

## **Notes on Charles Major and Harriett née Maud**

(Great-grandparents of John, Peter, Margaret, Randle and David Major)

**Charles Major born:** 21 August 1845, Norton, Northamptonshire, England.

**Harriett Maud born:** 1 August 1845, Byfield, Northamptonshire, England.

**Married:** 13 October 1868, Norton.

**Arrived in NZ:** 1 June 1874, Lyttelton, in 'Ballochmyle'.

**Children:** \*George, born 6 February 1869, Norton.

Albert Charles, christened 28 May 1871, Norton.

William, born 22 September 1874, Ashburton, Sth Canterbury.

Ernest Edward, born 21 September 1876, Geraldine, Sth Canterbury.

Alice Harriett, born 26 August 1880, Geraldine.

Susannah, born 15 March 1882, Geraldine.

Samuel, born 13 June 1884, Geraldine.

\*Grandfather of John, Peter, Margaret, Randle and David Major.

**Charles Major died:** 2 September 1891, Geraldine.

**Harriett Major re-married:** 18 March 1892, Geraldine, to James Crafer.

**Harriett Crafer, formerly Major, née Maud died:** 16 May 1902, Geraldine.

### **Charles Major's forebears, birth and early life**

Charles Major was born in the small village of Norton, not far from the town of Daventry in Northamptonshire, England, on 21 August 1845, the fifth child of William Major and Elizabeth née Stockton. Charles's older siblings still living when he was born were John, Richard, William and Susannah. Younger than he were Joseph and Betsy, both of whom were later to be witnesses to his marriage (though only Betsy could sign her name).

Charles appears in the 1851 census as a five-year-old 'scholar'. There was certainly a school in Norton and it would appear that Charles attended it, but the fact that he did not sign his own marriage certificate casts some doubt on its educational efficacy. By 1861 Charles had graduated to being a 'milk boy' living with other farm workers in the hamlet of Muscott not far from Norton.

According to old parish registers researched by John Major (a gt-grandson of Charles), William, Charles's father, was born on 28 February 1808 to Richard Major and Elizabeth née Gardner (1777-1849), who had married in Norton on 14 February 1802.

William married Elizabeth Stockton (1809-1861) on 15 July 1830. In the 1841 census William's occupation is given as agricultural labourer; in 1851 and 1861 he is recorded as a railway labourer. (William isn't identifiable in the 1871 Norton census, possibly he had moved or died – he would have been about 63.) Charles's death certificate describes his father's occupation more specifically as 'plate layer'. (A

plate layer was one of a gang of eight or so men with responsibility for the maintenance of a section of railway line.)

The first Majors to live in Norton were Alexander Major and Mary née Watkin who moved there from the village of Newnham, south of Daventry, in the 1730s. By the time of Charles's birth there were many families of the name of Major in Norton. In 1841, of the 496 adults and children living in the village, 46 of them – almost 10% -- were Majors. At the next UK census, in 1851, the village population had grown by about 80, but in 1861 only 490 persons were recorded as living in Norton. By 2001 the population had decreased further – to 363.

## **Norton**

According to *Wikipedia*, the earliest residents of Norton were Romans, who built the fortified town of Bannaventa on the Roman road of Watling Street (now the A5 running from London to Holyhead). Remains of this Roman settlement have been recovered from agricultural land at Whilton Lodge, north-west of Norton. Occupation of the site, which may have begun before the Roman conquest, continued into the fourth century.

It is possible that Bannaventa was the birthplace of St Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. In his *Confessio*, Patrick writes:

I had as my father the deacon Calpornius, son of the late Potitus, a priest, who belonged to the small town of Bannavem Taberniae; he had a small estate nearby, and it was there I was taken captive.

In circa AD 405, Patrick, aged 16, was kidnapped by 'pirates' who were raiding the imperial highways, and taken to Ireland as a slave. The possibility that Bannavem Taberniae is an alternative name for Bannaventa is supported by the fact that Watling Street ran indirectly to north Wales and thus would have offered easy passage from and to Ireland.

## **Charles's marriage**

In 1868, in All Saints (Anglican) Church, Norton, Charles, aged 23, married Harriett Maud of Byfield, Northamptonshire, who was working in Norton as a servant. The 1871 census records him as living in the village with his wife and first child George, and working as a farm labourer.

Harriett was the fourth child of Joseph Maud and Sarah née Bull, both natives of Byfield, who had married on 9 February 1832. Sarah died in May 1868 aged 59.

Harriett's father Joseph Maud had been born in July 1806, the twelfth and youngest child of Henry and Patience Maud. At the time of the 1871 census, Joseph was living at 'The Posts', Byfield. He died in April 1874 aged 67, and is buried with his wife in the churchyard of Holy Cross (Anglican) church, Byfield. As Geoff Saxton's Maud family research shows, the Maud family had lived in Byfield since at least 1678, when a James Maud was born there. Henry's birth was in 1772, and his wife's in 1773 in Pillarton, Warwickshire.

## **Life as a farm worker**

What was life like for an agricultural labourer at this time? The 1850s and 1860s have come to be known as the Golden Age of English agriculture as the demand for food grew with the steady rise of population in the industrial cities. Rollo Arnold in his book *The Farthest Promised Land* comments:

Squires and farmers prospered as never before, but the labourers' share of the wealth they toiled to create increased very little. Socially, the country world remained a class-ridden hierarchy. 'At the sight of the squire the people trembled. He lorded it right feudally over his tenants, the farmers; the farmers in their turn tyrannised over the labourers; the labourers were no better than toads under a harrow.'... There is ample evidence that the villagers over large areas of England had frequent experience of an empty stomach. Even at the best of times meat was a luxury, generally reserved for Sundays only....

While the villagers craved for meat, they saw the wild creatures about them protected by the Game Laws to provide sport for their 'betters'. Hunger and resentment drove many labourers to flout these class laws.... [O]ne of the greatest indignities imposed on the labourer was the Poaching Prevention Act of 1862, which gave rural police the right to search without warrant any person whom they suspected of poaching.

Then, from the mid '60s on, returns from arable land fell, and wage rates... came under strain. At this very time the labourer saw the economic advantages of a large family begin to disappear with the passing of laws prohibiting the employment of children ....

The simultaneous impact of reduced wages and loss of children's earnings proved to be the trigger for the rising of the agricultural workers of England in what came to be known as the Revolt of the Field, a militant movement that lasted from 1872 to 1879, by which time the farmers had once more gained the upper hand. The two main farm workers' bodies, the National Agricultural Labourers' Union and the Kent and Sussex Labourers' Union, both at various times strongly encouraged and facilitated emigration as a solution to the problems faced by their members – and this at a time when New Zealand was desperate for just such men, and Julius Vogel had launched his ambitious scheme of public works to promote migration to the colony.

## **Migration**

It is intriguing to imagine the hopes and dreams raised by the advent of a New Zealand Government migration agent in the Northamptonshire countryside. Certainly Charles Major, at least, was inspired to aim for a better standard of living and a more congenial society than he experienced in his homeland, and so he and Harriett took the irreversible decision, fraught with risk, to seek their fortune in New Zealand. Charles's decision would no doubt have been greatly influenced by the 1873 offer by the NZ Government, to agricultural labourers of good health and morals, of free passages to New Zealand, free travel to the port of embarkation in the UK and a free outfit for the boat journey. This very generous provision resulted in almost 32,000 immigrants, the Major family amongst them, arriving in NZ in the year from 1 June 1874 to 31 May 1875.

Charles and Harriett, both aged 28, with five-year-old George and Albert aged three, journeyed to Plymouth – a great adventure in itself – to board the ship 'Ballochmyle'. After an uneventful journey of 84 days on what was a large and well-appointed ship for the times, they arrived in Lyttelton on 1 June 1874. The immigrants would then have been taken by rail (the tunnel under the Port Hills was completed in the early 1860s) to the Christchurch suburb of Addington where they were housed and fed at Government expense in specially built barracks (later used by the Salvation Army's Men's Social Service Centre until the 1970s). Here employers interviewed prospective workers and offered jobs.

## Ashburton

It would seem that Charles did not find employment during this phase – an illiterate man with two children and a pregnant wife would not have been seen as a prime candidate for work on a farm. What happened next is described by Rollo Arnold:

On 24 June 1874 a special train brought 147 newly-arrived immigrants to become the first occupants of the Ashburton [*immigration*] barracks. Those arriving on the 'Atrato' and ... the 'Ballochmyle' were among the first to use the barracks.

The birth certificate of William, born four months after the Majors arrived in NZ, shows that the family was still in Ashburton at the end of September 1874.

## A fall from grace

It is likely that Charles and Harriett fell upon hard times at this period of their lives. This would seem to be the best explanation for an act which brought them before the Supreme Court, sitting in Christchurch. The *Press* of 7 April 1875 carried the following news item:

### LARCENY OF A VALUABLE SECURITY

Charles Major and Harriet Major, who had been out on bail, now surrendered, and were indicted for having on the 9th January, 1875, [*the Police Gazette says 18 February*] stolen a cheque on the Union Bank for £22 11s, the property of James McKenzie.

The male prisoner pleaded "Guilty".

Mr Duncan said that he did not intend to offer any evidence against the female.

His Honor directed the female prisoner to be discharged, and sentenced the male prisoner to six months' imprisonment, with hard labor.

It is most likely that Charles served his sentence in the Addington prison not 100 yards from the immigration barracks where he and Harriett, full of hope, had first lived in their new homeland only nine months before.

Harriett would have been treated with leniency as the mother of three children aged from six years to six months. George was probably at school, but how Harriett managed to generate any income with a baby and a toddler at home is hard to imagine.

Charles was released from prison sometime during the fortnight ending 11 September 1875. The issue of the *Police Gazette* containing that information also includes the following description of Charles: Height: 5ft 8¾in; Make [*i.e. build*]: medium; Complexion: fair; Hair: light brown; Eyes: blue; Nose: long; Mouth: medium; Chin: medium; Remarks: flat forehead.

## Geraldine

No doubt the Major family's move from Ashburton to Geraldine took place soon after Charles's release from prison. Certainly Charles and Harriett's next child, Ernest Edward, born in September 1876, first saw the light of day in Geraldine, and Charles and Harriett lived out the rest of their lives in this small South Canterbury town. Majors Road is named after them, presumably because they were the first to live along it. [*See end note 1*].

Eulla Williamson, writing about the street names of Geraldine in the *Geraldine Guardian: Historical Society News*, No.41, has this to say about the Majors:

This road was dedicated in 1879. Mr Charles Major and his wife Harriet, together with their two children George and Albert, arrived in Geraldine in 1874. Later they had four more children. Possibly he settled in Maslin Town [a locality on the outskirts of Geraldine] when they arrived in 1874 and he worked in that area as a labourer. From 1887 onwards Charles was a labourer on the Peel Forest Estate. He evidently stayed on the Estate for the working week and used to walk home every weekend, [a distance of some 20km]. He was later to move to Ashburton.

No sources are given for this material and some of it is clearly wrong: the family could not have arrived in Geraldine in 1874 as the parents' theft was committed in Ashburton in early 1875; also, the last statement is incorrect, and Ashburton-born William has been overlooked in the tally of children. But the other information is of interest.

Records of employees of the Peel Forest Estate during the 1880s and '90s are no longer extant, and the records of the adjoining Mt Peel station (held in the Macmillan Brown Library of the University of Canterbury) do not include the name of Charles Major. However, the historian Eleanor Cottle reported in a letter to me that a George and a William Major are listed in the Mt Peel wages book, George for four months in 1889 and William from 1887 to 1892. It seems likely from other evidence that these are sons of Charles and Harriett. The Mt Peel wages book includes also details of an Albert Major employed from 1888-90. Albert Major, Charles and Harriett's second child, certainly had early connections in that area as, after five years in Wanganui, he married a woman from a Peel Forest family.

The 1880-81 issue of *Wises's Post Office Directory* describes Geraldine as 'the centre of a fine farming district', with five churches, two banks and three hotels, and a population of 650 – rather larger and better serviced than Charles's ancestral village of Norton.

It is interesting to note that Charles was not the first Major to take up residence in the district. The Timaru electoral roll shows that by at least mid-1874 a Frank Major was living in Waimate and owned a section in Geraldine. Also, by 1900 a George Major was farming at Cricklewood, South Canterbury.

## Children

After the birth of Edward, three more children were born to Charles and Harriett in Geraldine, bringing their family to a total of seven 'living issue' at the time of Charles's death:

- **George**, born 6 February, christened 6 June 1869, Norton, Northamptonshire, England; married Sarah Esther Wallace, 30 April 1901, Wanganui; died 15 November 1948, Stratford, Taranaki. [See separate essay.]
- **Albert Charles**, christened 28 May 1871, Norton.  
Worked on the Mt Peel Station as a packman from October 1888 to October 1890.  
Married Jessie Whetton of a Peel Forest family, October 1897, in Wanganui. In 1905 he was a witness to the marriage of his sister Susannah, where he described himself as 'Gardener, Wanganui'.  
In the *Evening Post* of 4 April 1922, Albert is listed as one of the five occupiers of 'part Section 46, Turakina District, Block 1, Rangitoto Survey District'.

Albert died 5 June 1940, Turakina, Manawatu, farmer; Jessie died 20 March 1966, Turakina. Their children were (dates provided by Brian Major):

- Charles Albert, born 13 March 1899; died 8 January 1968, Wanganui. Robert Charles Major, born 26 February 1936, the fourth child of Charles Albert, was still farming in the Turakina area in 2008.
- Laurance, birth registered 1900.
- Harold Benning, birth registered 1902.
- Doris Evelyn, birth registered 1906.
- **William**, born 22 September 1874, Ashburton, South Canterbury.

A William Major is listed in the Mt Peel sheep station wages book from 1887-1892 working as a general servant, garden boy and packer, starting young – at 5 shillings per week, but by 1892 he was getting 20 shillings a week). For part of this time George and Albert Major also worked at Mt Peel.

A William Major is also on the Geraldine Salvation Army Corps roll in 1891 as a soldier attending the Peel Forest outpost. When the roll was re-written later that year, William, still at 'Peel', is stated to be single, aged 19. His name does not appear the next time the roll was re-written (1892?). Then in 1896 a William Major appears on the Wanganui electoral roll, joining George and Albert Major residing in Taupo Quay, Wanganui, and working as a labourer.

In an August 1902 court document relating to the administration of Harriett's estate, William Major is described as 'the oldest son at present residing in Geraldine', however, the 1902 Patea electoral roll has a William Major, labourer, living in Hurleyville, and by 1908 he is listed in Patea as a farm hand.

The supplement to the 1911 Wanganui roll includes William Major, Benefield St, Wanganui East, groom, with his wife Eleonore (Nora, née Kelsen), whom he married in 1911, and the 1914 Wanganui roll has the couple living in Wilkie St, Eastbrook (possibly occupying the house that George and Essie Major had just vacated); William's occupation is still 'groom'. Research by Brian Major, a grand-nephew of William, shows the following children born to the marriage:

  - Harriet Elenore (Ellen), born 15 May 1911.
  - Edith May, born 21 June 1912.
  - William Sam, born 24 February 1915, Wanganui; died 2 February 1999, Wanganui.
  - Ivy, born 6 March 1920; died 8 December 2006.
  - Ivy's twin, a boy stillborn 7 March 1920.

William died on 31 October 1938 at Paparangi in the Wanganui hinterland (but 'late of Fox Road, Wanganui'). Eleonore pre-deceased him, dying on 26 July 1928, in Springvale, Wanganui.
- **Ernest Edward**, born 21 September 1876, Geraldine.

In December 1887 Ernest Major in Class III at the Geraldine Public School received a prize for drawing.

Ernest was in Wanganui with his brothers by October 1896 but had left that area by October 1899.

He married Mary Greer on 17 July 1900.

- Their only child, Mary Evelyn, was born on 23 September that year. Mary started her formal education at Arundel in August 1909, leaving that school on 6 November 1913 bound for Mt Somers, on the Ashburton River, either with her family or more probably to take up work as a domestic servant.

*Wises's Post Office Directory* for 1915 lists Ernest Major as a horse trainer in Geraldine. The 1925 Ashburton electoral roll has him living in Arundel employed as a 'water ranger'.

Mary (Ann) died on 30 September 1945, Ernest on 9 September 1959; they are buried in the Arundel Cemetery, South Canterbury (Presbyterian Section), new row 54, plots 76 and 77.

- **Alice Harriett**, born 26 August 1880, Geraldine.

In the *Timaru Herald* of 13 March 1886, Alice is named in the prize list of Geraldine Public School (as 'Below Standard I').

Moved to Wanganui probably in 1895 and married her step-brother Arthur Crafar there on 18 January 1898.

Alice died on 2 November 1942; Arthur on 7 August 1957; they are buried in the Aramoho Cemetery, Wanganui.

Their children were (dates provided by Brian Major):

- Arthur Lancelot, born 9 February 1896 (birth not registered till 1912); died 22 March 1947, Wanganui.
- George William, born 21 December 1898; died 15 November 1977, Wanganui.
- Horace James, birth registered 1900; 28 August 1937.
- Herbert Morice, born June 1904; died 18 April 1906.
- Elsie May, born 21 May 1907; died 13 June 1944, Auckland.
- Samuel Maurice (Bill), born 7 June 1909; died 17 September 1964, Wanganui.

- **Susannah**, born 15 March 1882, Geraldine.

Susannah arrived in Wanganui at some time after October 1903, living in St John's Hill. She married James Alexander Heron in a private residence at 97 Wicksteed Street, Wanganui, on 12 July 1905; his profession is given as labourer and hers as cook.

Susannah died on 19 May 1947 in Wanganui, aged 65. Their children were (some information provided by Brian Major):

- Ernest Alexander, birth registered 1905.
- William James, birth registered 1907.
- Vera May, born 14 September 1909; married Thomas Shrewing Seward, 16 August 1937; died 15 November 1997, Wanganui.
- Herbert Maurice, birth registered 1911.

- **Samuel**, born 13 June 1884, Geraldine.

The *Timaru Herald* of 12 April 1892 lists Samuel Major as having received a prize at the Sunday school anniversary of St Mary's Anglican church, Geraldine, and in the 23 December 1893 issue Samuel is listed as a prize-winner in Standard I of the Geraldine Public School.

'Samuel Major, Shepherd, Wanganui' signed as a witness to the marriage of Susannah Major in 1905.

Samuel Major, shepherd, appears in the 1905-06 electoral roll for Wanganui, resident in River Bank where Albert Major and his wife Jessie were also living at the time. It is probably this same Samuel Major who is

listed on the 1908 Patea supplementary roll as a labourer of Kakaramea (William Major is on the Patea main roll for that year).

On 2 September 1914 Samuel Major enlisted in the Wellington Mounted Rifle (WMR) Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, and was assigned Service No.11/567. He is described as being 5ft 5in (165cm) tall and weighing 150lb (68kg). The WMR served as infantry in the Gallipoli Campaign from 9 May 1915, playing a significant role in the famous battle for Chunuk Bair in early August of that year. Samuel was evacuated from Gallipoli about 23 August suffering from severe dysentery. He was returned to New Zealand on the hospital ship 'Willochra' which sailed from Alexandria on 25 September 1915. On 9 March 1916 he returned to duty at Featherston Camp and was recommended for home service, however he refused this option and was discharged from the Army on 8 April 1916.

In 1919 a Samuel Major is again on the Wanganui roll, described as a drover living at Upper Aramoho.

It is interesting to note further that on 6 June 1940 Samuel again volunteered for military service, giving his year of birth as 1893 so making his age 47 rather than his real age of 56! However, he was not accepted and did not serve in WWII.

Samuel Major died on 22 September 1961. His remains were cremated and deposited in the Aramoho Cemetery, Wanganui. He never married.

## Religion

There is evidence suggesting that the Majors attended the Primitive Methodist church in Geraldine: a report in the *Timaru Herald* of 6 May 1882 states that William and Albert Major gave recitations ('The Child's First Grief' and 'The Lost Child' respectively!) at the Primitive Methodist Sunday school anniversary, and the issues of 21 March 1889 and 26 March 1890 list Alice and Ernest Major as receiving prizes from the Sunday school of that denomination.

But it would also seem that Charles and Harriett attended the Salvation Army after it 'opened fire' in the town in July 1889: a copy of *The Musical Salvationist* in the possession of David Major is inscribed (in an unpractised hand) 'Charles Major, His Book 1890, Geraldine [*sic*]'. However, the Geraldine Corps soldiers' roll, dating back to the opening year, does not include the names of Charles or Harriett Major (but see below re Harriett's church affiliations after her re-marriage). However, their son William has his name appearing on the Geraldine roll for 1891 as attending the Peel Forest Outpost.

## Charles's death

Charles Major died in Geraldine from asthma and chronic lung disease (coupled with 'Exhaustion') on 2 September 1891. He was 46 and had been in New Zealand for 17 years. He was buried in an unmarked grave\* in the Geraldine Cemetery, Row 201, plot 213. George, the eldest child, was 22; there were six other children ranging down to seven-year-old Samuel. Probably three of the children were still dependants. *Wises's Directory* for 1890-91 confirms that Charles Major of Geraldine died still a labourer.

\*But a headstone was erected by some of his gt-grandchildren in December 2011

**Harriett's re-marriage – the Crafers** (The spelling varies – James seemed to prefer 'Crafer' but his children used 'Crafar'.)



Understandably, Harriett quickly re-married – seven and a half months later to be exact, on 18 March 1892. Her new husband was a widower, James Crafer, with a number of children of his own. (The death of his wife Sarah Ann née Rice, aged 50, was registered in 1884.) The marriage certificate describes Harriett as a domestic – no doubt she had had to take up some form of paid employment as soon as, if not before, Charles died. The wedding took place in the Salvation Army officers' quarters, Geraldine.

James Crafer was a Salvationist who had been enrolled as a soldier in September 1889, the year the Geraldine Corps opened. He is listed at no.2 position on the first roll compiled, where he is given the rank of sergeant. He maintains the same position, though not the rank, in the second and third rolls. When the roll is re-written for the fourth time, James Crafer is relegated to position no.48 and is joined, at no.47, by 'Sis. Crafer' – the remarried Harriett Major. That same listing also shows that during the time of Captain Ernest Dixon, who took command of the corps in August 1893, the Crafers' names were removed from the roll and their soldiership terminated – 'gone to church' was the charge. This suggests that Harriett may have joined the Army out of deference to her new husband, and that after a year or so prevailed upon him to move with her to her original denomination, the Primitive Methodists (by whom she was buried).

What James Crafer's occupation was is somewhat uncertain: his 1892 marriage certificate describes him as a labourer; in August 1894 *The Timaru Herald* reports him as taking part in a ploughing competition held by the Geraldine Farmers' Club; then in June 1895 we are told of his winning tender for carting shingle for the Geraldine Town Board; certificates of title in which he is named describe him variously as 'contractor' (1897), 'Laborer' (1899) and 'Chimney Sweep' (1901). He is last heard of, in 1906, as a market gardener in Wanganui.

In the Crafer family history, a copy of which is held by the Geraldine Museum, Beatrice Ellery née Crafer speaks of her step-mother as follows:

When I think back to our mother's early death and how devastated Dad [*i.e.* James Crafer] was, maybe we should have been more tolerant of Mrs Major's harsh manner. However, Dad and Mrs Harriet Major married in the Salvation [Army] Citadel on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1892....

Dad and Mrs Major really were happy together, even though Dad's mischievous ways did cause many eruptions [*sic*] and disagreements between them. I now see that it was good for Dad to have a new partner and she did care about him and did look after him when he became ill and unable to work.

### **Harriett's death**

Harriett Crafer, formerly Major, née Maud, died in Geraldine on 16 May 1902, aged 56, predeceasing her second husband. The cause of death was a cerebral haemorrhage. Harriett is buried in the Geraldine Cemetery in an unknown grave, but probably with Charles.

Harriett died intestate, the Timaru district court granting letters of administration to William as 'the oldest son at present residing in Geraldine'. The document specifies that 'the estate, effects and credits of the deceased to be administered... are under the value of Fifty pounds'. Land south of Majors Road, totalling almost seven acres, which Harriett had purchased only 15 months previously had, on her death, passed into the possession of the mortgagee.

## Conclusion

So...had it been worth it? – that long and hazardous sea journey, the total and permanent separation from friends and family, and the vicissitudes of setting up a home and finding secure, satisfying work in a young and raw land.

I believe – yes. The 1890 electoral roll for Geraldine includes the name of Charles Major, labourer, and gives his voting qualification as ‘freehold, House & Section, Geraldine’. That he was able to own land and a home in a pleasant rural town, provide satisfactorily for his wife and family, and take his place as a citizen on equal terms with his peers, would undoubtedly have given Charles Major a sense of personal pride and achievement that he could not easily have gained as a working-class man in Northamptonshire.

### End Note: The Majors’ house

Alex and Dorothy Furness, the owners and occupiers (since 1960) of 41 Majors Road, believe that their cottage was the original Major home. Certainly the house is old enough – while undertaking repairs, Mr Furness found that the original weatherboards were pit-sawn, and that floorboards were fastened with square-headed iron nails, both indicating an early construction date.

However, perusal of the relevant certificate of title does not reveal the name of either Charles or Harriett Major. On the other hand, a rate book held by the Geraldine Museum shows that in December 1894 James Crafer (and presumably Harriett – they had been married for almost three years by this time) was occupying a dwelling owned by ‘Mrs C. Major’ situated on Lot 31, Deposited Plan 126 – the legal description of the property now owned by the Furnesses.

Officers of the Timaru District Council’s GIS Unit have suggested that no.45 Majors Road was the Major homestead. Again, this is not supported by the relevant certificate of title, so the rate-book evidence would seem to be decisive as to the exact location of Charles’s ‘freehold, House & Section’ of 1890.

It seems clear that the certificates of title do not tell the whole story – they contain no reference to land ownership by Charles Major, or by Harriett before her remarriage. All that they show is as follows:

**CT 43/122:** On 4 March 1897 Harriett Crafar purchased (with a mortgage) Lot 31, Deposited Plan 126, part of Rural Section 14599, Timaru District, the property that is now 41 Majors Road. This purchase appears to be at variance with the December 1894 rate book reference to Mrs C. Major as owner of that property. The fact that her former married surname is used indicates that the ownership dates from before her remarriage on 18 March 1892, and probably from before Charles’s death on 2 September 1891.

**CT 25/112:** On 15 March 1899 James Crafar purchased Lot 30, DP 126. This purchase appears to be at variance with the statement by Fred Ellery, James Crafar’s grandson, that ‘the Crafers and the Majors lived side by side in...Major’s Lane’ – indicating occupation, if not ownership, of Lots 30 and 31 from before Charles’s death.

**CT 79/46:** On 18 February 1901 Harriett Crafar purchased (with a mortgage) Lots 11-24 and 33-37, DP 126 – in total almost seven acres. On her death 15 months later these lots would have passed to the mortgagee.

**CT 25/112:** James then sold Lot 30 on 21 August 1902. Harriett had died on 16 May 1902, and it would seem that James sold his Geraldine property preparatory to moving to Wanganui where his sons Arthur and Hercules were already resident.