the day that he flew across the designated area to scatter Lester's ashes, the entire Ruahine Range was covered by a blanket of cloud. Because the cloud denied them the ability to distinguish the prescribed area correctly, they decided not to proceed and the aircraft was banked away so that they might return to Bridge Pa Aerodrome, and home. However, just as the aircraft banked, the cloud over the drop area (and only that area) cleared and remained

clear for just sufficient time for the task to be completed.

When Lester's wife *Margaret (Meg) Emily Masters* died in September 1969 (28/9/69) her ashes were also scattered over the same area.

In 1963 a Cairn to commemorate Lester was constructed on the high-point of the northern Ruahine Ranges above *No-Mans Hut* by members of the Hastings Deerstalkers Club. Among them was Jack Hall, Ron Pink, and Roy Angen. However, the original Cairn fell into disrepair, and a very durable replacement memorial Cairn was constructed at the same site by Jack Hall, Ron Pink, and Roy Angen on Saturday 3rd April 1982. The Cairn incorporates a plaque inscribed with text commemorating Lester & Meg Masters, and commemorating one Jim Fleming (whose ashes were also scattered in the area). Jim Fleming was, amongst other things, noted for his remarkable ability to imitate the calls of native birds.

In the early 1960s (after Lester's death) members of the Hastings Deerstalkers Association constructed a meeting hall at Roys Hill (near Fernhill) north-west of Hastings. The hall was formally named *The Lester Masters Memorial Hall* in commemoration of his contributions to the Association's objectives and the reading pleasure provided by his books and poetry. In attendance at the opening ceremony was Lester's sister Edith.

Tony Rule
30 January 1999

The Ruahine Hut

The photograph was taken in May 1936 at the old ***Ruahine Hut.***

The gentleman on the left (as we view the photograph) is Liecester (Lester) Masters who would then have been about forty two years of age.

The old *Ruahine Hut* was built in the 1860's initially to accommodate shepherds and wild dog hunters when Mr J.N. Williams and Colonel Herrick took up the then substantial Keruru Station. It was also used later by hunters, and by rabbiters employed by the Hawkes Bay County Council's Pest Destruction Board.

Lester's visit to the *Ruahine Hut* in May 1936 was timed to coincide with the rutting season of the Red deer. It is a time when stags roar assertively during their quest to gather hinds. The rut continues mainly throughout April and May (each year). Lester, like all hunters, took advantage of the stags' noisy habits during these months to determine their whereabouts and to improve his prospects of successfully taking a stag. Lester made trips to the location annually.

The diagonal strap across his shoulder suggests that he is carrying his .303 rifle, and there also appear to be two firearms leaning against the wall of the hut to the right of the door.

Lester Masters was at that time an Orchardist at Twyford. By May, his fruit crop would have been harvested and sold, and he would have been free of important work commitments. The end of the orcharding season was conveniently timed to allow him to take his annual 1-2 weeks in the northern Ruahine Ranges.

The person to the right of the photograph (mounted and also with a pack horse) is Bill Winchester, who was a rabbiter. The dogs in the photograph are typical of the assortment of breeds that rabbiters would accumulate and use on their daily routine of rabbit eradication.

The Poetry of Lester Masters.

The following is a collection of poems writen by Lester Masters that I have selected from his booklet ***Unfenced Country and Other Poems***, which was published about 1960.

Lester's various experiences, gained through his employment and recreational interests, have had a major influence upon the topics which feature in his poetry. During his younger years, the range of recreational activities available was significantly less than what has since become available. Rugby, cricket, and tennis dominated. However, during the early 1920's, Red Deer had become well established in the mountain ranges that lay to the west of Hawkes Bay. During the era, deerstalking was regarded as a sport for those who were particularly adventurous, independent and hardy. Within the working classes and the rural communities, a pragmatic view toward livestock existed, and this extended to introduced wildlife. Anyone who was successful in shooting deer drew the attention of, and at times adulation from, the rural communities and the hunter's peers. Lester Masters was for many years a member of the Hastings Deerstalkers Association, and spent much of his recreational time hunting in the northern Ruahine Ranges and the Kawaeka Ranges.

Access to the Ruahine Ranges from the adjacent farmland was by horse (usually from Big Hill Station). Lester would ride a hack, and his hunting equipment, his food, and spare clothing would be stowed in saddle bags and sacks etc and secured to a pack horse. Bridal trails between the farmland and the mountain huts gave access to areas in which he hunted. The various mountain huts on the eastern side of the northern Ruahine Ranges were all used by Lester. He occasionally hunted alone, but he appears to have more commonly hunted with acquaintances.

Later in his life, Lester's writings frequently revealed his very strong affection for the environment in which he had hunted. It is an environment that is radically different from the lower country, and that in itself was a part of its appeal. More specifically, the ranges are a craggy sub-alpine terrain comprising an array of ridges, gorges, gullies, streams, and expansive views. These, together with the Beech forests and other flora, and birdlife, clearly caught Lester's attention. However, his verse and prose also acknowledges that there is another aspect to that environment. The ranges are capable of presenting conditions that are harsh and potentially dangerous. Inclement weather, precipitous gorges, bush-congested slopes, and fatigue could all contrive to impose severe conditions upon any hunter. Anyone who has had regular exposure to a sub-alpine environment such as the northern Ruahine Ranges will also have suffered the adversities that are an inherent part of it. Throughout Lester's verse and prose, the full range of experiences, good and bad, are covered.

Although innumerable people over the years have had very similar experiences to those of Lester, he is a rare example among such people (of that era) who was motivated to write of his experiences. In doing so, he has commerated the environment that was so special to him, and he has revealed much of his personality, attitudes, and sentiments.

Tony Rule. 31/7/96.

Unfenced Country

I'll buy me a hack and a packhorse, and head for the hills once more;
I'll head for the unfenced country, and a place where the red stags roar.

Where there's no phone to be answered, nor appointments to be kept,
But only the crystal waters, of singing streams to be leapt.

And whining of wheels don't echo, and money counts not a hoot,
Except as a cost on horseshoes, or a patch on a hillman's boot.

Where meat is got with a rifle, and things don't come in a can,
And figures and forms don't matter, and a man is a better man.

And the Bellbirds sing of the dawning, and the Moreporks' call of the eve,
And the stars they shine more brightly, to add to the I believe.

I'll buy me a hack and a packhorse, and head for the place I know,
Way up in the unfenced country, where the whispering waters flow.

Lester Masters.

The Waiting West

Lets leave behind the streets of town,
For lands that wear the verdant gown,
And whispering waters tumble down,
With legends of the west.

Where mountains and foothills blend,
And ridge and gorge and spur extend,
And tracks begin and roadways end,
Beneath the range's crest.

For something calls where birds abide,
Belonging to the spaces wide;
A thing that may not be denied,
And cannot be expressed.

A mystic thing of gorge and hill,
Of bushland stream and rippling rill,
That's known to Andy, Bob and Bill,
Where Bellbirds build a nest.

Let others have the pavement way,
And rush and roar of city fray,
While we ride the dawn of day,
Into the waiting west.

Lester Masters.

Knights of the Blades

Now these be the rules, of each blade shearing shed,
And prior to each start, let 'em all be read.

That ringers of gangs, of *Knights of the Blades*,
May know what it is like, when trumps are spades.

First, all good sheep, shall be put in one pen,
And crutched and bellied, for the slow shearer men,

And guns be given, the cobblers to shear,
And never a gun, be allowed to swear.

And when voting sheep, to be wet or dry,
All counts to be taken, by Nugget and I,

And just to us two, given the say,
When starts or stops, should be made each day.

Sandy-backed wethers, to go to the guns,
To us the ewes, and clear pointed ones.

And any gun who gets dragging the chain,
Be dumped in the dags, and made to explain.

And the ringer, if he starts making a fuss,
Be sent down the board, to barrow for us.

At smokos, first bun and first mug of tea,
Be gently handed to Nugget and me.

And Nugget and I, just us two alone,
Always be given, first use of the stone.

And then when it it comes, to cut-out day,
We, first of the gang, to receive our pay.

And passed a bottle, of the best to try,
For we'll be drummers, will Nugget and I.

Lester Masters.

The Knights of the Blades

The verse *Knights of the Blades* uses many expressions that have special meaning in the environment of shearing shed, and more particularly, in a shearing shed prior to the introduction of mechanically powered shears. One of Lester's early occupations was that of sheep shearer. From comments made by him, he was never able to sustain a high speed performance as a shearer, and generally ranked as a slow shearer. As a man who stood only five feet tall and weighed eight stone, he simply did not have the physique and stamina to enable him to perform better than more strongly built men. However, personal pride ensured that he persevered and always acquited himself with a good performance. His sense of humour was never far from the surface, and this verse reflects his ability to generate fun from the otherwise unillustrious status of being a *drummer* (slow shearer). The terminology used in the verse is explained below:

The *Knights of the Blades*: Shearers with a healthy opinion of themselves and their trade.

Blades: Shearing sheers which were manually worked (with a scissor-like action).

Ringer: The **fastest** shearer is a *ringer* and could shear about 300 sheep per day. A ringer worked at the favoured end of the row of shearers, and there was a tendency for a ringer to be given preferential treatment. Guns: Fast shearers. Drummers: Slow shearers.

Gang: A group of men engaged for work in a shearing shed. (A shearing gang.)

Trumps and spades: These are not expressions with a unique meaning within a shearing shed, but Lester uses the analogy of playing cards and their relative values to create a humerous and ironic twist to the status and treatment of fast and slow shearers.

Crutched and bellied: Wool in the vicinity of the sheep's crutch and belly is commonly fouled by accumulated faeces and debris. When a sheep is crutched and bellied, it has the wool shorn from the crutch and belly. Lester fancied the notion that slow shearers should only be given crutched and bellied sheep to work on.

Cobblers: An unhealthy sheep with sticky wool (which is difficult to shear). The expression is now very rare in New Zealand, and appears to be of Australian origin. .

Nugget: An acquaintance of Lester's who was also a slow shearer.

Sandy-backed wethers: *Sandy-backed* refers to the accumulation of foreign particles such as dust and grit in the wool. Such material causes the shears to blunten quickly, and accordingly is objectionable to shearers. Weathers are casterated rams.

Clear-pointed: Sheep which have clean wool around the points (the **feet** and **crutch**) are called *clear-pointed*. Sheep that are **not** *clear-pointed* have wool on the *points* that is impregnated with natural wool grease (lanolin) which has become glue-like, impregnated with debris, matted, and as such it is difficult to sheer.

Dragging the chain: This is not an expression that is unique to the environment of a shearing shed. A slow worker is said to be "*dragging the chain*". (In former times when prisoners were shackled to a ball and chain, it was necessary for them to pick up the ball and chain to walk, but if only the ball was picked up, progress was inhibited and slow.)

The dags: The combination of the wool around the crutch of a sheep and encrusted faeces is called *dags*. Dag wool is of low value and is kept seperate from the higher grade wools.

The board: The floor area of the shearing shed on which the shearers work.

To barrow: To do various helpful tasks. Originally a *Barrow Boy* was employed in large sheds to convey shorn fleeces from the shearers to the sorting table, and to regularly sweep the floor around the shearers.

Smoko: Smoko is a period of rest in which workers have a hot drink, something to eat, and possibly a smoke.

The stone: A carbarundum stone used for sharpening the shears.

Cut-out day: *Cut-out* day is when all available sheep on a particular property have been shorn.

Nevermore

Each year I swear, that nevermore,
I'll leave my home, when Red stags roar.
No more I'll play, that silly game,
But come the Roar, it's all the same.

I gather gear, and off I go,
To get caught out there, in sleet or snow;
Take shelter beneath some dripping tree.
Hear stags nearby, but never see.

Crawl down some gorge, and up some cliff,
And land on top near frozen stiff.
Then through the darkness and the damp,
Go fumbling to some droughty camp.

And when I'm heading home once more,
Swear that which, I've sworn before:
Nevermore.

Lester Masters.

The Return

When timbers creek, and billies speak,
among the glowing logs,

Then shades stroll in of Joe and Jim,
from out of the swirling fogs.

With tales of tracks, and other shacks,
of rivers, streams and bogs,

Of bluffs and crags, and sheep and stags,
of hermit bulls, and hogs,

Of ducks and deer and guns and geer,
of horses men and dogs.

And hillmen old, and goats and gold,
and dudes in dainty togs.

When billies sing, and shadows cling,
among the glowing logs.

Lester Masters.

The Scent of Manuka Smoke

There's some who long for the scent of gums;
Some for the scent of oak,
While others yearn to smell once once more,
Scent of Manuka smoke.

That scent of hills and mountain vales,
Which holds the memory,
Of bridle tracks, and lonely shacks,
And bush fraternity.

The Mai-Mai in the sheltered bend,
The Raupo fringed lagoon,
The ducks that came before the dawn,
The clouds that crossed the moon.

The Royal stag high on a crag,
The wild boar in the fern,
The horses on the tussock lands,
The cattle by the burn.

The misty falls of azure lakes,
The rise of trout at eve,
The men who told those yarns of old,
The yarns we may believe.

The silver of the Tui's song,
Among the Rata flowers,
The winding creeks and snowy peaks,
The magic gloaming hours.

The wisp of smoke that drifts along,
At billy time of day,
The campfire gleaming through the dusk,
To welcome all who stay.

The murmer of the mountain stream,
Song of the spinnng reel,
To those who've smelled Manuka smoke,
Will all such things appeal.

To the wanderers overseas,
Just send some some twigs to burn,
Then get out your gear again,
For soon they will return.

There's some who long for balsam scent,
Some for the scent of oak,
But for the sweatest scent of all,
Give me Manuka smoke.

Lester Masters.

Some There Are

For some there are, who do not know,
Nor feel the urge, or wish to go.
Not know when stalking time is near,
Or wish to hunt elusive deer,
Or climb the tops and gaze below.
For some there are who do not know.

Not know or feel the time of year,
Or wish to gather pack or gear,
Or long to saddle up a hack,
And head for hills away out back,
To see once more, the fall of snow.
For some there are who do not know.

Not know the thrill to hunt the boar,
Or to hear the Red stag's roar,
Or quietly stalk through forests deep,
Or gaze at noon on hills asleep.
For we are queer, who wish to go,
Or so they say, who do not know.

Not know the tracks that seem to cling,
Nor wish to hear the Tuis sing,
Or laze beside a fern-draped wall,
Where misty mountain waters fall.
Watching the spray and coloured bow.
Nor wish for these or want to know.

Not know the thrill, afar to sight,
Over bush and ranges, old Egmont's height,
Nor listen to the Bellbirds' chime,
Or down the bush-clad spurs to climb,
So strange it is, we wish to go,
Or so they say, who do not know.

Not know the breath of mountain air,
Nor feel the feeling, of no care,
Not know what nomads ever knew,
Or do the things that they would do,
Or watch the cloud-mist fade and go.
For those there are who do not know.

Not know the big-eyed Morepork's wail,
Nor wish to take a campward trail,
Or watch the eve of changing light,
Or sit and yarn in camp at night,
For some there are who ought to go;
That they might feel the urge and know.

And know and in the spell be cought,
And know ten days would be too short,
Too short for those, who know the spell,
Of wild-fern ridge, and bushland dell;
Ten days too short to laze and dream,
By camp or spur or mountain stream.

Lester Masters.

A Way For Wheels To Go

The bush and singing birds have gone,
There's little now to show,
Since trail of old was made into,
A way for wheels to go.

Another way for wheels to go,
The hill is scarred and torn.
Wild clematis blooms no more;
A ponga stands forlorn.

The dewy banks of *Maiden Hair*,
The fairy dells sublime,
And carpets of the kowhai's gold,
Are dust on wheels of time.

The winding bridle trail we rode,
Is rubble now below,
Since tractor men have made of it,
A way for wheels to go.

Lester Masters.

Lester Masters wrote the following verse of himself as a person well into his retirement years. In the verse he specifically refers to *Brave* and *Spot.* These were pig hunting dogs that Lester had owned.

His Choice

He'd hunted 'mid the ranges grand,
And this was then his choice,
To stand upon a forest ridge,
And hear the dogs give voice.

To hear the dogs and plunge on down,
Nor stop to heed the way,
Until he'd got where Brave or Spot,
Had brought a boar to bay.

But time is stealing on him now,
To sit at home below,
And weave a webb of memories,
Where ruby embers glow.

Lester Masters.

The Poetry

of

Margaret Emily (Meg) Masters (née Wooley)

Although the verse and yarns written by Lester Masters have featured prominently in the family's history, it was particularly interesting to recently discover poetry written by his wife Meg. It is all the more significant for the fact that her verse pre-dates Lester's phase of compiling verse and yarns around the 1950s and 1960s. It invites the question: What influence did her successes have upon Lester?

When I reflect upon those occasions during my childhood when I would wander over to their household, it was very clear indeed that Meg adored Lester and was intensely interested in his activities (past and present). She was especially interested in what was emerging in print, and was proud of Lester's written material. It is my impression that it was Meg that gave Lester the necessary encouragement to document his adventures, his thoughts, and to also express ideas by way of verse. She had already compiled quite creditable verse herself.

The following three items of verse were written by Meg Masters.

Tony Rule
1 February 1999

Oh, The Life of a Spinster.

I bought a wee house, at the foot of the hill,
With cherry-red roof, and white window sill.
I planted a garden, and cleaned out the well.
Oh, the life of a spinster, really is swell.

Got a little black cat, and a clucky red hen,
And a fat little pig, which I put in a pen.
I relaxed on my porch, when my day's work was done,
Oh the life of a spinster, is no end of fun.

Comes a clatter of hooves, a shout and a hail.
Hullo, who is this, reining in at my rail?
A tanned smiling cowboy, in gay checkered shirt.
I'm a hard working spinster, with no time to flirt.

Okay, laughed the cowby, his teeth flashed so white,
But you'll likely get scared, all alone there at night.
He came many times, and he bantered and teased,
But with the life of a spinster, I'm very well pleased.

Then I saw him no more, and the summer slipped by.
My pig ran away, amd my well went dry.
The cherry red roof sprang a leak by the door.
Oh, the life of a spinster, is sometimes a chore.

In the fall of the year, he came swinging along.
I was so glad to see him, such a lot had gone wrong.
He laughed at my garden, and wobbled my fence.
For the life of a spinster, there seems no defence.

Oh it's fun to be married, to cook and to sew;
To lend him a hand, and to watch things grow.
To run to the rail, and to reach for his kiss;
Oh the life of a spinster, was never like this.

Written by Meg Masters.
(Formerly Margaret Wooley)

The above verse was written by the wife of Lester Masters around 1940. She was a citizen of Canada, and met Lester in Calgary, Alberta while he was on a working holiday in Canada. Hence the evidence of North American terminology in the verse.

Doran in Kent

The little tracks, up over the hill,

Where I could wander, at my will.

Soft breeze or gale, in trees above.

The scent of pines, I always love.

Way over banks, and through the wood,

Where honey gold, the willows stood.

The little paths, amid lanes I know,

There fresh cold sweetness, I know still,

Down memories lane, I always will.

Margaret Wooley
(Later Meg Masters)

Meg worked in England as a nurse during World War I. Presumably the poem relates this era of her life.

Into the Night

When I go out into the night, beyond this life of ours,
I dare not hope to find at once, the shining heavenly towers.
No saintly halo have I won, no crown, no angel's wings.
For I've been busy, all my time, with little homely things.

I've always tried to play the game,and sought to do my best,
But that is not enough to earn, a place among the best.
But when I pass into the dark, God grant that I may see,
A few familiar stars to light, the road ahead for me.

Meg Wooley (1922)
(Later Meg Masters)

This poem is understood to have been composed while Meg was on the nursing staff at the Chrysler Corp plant in Windsor, Ontario. It was published in the *Windsor Star* and a Calgary paper. It was also published in the *Kent Messenger* in 1940.

George Masters

(Son of Alfred Masters & Alice Lydia Leeves)

George Masters was born 1st August 1890, and grew up on the family property which lay between Selwood Road (renamed Windsor Avenue) Hastings and St Georges Road to the east.

He is understood to have attended primary school at the Hastings District School. On 9th February 1904 he was enrolled at Napier Boys High School. He was then aged 13 years and six months. At this time, the Boy's High School was situated on Scind Hill Napier. It is believed that George Masters was a "train boy" travelling daily from Hastings with other Hastings "train boys". The school had its own train siding.

The Boys' High School included elementary military training in its curriculum, and in 1904 George Masters was one of four pupils assigned the rank of Corporal. George was attached to No 4 Section.

On *Speech Night* 14th December 1904, at the *Theatre Royal*, those pupils who had performed with distinction were awarded prizes. George Masters was completing his first year (in Form IV) and was awarded first prize for geometry, and first prize for literature.

From 4th to 11th May 1905, a school military cadet encampment was held at Pukehou. This encampment was attended by A & E Company of Napier Boys High School and B Company of Te Aute High School. Cadet Sergeant George Masters is understood to have attended the encampment.

About June 1905, the school's four military sections held competitions and their performances were judged by Captain Ringland and Captain Smith (presumably locally based Regular Force Army personal). Sergeant George Masters' No 1 Section won first prise with 81½ points, his nearest rival was No 3 Section with 81 points, followed by No 4 Section with 80½ points and 79 points going to No 2 Section. When announcing the prizes, the judges stated that they were well satisfied with the exhibition of drill. The company was then dismissed and cheers were given for the best Section and Sergeant, and for the judges and officers.

In July 1905, George was approaching his 15th birthday, and already had clear plans of leaving school. He had discussed employment prospects with the manager of the Union Bank of Australia in Hastings. Prior to submitting his formal application for employment, he had to complete aptitude tests, have a medical examination, and also have guarantors. There were two people seeking the junior appointment, and luckily for George, his rival withdrew his application and thereby improved George's chances of winning the job.

On 15th July 1905 his application for employment was submitted through the Hastings branch of The Union Bank of Australia.

On Monday 14th August 1905, George left Napier Boys High School, and appears to have started work immediately with The Union Bank of Australia in Heretaunga Street, Hastings.

(The Union Bank of Australia Ltd was to merge with The Bank of Australasia Ltd in 1953 to become the Australia & New Zealand Banking Group Ltd, commonly referred to as ANZ Bank.)

His salary was £40-0-0d per annum and thereby provided him with approximately 30 shillings per fortnightly pay. £40-0-0 equates to $80.00, and 30 shillings equates to $3.00.

It should be kept in mind that during the era in which George joined the workforce, office technology in banks (and elsewhere) was limited to an elementary typewriter. All internal accounting work and customer records were manually written. All mathematical work was done by mental/manual calculation. There was no electric lighting and no heating in winter. Ventilation was provided in summer and winter by the circulation of air through open windows. Staff progressed from elementary duties to management by advancing through a prescribed sequence of work experiences. When a person had demonstrated proficiency at a particular level and range of responsibilities, he would then become eligible for promotion to the next step. As an opportunity arose, so the promotion would occur (which sometimes necessitated being transferred to another branch in another town).

During George's first year he would have been assigned such tasks as: Errands. These could have occupied about 50% of his time. This is before the advent of telephones. He would possibly have been made responsible for care and reconciliation of petty cash and postages. This would have occupied about 5% of his time. He is likely to have assisted with "batching" which involved mathematically testing whether all the *tellers* paper and cash transactions (lodgements and withdrawals) reconciled. This would have occupied about 45% of his time.

It was normal practice then for new entrants to be employed on a probationary basis for a year. At the end of the first year the performance of the new entrant would be reviewed and a decision made as to whether the person should be admitted fully to the bank's employment.

On the 13th August 1906, the manager of the Union Bank of Australia wrote to head office in Wellington with an assessment and review of George's performance and attributes. This letter is now barely legible, but in its amusingly rudimentary way gives an insight into George's performance during his first year:

"This official completed his term of probation on 1st August. I recommend that he now be placed on the staff. [He is a] Bright dispositioned lad, punctual and attentive to his duties. He does not appear to have a retentive memory, and is somewhat inaccurate. He is however improving in these respects, and doubtless will continue to improve with increasing age and experience. [He] Writes a fair hand, and is a fairly proficient typist. I recommend that he be granted increased salary according to scale."

That letter must have suitably impressed head office. George gained full employment status and with it went a 25% pay increase to £50-0-0 per annum. He also joined the bank's pension scheme.

On Monday 28th January 1907, George took two weeks of leave. At that time, young staff were eligible for two weeks of leave per annum (no more, no less).

In July 1907, George had aspirations of becoming an accountant. His older brother Clarence

was a qualified accountant, and presumably Clarence had influenced George into considering a career in accountancy. On the 9th July 1907, George gave the branch manager written notice of his intention to resign from the bank. In an explanatory letter to the Head Office Inspector (Personnel Manager) the manager of the Hastings office of the Union Bank wrote:

"Mr Masters informed me that he ultimately intends to take up accountancy as a profession. He is entering the employ of Messrs Fraser & Gardiner, Accountants, Land & Estate Agents etc, Hastings, in whose service he considers he will acquire greater knowledge of his ultimate calling than if he remained in the bank. His salary to commence with is £40-0-0`."

This completed George's first two years in the workforce. A clue to another change appeared three years later in August 1910 in the *Old Boys' Column* of the Napier Boys High School magazine *The Scindian.* It records George Masters as having joined the Hastings branch of the Bank of New South Wales (a predecessor of the Westpac Trust Bank). George maintained his subscription to the *Old Boys Association* in the years from 1907 to 1914.

George Masters joined the New Zealand Territorial Army (in B Company, 9th Regiment) and subsequently transferred to *B Section of the No 8 Mounted Field Ambulance.* He received discharge from the *No 8 Mounted Field Ambulance* upon leaving for England to become a theological student. George described his civilian occupation as a *"Student for Holy Orders"* with the Church of England.

On 26th September 1914, at the age of 24 years and 2 months, while a still a *"Student for Holy Orders"* in England, George Masters enlisted (in London) for service with the 1st Division Field Company, New Zealand Expeditionary Force (British Section). George's application for enlistment declared that he wished to serve with the armed services *"for the duration of the war".*

His application described him as 5ft 4½ inches tall (163½ centimetres tall), with a ruddy complexion, blue eyes, and weighed 8 stone, 12½ pounds (56½kilograms), with light brown hair.

In October 1914, George was sent to an Army training camp at Bulford near Salisbury.

Three war-time diaries recorded by George Masters have been made available for extraction, and the following text is a taken verbatim from his diaries.

Diary No 5 covers part of the time in which George was encamped in England with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force for military training. The text of *Diary No 5* obviously follows from Diary No 4 [not found] as its first words launch mid-sentence into an explanation of allied troop encampments. George Masters is based near Bulford about twelve miles from Salisbury, England, but the initial notes in his diary indicate that he has been seconded to a nearby encampment area for about a week to assist guide arriving Canadian troops to their allotted sites. The diary text follows:

24th Oct. 1914

and we were at West Down North. The other Canadian camps are West Down South, and Pond Farms.

The day we arrived it was raining, but we had to go out and get a complete plan of our camp, which was divided off for the various units who were to be camped there. It is about one mile long (perhaps more) by ½ mile or more broad, and is mostly for Artillery Hospitals (This is West Down North Camp only about which I am now speaking). About 6 pm we had to take over the telephone box, and from that time onwards one of us had to be continuously by the phone. No troops arrived that night, and it was rather slow work in the telephone box where I was on-duty up to 2 am. when I was relieved and went off to bed. I did not get up until about 10 am. though I got little sleep after 6 o'clock. One of my mates very kindly brought me over some breakfast, to save my getting up, and also took over my boots and socks to the cookhouse to dry them. They having got wet through the day before. I just mention these little incidents as signs of the thoughtfulness and good comradeship of our fellows, which made a great difference in the week which followed when we did have strenuous times! Instead of the three days which we anticipated, and had been told to prepare for, we were kept on duty at the Canadian Camp for just a week, during which time we had no change of clothes at all! Only on two hot nights did I have the opportunity of taking off my clothes for sleeping, and only one night did I get a decent sleep. It was a real night and day job, attending to the phone, running all over the camp with messages, guiding the troops to their lines and acting as general directory for them. The first time I acted as guide I was not altogether a success! A Colonel came in ahead of his men on the baggage waggon. He was just about done up having had no sleep for two nights, and I had just got him settled in a comfortable tent (this was somewhere in the early hours of the morning - 2 or 3 o'clock I think) when I found I'd taken him to the wrong tent! However, he wouldn't budge - said he'd stay there until the morning. He was able to do this because the troops came in dribs and drabs each night, and even when we left, after our week was up, they had not quite all arrived at camp. Altogether there are 33,000 men in this first contingent. They came over on 32 transport ships which also brought their guns, (cannon) and horses, transport etc. One thing which helped matters along for us was the invariable kindness & consideration of Major Sharman, who was in charge of us - and practically all the Canadian officers with whom we came in contact were the same. Also our food was A.1. We had our meals in the *Officers' Mess,* which was just alongside our telephone box. Our mattresses during that week were the boards of the tent floor! One thing that we should have greatly appreciated was a bath, but it was impossible to get one. Arrangements are very bad indeed as regards a bath there (and it is the same at our own camp).

All those poor Canadians had to walk from 8 to 12 miles from the railway station to their respective camps. It was nearly always the early hours of the morning when they arrived, - a weary tired lot of men, though often they were singing. The first lot of troops we saw arrive were Highlanders, and they were marching to the bagpipes! The worst night I had was the Friday night. I didn't go to bed 'til 3 am - was up again at 8 am, then I didn't get a wash 'till 4 o'clock in the afternoon, having had dinner just before my wash about 3.15 pm.

We were supplied with printed lists of dispositions of the troops, but for some unknown reason some of these were altered without our being advised, & consequently we led some people astray. The worst instance was a traction engine, with I think three lorries of baggage which came along early in the morning (about 1.30 am) and asked for directions to a certain Company. I looked up the list, but knowing that it had been altered, I rang up Headquarters to make sure. Was so and so at the West Down South? Yes. It had not been altered? No. So I advised the driver accordingly. Well, he said we were told Pond Farm (which was on past the camp at which I was stationed). I'm afraid you were misguided I told him, and I've just rung up my Headquarters for you, to make certain. You must go back to West Down South. They said a few pleasant nothings, and turned back. About ½ an hour after this I went off duty. In the morning, the man who relieved me, told me that these people had been back again, looking for my blood! When they got to West Down South they had been politely informed that this particular Company had been transferred to Pond Farm. They wanted me disturbed, so that they could give me their love, themselves, but fortunately the man on duty wouldn't wake me!

Some of our night experiences were quite funny. They were usually some belated Canadians looking for their lines, who had been into the village and had often imbibed rather too freely. At all hours of the night we would be called up, and usually the men were for one of the other camps. They had got properly lost, and often had been walking for hours. One night I was in front of the hut (telephone box) directing some stragglers, when from the cross-roads, probably 25 yards away, I heard a poor wailing cry, "Where is the Second Field Ambulance?" It was a helpless *lost sheep* sort of tone, and I could hardly answer the fellow for laughing, and for the rest of my time on duty that night, this plaintive wail kept "tickling me". Another little event: The Army Service Corps were just across the road from us, and amongst other things they had a big quantity of hay stored. As a rule, they had a guard over all the stores, but one night, between the change from English to Canadian guards, they had no one on duty, and the A.S.C. officer asked us to keep a look-out around the hay, and see that no men got near it smoking or lighting matches. We were, as far as possible, to warn everybody off. Somewhere during the still hours I went out, and against one of the hay stacks I heard some rustling. So over I went with my lantern, to warn the intruder off, and found a dog!

It was quite a happy time for us when our motor cars turned up for us, and we were on the way again for home, that is, for Bulford Camp. Not that we minded doing what little we could in the present state of affairs, but naturally we were quite glad that the strain, even though not very heavy, was over!

During the time that we were away, they had shifted from the tents to some new corrugated iron huts which had just been built for us. They are quite roomy & comfortable - miles better than the tents, because one has a little room to move about in and, if cloths were wet, you have

a reasonable chance of drying them, and of drying oneself too! Things, however, are so monotonous here that I can't think of anything in the way of events worth writing about, between the Wednesday we returned and the Friday night when I got leave for the weekend and went off to visit relations.

I had to go through London and Tunbridge Wells to Hawkhurst (Kent). Our train was timed to leave Bulford at 5.40 pm. It left at 6.15 pm. There were big numbers of Territorials & soldiers on the train, and so they held up the express at Salisbury (about 14 miles from here) for us, making it about 40 minutes late, much to the disgust of the passengers who were waiting at Salisbury. We had a great rush to catch it, but managed alright. It was a very long train and by the time it reached London was another 20 minutes late, arriving at 9.7 pm instead of 8.7 pm. The railway company which runs this way is the *London and Southwestern*, and the station they take you into is Waterloo. To catch my train, I had to take a taxi from there to Victoria Station. By 10.20 pm I reached Tunbridge Wells, where I stayed for the night, catching the train on [to Hawkhurst] at 10 minutes to 7 in the morning, and arriving at Hawkhurst about 8 o'clock.

I wanted to make the most of the few precious hours I had for my weekend, and although the weather was not the best, I certainly did enjoy my weekend, - such a grand change from soldiering. There are at Hawkhurst a number of wounded Belgian soldiers, who are quartered in a large private house which has been lent to the authorities for hospital purposes. I found my little smattering of French of the greatest assistance to me - only I did wish I knew the language better. I was able to speak just a little to them - but it was a little. I found it was much easier to speak to them, than to understand what they said to me. I visited them twice - on Saturday afternoon and on Sunday afternoon. They seemed very pleased to have visitors. There was one of them who could speak English better than I could speak French, and between the two of us we were able to carry on a little conversation. Some of his personal experiences of German atrocities were awful. For instance he told me of one Belgian village where they locked up the whole population in the Church, giving them no food or water for three days, and then they shot all the men, cut the throats of the babies, and after outraging some of the woman shot them! This is a fair example of a German. "Kultin" in Belgian! No wonder the poor Belgians are very bitter towards these German barbarians. They wanted me to kill as many as I possibly could. All these wounded soldiers seemed to be doing well, and several of them hope to go out again shortly, to the front.

Hawkhurst is a very big though scattered village, and has two Churches - one of them a very big and beautiful <u>old</u> Church. Outside of this Church they have a very old oak tree, which though partly decayed still grows acorns. It is all bricked up on one side at the bottom to keep it standing. The Church services were a particularly enjoyable part of my weekend. On my way back to camp I spent a couple of hours or so in London, attending to one or two matters I wanted to see to. It is fine to know, even as little as I do of London [that] you don't have that helpless lost feeling which comes over one on the first arrival in such a great city. I got back to Bulford at about 9.45 pm on Monday night just before *lights out* - so had to undress in the dark!

The only exciting thing that has happened here since then has incapacitated most of us for 24 hours or more! The doctor has been making injections into our arms as a preventative against

Typhoid fever. It is on the same lines as vaccination, only I don't think its effects are quite so severe. There was only one in this hut who was affected more than me, I think. We were done yesterday morning - myself just before lunch, and was one of the first down with it. I began to get shivers as soon as we got on our first after-lunch parade, and had to come and lie down. It was not long before I was followed by others, but some it has hardly affected except that they have sore arms. Last night I was quite feverish, but it has gradually subsided today, and this evening I am beginning to feel quite well, although the arm is still sore.

For the present I think that's about all I can write. It's all that I can think of the may be interesting & the probabilities are that a lot of what I have written makes very dry reading.

It is now Thursday evening October 29th. I might mention that on account of these injections, there were no parades held this afternoon.

One thing I have just remembered, they have been giving more extras - being gifts I expect, from the patriotic fund I spoke about before. The latest we have received are mittens and knitted cardigan jackets. We are getting well fitted up for winter campaigning. One little feature of my weekend was that I saw something of an English Autumn, but of course it was only a passing glance. The various tints of the leaves - it is some time before they fall after they first start to tint - are very pretty, particularly when you see great numbers of trees as there are in and about Hawkhurst - and the town being hilly, (just easy hills) you can get some great views. New Zealand autumns can in no way compare with English autumns.

Time is slowly passing on. Tonight is the famous "Fifth of November". English children are burning the Kaiser they say, instead of Guy Fawkes! I suppose the same idea was adopted in New Zealand. I say *was* advisedly, for the 5th of Nov. is now passed and over, and it must be somewhere about 8 am of Nov. 6th in N.Z.

The war news we are at present getting is very serious and, much of it, especially the naval side, really bad. Prospects are undoubtedly all in favour of a very long war, with very serious loss of life to our Empire. We are every day hoping and expecting to hear something of the New Zealanders, but can get no definite information. N.Z. mail, so far as I am concerned, is very disappointing. I dare say it is partly due to disorganisation owing to the war, but there should be some more in tomorrow anyhow, and I very much hope there will be some for me. Even yet I often start to wonder where I am and it seems mighty hard to realise that I am so far away from home and all my old friends.

I have been having one or two fresh experiences of the soldiers' life. On Monday last I was "told off" for transport fatigue, and had to go with the fatigue party, on our motor lorry, into Bulford Station twice to pick up some things for our camp, and we also had to go to the main Bulford camp for our allowance of meat and bread. Unfortunately for us, we struck a very wet day, and but for having a good coat, which sopped up the rain and made itself very heavy, I would have been wet through, for our lorry is an open one, without shelter. Our main trouble though, was persuading the lorry to come into this camp, from off the road, there being no formed track, and the wheels consequently preferring to plough for themselves, holes in the ground, and scatter mud around generally, than to take the lorry forward. We had a worse job than getting out and walking. We had to help the wagon along, and incidentally, get ourselves

covered in mud! At night we couldn't get the wagon more than about ½ way in (it being slightly up-hill in addition to being muddy) although we got about 20 fellows to heave and push. And so everyone took a few loaves of bread and carted them up to the cookhouse, the lorry being left until the morning. Then the next day, Tuesday, an examination for non-commissioned officers was held. I was a competitor, but a very poor one, for I'm afraid I made a lovely mess of both papers. When the results are published, I guess I'll be among the disrated, for I have been acting Lance Corporal.

Then on Wednesday I struck my first turn on "*hut*" orderly, whose duty generally is to sweep out and tidy up the hut, etc. First thing [in the morning] I had to jump out pretty smart when Reveille sounded and go to the cook house for our hut's supply of coffee and biscuits (which are provided every morning). Instead of going on *before-breakfast* parade - our first parade - I had to stay in the hut to sweep it out and make it generally tidy, and also to clean out the coffee dixie and the mugs - and the time is really insufficient in which to do things properly. About ten minutes before breakfast I had to run to the mess tent, to help get the breakfast out and act as waiter generally. This is always the hut orderly's privilege! I had to do the same at lunch and dinner times also. In the evening I got a gentle reminder that I had not brought in the coal, so off I had to go for that. Just as i was thinking of getting to bed: "Has the Orderly put out the fire buckets"? Of course he hadn't, and out I had to go again. It is the rule of the camp that we have two buckets full of water outside of each hut each night, to be ready in case of fire.

Today we have simply been ploughing our way through mud all day. It has been raining a good deal here, and last night it rained pretty heavily again. This on top of the recent bad weather, and the soppy state of the ground, served to make the place properly muddy, and all over the place it is just like a New Zealand stockyard in mid winter, after heavy rains. That's as good a description as I can give I think. They seem to be using us to prepare the way for the others, as we are constantly on fatigue [additional chores] (we have all been on all day today) getting equipment, crockery etc into the huts, and preparing palliasses for the New Zealanders whom we hope are now well on their way.

(11/10/14.) Things have been happening these last few days - that is in a mild sort of way. It was last Thursday night that I last wrote up this diary, and it was on Friday morning that things started to move. Rumours had been going around camp that a contingent of us were to go up to London for the Lord Mayor's Show, but no-one seemed to know anything definite until I think it was in Thursday morning's papers that the notice appeared that 100 New Zealanders were to participate in the procession. On Friday morning (Nov.6th) our Commanding Officer (Captain Lampen) came round and inspected each platoon (who were drilling separately) and picked out 100 altogether - or just about ½ the Corps - to go to London. I was one of the fortunate ones. From then on we were kept pretty busy until we got away, abut 9.30 am on Saturday. In the evening (Friday) we had to receive our pay (Saturday is the usual pay-day) and afterwards to receive from the doctor our second inoculation against Typhoid fever. This time he inoculated us in the bottom of the back - at the back of the right hip. We were also given two red cloth badges, with New Zealand worked on them in white lettering, which we had to sew onto the sleeves of our tunics just below the shoulder. They do show us off, and there is no mistaking what part of the Empire we hail from - but wasn't it a job sewing the beggars on. I certainly didn't appreciate it, and it took me a *Dickens* of

a time to do. But that wasn't the end of my troubles. A few of us unfortunates had leather buttons put on our tunics by the tailors instead of the N.Z.Forces brass buttons, and we had to cut these off and, sew on the brass ones ourselves - another enjoyable job, but not so good as the cloth badges business, all the same. I was the only poor clown in our hut who had the button sewing to do. I just got these things finished as *lights out* went - and it was extended ½ an hour, to 10.30, to give us a chance to get things ready. However, I had many more things to attend to, so had to get up at a quarter to six in the morning (although Reveille is not until 6.30 nowadays on account of day-break not being until nearly 7 am, and get my Mills Webb equipment together, my kit bag packed (we had to take two blankets with us in addition to our private toilet requirements etc) get my buttons shone up, boots cleaned etc, before 7.15 when we had inspection parade for the London Contingent. I was pretty sore on it on Saturday morning, as was nearly everyone else also, but it did not appear to have affected my system as the first inoculation did. So when we were ready to march off to Bulford Station (nearly 3 miles from our huts) and they asked those to fall out who were unfit to march. I took no notice of the invitation. Thought I would be better for the walk. About a dozen fell out and rode down on the motor lorry with our baggage. That walk however, just about knocked me up, and it treated a few others likewise. One fellow fainted when he got to the station. I felt pretty miserable on it, and after we got a start in the train, I began to shiver with it - which was one of the effects of the first inoculation also. I can't say I enjoyed the ride up to London. At one of the stations one of the boys got me a nice hot cup of tea, which cleared my head and made me feel rather better, but when they asked at London (Vauxhall Station where we left the train) for those who could not do a two mile march to fall out - I fell out. I hated doing it, for it makes me miserable if I can't keep my end up with others, and this was the first occasion since my connection with Military matters, either in New Zealand or here, that I had to report sick. We went by train, car and bus to Chelsea Barracks. Changing at Victoria Station, and the other fellows marched it. A lecture room had been prepared for us for accommodation purposes [with] straw palliasses arranged in rows across the floor. Owing to delays and waits with the trains, it was somewhere about 4.30 pm before we got settled down, and our Captain announced that those who wished could have leave until 9.30 Sunday morning, and most fellows went. I was one of the most!

I went from Victoria Station out to Ightham - a place where I have relations, and which I think I mentioned previously - about an hour and a quarter by train. As I had to go about a mile from the Station I did, what is for me a most unusual thing - I took a cab. I fully intended returning to London that night but I felt too miserable, and did as my relations wanted me - stayed the night. All that evening particularly and most of Sunday, I was too stiff and sore almost, to move. Getting in and out of bed was an awful process, as was getting up and down from a seat also. But the general seediness which had a grip of me on the Saturday night had just about left me on Sunday. I didn't budge from the house until the evening, when I got a lift to the station, and went back to London. I reported myself at the barracks and found that several other sick men like myself had not shown up in the morning, but our sickness was a valid reason for absence and nothing whatever was said to us [about returning overdue]. I didn't feel like sleeping on the very hard palliasses, and most uncomfortably narrow, with which we were supplied, so I went off to the Y.M.C.A. They were full up but sent me on to a very nice boarding house, where I was able to spend a fairly comfortable night, despite my soreness, and on Monday morning I was almost surprised at myself. I felt so much better, and quite fit for the ordeal of the day. The place where I stayed was near to St Pancras and Kings Cross

Stations, in the north of London - a new part of the city for me. We had to report by 10 to 9 on Monday morning, and by about 9.30 we were all ready to move - properly spick and span and with most of our equipment on. Instead of the ordinary service caps, we had the *felts,* and what with these and our cloth badges, in addition to pretty brass fern leaf badges, we were very quickly and easily distinguished. We left barracks about 10 o'clock, and from then until about 5.30 we were on our feet all the time, the bigger part of it on the march. It was one long round of cheering for us the whole day long. We were enthusiastically received everywhere by everyone. We marched at ease most of the way in the morning, except when we passed Buckingham Palace, where the King is now in residence, when we marched at attention. This is not very far from Chelsea Barracks. We passed up in front of there, along the Mall (not Pall Mall which is another thoroughfare altogether) , with St James Park on one side, and amongst other places on the other side [was] York House, the official residence of the Prince of Wales. The Mall leads through an archway into Trafalgar Square, and passing across there we marched up The Strand, Fleet Street, Ludgate Hill, Ludgate Circus, and passed St Pauls into Cheapside. Here we were given a rest for nearly an hour, until we had to join in the procession. As I said before, most of this time we were marching at ease, and singing our own particular marching songs, calling out *Kia Ora* and suchlike to the crowds that everywhere rushed to see us, and shout out their good wishes for New Zealand. We had some great fun over a Maori. He passed us on a motor bus, I think it was in Fleet Street, shouting and waving like mad when he saw we were New Zealanders - and I suppose we did our share of shouting and waving too. He got off the bus and joined us at Ludgate Circus, and started marching with us. And he kept with us until we joined the procession. We got him on a cycle car affair to give us a Haka while we were resting prior to joining in the procession. But he didn't like his elevated position and soon gave it best [declined to perform]. We gave the waiting crowd a Haka ourselves there, and weren't they pleased with it! The girls from the windows above us were throwing apples, and many people came around with apples, cigarettes etc and gave to us. One man brought round two great baskets full of apples - they must have held nearly a bushel [20kg] each. A number of people who had been in New Zealand, or had friends in New Zealand, came up to us to make themselves known and ventilate their knowledge of N.Z. And all day long as we passed along the streets we would hear every now and again Kia Ora, Kapai, Tena Koe Paheka etc. One or two tried to give us a Haka, so there must be a few people in London, anyway, who know there is such a place as New Zealand.

Once the procession started we had to be on our best behaviour. We had the honour of representing dear old New Zealand, for I believe the first time it has ever been represented in the historic old pageant, of the Lord Mayor's Show - and what is I believe, the greatest and biggest of such shows that has ever been held. Great importance is attached to the show here as a stimulus to recruiting, and particular importance is attached to the presence of Colonial troops. Altogether it was a grand patriotic pageant, and I think will go down as one of the greatest in history. I'm mighty glad that I was fortunate enough to be present. I would have been rather miserable on it, if I had been one of the poor unfortunates left down here at camp.

We joined the procession at Cheapside about 1 pm, it having about ½ an hour start of us, as we were well back in the long line. We passed from Cheapside down Poultry, Queen Victoria St, Cannon St, St Paul's Churchyard, Ludgate Hill, Fleet St, to the Royal Courts of Justice, the return being by The Strand, Charring Cross, Northumberland Avenue, Victoria Embankment, Queen Victoria Street, to the Guild Hall. I have given the list of streets not

because I think my readers will be able to follow the route taken, but because the names being mostly well known in New Zealand, might be of interest. About half way through the procession we had a rest of an hour or so while the Lord Mayor was being sworn in. And we then gave the crowd another Haka which they seemed to be very greatly pleased with. The whole day was nothing but one continuous roar of cheering for us - as soon as ever our front men passed along the people would all take up the cry N.Z., N.Z., and shout and shout and shout. The Canadians looked so much like home [UK] troops that they were not easily distinguished, and consequently their ovation was not comparable with ours. The marched (300 of them) just in front of us. The papers were rather apologising for this poorer reception of the Canadians, and no doubt they were right in their statements that had they (the Canadians) been easily distinguishable, as we were, their reception would have been the same.

I will give you one or two quotations from the London Dailies:
1. The Daily Express says:- ".....the *Maple Leaf* passed practically unnoticed, although those who know them tried to make up in vigour of their cheers for the silence of the rest. That it was not apathy on the part of the crowd, but sheer want of a clue was shown when the New Zealanders followed. They came immediately after the Canadians. As soon as the crowd caught sight of their slouch hats it cheered the New Zealanders to the echo....."

2. The Daily Graphic says:- ".....In the manner of the overseas men one notices a certain difference which distinguishes them from the home national. A sense of unrushing irresistible force communicates itself as they pass. If it is possible, they are keener than the men of the Mother Country [UK] to throw themselves into the fray .....Every muscle of the perfectly trained troops says it as they step out amid the blare of martial music and the plaudits of every man woman and child who looks on. The people dote on them, and if there are favourites anywhere in the long line, the trim clean looking New Zealanders bear the palm."

There were miles of streets lined with millions of people. Of course far the greatest crowd that ever I have seen in my life. Miles of people were thickly packed on either side of the streets through which we passed, with lines of police (thousands of them there must have been) holding them back, and every available space, like the great steps of St Paul's Cathedral, and all windows and steps of buildings of all kinds seemed to be packed also. The papers all say that but once before has such a crowd been seen in London, and that was on the return of the C.I.Vs. (City Imperial Volunteers from South Africa) and marching in the procession we had a grand opportunity of seeing all parts of this enormous multitude of people. Our return home after we broke off from the procession, was at the ease also, and so our singing went on again, and our Kia Ora etc to the people who still crowded round us practically all the way back to the barracks. We arrived there about 5.15 pm, and as soon as we were dismissed general leave was granted to all until 12 midnight, but all had to return to sleep in the barracks. Although we were all pretty tired, and many had sore feet, not to be wondered at considering we must have marched somewhere between 10 and 15 miles and had been on our feet since 10 o'clock in the morning. What rest we had was standing up on the hard streets. Most of the fellows took advantage of the leave. I did for one. Without waiting for a wash or anything to eat, I removed my equipment and off I went. I caught a bus through to Charring Cross, where I rushed through, got my ticket, and just caught my train as it was moving off - 6.6 pm. I got through to Kingswood, the station I had booked for, at 7.5 pm, and it was not until then that I got my wash and a meal - which I muchly appreciated as all I had since breakfast was

some bread and cheese and water - the ration we were supplied with in the morning. Of course I had a couple of apples as well, but the list I have just given are not good appetite appeasers! I went to Kingswood to see relations, and after an enjoyable evening there, I managed to get back to barracks just before 12 o'clock. We had our swags packed and were ready to leave the station at 7.30 and off we marched to Waterloo, catching a special train for ourselves and the Canadians, back to Bulford.

A few incidents of happenings of individuals in London will I think be of interest. This much was general, wherever any of us went, there were always people looking at us and you could hear the constant whispers of the people "New Zealand, look New Zealand." That was continuous wherever we went, and we were continually being *button-holed* [stopped] by various people. These incidents I am going to give, are just a sample - the same kind of thing befell us all.

One fellow had to go through the East End, and, he got such a crowd around him shouting New Zealand, New Zealand, etc (mostly children) that he found his only escape was to jump on a passing bus. He didn't care where it was going.

Another one was riding in the tube when a young lady said something like this, "Oh, you're from New Zealand aren't you - would you mind giving me your autograph and address."

One lady nearly in tears with emotion, came up and caught hold of two of the men and said, God Bless you both for coming such a long way to help.. etc."

I was in the refreshment room at Victoria Station getting a cup of tea and something to eat, when some men there insisted in paying for what I had. In the motor busses - everywhere in fact - people would continually congratulate us, wish us good luck and praise us up generally - they appreciate tremendously the practical loyalty of all the overseas Dominions. Such behaviour undoubtedly tends to give us all swelled heads. I personally, and so did many others get sick of it. We have done nothing but what was staring in our face to do. Nothing more than all the fellows at home here [Britons] have done and are doing - just a plain duty. We had to explain of course over and over again, that we had enlisted in England and that the others had not yet arrived - but we are undoubtedly taking all the kudos that should fall to them.

It is jolly fine to think that we had a Corps here that could send a contingent to represent "God's Own Country" at this great pageant. It certainly has brought New Zealand and its loyalty before millions of people personally.

One very funny little incident I must tell you about. Two or three of our fellows were walking along, when a couple of kids alongside of them noticed the New Zealand badges, which made them very curious. And they overheard one say to the other "New Zealanders, and Gor-blimey, they're white."

We were followed down to camp on Monday by a party of ladies and gentlemen representing the New Zealand War Contingent Association in England. [They are] the people who are providing us with extras. And in the afternoon we were inspected by them, and then Lord Plunkett and the Hon. Thos. Mackenzie addressed us. One consoling piece of information they gave us was that they are preparing for us or for those of us who come back from the front, wounded or invalided home, one of the finest convalescent homes in England. They're

going to make it as much like New Zealand as possible - even going to import N.Z. climate for it!

Tuesday and Wednesday were just very ordinary days, except that on Wednesday (yesterday) and today it has been bitterly cold - today particularly - a piercing cutting wind. We are beginning to get winter weather. It seems bad enough here, but as for those poor beggars in the trenches at the front it must be awful. I know that I felt pretty cold last night. It was cold enough to spoil my sleep a little.

18/11/14 - Camp life is passing slowly along with a few incident to relieve the sameness, and also we are now getting on to more interesting work. The monotony of ordinary squad and rifle drill is nearly over, and we are now on skirmishing work, range finding etc. Last Saturday we had a route march competition between our four platoons. It developed into pretty nearly a route run. We did 11 miles in 2¾ hours. A very fast pace indeed for such a distance. Unfortunately, several of the fellows of our platoon fell out. They could not stick the pace, and consequently we were last on the last, even though our pace was better than some of them.

Saturday afternoon is our afternoon off, and as I felt pretty well after lunch, I got leave and went to Salisbury for the afternoon and evening. Salisbury is a fine old town about 12 miles from here, but I was disappointed in not seeing what I particularly wanted to see - the grand big Cathedral - a fine old building built I think in the 13th century. By the time I arrived there the place was, unfortunately, closed, and so I only got an outside view of it. I hope for better fortune next time. There are some old gates leading into the city - two of these I saw. I spent an enjoyable evening doing some shopping and having a look around the place, but one can't see as much in the dark. I hope next Saturday week to go into Salisbury and stay 'til Monday morning. It is one of the old English towns and well worth spending some time in. Although my leave (as that of the other New Zealanders who had leave) was until 9.45 pm but it was that time before I left Salisbury, and owing to the train needing a long rest on the way, it was nearly 12 mid-night by the time we reached Bulford Station and somewhere about ½ past twelve by the time we arrived at camp. There were three others who came home with me, but there were more on the next train [which was] more than an hour later. If you spend any time at all in Salisbury, it is practically impossible to get back any earlier than we did. The trains are too inconvenient, and so it is recognised that we get leave up 'til 9.45 pm - and return, well when convenient. But officially, leave is not allowed later than 9.45 pm.

Sunday was a wet miserable day and consequently I did not get out much. We had Church service in our Lecture Hall in the morning and in the evening I went over to Bulford camp for Church service and afterwards onto the Garrison Theatre for a semi-sacred concert, which is arranged each Sunday evening by the Church people.

On Monday morning we received a challenge from the Canadians (five thousand of whom have moved into huts adjoining ours) for platoon drill competition. In the afternoon the competition was held - result New Zealand won. The judge was a Canadian officer, but I think there was no doubt whatever that our boys were much smarter and better. Unfortunately I was one of the onlookers. I didn't get a place in the picked platoon.

On Tuesday we had a very interesting day - in the morning we went for a route march to Stonehenge some six miles from here. The name I don't doubt is familiar to all! We were allowed time off when we arrived there to have a look at the place. Admission 1/- [one shilling] The first impressions one gets is of some old ruins in the centre of a big plain with very little signs of human life anywhere about. But when we got nearer we could see what a wonderful old place it is. It is built of great blocks of roughly hewn stone, probably, I should say, about 4 to 5 foot across, 12 to 18 inches thick (perhaps more) and jutting up about 15 to 20 feet above the ground - and the guide told us they were buried about 9 feet into the earth. What I am speaking of now is the main outside circle. Inside of it are two minor horseshoe shapes of smaller rocks. On the top of these outer great pillars of rock there are pin heads, cone shaped about a foot high and hewn out of the solid rock which fit into sockets on caps or cross pieces of rock which fit on the top of these pillars - and these top stones or caps are nearly as big as the pillars. How the whole thing was built is an absolute marvel. No-one knows how they got these great rocks into position, and more than that, where they got them from. For there is no rock of any kind within miles and miles of the place. It is in the centre of the great chalk district, the same as we have at Bulford, there being a top covering of earth. The wonderful thing about it is with regard to the altar stone and sacrificing stone. The ancient Druids are supposed to have made human sacrifices occasionally - on special feast times. In front of this temple (understand there is no roof) there is one solitary pillar with a conical top, which is I suppose about 10 to 15 yards ahead of another great stone - the sacrificial stone laid at full length on the ground. In this there are two places hewn to roughly fit human bodies. The sacrificial stone is roughly ten to fifteen yards in front of the temple. Inside the temple, but near the back the altar stone also lies flat on the ground. Now the Hall Stones that I have last mentioned are in an exact line, - a line which runs between two of the main pillars of the temple, and on one day of the year only, June 21, the sun rises directly over the outer-most stone which throws a shadow over the sacrificial stone, and just reaches the centre of the altar stone. That is a short rough description of the Stone Henge - the best I can give from my slight knowledge. [George Masters' diary incorporates a drawing of the Stone Henge arrangement of pillars etc and their alignment] I may state that experts date it back 3,700 years. At the present time a number of the pillars and capping stones have fallen, but the circle and the horseshoe are practically unimpaired. There is no great damage done by age to spoil the affect of it all.

Most of the afternoon we spent in inspecting some lines of trenches which the Royal Engineers have constructed not far from our camp. They are really great works of art, and by various devices are wonderfully well hidden from view. Head cover is made in some of them as a protection against shells. Also in front of some of these are barbed wire entanglements - a sample of the sort of thing that we can expect to bump up against when we go on the Continent.

Wednesday morning the main item on the programme was range finding (judging distances). Every man's figures were taken down and, afterwards compared with the correct figures as taken by a Range Finder (wonderfully accurate mechanical instruments about a yard long which can be slung over the back, and have the appearance of a golf club carrier. They cost only £90 apiece ! The three best men of each platoon have been selected as range finders - that is to be their special work - and today they were each supplied with a range finding instrument, on which they had a little practice. Some of the men were wonderfully accurate. They had six different ranges to judge, and although there was a great difference in some of

the guesses, there were a number who were very close on every range. I was detailed to the job of taking down the men's names and the distances they judged, and so had no opportunity to test my judgement powers, except on one range, - the first one - and then I was hopelessly out.

Today we went out for a Field Day, taking our full equipment except our *Great Coats*, but the weather spoilt our outing and cut it short. It was a hard white frost this morning, but fog came over, which seemed to develop into clouds, and about one o'clock light rain set in, and we started right off for *home* - otherwise camp. We managed to get back before getting wet through, but were very disappointed at our day being spoilt. It was like a picnic - we took our *dixies* with us and had some good old New Zealand billy tea, but that was the end of the fun.

25/11/14. On Saturday morning last the Canadians again challenged us for the cup we won from them the previous week, and I regret to say that they won it back. I suspect we will put in another challenge when I hope our boys' drill will be too good for them.

On Saturday afternoon I went for a walk to a village called Durrington - about 2½ - 3 miles from camp, to look up a waterworks engineer whom I had met at the Canadian camp. He used to come in to use the telephone at all hours of the night and day, and was kind enough to ask me to go along and see him. He was away, but his wife was expecting me, and wondering why I had not been along before. As he was to be home on the Sunday, she asked me to go back then for tea and spend the evening with them.

On Sunday I got full day's leave; leaving camp about 7.45 am. I first went to 8 o'clock Communion service at Bulford Camp, and from their the Chaplain took my friend and I for breakfast with him. From there I walked on to Amesbury, a matter of three miles from Bulford Camp. I arrived early for Church service, so spent the time in looking around the beautiful old Church, which is built in the form of a cross, with a big tower rising from the centre. The tower is not built down into the body of the Church, but is in the form of a loft, the bellringer standing on the ceiling of the Church. In this Church there are some fine old oak beams. It contains a font which was recently dug out, whilst (I think) while they were doing some repairs, and which dates back, I understand to Norman times. There is one fine old marble tablet in the Church dated 1683, written in old English lettering, all of which is plainly readable. I spent a most interesting time there. The Amesbury Church is all of Norman architecture. One particular feature is a fine old screen. On one old grave stone on which most of the lettering was indistinct, but the date appeared to me to be 1200 and something - I could not make out any of the figures after the 12.

Amesbury is quite a big village, or perhaps a small township. Like Durrington, it is very old, and contains numbers of old fashioned houses, many of which have thatched roofs. After lunch at Amesbury I walked on to Durrington, a matter of two miles, where I spent a most happy evening - a very pleasant change from camp.

We have been getting some properly cold weather lately - hard white frosts, and often the ground is frozen all day. If I want to sleep at night, I find that I must have four thicknesses of blanket on my bed in addition to a thick Kaiapoi rug folded double - otherwise the cold comes through and spoils my sleep. A number of the fellows are, unfortunately, down with

coughs & colds, but so far I am glad to say my health is A.I.

We got some very interesting news today, which created a lot of excitement in camp. Our Captain announced that the first New Zealand contingent had landed at Suez, and that they are going to winter in Egypt. We judge from a remark that he passed that we will join them there, but that is pure guessing on our part. Still that is the idea that practically all of us have, but the question is when shall we go? Are we to spend Christmas in England or not? We know this, that he (the skipper) is making things move with regard to our drill, working us signallers hard, and so on.

1/12/14. We have today been notified that we are "to leave for abroad very shortly", but that is all the definite information that we have, that we are allowed to pass on to our relations and friends. But in confidence our Captain told us a little more, and as the need for confidence will have long since passed before anyone reads this I will give the information here - not that it matters much. But he said that within 8 days we will be leaving, and it is a practical certainty that it is for Egypt, as our sizes were taken today for pith helmets! Well, now that we have got the exciting part down - and it is causing proper excitement here, as you can understand - I will go on with what little I have to tell of the past few days' events.

On Saturday last I went into Salisbury in the afternoon and did not return until Sunday night. We New Zealanders received a special invitation to a concert which the Mayoress of Salisbury had arranged for soldiers, and a good number of our fellows were there. It was a very good concert indeed, and the people were most kind to us. In addition the people of Salisbury have several *Soldiers Homes* - places where any Tommy in uniform has free admission, reading matter and various games are provided, and in one, at least, there is a piano. One can also get a wash, & a brush up, and boot cleaning outfits complete are provided - all free; and they also provide cheap refreshments. These things, of course, are very much appreciated by everyone. Five of us stayed together at an old Inn called the *Red Lion* - a real old fashioned place. The entrance is through an archway which leads into a courtyard, into which the old stage coaches used to drive - and one can just picture them coming in. Just beyond this courtyard is the stable, and on one side is the office and the bar - everything arranged for the travelling public in the old stage coach days. It is a peculiarly constructed old building, and one can very easily get lost, wandering around the passages. Two of my camp mates did the previous Saturday, and had to get one of the maids to guide them back to their rooms. The different levels on which the rooms are is most peculiar. There will be one room, or a set of rooms say 5 or 6 steps up from the dining room on the ground floor. Then another dozen steps or so higher up another set of rooms, and another two or three steps only higher, some more rooms. One certainly does not see modern buildings built on this extraordinary plan.

On Sunday morning I went for 8 o'clock communion service to the Cathedral - one of the largest and grandest in England. A hushed feeling comes over one immediately on entering this wonderful edifice - its magnificent architectural beauty inspires at once that feeling, and one realises that he is viewing one of man's grandest and most magnificent works. It is, I think, an even more beautiful design than St Paul's. A gentleman who very kindly showed us over in the afternoon, told us that there were as many pillars in the Cathedral, as there are hours in the year. (I hadn't worked it out yet) But the pillars are a sight in themselves - all of marble, and the smaller ones beautifully polished. Such a building is entirely beyond

description - one can only tell of its great beauty. To understand and realise what it really is, one must see it. The tower is the highest in England - 400 ft, and there are only two Cathedrals in the world with higher towers - those of Amiens and Strasbourg. Salisbury Cathedral was built somewhere in the 1220s or 1230s, without a tower, but with foundations for a small tower. Somewhere I think in the 16th century, this great tower was built, and the result was that its four supporting pillars bulged beneath the weight, and supports had to be built in. These supports included two inverted arches, which also serve as an additional feature of beauty. This bulge is very plainly discernable, and in fact catches the eye. Amongst the chapels the Cathedral contains, are two very small ones, also added about the 16th century, for the celebration of masses for the Dead - but someone in authority very soon put a stop to this practice being against the principals of the Church faith, and they are now used as pews by two local notables. I also attended, with the others, morning service at 10.30 am.

In the afternoon we went for a walk to a place called Old Sarum, about two miles from the city. All it now consists of is a great earthwork which is believed to have been erected in Roman or Saxon times, and was no doubt then a great stronghold. It encloses about 33 acres, and is on a small hill, being protected all round by a great ditch, which most probably, in olden times, was full of water. It is I suppose 4 feet deep, with very steep sides, and at the top about 40 feet across. Evidently the Normans made use of this fort, and erected inside of it a castle, and also a Church. This castle was at some time or other largely demolished. Only a few feet of the bottom walls in most cases being left, and all the building materials were apparently taken for use elsewhere. Somehow or other most of these ruins have got covered with earth, and excavations are now going on, and have been for the last year or two.

3/12/14 - I was interrupted in writing this "*story of my life*" (as it is called by my hut mates as soon as they see me writing in this book) and have only just been able to make another start. For want of time I must leave out further reference to the ruins at Old Sarum though they are very interesting indeed.

I see by glancing back that I forgot to mention that on Monday Nov. 30th we were inspected by General Pitt Kent Campbell, evidently with a view to seeing that we were fit for active service, and he as much as said, after the inspection, that we would shortly go to Egypt to join the other New Zealanders.

Yesterday morning (Tuesday Dec. 2nd) I happened to again be told off for transport duty, and while I was away 48 hours General Leave was granted to most of the men, prior to our embarking, which is, I <u>believe</u> to take place next Monday night. This is the usual leave granted to all soldiers who are going abroad. About 40 men were left behind in camp, and these are to have their leave as soon as the others return. I was on the list of those to remain at camp, as were others who were on transport duty, but I managed to get away this morning. I had been promised leave to go into Salisbury to a dentist, but this *bolt from the blue* about going abroad upset that arrangement. In lieu thereof, however, I managed to get something that suits me better - an extra day on to my general leave, and thus I am not due back at camp until Saturday night. I caught the first train up to London from Bulford this morning, and after seeing a dentist there, and collecting some luggage I had left at the Y.M.C.A. I came through to my relations here at Ightham where I am staying the night. I have two other places to visit yet before returning.

The last entry in Diary Book No 5 is dated 3 December 1914. His military records show that on 11 December 1914, he left England (by steamship) and arrived in Egypt twelve days later on 23rd December 1914.

Between the last entry in Diary No 5 and the first entry in Diary No 6 there is a period of thirty eight days elapse.

Geo. Masters
Continuation of Diary
Book No. 6.
Jan. 1915 / March 1915.
(Egypt)

10/1/15. These marches are most interesting as they give one an idea of the system of irrigation from this great river [Nile], of which all of us have read and heard so much. There is a system of big drains or canals which tap the Nile, and make a network through theses cultivated lands. There are many means (and most of them are very old) of lifting the water from these canals and running it into the small drains which run everywhere through the fields at only a few yards distance. Some of the means used are lever lifts with weights one end buckets the other; big wheels with buckets fitted onto them, (these buckets empty into a scute as the wheel revolves); revolving drums etc etc. Here where our camp is, one sees only sand sand sand (except of course the houses which are not far from us) - but, in the Nile Valley everything is beautifully green - crops, trees, palms, etc, all help in making a lovely sight.

Shortly after we arrived in Egypt the Hon.Thos. Mackenzie had a general inspection of all troops - a grand March Past. It was a fine and imposing sight. Then, last Saturday morning he had us all drawn up and gave us a fine address. No doubt all of this will have been reported in the New Zealand papers before now. I see according to the papers he is leaving for England today.

On Saturday afternoon I was taken to see the Native Bazaar - a most interesting and wonderful street. It is said to be the wealthiest street in the world. It is so very different from the usual filth and squalor of the natives, that one could hardly believe it to be a native quarter. Still, there are a lot of Europeans who have shops there. These different shops, (all facing a very narrow street) are filled with ancient curios of all kinds - paintings, artworks of brass ware, wood, earthenware, metals, precious stones and jewellery, ancient arms of warfare, and all manner of things. I hope to have another visit there, anyway if not more.

Then on Sunday I went to a Coptic Church. The Copts, as I expect you know, are the descendants of the Ancient Egyptians, and are quite a distinct race from the Arabs, who form the major part of the native population. These (the Arabs) I believe, invaded Egypt and

captured it somewhere in the past). The Copts have kept a form of Christianity from the earliest days of Christianity. Kept it in spite of all persecution, and entirely separate and apart from the mother Church. Strange to say, they have three divisions in their Church. The Orthodox, the Catholic, and the Protestant. It was an Orthodox Church which I attended, and I was taken there by a Coptic youth to whom one of the French boys introduced me. He is thoroughly well educated and speaks fluent French, and pretty good English, in addition to his own language Arabic. Strange to say the ancient Coptic language is nearly dead. It holds a comparatively similar position to Latin. This service starts at 8.30 in the morning (I had to get special leave from camp to get away before lunch) and finishes about 11 o'clock. They never kneel, and the ladies (who sit apart from the men) never remove their hats. (The same as our own Churches of course.) And strange to say, the men do not remove their hats either - at any rate if they were wearing the little Fez hats which practically all of them wear. They never kneel, but stand up for their prayers. Of course, there was no part of the service which I could in the least understand, but my Coptic friend told me that it was mostly conducted in the ancient Coptic tongue (which very few of the modern Copts themselves understand). They have no musical instruments of any kind. One man (an assistant of the priest) leads the singing and the others follow, but none of it appeared to be very hearty. It was left mostly to a few. They apparently do not seem to have a choir. I understand that they sing some of the psalms and some prayers - I don't think that they have such a thing as a hymn. The reading from the Bible is by one of the Priest's assistants (of whom there are several) and is in Arabic. Of the Priest's assistants, some I understand, are students for Holy Orders, & others merely paid assistants to help in the conduct of the service. About half way through, the Priest comes round, holding in one hand a censer burning incense, and the other hand he places on the head of each in turn, and utters a blessing. Many of the men, but not all, removed their hats for this blessing. He blessed me in turn with the rest, so I have had the unique honour of a personal blessing from a Coptic priest! With regard to this particular Priest I must say that his face struck me from the very first, as being very beautiful and holy. It is one of the most saintly faces that ever it has been my privilege to see. He preached a fairly long sermon, & this of course in Arabic. If I remember right, it was after the sermon that preyer books were handed round, written in the ancient Coptic with an Arabic translation alongside. For a long time they used these payers, most of the people standing the while, although some sat down. If they get too tired of standing through these long preyers, they sit down for a little while. With a number of the preyers, the congregation make responses. The Altar of the Church is nothing like that on our Churches. (or of this one particular Church at any rate). It consists of a square, standing about the height of a table, (on which the bread and wine are placed). This Alter has a covering surmounted by a cross, which covering is umbrella shape, and supported by four posts - one at each corner of the Altar Table. I could not manage to find out much about their communion service, but I understand that some days those who wish, receive the Holy Communion, the bread and the wine. But on this occasion, one little girl only (I suppose about 4 or 5 years of age) received it. She went up to the Altar and knelt down before the priest who gave her the bread. She was followed by one of the priest's assistants who twice repeated the process, receiving in all three + small pieces of bread. Then the little girl knelt down again and drank a little wine, and immediately afterwards one of the priest's assistants gave her some water to drink. This was practically the conclusion of the service, except that the people (I think all of them) went up to the priest and received of him a small piece of blessed bread. Part of the service evidently was to bless the bread which he broke up with his hands and gave to the people as they came up. I also partook part of the bread which he had

blessed. (This is something quite apart, and has no connection whatever with Holy Communion). When service was over, they showed me a beautiful tomb which is built beneath the Altar for some Pasha. I cannot remember his name, but he was Prime Minister of Egypt, and two years ago was assassinated, I understand, by Mahommadans. Then I was shown the Coptic graveyard. One would almost think one was entering a native village. One part of it is entirely given over to rich people and, the other to poor. It was the former that we saw first, and the appearance is of a number of small houses. I wanted to see inside, but my friend told me that all were locked and that the keys were held by relatives. The poorer part rather reminded one of an English cemetery - one sees the cross on almost every grave, but I did not notice any inscriptions (either on the rich or the poor). Just as we were coming out, some men entered the cemetery bearing a small coffin. Evidently of a little child. There appeared to be no reverence for it. It was merely a matter of business to get it buried. I turned and followed them to see the ceremony of burial. All I saw was the opening of a trap door in the ground alongside one of the small buildings which I previously mentioned. One man went down below and the coffin was handed down to him, with the lid off. I could see the features of the little girl. They dropped in a little earth, and then the lid of the coffin was passed to the man down below, and he nailed it on, afterwards placing the coffin inside a great tomb underneath this building, which tomb already had dozens of other coffins inside it. I had unfortunately missed the burial service entirely. I was told that it was held in the Church (apparently it must have been directly after service.) They have no service of any kind at a graveside.

My friend then took me with him to lunch and I had a most enjoyable meal, Egyptian style. The table was laid with bread, a plate of rice each, salad, some affairs looking something like sausages without skins, and a nice plate of fried meat and potatoes and tomatoes. This latter being hot. I started to eat first, but they informed me that they always took their rice first, of course, I conformed to their custom, though they impressed upon me that I was free and should eat as I wished. But naturally, on all grounds, manners, the novelty etc, I wished to eat as they did. Half way through the meal they brought in little glasses of cognac and seemed very disappointed when I wouldn't drink it. The cooking was very nice, and things were all perfectly clean, so that I thoroughly enjoyed my meal. They had English bread there especially for me, but I ate the Arabic bread. I cannot say I like it as well as ours, but it was good bread. In appearance, the loaves are like big pancakes. I forgot to mention that they brought me some nice biscuits and sweets, and a glass of some Egyptian drink very daintily served on a tray, almost as soon as I arrived at the house. After lunch they served black coffee in the sitting room.

The only thing I can remember now to bring my diary up to date sounds very flat against the things I have been describing. I must first of all bring you back to common-place camp, dismiss from your mind all thoughts of ancient things, and strange peoples and customs. This refers only to an ordinary *Tommy Aitkins*: myself, and just mentioned it to show that as far as possible, the authorities make all reasonable arrangements for us. I have been troubled a little with a couple of teeth, and so saw the doctor who sent me to one of the camp dentists. And this morning this gentlemen (a Lieutenant in the Ambulance Corps) has put a filling into each of them, and the chief point about it is that it is entirely free. In consequence of this I missed going out with the others trench digging, and have put in the balance of the morning, since the dentist has finished playing with me, at writing this diary up to time.

27/1/15. Well, it seems a long time since I did any diary writing, and I have a few odd things to write about so I must make the best of a little spare time this evening. Somehow or other time has been pressing lately and not only is this little record all behind the times, but my correspondence is too. Anxiety to learn French, and the fact of my being appointed pay clerk to this company are the two chief reasons. But let me go back to the 10th of this month, which appears to be the day on which I last wrote up this diary. The Saturday following this (the 16th of this month) I went out with one of my tent-mates digging for antiquities, a little excavating on my own account, in an ancient graveyard, believed to be thousands of years old, which is only about a half a mile or less from our camp. I think it has been dug over many times, and many mummies removed from it, but many of the men in camp have had most interesting finds of ornaments, pottery, etc. My luck however, was not up to that standard, and all I managed to obtain were some small beads (very much the worse for age) and (now my susceptible friends, don't get shocked) 3 beautifully preserved teeth which I took from jaw bones of two of these ancients! Still, I consider they are antiquities, well worth keeping, especially considering I dug them up myself in ancient Egypt. The beads I found in a tomb down which I had to climb, about 20 feet or so beneath the ground. This straight drop to the bottom of these tombs with passage-ways (tunnels) on either side, and it was in one of these tunnels that I sifted the beads, with much patience, from out of the sand, using a candle as light.

By the way, I think I rather led you astray in what I said previously about the white population of Cairo. I find it is composed chiefly of Greeks and next to them Italians, then Assyrians and Turks, with French, and then English a long way down the list - and in addition to them there are numbers of, I think every European race. But all of them seem to learn French, and it has become undoubtedly the white man's language in this country. We have a number of canteens of different kinds in camp, most of which are, it seems, run by Greeks, but in no line are they (the canteens) a patch on good English ones. Cleanliness is never considered by any of these people, so far as I can see, to anything like the same extent as any or every class of shopkeeper in England or the colonies.

Last Monday week I think it was, two new officers from the Royal Engineers, arrived for this company - one of them being O.C. (Officer in Charge) and both of them ranking over the two officers we now have. On of the first things which the O.C. did, was to appoint an Orderly Room clerk and Pay Corporal, for which uninteresting job I was marked off. Capt Simson (our Acting O.C.) had asked me about taking up the work about a fortnight before, and I had told him that I did not want it, but would prefer the field work. I thought I had got out of it nicely, but I found my mistake unfortunately, when the new O.C. (Capt Ferguson) called me up I told him the same thing. However, he wanted to know what kind of work I had been doing previously, and it was that that settled it. He *soft-soaped* things over lovely "It was a most important position! It needed a trained man, and I was just the one for it! One must not consider themselves, but do the best they can for the country!" etc etc etc! He also promised me that I would get outside work as well, & that I would not be left behind at the base when the others went to the front, but that I would go right into the fighting with them and so on. But as far as I can see I will be tied to the office all the time (and for pretty long hours if things go on as they are at present).

Just at present the others are doing about a week's shooting on the range and I am "excused"

Please not the "excused". I nearly got into hot water over this by trying to get the O.C. to allow me to do my shooting with the rest. The worst part of such a job as I have is that after the war, one will feel that he has taken no active part that others have gone and borne the brunt of things, and I have been right out of it. If I insisted, I think I could be relieved from the work in the office, but the way the officers put things, I can't seem to insist. I have spoken to Capt. Simson about 4 times, and he always makes me feel that I should stick where I am and be satisfied, and so I suppose I will.

About a week ago today I got leave for an extra hour at lunch time, and went over to a very nice Assyrian home at Heliopolis to which I had been invited for dinner. There's no need for me to say that I enjoyed it immensely. The house, the people, and of course the dinner too were just grand. I had to speak in French all the time (although the young fellow who asked me speaks English fluently). Not that I could say much - only a little, and the conversation was not very lively. I have been asked there again, and would have gone, had it not been for this office work. Nowadays I can only get leave every other night, and only either on Saturday or Sunday afternoon each week (instead of both as before). Then yesterday and today all leave has been stopped, on account, I believe, of the fact that yesterday was the birthday of the prophet Mahomet, and the natives hold, as one would expect, great festivities; it was feared, I think, that in some way some of the troops might come in contact with the natives, and very serious trouble ensue. That same evening, another boy took me to the skating rink, where I had a fine old time.

I know a number of French boys and young men now. I seem to get endless introductions - the one on from the other - and they are always wanting to met me when I can get away. But, what with letter writing, and an occasional concert at which I recite here in camp, and my office night work, I seem to find very little time to take advantage of these invitations. Also three nights a week we have a French class in our own mess hut. We have about a dozen French [language] pupils and quite an interesting, though short class, we have it immediately after dinner from 6 to 7 pm. This is the time that suits the master and suits us too, as it leaves the remainder of the evening free. This class is entirely free to us, and was arranged through the Y.M.C.A. [Young Men's Christian Association] here.

11/2/15. I don't seem to have been seeing or doing very much lately outside of military clerical work. I can see myself a *two-penny ha'penny* expert on King's Regulations etc etc, before long, but there are two things worth writing about I think. The other Saturday afternoon, myself and a friend were taken by a French young man to see the Citidelle - said to contain the most beautiful Mosque in the world - and one can well believe that it is. Exactly what the Citidelle itself is, it seems very very hard to find out, but as far as I can see, it is a very large old building and courtyard enclosed all round by a high wall. It is used as a barracks by a large number of English soldiers (at the present time I think Territorials have been substituted for *Regulars*, the latter having been sent to the front). Part of it is also used as a detention barracks for men guilty of military offences. There are also some Indian soldiers in barracks there. The Citidelle is on a rise, to one side of Cairo (just on the edge of the city) and it commands a grand view of practically the whole of Cairo. There are a number of large guns mounted there, which could give the city an awful smashing were it necessary. And it is right inside one of the courtyards that this great Mosque is built. Why it should be built there I do not know, unless the whole place was originally built by Mohammedans for

some particular purpose. Just alongside of it is a very old Mosque, also a large one - which is in ruins. The present Mosque *Mohammed Ali* is only 100 years old or a little and was built by the first Khedive of Egypt, and named after him. In one corner there is a large and most magnificent tomb of *Mohammed Ali* - the only tomb it contains. The Mosque is built throughout of Alabaster (an exceedingly pretty building stone, and slightly transparent) except for the four main pillars which support the great high roof, and these are of some other stronger stone, but are Alabaster imitation. The architecture and ornamental work are gorgeous, and it is fitted with no less than 1,000 lovely electric light fittings (designed and made, I believe, in France). The whole of the floor is covered with the best of Persian carpets, blending with the remainder of the colouring. Towards the east there is a niche in the wall - in the shape of a quarter of a circle extending, I think, nearly to the roof. This, the guide told us, is the sign to the faithful as to the direction they should face when they kneel to pray, and there is in every Mosque, a similar niche facing the east. On the two front corners are two very high towers, and from these the priests call the people to prayer, five times each day. Since the beginning of the war only such Mohammedans as have been in barracks can obey this summons, as no civilians are at all allowed entrance. Even our young guide could not accompany us - our uniforms of course guaranteed us admission, but he had to wait outside for us! It was a very interesting view of Cairo that we got from the Citadelle and would have been more interesting had it have been a clear atmosphere. In the distance we could just distinguish the pyramids away to our left across some bare and barren desert jutting right into the city, the remains of an ancient viaduct built by the Romans in the time of their occupation (vide Anthony & Cleopatra) directly in front of us, to the left, the old city, to the right the new city, and everywhere Mosques, Mosques, Mosques. Some grand, some small, but the place just teems with them. There are literally hundreds of mosques all over Cairo, but they are especially thick close below the Citidelle. We had a closer look at the two biggest of these afterwards, and in the wall of one can be plainly seen several marks made by cannon balls. These were fired by Napoleon (when he was in Egypt some 100 odd years ago) in a bombardment of the Citidelle. Those particular ones passed right over the Citidelle and hit this particular Mosque in falling. One cannon ball can still be seen imbedded in the wall! We tried to gain admission into the other one but were refused. I understand we can only gain entrance during the morning - but we were allowed to go into a side porch, which contains some very beautiful and costly tombs, on some of which there is a great deal of real silver work. There is also an inside door of exquisite inlaid ivory. I was not able to ascertain the age of these Mosques, but they must be very old.

We had terrific excitement here - I think it was a week ago Tuesday. About 6 o'clock all the infantry, and the Ambulance Corps attached to them, received notice that they would move early the next morning for the Canal. They just went absolutely mad. The bands played, the men cheered and yelled themselves hoarse - and things were more than middling: They had to get their swags packed, and everything they took with them they had to carry themselves - toilet requisites etc, and one change of socks. No other change of cloths at all. A certain specified number of items, including an extra pair of boots, towel, shirt and under clothes, and uniform, they packed in their kit bags to be left at the base. Any surplus private kit (above the regulation) they had to leave here - when they will see it again goodness only knows - I suspect not until the war is over. I went around saying goodbye to all the boys I knew - and nearly all the Hastings boys have gone, and it was a beggar of a job to tell the truth. I jolly nearly cried at the last, to think that nearly everyone I knew was off to fight and we were to

be left behind. Simply because, as Engineers, we were insufficiently trained. However, I suppose we'll have our turn presently. I believe some of the New Zealanders have been into the fighting there, reports of which are sure to have been published in the N.Z. papers, but we have no details. There are, rumour has it, several wounded, but I have not so far heard of any deaths. But the fighting so far has not been very serious, although the Turks have had rather the worst of it, I am afraid. It is the general opinion here that they have simply let themselves into a death trap, and that practically none of them will ever get back across the 100 miles of Syrian desert, alive. As it is, I think it is a very poorly trained and equipped army: and as for their chances of crossing the Canal, they are absolutely, nil. It is too well defended.

I had a grand treat last Saturday afternoon. There was an admission service for soldiers held in All Saints Church Cairo, for the Church of England Men's Society, and about 20 soldiers were admitted - English, New Zealand, and Australian, by the Bishop of the Diocese. (A number of the N.Z. troops who moved to the Canal were to have been admitted also.) After the service we all had tea together, a very pleasant happy meal at the Continental - one of Cairo's best hotels. Then we had a meeting at which the Bishop presided, and at which there must have been well over 200 officers, non commissioned officers and men, all members of the society, and representing the motherland, all parts of New Zealand and Australia. It was one of the happiest times I have spent - in fact I think the happiest - since leaving England. It was a time of spiritual up-liftment - one could not but feel the magic of the unity of all there in the one great cause - the fight against evil. And in this eastern land, with its vile immorality, - and in our own camps quite apart from all Eastern influences, because men miss the refinement and purity of the opposite sex, and of their home life, one needs terribly more spirituality, more strength to hold one's own head above the temptations that are so thick and strong, to strive to set a worthy yet humble example for better things one needs, so very very much, such strength and resolution, such drawing and lifting of the soul to higher and better things, and nearer to its maker, that this great meeting gave!

One thing which I notice here very much is the non-observance of the Sabbath, or at least to only to a small extent. The Mohammodan Sabbath falls on a Friday, when I believe Mohommadan houses are closed to business. The Jews, of whom there are a considerable number of course celebrate their Sabbath on the Saturday, and Christians of course on Sunday. On both of these days a certain number of business premises are closed, but a great number are, I believe, open continuously. Then the trams and railways run just the same on Sunday as on any other day so far as I can see. Even the French religious schools are open of a Sunday morning, but only I understand for the teaching of religious subjects. Then Sunday afternoon is the great holiday afternoon, and of an evening the Heliopolis Wonderland "Lunar Park" opens for the only night in the week, the Cinema shows are open etc etc.

Last evening I was in Cairo for a little while, and walked for a few minutes into the Ez Bonkiah Gardens, which are thrown open to soldiers free, and there I saw for the first time a Mohammedan kneeling on his mat, facing the east, and saying his prayers, in the open. I had often heard of it, but never before [had I] seen it.

23/2/15. It's a couple of weeks since I did any diary writing - as usual I never seem to have much time, but I have now broken the back of all the extra clerical work in connection with the formation of this company, and, find myself today with spare time on my hands. It seems

too good to be true! Two days I have been out with the company on field work, and I am going out again tomorrow. As near as possible, I am taking it day about with my assistant at the Orderly Room, to go out on the field work.

Our French class here is turning out trumps in more ways than one. We have the lesson three nights a week and two gentlemen - both local schoolmasters - take turn about in coming. One of them is the principal of Trewfikieh College and the other his chief assistant, but I don't know which is which. But this I do know, that one (Mr Walton) is married, and that he extends an open invitation to us for afternoon tea each Sunday. He is in residence at the College. Usually 4 or 5 of us go along each Sunday afternoon - we don't like to trespass on his hospitality any heavier than that - and as you can guess we have a most enjoyable time. Mrs Walton is the nicest of English ladies, and is always pressing us to come again, and asking us not to feel that we are going too often for " I am always at home on a Sunday afternoon and am so pleased to see you." I have been twice myself and hope to go again next Sunday. It is something that we are always looking forward to (entrance to a **home** and such a nice one at that in this strange land of Egypt, is something to treasure!) The last time I was there I met an English visitor who was just here for a week or two, and he was kind enough to ask me along to dinner with him at Shepheard's Hotel, where he is staying, and which is The Hotel of Cairo. A most luxurious and tastefully furnished and decorated hotel, but entirely Egyptian art and style. Who wouldn't be a Tommy Aitkens - very few of us could ever have had such a grand holiday as this if we had not enlisted.

I had a very interesting time the other Sunday afternoon when I was fortunate enough to see something over 300 of the Turkish prisoners who were captured in the recent fighting on the Canal. I happened to be there just as they were going out for their daily exercise, and I watched them at drill, under their own officers. Having found out that they had a fair supply of money with them, and were anxious to buy cigarettes, I managed to obtain half a dozen Turkish coins (worth about 6d altogether) in exchange for three packets which cost me about the same in Egyptian money! But I had to do it behind the back of the sentries, and dodge the officers who were prowling round, as all contact with the prisoners is forbidden! Had I not been in uniform I would not have been able to see them at all as all civilians are forbidden admission. Although, on the average, a big built set of men, they are very scraggy and untidy. Their uniforms were apparently good before they started their foot march over the desert, but that has evidently ruined most of them. What surprised me most was that they were almost without exception, dressed in khaki, and all apparently had putties, although a number were not wearing them. Their only difference practically, was in their hats. They were wearing some great heavy affairs that looked almost like blankets. The men themselves are a mixture: Assyrians, Arabs, and Turks. Mostly, I think, the former. The greater part of them (ie Assyrians) I believe, have been forced into it against their will, and many were only too pleased of the chance to surrender. They all look very satisfied with themselves now, and I think are well pleased to get out of the death trap, into which they had walked, alive. I regard my Turkish coins, taken direct from the prisoners here, as interesting souvenirs of the war in Egypt.

A week ago last Saturday, half a dozen of us went out to the pyramids and had a real old picnic. My companions were five of the finest fellows I have met since I enlisted - all members of the British section. We were like six school-kids out for the day, and everything

was turned into a cause for amusement. We went first to the Sphinx, close to which we had our photo taken, in a group - all sitting on camels. A postcard of this I have sent home. It's most interesting, although not the best of photos. Then we climbed the big pyramid - 450 ft high! It was 470, but about 20 feet has been taken off the top, I understand to make standing room for the people on top. One of our party took a couple of snaps of us while up there with his little pocket camera. These snaps I don't think have been developed yet, but we are all hoping they turn out well. The Arabs supply a very nice cup of tea and a biscuit, up there, and we had one of these snaps taken whilst we had the tea things in our hands.

One gets a grand view from the top of this pyramid - to the east, some distance away, is the great river Nile, and beyond it (for the most part) the city of Cairo. Then there is the fertile Nile valley, with its wonderful irrigation, looking very fresh and a beautiful green, extending almost to the foot of the pyramids. This is in striking contrast to the sands of the desert, at the foot of the pyramid, and extending to the west, as far as the eye can see - bleak, barren and, monotonous. The line of the meeting of the verdure with the barren sand showing up very plainly. The desert is mostly rising ground - quite low, but higher than the Nile valley. In the distance could be distinguished some evidently fairly high hills. Away to the south we got a view of the pyramids of Sakkara, and directly below us we could see the excavation work - or rather its result, showing a buried city, on three sides of the pyramid, and extending away to the west. We waited for the sunset, which at first seemed disappointing, but the afterglow shed rich hues particularly over the Nile valley and the city (Cairo). From the pyramids down to the train terminus - only a few hundred yards - we all rode, either a donkey or a camel. The last time I was there, I rode a camel, so this time I took a donkey - the first one ever I've ridden on. There's no doubt about it they're obstinate. You cant get much pace out of them, but we got a lot of fun all the same. On returning to Cairo we went and had lunch together, did a little shopping and got back to camp just before *lights out* (10.15 pm) feeling well satisfied with a very interesting and happy day. If it is possible - only guard and other duties so often interfere - we are going out together again this coming Saturday.

One of the days that I was out on the field work last week, was a day in the desert - all of the troops of the division taking part. We marched about 7 or 8 miles into the desert on the Heliopolis - Suez road, to attack some imaginary Turks (some of our own men) who had crossed the Canal, and were marching on Cairo. I think we put a stop to their little game alright. The desert on this side (east of the Nile) I don't suppose differs much from the other. The road, as far as we went, was not bad, though a little loose and heavy in places. The desert was just the same sameness all the way - all sand, easy low hills, and the only vegetation a small shrub growing at intervals of about 10 to 30 yards everywhere. At intervals of about every three miles (we only saw two of them, not going far enough to see any more) there are old stone towers on the side of the road apparently used, I should say for storing water and provisions. I'm afraid I wouldn't like to have to cross a desert. I've seen quite enough of their dryness, and their dreary and desolate appearance, to satisfy me.

This last weekend I did very little sight seeing. I didn't manage to get away until late on Saturday afternoon, and only got as far as Cairo for a little shopping and a walk around. On Sunday afternoon I was going to an old Coptic Church, but my guide did not turn up. I went for a little walk to see a big new Greek Catholic Church. Very fine in appearance outside, but very disappointing inside. There were only about a dozen or so seats in the building, and these

looked to be two old sort of box benches in a very poor condition. There was carpet all over the floor, in this respect resembling a Mosque. It is in strange contrast to its surroundings - that is the beautiful, rich appearance outside, as it is surrounded on three sides by dirty miserable and poverty stricken native quarters. Not far from it I noticed another Church - (it was locked or I would have gone in) - which I saw, from the signboard is a German one!
A little matter of interest, which I don't think I mentioned before, is that the first lot of reinforcements have arrived. They landed here while the fighting was actually going on at the Canal, and many of them, on that account, were disembarked at Suez instead of Alexandria.

8/3/15. Well, time passes, but I can't say it drags at all. I've been enjoying myself too much. I had a nice little trip the other Saturday afternoon to a native village not far from here called Harq. I went with my cousin [presumably a Leeves] and one of my friends of the British section. But I suppose first I'd better tell you how I found my cousin - or rather how he found me. The payday before last, one of our corporals came along and whispered in my ear, "Someone (an Australian) to see you." Unfortunately (as always on pay day) I was too busy to stop, so I just said, "Ask him to sit down. I'm afraid he'll have to wait until I've finished paying." We were in the mess hut, so he came in and sat down, and I looked at him and puzzled and wondered, but could not remember the face at all. I got the cook to give him a cup of tea, and then as soon as I was free, I went along to see him. My puzzling was soon finished as he introduced himself as my cousin! It appears mother had told him in a letter she wrote just before he left Australia - he came in the 2nd Contingent - that I had joined the British section, N.Z.E.F., and hearing that we had been sent out here to join the others, he made enquiries, and found me without much trouble. He is a cousin I had never seen before - an English cousin who has been in Queensland the last few years. Well, as I was saying, we spent an interesting afternoon at Harq. It is a real native village undisturbed by intruding Europeans. The natives there give one a much better impression than those one sees round about Cairo. Instead of running after you in a forward cheeky manner, they rather run away from you. Kiddies are shy and run inside or to their mothers, and up go the veils of all the women as soon as they see you. When they are on the street, they always wear their veils, but apparently they don't when they are about their own village. The place too, though very dirty, is not so filthy as the native quarters of Cairo. The houses are all built of mud bricks, and it's quite funny to see, in many places, the art work, in the line of painting, which some of the natives have indulged in. Animals of different kinds are painted over some of the doorways.

Things have been going along in a very ordinary kind of way until last Wednesday when we had a test mobilisation, and that gave us quite a little fun. We had to get rid of all our surplus private things - ie those items over and above what we are allowed under Army regulations. I had to pack up all books and stationery. In fact everything was done just as if we were really on the move. Then on Thursday morning, off we went, only a few miles away though, and camped in an old brickfield, close to the Ismalia Canal - a fairly big canal which connects the Nile with the Suez Canal, entering the latter at Ismalia. I found a very snug little place in a little *cosy corner* made by date palms and fig trees, and I promptly set up the Orderly Room there. There was an old table lying-about not far away, which I requisitioned for *active service* and I built up quite a good seat out of a few big squared-off rocks which were also lying about close at hand. I was well sheltered, both from the sun and the wind, and also from the dew at night. We were right in the heart of the valley of the Nile, and the country all round us was

very pretty and luxuriously verdant. Our fellows built a bridge over the Canal, partly by the aid of pontoons, which they had to finish before dawn on Friday, and on which, consequently, they had to work most of Tuesday night. General Godley himself came down to see it the next morning, about 9 o'clock, and seemed to be well pleased with it. They dismantled it on Thursday and got all the things packed up, and had a good night's rest on Friday. We came back to camp on Saturday morning, going a round-about away simply for the sake of a little route marching practice. Altogether it was a nice little picnic and I think I enjoyed it. I know I did and I'll always be satisfied of I can improvise an Orderly Room like that when we actually get on the move - which we expect to be quite soon. Of course, in raining weather it wouldn't be up to much, but A.1. for fine weather. It's what I call romantic - an orderly room under the fig trees and palms of Egypt. Who'd have thought, a year ago, that I would ever have been doing such work, and under such circumstances. But as always "Man proposes and God disposes."

Last night, Sunday, I went to service at All Saints Church Cairo, and I don't know when I've enjoyed a service so much. It's absolutely lovely to go to a real Church service after the paltry substitutes we have here. And the music, the English faces and voices - all, all was just lovely. Perhaps I should not say "paltry" substitute, because it is the best that can be done under the circumstances, but it does seem rather poor when compared with a proper, nice, service. At a service such as this held inside a beautiful Church, one feels so much more real, the very presence of God.

A little whisper before I forget. The other boys have all returned from the Canal and the whole force is on the move again shortly, - when, or where to we don't know!

16/3/15 Rumours are flying thick, and have been for the last week or two. We ought to have been away from here before now several times, but all rumours have collapsed against the hard fact we are still here. But someone's bound to hit the right day soon, because there are rumours out for each day, and then it will be a case of *I told you so*. Also varied are the rumours as to where we are going. Turkey, France, England are all mentioned, but for my part, I'm afraid it's Turkey. Only time will prove the point though I'm afraid I don't expect a one of us will know 'til we get there. I've been hoping and longing to go to France all along, and particularly what I would like is to land at Marseilles and spend a little time there, because my French friends, whom I met on "the good steamship ***Orsova,*** live there, and only the other day I had a letter from them in reply to one of mine. Apparently it will be a fine introduction for a start, and from their letter they will be pleased to see me again and show me round, but I suppose luck would be against me!

Things are *"passing strange"* these last two days. It has actually been raining, and pretty heavily too! And this in Egypt! If you had had the experience of the perpetual Egyptian sunshine, you'd be as much surprised as we are. It almost made me think I was back in dear old Hastings town. The rain, and the rainy atmosphere have been a fine treat - no doubt because they are such a change! But the heat here now is getting unbearable. It gets terrible hot during the day, and I've no wish to experience a summer here, and I don't think any of the boys have! We are all getting tired of being here, although undoubtedly we have had a grand cheap holiday here - seeing all the wonderful sights and antiquities of this ancient and historical land, which most of us could never have afforded to see otherwise.

23/3/15 Still we are in Egypt, and still we are hearing fresh rumours as to when and where we are going. All the men are getting very restive, for it is now some three weeks since we were definitely informed that we were "shortly to go to a cold climate." And instead of that we are in a hotter climate - not that we've moved, but summer is coming on and with it the heat. It'll be too much altogether for us if we have to stay here much longer. One thing that we have experienced during the past few days is the invasion of locusts. One can well imagine how the locusts spoil the crops here and other parts where they are thick - such as Syria. These locusts are a tremendous size - almost as large as those small little birds you see so often flitting about in New Zealand which we used to call "Wax Eyes" . Whether that is their recognised name or not I don't know. They [the locusts] fly in tremendous swarms, very thick, and covering the sky for almost as far as the eye can see. They seem to be everywhere, but are quite noiseless in their movements, or almost so, and they do not make that monotonous croaking noise such as the smaller locusts do that we have in N.Z. They settle in great numbers on the sands, but you cannot get near them. They seem quite afraid of human beings, and fly when one gets within a few yards of them. Also, though habitually numbers of them fly low, they rise when approaching a human being. The papers here are reporting at present that they are doing enormous damage to the crops in Syria. Such swarms as we have seen here would just about eat out all the crops and fruit in Hawkes Bay I should say, so N.Z. is lucky in not suffering from this pest.

I had a very nice little outing last Saturday afternoon going with a party, under the guidance of the Rev. Bush King, to a part of old Cairo. If one could only always go out with such a guide as him, things would be far more interesting. He is head and shoulders, and in fact far more than that, above any of these native Dragomen (that is guides) who are always pestering you to take you here there and everywhere. The first place he took us to was to see some of the Nile shipping at one of the principal wharves. There were hundreds, I should think, of the Nile boats - sailing junks of about 30' x 15' [hull dimensions of 30 feet x 15 feet] I should say, at a rough guess, and most of them loaded with grain brought from up the river. The system of unloading is the same now as it has been since time was [begun] I believe. The natives go down to the boats with empty sacks, which they fill and bring up. Each sack should be a certain weight, and is weighed on the top of the riverbank, where there is a row of dozens of weighing machines. Should a sack be overweight, the extra grain is taken out. Should it be underweight, enough grain is put in to bring it up to weight. These sacks are then stacked in the warehouses which are quite close to the river. As Mr King said, one could just imagine Joseph's brethren opening their sacks, of grain and finding the coins inside. But this part of the river has double interest, as somewhere just about there - the exact spot is not known - Moses was found in the bull rushes by Pharaoh's daughter. Also a few hundred yards down the river from these wharves is a little island (I have forgotten its name) on which is "Nile Ometer" - a place built in the seventh century for registering the rise and fall of the river. It of course shows the Arabic measurement, but when the rise reaches just over thirteen feet, the Sheikh in charge causes a great proclamation to be issued in Egypt, which is the signal for great excitement and rejoicing amongst the "Fellaheen" (the cultivators of the lands) and amidst all the noise and jubilating they burst out the ends of the irrigation channels, and of course the whole land is immediately flooded. And according to the height that the Nile rises are the Fellaheen taxed - a system which they say works admirably. From the river a short walk brought us to some old walls and buildings - remains of the Roman occupation. The biggest building, still in a fine state of preservation, was a barracks for Roman soldiers, before Christ!

Part of this old barracks has been turned into an Orthodox Greek Church in recent years - it is a part of a great old round tower. The work of renovating has been splendidly carried out, and the result is a most beautiful Church. The walls and the ceilings are covered with many beautiful Biblical paintings; the one which seemed to me to be the most beautiful of all is a huge painting of Christ blessing the little children - a beautiful theme most beautifully and reverently depicted. The Patron Saint of the Greek Orthodox Church is St George, and it happens that they always have a representation of *St George and the Dragon* in each Church , and on entrance, one of the first things they do, is to do him homage. In this particular Church the image is of beaten silver or something of that kind, and is in a little enclosure just inside the door, through which each member of the congregation passes. There is very little seating accommodation in an Orthodox Greek Church, and what seats are provided are only for people who, through feebleness or illness are quite unable to stand up throughout the service.

Quite close to here we went into one of the oldest and certainly the most beautiful of all the Coptic Churches. The entrance is through an outer courtyard or portico, in the centre of which is a small garden. From this we pass into the courtyard proper, which in turn leads into the Church. The entrance doors of the Church are of beautiful carved cedar, inlaid with ivory; and inside the Church seems to be nothing but exquisite carving and inlaid work. It is most wonderful work and beautifully executed. In the corner of the Church is a cabinet containing relics of departed Copts - arms, legs, hands, etc etc all done up in separate little boxes. Some tradition hold sway with these Copts that it is beneficial to the souls of the departed ones that relics should be left in the Church. Around the top of the Church there are balconies, which are all shut in except for little doors about one foot square which open into the Church. These balconies are for the women who do not worship in the main body of the Church, and they only get so much of the service as filters through these little doors. This Church is 1,400 years old.

Our next sight was a great old Roman door (wooden) which is opened by a tremendous old wooden key - a rounded piece of wood about 2' 6" [75 cm] in length, shaped as follows [an **L** shape] with three spikes sticking out. A wonderful contrivance altogether, and it is impossible to open the door without it. This opened the way into an alleyway, along which we passed through dirty evil smelling native quarters, to a Jewish Synagogue. As far as I could understand, it is extremely old and was in use by the Jews before the time of our Saviour. Then came a time of a great spreading of Christianity in Egypt (in the first century I believe) and so many of the Jews of this particular parish were converted, that the Synagogue was turned into a Christian Church. It continued as such until the time of the Mohammedan invasion of Egypt, when the Christians were bitterly persecuted and in addition their Bishop was seized. A tremendous ransom was demanded for him, which the Christians could not meet; but a number of wealthy Jews came forward with the amount required, their repayment being the giving back of the Synagogue into their hands. From that time onward it has been continuously in use by the Jews. One of the most interesting parts of it are the little cabinets in the Holy Place (or Altar) containing the rolls of the scriptures, just as they were in the time of our Lord and before him. These cabinets swing open, revealing two rolls, the scriptures being wound backwards and forwards on these roll as required for reading. They are printed in Hebrew. This Synagogue is also rich in inlaid work. A thing about the Jews here, which strikes us all very much, is that they do not have the appearance of Jews as one knows them

in England, New Zealand, and I had thought, all the world over. They have no distinctive features, and for me at any rate, it is quite impossible to know one of these Egyptian Israelites when I see one. Their skins are a little darker, but not much than the average European.

We next were taken to an enormous Mosque - nothing of beauty to see, but only its tremendous size. On one side there are six arcades, over 100 yards long, the whole being about 40 yards across . The arcades are merely divided by six rows of pillars which are of various designs, having been taken from old Roman and Grecian buildings. At one end of this Mosque there is an old stone called by some special name which I have forgotten; but the interesting, and rather ghastly fact about this stone, is that by way of atonement certain Mahommedan pilgrims visit this place, and through some iron railings, they put their tongues [out] and lick this stone until their tongues bleed. There are red marks on the stone which are supposed to be blood marks.

On our return home the commencement of the old Roman Aqueduct was shown to us, at the place where the water used to be raised from the Nile. The party dispersed on returning to town (Cairo) and our poor hearts were nearly broken at squaring up with Mr Bush King for train fares, baksheesh and all, at having to pay the huge sum of 3 piasters each (7½pence)! Fancy that for one of the best afternoons spent here, and which, when one takes the trip privately, usually run in for about 20 or 30 piasters. Such is the advantage of going with an organised party.

29/3/15. I don't seem to have told you of the inspection parade last Monday (a week ago today) of the now well known "*New Zealand Exhibitionary Force*". This was a great parade before Sir Arthur McMahon, the High Commissioner for England in Egypt - the man who practically runs the Country, or anyway has a big say in it. Then again today we had a similar inspection. This time for one of the grandest generals in the British Army - Sir Ian Hamilton. We understand he is to take full charge of the expedition against Turkey (which will include ourselves). For such a fine man as him to have been saved up for it, it is evidently going to be a very important and big operation.

And now military matters to one side and I will tell you something of our "*Cooks Tours*" , in connection with our wintering in Egypt. General leave was granted during last week, to all who wished to go to Luxor - a town in Upper Egypt, something over 400 miles from here - where the finest antiquities of Egypt are said to be. We only had 36 hours leave, so we didn't exactly have much time for loafing round. We left Cairo at 8 o'clock last Wednesday night, arriving at Luxor about 9 o'clock on Thursday morning. We left again at six that night, getting back here about 7 o'clock Friday morning. The train fare, return, (comfortable second class carriages) is for soldiers 107½ piasters (£1-2-6 roughly); we had to pay 10 piasters to see all the antiquities (the usual price is 120 piasters, so that's not a bad reduction for us, is it?) and meals, donkeys, cabs and boats, only cost us about another 35 piasters (but we took some rations with us from camp which saved one meal. So altogether the trip ran into about 150 piasters, (or about £1-10-0) - very cheap indeed. Guides in Egypt are of three kinds - good, bad & medium - very nearly all the second adjective, bad, applies to [them]. But we were fortunate in striking a good guide at the station when we arrived. There were just over 20 of us from our company who formed a party and went round together. Within a few minutes he had us in carriages and on the way to Karnak, to the Great Temple - a matter of about 2 miles.

There used to be an Avenue of Sphinxes all the way, but they are nearly all damaged and a great number have disappeared entirely. The whole district is wonderfully rich in antiquities, but nearly all have in one way or another been damaged. It is pitiful to see the great amount of vandalism that has been shown in the treatment of all these ancient works of art. The guilty ones are the Persians who were only in possession of the Country for a period of 25 years, just before Christ, but the wilful damage they did was terrific. They must have been a people without the slightest love of art. At the entrance to the Eastern gate of the Temple there is another avenue of Sphinxes in a splendid state of preservation. That is because until quite recently all were buried beneath debris. These sphinxes are in the form of lion's bodies (to denote the strength and power of the kings) with ram's heads. The length of these is fifteen feet with other measurements in proportion. So far 20 of these on either side of the road have been uncovered, but there is a great avenue of them leading to the Nile, and continuing, on the other bank to another temple - The Ramusseum. This eastern gate is of enormous size, and reminds one of the pyramids only on a smaller scale. Inside of it are still more sphinxes but not so well preserved as those outside. At the entrance gates are two great statues in proportion to their surroundings. This temple is built in 13 great parts, each part being built by a different king, in continuation of, and in addition to, the original temple. The area of the temple grounds is 130 acres, enclosed by the temple wall, and a great portion of this is built on. This should give some idea of the enormity of the building, or rather collection of buildings, which go to make up the temple of Karnak.

I should mention here that the Persians are not guilty of all the destructive work, part being due to an earthquake, or series of earthquakes which occurred about B.C. The great avenue of sphinxes which used to run for 2 miles from the temple to Luxor consisted originally of 1500 on each side of the road. Originally there were 4 entrance gates - North South East & west, but only 3 remain, the west gate being broken down by earthquake. The temple was started 3000 B.C. and the last addition was 200 B.C. Passing through the outer court, we turn off to the right to the Temple of Ramses III, a large image of whom is on one side of the doorway, and on the other side is the image of a God, all of solid granite. On the wall inside this temple, is a drawing of Ramses III holding his enemies by the hair, and also a God standing by with a sign of victory (a sceptre, and very much like the sceptre *Britannia* holds) in her hand. Coming out of this temple we entre the great temple in which are the most enormous columns I think in Egypt. Their dimensions are 12 feet through at the base. and some 60 feet high, and there are two distinct kinds: The top of one representing the lotus tower, and the top of the other the papyrus. The Lotus is the sign of the Lower Egypt, and is, according to the representation, a perfectly round flower, opening out as under [George records a drawing depicting a vertical column with a trumpet flare at the top] This spreading top is painted to represent the opening petals of the flower. The Papyrus is the same flower, but in bud only - that is before it blooms, and consequently the top of the pillar folds in, as it were a closed bud. [George includes on the page a simple sketch to depict the column.] I think it was in the time of Ramses II (Ramses the Great) that the Kingdoms of upper and lower Egypt became welded in one great Kingdom of Egypt, and in this great temple, as in others built by Kings ruling United Egypt, there are pillars of both kinds. On the tops of many of these pillars are enormous capping stones, weighing as much as 100 tons - single stones! There are 134 of these tremendous columns varying from 60 to 40 feet in height, and the general appearance is amazing and bewildering. One wonders and wonders and wonders however such columns could have been got into position. The patience and zeal of ancient Egyptians must have been endless and

unlimited, and this one particular work has an enormity and a vastness, that no words can describe, and no description make clear. To realise it one must see it, and when one does see it one feels almost stupefied at its enormous and yet magnificent grandeur. Its symmetry is wonderful, and the accuracy of the building is perfectly marvellous. There does not seem to be an eighth of an inch mistake anywhere despite the size of the building materials - and it all has a pleasing affect to the eye. The spreading top columns being particularly beautiful. Although the whole temple is a mass of wonders (See next book)

Diary Book No 6 concluded with George's account of a phase of General Leave in which he travelled four hundred miles by train into upper Egypt. ***George was back in camp again on Friday morning on 26 March 1915.*** *Although Diary Book No 6 ends mid-sentence, and with the comment in parentheses: "See next book", the next book has yet to be traced. A gap of eight months exists in the dairy records available.*

However, his military records record the following:

- ***On 12th April 1915, he embarked for Gallipoli.***
- *On 13th July 1915 he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, and approximately four months later:*
- ***On 20th November 1915 he was transferred to the hospital ship SOMALI.*** *His subsequent diary indicates that he was not wounded, but instead suffered an eye ailment that made him unfit for active service.*
- ***On 24th November 1915*** *he was transferred to the New Zealand General Hospital* ***in Cairo.***
- ***On 28th December 1915,*** *George's period of convalescence officially ended and he re-joined his unit at Ismailia, near Cairo.*

On Friday 26 November 1915 while back in Cairo, *George commenced the next diary. That diary is reproduced verbatim in the following text:*

Diary of

No 4/112 A

Sergt. G. Masters
1st Field Coy,
N.Z. Engineers.

In New Zealand General Hospital Pont de Konbbeh, Abassia, Cairo.

Friday 26th Nov. 1915. I went before the Medical Board this morning and have received my discharge to convalescence. Thanks to Mrs Walton's kind offer, I am going to stay with them - one week is the period granted me. This will be miles nicer than a Convalescent Home, and I will be absolutely free of military discipline . Just think of that !

Saturday 27th Nov. 1915 (C/o Mrs Walton, Zamalek Gezira, Cairo). When I called for my *Letter of Authority* for convalescence at the hospital Orderly Room this morning, I found that my week's leave had been extended to 10 days, and I was told that I need not report back until next Wednesday week - the days of going and of reporting back not being included in the 10 days! So I am in for a nice little holiday. I am now comfortably settled down in a lovely big house in one of the nicest residential parts of Cairo. Gezira - which is a large island in the Nile, and is accessible by two main bridges from the city - the Bonlac Bridge, and the Kasr-el-Nil Bridge, [and] two smaller bridges connecting it with the mainland on the other side of the river - that is the western side, for the main part of Cairo is on the east of the Nile. I've a great big bedroom all for myself - rather a change somehow for anyone who has been in the army for any length of time! I am most fortunate - the boys at the hospital were all envying my luck - to be in a nice English home in Cairo - a place where English home seem so scarce!

I forgot to tell you that the Colonel in charge of the Hospital asked a great many questions and had to satisfy himself as to the respectability of Mr & Mrs Walton before he would allow me to come here. After bringing round my few belongings this afternoon - you could hardly say that a soldier's personal baggage is excessive! - I went out and did a little shopping. Fortunately I had a couple of pounds with me, as we received a pay not long before I left the Peninsula but had no chance of spending it.

Sunday 28th Nov. 1915. Went to Church both this morning and this evening and cannot tell you how much I enjoyed full and proper Church Services once more. They were so beautiful. It seems so much easier to realise the beauty and nearness of God's presence in these services in His House, than it was in our very short and simple services when on Active Service.

Monday 29/11/15. Went to Zeitoun this morning to our *Base Details* who are camped on almost the same old spot as we camped for three months or so when we were here last winter. They took my order for some articles of clothing I require - this only as a favour, for as I am not on their strength I am not entitled to get clothes from them (nor from anybody else until my convalescence is up and I am sent into a *Details* camp). Neither am I entitled to draw any pay until then, but I managed at the same time to get a few pounds to go on with. I've got a lot of spending to do, it seems - things I am needing. Had some lunch at Zeitoun and in the afternoon went on to Heliopolis to see one of the N.Z. nurses, who is staying with other nurses at Heliopolis House (the leading hotel) and is under orders "to be prepared to leave at any moment for Salonika". This is Sister Ingram who used to be at Nurse Jeffries' in Hastings for some time, and nursed Charlie Heald through his appendicitis operation. And as I was always going along to see Charlie, I of course, got to know her quite well. We had afternoon tea together, and a long talk about Hastings & mutual friends etc.

Tuesday 30/11/15. I did some writing this morning and this afternoon went along to the New Zealand Hospital to see Sister Hobbs (Miss Nellie Hobbs). She came over on the *Maheno,* but does not belong to the staff of the ship, but to the N.Z. General Hospital. Both she and Sister

Ingram seem to be extremely well and happy in their work here.

Wednesday 1/12/15. I have been through to Alexandria today - a very pretty train journey through the delta of the Nile - about 100 miles I think. (I ought to know but I don't). I had to have an early breakfast and catch the 7.30 am train, reaching Alexandria about 11 am. I saw some old friends in the N.Z. record office, and also collected some curios which I had sent over from ***Anzac*** [Presumably ANZAC Cove, Galipoli] by friends long ago, and which Major Fitzherbert (O.C. New Zealand Records) was very kindly holding for me. (He was one of the officers of the British Section originally). Then I went to the pay office, only to find that they would no longer issue pay to convalescents. I wanted to draw the pay due to me up to date, but they would do no more than make my book up and show how much was due. Then I went to the N.Z. Base Post Office to find out about mail, and I found out that three weeks' accumulation of mail for N.Z. troops, which had been held up on account of the impossibility of procuring a boat for transport to Anzac, owing to the expedition to Salonika and Servia, had all gone to the bottom of the sea in a transport torpedoed near Lemnos, somewhere about the middle of November. Such good news!!!! Any fresh mail they promised to send on to me here. I have received one letter so far, and as it was evidently the only one they stopped out of a New Zealand mail then I am afraid they must have missed several others and let them go on to Anzac with the Company's mail. Worst of all, is that I have not received a line from home since the 22nd of Sept. and goodness knows when I will as things are. I left Alexandria on the return journey at 6 pm, arriving in Cairo about 9.30.

Thursday 2/12/15. - A trip to Zeitoun this morning to get my clothes ordered for me. They had not yet been able to procure them from *Ordinance Stores!* I got a further draw of pay however, on the evidence of my pay-book made up by the Pay Office - though it was against orders to pay anyone not on the strength of Base Details! In the afternoon I went out to Heliopolis and on my way home this evening called to see our Colonel (Col. Pridham) in reference to going back to the Peninsula, as he expects to be going back soon and will take me with him. I don't want to hang round Cairo loafing when I am so fit and well, and hope to get back to the Company as soon as my holiday is up. How I wish the rumour were true that all the main body of men are coming back here on leave - I wouldn't worry or want to go to Anzac then! But while our Company is there I'd like to be with them.

Friday 3/12/15. Have had a lovely picnic trip into the desert beyond the pyramids this afternoon [with] Mr & Mrs Walton & Mr & Mrs Elliott and some friends. It was very pretty, particularly at sunset and a nice cool breeze helped to make the afternoon more enjoyable. I'm afraid my ideas of desert, as I had imagined it, have been rudely upset by what I've seen here in Egypt. Instead of stretches of flat sand, it seems to be all undulating country and some of it rises very high. Much of the surface is of solid rock, and everything absolutely bare. The occasional oasis you so often see illustrated seems to be altogether missing.

Saturday 4/12/15. To Zeitoun again this morning and got some of the things I'd ordered. Went to the hospital in the afternoon to see some of the men I know.

Sunday 5/12/15. Went to Church both morning and evening. Saw Dr McKibbin at Church this morning and spoke to him after. He is on duty at Zeitoun at present.

Monday 6/12/15. Zeitoun this morning. Reading etc. this afternoon. I always buy French newspapers for practise (I can speak French a little better now) and I am starting to study Italian.

Tuesday 7/12/15. Went with Mrs Walton and a friend to Helowan today - a place about 20 miles up the river where there are natural hot sulphur-springs. It is on the eastern side of the river, and is on a subsidiary line, the main railway running on the west of the Nile. We had a great ride over the desert for a couple of miles, on really good donkeys, to one of the convalescent houses, the matron of which is a friend of Mrs Walton's. It has a lovely situation on the banks of the Nile, and has a big garden with hundreds of orange trees, and with palms growing all round about. It has been an old palace or something of the kind. On our ride back to the station we had a beautiful view of one of the most lovely sunsets. Across the river from Helowan are a number of pyramids, and these all helped in the sunset affect.

Wednesday 8/12/15. As my leave was up I had to report at the hospital today, and reported *quite well* except for my eyes which had been giving me trouble. I am to report back again tomorrow, when an Eye Specialist will be there.

Thursday 9/12/15. The dream is over and my holiday is up! The eye specialist reported, very much to my relief, that I had contracted a severe chill in both eyes, but they are now nearly well again, so I've nothing to worry about. I am now in the N.Z. Base Details Camp at Gizeh, Cairo, which is on the western side of the river, just on the mainland, at the south end and bordering on, the island of Gezira. All men for return to the front are sent to this camp.

Friday 10/12/15. Nothing to report. Quite a comfortable camp. Good food. Next to nothing to do. I am putting in a little time trying to learn Italian, but it's a slow process working by yourself.

Saturday 11/12/15. Nothing to report. It's too dreary both for reading and writing - to write this diary up every day, so in future I'll only write it up when I have something to report. The monotonous round of camp life doesn't give anything to write about.

Wednesday 19th Jan 1916. I can't claim to be the best of diary writers, though I might be in the running for the worst. I've intended many times to write this up, but intentions seem to be valueless (that is my own I'm referring to), for I see that it's just on six weeks since I made the last entry - The next will have to be in the next book now, I'm afraid, as this one has run its course.

The above diary book, concluding with his entry of 19 January 1916. It is the last of his diaries that have been made available for reproduction for this genealogical record. Military records have assisted with tracing his path further. The book "*Above the Trenches*" by Christopher Shores, which traces some of the history of The Royal Flying Corp, has also provided useful information.

On 1st March 1916 George Masters was promoted to the rank of Second Lieutenant . At the time

he was attached to C Company, New Zealand Pioneer Battalion. In a letter to his family George modestly made comment in regard to himself and an acquaintance : *"It's a funny feeling to be dressed again with a nice collar and tie! We are like fish out of water, at present, but I don't doubt we'll get more used to things before long."*

On 10th March 1916 George was transferred to the Pioneer Battalion. Between 24th March 1916 and 25th June 1916 he was attached to Infantry Base Depot at Moascar, Egypt.

On 13th April 1916 he embarked from Port Said, Egypt on transfer to France where he arrived on 19th April 1916. He was still attached to the Pioneer Battalion.

On 24th June 1916 George was at Etaples.

Between 28th August 1916 and 2nd October 1916 the Pioneer Battalion had assigned a Company to dig a communication trench to link with a captured trench. During that phase of work, on 16th September 1916, the company was subjected to heavy shell fire. The Company Commander was killed and other Officers were wounded. George Masters was in command of a platoon. George's performance during the testing conditions resulted in his being mentioned in General Haig's despatch (published in the London Gazette). The citation read:

"For good work and devotion to duty during the period August 28th/October 2nd 1916. On September 16th when his company was working under heavy shell fire, and his company C.O. was killed and other officers were wounded, Lieut. Masters, by his coolness and personal example, was the means of keeping the men of his platoon working on the digging of a most important communication trench to one of the captured trenches."

On 4th October 1916 he was transferred to the Royal Flying Corps at Iuthefield, but rejoined the Pioneer Battalion on 18th October 1916. This phase of two weeks appears to have been a time in which the Royal Flying Corps assessed whether George would be a suitable person for the an active role in the British Flying Corps, and no doubt George had to decide whether he still regarded himself as a person who might perform effectively with the Flying Corps (having regard for the then new warfare activities of the Flying Corps).

On 20th October 1916 the Royal Flying Corps accepted George as an *Observer* (on probationary basis) and was seconded back to the Royal Flying Corps. On 25th October 1916 he departed Iuthefield to report for duty with the Royal Flying Corps.

On 27th October 1916, George was sent to France as a probationary observer, joining 5 Squadron, of the Royal Flying Corps, but he was subsequently transferred to 11 Squadron, of the Royal Flying Corps.

On 15th March 1917, Captain Cyril Nelson Lowe as pilot, and Second Lieutenant George Masters as observer and gunner, engaged and destroyed an enemy two-seater aircraft while flying over the town of Bailleul in western Belgium. Bailleul is situated approximately forty kilometres south-west of Dunkerque (Dunkirk).

On 24th March 1917, Second Lieutenant George Masters and his pilot Captain Cyril Nelson Lowe, had taken off at 7.58 am in an ***FE2b***, aircraft number No A5442. One hour and forty

seven minutes later (at 9.45 am) while they were over Fontaine les Croisilles in France they shot down an ***Alb. D111***. (A German *Albatross* fighter aircraft). However, shortly afterwards while still in the vicinity of Croisilles, their ***FE2b*** was damaged in an air-to-air *dogfight* with another enemy aircraft (probably flown by Unteroffizer R. Jork of Jasta 12). The damaged ***FE2b*** subsequently crash-landed. Captain C.N. Lowe (the pilot) was injured during the crash landing, but George Masters was unhurt.

The FE2b: The letter ***F*** denotes *Farnham* (an English aircraft designer) and the letter ***E*** denotes *Experimental*. The 2b indicates the variant (model). Although by 1916 the FE2b was operating beyond its experimental stage, through habit and for convenience, it retained the letter ***E*** in its designation throughout the war.

The aircraft first flew in 1913 but did not enter combat until mid-1916. The *FE2b* was highly effective against the German monoplane (the Fokker E111) and restored air superiority to the allies. It was powered by a Beardmore in-line 160 horsepower engine; flying-time endurance 2½ hours; maximum flying altitude 11,000 feet a.s.l; maximum speed 91½ miles per hour (147 km/h); length 9.83metres; height 3.85 metres; wingspan 14.55 metres; its crew of two comprised the pilot and the Observer-Gunner; role: reconnaissance, fighter, bomber. They were withdrawn from their roles as reconnaissance and fighter aircraft in mid-1917 and relegated to night bombing when the German Albatros bi-planes arrived.

A distinctive feature of its design was the in-line position of the Observer/Gunner, the pilot, and the engine. The Observer/Gunner sat at the extreme front of the aircraft's nacelle in an open cockpit and with a forward-mounted twin .303 calibre Lewis machine guns. Because of the Observer/Gunner's forward position, he had an unobstructed forward and lateral view and firing arc of approximately 240° . This attribute, together with its speed, manoeuvrability, and endurance, contributed significantly to the aircraft's success. The pilot sat immediately behind the Observer/Gunner in a separate open cockpit. The engine was mounted immediately to the **rear** of the pilot, with the propeller at the **rear** of the engine. The propeller therefore operated in pusher fashion. Because of the position of the propeller, the fuselage to the rear of the engine was open truss framework thus allowing the prop-wash air to pass rearward and out through the framework unobstructed.

To locate the town of Croisilles, France (which is near to where George Masters and pilot Cyril Lowe were shot down on 24th March 1917) the following should be of assistance:

Firstly locate the nearest French port to England (which is Calais). Starting at Calais, extend an imaginary line in a **south-easterly direction** to a position that would place you **about 115 kilometres from Calais.** This will place you very close to Croisilles. Croisilles is a mere 20 kilometres from the Belgium border. It is a similar distance from the town of Arras where the military memorials to the fallen are situated.

The pilot of the ***FE2b***, Captain Cyril Nelson Lowe, was born in 1891 and was educated in Cambridge. He served with the Army Service Corp from 1914-1916, and then transferred to the Royal Flying Corp. He served with 11 Squadron from 1916 to 1917. After recovering from the injuries sustained during the crash-landing on 24th March 1917, he was (in 1918) promoted to Captain posted as Flight Commander to 24 Squadron. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying

Cross and Military Cross. He claimed nine air combat victories during the First World War. After the war he commanded 1 and 6 Squadrons in Iraq during 1926-27, and from 1927-1930 was Commanding Officer of 43 Squadron (which took part in the early Hendon air pageants). He played rugby for England as wing-3/4 during this period. From 1930 he was Chief Flying Instructor of No 2 Flying Training School, and became its Wing Commander in 1933 as Group Captain in 1938. He retired in 1944, and died in 1985 at the age of 94 years.

In April 1917, the Royal Flying Corps was to suffer its heaviest losses of the war. Losses during the month occurred at the rate of 600% pa, and in effect gave the air-crews a life-expectancy of only two months. **The third battle of Arras was fought during April and May 1917.**

On 3rd April 1917, Second Lieutenant George Masters and pilot Lieutenant E.T.C. Brandon took off from their airfield in France at 1 pm on a patrol flight in an ***FE2b***, aircraft No A808. Their aircraft was believed to have received a direct hit from a German anti-aircraft gun (ground-to-air). The aircraft crashed at map reference SH51BH27D. Initially the fate of George Masters and Edgar Brandon was uncertain and they were simply reported as "*missing*". British military records of their deaths did not appear until 4th August 1917 (four months after they went missing). Their fate had been conveyed to the British by the German Flying Corps who had dropped a message behind British lines. Both had perished when their aircraft had gone down on 3rd April 1917. Neither body was recovered by the Allied forces, and the location of their graves is not known.

Squadron records listed his closest relative in England as Miss H.A. Masters, of Trycewell, Sevenoaks, Kent.

The pilot who had been with George during the fateful flight of 3rd April 1917 (Lieutenant Edgar Thomas Colin Brandon) was the son of F.J.T. Brandon & Annie Elizabeth Brandon of Elandlaagte, Natal, South Africa. Brandon had earlier served in German South West Africa (now Namibia) with the Natal Caribiniers before going to England and being commissioned in the Sussex Regiment.

In a memorial notice sent to his family, the following text was recorded:

Masters, 2nd Lt. George, 4/112A. N.Z. Maori (Pioneer) Battalion, attd. Royal Flying Corps. Mentioned in Despatches. 3rd April, 1917. Aged 26. Son of Alfred and Alice Lydia Masters, of 207 Selwood Rd., Hastings, Hawkes Bay, New Zealand.

Who gave his life in the Great War
that we might live
and whose name is carved in stone
at
The British Memorial and Cemetery, Arras - France.

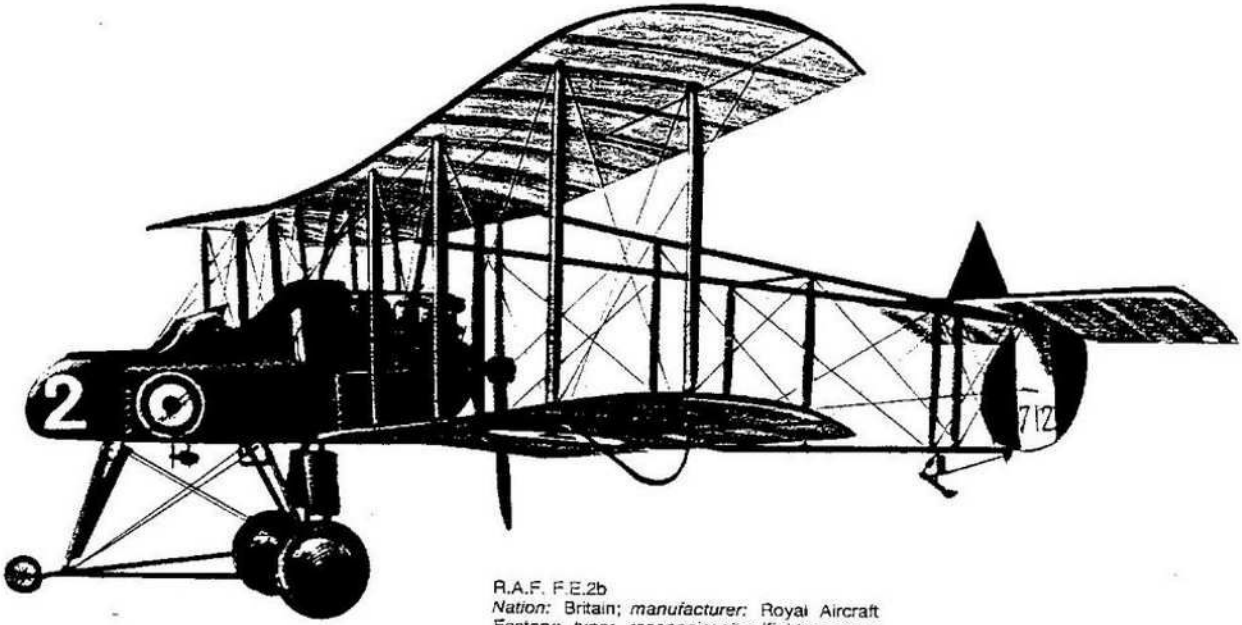
From the diaries it is clear that George Masters was a man who was intensely interested in the world around him. He was a man with a gentle and humble personality who had a strong attachment to his family and relations, and to his friends. He also revealed a similar sense of

humour to that which was characteristic of his siblings. George was a person who evidenced a high standard of self-discipline. He had an intense appreciation for fine architecture and with it a sense of history and reverence for cultures of former times. He behaved with grace, finesse, and goodwill toward his fellows. Despite the periods in which his morale suffered from the frustrations imposed by the military environment, he desisted from passing criticism of those who contributed to his dissatisfaction. He possessed a strong loyalty to his country and to the British Empire and Commonwealth. The loss of such a life was an immeasurable tragedy.

Following his death, his estate was liquidated in the usual manner, but a trustee (his brother Clarence) decided in 1951 to form a trust from the estate funds. The Trust became known as the George Masters Trust. The trustees of the new trust were the Bishop of the Diocese of Waiapu, the vicar of the Parish of Saint Matthews, Hastings, and a member of the Masters family. In 1997, the member of the Masters family was R.G.(Bob) Masters of Hastings who by then had functioned in the role for about fifteen years.

The object of the trust was to assist in the education of persons selected by the trustees, who wish to study for and obtain Holy Orders in the Church of England. In making grants, the trustees give preference to persons who are members of the Church of England connected with the St Matthews parish, Hastings. However, the trustees are not restricted to such students who are connected with the St Matthews Parish.

A.W.(Tony) Rule
13 December 1998



R.A.F. F.E.2b
Nation: Britain; *manufacturer:* Royal Aircraft Factory; *type:* reconnaissance/fighter; *year:* 1915; *engine:* Beardmore inline, 160 hp; *wingspan:* 47 ft 9 in (14.55 m); *length:* 32 ft 3 in (9.83 m); *height:* 12 ft 7½ in (3.85 m); *weight:* 3,037 lb (1,378 kg); *maximum speed:* 91.5 mph (147 km/h); *ceiling:* 11,000 ft (3,353 m); *endurance:* 2 hrs 30 mins; *armament:* 2 machine guns; *crew:* 2