

# Elizabeth Agnes James PETRIE

---

While updating our Legacy genealogy database, we came across a lady buried in an unmarked grave in the Waipu Cemetery. Her death was registered as Elizabeth SIMSON, her father William PETRIE, Doctor of Medicine, Royal Navy. At that stage, she became one of the several individuals who seemed to be 'drifters' in the district, and didn't appear to be relevant to the Nova Scotian scene within our community. She died on the 26 Sep 1884 in Waipu and was buried on the 28<sup>th</sup> September. Sadly, her burial site remains unknown.

Towards the end of last year, we began to check through the Waipu School Records to make sure that they were correctly recorded on our Museum database. This led to some rather surprising discoveries - children that we had not heard of and who seemed to have no connection to the Nova Scotian settlers. Revelations that followed seemed to throw a whole new surprising light on the early history of Waipu.

One of the first group of children we came across who were not listed on our database were the SIMSON children, Hector Norman, John Andrew, Horace Ian, Elizabeth Agnes, Lucy Mary, Donald Petrie (later to become Sir Donald Petrie SIMSON, O.B.E., K.B.E.), Rupert William and Norman McDonald. We then discovered that the Elizabeth SIMSON buried in the unknown grave in the Waipu Cemetery was none other than the grandmother of these SIMSON children. This discovery set me up for a very surprising journey of discovery, probably brought about by a certain amount of empathy towards Elizabeth. Who was she, where did she come from, why an unmarked grave when she seemed to have family here, and more to the point, what was she actually doing in Waipu.

A check on the transcription of her death registration (work done during the 1980s, prior to the Museum having all records on a computer database) answered one of my questions, but raised a lot more. As Elizabeth was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, it was natural to assume that she had family connections with the settlers in Waipu.

My first task was to find out who she really was and maybe that would answer the next question – what was she doing in Waipu. I spent the next few weeks trawling the Internet, and particularly the archives of Rootsweb Mailing lists. This not only led me to (digitally) meet two very interesting people with like interests (but for different reasons), but also to find out who Elizabeth's parents were. The Nova Scotia mailing list was also a big help, and contacts made on that list gave me her parents and siblings. Also, through that list, I was introduced to Dr Allan Marble, Chair of the Medical History Society of Nova Scotia. Dr Marble was able to send me pictures of Elizabeth's parents, and the names of her siblings. Elizabeth's parents were Dr William PETRIE, M.D., R.N., and Sarah Ann JAMES. They were married at St Paul's Anglican Church, Halifax, NS on 28 Jan 1810. Elizabeth's siblings were Thomas James Huyghe PETRIE (1814 Halifax – 1828 Kingston, Jamaica), Peter (1816 - ?), Agnes Anne Waugh PETRIE (b. 1818, Halifax, mrd Charles Campbell SUTHERLAND), and Sarah Ann PETRIE (b.1821). Dr PETRIE had established a medical practice in Halifax in Jul 1815, but left there in 1821 according to Halifax newspapers. He had had a distinguished medical career. He was a member of the Royal Colleges of St Andrews, Scotland and had served as Surgeon on the *Alfred* from Jul-Dec 1812 and was entered in the Navy List of Medical Officers in 1814. He served on the convict vessel *Woodford* which departed from Portsmouth on 2 May 1828 and arrived in Van Diemen's Land 25 Aug 1828.



Dr PETRIE died on 7 Nov 1831 at Duns, Berwick, Leith, Scotland at the age of 45. On reflection, it seems that William had packed an awful lot into those few short years. He was born on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1786, to Peter and Agnes (née WAUGH) PETRIE at Kinghorn, just south of Kircaldy on the Firth of Forth in Fife, Scotland. He studied in Edinburgh in 1805 and 1806 and was awarded an M.D. from Marischal College in St. Andrew's, Scotland. He later became a member of the Royal Colleges of Edinburgh and London. William was mentioned as an Assistant Surgeon in the English Naval List of 1806 and served at the Bombardment of Copenhagen in the August and September of 1807. By 1808 he was a Naval Surgeon, having served the requisite two years as an Assistant Surgeon, and was entered in the Naval List of Medical Officers on 5th June, 1810.

Dr PETRIE's will states that he had three living daughters – Elizabeth Agnes James, Agnes Anne Waugh and Sarah Ann. Elizabeth would have been about 14 years of age when her father died. What happened to the three girls and their mother after his death? Were they still in Nova Scotia? Life would not have been too easy for a young woman with three young daughters in 1831. Attempts to find her and her family proved negative. However, William's will did reveal some of the history surrounding Sarah Ann PETRIE, nee JAMES, but more of that later.

Over a period of several weeks I was able to piece together an outline of Elizabeth's connection to the SIMSON family, and how she came to be buried in the Waipu Cemetery, but there were still some big questions to be answered.

A colleague in Victoria was able to give me a good deal of information on the SIMSON family. At the time, he was working on the history of the SIMSONS and their connection to Charlotte Plains in Victoria. This tied in with the information that we had gleaned from the Waipu school admittance registers and the arrival of Ian Simson SIMSON in Gore prior to 1877.

Our SIMSON family seemed to be travelling back and forth between Waipu and Gore in Southland at regular intervals. Why? Travelling between Waipu and Gore on a regular basis with a family of nine could not have been easy or inexpensive. What brought them from the bottom end of the country to the top? Strangely, we could not find anyone in Waipu who had heard the name or knew of the family until quite some time after our first discovery of the SIMSON name in Waipu – that is, until one of our Museum colleagues mentioned it to his 90 year old cousin. Yes – he had heard the name. Sadly, the cousin's death was reported in the newspaper that same day.

The father of our Waipu SIMSON children was born at Chippendale, NSW, Australia on 18 Nov 1843. His parents were John SIMSON and Elizabeth Agnes James PETRIE, married on 8 Nov 1842 at St Andrews Presbyterian Church, Bathurst Street, Sydney. Elizabeth was John's second wife – his first being Helen Smith MacDOUGAL, b. 1819, Port Glasgow, Scotland. Helen and John were married on 28 Aug 1836 in Argyllshire, Scotland. They had three children – Hector, Margaret Helen and Lucy Campbell SIMSON. Hector was born in Scotland but died soon after arrival in Australia. Margaret and Lucy were born in Sydney, Australia. Witnesses at the marriage of John and Elizabeth were Thomas JEFFREY, Agnes Anne PETRIE, Flora M McDougall and a John McLEAN. Flora could have been a relative of John's first wife; Agnes Anne was Elizabeth's sister, but who was John McLEAN? There has been a suggestion made that John McLEAN may have been a Surgeon on an early Navy vessel and may have been a colleague of Elizabeth's father, but very difficult finding proof at this stage. Was this an arranged marriage? Did the families know each other in Scotland?

From The Australasian Chronicle (Sydney), Saturday, 23.7.1842, page 3<sup>i</sup>: "SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE. ARRIVALS .... 22 [July] From Liverpool via Cape of Good Hope, having left the former port on the 7th March and the latter on 31st May the barque *Amwell*, 235 tons, Captain Hesse, with merchandise. Passengers - Mrs. Hesse, Mrs. Mulier and two children, Miss Quelch, two Misses

Petries & M. Tobias.” Sadly, there are no Christian names, but I think we can be sure that the two Misses PETRIES are Elizabeth and her sister Agnes, and again, I can’t help pondering the thought that it was an arranged marriage?

Elizabeth and John went on to have five children – Hector Norman, William Petrie, Donald Campbell, Ian Simson and John Simson. Hector Norman was the aforementioned father of our Waipu school children, William Petrie died of heart disease in NSW in 1876, Ian became a stock and station agent and eventually Mayor of Gore in 1888. Of John Simson we have no details. Hector Norman migrated to New Zealand in 1864. Records are a little hazy, but he could have been on the *Aldinga* in 1862, although ages and dates don’t quite tie in with that theory. He married Mary DOUGLAS in Waikia on 15 Mar 1869. Mary was born about 1843 in Glasgow and at the age of three went to Australia with her parents. I have been unable to find her arrival into New Zealand.

Mary and Hector had nine children, although in some accounts of the family, that figure is ten. Hector Norman (jnr) attended the Waipu Central School in 1882 and the Waipu Upper School in 1887. John Andrew attended the Waipu Central School in 1882. His previous school was Gore. Horace Simson also attended Waipu Central School in 1882 and Waipu Upper in 1887. Previous school in 1882 was Gore. Donald Petrie attended the Waipu Central School in 1883. Rupert William attended Waipu Central School in May 1887, and Waipu Upper in 1889; Norman McDonald attended Waipu Central in 1888, and Waipu Upper in 1889. Elizabeth Agnes was also at Waipu Central in 1882 and Waipu Upper in 1889, as was Lucy Mary.



The SIMSON boys of the family distinguished themselves in the armed forces in South Africa and during WW1; Hector Norman served with the South African Forces in 1902. He married Bertha Agnes E RIVAS in Cape Town on 23 Jun 1907; John Andrew became a licensed auctioneer, ran the Auckland Parcel Delivery Co which eventually became the New Zealand Express Co. He enlisted as an E Reservist in the 1914-1918 war. Horace also became a stock agent and auctioneer and registered with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reserves in 1917. Elizabeth Agnes married Arthur BULLOCK, a journalist with the Auckland Star, in 1908. She died in 1914 (possibly after childbirth). In 1916, Arthur married her sister Lucy. Donald Petrie SIMSON O.B.E., K.B.E, is perhaps the most remarkable of the siblings. He was an accountant and a career soldier. He served in South Africa between 1899 and 1902. In 1902 he was appointed Staff Officer to Colonel THORNEYCROFT, commander of the Australian and New Zealand Forces in South Africa. He served and was injured at Gallipoli in the 1914-1918 war and in 1934 was awarded an O.B.E. He was Knighted in 1939 for services to the British Empire Services League. He died on 20 Jan 1961 and is buried at Howick, Auckland. Sir Donald Petrie SIMSON is credited with the formation and establishment of the New Zealand Returned Solders’ Association. It is not known if he married or had children.

Rupert William SIMSON, became a traveller prior to 1914. He served as a Corporal with the NZEF 20<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements NZ Field Artillery. He married Ruth EVANS in London on 30 Jun 1919.

Norman McDonald SIMSON married Janet DAVIDSON in Auckland on 2 Oct 1914. He died in Australia in 1961. Herbert Waipu SIMSON (a.k.a. Herbert Cyrus SIMSON) served as a Lieutenant with the Royal Flying Corps. He died at sea en route to New Zealand on 24 January 1918 and was buried

with full military Honours. He is remembered on the Hollybrook Memorial, Hollybrook Cemetery, Southampton, England.

So, that, basically, is the story of the SIMSON children who attended school in Waipu. Their parents appeared to have lived rather interesting, if not colourful lives while in Gore and Waipu. Hector had various occupations – Firewood Merchant, Club and Accommodation Manager, Vice President of the Waipu Jockey Club, Parliamentary candidate for Marsden, Miner, horse breeder, manager of the Switzers Freehold Goldmining Company. After reading the many articles published in various Newspapers, we were left wondering why their very existence in Waipu was not known to present older generation still living here. On the 19 January 1889, the Northern Advocate published a lengthy report on the complimentary supper and ball in honour of Mr Simson, vice-president of the [Waipu Jockey] Club, and on the 16th March 1889, there is a report of a presentation of a '25 guinea gold watch to Mr Simson as a parting memorial'. However, in the Auckland Star of 18<sup>th</sup> October 1887, there is a report of a 'Publican Convicted for 'alleged sly grog selling at Waipu'. It was also reported that local people took up a collection to pay the fine. Both Mary SIMSON nee DOUGLAS and her husband Hector Norman are buried in the Havelock North Cemetery, along with John Andrew and Horace Ian.

All of this is getting away from the subject of this story which is - who was Elizabeth SIMSON and why was she buried in the Waipu Cemetery in an unmarked grave. It is possible I guess, that her Waipu family could have put a wooden cross on her grave and that could well have disintegrated over time. Her Probate states that she died at her residence, so she must have been living here for some time. Why did the SIMSON family have so much to do with Waipu – was it because of a family connection, i.e. Nova Scotian? Or simply that Hector Norman had an eye for a profit in a burgeoning mining and timber industry in Northland? Was it purely a coincidence that Elizabeth was born in Nova Scotia where many of our settlers had come from?

Recently, I acquired the will of Dr William PETRIE. It mentions his three daughters and his "dear wife – Sarah Ann PETRIE", also his brother-in-law Peter Pannier (*looks like*) JAMES – a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy. So – it looks as if Sarah Ann and her three daughters left Halifax and went back to England with William. Elizabeth's sister went on to marry Charles Campbell SUTHERLAND in 1846, at Milverton, Warwickshire, England. It is not known what happened to the 3<sup>rd</sup> sibling Sarah Ann, but there is a possible marriage for her on FreeBmd, but this could also be a second marriage for her mother.

There was yet one more surprising turn in the story of Elizabeth SIMSON and her children and grandchildren. While checking on the marriages of her descendants, I came across a Kauru Karaitiana SIMSON married to a Margaret Myra RIDDELL at the Wellington Anglican Cathedral in 1922<sup>ii</sup>. The name RIDDELL sparked a fresh line of inquiry as I knew that there were RIDDELLs on our genealogy database. Surely, this could not be history going full circle??? It transpired that Kauru SIMSON was an 'adopted' son of Horace Ian SIMSON and Angela Elizabeth TODD. Kauru was the son of Chief Albert Mokau KARAITIANA and Angela. Albert had died in Nov 1896 and Kauru was born about the same time, Angela married Horace SIMSON on 21 Nov 1899.

Margaret RIDDELL and her sister Elizabeth were sent to stay with elderly relatives in Maungaturoto after their father died. I believe that one of the relatives was known as "Granny Phazyn" – a very unfamiliar name to associate with Maungaturoto. To date, I have not been able to connect the girls to the RIDDELLs on our database, but I did uncover another intriguing story. While searching for PETRIE and SIMSON connections, I came across a Euphemia Jane PETRIE married to an Arthur BULLOCK. Surely this could not be the same Arthur BULLOCK that married the SIMSON girls! Marriage certificates told me that it was not – the Arthur BULLOCK who married Euphemia

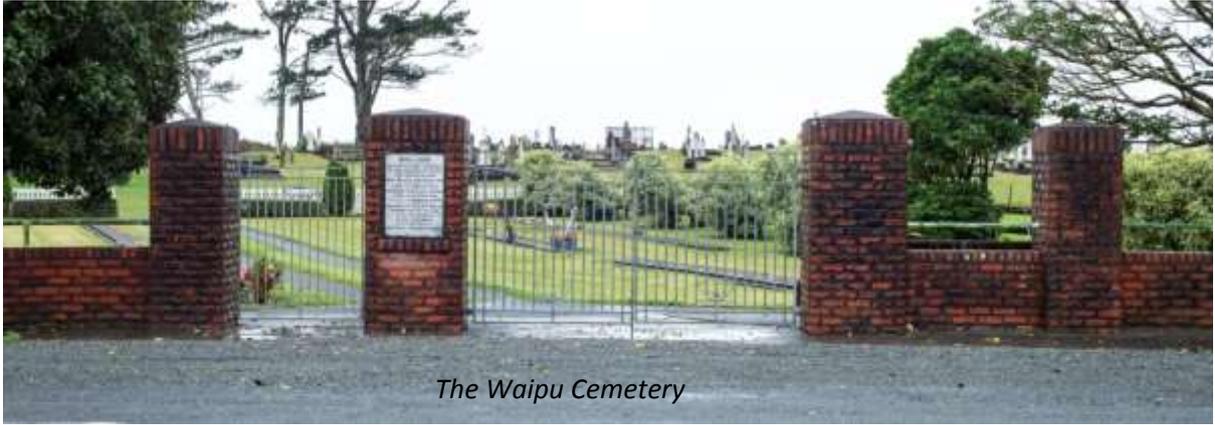
was born in Blenheim in 1900. But what about the PETRIE bride, Euphemia? Was she a connection to our Elizabeth? A trawling for PETRIE on the Internet lead me on a bit of a wild goose chase when I found Euphemia's parents on a web site, details which proved to be incorrect. I was eager to solve the BULLOCK marriages, so ordered the birth registration for Euphemia. This told me that Euphemia's parents were in fact James Irvine PETRIE and Agnes NICOLL, married in Waipawa, NZ in 1895. After posting a message on the NZ Rootsweb Mailing List, I received a reply from one of those wonderfully helpful listers who seem to have the finger on the pulse of everything – James Irvine PETRIE was a groom employed at Gwavas. And who at one time owned Gwavas? None other [than C J PHARAZYN \[http://www.gwavasgarden.co.nz/index.php?CID=100005 \]](http://www.gwavasgarden.co.nz/index.php?CID=100005), father-in-law of the elderly RIDDELL relative living in Maungaturoto where the RIDDELL girls were sent to live. Meanwhile, I have not proved a connection between Elizabeth PETRIE and James Irvine PETRIE, but another interesting PETRIE that I found was Robert PETRIE – farming at Woodend, Canterbury until 1906. Unfortunately, unlike his wife Betsy, Robert's death certificate and his probate were void of any family names – at least, names that mattered for my research, but I believe his parents were Alexander PETRIE and Barbara GIBSON who were married on 8 Feb 1823 at Farnell, Scotland – where James Irvine PETRIE was born on 16 Dec 1855. James Irvine could well have been Robert's nephew, but that is for someone else to follow up.

There is a lot more of the SIMSON story to tell, particularly of the previous generation. But that is for someone with stronger interests in their Australian activities. As for Elizabeth SIMSON buried here in Waipu – I wonder what sort of a life she had. What made her travel so far from home, whether it be Gore in Southland, or Charlotte Plains in Victoria, Australia, where she had been left considerable property and money when her husband John died in 1848. Perhaps her in-laws weren't too happy about that. Will we ever know? Her step-daughter Margaret Helen, married Cyrus HEWITT in Victoria, and Lucy Campbell died in New Zealand in 1918. She is buried in the Hawera Cemetery. The SIMSON children were descended from a long line of wealthy, well educated families. It is really sad to think that Elizabeth is buried in an unmarked grave here. I wonder if her descendants ever wonder about that? Perhaps we should have some sort of a memorial wall in the cemetery where plaques could be placed in memory of the people who we know are buried there, but have no known grave. There have been several throughout the history of Waipu – some have been gum diggers, labourers, or simply just drifters. We have their names, but very little information about them. But Elizabeth PETRIE – she now has some flesh on her bones, and an enormous amount of history to go with it. If we had not started checking through our local school registers, this amazing but mysterious lady would never have come to our attention. Interestingly, the February 2013 issue of the NZ Genealogist featured an article on the importance of school registers – an article which fully endorsed our thoughts on the importance of school Registers.

Since writing the above, I have since managed to dig up a little more on the JAMES family in Nova Scotia, although I unfortunately I do not have the documented proof. It seems that Sarah Ann JAMES (Elizabeth SIMSON nee PETRIE) was born in Granville, 1778, NS. She came from a "well-to-do" family. Her father was a well known Politician and land owner and represented Granville in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly from 1785 to 1793. Sarah Ann's brother Thomas Wright JAMES was Bondsman at the marriage of William and Sarah Ann.

My thanks go to the many people who have helped me with this project – particularly Tony Anderson in Victoria. It has been good to have someone who has a like interest to bounce finds and ideas off.

*Anne Picketts*  
*Genealogy Dept for Waipu Museum*  
[waipucove@gmail.com](mailto:waipucove@gmail.com)



*The Waipu Cemetery*

---