



**FRIENDS of
BOLTON STREET
MEMORIAL PARK INCORPORATED**
PO BOX 12 426, WELLINGTON, 6144, NEW ZEALAND
<http://www.boltoncemetery.org.nz>

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Editor: David Dunsheath

In this issue:

- Margaret Alington, ONZM (below)
- Marjorie Fullarton (page 4)
- The value of cemeteries to genealogists (Lynly Yates) (page 4)
- 1846 murders: Gillespie grave restored (page 5)
- Cemetery repairs completed during 2011/12 (page 8)
- Botanic Gardens Manager's Report to AGM, July 2012 (page 9)
- Captain Renner and the wreck of the Orpheus (page 10)

IN MEMORIAM: MARGARET ALINGTON, ONZM



Margaret Alington in 2007, signing a copy of her book, 'Unquiet Earth'. Photo: Kate Fortune

On 15 October 2012 Margaret Hilda Alington, ONZM, librarian, writer and historian, died aged 92, in Wellington, a city to which she has given so much. It is impossible to over-estimate the contribution she has made in particular to the Bolton Street Memorial Park. Without her quiet but persistent and professional work the Park would not be the treasure it is today.

Her close connection with the three historic cemeteries at Bolton Street began in the 1960s when the decision was made to dismantle a large part of the burial grounds to allow construction of a motorway. The Ministry of Works (MoW later MWD) began a programme to document the old cemeteries. As part of that Margaret was commissioned to write their history. She was well-equipped for this commission, having already completed a publication, *Frederick*

Thatcher and St Paul's, about the church architect whose country church plan had

been adapted for the Church of England Mortuary Chapel. The latter, then in the path of the motorway, was intended to be removed, restored and re-erected.

Margaret thus began a decade of intensive research which revealed a trove of historic treasures. An early discovery by her was that a little cottage on Bolton Street, bought by MoW for motorway development, was in fact the former Church of England Sexton's cottage. This discovery informed the decision to keep and restore the cottage – now believed to be the oldest extant residence in Wellington City.

The MoW also commissioned the City Sexton, P.J.E. Shotter, to photograph all tombstones to be removed (about 840) before the graves were dug up and the human remains (finally totalling around 3,700) were reinterred. Realising that these photographs were not adequate for deciphering the inscriptions, Margaret decided that the stones needed to be transcribed by hand to make them fully useful for historical research. She gathered around her a team of volunteers to do this work, many from the Wellington Branch of the Historic Places Trust, but some also from the National Council of Women and the Federation of University Women.

She records in one of her writings that *“On Sunday afternoons in the winter of 1974... the inscriptions on the stored memorials were copied by hand by a group of volunteers, most of us Wellington members of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. These transcripts allowed the Friends, when they formed in 1977, to demonstrate to [MoW] that, in terms of the cemetery's history, the reinstating of the memorials needed to take place on appropriate ground in the remnants [of the Park], and not in an arbitrary manner.”* Before then Margaret had battled to gain approval to have all the disinterred tombstones reinstated, not just a selection of these as the MoW had wanted. Had she not intervened, the loss of historic assets would have been considerable.

Margaret wrote later of this work: *“The inscribed memorials were stacked in ten rows, with blocks of wood in between to allow them to be read. Unfortunately in many cases the blocks moved or fell out, causing some stones to fall against their neighbours, and so making them very difficult to decipher. Because of the danger involved, no one was permitted to attempt to move the stones. However, by contorting one's body, by using brushes, torches and talc powder, and by several visits in different lights to particularly 'difficult' inscriptions, most were able to be recorded at least in part.”*

In 1975-76 the stones remaining in the in-ground graves were transcribed, again under Margaret's supervision. A total of 1,186 inscriptions were deciphered over these three years. They are invaluable for reference purposes as much of the writing has since disintegrated on the face of the tombstones themselves. She extended this work to cover about 140 additional memorials in the Mount Street cemetery, the original Roman Catholic burial ground still under the ownership of the church.

Through Margaret's initiative and persistence, the Friends of Bolton Street Cemetery was formed in March 1977. Such support groups are now commonplace in the heritage and environment area but this was pioneering work in Wellington at the time. Margaret was on the first committee as convenor of the Research group. By

then, some 50 people were helping with biographical research on names from the headstones and also translating the Maori and Chinese inscriptions. Responding to a request from the MWD architect to sketch and measure all the tombstones then stored at the Karori Cemetery, Margaret's group tackled this project between June and August 1977 in a series of workdays as the weather permitted, so this was a fourth winter of cold and cumbersome outdoor research.

Some of this extra information was recorded on a hand-written set of the transcriptions covering the three historic cemeteries at Bolton St and the fourth at Mount St. A revised map of the town cemetery was completed in 1987, new grid references allocated, and the burial list was indexed to the new grid. The first computerisation of the index was prepared by Margaret's son, Giles. The set of transcriptions is still used today as the basis of the burial list on the Council's records and on the website of the Friends of Bolton Street Memorial Park.

Parallel to these projects, Margaret continued with her research and writing. She has commented that it was not known at the outset what was involved in writing such a history, or even whether the cemetery had a history apart from the lives of those buried in it. "*It soon became apparent*" she noted "*that these acres in such a vulnerable central position had perhaps inevitably been the subject of several fierce controversies of which the most recent was not necessarily the most intense.*" By the time her work was completed the Government had decided to renege on its commitment to publication but had not reckoned on Margaret's tenacity. An appeal to the Minister resulted in a reluctant reinstatement of the funding.

Her comprehensive and well-illustrated book, very appropriately named *Unquiet Earth*, was published in 1978 under the auspices of MWD and the National Roads Board. As would be expected of Margaret, it is a thoroughly professional work, fully referenced and indexed, very readable and with a rich mine of information about all aspects of the cemetery and its history. It is typical of her thoroughness that the appendices range from botany to art and even cover the geographically separate Roman Catholic cemetery in Mount Street. It is an invaluable resource on which all future historical work has been based. [While the book is now out of print, the Friends hold second-hand copies which can be purchased at a modest cost of \$20.]

Margaret remained on the committee of the Friends of the Cemetery for ten years, finishing around the time that the first stage of the Society's work was coming to an end with the completion of the land deal. Despite her other commitments, she retained her interest in the cemetery and its Friends group throughout the rest of her life, writing articles and responding to questions about the historical detail. Her interest in the research never faltered.

Returning, after her book had been completed, to the discarded pieces of tombstones just in case something had been overlooked, she found one stone with the word *John* and a date. She then traced this to the tombstone of the forgotten baby of a past Governor of New Zealand. She was a constant attendee at our AGMs, including the one held this July, although her increasing frailty and fading eyesight was challenged by the difficult Turnbull House access. She was for me personally over the past

decade, and for the Friends' committees overall, an unfailing source of information, inspiration and encouragement.

In recognition of her work, the Friends decided in 2004 to make her, along with Mac McCormick and Hugh Fullarton, a life member although Hugh died before the awards could be made. In 2008 the Friends agreed on a more personal recognition of Margaret's services by naming a path in the cemetery after her. The *Alington Path* is a somewhat treacherous one in the Church of England Upper area but we are pleased Margaret managed to navigate her way to the signpost bearing her name even if she might not have managed all the hazardous steps along the route. This is the only path in the cemetery to be named not after a 19th Century founder but someone from our era.

At Margaret's funeral her friend and fellow writer, Shirley Murray, said, "*Her writing is lively – even when dealing with cemeteries! Her keen intelligence made her a natural and very meticulous scholar. Her footnotes are impeccable, as are her references, of course. She taught me much about the importance of archives, of keeping records and dates intact. Photos, too. She was a magpie collector of interesting human stories and loved finding out more. She was a natural biographer.*" We are all beneficiaries of these attributes.

To Bill and your family, we extend our deepest condolences. To Margaret, thank you for giving us and Wellington such a precious taonga. *Priscilla Williams*

MARJORIE FULLARTON

We record with regret the death on 3 November of Mrs Marjorie Fullarton of Karori, widow of Hugh A Fullarton, CMG, past chairman of the Friends of Bolton Street Cemetery (1980-83) who died in 2004. Marjorie remained interested in the activities of the Friends for the rest of her life, and the Friends extend our sincere condolences to her family. *Kate Fortune*

THE VALUE OF CEMETERIES TO GENEALOGISTS

Our guest speaker following July's AGM was Lynly Yates, former archives officer for the NZ Defence Forces Personnel Archives, and an active member of the NZ Society of Genealogists. Lynly spoke about the value of cemeteries to genealogists, using examples from her own family genealogical researches.

Bolton Street is certainly not on its own when it comes to lost or inaccurate early records and broken or missing headstones, judging from Lynly's examples. Even in such cases, many family mysteries can be solved by delving into whatever records remain and by exploring old graveyards. It was also interesting to see that family documents can be a valuable resource for information on many old and almost forgotten cemeteries. We thank Lynly for her fascinating account. *Nick Perrin*

1846 MURDERS: GILLESPIE GRAVE RESTORED

Just a few steps from Bolton Street in the lower cemetery, the last marker (#45) on the Memorial Trail indicates one of the Park's early graves [grid reference C15-04], that of the Gillespie family. Andrew and Christy Gillespie arrived in Wellington on the *Birman* in February 1842, with their three children: Charles, Andrew, and Janet. Janet died in 1844 (cause unknown), followed in April 1846 by Andrew Gillespie (aged 42) and his 12-year-old son, Andrew.

Father and son were engaged in sawing a tree near their home on the banks of the Hutt River when they were attacked by Māori and left lying, severely wounded. The boy died almost at once, and his body was placed in St Paul's Church in Wellington, pending the death of his father who lingered for two days and three nights. They were interred in the Public Cemetery on 7 April. About 150 residents attended in support of the widow, Christy, and her remaining son, Charles, aged 14.

Subsequently, Christy remarried (Thomas Stack), but she was buried with Andrew and their two younger children when she died in 1851 aged 49. The surviving son, Charles Hagerty Gillespie, grew up to become landlord of the Shepherd's Arms on Tinakori Road for 30 years, where his '*interesting collection of ethnographic curios*' that adorned the inn was widely known. He died aged 65 on 25 July 1897, leaving a widow (Helen) and a family of six boys and four daughters.

The inscription reads:

*Sacred to the memory of
Janet Gillespie, aged 8 years
died 30 May 1844.
Also of Andrew Hagarty Gillespie
her father aged 42 years
and Andrew, her brother aged 12 years
died of wounds murderously inflicted by
rebel natives early in the evening of 2nd April
on the banks of the River Hutt, and were
laid in this grave together, 7th April 1846.
The surviving widow and mother erects
this memorial.
The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night,
for when men shall say Peace and safety: then
sudden destruction cometh. 1 Thess. V 2-3.*

The jury's verdict on the 1846 deaths was '*wilful murder by some person or persons unknown*'. The suspicion remained, however, that the attackers were tenants of the Ngati Toa warrior leader Te Rangihaeata. They may have acted in revenge after the burning of what Gillespie considered to be derelict Māori huts on his newly acquired land. Probably the incident represents a tragic misunderstanding, as it seems that the Māori considered the settlers had desecrated a burial ground.

At the time of the murders, Te Rangihaeata was building a new pa at Pauatahanui, near Porirua. He had been a vocal opponent of the spread of settlement in the Hutt

Valley, and he and his uncle, Te Rauparaha, had been involved in the ‘Wairau Incident’ of June 1843 in which Captain Arthur Wakefield and eight other prisoners had been brutally executed. By 1846, however, even before the arrival of Sir George



Gillespie grave in 2010, showing delamination and buried head and foot stones. Photo: Kate Fortune

Grey, Te Rauparaha had begun to distance himself from his nephew and was encouraging Māori occupants to abandon the Hutt Valley land that was in dispute with settlers. He was, therefore, anxious to clear his own followers of blame and told Sir George Grey that the murderers might be found in Porirua, although they were never captured.

The headstone inscription – its wording reflecting the bitterness of community attitudes at the time – shows

three different character styles or fonts in remarkably sharp relief. Most of the text resembles a standard font similar to Times New Roman, with all names written in capital lettering. Other short passages are rendered in a gothic-style font or in italics.

In recent years, the headstone began to suffer noticeable delamination, and the Friends investigated a number of avenues for funding its repair. Last year we learned with great relief that restoration of this significant historic grave would come under the auspices of the War Graves Commission of the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, and would be managed by Margaret Marks. The repair work (including re-setting of the headstone and footstone) was carried out earlier this year by specialised conservators, Detlef Klein and Marco Buerger of Manawatu Museum Services.



Gillespie grave delamination (2009) Photo: David Dunsheath

Their task began with delicate removal of the headstone and footstone markers from the grave. This process quickly revealed that previous grave maintenance work included it being covered with a thick layer of concrete. This probably occurred when the adjacent, low, cemetery boundary wall was constructed and the surrounding ground was raised to its current level. In effect both markers became partly buried, contrary to the original design of the grave. This renovation has now uncovered 21 cm additional headstone height, with 148 cm now visible (of its overall 185 cm length). Likewise for the footstone, 35 cm additional height has created 52 cm visible height (of its overall 82 cm length).



Conservator, Marco Buerger re-setting the memorials. The white base on the headstone shows the extent buried in concrete during previous maintenance. Photo: Priscilla Williams

A vital aspect of this conservation project was to arrest and repair areas of headstone delamination. This is a process of deterioration whereby the outer 2 mm surface of stone was slowly separating from the original stone slab. The cutting of the inscription lettering with a cleaver had compressed or compacted this surface causing it to expand and contract differently from the rest of the stone during weather induced wet-dry cycles. Having now allowed the two stones to dry thoroughly, treatment was effected by filling or ‘grouting’ the voids between the delaminated sections in order to stabilise, support and bond the delaminating surfaces, and prevent on-going loss of surface material.

Kate Fortune

[Sources: *Early Wellington*, Louis E Ward; ‘*Te Rangihātea*’, Angela Ballara; ‘*Te Rauparaha*’, Stephen Oliver; *Dictionary of NZ Biography* Vol.1; *Unquiet Earth*, Margaret H Alington; *Conservation Proposal*, Feb 2012, prepared by Manawatu Museum Services Ltd]

CEMETERY REPAIRS COMPLETED DURING 2011/12

Using the annual grant from the *Early Settlers Fund* (within the budget of the Wellington City Council) the following repairs were made to tombstones and graves during the Council's last financial year ending June 2012.

The wooden grave markers remain a priority because of their rarity. The specialised conservator, Detlef Klein of Manawatu Museum Services, has repaired eleven of these over the previous two years. He examined the remaining in-ground markers and concluded about six of these should be repaired now while the other eight as yet untreated, could be monitored meantime. Of the six repaired this year, five were markers in the shape of tombstones in memory of the following: Peter Hale (Hart Path), Walter Hutchinson (above Strang Path), the Holdsworth family (Woodward Path), and John and Sarah King and George Webster (on Carr Path). The sixth marker repaired was a cross marking an unknown grave in the Easdale Street area.

Masonry repairs were undertaken by two repairers. Kim Stops of Headstone World, repaired two marble tombstones on Trustees Crescent. One for Ellen Henry is an in-ground tomb accessed up some steep steps. The other was a broken cross in memory of Aileen Barron which received skilled workmanship to replace the missing part. It has yet to be installed while we await access to bases held at the Karori cemetery.

Glover Memorials of Wellington repaired the wall of the Doull family grave (Benjamin Smith Path) which contains a beautifully carved tombstone. The same firm also stabilised two tombstones belonging to the Tonks and Ferguson families, which are in the large group of reinstated tombstones along Woodward Path.

The most notable repair during the year was that of the **Gillespie grave**, funded by the Ministry of Culture and Heritage. Because of its importance, this newsletter features an article on its history and restoration (refer to p5). *Priscilla Williams*

COMMITTEE CONTACTS 2011-12

Priscilla Williams	President, Policy & strategies, Historical research, Heritage WP database, Guide	priscilla.williams@paradise.net.nz Tel (04) 977 4667
David Dunsheath	Vice President, Conservation repairs, Newsletter Editor	davidd@bcpl.co.nz Tel (04) 472 8405
Kate Fortune	Membership Secretary, Treasurer, Guide	kate.fortune@paradise.net.nz Tel (04) 970 0024
Karen Adair	Minutes Secretary, Mount Street Cemetery Coordinator	karen.adair@xtra.co.nz Tel (04) 473 1778
Nick Perrin	Biographical & Burial research, Guide	n.perrin@xtra.co.nz Tel (04) 472 3767
Judy Bale	Tour coordination, Publicity, Guide	judybale@paradise.net.nz Tel (04) 499 8588
Terry Brandon	Legal & constitutional, Railing repairs	terrybrandon@xtra.co.nz Tel (04) 471 1483
Jennifer Robinson	Working bees coordination	jennifer.robinson@ccdhb.org.nz Tel (04) 973 8137

BOTANIC GARDENS MANAGER'S REPORT TO AGM, JULY 2012

The year has proved to be one of challenge and uncertainty as we worked our way through the Long Term Planning process then launched into the Eco City discussion in March. While Eco City was ultimately unsuccessful as proposed it certainly raised the spectre that change is in the air and even now we still do not know what that may look like.

Meanwhile Parks & Gardens is exploring ways in which regionalisation may affect our operations and identifying where we can work better together with our peers across the region and where we see that duplication of services can be identified. Cemeteries are one area where a common administration could work well as could a common platform for the maintenance of heritage cemeteries. This remains as speculation for the present but we cannot ignore the possibilities that may present themselves.

Again, a great vote of thanks from the Botanic Gardens team and Council for your assistance with Bolton Street Memorial Park, through your guided walks, working bees, restoration programme and advocacy. In particular I would like to acknowledge the Eco City Submission made by the Friends. Along with those of the Friends of Wellington Botanic Garden and the Otari Wiltons Bush Trust these were articulate and well thought out compared to a large number of rather florid and tenuous submissions received by Councillors.

The 2011/12 year's work programme has seen the continuation in restoration of stone and timber memorials with six timber headboards repaired and returned and five masonry memorials reinstated. Additionally and of note has been the restoration of the Gillespie headstones through advocacy from the Friends and funding from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage.

The coming year was expected to be the last of the *Early Settlers Fund* beyond which the repair and renewals costs will be met from within the Botanic Gardens (covering all four gardens) capital renewal programme. However there is \$44K remaining in the fund which will last through to the 2013/14 year. This year we will be laying out the remaining masonry work at Karori Cemetery to see what can be recovered and reused and what might be able to be included in the proposed 'unknowns' display at Bolton Street. Restoration of memorials and graves will continue.

The Sexton's Cottage has been reroofed and we are about to seek a short term rental through to the end of September when there will be another WARE programme artist in residence through to mid December.

Reuben Herrick joined our Rose Garden team this year and James Jones now heads up the Rose Garden and Cable Car teams. With increasing pressure on our staff resources we are trying to strengthen our operational teams to ensure that we maintain and work towards improving our standards of service.

Lastly I would acknowledge the work of the Botanic Gardens team in the Cemetery and again thank the Friends for their continuing support without which we would not have made the progress we have.

David Sole, Manager Botanic Gardens (on behalf of the Botanic Gardens team)

CAPTAIN RENNER AND THE WRECK OF THE *ORPHEUS*

7 February 2013 will be the 150th anniversary of New Zealand's worst maritime disaster, the wreck of *HMS Orpheus* on the Manukau bar on that day in 1863. There is a little known link between the wreck of the *Orpheus* and the Bolton Street Memorial Park in the person of Captain Frederick Renner who is now commemorated there.

7 February 1863 was recorded as being a fine day and there was a stiff westerly wind when the *Orpheus* approached the entrance to Manukau Harbour at the end of a journey from Sydney. As part of the Royal Navy's Australian and New Zealand station, the *Orpheus* was carrying reinforcements and supplies plus 259 sailors and marines on board.

The *Orpheus* was using outdated charts of the harbour entrance when shortly before 1.30 pm it struck a submerged sand bar. The force of the waves then turned the vessel and exposed it to the breaking surf which caused extensive damage. As it began taking on water attempts were made to abandon ship. Boats were lowered but many of those on board were swept away by the rough sea.

Not far away the steamer *Wonga Wonga*, under the command of Captain Frederick Renner, had left Onehunga at 1.00pm headed for Taranaki. Renner and his crew realised that the *Orpheus* was in difficulties. They were able to take two of the boats containing survivors in tow, and also picked up some survivors from the sea. The *Wonga Wonga* then approached what was left of the *Orpheus* but it was rapidly breaking up and by 8.00pm little remained. Renner took his ship as close as possible to the wreck, with all his skill and knowledge to ensure he did not endanger his own ship, his crew and passengers. Thus any remaining survivors clinging to pieces of wreckage had to attempt to swim through the waves and currents to have any hope of rescue.

Renner then found safe anchorage but kept lights burning and sounded his ship's steam whistle and bells throughout the night in the hope that further survivors might still be found. The wind died away and the sea became calm but when the *Wonga Wonga* steamed close to the wreck next morning only the stump of one mast and a few other timbers were visible.

The death toll was recorded as 189, out of the total of 259 who had been on board. Most of the victims were young men, with the youngest being only 12 and with an average age of 25. As well as being responsible for rescuing 50 of the 70 survivors, Captain Renner and his crew recovered a number of bodies from the sea.

Some of the victims were buried in the sand dunes near Titirangi. Enquiries were held after the disaster and eye witnesses, including passengers on the *Wonga Wonga*, agreed that Renner had acted as best he could. He was widely praised for his efforts in rescuing so many lives. A letter to Captain Renner, written by Charles Hill on behalf of the surviving officers of the *Orpheus*, is held in the Auckland War

Memorial Museum. It thanks Renner for his efforts and asks him to accept a pencil case 'in proof of the high esteem and regard' in which he was held. .

Frederick William Simmonds Renner was born in Devonport, England on 13 July 1824. He came from a family with a sea-faring history but instead of following their naval tradition he joined the Merchant Navy. By 1850 he had gained his master's certificate. He married Janet Moffat, from Dumfries, Scotland in 1851 and they appear to have spent the next few years travelling the world in ships under Captain Renner's command. Family stories speak of them being in China. Their second son is recorded as having been born on board the *Strathfieldsay* in March 1854 when in Sydney Harbour at the end of a trip from Madras.

Frederick, Janet and their two young sons left England for Nelson as passengers on the *Queen Margaret*, arriving there in October 1855. By 1857 they had moved to Wellington which was their home from that time. Captain Renner was listed as the owner/occupier of a house in MacFarlane Street, Mt Victoria, overlooking the harbour. It was said that because of the harbour view, Janet was able keep watch for her husband's ship returning from voyages and make sure that a meal was waiting for him by the time he arrived home.

Renner was involved in coastal shipping and at various times had command of *Stormbird*, *Rangatira* and *Ladybird* as well as the *Wonga Wonga*. He was also associated with management, becoming the Wellington shore manager of the New Zealand Shipping Company.

However he retained his active career and in 1874 became the owner and skipper of the *Hannah Barrett*, a 57-ton schooner.

When nearly 60, Renner planned to take the *Hannah Barrett* from Wellington to Sydney, via Picton where he was to collect a load of timber. He also intended to sell his ship in Sydney and retire from the sea. The *Hannah Barrett* left Wellington in fine weather on 2 April 1883 with a crew of three under his command. The captains of two ships coming into Wellington later recounted that Renner had waved a greeting as they passed, one near Evans Bay and the other off Sinclair Head.



Captain Frederick Renner (Auckland War Memorial Museum, C20780)

However during the night the wind rose to a southerly gale and somewhere beyond Sinclair Head the *Hannah Barrett* is believed to have foundered in heavy seas. A press report that was carried in several papers on 9 April under the headline ‘*Supposed Wreck of the Hannah Barrett*’ recounted that ‘*it is feared that the little vessel has met with some disaster*’. It was believed the ship had capsized and sadly, in contrast to the wrecking of the *Orpheus*, no other vessel was able to come to their aid.

The *Wanaka*, while sailing from Christchurch to Wellington under the command of Captain Edie, did report seeing a large floating object in Cook Strait but added that it was too dark for them to ascertain what it was. A few pieces of wreckage identifiable as being from the *Hannah Barrett* were found near Owhiro Bay. Although police and three of Renner’s sons searched the coastline, the bodies of the captain and his crew were never found.

Despite these efforts, on 19 April an article in the *Fielding Star* (and possibly other papers) berated the authorities for not making a more extensive search to find ‘*the well-known Captain Renner*’ and adding that ‘*There are few old colonists that have not had a trip with him in the old days... and every one of them must remember with kindly feelings how good a seaman he was, how attentive to his passengers and careful of his ship.*’

Although no burial was possible, Captain Frederick Renner was commemorated in Bolton Street Cemetery. The family headstone – now relocated to the Woodward Path [grid reference N11-14] – also records the death of Frederick and Janet’s infant daughter Mary in 1864, Janet who died in 1910, and their son Ralph who died in 1916.

Jennifer Robinson (a descendant)



The Wreck of HMS Orpheus, R. B. Beechey (1863), with the Wonga Wonga at right. Edmiston Trust Collection, Voyager NZ Maritime Museum