

## **Notes on Elizabeth Ellen Seed** **and Jane Seed**

(Gt-grandmother and gt-grand-aunt of Daphne, Laurence, Glenys and Lynette)

**Elizabeth born:** 1849, Leitrim townland, parish of Kilkeel, Co. Down, Ireland.

**Arrived in NZ:** 15 March 1869, Port Chalmers, in 'Edward P. Bouverie'.

**Married:** To William Murphy, 26 July 1872, Tokomairiro, Otago.

**Died:** 29 April 1924, Milton.

\*Grandmother of Daphne, Laurence, Glenys and Lynette

### **Elizabeth Seed's birth and parents**

Elizabeth Ellen Seed was born in 1849 (on 18<sup>th</sup> of a month that is illegible in the parish register) in Kilkeel parish, Co. Down, Ireland, the fourth child of Hugh Seed and Mary, née Glenny.

Hugh (aged 24) and Mary (aged 14) had been married in the Church of Ireland (i.e. Anglican) parish church in Kilkeel on 5 February 1841. The children born to them were: John on 26 November 1841, Jane on 23 March 1844, Sarah Ann on 18 June 1846?, Elizabeth Ellen, then Anna Maria on 28 July 1853, Esther and possibly James.

According to their tombstone in the Kilkeel Church of Ireland graveyard, Mary Glenny Seeds [*sic*], Elizabeth's mother, died in Leitrim on 27 March 1884, aged 57, and her father, Hugh, died on 10 May 1891, at the age of 74.

### **Elizabeth's grandparents**

Hugh Seed was the son of Thomas Seed and Jane née Smith, who had been married on 22 March 1797 in the church of St Andrew and St Luke, Stoke Damerel – a large parish adjoining Plymouth in Devon, England.

At least four children were born to Thomas and Jane Seed: John, the firstborn (May 1800, see separate essay), William, Thomas and Hugh (c1817, Elizabeth's father); where or when the latter three were born is not certain.

How long the family stayed in Devon is not known either, but by about 1830 a Thomas Seed, along with a number of other men of that surname, is listed in the Applotment Book for the parish of Kilkeel, Co. Down, Ireland, as farming in Leitrim townland, Thomas with 25 acres of 4<sup>th</sup>-grade land (there were seven grades). This Thomas, Hugh's father, died in 1841 in Leitrim, aged 65, and was buried on 8 February in the Presbyterian graveyard, Kilkeel. His wife Jane née Smith survived him until March 1852, when she died aged 75.

Seeds seem to have farmed in this area for a generation or so by the time Thomas arrived, renting land from Lord Kilmorey.

- The earliest mention I have found is in a legal advertisement in the *Belfast Newsletter* of 15-19 March 1776 which includes the names of Adam and Hugh Seed in a list of Mourne signatories.
- The Registry of Deeds, Dublin, holds a copy of a document dated 2 February 1792 whereby John Seed and his wife Jane Seed née Young of Leitrim, Mourne barony, co. Down, assign 'to Hans Arnett of Maghery in Mourne barony, co. Down, Jn Young's 9a 1r 10p in Ballymaderphy [*townland*] in Mourne barony, co. Down, held for the lives of Jane Arnet alias Young and her daughter Jane Young & King George III, sublet to Michl M'Avey'.
- Then in 1796 Adam, Hugh and Andrew Seed are named as flax-growers in the parish of Kilkeel qualifying for a free spinning wheel or loom (a government attempt to stimulate the linen industry).
- In 1820, Hugh Seed of Letrim [*sic*] is again mentioned, this time as a 40-shilling freeholder, so qualifying for the vote.

### **Kilkeel Parish, County Down**

The south-east corner of County Down, between the Irish Sea and the crescent of the Mountains of Mourne, has traditionally been known as the Kingdom of Mourne. This area was never included in any of the 'plantations' or settlements of immigrants that were periodically attempted in Ireland by the British crown, nevertheless, during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries many Scottish and English settlers took up land there. The Kingdom of Mourne includes the large civil and Church of Ireland (i.e. Anglican) parish of Kilkeel, divided into some 46 townlands, one of which, Leitrim, was (and still is) home to the Seeds.

Despite continuing immigration from across the Irish Sea, the majority of the population in Kilkeel Parish has always been Roman Catholic. In Leitrim townland as late as 1901, 23 of the 45 families (51%) were Catholic, with 11 households (24.5%) being Anglican (including five families by the name of Seed or Seeds) and the same number Presbyterian.

Whether any of the Seeds were involved in the Rising of 1798 is unclear, but a James Annett of Leitrim, and an Owen McAvoy, both of whom would have been well-known to the Seeds, were implicated in gun-running for the United Irishmen. An account of the rebellion, written in 1801 by Sir Richard Musgrave, tells that

about a thousand United Irishmen assembled in that mountainous part of County Down to discuss the expediency of a general rising and the question was agitated a considerable time. At length it was proposed to decide it by votes, and a division took place when upwards of three hundred declared themselves averse to open hostility at that time. Though the majority were for it, the schism was so considerable that it was thought prudent to postpone it to a more favourable opportunity.... It may be proper to observe that the majority, on that occasion, consisted chiefly of Roman Catholics, and the minority of Presbyterians and a few Protestants of the Established Church....

In view of Musgrave's final observation, it is likely that any Seeds at this clandestine gathering would have been amongst those 'few Protestants of the Established Church' voting against hostilities, or even to have been recruited to the Mourne Yeomanry established at that time to support the British ruling authorities.

In 1807, when asked to establish a postal service to the town of Kilkeel, the Postmaster General for Ireland reacted sharply: 'Kilkeel is a small village on the sea coast, possessing neither trade or consequence except what may be derived from

the system of smuggling practised there and which is carried on in rather an extensive manner'. In response it was said that 'Kilkeel had a very considerable market of linen [and] ... produced a very respectable corps of yeomanry' – but the charge of smuggling was tacitly admitted.

The Ordnance Survey *Memoirs of Ireland, Vol.3: Parishes of County Down 1* includes a detailed description in note form of Kilkeel parish as it was in the mid-1830s. The brief account of farming in the parish says only that 'in the plains, barley ripens about the beginning of September and is sown in May. Little or no wheat is sown; corn [oats?] sown in April and beginning of May. Potatoes sown April or May and dug in September'. Under the heading 'Habits of the people' we read:

[The houses] are built of stone, thatched, 2 or 3 small windows, mostly 2 rooms. Cleanliness is attended to by some but not many. The country people sometimes indulge themselves with mutton. Their fuel is turf. The male persons of this parish (scarcely without an exception), dress in blue cloth jackets, pilot cloth trousers and glazed hats. The little schoolboys are even embryo fishermen. In consequence of the fishermen devoting as much time to their farms as they do fishing, they are neither good fishermen or good farmers. In the autumn after a storm, they spend much time drawing seaweed that has collected on shore to their farms. It is the principal manure that is used and is preferred for potatoes and wheat. The girls dress better; it is generally the case among persons so poor. It is owing to ... 'flowering work', sent over from Scotland to an agent in Kilkeel who distributes it to every person who is competent to do it. A girl of 10 years old, with some previous practice, might make 10s a quarter; older girls can make from 2 to 3s a week. There is scarcely a family which has not one or more daughters who work at it during the day ....

## Emigration

As can be gauged from Hugh Seed's letters [see Notes on John Seed], life was hard for the tenant farmers of Kilkeel, and it would seem that the girls, at least, of Hugh's family missed out on even a primary education – Elizabeth was not able to sign her name when she married in 1872. It was probably the financial strain of keeping unmarried daughters at home, and their limited marriage prospects in Kilkeel, that persuaded Hugh and Mary to send two daughters out to New Zealand to their uncle John, Hugh's eldest brother, who had become a landowning farmer in the Tokomairiro district of Otago. New Zealand had a dire lack of marriageable women at this stage in its development.

And so early in December 1868 Elizabeth Ellen, aged 19, and her 24-year-old sister Jane left for the last time their family home in the townland of Leitrim, a few miles out of the fishing village of Kilkeel, and journeyed to Belfast to catch the ferry across the Irish Sea to Greenock, taking, as they did so, a last long look at the mountains of Mourne sweeping down to the sea.

On the morning of 7 December they, along with many fellow-migrants, boarded the 997-ton vessel 'Edward P. Bouverie'. The voyage of 98 days was uneventful except for two prolonged periods of gales and high seas during one of which the main hatch was stove in – with what consequences for the steerage passengers below one can only imagine.

Even in the best of weathers life for a single woman on board an emigrant ship was not easy. David Hastings in his 2006 book *Over the Mountains of the Sea* describes

the extremes to which the migration and shipping companies went to protect the single women from the predations of crew and male passengers – and to protect ‘respectable’ males from the possibility of seduction by ‘loose’ young women. ‘To achieve this’, he writes:

the single women were to be cut off from the rest of the ship’s company. Not only were they to be locked down at night but when they came up for air they were restricted to a roped off section of the poop to keep them away from the cabin passengers. They were forbidden to talk to anyone other than their own kind. No man was allowed to visit the ‘virgins’ cage’ except on official business .... Even the most powerful men on the ship, the captain and the surgeon, had to be chaperoned by the matron when they wanted to inspect the cage. At the very best, the single women were treated like girls in a boarding school. At worst they were treated like prisoners ....

It is to be hoped that the two girls were met by a welcoming John Seed when the ship finally arrived at Port Chalmers on 15 March 1869, and were quickly transported in some comfort to Brooklands, outside of Milton, where John had his farm.

The sisters travelled as assisted immigrants in a scheme operated by the Otago Provincial Council. It is interesting to note that as at 30 September 1872 they still owed the provincial government £10 for their fares.

### **Milton and marriage**

The MS notes written by Elizabeth’s daughter Sarah Ann Hamilton in 1951 say that the two women ‘worked later in the town’, i.e. Milton, where Elizabeth met the Irish gold-miner William Murphy. She was 22 when she was married to the 37-year-old William (not 32 as he claims on the marriage certificate!) in a ‘dwelling house, Tokomairiro’ by a Methodist minister on 26 July 1872.

*[See Notes on William Murphy for further information re Elizabeth Ellen.]*

William Murphy died on 7 October 1907 aged 73. Elizabeth survived him until 29 April 1924, reaching 75 years of age.

### **Jane Seed**

Jane was born to Hugh and Mary Seed in Kilkeel, co. Down, Ireland, on 23 March 1844. She emigrated to Otago with her younger sister Elizabeth Ellen in 1869. Notices in the *Bruce Herald*, supplemented by birth records from the civil register, enable us to keep track of some of the developments in Jane’s life.

- In the newspaper issue dated 30 November 1870: ‘**Marriages.** At the Wesleyan Chapel, Dunedin, on 28<sup>th</sup> inst. [*i.e. November*] by Revd. Alexr. Reid, Mr. George Capstick, auctioneer, Tokomairiro, to Jane, eldest daughter of Mr. Hugh Seed, Leitrim, Ireland.’
- Richard Westal, birth registered 1871.
- John, birth registered 1871
- 29 April 1873: ‘**Births.** At Milton on 28<sup>th</sup> inst. Mrs. George Capstick, of a daughter’; [*Bridget Selkirk*]
- Jane Seed, birth registered 1874.
- 6 June 1876: ‘**Births.** On 30<sup>th</sup> May at her residence, Ajax street, Milton, wife of Mr. George Capstick, of a daughter’; [*Mary Westell*].

- 8 January 1878: '**Births.** At Milton, on 3<sup>rd</sup> inst., wife of George Capstick, of a son'; [*George*].
- 23 April 1880: '**Births.** On 21 April, at Alva street, Dunedin, wife of George Capstick, of a daughter'; [*Elizabeth Alice*].
- Jessie, birth registered 1884.

Jane Capstick née Seed died on 5 March 1921, aged 76 years, and George, her husband, on 6 September the next year, at the same age; they are buried together in the Southern Cemetery, Dunedin, Block 15P, Plot 28. The grave has no headstone but there is a nameplate 'CAPSTICK' at the top of the grave on the concrete surround.

Also buried in this grave are two of Jane's eight children and an unknown male:

- Bridget Capstick, buried 27 September 1887, aged 14.
- Richard W. Capstick, buried 24 November 1896, aged 25.
- Stanley A. Colburt [*sic*], buried 20 February 1913 (Stanley Allan Colbert, aged six months; the parents lived in Dunedin but were both from old-established Milton families, and were, no doubt, friends of Jane and George Capstick).