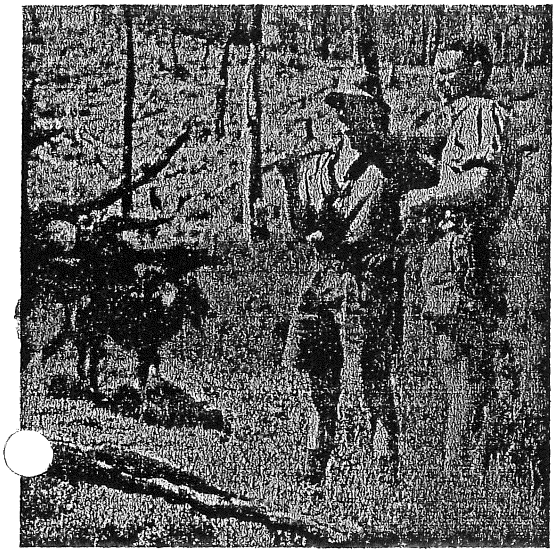
File: "Genealogy\Downey Extended family\Downey Biographical Notes + Photos\Downey History\Notes" ‡ See below.

DAVID GLADSTONE DOWNEY – An Autobiography.

\Notes\

~~NOTE. This version 1 is the latest (3 August 2008) but some editing still required~~

1.When I Was Very Young



I was born on 8th March 1922 in Gisborne. In 1919 my father returned from nearly four years active service in France during World War I and went to work as a shepherd for Mr Bob Wickstead on Makarika Station near Ruatoria on the East Coast north of Gisborne. As soon as a suitable cottage was available at the Station he married the girl to whom he had been writing all the time he had been away, Jessie Wright in Wellington. She was the daughter of Mr George Wright, a well-known Wellington Solicitor who, incidently was most upset when his daughter announced that she was going to take up shorthand typing to keep herself occupied while her fiance was away at the war. They were married on the 21 January 1921. My father took his bride from city life in Wellington to the isolated farming environment in Ruatoria, to a cottage where home comforts were minimal and where there was no sink, no water laid on, no power and no drainage and horses and buggies were the only means of transport. They lived there until mid 1923, by which time Dad had bought Waitangirua and was keen to start developing it. They owned a "buggy and pair", the pair being Queenie, a mare from thoroughbred trotting stock and Pipi, a good natured bay mare of unknown stock, an unlikely combination that were with us for the next fifteen years. I was eighteen months old and my brother Phil three months when we left Makarika for the first steps that Dad took towards owning a farm of his own. This was the realisation if a desire that he had years before when in Canada that this was what he wanted to do. I do not remember the trip of some fifty miles from Ruatoria to Lottin Point east of Hicks Bay. All our belongings were loaded on the buggy, including a cat in a basket on top and, with the dogs running alongside we left Makarika to begin a new life more isolated still.

My father started right at the beginning as far as farming was concerned, "breaking in" the land from virgin bush and building a house. As soon as he had fouind a suitable site, the bush was felled by hand by contractors using axes and cross-cut saws.When sufficiently dried out (about two months after felling) the fallen trees were burnt and the building site was cleared by rolling remaining logs out of the way with timber jacks and crow bars. The timber for the building was all pitsawn from rimu trees on the site, a factor that to a certain extent influenced its selection, but corrugated iron cladding for the roof and walls, together with everything else had to be packed on horseback up a track through bush, an hour's ride. This remained our only access for nine years during which time we garaged our car, when we got one, at the end of the road, the last four miles of which followed the Oweka River bed with some six open crossings of the river itself. The crossings had to be cleared of boulders after every flood which happened all too often in winter. We were often unable to get away from our home in winter because of flooded rivers but this was accepted as inevitable in such an isolated part of the country.

Lottin Point, a sheep station also being developed, was some eight miles from Waitangirua and out on the coast. Aunt Dorothy was Dad's sister and they had offered to have Mum and Dad stay with them until our own house was built. This must have been a very stressful time for my parents particularly as Dad was working at Waitangirua during the week and Mum with her young family was living with people whom she had only just met. They stayed at Lottin Point for about twelve months and then moved to Potirau with Uncle John and Aunt Hoani, Dad's brother, until they had a home of their own. Potirau was inland from Lottin Point but still five miles from Waitangirua. We were finally able to move to live at Waitangirua in late 1925, and what a day that must have been for my parents, they at last, had a home of their own.

I include this digression into history of the family because it describes the background and the environment in which Phil, Ian and I lived for the first ten years of my life.

I do not remember anything of those days except that I have vague recollections of Lottin Point and Potirau but I think my thoughts might be influenced by comments made or events that occurred later, when we gathered with our Aunts and Uncles and others in the district on various occasions for tennis parties in the summer. However, I do remember going down the

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river, probably to Lottin Point or Potirau, and meeting Uncle Rod Griffin on the way. He was having trouble with one of the horses in his buggy. It kept on "jibbing" and refusing to behave so he took it out of the shafts and galloped it down the riverbed through tall manuka trees to get rid of its surplus energy. He galloped back ten minutes later with the horse in a white lather of sweat after which it quietened down and gave no more trouble.

All materials and food, except vegetables were grown in our own garden or produced on the place, that were required for our day to day living were ordered from Gisborne and Te Araroa, a year's supply at a time. Everything was packed on horseback up the Oweka Riverbed for some four miles and then up through the bush on a steep track for a thousand feet to our house. Naturally, as much as possible was bought in bulk, 50 lb bags of flour, 70 lb bags of sugar and tea in 60 lb ply-wood chests. We had a special storeroom that was lined with tin to keep the bush rats out and I remember quite clearly the lovely "grocery-store" smell that we got from our own storeroom. We boys used to greet the arrival of the stores with great excitement because there might just be something for us!

We had no power and keroscene refrigerators had not been invented as we know them today so there were no perishable foods in the orders! We milked our own cows, two or three, twice a day and churned our own butter and killed our own sheep for meat. A sheep would usally last about a week and there was never any change from roast mutton, stew and chops! I remember skimming the cream off the top of the milk that had been left to stand overnight in large shallow pans, using a saucer-shaped skimmer full of holes. The milk drained through the holes leaving the cream behind and when we had enough we made butter in a wooden churn which was turned by hand, making about a couple of pounds of butter at a time. When we boys got big enough it was our job to make the butter and sometimes in the summer when the cream was too warm it would take ages to turn it into butter!

All of my primary schooling was obtained from the Correpondence School in Wellington and we had a governess living at home with us, of course. Two governesses I can remember were Beatrice Beauchamp and Jean Heath. "Auntie Beatrice" came from Timaru whose parents were friends of Mum's and Jean came from Hawkes Bay I think. Beatrice later married Russell Thomas, a prominent Skin Specialist in Auckland and remained a special friend of our family up until she died in 1998. It must have been a great experience for these two young city girls who had never been in such an isolated environment before and had to learn to ride horses and get used to life on a back-country sheep station.

I remember the 1931 Napier earthquake quite well too. We were sitting at our desks in a spare room towards the back of the house working away at our school work when it struck. The whole house seemed to sway about and Phil and I were hustled outside and told to keep clear of the tank stand which was close to the back veranda of the house. However, it didn't last long and we soon forgot about it.

As can be imagined, we all had to be very self sufficient in both work and play. Phil and I spent hours playing in and around a small trickle of a stream two or three hundred yards from the house making roads for toy lorries and building dams in the stream.

Occasionally we would have children from neighbouring farms to stay over school holidays for a few days which we enjoyed. I remember building a pole-framed "house" which we thatched with "wiwis" or rushes one holiday, with Mary Wood and Wilfred Neal. Mary came from Matarau station, about 15 miles further inland from us and Wilfred lived at Tahore station three miles down the Oweka River from Waitangirua. It took us days to build our house the poles for which we cut from some nearby scrub and it was complete with an open fireplace. The culmination of the programme was making and cooking some bread or maybe scones, which really was an achievement!

It was a healthy life but we seemed to still catch colds from time to time and I can remember spending days in bed with what Mum said was the flu. Mum nursed us with telephoned advice from a District Nurse on occasions and she also had various "medical" books which we seldom saw but I had the impression, probably quite unjustified, that they contained pictures and information that I was not supposed to know about! I would be put to bed if I had a temperature of anything above 99°F and had to have regular "inhalations" breathing steam over a jug of boiling water with which was mixed a spoonful of menthol or some similar potion, with a towl over my head to stop the steam escaping ! I can remember hating it all but it probably did some good. On rare occasions when we were really sick Mum made up a hot "antiflogistine" pack which she applied to our chest to relieve congestion. But she always insisted that we were not allowed to get up until our temperature had been down below "normal" (98.4oF) for at least three days! I can remember lying in bed for days feeling well enough to get up but Mum saying that my temperature had not stayed down long enough!

Our nearest and only doctor, Dr. Wirepa, was twenty miles away in Te Araroa but fortunately, we never got sick enough to need him. But I am sure that my parents must have felt very vulnerable should we need medical advice should an emergency ever arise. But it never did.

Our nearest town was Gisborne which, although only 140 miles from Hicks Bay, took a day's journey to get there. Consequently we seldom went to town. However, I remember only one occasion, Phil and I were about nine and ten years old and we stayed a couple of nights at a boardinghouse called Braeburn. We boys had never eaten sausages before and we thought they were marvellous. I also remember sitting on the street kerb outside Braeburn eating cakes or something! We also went to the "pictures", another new experience, and all the movement on the screen made me feel ill so I had to leave the theatre before the film was over.

Waitangirua was 15 miles from Hicks Bay, the nearest store and wharf. For the first 10 miles from there a clay road wound through the hills inland to the Oweka River at Potaka. Our road then followed the riverbed for the last four miles to end at our carshed, crossing the river in open fords a couple of dozen times. There were no bridges, and after every flood the crossings had to be cleared of stones by hand before any cars could get through. When I left the farm in 1944 we still had four river crossings on the road to Te Araroa and three to Opotiki.

The carshed was built of saplings from the bush, clad with corrugated iron and sited at the edge of the bush near the Waitangirua Stream. Every time we went out we had three quarters of an hour's ride through the bush to the car where we left the horses in a small paddock behind the shed until our return.

My first car was an open Chevrolet Tourer, bought secondhand in the late 1920's.

It served us well but the rough roads, boulder strewn river crossings and frequent partial submergence in flood water took its toll so a few years later we traded it in for a 1926 model Buick Tourer complete with side curtains, a considerable improvement on the old Chev. However the Buick came to an untimely end when it was washed away in the Oweka River. We were returning from Te Araroa and, as my father so often said "come on, we had better get moving before the river gets up." We got to within about three miles of the carshed when the car stopped in soft shingle in one of the river crossings. The river was rising and, unable to get going again there was no alternative but to leave it. We telephoned a neighbour who met us with horses and before leaving we stripped some wire from a nearby fence and with the help of stirrup leathers we tied the car to a tree, not knowing, as I look back, what good that was going to do!

The river rose quickly, finally submerging the car. My father recalls that just as the roof was about to be covered by the rising flood a rat appeared before being washed overboard. It had been living in the upholstery somewhere and we had never been able to find it. We returned to the car the following day when the river had gone down and found the car rolled up against a bank. (P) All of the hood and top hamper had been washed away and the car left a total wreck. My father sold it to the butcher in Te Araroa for £40 and I believe he restored it to run for many years.

We were well used to fording rivers in partial flood. The procedure was to remove the fanbelt, cover the entire engine and radiator with sacks, block the vent to the crankcase and attach a snorkel hose to the exhaust pipe so that it would discharge above water level. As long as there were not too many boulders in the way and no loose shingle we could usually get through quite deep water. I can remember crossing rivers on occasions with the water up to the door handles, but as long as we kept going there was no problem.

However, we sometimes did get stuck but get out again. One fine day we were stopped by loose metal in crossing the Oweka. I walked some two miles to the nearest farmhouse for help and a local Maori, Taha, turned up in due course with two bullocks and pulled us out. (P)

We lived "up the hill" for nine years in the belief that we would eventually have a road to our door as had been stated by the local authority, the Matakaoa County Council. However, after repeated requests for some action the council finally said that it was not possible on account of the rough country. We would have to be content with riding through the bush to get to a road suitable for vehicular traffic, even if it was down a river bed. So in 1935, having spent nine years devoloping pasture land from scratch with our only access to a road and cars by riding through our neighbour's property in native bush we packed our house "down the hill" and started again. Dad bought the 500 acre block of neighbour's land and felled the bush to provide a site for our new house, re-using all the original timber and corrugated iron for roof and walls but supplemented with new materials as required.

Soon after we had moved into our new house "down the hill", and before we had extended the road the last half mile to it, we had a severe storm which built up over three days of continuous rain to the night of 17 May 1937. I remember it very well as I was home for school holidays from Napier Boys High School.

Three weeks before, My parents had brought home our first new car, the previous two had both been second-hand. It was a 1937 closed-in Chevrolet, and it was parked in the old carshed which was about 30 feet from the Waitangirua Stream that normally never rose to be more than a few yards wide. During the night the flood waters rose, washed away the shingle bank and left the car half submerged in the water. This was something we had never dreamt would happen. My father was up early that morning and hearing the rumble of boulders in the raging flood said, "I think I shall go and have a look at the car. Imagine his dismay when he found the brand new Chevrolet, only three weeks old, lying at an angle half submerged in the silty flood water.

It took three days to get a mechanic up from Gisborne and he and his tools had to be packed the last four miles of riverbed road on horseback. We pulled the car out of the water with the help of a chain-block and a lot of heaving and struggling and then pushed it 100 yards to a clearing which became the workshop where the car was completely stripped down and re-assembled. The work took 10 days and a gallows was erected over the top of the car using trees from the bush, from which a chain block and tackle was hung to enable us to lift the heavy loads. The motor, gear box, transmission and wheels were completely dis-assembled and all silt was washed out before being re-assembled.

My uncle, who was living with us at the time, had a bet for 2/6d with my father that the moter would start first kick on the self starter. My uncle won his bet!The car ran without a hitch for the next 10 years. The high water mark left on the doors by the flood waters remained a permanent reminder of the event, one that we would have preferred to forget.

My mother lived in Wellington at 108 The Terrace, before she was married. She worked as a shorthand typist in a prominent lawyer's office and had a wide circle of friends all of whom led an active social life.

This was a far cry from the isolation and rugged pioneer life in which she so suddenly found herself at Waitangirua. Her strength of character, devotion to her family and her determination to succeed in helping to carve out a living in such a comparatively hostile environment were the essential elements that, I am sure, led to success in the development of Waitangirua. In later years Mum had household help for periods, but for years she spent long and weary days coping with, not only the housekeeping but also cooking for seven, our family, a governess and a station hand.

Monday was always washing day unless it was raining. The copper had to be lit, clothes boiled, the heavier dirtier garments having been hand washed on a wooden scrubbing board and all clothes wrung out in a hand turned wringer that frequently jammed. When I was old enough my job was to chop wood for the kitchen stove and the copper in the washouse. This was the routine until the late 1930's. Mum set herself high standards-all the clothes had to be ironed using flat irons that were heated on top of the kitchen wood-fired stove. It was hot work on a still summer's day. It was years before we persuaded her that it was not really necessary to iron all of the sheets, "Why not do them half folded?"we said. The ironed clothes were finally put in the linen cupboard complete with little muslin bags of lavender that Mum grew in her own garden. She dried the flowers in the sun before filling the scent bags. Sometimes she gave them away as presents.

The menfolk and we boys all worked and played physically hard and had hearty appertites. The midweek evening and Sunday midday meals were always roast mutton, vegetables and pudding, without variation and we always enjoyed them! There were few opportunities for change anyway with no shops and no means of food storage other than a safe on the shady side of the house.

We killed our own meat, a sheep a week, grew all our own vegetables and hand milked three cows. All the cooking was done by Mum, with some help in later years, on a wood-burning Shacklock range which also heated water and we made our own bread. Artificial lighting was provided by kerosene Aladdin lamps and candles until sometime after we moved to the new house when, in 1939, we installed a small diesel electric power generating plant. For the first

time we had electric light and power to run only a refrigerator, vacuum cleaner and an electric jug.

In the early days 'up the hill' we used to 'set' the milk in large shallow pans and skim the cream off the next morning. When there was sufficient cream Mother made it into butter in a wooden hand turned churn. The churn was made of white pine timber which was chosen because it had no resinous odour that would taint the butter. We used wodden butter pats with a grooved face to make up approximate pound blocks which were stored , along with other fresh foods in a safe. This was a cupboard on an outside wall of the house with ventilation holes covered with mesh to keep flies out. Butter for the table was always rolled into small balls or little rolls using the butter pats which gave the butter a nice corrugated finish! The butter was always placed on the table in separate dishes and dispensed with a separate butter knife. We were not allowed to use our own knife!
When we moved down the hill we enjoyed the luxury of a 'modern'hand separator which did away with the milk pans but not the churn, which we were still using when I left Waitangirua in 1944.

Until we moved downhill all the stores such as tea, flour, sugar etc. were brought in annually, packed up the hill and unloaded into our storeroom. This was a sheet metal-ned room (to keep out rats) and always kept locked and had the characteristic smell of a grocer's store! The day the stores arrived was always an exciting one for us boys because there were usually one or two small surprises for us.
My father tells of another time when we boys must have been quite young:

" We had left our horses in our neighbour Fritz Wilson's Dip Yards. It was just about dark when we got back to the horses. I caught my horse alright but just as Jessie put her hand out to take the reins of hers, Queenie pushed her aside, dashed through the gate and headed for the top end of the adjoining paddock. I went on with the two kids for some distance then let them down to wait while I went back to give my horse to Jessie to ride. When she saw me she asked where the children were and being a good husband I said "up the creek waiting". She said "go back at once and stay with them. How dare you leave them all alone! It is my night for walking.
She did, all the way back up the muddy track and, as Dad recalls, said "
Good old David looked around and said "poor old Mum". What a night! Next day I went down and collected Queenie."
I have quite clear recollections of of this episode, riding through the bush "double banked" on Dad's horse, trying to console Mum who was floundering along behind, from one mudhole to the next, in the dark.

We did not very often go to any functions without the family but I do remember that around '40 I joined Peter Wood from Matarau, cousin Jim Wood from Lottin Point and others to go to a Maori dance in Potaka which was four miles down the river from Waitangirua. I rode there and left my horse in a small paddock behind the hall for the evening. In those days no alcohol was available in the hall or allowed by law, but everyone brought their own and would frequently find it necessary to " go outside for a breath of fresh air". I remember riding home on King in the early hours of the morning and being suprised at flashes that appeared every now and then. I wondered what they were until I found that sparks were flying from the horseshoes on the metal road.

The Hunt Ball at Te Araroa was one to be remembered too. I rode King the fifteen miles to Hicks Bay, left him in a paddock behind the Post Office and joined the others on the back of a truck to Te Araroa, another nine miles. The Post Office, incidentally, was the one that was built to replace the building that Grandfather Downey had added on to his school house when he was teaching in Hicks Bay in 1893. Also it was the first one in the village, and was among the first buildings to be constructed in conventional materials of sawn timber and corrugated iron. After a long and strenuous evening at the Ball, dancing to a Maori band of piano, saxaphone and drums, I came back to Hicks Bay on the back of the same truck, caught my horse and rode home. I arrived at 4.am. to find my father cooking an early breakfast because we were going out mustering. I did not even unsaddle my horse, but had breakfast, let my dogs go and set out for what was, for me, a very long day.

Casual visitors were few, if any, for obvious reasons but I remember an occasion, late 1920's it must have been when we lived up the hill and "Mad Harry" walked in. He was a

local drifter who lived for months at a time in the bush hunting pigs and shooting pigeons for food.
On this occasion he had been badly gored by a boar which had ripped open his arm. Mother gave him her universal treatment for all our cuts and scratches, she poured iodine straight into the wound, bandaged him up with bandages made from old sheets and sent him on his way. Looking back, the ride through the bush from the carshed to the first Waitangirua home was a delightful one. Starting from the river the track wound for some distance up the streambed itself, and was completely covered overhead with tawa, rimu and other native trees. At night time glow-worms could be seen along the banks for quite long stretches. Further up the hill the ride was a very pleasant one in fine weather, if you forgot about the horses plodding from one mudhole to another, and listened to the moreporks calling to each other. We had plenty of time to admire the brilliant night sky appearing and disappearing through the canopy of trees overhead.

9. BITS AND PIECES

As can be imagined, life revolved around horses very much. My station hack was King who was bred on Waitangirua and whose mother was Queenie, of trotting blood, who was one of the buggy pair with Pipi and they were both used in the buggy when we first came to Waitangirua. Pipi is carrying the double bed up to the first house in Photo 3. I handled and broke King in as a foal and rode him for many years. Phil also rode him in the Potaka Show one year and I rode him a Ruatoria Hunt meeting when I had the distinction of qualifying as a "blooded" huntsman. (P) King and I became great pals and when I was away from home at times during the war he was turned out and no-one could catch him or get anywhere near him. However, when I came home on furlough he would appear the day before galloping up and down the ridge just as if he was expecting me to return. I could go and catch him immediately as if I had left him only the day before.

On one occasion I had to go to Ruatoria, some 50 miles, to pick up three bulls and bring them back to Waitangirua. This took three days. It was at the height of summer and I walked most of the way because bulls do not travel very fast. At one stage it was very hot and we were all very thirsty, horse, dogs, bulls and me. On finding a convenient water hole on the side of the road I lay down to have a drink and King, impatient for a drink himself, pushed my head aside with his nose to get in first! I did not have the heart to stop him.
I finally lost King when I was leading him along a narrow track in steep siding country while mustering sheep. He lost his footing in loose ground and plunged down a 50 foot bank and was killed. I went back afterwards and took off his two front shoes rivetted the nails in place and made a pair of book ends with them. They are on the shelf beside me now as I write.
I remember Phil, Ian and I spending a weekend at Potikirua and being taken fishing with Tun Hindmarsh and his boys Jock, Andrew and Pip in their clinker built dinghy which had been painted with tar not long before. Our hands, legs and clothes all got covered in tar and the only way we could remove it was with butter! Tun was not very popular with the rest of the family when we returned! I do not remember catching any fish either!

Waitangirua was bounded by extensive areas of native bush on two sides, some thousands of acres in area backing onto the Raukumara Range and from which wild pigs and cattle emerged from time to time. The pigs attacked young lambs in the spring and wild cattle lured station cattle into the bush. We used to go pig hunting now and then or had to go into the bush to retrieve the dogs when they chased pigs that we came ocross in the open while mustering. I remember one day, having followed the dogs into the bush, I found them with a boar bailed up at the bottom of a steep gully. I had no rifle so had to resort to knocking the pig semi-conscious by throwing a rock at its head, to subdue it long enough to grab it and kill it with a knife, a somewhat hazardous operation unless you were very quick!

Mother was a very keen gardener and she loved flowers. Establishing a garden in such a hostile and exposed environment was no easy task, but she worked relentlessly at it, starting with helping to clear the ground of logs and stumps. At the lower house she built a small lily pond and it was not long before she had a wide variety of shrubs and flowers which were the envy of neighbours and friends.

In 1938, soon after the second house was finished we decided to make a tennis court. This was a major task involving excavation of a great deal of soil and the removal of at least one very large tawa tree stump. It all had to be done by hand with timber jacks and crow bars, and took many weeks of very hard work , all of which I remember well. We had many years enjoyment with tennis parties at which all were keen to be shown around the garden, to discuss and compare with their own.

Mum learnt to play the piano in Wellington and had training in singing as a soprano before she was married. She loved music and brought her piano with her but since it could not be packed on a horse she had to leave it at Potirau. She must have been devastated when it was lost in the disastrous fire in 1928.

However, after we moved down the hill she bought another piano and started playing and singing again. She loved a sing-song round the piano and gave me lessons in singing in my "spare time". I remember singing scales and appeggios before going off to work, which was greeted with a certain degree of intolerance by my uncle Basil Wright, for whom I was, at that time, working part time.

Much of the time in the early development days involved working with the Maoris. All the bushfelling was done by them and they played a major role in shearing, fencing etc. At times my father had to be away from Waitangirua overnight and Mother said, on more than one occasion, that she felt quite safe knowing that Sailor Moran, one of the bushmen, was not too far away if she ever needed help. This was undoubtedly because of the respect they held for each other. My father got on well with everyone with whom he came in contact and he could speak Maori himself, having spent so much time with them in the early days in Hicks Bay and Ruatoria.

My brother Ian was born at Waitangirua on 4 February 1928, in the house up the hill. Mother arranged for a nurse who was newly trained, to stay with us and the local doctor, a r.Wi Repa, who lived in Te Araroa, 20 miles away, was "on call". As luck would have it he got the call late one evening and our neighbour Fritz Wilson met him in the riverbed at midnight and brought him up through the bush to the house. It must have been an eventful few days but all was well in the end.
Mother always set and maintained high standards in the home. In a reflection of her life in Wellington she liked to observe the niceties of life, was a socially oriented person and enjoyed having people to afternoon tea on those rather rare occasions when they might have been passing on their way home to the Waikura Valley and beyond.

Ian reminds us that : "Mum had a strong character, always changed for dinner at night and insisted that Dad did the same. This meant that he had to wear a coat and a tie and the meal was served with due decorum. In the early days a maid was employed (ten shillings a week) and called to clear the table by the ring of a silver bell." Those were the days!
My brother Phil and I had our primary schooling at home with a governess to help Mother with the teaching when she found she could not cope with everything. Phil and Ian later attended the Maori Potaka School, to which they rode five miles down the river every day from Waitangirua.
During our primary schooling days we boys had our various allotted chores such as peeling potatoes and preparing vegetables for the evening meal, followed by the inevitable washing of dishes. Out of "school" we spent all our time outside playing in the paddocks and no doubt helping with work on the place if the whim moved us. The life brought with it self reliance nd a respect for the environment, helped very much by our close association with the land and the animals on which we so much depended.
Phil and I built little roads in the paddocks, a small dam with 18 inches of water and we hewed out a Kohekohe log to make a canoe. My introduction to engineering! We built a hut made with saplings we cut from the bush and thatched it with wiwis (rushes) . I can remember getting many days of pleasure out of these activities, including making an apple pie, with Mary Wood, who lived at Matarau and was staying with us for the weekend.
We rarely left the place for a holiday for any length of time but I have clear recollections of being in Gisborne and we stayed at a boarding house called Braeburn. This was a most exciting adventure for Phil and I, two highlights of which were sitting on the street kerb in front of Braeburn eating sausages and going to the "pictures". We had never done either before! The movement on the screen upset me so much that I had to go outside to avoid being physically sick so I only saw a bit of the picture!
Talking of pictures, going to a film in Ruatoria was a real experience which I had on rare occasions because it was fifty miles from Waitangirua. The Maoris tied their horses up to a hitching rail outside the theatre but would not leave the saddles on them because their mates would pinch them. So they brought their saddles into the theatre with them and dumped them on the floor beside their seat with a resounding crash! I remember a film sequence that showed a "goodie" climbing up a rope to a cliff-top while a "baddie" started cutting the rope at the top! There were numerous shouts of warning from the "patrons" one of whom threw a bottle at the screen!
After the show was over they saddled up their horses and galloped off with a great deal of hilarity but while one was doing up the girth in saddling his horse one of his mates was

undoing it on the other side. The rider then started to climb into the saddle but as soon as he put his weight on the stirrup the saddle slid off the horse's back and they both landed on the ground in a heap, much to everyone's enjoyment!

At the end of 1938, after three years at school my only desire was to go back to the station which I did. This turned out to be great mistake because eight years later I started serious study at University for a new vocation, civil engineering. But this turned out to be only a small diversion from what became a most rewarding career.

However, in 1938 I started as a junior shepherd working for Dad on Waitangirua with three dogs and my horse King. Shepherding was a life with which I was, of course, very familiar, and I continued gaining experience and took on more responsibilities during the following six years. Work was our main activity at Waitangirua, there was not anywhere to go on days off anyway because the distances were so great and there was always the odd repair job to be done on saddles, tools and other gear. Station work involved looking after the stock which was pretty well a continuous job in spring and summer, while fencing, which included splitting posts and battens and clearing lines for new fences as well as maintaining existing fences, generally checking on the stock and clearing tracks took up most of the rest of the year when it was not raining! The work was necessarily slow because the country was so rough and we did not have the luxury of being able to use machinery such as tractors which is common today. Transporting fencing materials and all gear had to be done using pack horses which, looking back, must have been very slow but I do not remember thinking so at the time. Stock work volved generally riding round the place checking on the sheep and cattle particularly in the spring, a ride around generally taking a day on horseback and we had to go whatever the weather unless it was actually pouring with rain. However, it was not unusual to be caught in the wet when out in the back paddocks somewhere.Seasonal work included mustering sheep and cattle, and lambing, crutching, shearing and dipping sheep in the summer.

We all went to boarding school for our secondary education, I to Napier Boy's High School and Phil and Ian to King's College in Auckland.Several families had boys at Kings and they joined forces in taking them to the train at Taneatua, rather than running several cars on the same journey. Holidays gave us all the opportunity of getting together again at home where we spent much of our time helping with whatever station work was on at the time.
During 1941-1942 I spent 18 months in Military Training at Waiouru initially and later in Woodville and Napier on Signals Training. I was not eligible for overseas postings at the time because I was shortsighted. My first six months in the Army was a winter in Waiouru where we slept ten to a circular tent with our feet to the centre pole and for a lot of the time there was two feet of snow outside! I was then back at home briefly until Japan entered the War when I was posted to Woodville, again under canvas, and then transferred to Napier where we manned gun emplacements along the waterfront in Marine Parade.
I was finally discharged in 1942 when I returned to work at Waitangirua. My discharge from the Army was finally approved after two unsuccessful applications and then only allowed because farming was categorised as an "essential industry" during the war.
those days I had no desire to do anything other than farming even though my Mother had suggested that perhaps I would like to go into Architecture. There were no architects in the family but maybe it was because I had done well in Drawing at High School.
However, on returning to what now seemed the comparative isolation at Waitangirua I soon found I missed the company that camp life provided with many of my own age . The few young guys who had been in the district with me growing up had all joined the forces and gone overseas. I found myself loosing interest in the farming life and wanting more of a mental challenge than looking after sheep and cattle gave. I started on a course in Trigonometry with the International Correspondence School without knowing what I was going to do with it.
During the Christmas holidays of 1943 great freinds of our family the Hindmarsh's, who lived on Pakira Station fifteen miles further inland from us, had a Mr and Mrs Worley staying with them from Auckland. Ralph was a consulting engineer and Mum asked him if by any chance he took on cadets for training. He said he did from time to time and it so happened that he did have a vacancy for the coming year. Mum asked me whether I would like to take on a career in civil engineering and surveying. I am really not sure whether she knew what was involved in it but she saw the possibility for me for which I must be very grateful. I joined Ralph Worley in March 1944 as a chainman and retired from the firm 43 years later as chairman of the Board of Directors.
For the first eighteen months with Ralph Worley I worked as chainman on a survey of the Karapiro Hydro Lake the power station for which was under construction. During the next six years I completed the required practical time for a legal land surveyor but did not take any of the survey examinations, choosing instead to go into civil engineering.

FURTHER STUDIES

Around this time I realised that I would soon have to decide which route I would follow in achieving a professional qualification. In 1946 I studied Pure and Applied Mathematics at Auckland University part-time without having any particular goal in mind. However, the next year I decided I would study for a civil engineering degree and began full-time studies at the Auckland University College which would lead to a B.E.(Civil) degree. It was not possible to do the final year in Engineering in Auckland at that time so since I had to find board wherever I went I decided to go to Christchurch in 1948 to the National School of Engineering. I had not been to the South Island before either so it seemed a good idea which I did not regret.
I was lucky in getting a vacancy in Rolleston House right across the road from the Engineering School. Rolleston House was a student boarding establishment started by ex-servicemen from World War I when they bought a number of residences on the corner of Rolleston Avenue and Park Terrace. The group had grown to six houses when I was there. Rolleston House was run by the students themselves as far as day to day management and discipline were concerned, even though it came under the general umbrella of the University. There were very few rules, which we liked of course, but there was one that everyone accepted and it was rigidly enforced. This was if anyone wanted to study and complained about the noise that a neighbouring party was creating then the "offenders" were closed down, and there were no exceptions! The founders of Rolleston House were, of course older than the average student from a secondary school and they were keen to concentrate on their studies having lost four of five years being away at ıe war. It was interesting to see that in 1948 the situation was the same as after WWI, some ₹wenty years earlier, with a significant number of new students being returned servicemen from World War II.
As far as social life in RH was concerned we could entertain in our rooms whenever we liked with the restrictions referred to above and there were no restrictions on alcohol consumption.

The University was situated on one side of Hagley Park, through which the Avon River runs, while the Christchurch Public Hospital and its associated Nursing Home was on the other side. Not surprisingly a certain amount of "socialising" occurred between the student nurses and Rolleston House students and I met my future wife Barbara Jaggar in this way. I was actually partnering another girl, Shirley Priest, to some sort of a party/dance in the summer of 1950, I cannot remember what it was and I asked her if she had a friend who could partner my brother Ian who was visiting Christchurch on holiday with our parents. This turned out to be a very eventful year because I became engaged to Barbara in September and we both sat our final examinations in November! With good management we both passed, in Barb's case with honours.

The annual "capping" ceremony at the University was held in May 1951, in Christchurch of course. Since I was going to be there for that Barb's father said "Why not get married at the same time!" The logic was compelling so we did, on 5 May at St Barnabas Church in Fendalton. We honeymooned at Leithfield Beach north of Christchurch and then worked our way up to Auckland by bus and ferry, to the new world of a life together. I, of course went back to ılph Worley and the most significant change there was that my salary went up from seven to the princely sum of nine pounds a week, as Ralph Worley had promised! I thought I was "made", I had really joined the august group of professional engineers! On reflection the salary was not as good as many prevailing at the time but I thought it was; Ralph did not have the reputation for being very extravagant when it came to salary! However, Barb soon got a job as receptionist for a Dr Patrick Fox with rooms in the city, which certainly made a difference.
We immediately started looking for somewhere to live and bought a section in Carnarvon Avenue in Glendowie. We designed our own house and, with the help of a low interest City Council loan, built under a "labour only" contract. We supplied all materials and arranged the sub-contracts which was particularly difficult in the case of timber. We finally found a supplier of house-lots which had to be trucked from a mill near Taumaranui direct to our section. The timber was all heart rimu but still "green", with "the birds still whistling in its branches"! However, we were lucky to get it and then only thanks to a friendly officer in the State Advances Corporation who was organising a loan for some of our financing. We had no transport of our own for some years but Ralph Worley would let me have the "office" car for special social occasions.
We lived in Carnarvon Avenue for thirteen years and then built again in Cheverton Place in Kohimarama having outgrown the former with our family of four young children. We lived there for twenty-two years. The family had all grown up by then, of course, and left home and we no longer needed such a large house so we decided to go to Kerikeri where we already had a house and had developed a ten hectare kiwi-fruit orchard.

A general downturn in the kiwifruit industry occurred around 1994 so we decided to sell the orchard but we kept our house and garden. We are both keen gardeners and get a lot of pleasure out of seeing the seasons come and go and in looking after it all.
What spare time I have is divided amongst researching our family histories, both Barb and I are keen on genealogy and are members of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists, Seniornet(I am a tutor), painting (I am a member of the Kerikeri Artcraft Society) and Probus, I am a Past President.

Returning to my life in engineering I became a partner with Ralph Worley in 1955 over the years we took on additional partners as we increased in size and when I retired in 1987 as Chairman of the Board of Worley Consultants Ltd we had a total staff of over three hundred with offices in the main centres throughout New Zealand as well as in the Pacific and the Far East.
In the early days most of the firm's work covered municipal services including water supplies, wastewater collection, treatment and disposal,roading, stormwater and legal surveying but from 1960 onwards we moved into power engineering,industrial works, structural design of buildings,architecture and project management. My involvement in overseas work prior to retirement was in feasibility studies and project management and at retirement I was on the list of consultants to the Asian bank.
A major project for which I was responsible was main drainage for the whole of the North Shore of Auckland, a scheme which took some thirty years to complete, ~~and~~ other projects were sewerage ~~schemes~~ for Tauranga and Wanganui and a Sewerage Feasibility Study for Ipoh in Malaysia, to mention only a w.

29.10.09. See David's life 3. doc for small additions. Rest of above is the latest.