



NZSG New Plymouth Branch Newsletter



Number 344

May 2020

Unite
against
COVID-19

Stay home – be kind

New Zealand Government

Branch rooms are closed until further notice

LEVEL 3

New Zealand is currently at Alert Level 3.

Branch AGM

Our branch AGM was due to be held on Tuesday 5 May 2020. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 alert level 3 restrictions will still apply then. For this reason the AGM will not be able to go ahead on 3 May. It is not yet clear when the AGM can be held, although the NZSG rules require that the AGM is held by 30 June 2020.

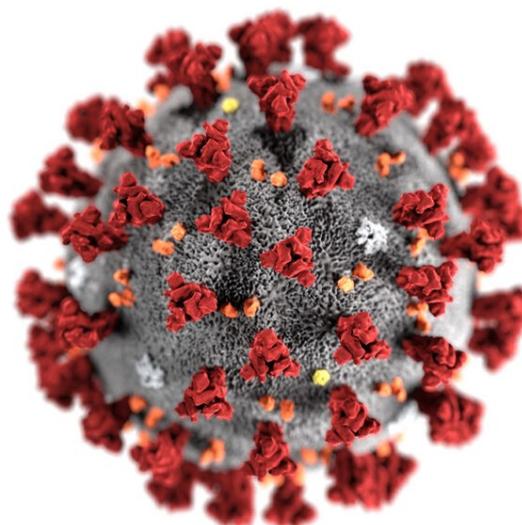
We will keep you posted regarding the re-opening of our rooms and resumption of our meetings, including the AGM.

In the meantime, please have a think about how you can help your branch. Several committee members are standing down and new people with fresh new ideas are most welcome to our committee. We also need a new treasurer. Please help!

Next meeting: <to be advised>

Branch Activities

All branch meetings are cancelled and the branch rooms are closed until further notice.



Convenor: Bruce Bellini 758 0130

Secretary: Jackie Sewell

Treasurer: Gail Tanner

Committee: Lorraine Austin
Lea Bellini
Graham Cowling
Jill Jackson
Annette Larsen
Neville Richards

New Plymouth Branch

c/- Bruce Bellini

98a Queens Road

New Plymouth 4312

Meetings: 7:30 pm, first Tuesday each month at branch rooms, Moturoa Shopping Centre access is off the Whiteley Street car park

Email: newplymouth@genealogy.org.nz

Website: www.genealogynp.com

Convenor's Report

Since the beginning of the lockdown, our branch committee has been meeting via Zoom on the internet to conduct branch business so that our branch will be ready to resume its normal activities once we get to a level where we will be safe to do so.

At our last meeting, we discussed the possibility of reopening our branch library for researchers, and it looks, based on the information we have at the moment, that if we can provide hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes for the computer keyboards etc., keep a register of people using the library (the sign in book) and adhere to the social distancing requirements, we may be able to open the library under alert level 2.

So if we are lucky enough to move down to level 2 in the next couple of weeks, please check our webpage for an update on the branch library opening for researchers.

Unfortunately the resumption of monthly branch meetings may be a little further off, as we will probably have to wait until level one before we can resume them.

Taranaki Biographical Index Update:

The TBI has been recently updated with the addition of the following indexes:-

- (a) Envelope & Funeral Sheets for Ver33
1222 records
- (b) Faith Hope Courage Pepperell family
1095 records
- (c) Lea's Misc 4 Ver33 20 records
- (d) Misc Family Trees NPNZSG 153 records
- (e) Norgate Family Origins 99 records
- (f) NP Courthouse Births 1921-1940
10,727 records
- (g) NP Courthouse Births 1848-1900
10,579 records
- (h) NPBHS OB Rugby Centennial Book
1,429 records
- (i) Okato Church Centenaries 501
Records
- (j) Public Service Staff Lists 398 records
- (k) They Settled in NZ 320 records
- (l) Waitara PO Births 1882-1960
7,639 records

Total new records for TBI: 36,122 records

This new TBI version number 33 now has 844,565 records.

As most of our members will know the TBI has become a good resource for locating information held in our library. Remember also that our Research Officer can undertake searches of the TBI for the names you are researching and forward the results to you via email during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to thank our dedicated members who are busy producing the indexes of our branch library resources for inclusion in the TBI, and ask that if you have some spare time and would like to help the branch by doing some indexing please do not hesitate to contact myself or Lorraine Austin.

Thanks,

Bruce Bellini
Branch Convenor



For more information, check these links

- [COVID19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz)
- [Ministry of Health - cases](#)
- [Radio NZ](#)
- [NZSG](#)
- [Spinoff COVID-19 coverage](#)
- [global data](#)

Genealogy Videos

Take advantage of the time in lockdown to watch some videos on genealogy, such as these from Rootstech (the big genealogy conference):

- [Rootstech conference sessions](#)
- [Adding branches to your family tree using DNA](#)
- [the emotional side of DNA](#)
- [discover your family with interviews and sources](#)



What did you do in the lock-down?

It seems to me we all did a variety of activities. I have friends who spring cleaned all of their house, garage and gardens. Where did they find that energy! Wish I had it. Others went for long bike rides. Me, I found the beauty of electronic books from the library AND my father's letters. These letters were sealed up in a shoebox labelled "Keith Roberts WWII letters packed 1986". These letters had been on my mind for years (34 in fact).

My dad enlisted in the army on 23 July 1940, at the age of 23 to do his duty for his country. At that time he had been married for 19 months and had a 10 month old son. He left New Plymouth for Trentham camp on 13 January 1941 (my mother's birthday). The last time he saw her before leaving New Zealand was on 30 March 1941 and he left Wellington on the *Mauritania* at 4:15 pm on Monday 7 April 1941. I believe he was with the first group of married men to leave New Zealand. They were nicknamed the "wife dodgers". Dad returned to New Zealand on the *Tongariro*, arriving in New Zealand on 21 April 1945.



Troop accommodation on the Mauretania

The letters were in random order and their condition ranged from really good to somewhat silverfish nibbled. Some were in envelopes, some were not. The first thing I did was create a spreadsheet, with ten columns. Columns were: Original number, date order, year, month (in full), month (number), day, pages, comment 1, comment 2, address.

Then I read each letter in random order and added details to the spreadsheet. Once I had read all the letters, of which there were 113, I

sorted the spread sheet in to the order the letters were written. There were 840 pages to read through. This was by no way all of the letters that had been written. Dad was writing 1 – 2 letters a week and he was away just over 4 years. I must say here, he was not an infantry soldier and did not serve in the theatres of war as far as I am aware. He seemed mainly to do his trade – a carpenter. I believe he may have worked on building wharves etc and he served in the Middle East only.

It's hard to describe what I felt from these letters but I will try. Dad didn't talk much at all about any hardships he endured. Mainly complained about the heat and sand storms in the summer and the chilling cold in the winter. What came through in all of these letters was the fact dad was always looking to the future with mum and his son Ian, plus the other children that they would have. The first one they would have after he returned was even named - "Lea". He talked of the house they would build. It would seem plans were to and fro-ing from Egypt to New Zealand from time to time. In spite of the odd grumble, he remained loving and positive. Of course these letters were always censored so there was not a lot of real information in them. I can see he visited Cairo often, and I presume he was at Maadi most of the time. He looks to have been at Mena Camp at some stage. He had also visited the Barrage on the Nile. Visited Palestine and Syria while on leave. Goes to Helwan from time to time. Has visited the pyramids, Memphis and Katara (Qattara?), Sakara (Saqqara?). Had been in Alexandria. Hunted for gazelle (unsuccessfully) from another isolated camp that he could not say where it was but it was a couple of hundred yards from the sea.

One of the rare comments he made about the war itself was on 28 June 1942 when he wrote "Things are a bit troubled over here but should be straightened out soon". According to a timeline of WW2, on 21 June 1942, Rommel captured Tobruk and on 30 June Rommel reached El Alamein (that was 260 km from Cairo/ Maadi). The only other comment about the war itself was on 6 January 1943 when Dad wrote "Life is still fairly quiet except mainly for yesterday morning when jerry visited us at the ungodly hour of 6 in the morning. Although it disturbed our slumber, breakfast was much later than usual so really it wasn't so bad after all. In



the same letter he apologises for not writing more on Friday evening 8 January because "owing to the jerry paying us a visit it just didn't get done". I don't really know where Dad is here but he talks about the sea being pretty rough and I don't think he is at Maadi as he is in a 2 roomed batch. Does he call the Suez Canal a sea – who knows?

Dad most looks forward to mum's letters and parcels. Minties, tobacco, cigarettes, cakes, clothing are some of the things she sent in sealed, soldered tins. He also received parcels from other relatives, including from England, the Patriotic Society and other organisations.

On the trip in 1941 from Wellington to Tewfik, the port on the Suez canal, the boat had stopped at Colombo (Ceylon/Sri Lanka) and I now know the black elephants that my brother has, were ebony from Colombo, thanks to dad's letters. His letters have given me a better idea of my father's outlook on life and how he survived the loneliness of being so far away from home for 4 years. It puts in to perspective the sacrifices we have made in our 4 weeks. There is no comparison. We are so lucky.

Lea Bellini

25 April 2020

Colyn Nicholls 1933 - 2020

It is with sadness and regret that we note the passing in April of Colyn Nicholls, artist and branch member. We will miss his comradeship and sense of humour.

Library Roster

The branch rooms are closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They will remain closed until further notice.

Internet Connection

The internet connection for our branch rooms is generously sponsored by Primowireless.

Based right here in Taranaki, Primowireless provides internet connections and ISP services for residential and business customers. As well as the usual ADSL and fibre connections, Primowireless also provides broadband internet over a wireless link for customers who are not in an area served by the other types of internet. This is just great for people who live outside the main centres.



PRIMO WIRELESS

CONNECTING TARANAKI

Please consider Primowireless for your ISP. Ring them on 0800 123 774 or visit the website:

primowireless.co.nz

Library News

Newsletters received;

Balclutha, Canterbury, Dunedin, Feilding, Gore, Hawkes Bay, Hutt Valley, Nelson, Otaki, Palmerston North, Porirua, Riccarton, South Canterbury, Southland, South Waikato, Wairarapa

If you would like an email copy of newsletters from another branch, please contact Peter Hewett. Many of the newsletters are also available from the NZSG website.

www.genealogy.org.nz/branches--area-contacts_55



Newsletter

If you have any comments or suggestions for the newsletter, please contact Peter Hewett at peter.hewett@gmail.com.

