

Notes on Esther Revel(I) née Wallace

John and Esther Wallace's second child, their first in New Zealand, was a daughter born in December 1848 (or possibly January 1849) in Wanganui. She was named after her mother – Esther.

What schooling the young Esther received in Wanganui is not known – the Matarawa School opened in 1855, but the family did not move into their Matarawa Valley house until about 1861, when Esther would have been 12 or 13 and past primary school age.

What is certain, however, is that, at the age of 13 years and four months, Esther was married to Charles Revel(I), a bachelor shoemaker, aged 25. The wedding, conducted by Rev. David Hogg, Presbyterian, took place on 25 April 1862 'at the residence of John Wallace, Wanganui' as the Intention to Marry form tells us; the entry in the civil marriage register gives the place as 'the house of Mr Wallace, Firgrove, Matarawa Valley' – i.e. the homestead on John Alexander McKane Wallace's farm.

Charles and Esther Revell (the second 'l' was added after about 1870) produced a family of 13. According to Chris Korte's New Zealand Genealogy Project on RootsWeb (from which some of the following bullet-pointed information is taken), the first two children born were:

- **John Alexander**, born in 1867 in Wanganui; married Amy Louisa Divehall in 1899; died on 8 October 1931 in New Plymouth, and is buried in Te Henui Cemetery; and
- **Jane Kingcome**, born 13 August 1869 in New Plymouth.

Then came:

- **Emily**, born 11 July 1871 in New Plymouth; married Thomas Fraser in 1896.
- **Esther**, born 19 July 1873 in Omata, Taranaki; married John Thomas Laing in 1910, who died in 1925; Esther died 19 June 1963, and is buried in Waikumete Cemetery, Auckland.
- **Mabel**, born 29 December 1875 in New Plymouth; married George Henry Lynch in 1897; died in 1911 aged 35.
- **Minnie**, born 22 April 1877 in New Plymouth; married William Robson Coulthard in 1900; died in 1972.
- **Charles (Edward)**, born 16 July 1879 in Inglewood, Taranaki; married Sarah Hudson in 1913; died 7 December 1922, and is buried in Te Henui Cemetery, New Plymouth.
- **William James**, born 29 April 1881 in New Plymouth; married Constance Theresa Smith in 1904, who died in 1921; William died 21 September 1958, and is buried in Te Henui Cemetery, New Plymouth.
- **Agnes Wallace**, born 1883 in New Plymouth; married Cornelius William O'Sullivan in 1904; died in 1965, aged 82, and is buried in the Awanui Cemetery, New Plymouth.
- **Ernest Samuel**, born 1885 in New Plymouth; married (1) Helen Constance Johnston in 1905 and had one child, Eric Ernest, born that year; it would seem that Helen and Ernest were divorced by 1920; Helen died on 26 September 1938 in Wellington; (2) Jane McIntosh Stuart on 10 April 1920 in

Wellington; Jane died in 1960 aged 75 and is buried in Karori Cemetery, Wellington. Ernest, printer, died at Paekakariki on 16 September 1963 and is buried in Paraparaumu Cemetery.

- **Elizabeth Crocker**, born 1886 in New Plymouth; married Duncan Ritchie Ingram in 1920.
- **Oswell**, born 12 December 1888 in Omata, Taranaki; died 1968, aged 79, and is buried in the Awanui Cemetery, New Plymouth, with Mary Jane Revell who died in 1959 aged 70 – presumably his wife.
- **Florence May**, born 21 December 1892; married Stanley William Lovegrove in 1912; Stanley died in 1954 aged 67, Florence in 1976 aged 83, and they are buried together in Te Henui Cemetery, New Plymouth.

The *Taranaki Herald* reports in its issue of 23 August 1871 an inquest at which 'Charles Revell, a shoemaker' was called to make a deposition. It is clear from his evidence that he, Esther and their family are living together in New Plymouth at this time. But shoemaking did not seem able to produce the income needed to keep his growing family, and Charles, though reputedly of a titled and wealthy Devonshire family, filed for bankruptcy in 1883, describing himself then as 'of Omata, Farmer'. By this time the household included eight children with another on the way.

The marriage was not a happy one. The first clear sign of a marital rift is a report in the 26 September 1893 issue of the *Taranaki Herald*, a New Plymouth newspaper:

In the R.M. Court this (Tuesday) morning, Esther Revell sued her husband, Charles Revell, of Okato, for maintenance of herself and family. Defendant did not appear, but sent a letter stating he was willing to contribute 10s a week. The R.M., after hearing the views of the informant, ordered defendant to pay 15s per week, first payment to date from Tuesday next.

But Charles either could not or would not pay, as the next newspaper report, in the issue of 17 February 1894, makes clear:

Charles Revell, who was arrested on a warrant, by Constable Hickman, appeared before the Court charged with being in arrears with his payments....

In answer to Sergt. Duffin, Mrs Revell stated that she had heard from several persons that defendant had signified his intention to clear out in order to avoid payment. She had eight children, only one of whom was earning wages....

Defendant replied that he had got one of the boys a situation at 12s a week and found, but his wife would not let the boy go, saying that he (defendant) wanted the boy to earn the money in order that he could avoid the payment of the 10s a week. This was the way he had been treated right through life. He had been driven from home. For five months his wife had never spoken to him in their house, and the eldest girls were the same. He had also to sell his cows, as he could not attend to them through the way he was treated.

His Worship said that he would have to make an order to imprison defendant for one month, but in order to give the defendant a chance he would give him time to pay the arrears before executing the order.

The defendant said that he could not see his way to pay.

After some discussion, the defendant was allowed 14 days to pay off the arrears and current payments.

Charles must have paid up as it seems he did not go to prison, but the *Herald* reports that he was before the court again on 30 October that same year, having

paid the maintenance only up to 31 July and being £3 10s in arrears. Charles did not appear, sending a letter asking to have the amount reduced. This request was rejected out of hand, and Charles was given one week to pay or serve one month's imprisonment.

At his next court appearance, on 17 April 1895, it transpired that Charles had served the prison sentence, but that he was still not paying the 10s weekly towards the maintenance of his wife and children as ordered by the court. However, a physician gave evidence in Charles's defence, telling the court that he had known the defendant for the previous 20 years.

I know him to be a hard working man. He was sent to prison recently, and he volunteered to work at hard labor in the quarries. I gave the requisite permission. Two days after he was reported sick, and on my examining him I found a curvature of the spine. The spine is diseased, and he cannot work continuously. He might work for an hour, and then have to lie down. Judging from my past experience of the man I think his brain is softening. He is not likely to get better.

On hearing the doctor's evidence, the magistrate declined to make an order requiring Charles to pay.

It was more than six years before Charles, said now to be of Rahotu, was before the court again, but this time his arrears amounted to £13. The case is reported verbatim in the 9 November 1901 issue of the *Taranaki Herald*.

Defendant: I am a cripple and unable to pay this amount as I can barely keep myself.

Mr Stanford [the magistrate] (to Mrs Revell): Is he able to pay?

Mrs Revell: He is quite able to pay. John Revell, his nephew, informed me that my husband told him that he was never doing better at his trade than he is now. Witness added that there were two children out of the eight still unable to earn their living.

Mr Stanford: Do you earn anything?

Witness: I used to do washing, but rheumatism has so crippled my hands that I am unable now to wring clothes.

Defendant got in the box and said he was 64 years of age, and Drs. O'Carroll and Walker had some years since certified as to his physical condition. He had a little workshop at Okato, and just earned enough to enable him to exist.

Mr Stanford said he would not alter the order, and directed the defendant to pay the arrears, in default 3 months; order to be suspended for a month to enable the defendant to pay.

Defendant: I simply can't pay, so I suppose I will have to take out the three months.

Mr Stanford: But you will have to pay. It is your duty to keep your wife.

Defendant: Well, I can't pay.

Five years later things are no better. The *Herald* of 31 January 1906 reports that Chas. Revell of Okato had 'applied to have a maintenance order for payment of 10s per week towards the support of his wife, Esther Revell, reduced'. However, the court was told that he was again in arrears of £13. The magistrate ordered that

Charles satisfy his obligation by paying his wife £5 within seven days, after which the payment would be reduced to 5s per week.

Charles died in 1920, aged 82; the on-line cemetery record gives his occupation as 'Custodian, Pukekura Park'. Esther (May), widow, died on 16 August 1939, aged 90. Her last address is given as Carrington Road, New Plymouth. They are both buried in Te Henui Cemetery, New Plymouth, Esther in the Primitive Methodist section, Row 17, Lot 2, Plot 2. The location of Charles's grave is not known.