

# The Papakura Sentinel



Number 51

## Contents:

Museum Musings— two questions .....page 2

Museum Artefact de Jour— Kara Oosterman and a sash .....page 3

2021 and all that ..... page 4

Tracks and Stations (7!) ..... page 6

PDHS and Museum news..... page 15

## Editorial

2020 has gone—Goodbye! We welcome all our readers to the *Sentinel*, and to the New Year, with all that means for us, individually and as supporters of Papakura Museum and the historical society.

There are changes. Sadly, the first is the fact that the editorial diumvirate has become a reluctant monopoly. Terry has stepped back because of the demands on his time, and at the moment I am the sole editor. I have truly appreciated our partnership and Terry’s many cheerful and informative contributions. But I promise our readers to continue the editorial policies we developed in the last few years, and we will have to do something to expand the team and future-proof the enterprise. We have both seen the *Sentinel* as a means of conducting Society business, keeping everyone informed, and furthering research into Papakura and the outlying district. We appreciate other contributors and continue to welcome your memories, research and insights. We love your feedback: history requires different voices, perspectives. In fact history thrives on debate. Maybe you have thoughts of providing articles, proof-reading, being part of the circulation team... Speak to Rob.

Some of you will have met our new front-of-house receptionist. Rosie has many talents, including social media, and is a personable face for the Museum. We welcome her to the team.

What else is new? The year is, and so *Sentinel* does its usual feature on significant anniversaries.

### PAPAKURA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Monthly Luncheon Meetings: 4th Thurs, 1pm – 3pm  
Regular Saturday Bus Trips to places of interest

### PAPAKURA MUSEUM

**Open: Monday—Friday, 10am—4.30pm,  
Wed open till 6 pm, Sat 10 am—3 pm**  
Accent Point Building, 209 Great South Road  
Ph.: (09) 298 2003 [www.papakuramuseum.org.nz](http://www.papakuramuseum.org.nz)

Museum Musings will be based on two questions—see below. Kara provides the Artefact de jour.

And Rob, without Terry's restraining hand, sends a further train hurtling down the Tracks and Stations, sweeping up stationmasters, platelayers, clerks, inspectors and general managers in its path.

Remember that some subs haven't been paid. We appreciate your support. Enjoy and keep in touch,

Rob (Ed)

# MUSEUM MUSINGS

I asked our staff and President two questions:

What are you most looking forward to for the Museum in 2021,

Kay, Admin Manager: This year will hopefully be a year without interruptions. I hope we all stay well both physically & mentally as we are not out of the woods yet! I'm looking forward to having that extra staff member to increase social media and advertising to cement the museum's worth in the community.

Ione, Curator: I am most looking forward to the Warbirds exhibition in March, it's great to be able to collaborate with other local heritage institutions.

Kara, Researcher: I'm looking forward to our next exhibition—a cooperative project between a local group and our curator. It's great to have the local content.

Rosie, Receptionist: People knowing who we are

Margaret, President of the PDHS:

I want to promote the museum in the community so that people know where it is for a start!

Following along from that, I would like to increase the publicity about our exhibitions by using a wider variety of social media posts.

and — What do you hope to achieve?

Kay: "Awareness" of our museum by pursuing local partnerships and running social media contests which in return will hopefully increase our visitor numbers and popularity within the wider Auckland area.

Ione: I hope that we can make our collections, in particular our photographic collection, more accessible this year with some sort of collections online database – a big achievement to hope for!

Kara: Win Lotto, have a lovely old house in Papakura with part-time tea-rooms (an echo of Mrs Mack's Tea-rooms near the railway station) with displays, and spend the rest of my time at the Museum.

Rosie: Getting an awareness of this great Museum.

[Ed. There you have it. We can all respond to the enthusiasm for the forthcoming Warbirds exhibition, using local stories and collaborating with local people. And we can expect publicity by all means including social media.]

Museum Musings is brought to you regularly by members of the Museum staff.

# Artefact de jour

for this issue is contributed by Kara



A surprising number of Papakura (and Drury) gentlemen were members of the Loyal Orange Order, a staunchly Protestant group not particularly fond of Catholics - especially back in the day. In several cases living descendants seem to have been quite unaware of the connection.

In November 2020 a very welcome gift, in the form of a ceremonial purple collar and black sash, arrived at the Museum from members of the blacksmithing WILSON family. The items belonged to David Wilson (1858-1926) pictured wearing the sash. He had passed through each of the Order's three levels, the Orange, the Royal Arch Purple, and the Royal Black Institution.

The sash is adorned with numerous honours or jewels in the form of metal badges. Those of obvious religious symbolism and the Red Hand of Ulster are understandable but I am keen to find out why there is a skull & cross bones! Pride of place goes to a representation of William of Orange riding into battle.



Sashes were highly regarded as indicated by this chorus from a popular Orange marching song:

*'Sure me father wore it in his youth,  
in bygone days of yore,  
and it's on the twelfth I love to wear,  
the sash my father wore'*

The Papakura Orangemen were known as Barton's True Blues, No 32, Loyal Orange Lodge.

# 2021

*Sentinel* usually begins a new year by reminding readers of significant events in the past that have left their mark on history, so here are a few of the anniversaries we might be well to take note of (on a decimal or half decimal basis). Those in **bold** affect **New Zealand**.

In these events we can see fragile beginnings, enlightened decisions, disasters, bad decisions—the American Civil War seems very pertinent at a time when treasonous outrage has brought the USA close to a repeat 160 years later, and old themes and symbols persist. We also see great could-have-beens where the public potential has been corrupted. A case in point is Tim Berners-Lee's vision for the World Wide Web as a public amenity: political decisions to privatise internet and monopolies have undermined the potential of his invention.

2500 years ago, at the Battle of Plataea, Greeks turned back the Persians

1250 years ago, 871, Alfred became King of England, (after burning the cakes)

500 years ago, 3 January 1521, Martin Luther was excommunicated (thus burning his bridges)

400 years ago, 1621, Pilgrim-Wampanoag Peace Treaty—1st colonial treaty in North America

240 years ago, 1781, William Hershel discovered Uranus

200 years ago, 1821, Napoleon Bonaparte died on St Helena

190 years ago, 1831, Victor Hugo wrote *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*

175 years ago, 1846, California rebelled against Mexico/ US—Canada border settled

February—**Battle at Ruapekapeka pa, in the Northern War**

170 years ago, 1 May 1851, opening of the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London

160 years ago, 3 February 1861, southern states formed the Confederates States of America

4 March, Abraham Lincoln inaugurated/ 12 April American Civil War begins

Sense of déjà vu?

150 years ago, 1871, Rome became capital of Italy, Germany defeated France

Stanley says: 'Dr Livingstone I presume' near Lake Tanganyika

125 years ago, 6 April 1896, 1st modern Olympics in Athens

**Brunner Mine disaster, NZ's deadliest industrial accident**

120 years ago, 1901, oil struck in Texas—the start of the US oil industry (Global Warming closer)

115 years ago, 1906, San Francisco earthquake (but more Americans die each day of Covid-19)

105 years ago, 1 July 1916, Battle of the Somme

100 years ago, 29 July 1921, Hitler became leader of the Nazi party

First barrel ride down Niagara Falls/ 10 December, First Nobel Peace prize

**First regular airmail flights**

**ANZAC Day becomes a public holiday**

**Princess Te Paea establishes Turangawaewae**

**Short sharp post-war recession affects NZ economy and Reform government reacts with austerity, harsh cutbacks**

**Weekly flag saluting ceremonies compulsory in NZ schools**

**Communist Party of NZ set up**

**Commission of inquiry into Ngai Tahu's land claims recommends compensation but no immediate action taken**

**NZ Division of Royal Navy set up with HMS *Chatham* as first ship**

**Truby King (of Plunket) first director of child welfare**

**First Springbok rugby tour of NZ—drawn, including test with Maori side.**

90 years ago in February **Napier earthquake**

85 years ago, 1936, Spanish Civil War began

80 years ago, 1941, Germany captured Crete during World War 2 / Enigma code broken/

7 December 1941, Pearl Harbour

75 years ago, 10 January 1946, the United Nations first met

**J Force arrives in Japan**

3 May, Opening of Japanese War Crimes trials/ Churchill's Iron Curtain speech

60 years ago, 20 January 1961, John F Kennedy inaugurated—first televised news conference

50 years ago, 1971, Beginning of Ping Pong Diplomacy leading to Nixon visiting Mao in China/  
Stairway to Heaven first performed

**South Pacific Forum, now Pacific Islands Forum**

40 years ago, 1 February, Trans-Tasman cricket, Chappell brothers' under-arm bowling

35 years ago, 26 April 1986, Chernobyl

30 years ago, 6 Aug 1991, Tim Berners-Lee describes plan for World Wide Web

9 November, Fall of the Berlin Wall/ December USSR ceases to exist

25 years ago, 1996, **MMP introduced**

10 years ago, Arab Spring began/ Fukushima Nuclear Disaster/ Killing of Osama bin Laden

## YOU ARE WARNED!

**Tracks and Stations was timetabled to reach the end of the line in December 2020, but it's hard to derail a good story once the engine has a good head of steam up and signals are go. The stationmaster has discovered another waggon deserted on a siding, and has decided to switch the points to release it to run. (With apologies to any readers who find metal wheels rolling on metal tracks under the power of labouring steam engines tiresome... I can't imagine why!)**

# Tracks and Stations (7)

## Local railway staff 1875—1920

**The focus of this series has always been on people and the place of the 9 local stations in local lives (including 8 communities outside the Papakura metropolis.) In the first article I mentioned those who worked for Railways, and more of their stories have come to light.**

Being part of Railways meant being part of a large national family. The numbers cited by the *Evening Post* (19/4/97), summarising the 1897 census, were as follows:

848 railway officers, clerks, stationmasters (ie. working in stations or head and branch offices)

591 engine drivers and stokers (ie. on the trains)

632 guards, porters, pointsmen

1799 gangers, fitters, platelayers (ie. on the tracks or workshops) - making a grand total of 3870.

A comparison of rates of pay in 1876 for the Auckland to Mercer section shows platelayers and coalmen working for 6/6 (65c) per day, gangers at 8/- (80c) a day, drivers at 11/6 or 13/- (\$1.15 or \$1.30) and firemen at 9/- (90c) a day, porters and pointmen at £2.5/6 (\$5.05) per week, guards at £2.6 (\$4.05) a week, station clerks at £100—£150 (\$200-300) a year, and the railway manager earned £400 (\$800) a year. By 1921, a Papakura clerk was earning £235 (\$470), and the highest paid Railways employee at Papakura was earning £430 (\$860).

Locals have always been part of the team, living in their own homes, with relatives in the community or running a small block of land while working for railways. Usually the locals worked on the tracks or on the trains. Among Kirikiri settlers and their sons, James Croskery and William Neillie (sic) were platelayers, the former for 28 years, Andrew Pitt worked for railways before becoming a local carrier while Robert McLennan was described as a railway employee in 1900. In the 1870s when the tracks were being built several found work as navvies. Brooks arrived in Drury to work at the station but settled as a farmer and storekeeper. Meanwhile, one local boy, P.G. (Philip) Rousell, began as a cadet in Auckland in 1893-4 and moved up the ranks to become General Manager of Railways. He was born in Waimauku but had grown up in Papakura, where his father Pierre, an immigrant from Jersey, was a railway ganger in the 1890s. (MAS, Open all hours 41-2) Rousell father and son are one example among many of railway families.

But for us, relying on newspapers or Railways records, the most visible part of the national railway family locally were stationmasters. Railways had a policy of moving career staff around and providing railway houses for them. Regularly newspapers recorded the movement of lists of staff across the country, when the relatively small team of stationmasters moved, often considerable distances, to new stations or per-

haps to inspector or administration positions in major railway centres. Though they came and went, roughly every five years, stationmasters often became prominent members of the community. In Otahuhu by comparison stationmasters frequently remained in their posts for much longer periods. The 1876 Railway Department list included stationmasters as 'station clerks': there were 12 in the Auckland to Mercer line in the second year of the line, earning between £125 and £100, and they were listed first in the category of 'Traffic', along with guards, ticket collectors, porters, pointsmen, watchmen and wheel tappers. (The other categories were 'Maintenance of way' - foremen, gangers and platelayers; 'Locomotive running', including drivers, firemen, cleaners, coalmen, pumpers; 'Locomotive repairs' and 'Car and Wagon Repairs' – mechanics and labourers; and 'General charge' – manager and clerks in major offices. Just so you know what your options were.) In some years lists were produced of hundreds of railwaymen throughout the country—they were all men, ranked by time served, from a small national team in Wellington, through district managers, and extending through inspectors, station masters, clerks and other station staff, all the way down to the newest cadet, identifying their stations or offices. Below that a similar ranked list of track, locomotive and wagon staff did not usually list a locality, so was of little help locating where they worked. (AJHR or NZ Gazette/ Railway Staff)

Of all the local stations, only Papakura, Drury and Pukekohe had stationmasters (although Manurewa had one periodically between the 1880s and 1916, and again by 1927. Manurewa locals frequently argued for a stationmaster citing security against theft or weather as a reason, and in 1882 suggesting that the office could also provide a post office. At times the only employee was a caretaker. In 1882 and 1917 Manurewa was a flag station only). In the absence of a station master, stations might be staffed by a clerk, porter or by tablet porters. This article focuses on Papakura and Drury. Stationmasters no longer preside at Papakura. Their place was taken by signalmen, and they have also disappeared from the scene locally.

One of the first provisions made by Railways was a house for the stationmaster. In Papakura the stationmaster's house seems to have been on Railway Street West adjacent to Averill Street: part of its land was surrendered to the Fire Station. A later house on the corner of Onslow Road, advertised as 'the original stationmaster's home' by Barfoot and Thompson, was sold in 2019 for \$645,000.

The first stationmaster in Papakura had no rail background though he was a keen sportsman, but a professional corps of experienced staff, some from Britain, or promoted from the ranks, was quickly built up. By the 1870s, railways were already well-established in Britain. When Kirikiri settlers James and Agnes Arnold and child immigrated to New Zealand on the *Resolute* in 1865, they travelled first from Preston in Lancashire to Glasgow by train. (James Arnold *Resolute* Diary) Some had time for sport or to practice other trades while acting as part-time stationmasters in early years when only a few trains went through Papakura station. Two trains (each way) went through Papakura in 1875 and in each case, morning and afternoon, arrived and left at the same time. By 1884 there were six daily trains, as well as the occasional freight train. North-bound and south-bound trains met at Drury (1875) or at Papakura (by 1878) each time.

Stationmasters had many responsibilities. They were local representatives of NZ Railways, and thus of Government. They managed train movements (keeping a time-book) and traffic, dealt with local bodies and locals, bringing in Railways engineers and managers when required. Local Board minutes refer to frequent communications with stationmasters: J Tasker in 1929 attended meetings of the Chamber of Commerce and engaged in discussion with the district manager (*FT* 17/5/29) as part of his responsibility. They often faced criticism, but many became popular in their own right. They handled staff and dealt with the public. Occasionally they had to deal with issues on the trains, accidents, or inebriated passengers. From 1882 (when storekeeper Robert Willis relinquished the role), the stationmaster also doubled as postmaster (MAS). The Post and Telegraph Office was part of the railway station until a separate Post Office was built in 1913; the Stationmaster/ Post

Officer was also Telegraphist, and dealt with matters like electoral registration. Dr Smith describes how the Mail Train drew crowds of locals. In early years when trains converged on Papakura two or three times a day and brought the mails and newspapers, trains were social events. People often lost property on the trains—they still do— and stationmasters frequently inserted notices in papers advertising lost or found property. Socially some engaged in sport or entertained at gatherings. Pigeon race clubs in the 1920s and '30s often depended on train guards to ensure that birds travelled safely and on stationmasters to release them at the right time. Charles Somerfield married a local girl. Amos Eyes, an early stationmaster in the 1880s, bought land in Kirikiri, and his family settled here. Railways moved him on, but when he died in 1901 soon after retiring as the stationmaster at Avondale, his burial, and his wife's years later, were in Papakura.

There were some colourful characters among early staff.

The first, in 1875, was **Robert (Bob) Wynyard**. Two related gentlemen, uncle and nephew, in early Auckland shared the name. Bob was the nephew, aged 20 when he took on the job in Papakura. The few years spent as stationmaster at Papakura seem to have been the extent of Bob's work in New Zealand Railways. Born in 1854 in Auckland, he was part of colonial aristocracy, the grandson of Col Wynyard of the 58<sup>th</sup> Regt, relieving Governor of New Zealand on occasion, and eldest son of Captain Gladwyn J R Wynyard, who died in 1871.

His obituary in 1927 described him as kindly, genial and courteous, and a 'most popular sportsman'. He was able to be a part-time stationmaster, and so had time to indulge in sport and to mix with the local gentry. Shooting was one interest. He came second to Mr Hay in a pheasant shooting competition at Papakura in 1875. (*DSC* 4/5/75) and in 1877 was umpire in a pigeon shooting competition at Pokeno. (*Waikato Times* 23/4/77). He also played cricket in the Papakura team.

Although a house came with the job, Bob, a single man, 'lived at the old hotel about a quarter of a mile distant and after concluding his day's work at the station which coincided with the departure of the last train, would get on the engine of that train and make the driver stop just opposite the hotel to save him the walk.' (*FT* 2/5/1934) This would be at Broadway. What about his fitness regime? If a letter to the *Daily Southern Cross* was correct, there were times when the stationmaster was absent. The annoyed writer describes arriving half an hour early for the 5.40 train for Auckland on a Saturday. He was told that when the two trains arrived the guard would give the tickets. The two trains arrived punctually, 'the train for Mercer near the platform [on the eastern side], and that for Auckland on the opposite side, just abreast of it.' With no one to tell the passengers what to do – 'even the guard of the train to Auckland did not come on the platform,... yet it was expected for the passengers to get off the platform and cross the rails, contrary to one of their bye-laws, and scramble into the train on the far side.' In the event the train for Auckland left before the Mercer train, leaving the confused and annoyed passen-



Gladwyn Wynyard's house, Devonport c 1870: cnr Calliope and Clarence. presumably where Robert Wynyard made his home, Painted JBC Hoyte. Ref: C-133-057. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <https://natlib.govt.nz/>

gers behind. He ended up having paid 3s for his ticket to the guard on the Mercer train, and then having to pay 2 guineas for a trap to Auckland (it was an 'essential trip'), and was provoked to asked about compensation. (*DSC* 19/4/76)

Bob appears to have left in 1877. He was in Devonport by July 1879 when he was fined for permitting his cows to wander on Victoria Road. (*AS* 4/8/79), and he was recorded as starter for the Auckland Racing Club 1878. He was a leading player in the Devonport and North Shore Cricket teams in the 1880s (teams that might feature three Wynyards). He pursued his interest in racing, and became secretary of the Takapuna Jockey Club about 1883, a position he held for 44 years. (*AS* 26&28/10/1927), and of the North Shore Amateur

Athletic and Cycle Club (*Observer* 27/3/97). Around the time his wife died in 1900, he was sued successfully for the seduction of a servant girl.

**Unlike Bob, John Seaburn/ Seaborn**, the first stationmaster at Drury, made a career in Railways. When the railway employees picnic was held in Pukekohe in 1877, attended by 800 people, the excursionists stopped at the Drury station on the return journey and were welcomed by Mr Seaburn to 'an excellent tea.' Did he and his family and staff provide tea for several hundred people? As a stationmaster J Seaborne (sic) was earning £150 in 1881; he was at Mercer in 1891, and retired in 1900, buying a boarding house at Te Aroha.

After 'Bob' a stationmaster of another ilk took his place in Papakura. He is only identified as **Cahill**, but a John Cahill was ticket issuer on a train from Auckland to Mercer (*NZH* 6/2/78). He may have been the single man, J Cahill, who arrived in Auckland on the *Salisbury* from UK, (*DSC* 11/3/76), and the Cahill who left Auckland in April 1878 for the south.

Cahill's stay was brief, and he became a casualty of at least one railways mishap—the newspaper accounts are quite confusing and sometimes inaccurate. (It is not clear if the different reports in different papers combined two incidents.) On 27 December 1877 there was a collision between two trains south of Mercer: a ballast train and a Fairlie engine taken out on a run by the foreman of the workshop collided at Taupiri. Only one person was injured, one of the drivers who broke his leg leaping from his engine, but there was considerable damage to two engines and the line was blocked. An inquiry was held and reported on in November 1878. Blame was apportioned out between the drivers, the fireman on one train, a traffic manager who ordered the train to continue, and **Cahill**, stationmaster at Papakura, 'was recommended for dismissal'. Another incident was more generally critical of the Railways Department as well as Cahill. This time the issue was trains keeping to time, with the risk of accidents where this did not happen. Blame seemed to rest with the clock (or the time keeping) of the stationmaster at Papakura. Clocks and watches were required to be set to New Zealand mean time, and the watches of the driver and guard on both the north-bound and south-bound trains that met at Papakura that morning were, 'for a wonder', agreed, but they were out of sync with the stationmaster's clock; he held both trains back 4 minutes, and neither were able to make up time. In the case of the south-bound train this appeared to lead to an accident. An article in the *Herald* noted the requirements that guards and engine driver, and also stationmasters are required to record times of arrival and departures in time books, and asked why clocks were not provided at all stations. Papakura did not appear to have had a clock. (*NZH* 1/3/1878)

Cahill was dismissed, but had had local support. 'His attention to his duties - in receiving and despatching goods – his desire to please, and his civility, have made him a general favourite.'

Unlike Bob Wynyard, the amateur who pursued sporting activities in his abundant spare time, the next station master, was one of two who are remembered for carrying out a trade alongside their Railways role. He was also the first of several who had worked with railways in Britain, and arrived with experience. **Amos Eyes** was also a bootmaker. In 1871, before his NZ Railways days, the *Auckland Star* reported the theft of a pair of boots from Amos Eyes, attesting to his trade. (*AS* 3/5/71). Born in Cheshire 1834, son of a bootmaker, at the age of 16 he was working as a cordwainer. But by his early 20s he was working in a range of positions in railways; at one stage he was a railway porter in Wolverhampton, Staffordshire. He married in 1862, and he and Sarah immigrated on the *Golden City* in 1864 as part of an Anglican immigration scheme intending to settle the remote Pakiri Block. Instead they moved to Freemans Bay, where he worked as a storeman. After a visit

to England via the USA, they returned to Freemans Bay in 1870. Hearing of the development of the Auckland to Mercer railway, he applied for positions such as 'station master, inspector, guard or signal man'. His first position was at Epsom.

In April 1877 Eyes had been renting the Mercer stationmaster's house for 18 months, and objected to his name being on the rates list since it was part of his salary. He was also charged (and the case dismissed) in September 1877 in the Mercer court for the 'torture of sheep' for four days without water. Some time in 1878 Cahill left Papakura and Eyes arrived. Two daughters were born in Papakura in 1880 and 1882, and in 1881 he bought property— 20 acres on lots 90 and 91 from Alexander Lyon at Kirikiri (on the corner of Kelvin and Willis Roads), and part lot 2 Opaheke. He was earning £150 a year. He had been moved on to be Postmaster at Mt Eden by 1885, and he was Postmaster/ Stationmaster at Avondale between 1889 and 1900. We have a photo of him in those years. A scar on his face, caused through a railway accident, is visible in the photo. Although he worked elsewhere, his family remained in Papakura; two sons, Charles and John, farmed the land, while a daughter married in Papakura in 1898. His wife and another daughter were registered on the Electoral Role in 1896 giving their address as Papakura, and it was in the family home in Papakura that he died in 1901, soon after retiring from a stroke. His funeral and burial were in Papakura. Sarah, his widow, died in August 1824, and was buried with him. The family sold the land and an old 8- roomed house in 'Kelvin Avenue' in 1927.

The young William Richardson remembered a 'Mr Hives' when he first arrived in Papakura around 1880. 'Mr Hives, he reported, 'was both stationmaster and bootmaker. Between the times of arrival of trains he mended boots, watching for trains approaching through a window at the end of his shop.' (AS 11/2/1939) He 'had his shop alongside the line, with windows at both ends so that he could see when the train was coming. He would then drop his tools and go over to the station.' I suspect a clock and a trained ear for trains coming up the incline from Hunua station or from the north, were also part of their warning system. The quiet during the 2020 Lockdown was a reminder of times when trains or motor vehicles could be heard from a great distance.



Two nineteenth century stationmasters. Left: Amos Eyes, photographed at Avondale. Photo PDHS; Right: G H Cottam, Cyclopedia of NZ, NZETC DigitalNZ, NLNZ

Another early stationmaster, the same newspaper source tells us, 'was a watchmaker and inventor, who spent his spare time, of which there was plenty in those days, mending watches and planning out inventions that were going to make his fortune.' (AS 8/5/34) The inventor was probably the next stationmaster, G H Cottam.

**George Henry Cottam**, stationmaster for a short while in the early 1880s, illustrated another route into Railways, a good general education. Cottam was born in London in 1853, and educated at London University. He

immigrated to Nelson in 1872 and joined the railway service in 1874 in Wellington and then in Foxton in stores, before becoming stationmaster at Kai-iwi and Waverley, on the line connecting Wanganui with New Plymouth' (*NZTimes* 5/7/79). While he was stationmaster at New Plymouth for 2-3 years he was involved in a standoff in 1881 with contractors who had placed an engine on the line blocking access for a special train returning to New Plymouth. He refused to be blackmailed but a passenger paid what amounted to a bribe demanded to move the blocking train. (*Hawera and Normanby Star* 24/8/1881) He moved north to Mercer, and then Papakura. His transfer to Auckland was announced in 1883 and he entered a notice in the *Herald* in June 1884, thanking the residents of Papakura and the surrounding districts for signing a testimonial 'regretting my removal from Papakura Railway Station.' (*NZH* 20/6/84) From Papakura he was appointed chief clerk at Greymouth, and after six years, was transferred to Christchurch, where he had charge of the delivery of the north and south goods for another six years. In 1895 he was appointed to Pleasant Point (Timaru), South Canterbury, and was transferred to Huntly in October, 1900. Ten years later he applied for and was granted a patent which was registered in the Canterbury area. He and Joseph Bulte (a Belgian-born confectioner and promulgator of cancer cures) looked at the challenge caused by the smoke from steam trains in the Lyttleton Tunnel. One suggestion made in 1909 was converting coal to oil burning locomotives. Railways were also investigating an Australian scheme for fixed tunnel fans, and Bulte and Cottam came up with their own railway tunnel ventilator, by which a fan attached to the locomotive would blow the smoke forward ahead of the train. (*Mataura Ensign* 16/4/1910, and others, also *Lyttleton Times* 30/4/1910 and (*Christchurch* ) *Star* 21/7/1910.) (The invention was not taken up, and in 1929 the problem was solved with electrification.) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyttelton\\_Line](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyttelton_Line)). G H Cottam died in 1918, aged 64.

In 1888, the stationmaster at Drury, **Howard** was involved in a tragedy involving a local Member of the Legislative Council, the Hon H Chamberlin. Chamberlin's wife became concerned when he didn't return home to Auckland from visiting his property at Drury, intending to inspect a shaft he had dug in a search for coal. He had borrowed a spade, bucket and bailer from the wife of a railway employee, Brooks, saying he would return them that evening, but when he did not return it was at first assumed he might have caught the train at the Hunua station instead. When the alarm was sounded, James Cossey found his coat, collar and necktie hanging on a tree. Howard, the stationmaster organised the search party that found his body in a water-hole, and then rode to Papakura to inform Constable McKnight. (*AS & NZH* 16 and 23/4/88) Mrs Chamberlin had come down to Drury but was on her way back to Auckland and did not hear the news until the train got to the Papakura station.

After Cottam, the stationmaster at Papakura by 1887 was the 'indefatigable' **Bernard Bruce McCurdy (Bruce)** married to Charlotte. 2 or 3 of their children were born in Papakura (KO). The *Auckland Star* provided a sketch of his life when he died 30 years later. He was born in Birmingham in 1861, and his father was a Professor of Mathematics. As a young person he entered the London and North Western Railway as a clerk, and joined NZ Railways when he immigrated. Before he served at Papakura he was stationmaster at Otahuhu and Hamilton. He may have been the stationmaster referred to when D Crawford of Clevedon complained about railway management; he had contacted the stationmaster, in plenty of time – 4 days – asking for two double sheep trucks to take sheep to Buckland's saleyards at Remuera. When he got to the station with his sheep there were no sheep trucks in sight. He was told they had all had been booked out but cattle trucks were provided. The farmer duly loaded the sheep, and then discovered that instead of moving on the first train, they waited till the second, arriving at the Remuera saleyards at 10 pm, but with the loss of 5 sheep smothered in transit. (*NZH* 28/2/89)

When McCurdy left in 1892, headed for Oxford – as Tirau was known, he received a big send-off in the pub-

lic hall. He was handed an elaborate illustrated tribute which acknowledged 'the many difficulties which beset the impartial discharge of your official duties as stationmaster, postmaster and telegraphist' and paid tribute to 'the ability, uniform courtesy, and tact which have invariably characterised' his service. He had engaged himself in the social life of the community and his wife was particularly appreciated for her musical contributions. He had been secretary of the Fruitgrowers Association. (NZH 25/11/92) After Papakura he served at Morrinsville, Tirau, Normanby, Stratford, (and then was transferred to Auckland at his own request on account of the health of his oldest son (AS 15/1/97), and became Chief of the Relieving staff. He was respected as being capable in every role in the railways and being a practiced engineer. AS 1/6/07 McCurdy died in 1907 at Hamilton. He had recently relieved at Papakura, where he had caught a chill, but had gone down to relieve at Frankton Junction. A Papakura-born son, Archibald, was a railway clerk in Papakura in 1919 when he was called up. (KO)

As an aside, stationmaster farewells were often major local events, with speeches from civic and business leaders, lavish praise for helpfulness and courtesy, regret at the Department moving them on, and gifts, often smoking gear, and for the wives dinner services. They were valued public servants.

Son of a sea-captain turned farmer, born in Waipipi, Waiuku, **A K (Alfred Kinsella) Harris** was the only stationmaster born in Franklin. Harris had joined Railways as a cadet in Auckland in 1884, and in 1890 was still recorded as a cadet in Onehunga, illustrating a fourth route to promotion, one which became standard. He was Papakura stationmaster three years later. Probably he was the 'popular and genial stationmaster at Ohaupo (who had) been removed to Papakura, which we are informed, is a promotion' according to the *Waikato Times* of November 1892. It continued: 'He is a young man, well liked by the public, and always courteous and obliging, and very general regret was expressed at his removal; but we are consoled that he is to be replaced by a young gentleman from Auckland, whom, we are informed is equally courteous, etc, and not engaged.' (KO) A lengthy letter, headed 'Against the regulations' publicly criticised him. without naming him, for being unwilling to send an urgent telegraph to Waiuku, but he was warmly defended by others for having acted in the best interests of the family of the bereaved person, by sending the messenger on to Drury, knowing the message would arrive earlier that way. (*Observer* 19 & 28/10/93) From Papakura he mainly served in administrative positions in Wanganui (1896-1905 described as clerk), Wellington, Auckland, Dunedin (1911—1914) and Christchurch (1919), serving in the latter two centres as district traffic manager. He later became General Superintendent of Transport for New Zealand in Wellington. His death on 31 January 1927 was reported as being the day of his retirement. (*Evening Post* 1/2/1927)

Between December 1894 and March 1901, **Charles Frederick Somerfield**, previously a clerk at Ellerslie, was Papakura Stationmaster and Postmaster. He married Miss Delia Lynch at the Roman Catholic Church in February 1896. She was daughter of the publican Mrs Ann Lynch, and a 'brilliant and accomplished pianiste'. Two children were born to them locally, and a third after they moved on. He was described as a popular stationmaster. The couple were active at social events, providing speeches, recitations and musical items at a Presbyterian soiree in April 1896, a banquet at the Masonic Hall to honour local D Wilson who had become the 3 mile walking champion of Australasia in a race in Sydney (another speaker was his brother Sidney Somerfield), and in 1900 at an Orangeman's Ball, where he sang. She was at her mother's residence at Gladstone Street in 1899 In August when a child was born.

In his first year at Papakura there was a break-in at the station. A hole was drilled in the top of a safe and an explosive inserted, blowing the top off the safe, with £30 taken. (NZH 16/8/95)

Elsie K Morton was living at Red Hill and going to school in Papakura in the 1890s. In 1927, as an established author revisiting her old school for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, she spoke of going to school. 'A narrow track ran through the Reserve from road to station.' She remembered 'the pranks at the station, and urgent pursuit of a harassed stationmaster who strongly objected to hide-and-seek in the good's shed, who had an unreasoning prejudice against the placing of crossed pins and coins on the railway line, and who called on high heaven to aid his vengeance when once he caught me tugging with might and main at the little white lever that made the lines move up and down in most fascinating manner.... He was a worthy man, no doubt, but I have always felt that he had no real love for little children.' The fact that she remembered a 'sound maternal spanking' after that last prank would indicate that the worthy man made a point of telling her mother. *NZH 10/12/1927* (Elsie Morton was born in October 1885 and moved to 'remote' Papakura when she was 9, which would suggest her worthy protagonist was either Harris or Somerfield.)

In 1899, a list named 4 railway staff in addition to Somerfield: all were local names – Pierre Roussel, Robert McLennan railway employee, John Sutton, platelayer of Drury, Charles Watkinson, engine driver. (And in 1900 the Electoral Roll named James Croskery platelayer, Charles Whitburn Drury, porter. Whitburn was still employed in the Drury station in 1920 and his wife Helen was postmistress.)

In 1901 Somerfield was transferred to Waikare, as station and postmaster, a move *the Auckland Star* described as a promotion. He had clearly won the esteem of a large circle of local friends over the six years. (*NZH 14/2/10, AS 21/3/01*). Four years later, when he was stationmaster at Rakaia, Delia was killed in a railway accident in October. (*Star 22/10/1909*). She was on the second express for the South, on the stretch between Islington and Templeton, when she slipped crossing between a carriage and a dining car and was killed immediately. She was identified by the Islington stationmaster and by several guards. In 1914 Somerfield was Woodville stationmaster but by 1928 had retired to Milford, described as a settler, with his son Charles Desmond.

A **F (Arthur) Brown** was named as station master in July 1904. One evening in 1905 the stationmaster and his assistant Mr **Samuel James Gaw** had locked up after the last train, and while Gaw was talking with Constable Lanigan in the village they heard screams from the direction of the railway line, where a young groom attending a horse on a train had fallen onto the line. (*AS 6/3/1905*)

**John Heaton von Sturmer**, with his wife Laura Margaret, was posted to Papakura in 1910. He wrote to the Town board in May complaining about the number of straying horses and cattle on the roads and rails. (*AS 5/5/10*) He was popular locally but the illness of his wife by 1913 meant he needed to move on. (*PWT 28/2/13*)

Wises Directory listed 6 Railways employees in 1910: they were John Heaton von Sturmer, stationmaster and postmaster, W A Baker and F Driver (railway clerks), J A Wills (railway porter) M J Carr, ganger, Percy Hunt, platelayer (who was still there ten years later). A McDonald was also named as a porter.

In 1913 **J McKenzie** was the new stationmaster. He had been in Railways since 1901 (at Te Awamutu, relieving at Matamata, shifted to Frankton Junction, a very busy station, in 1916 as Traffic Inspector. F J Hoddinot relieved in that position as acting stationmaster while McKenzie took annual leave. *PWT 26/3/1915*. While he was living in the stationmaster's house, the owners of neighbouring buildings complained about the pinus insignis (or radiata) trees shading their properties, leading to their removal. Railways used them for posts. 'The result is that a much better view of the township is available from the railway line.' *PWT 21/7/16*. By 1922 he was stationmaster at Riverton.

An issue for the railways in these years was the periodic call up of railway staff. During World War 1, newspapers bore witness to the call up, mainly of track staff: Frank Currie, platelayer, Paerata, and James Cain, railway labourer, Papakura, were called up in 1917 and 1918. English-born Corporal James Cain (62252) was a railway shunter, or railway guard who had previously served in the South Africa War. He gave his home address as Grey Lynn, had last worked in Te Kuiti, was in the Main Body and left for overseas service in October 1917, serving on the Western Front, promoted to Corporal and returned a year later on the *Maheno*, 'no longer fit for service' following wounds in his right arm and shoulder. **Norman Robson**, stationmaster at Drury, was called up in 1918, perhaps a little late to see action. *NZH 22/5/18*, and Archibald McCurdy in 1919. Patrick Allen (Paddy) Finn, one of several sons of a Clevedon farmer to enrol, shipped out with the Main Body in the Auckland Mounted Rifles, and saw action in Gallipoli where he was wounded and was in hospital in Malta. He was gassed at the Somme, discharged in August 1916, and joined the Railways after the war (RN)

In 1920, **Donald E Connell** (1920 Wise's Directory) was stationmaster and postmaster. The highest ranking and highest paid local official, living in Papakura in 1920 was **William F Osborne**, Railway Inspector (Permanent Way) on a salary of £430, and with 36½ years in the Department, compared with J M Tasker on £380 with 25 years seniority, and C H Aukett, Clerk, on £305. (Members of the Railway Dept 1/4/22, AJHR). Tasker would be Papakura stationmaster in 1922 and again from 1928. Charles Aukett had been a railway porter at Otahuhu, and 6 years previously had suffered a double tragedy. His mother Annie Aquilla Aukett, holding his 3 year old daughter Dorothy Thelma, had made a late discovery that the train was at the Otahuhu station and had tried to get off as the train was moving off. Both had been killed when she fell stepping on to the platform. Aukett appears to have grown up in Otahuhu where his father was a prominent storekeeper. (*NZH 31/5/14/ AS 28/5/14*) Thirty years later, Annie Aukett, was still living in Onslow Road, and three tradesmen sons and their families were also still in Papakura. (*Papakura Borough Electoral Roll 1950*)

In addition the 1920 directory lists 3 railway guards, 2 railway gangers, 2 platelayers, 2 engine drivers, a railway porter, and ten other railway employees, 23 in all.



Early in this article I mentioned Phil Rousell the local boy who began as a cadet and ended as General Manager in Wellington. In 1932, at the early age of 55, he all but died on the job: he had a heart attack on an overnight train travelling from Wellington to Auckland on his way to Sydney for talks with Australian railways, and died at his sister's place at Grey Lynn soon after arrival. His largely -attended funeral was attended by a roll call of politicians, transport company officials (Union Steam Ship Co, Canadian Pacific Railways), business leaders, representatives of the Railway Officers' Institute, Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, and the Engine Drivers Union.

**Sources** i- Dr Michelle Smith (MAS), Kara Oosterman (KO), and Robert Neale (RN), train driver. Newspapers cited included *Daily Southern Cross* (DSC), *NZ Herald* (NZH), *Auckland Star* (AS), *Pukekohe and Waiuku Times* (PWT), *Franklin Times* (FT). Also Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives (AJHR) ex Papers Past NZ

P (Phil) Rousell, photo in the article reporting his funeral, *Evening Post*, 2/11/1932

# NOTICES

**February Monthly Meeting—Thursday, February 25, at 1 pm: THE CHANGING FACE OF NZ STAMPS, Phil Sai-Louie**

**February Trip: Saturday, February 27** departing at 0900, for Silverdale, visiting the market there following which we go to the Pioneer Village Museum. Cost \$45pp., \$5 extra for non-members.  
**Bookings to Dave, phone 298 4507.**

**March Monthly Meeting March 25, at 1 pm: WHO KILLED JFK? Rod Baldwin** surveys the suspects

Further trips are still under deliberation and will be advertised on the screen once confirmed.

## MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS:

Currently—Buller's Birds. Make sure you see these paintings and the birds

Next: Warbirds, a local collaboration—opening March 18, continuing to June

Following that: Tokelau

***Remember: 1. Subs, and 2. Trip registrations through Dave Smith 2984507***

**Meetings** are held on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Library Meeting Rooms opposite the Museum, starting with the talk at 1 pm, continuing with business and afternoon tea (for a **\$2 gold coin** minimum). All are welcome. Phil Sai-Louie arranges our interesting speakers.

**Events are advertised** on the screen in the Museum window and on our blog and Facebook pages. Please check for updates and Museum news.

**Trips** are usually held on the fourth Saturday of each month two days after the meetings. The bus leaves from East Street behind the Access Point building at 10 am, unless otherwise stated. Cost is \$5 more for non-members, but anyone is welcome on a first come first aboard basis. Please register early and advise if unable to attend as numbers are limited.

**To register for trips, please ring Dave at (09) 2984507**

### Visit Papakura Museum on

Website: [www.papakuramuseum.org.nz](http://www.papakuramuseum.org.nz)

Our blog: <https://papakuramuseumblog.wordpress.com>

Facebook : [www.facebook.com/PapakuraMuseum/](http://www.facebook.com/PapakuraMuseum/)

**The Papakura Sentinel is a bimonthly magazine of the Papakura & Districts Historical Society. Your contributions are welcomed. Please send directly to Terry or Rob by email: [pdhs@papakuramuseum.org.nz](mailto:pdhs@papakuramuseum.org.nz)**



The Papakura Museum & Sentinel are supported by



**Advertisement:**

**Papakura is changing before our eyes.  
 We need to record the changes for posterity.  
 Here’s a challenge: When you see a For Sale sign on a property, whip out  
 your camera and record the site.  
 Pass on the photo and address to Sentinel at  
 pdhs@papakuramuseum.org.nz  
 Take a follow-up photo to show us what takes its place?**

Would you like to advertise to our readers? \$10 or donation for this space / \$5 or donation for half space

**Become a member of the Papakura & District Historical Society**

Please complete the following

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Subscriptions \$25 (1st July - 30th June: Free for those 90 years and over)**

Are you Interested in daytime/evening speakers? Daytime \_\_\_ Evening \_\_\_

Are you interested in volunteering? (We **love** volunteers!) \_\_\_

Are you interested in joining our bus trips? \_\_\_

You will receive *Sentinel* regularly. Please pay at Papakura Museum or online— ANZ 060401 0241593 01