



New Zealand's 'Little Lichfield'

The literature of Eastern Southland

LICHFIELD, in the English county of Staffordshire, never enjoyed a particularly large population. In the 20th century it probably averaged about 11,000: in Elizabethan times perhaps 3000–4000. But it was one of England's original bishoprics, had a 12th century cathedral, housed the militia and held the quarter sessions.

For its size, it developed remarkable cultural strength. Not only was Dr Johnson born and educated there, but Addison the essayist and Garrick the actor went to the same school. (Even in the 1850s, Lichfield's two notable schools catered for only about 30 boys apiece). Ashmole (of Ashmolean Museum fame), Dilke the dramatist, Lady Wortley Montague, Chief Justice Wilmot and a considerable number of notable scholars and divines — Bishop Selwyn among them — were associated with Lichfield over the centuries.

The Eastern Southland town of Gore, often dismissed by many New Zealanders as just another characterless rural servicing centre, can in fact claim a cultural history not dissimilar to that of Lichfield. It may not have had Lichfield's long lineage, but the populations are comparable — Gore had about 3000 in 1900, the whole district about 13,000 in the 1990s; its youngsters had access to excellent schooling; and the district has produced, particularly in the field of history, a remarkable run of prolific scholars and not a few earnest divines.

Historians and chroniclers

One might start with Dugald Poppelwell (1863–1939), lawyer, leading Catholic layman, five times Mayor of Gore, and a keen botanist. Seven of his pamphlets appear in Bagnall's *National Bibliography*, most of them — such as *Plants of the District*, 1909; *The Croydon Domain*, 1910; and *A Pioneer Story and Primitive Gore*, 1933 — the texts of lectures. His entry in *Southern People* notes that he also contributed 17 papers to the *Transactions of the NZ Institute*.

Robert McNab, born the year after Poppelwell, was one of the best of the first generation of New Zealand historians. Dux of Middle School, Invercargill, and graduate of Otago University in both science and law, he combined farming and politics, then interested himself in collecting records for a history of Southland. His first slender version of *Murihiku* was published from Gore in 1905; a second version was immediately withdrawn (the handful of surviving copies are among the rarest and most costly titles in the antiquarian book market); then came the two main editions in 1907 and 1909. Among the other works which earned him the first DLitt to be awarded by the University of NZ were

Historical Records of NZ (1908, 1914), *Old Whaling Days* (1913) and *Tasman to Marsden* (1914).

Next by date of birth came Herries Beattie (1881–1972), son of another mayor of Gore, and one of the most remarkable non-graduate chroniclers and historians NZ has ever produced. Of his strictly Eastern Southland writings, the best known are his four-volume *Pioneer Recollections, chiefly of the Maitai Valley* (1909, 1911, 1918, 1956), *The Andersons of Early Wyndham* (1960) and *A History of Gore 1862–1962* (1962).

From teenager to octogenarian however, his total output of nearly 30 books and innumerable articles ranged over the whole of southern New Zealand, and as a pioneer collector of Maori history, lore and lifestyle — with a unique ability to record accurately and let the information stand on its own feet — he has had no superior in this country. The modern endorsement of a southern Maori identity and dialect owes much to Beattie's careful work.

In more recent times, the journalist J.F. McArthur has chronicled a great deal of district history: as sole author — in *Progress in Retrospect. A history... of the Maitai Licensing Trust 1955–1965* (1966), *A Brief*

History of the Gore Main School (1978), *From the Kirk on the Hill* (1981), and a rugby club history; as editor — in *Golden Reflections* (the history of Waikaka Valley etc, 1992); and as co-author — *The Pioneers of Wendon* (1950, with Walter Fowler), *BNZ Gore* (1977, with R.H. Griffin), and *One Hundred Grand Parades* (the Gore A & P Society, 1983, with G.L. Morrison.). McArthur also wrote *Licensing Trust Development...* (1967, 84p), a history of licensing trusts throughout New Zealand.

And yet another former mayor of Gore, Hallam Smith, who with others in 1995 wrote *A Backward Glance at Gore*, went on to issue a series of booklets on aspects of the town's history: *The Beginnings* (1996), *The Introduction and Development of the Supply of Light and Power* (1997), and *The Town's Streets and the Origin of Their Names* (1997). His wife, Jean Smith, contributed *The Mayoresses of the Borough of Gore, 1885 to 1989* (1996); and their daughter, Rosemarie Smith, wrote a lively account of the local suffrage movement in *The Ladies Are At It Again!* (1993).

Interpreting the scope of Eastern Southland reasonably liberally towards the lower Mataura Valley for the purpose of this Bulletin and drawing on Bagnall's bibliography as well as the Hocken Library's own catalogue, a list of district and locality histories is also impressive,

Brydone — Margaret Smith, *A Goodly Heritage—Brydone 1904–81*, (1981, 72p).

Chatton — Elizabeth Wilson, *The Book of the Pioneers: Otama, Knapdale, Chatton*, 1936, 103p.

Croydon — A.D. Dickie, *A History of Croydon Siding* (1985, 151p); Paula Dickie, *A History of Croydon Bush 1856–1988* (1988, 248p); A.L. Dolamore, *Croydon 1855–1958* (1959, 11p).

Glenham — Anon, *Glenham-South Wyndham Centennial Souvenir 1853–1954* (1954, 89p).

Gore — D.L. Poppelwell, J.H. Beattie & others, *Records of the Gore & Surrounding Districts Early Settlers Assn* (1927, 64p; 1933, 84p; 1940, 106p; 1953, 112p); Anon. *The Ensign, 1878–1978* (1978, 64p tabloid).

Kamahi — M. Holliday, *Kamahi — a district history* (1990, 264p).

Knapdale — Elizabeth Kerse, *The Knapdale Run: Its Land and its People* (1983, 340p).

Mataura — D.C.W. Muir ed. *Mataura, City of the Falls* (1991; 504p).

Mataura Island — R.A. Evans, *General History of Mataura Island and Its School* (1949, 119p). Kay Hunter, *Life at the Island: a History of Mataura Island* (1990, 152p).

Mataura Valley — W.T. Shrimpton, *The Mataura Valley, a course of study* (1948, 24p).

Menzies Ferry — Edna Chisholm & R.J. Scobie, *Menzies Ferry: a History of the District* (1984,

280p).

Mimihau — Elizabeth B. Smith, *Mimihau: the First 100 Years 1869–1969* (1969, 55p);

Pukerau — Paula Dickie, *Land of Many Hills* (1982, 528p).

Tuturau — D.C.W. Muir & L.W. Dickie, *Tuturau: a history... to 1970* (1972, 208p); updated by Edith McKay, *Tuturau: a history... to 1995* (1996, 208p).

Waikaka Valley — Anon, *Jubilee of Waikaka Valley, 1874–1924* (1924, 32p).

Passing Fame

Before moving on to lesser parish literature, some mention should be made of books which have introduced aspects of Eastern Southland to a wider audience.

Janet Frame's sojourn with relatives at Wyndham was first described in her autobiographical *To the Island* (1983) and is an intrinsic part of Michael King's biography *Wrestling with the Angel* (2000), and many other writings on Janet Frame's life.

Keith Ovenden, in *A Fighting Withdrawal. The Life of Dan Davin* (1996), describes the period that the Davin family spent in Gore. And, of course, many other authors — such as Edith Howes and geologist Ian Speden — were associated with Eastern Southland without writing books specifically connected with it.

No fewer than three significant books are centred on Tuturau. In *Te Puoho's Last Raid* (1986), Atholl Anderson described the fate of the northern Maori raiders who, in the 1830s, were themselves ambushed, and killed or captured at Tuturau in the last Maori engagement to take place in the South Island.

Thirty years later, a harmless boaster named Sam Perkins also nearly came to his end when he was foolish enough, for the price of a pint, to hoodwink a party of greedy diggers into tramping nearly 100km to a non-existent goldfield. His narrow escape from lynching is told by Gavin McLean in *Sam's Grief* (1989).

Then, in 1887 came the notorious Meikle case, in which a Tuturau farmer, on the evidence of a vengeful rabbitier, was found guilty of stealing a neighbour's sheep and sentenced to seven years' hard labour. The four booklets — *The Tragic Story of Mr J.J. Meikle...* (1904), *The Meikle Commission. Meikle in Self-Vindication* (1907), *Addenda; more manufactured statements to mislead justice* (1907), and *Cleared at Last* (1907) — which proved his innocence and won him a somewhat grudging acquittal, should still be required reading for any New Zealander concerned with principles of justice.

The association with the district of the internationally famous pacer Cardigan Bay is the subject of two books noted in the Sports section.

More recently, the Gore Museum has paid homage to the illicit Hokonui whisky industry which had its centre nearby. W.D. Stuart's *The Satyrs of Southland* (1982, 91p) is the standard work, but copies are not easily

obtainable. The story is included in Stuart Perry's *The NZ Whisky Book* (1980, 141p), while the catalogue of painter Trevor Moffitt's exhibition *The Hokonui Moonshine Series* (1998, 28p) gives good visual coverage.

Churches

The strongly religious ethic of Eastern Southland came into national prominence in the 1960s, when the publication of the controversial *God in the New World* by Lloyd Geering, principal of the Knox Theological Hall, caused members of the Maitua Presbyterian to lead the campaign for Geering to be called to account. *A Trial for Heresy; Charges against Principal L.G. Geering* (1968) is one of several publications dealing with that episode.

Not surprisingly, church literature has a prominent place among Eastern Southland publications:

Anglican: Anon. *Jubilee Commemoration: the Church of the Holy Trinity, Gore* (1931, 17p); A.J.T. Fraser, *A History of the Parochial District of Wyndham* (1967, 64p); L.H. Greenfield, *Centennial Holy Trinity Church Gore 1881–1981* (1981, 64p).

Baptist: Anon. *Gore Baptist Church, 75th Jubilee* (1985, 12p).

Catholic: Anon. *Souvenir of the Diamond Jubilee of the Church of St Saviour, Maitua, 1884–1944*; Helen Bruce, *The Meeting of the Waters, Gore Roman Catholics 1882–1982* (1982, 160p);

Methodist: T.R. Benny, 'What God Hath Wrought': *the story of Methodism in the Gore District 1879–1961* (1963, 64p)

Presbyterian: Anon, *Edendale Presbyterian Church 1904–1929* (1929, 8p); Anon, *Presbyterian Church of NZ, Edendale Charge 50th anniversary* (1954, 20p); Anon, *St Andrews Presbyterian Church, Gore: Jubilee Souvenir* (1931, 35p) & *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, Sixth Decade of Activities* (1941, 20p); Anon, *Waikaka Valley Presbyterian Church Jubilee 1894–1944* (1944, 39p); Anon, *Wyndham Presbyterian Church Centennial Record 1874–1974* (1974, 104p); J.F. McArthur, *From the Kirk on the Hill 1881–1981* (1981, 160p); W.A. McCaw, *Looking Down the Years: a short account of the early establishment of the Presbyterian churches within the Bounds of the Maitua Presbytery*; A. Martin, *Maitua Presbytery 1891–1933* (1933, 12p); J.D.S. Moore, *Wyndham Presbyterian Church: 80th anniversary record 1874–1954* (1954); J.H. Park, *The Maitua Presbyterian Church: 80th anniversary* (1954, 80p); J.H. Park & K.R. Henderson, *The Burning Bush in Maitua, a short history of the Maitua Presbyterian Church... 1874–1974* (1974, 140p); R.M. Paterson, *A History of the Pukerua Presbyterian Church* (1962); Colin R. Scott, *The Continuing History of the Parish of Pukerua* (1987).

Quakers: The Quertier family appear in J. & A. Brodie, *Seeking a New Land: Quakers in NZ* (1993, 200p), and also in *Southern People*.

Salvation Army: Anon. *The Salvation Army Gore Corps... 100 years of service...* (1986, 16p).

Commerce

Anon, *A Notable Event in the History of Southland; the Southland Woollen Mills...* Gore (1924, 12p).

Angus, J.H. *Papermaking Pioneers* (1976, 211p).

Beck, C.P. *The Seaward Downs Dairy Factory Co. Ltd... Golden Jubilee* (1947, 34p).

Brogden & Sons, *Invercargill to Maitua Railway* (1878–79, 11p).

Cuff, Martine & others, *Edendale; Heart of Dairying in the South, Historic Account of the Southland Dairy Co-operative Ltd* (1998, 44p).

Dryden, J.W. *Crystal Clear; the Story of the Lactose Company of NZ* (1993, 148p).

Richardson, Bill & Clive Lind, *Wheels and Deals* (1999, 148p).

Families

For general genealogical information, A.McDonald & E. Scott, *Gore Genealogical Guide* (1989, 18p).

Individual accounts include:

Anderson, C.C. *A Pioneer Family. John & Helen Anderson & their descendants* (1969, 56p, Wyndham).

Barnett, R.C. *A Two-Family Migration: the Barnett-Norris families' departure from Bolton, Lancashire* (1993, 112p, Gore).

Duncan, L., Marshall H. & N. *Marshalling the Facts. History & descendants of Robert Gray Marshall...* (1997, 135p, Edendale).

Field, Margarita. *The History of the Stirling Family...* (1996, South Wyndham).

Ford, A.J. *Ford, a Family History* (1980, 165p, Chatton).

Gillespie, B.V. *A Chronicle of a Family, Alline and Helen Wayte of Otamita* (1996, unpagged).

Hardy, Glynn. *The Sleeman Family Tree* (1990, 131p).

Hatch, Anne. *Living Here; a photographic essay* (1940, 48p, Gore portraits).

Healey, Martha. *The Winsloe Story* (1992, unpagged, Chatton).

Hickin, R.J. *The Agony of Distance: a story of Alexander & Isabella Smith...* (1993, 160p).

Lapthorne, Joyce. *The Rule Family History...* (1986, 52p, Maitua Island).

McGibbon, John. *Going Abroad. The McGibbon family and other early Scottish emigrants...* (1997, 231p).

Malloch, Janet. *From the Tops. A Daughter Reminisces on the life of Erskine Bowmar* (1992, 155p).

Milne, Emily C. *James & Ann Lawson Milne of*