

Emigration of McNeill families from the island of Arran to Southland in New Zealand

The Isle of Arran



he island of Arran has a human history stretching back into distant prehistory, the first visitors being hunters and fishermen, who came ashore between 7000 and 400 BC during the Bronze and Iron Ages.

The name Arran may have come from a number of possible sources. One being *lofty, exalted, High Mountain*, another derived from the Irish word for bread!

Arran in size is around 25 miles from South to North and is 11.2 miles from East to West. It lies between the Isle of Bute to the north and Kintyre to the west. To the east and opposite is the Ayrshire coast on the mainland. It has been described as Scotland in miniature! It has a number of mountains typical of the best of the Scottish highlands and areas of lowland, surrounded by the glistening sea. The mountain of Goat Fell on Arran at 874 metres (2,867 feet), ranks as the 16th most prominent mountain in the British Isles.

The island is high and mountainous, with slopes on each side around the coast. Situated on the east coast is the main town of Brodick. Formerly the seat of the Dukes of Hamilton, who owned large parts of the island for most of its history, Brodick also serves as the main port for travelling to Ardrossan on the mainland of Scotland, made possible by steam navigation in 1812. Brodick one of the few Viking names left on the island, the other being Sannox.



MacNeill burial stone in Kilmory



Allan McNeill

The McNeills of Arran and where they lived



he island of Arran lies in the Firth of Clyde, on the east side of the Kintyre

peninsula, in western Scotland. It has been home to several families of McNeills for over 300 years. Land-lease records, kept by the Duke of Hamilton during 1685-1702, include a John McNeill, tacksman, who held a lease on Wester Bennan in 1694, together with an Archibald McMurchie, near the village of Kildonan. The tenants in this area, around the southern fringe of the island, were farming on some of the most productive land in Arran.

The early tenants managed their arable land by using the run rig system, growing potatoes and grain; they worked together in groups of around 12 families, all living as a community.

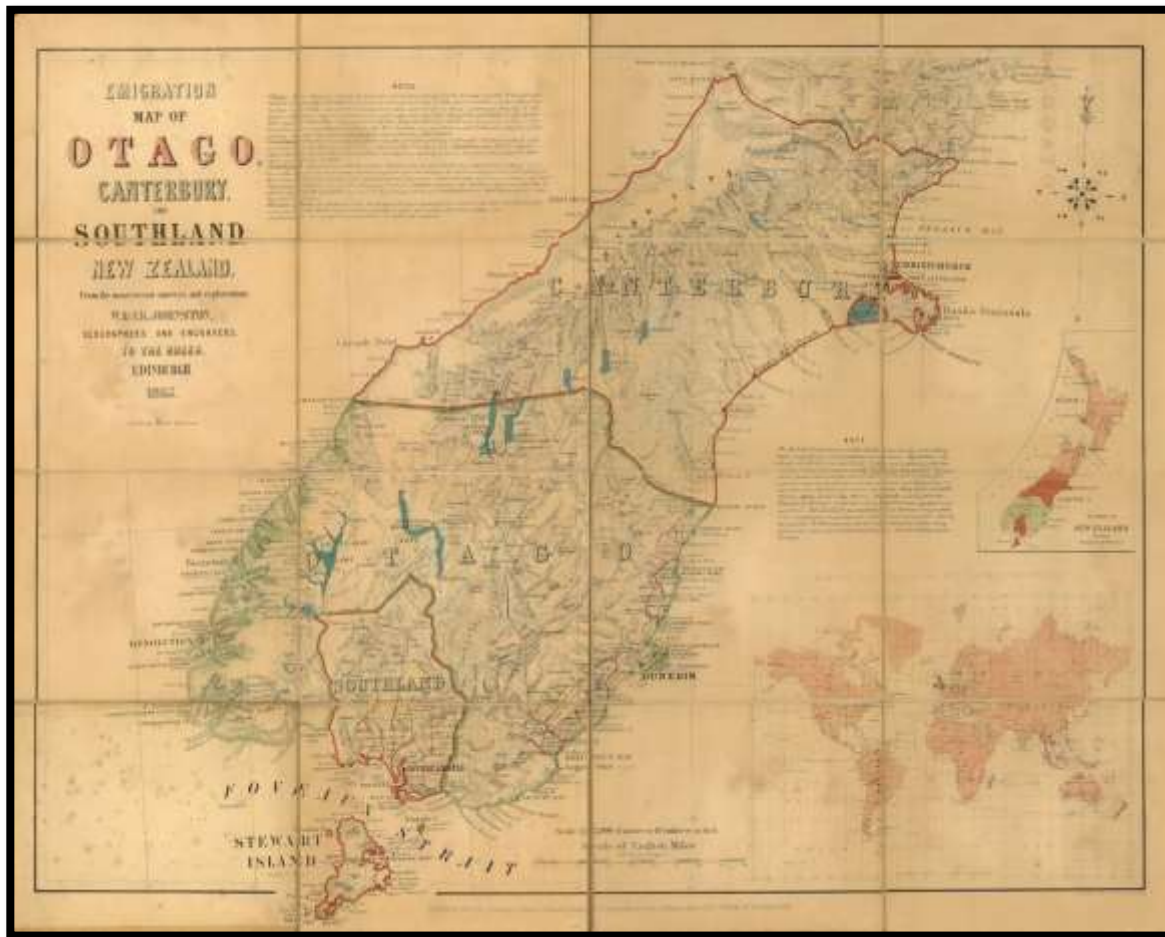
Extensive areas of non-arable land were used for grazing. Each farm was held by a head-farmer, called a tacksman, who held the lease and was responsible for paying the rent to the Duke of Hamilton. The names of their farms included Levencorrach, Ballymeanoch the Glen, Drimlabarra, Auchenhew, Glenree and Corriecravie. Most of these named farms, together with some of their stone buildings, have remained intact to the present day. Not all farms were near the coast, I am told that the early people built higher in the hills than today. They were, firstly, worried about the danger of Vikings coming ashore to plunder. The last Viking attack on mainland Scotland, at Largs on the mainland coast to the east from Whiting Bay, Arran, and close to the farms mentioned. Secondly, they were concerned that naval press-gangs may snatch away their sons, to man warships.

The Kilmory Parish Registers begin in 1701 and already (in the first 16 years) there were seven McNeill families baptizing their children, they were Allan McNeill and Marie Stewart of Levencorrach, Lachlan McNeill and Janet McCouk of Drimlabarra, Donald McNeill and Mary Dounie of Auchenhew, John McNeill and Katherine Stewart of Dippen, John McNeill and Janet Couke, Donald McNeill and Katherine Sillars, and Donald McNeill and Mary Ferguson. These parents' birthdates must go back to around 1680 but no records for this period have survived.

The old Kilmory Church and its registers were destroyed by fire about 1702. Common Christian names of McNeill children were Allan, John, Lachlan, Hector, James, Donald, Duncan, Robert, Alexander, Janet and Mary and these were passed down through the generations. Other common surnames are Murchie (which became Currie), McCouk (which became Cook), Jamieson, Kennedy, McBride, McKinnon, Stewart, McGraffen (which became Crawford), Shaw and Fergusson.

Other McNeills lived in the Parish of Kilbride (records begin in 1723), on the eastern coast of Arran, but it appears that they settled there after the 1720s as the first McNeill records are dated a decade later. The marriage of Allan McNeill and Mary Thompson occurred in 1736. However, it is likely that Allan was of Kilmory Parish and that Kilbride was his wife's parish. The first McNeill baptisms here occurred in the early 1750s and included a John whose parents were Torquil McNeill and Catherine McMaster. The name Torquil is most common amongst the McNeills of Kintyre, indicating a connection between the Kintyre families and those of Kilbride Parish. Also, the Thompson surname is said to be derived from the name MacTavish which is a northern Kintyre family.

Emigration from the Isle of Arran to the District of Thornbury Southland, New Zealand in 1859





eter McNeill was born in 1833 at Ballymeanoch the Glen, in the Parish of Kilmory,

Isle of Arran.



**Old house at
Ballymeanoch**

He died in 1915 in Thornbury, New Zealand. His father was Robert McNeill (born 1777) who, in 1808, married Jean McKirdy at Ballymeanoch. Peter was their seventh son and the youngest of nine children.

It was traditional in those days for the farm to be handed down to the eldest son but, in Peter's case, his second eldest brother, Lachlan, eventually took over "The Glen". His eldest brother, John, had taken up a career on sailing ships and was said to have been sailing on the American run. This is a career that the youngest brother, Peter, would also follow.

Peter's uncle, Captain John McNeill (1789-1868), had become a successful sea captain, eventually owning several foreign-going sailing ships. It is recorded that maybe he owned up to five ships.

He also built a house known as Breadalbane, at Kildonan, which in later years became a boarding house and eventually Breadalbane Hotel. Peter studied on the mainland of Scotland at a Maritime College in Glasgow and achieved his only Mate's Certificate. He started his seamanship, with his Uncle John of Breadalbane, and worked his way up to become Chief Officer.

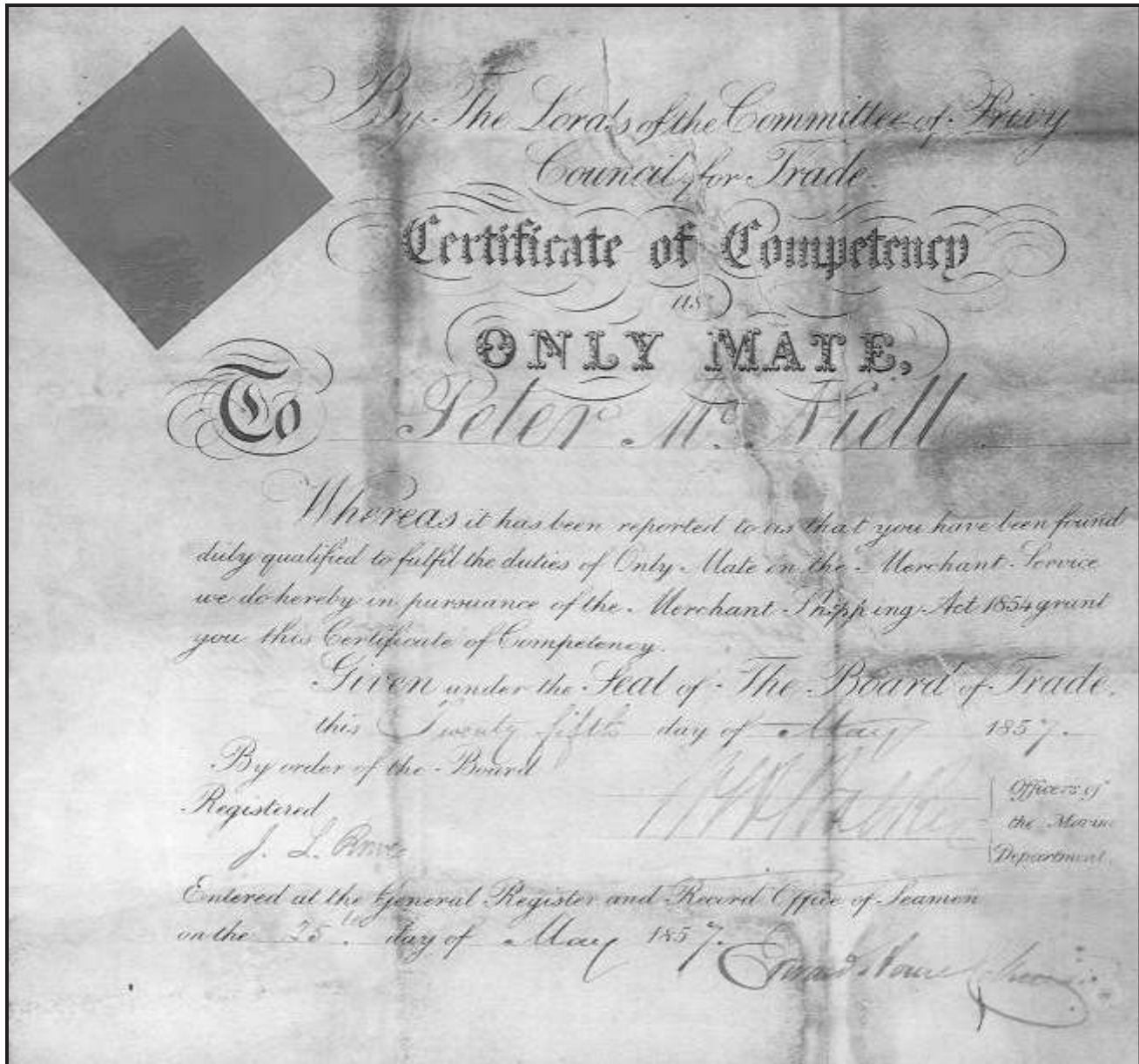
Here to follow and just found by Grace Small on Arran in September of 2019 is an article written some 158 years ago about a visit by a writer of the Kilmarnock Weekly Post

A FEW DAYS IN THE SOUTH END OF THE ISLAND OF ARRAN

A number of horses and carts are in waiting to convey the luggage to its destination, and among them is one from Auchenchuie, the 'faithful and true' James McNeill, our landlord, 'has come himself to see all right'. We are next greeted by our old friend, Capt. McNeil; and as it is so very wet, we must all come up to his cottage and warm ourselves a little. Knowing that the Captain has a goodly stock of kindness, and which he wished occasionally to dispense, and could afford to do so, we did not require much pressing. Many cosy nooks have we,

at one time and another, been in, between Inverness and this same South End of Arran; but a cosier nook have we never seen than Breadalbane Cottage, nestling at the bottom of the high ridge of hills, and greater kindness have we never experienced than we again and again have got pressed on us in the snug little parlour within; but we won't farther dilate on this for fear of offending the organs of our teetotal friends. The rain still continued, and to our lodgings on the top of the hill we must get, and therefore we set out in the midst of it, but certainly somewhat more comfortable for our short stay.





Peter's Certificate of Competency as Only Mate, dated 1857.

Peter sailed abroad on his uncle's ships and a story is passed down that while in the port of Callao, Peru, and loading a cargo of Guano fertilizer, an Indian dock-worker fell into the cargo hold and the local stevedores had no interest in stopping the loading of the ship, perhaps showing how cheap life was in those early days. Once loaded, these relatively small ships and their crew still faced the navigational perils of rounding Cape Horn, which was no easy feat.

Aged approximately 26 years, on the 10th June 1859 in Greenock, Peter joined the 1,164 ton ship the "Alpine" that was built at Ardrossan, Scotland, by the firm Barr and Shearer; she was designed for the passenger run from Glasgow to Otago in New Zealand. She was one of three almost sister ships, the other two were the "Pladda" (an island just off Arran) and the "Lady Egidia".

It was quoted in the local paper that she was one of the finest vessels visiting Otago to that date. However, the mood on board may not have been as happy as it seemed. The account of the voyage below, by James McIndoe, relates the displeasure of the passengers and the fact that many of the crew left the ship. It is believed Peter joined the ship as crew as he does not appear in the passenger list. We are not sure what his rank was but it is assumed he was not acting in his usual capacity as only mate. He was among the crew members who did not return to the ship. A story is passed down by the old family, that he arrived with just five gold sovereigns to start his new life in this far away land.



The *Lady Egidia*, shown in front here, was a very similar vessel to the *Alpine*. Both vessels were built in the yards of Barr & Shearer at Ardrossan, Ayrshire.

The Shipping News in the Otago Witness, Issue 407, 17 September 1859, page 2, gives us the following details on the arrival of the "*Alpine*"

September 11 – "*Alpine*" 1164 tons, R. Crawford,
from Glasgow, with 90
A Reminiscence Voyage of the "*Alpine*" By Jas.
M'Indoe.

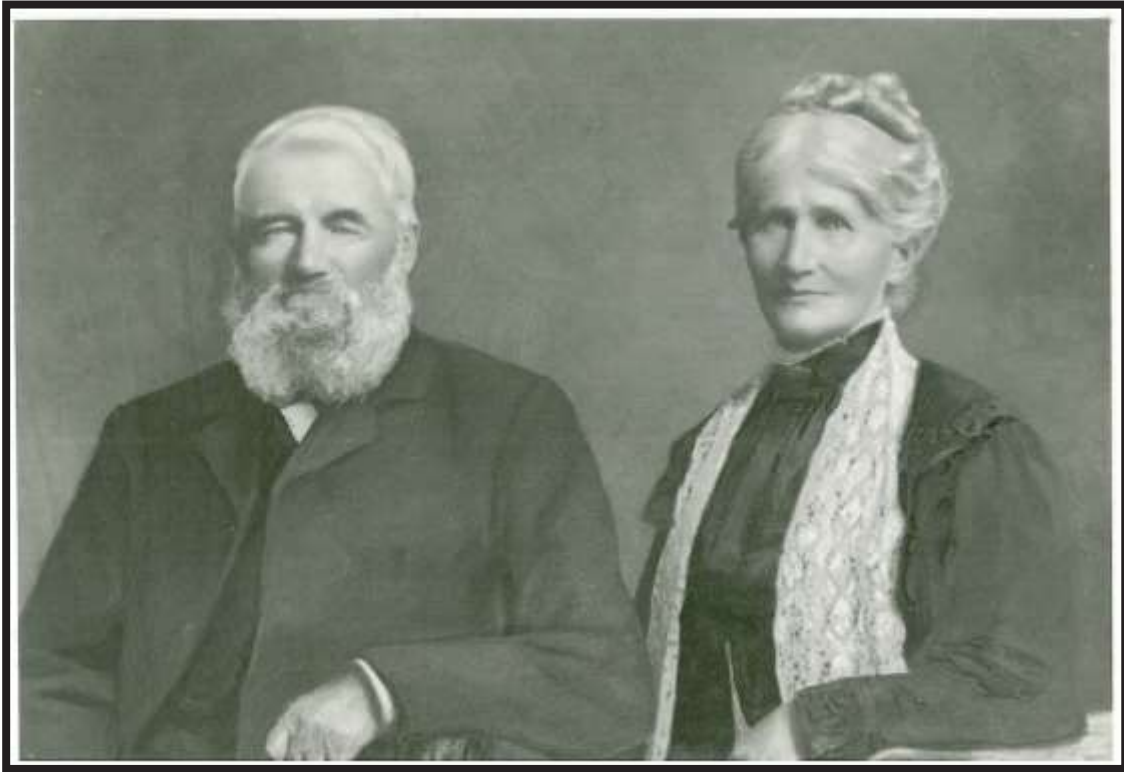
It was a bright, sunny day, that Thursday, 10th June, 1859, when at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the anchor of the good ship "*Alpine*" was hove from the tail of the bank, Greenock, and in tow of the powerful tug "*Hercules*", the first part of her 16,000 miles' journey began. Before entering into details of the passage I may be permitted to make a few remarks regarding the ship herself. She was built at Ardrossan by the then celebrated firm of Barr and Shearer, who in due course immediately afterwards launched the "*Pladda*" and the "*Lady Egidia*", named in honour of the eldest daughter of the Earl of Eglinton, the three being designed for the trade from Glasgow to

Otago, and each making successful records, the “Alpine” inaugurating, but not being destined to make a second visit. Our ship was well appointed, officers and crew being efficient. Captain Crawford was a bluff old salt, who had made many voyages to different parts of the world — a thorough sailor, deemed a little over-cautious. Mr Mann, the chief officer, was to the manner born, and would willingly carry on whilst his superior hesitated. Mr Gray, the second, had much less experience, but did his duty faithfully, and was a favourite with the ladies. By such accounts, we are assured that journeys of this length and in the conditions that had to be endured, must have presented challenges on board for passengers and crew. That said, the “*Alpine*” did not continue in the passenger run to New Zealand. It is not certain whether Peter chose then to leave the ship to start a new life in New Zealand or if this has always been his intention.

It seems, by the accounts in James McIndoe's article, that most of the crew were held in very high regard throughout the journey. Gold mining was at its height in Central Otago in this period, so after departing the ship Peter tried his hand at mining, but it must have proved difficult so he abandoned this endeavour and headed further south to a district called Thornbury which is between Invercargill, the main city of the Province of Southland, with a population of only 609 in 1861, and the sea-side town of Riverton.

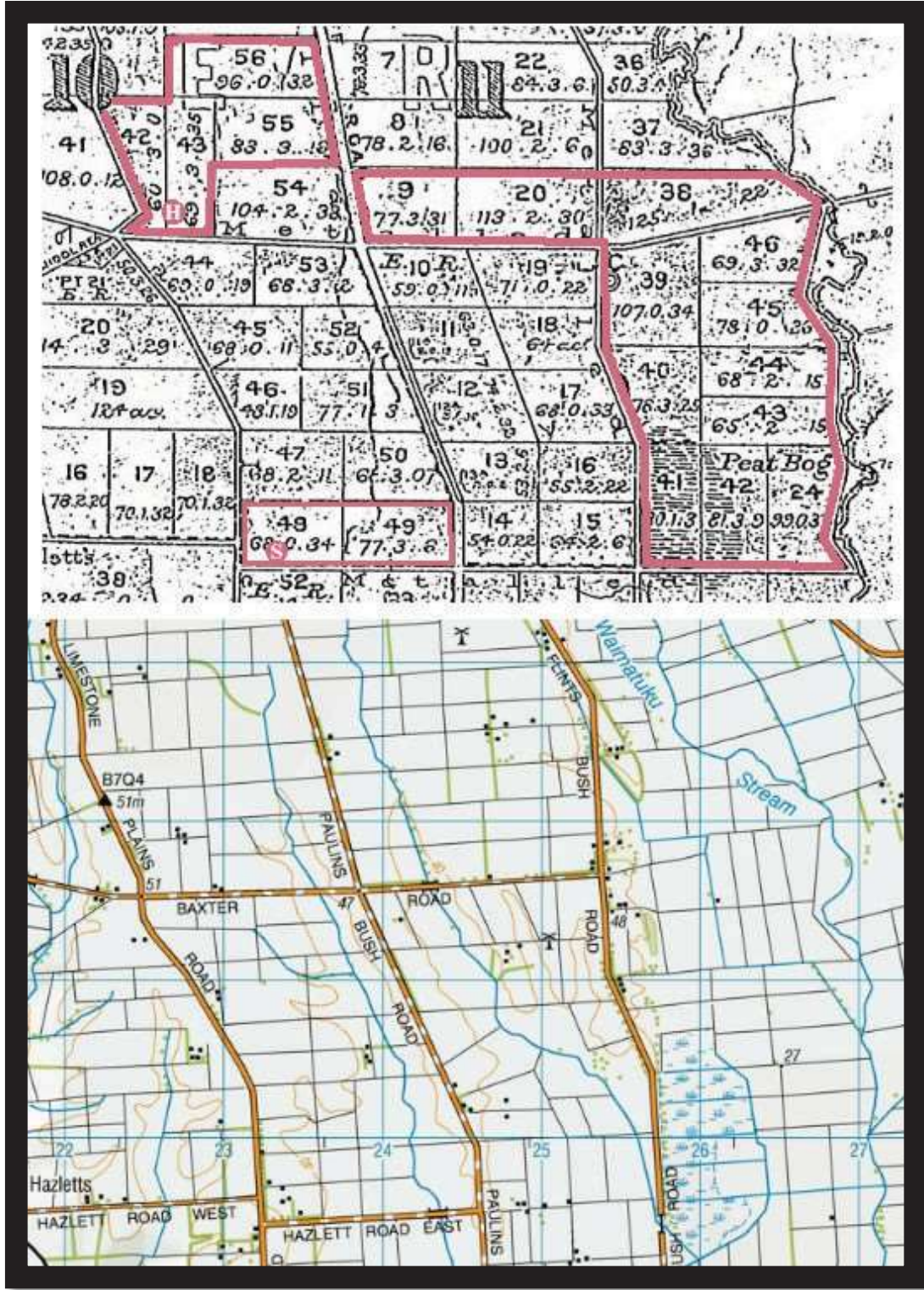
It was not far from here, in a neighbouring district called Waimatuku, that he was to meet his future wife, Margaret McKenzie. Margaret was born in “Fearn”, Ross-shire, Scotland and travelled out with her father Andrew McKenzie and mother Margaret McKenzie, nee Henry, to the Port of Bluff, Southland, New Zealand in 1863 on the ship “*Robert Henderson*”. They lived in barracks in Invercargill before her father Andrew took his first job working for a farmer at Wallacetown; however the farmer went bankrupt, so they took up land at Waimatuku and settled there.

Peter and Margaret were married in 1868 and built a pioneer sod cottage on Hazlett Road, section 48 of block 10, also farming section 49 of the Jacobs River Hundred, just to the north of Thornbury. However it is the belief that he did not own these sections that he had held since 1866. (See cottage location below). In this cottage they had their first five sons. However, very much like back in Peter's old home country of Arran, he must have worked very hard to make the boggy land productive as it is today. Extensive drainage work and clearing of manuka scrub was required with only man-power and draft horses.



Peter and Margaret McNeill, taken around 1900

Jacobs River Hundred map of 1929.



Maps showing the location of the numbered sections and the two buildings: S is the old sod cottage and H is the 1875 timber house. Flints Bush is a little to the south and Isla Bank is a little to the north of this area.

In or around 1875 Peter and Margaret built a modern timber home on Block 45 of Jacobs River Hundred. Peter was assisted in this work by his bachelor brother, James, who had a background in ship-carpentry.

At this stage it should be mentioned that Peter's elder brother, the pioneering James, born on Arran in 1820, was also living in Southland. It is unclear whether James arrived in New Zealand before Peter and then Peter had followed him out, or if James had followed Peter out. It is thought, however, that James was the first to arrive. What is known is that James was a "Shipwright" and did quite a number of jobs in and around his brother, Peter's farm, including work on the new timber house. He never married and remained in New Zealand for only a short time before returning to Scotland where he died in a Poor House in Glasgow.

Peter and Margaret had a total of 13 children, seven boys and six girls. The youngest eight children were born in the new timber house. To give some history of this family I record the following. Peter started aggregating land in the Jacobs River Hundred from 1862 and purchased lots 42,43,55 and 56 in Block 10 and sections 9,20,24,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45 and 46 in Block 11. Records show he opened his first bank account with the National Bank of New Zealand, Riverton Branch, in 1874. Their family was as follows:

James (Jim) McNeill

He was the 1st born, in 1869. He died in 1954 at the age of 85. When he was old enough he left the farm at Thornbury and went contracting with a chaff cutter and threshing mill. He later leased a farm at North Makarewa. He married Elizabeth Clark in 1898. He was aged 29.



James and Elizabeth on their wedding day, 26th December 1898.



This photo shows the wedding of James and Elizabeth's eldest son, Norman, on the 6th July 1932. The best man on the right is Peter, Norman's brother, who in later years moved to Oriental Bay in Wellington and had a successful working life, marrying, (Mary McRae Gray) "Molly" from Invercargill and between them they had two daughters, Helen and Elizabeth. Molly was a relation of Peter's with her mother being a sister of his Grandmother, Margaret Mackenzie.

Laughlin (Laugh) McNeill

2nd son. He was born in 1871 and died on the 6th October, 1941, aged 70. They are interned at Riverton Cemetery. He never married. He purchased land from his father-sections 9, 20 and 38 in Block 11. He sold the above to his brother Bob so he could manage 42, 43 and 55 in Block 10 (which was known as "The Homestead" or "The Estate") for his mother.



Laughlin was a ploughing contractor and can be seen standing on the right with his horses.

Thomas A. McNeill

3rd son. Born in 1873. Died 10th August 1961, aged 88. He purchased the land from his father - sections 39, 45 and 46 in Block 11 and built a new house on the property in about 1900. The farm was known as "Terrace Range". He married Catherine Barbara Anderson in 1902. He farmed this property until selling to his son, Tom, in 1933. He was interned at Riverton Cemetery.

Peter McNeill

4th son. Born 1875. Died 1930 aged 54. He married Frances Christina Roy in 1913; Frances was born in 1886 and died in 1967. Peter worked as a blacksmith in shops around Southland before going to Wellington where he started an engineering business, in partnership with Mr Hamilton, on Waterloo Quay. They built it up to having over 30 staff. Peter died of blood poisoning after a piece of steel flew into his face. Peter and Frances had eight children.



Peter McNeill with the staff of Hamilton & McNeill engineering works. Peter is seated centre-front; Mr Hamilton (wearing glasses) is next to him on the left. Peter's son, Jack, is the boy sitting in front of him.



Photo taken in 2017 of Mr Hamilton's family stone in the Rutherglen Cemetery, East Glasgow.

Andrew Allan McNeill

5th son. Born 1876. Died 1956 aged 80.



He married Alexandrina McNeill on the Isle of Arran in 1919. She was born on Arran in 1888 to Allan McNeill and Mary Crawford and died in New Zealand in 1980 aged 92. Andrew took over part of his father's farm, sections 40, 43 and 44 in Block 11. Sections 41, 42 and 24 were sold to the Frasers. In 1916, at the age of 39, Andrew was enlisted in the New Zealand army, which saw the 1914-18 World War (WW1) against Germany. He served his country in Somme and Passchendaele, France. Before leaving he sold his property to the Baxter's.

NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
ATTESTATION FOR GENERAL SERVICE. *D 21st*

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT TO THE RECRUIT.

1. What is your name? ... *McNeill Andrew Allen*
2. Where were you born? ... *Shamberg, N.Z.*
3. Are you a British subject? ... *yes*
4. What is the date of your birth? ... *23/11/1876*
5. What are the names of your parents? ... *Father: Peter McNeill (deceased)
Mother: Margaret McNeill*
6. Where were your parents born? ... *Father: Brisbane, Scotland
Mother: Ross-shire, Scotland*
7. If your parents are of alien origin, when and where were they naturalized? ... *Father: (when) — (where) —
Mother: (when) — (where) —*
8. How long have you been resident in New Zealand? ... *All life*
9. How long have your parents been resident in New Zealand? ... *Father: about 63 years
Mother: " 59 "*
10. What is your trade or calling? ... *Farmer*
11. Are you an indentured apprentice? If so, where, and to whom? ... *No*
12. What was the address at which you last resided? ... *Shamberg*
13. Have you passed the Fourth Educational Standard or its equivalent? ... *yes*
14. What is the name and address of your present or last employer? ... *Self*
15. Are you single, married, widower, divorced, or legally separated from your wife? ... *no, single*
16. If married, a widower, divorced, or legally separated from your wife, how many children under sixteen years of age have you? ... *0*
17. If single, how many persons are absolutely dependent on you? ... *None*
18. Have you ever been sentenced to imprisonment by the Civil power? If so, when and where? ... *No*
19. Do you now belong to any Military or Naval Force? If so, to what corps? ... *No*
20. Have you ever served in any Military or Naval Force? If so, state which and cause of discharge. ... *No*
21. Have you truly stated the whole (if any) of your previous service? ... *Yes*
22. Have you ever been medically examined for service with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force? If so, when and where? ... *Yes, Rotorua, 1916. Sine operated on 2 hands R & L*
23. Have you been registered for compulsory military training under the Defence Act, 1909? If so, where? ... *No*
24. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for the Military or Naval Forces of the Crown? If so, on what grounds? ... *Yes, but operated on at Rotorua Hospital*
25. Are you willing to be vaccinated or to be vaccinated and inoculated? ... *No*
26. Are you willing to serve in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in or beyond the Dominion of New Zealand for the duration of the present war with Germany and six months thereafter, if your service is so long required? ... *Yes, but in the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force*
27. For which Reinforcement draft do you volunteer? ... *22nd Re-emp. Southland*

NOTE.—Your discharge will not be granted before your return to New Zealand unless permission for discharge elsewhere be obtained from the G.O.C. the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

I, *Andrew Allen McNeill*, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagement made.
 Signature of Recruit: *Andrew Allen McNeill*
 Signature of Witness: *John George Lint*

Oath to be taken by Recruit on attestation.
 I, *Andrew Allen McNeill*, do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to our Sovereign Lord the King, and that I will faithfully serve in the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces against His Majesty's enemies, and that I will loyally observe and obey all orders of the Generals and Officers set over me, until I shall be lawfully discharged. So help me, God.

Certificate of Attesting Officer.
 The above questions were read to the above-named recruit in my presence. I have taken care that he understands these questions, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered. The said recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath of allegiance before me, at *Araucan*, on this *11th* day of *October*, 191*6*.
 Signature of Attesting Officer: *John George Lint*

NOTE 1.—If any alteration is required on this page of the attestation, the Attesting Officer should be requested to make it and initial the alteration.
 NOTE 2.—The recruit expresses his preference to enlist for *22nd Re-emp.* (Branch of service.)

Andrew's enlistment Certificate, to join the New Zealand Army.

They did not make a success of it and the property came back into Andrew's hands. Andrew purchased a farm at Wrights Bush, between Invercargill and Riverton, and while there he built a well-boring or drilling machine. This was the beginning of the McNeill Drilling Company and their only son Allan continued to expand the business after the Second World War. In the early days it operated for some time out of Andrew's Sydney Street garage in Invercargill, where Andrew and Alexandrina had retired. This business continued until it was sold in 2019 after 100 years in the family.



Andrew McNeill and his first drilling rig, at Taramoa near Wrights Bush in 1933.



Second from left is Allan McNeill 1921-2018, only child of Andrew and Alexandrina. Andrew is standing to the right.

Robert McNeill

6th son. Born 1878. Died 26th March 1962 aged 83. He was interred at the Riverton Cemetery. He never married. Purchased property from his brother Laughlin, sections 9, 20 and 38 in Block 11 and farmed for a number of years. When Laughlin died, Robert sold his property to his nephew, Mitchell. He then managed the McNeill estate for his mother and later his sisters, Bessie and Kate.

Below is Robert's (Bob) enlistment application to join the New Zealand army and serve his country overseas in the First World War along with his other two brothers.

Form of attestation of voluntary recruits and of men called up for service under the Military Service Act, 1916, who are willing to be attested in this manner.



ORIGINAL Form No. 2

NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

ATTESTATION FOR GENERAL SERVICE.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT TO THE RECRUIT.

1. What is your name? ... 1. *Robert M. O'Neill*
2. Where were you born? ... 2. *Hambury New Zealand*
3. Are you a British subject? ... 3. *Yes*
4. What is the date of your birth? ... 4. *22-9-78*
5. What are the names of your parents? ... 5. Father: *Peter M. O'Neill*
Mother: *Margaret M. O'Neill*
6. Where were your parents born? ... 6. Father: *Scotland*
Mother: *Scotland*
7. If they are of alien origin, when and where were they naturalized? ... 7. Father: *Nil*
Mother: *Nil*
8. How long have you been resident in New Zealand? ... 8. *Since Birth*
9. How long have your parents been resident in New Zealand? ... 9. Father: *59 years*
Mother: *59 years*
10. What is your trade or calling? ... 10. *Farmer*
11. Are you an indentured apprentice? If so, where, and to whom? ... 11. *No*
12. What was the address at which you last resided? ... 12. *Hambury*
13. Have you passed the Fourth Educational Standard or its equivalent? ... 13. *Yes*
14. What is the name and address of your present or last employer? ... 14. *Self*
15. Are you single, married, widower, divorced, or legally separated from your wife? ... 15. *Single*
16. If married, a widower, divorced, or legally separated from your wife, how many children under sixteen years of age have you? ... 16. *Nil*
17. If single, how many persons are absolutely dependent on you? ... 17. *Nil*
18. Have you ever been sentenced to imprisonment by the Civil power? If so, when and where? ... 18. *No*
19. Do you now belong to any Military or Naval Force? If so, to what corps? ... 19. *No*
20. Have you ever served in any Military or Naval Force? If so, state which and cause of discharge. ... 20. *No*
21. Have you truly stated the whole (if any) of your previous service? ... 21. *Yes*
22. Have you ever been medically examined for service with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force? If so, when and where? ... 22. *1916. Duncargill*
23. Have you ever been registered for compulsory military training under the Defence Act, 1909? If so, where? ... 23. *Yes*
24. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for the Military or Naval Forces of the Crown? If so, on what grounds? ... 24. *Varicella + Tox.*
25. Are you willing to serve in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in or beyond the Dominion of New Zealand for the duration of the present war with Germany and six months thereafter, if your service is so long required? ... 25. *Yes*
26. For which Reinforcement draft do you volunteer? ... 26. *34th Reinforcements*

NOTE.—Your discharge will not be granted before you return to New Zealand unless permission for discharge elsewhere be obtained from the G.O.C. the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

I, *Robert M. O'Neill*, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagement made.

Signature of Recruit: *R. M. O'Neill*
Signature of Witness: *A. C. W. H. P. S. M.*

I, *Robert M. O'Neill*, do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to our Sovereign Lord the King, and that I will faithfully serve in the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces against His Majesty's enemies, and that I will loyally observe and obey all orders of the Generals and Officers set over me, until I shall be lawfully discharged. So help me, God.

Certificate of Attesting Officer.

The above questions were read to the above-named recruit in my presence. I have taken care that he understands these questions, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered. The said recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath of allegiance before me, at *Punerton*, N.Z., on this *Twenty-sixth* day of *June*, 191*7*.

Signature of Attesting Officer: *[Signature]*

NOTE 1.—If any alteration is required in the attestation, the Attesting Officer should be requested to do so and initial the alteration.

NOTE 2.—The recruit expresses a preference to enlist for *Infantry* (Branch of service.)

Henry McNeill

7th son. Born 1882. Died 20th June 1962 aged 80. He is interred at the Riverton Cemetery. He never married. Henry, like his older brother Andrew, also served his country in the First World War and left his home to join before him. He suffered for many years on his return from the effects of mustard gas received while he was in action in Europe. Shown below is Henry's attestation he made on his enlistment to serve in the artillery of the New Zealand army for active service overseas. He purchased section 56 in Block 10 from his father and farmed for a number of years. He sold the property to Mr Ian Fraser.



Seated is Andrew McNeill and standing to the right of him is Henry McNeill. It is not known who the other person is.

NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

ATTESTATION OF

No. _____ Name: McNeill, Henry Regiment or Unit: FANTRY

Questions to be put to the recruit before enlistment.

1. What is your name? ... Henry McNeill
2. Where were you born? ... Thornbury
3. Are you a British subject? ... Yes
4. What is the date of your birth? ... 15th August 1882
5. What is your trade or calling? ... Farmer
6. Are you an indentured apprentice? If so, where, and to whom? ... no
7. What was the address at which you last resided? ... Thornbury
8. Have you passed the Fourth Educational Standard or its equivalent? ... yes
9. What is the name and address of your present or last employer? ... Self.
10. Are you married? ... no
11. Have you ever been sentenced to imprisonment by the Civil power? If so, when and where? ... no
12. Do you now belong to any military or naval force? If so, to what corps? ... no
13. Have you ever served in any military or naval force? If so, state which and cause of discharge. ... no
14. Have you truly stated the whole (if any) of your previous service? ... no not liable
15. Have you been registered for compulsory military training under the Defence Act, 1909? If so, where? ... no not liable
16. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for the military or naval forces of the Crown? If so, on what grounds? ... no
17. Are you willing to be vaccinated or revaccinated and inoculated? ... yes
18. Are you willing to serve in the Expeditionary Force in or beyond the Dominion of New Zealand under the following conditions, provided your services should so long be required: For the term of the present European war and for such further period as is necessary to bring the Expeditionary Force back to New Zealand and to disband it? ... yes

NOTE.—Your discharge will not be granted before your return to New Zealand unless permission for discharge elsewhere be obtained from the G.O.C. the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

I, Henry McNeill, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagement made.

Signature of Recruit: Henry McNeill
Signature of Witness: R. E. Robertson

Henry McNeill do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to our Sovereign Lord the King, his Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully serve in the New Zealand Military Forces, according to my liability under the Defence Act, and that I will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me, until I shall be lawfully discharged. So help me, God.

Certificate of Magistrate or Attesting Officer.

The above questions were read to the above-named recruit in my presence. I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at Tranham, N.Z., on this 30 day of June, 1916

Signature of Attesting Officer: R. E. Robertson

If any alteration is required on this page of the Attestation, the Attesting Officer should be requested to make it and initial the alteration.

Jane McNeill

1st daughter. Born 1880. Died 1931 aged 49. She is interred at Isla Bank Cemetery. She married David Teviotdale, a farmer at Isla Bank, in 1908.

Margaret McNeill

2nd daughter. Born 1884. Died September 1916 aged 32. She is interred at Isla Bank (Calcium) Cemetery. She married William Henry Cochrane in 1909 and had two daughters, Lena and Louise. Farmed at Spring Bank between Isla Bank, Otahuti and Spar Bush. They purchased a property known as Spurhead near Edendale.

Mary McNeill

3rd daughter. Born 1886. Died 1943 aged 57. She married Arthur Williamson Clark in 1911 and they farmed at Wrights Bush. There were no children from the marriage.

Helen Jessie (Lena) McNeill

4th daughter. Born 1889. Died 1948 aged 59. She is interred at the Riverton Cemetery. She married Albert John (Jack) Haywood in 1926 and they farmed at Thornbury, across Baxter Road from the old McNeill house. There were no children from the marriage.

Elizabeth McBride (Bessie) McNeill

5th daughter. Born 1892. Died 9th May 1976 aged 84. She is interred at the Riverton Cemetery. She never married. Bessie and her sister Catherine (Kate) bought the "Estate Property" from the family estate, being sections 42, 43 and 55. They farmed this for a number of years with the help of their brother Robert. The property was later sold to Mr Ron Lindsay.

Catherine (Kate) McNeill

6th daughter. Born 1894. Died 9th May 1970. She is interred at the Riverton Cemetery. She never married. Kate, Bessie, Bob and Henry all retired to Avenal Street, Invercargill.



Helen (Lena) Henry and Kate

The Family of Thomas A. McNeill.



Thomas can be seen standing in the back ground. He was a sheep farmer.



Tom and Catherine raised five children on the farm at Thornbury as this photo shows

Phyllis, the eldest child, was born 4th Sept 1903 but, unfortunately she died on the 3rd of June 1922, aged 18 of meningitis and is interned at Riverton Cemetery. Phyllis took over the housekeeping duties when her mother died in 1918. Her brother remembers that she did the washing on Monday and was buried on Thursday.

The first son was Laughlin Peter McNeill (also known as Lin), born in 1905, he worked on his father's farm and, with his next-youngest brother Tom, born 1908, he bought their Uncle Andrew's farm after the Second World War, being sections 39, 45 and 46 in Block 11. Laughlin died in 1944 and Tom died in 1992, Tom was unmarried. Laughlin was married to Myrtle Cook.



Mitchell Henry McNeill, born 1910, the third son, bought his uncle's farm in 1933, being sections 9, 20 and 38 in Block 11 and after his death, in 1966 in a road accident, at the age of 56; the farm was taken over by his son Tom.

The youngest son, Cecil Robert (Bob) McNeill, born 1912, after leaving school and doing farm contracting work, purchased a Bedford truck and began Thornbury Transport. After expanding the business he sold it to his brother Lin in 1935 and purchased the Waianiwa garage and service station from J.K. Stevenson. This included the local school bus contracting business. Bob drove the Waianiwa school bus for almost 50 years. He died in April 2012, aged 99.



The new timber house at Thornbury

Although the house is no longer on the site, some parts of the house have been incorporated into Robert (Bob) McNeill's modern home on the outskirts of Invercargill. Some of the materials include: kauri doors with original door handles, etched glass, totara tongue and groove lining, fire place surround bricks, totara veranda poles, some tools from the smithy, farm hay knife (patent applied 1871) and our Great Grandmother's smoothing iron.

Also recovered was part of the original cow byre with mortise and tenon joints and held together with wooden pegs, as in ship building.



The McNeill family at Thornbury about 1900. Back row (L to R): Robert, Mary, Laughlin, Jean, Thomas, Margaret. Front row (L to R): Henry, Bessie, Margaret (mother), Kate, Peter (father), Lena, Andrew. Absent: James and Peter.

With such a large family, every child had a job to do; daughter Kate went by horseback each day to pick up the mail which would take quite a number of hours. Another would milk the cow. A number of the children went to a little school (no longer in existence) at a place called Flints Bush which was almost at the end of their road.

Peter had a mixed farm on which he would grow crops and run livestock. In good years he was able to produce oats for export, these oats were taken by draft horse and timber cart to the port of Riverton for shipment to Melbourne, Australia. This was made possible because Melbourne was booming with the Gold rush and an influx of large numbers of new settlers.

Peter was one of the first district Councillors of Wallace County and we see he was active in the early development of the area.

Excerpts from the Southland Times

Papers Past — Southland Times — 17 February 1895 — Wallace County Council. Page 2 of 4

Wallace County Council

MONDAY, 12TH FEBRUARY.

The monthly meeting was attended by all the councillors.

Capt. Stevens was unanimously re-elected to represent the Council on the Bluff Harbour Board.

George Harrington, Fairfax, called attention to the necessity of graveling road at old brick kiln and leading to their sawmill, and also requested leave to lay a tramway along the side of the road by the kiln belonging to W. P. Smith.—Request granted.

J. Salton again called attention to the state of the ford at Woodburn creek.—Councillor Forde stated that he had arranged to get the repairs required executed.

Peter Allen wrote requesting payment for land taken for a road.—The survey not being completed the matter was held over.

James Scoullar, Moseburn, called attention to an alteration of road through his land—which was proposed some time ago but not yet carried out. He pointed out that it would be a great convenience to the settlers above him who now went through his land as well as to himself, and that the road would be made at less cost on the proposed line than on the surveyed road.—The engineer recommended that the exchange should be carried out, and it was resolved that he make an estimate of the cost of making a road on the surveyed line and on the proposed line of road.

* Peter McNeil, Thorabury, complained of the neglected state of the road to his farm.—Councillor Hamilton stated that he had engaged a man to attend to the repairs required.

J. R. Stuck wrote that he had lifted the pipes in the outfall referred to in his last letter, and asked leave to lower the culvert and put it in properly and to be allowed part of the cost of the work.—Referred to the engineer with power to act.

Leave was granted to Wm. Templeton to erect two swing gates on roads in Hodgkinson.

John M. Crawford sent in his resignation as poundkeeper at Orepuki as he was obliged to go to Victoria for a change.—Accepted with regret.

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About this newspaper View computer-generated text

FLINTS BUSH.

The Committee for the ensuing year are Messrs P. McNeil (chairman), John S. Brown (secretary and treasurer), John McIntyre, James Fallow, Wm. Hamilton, Alex. Millar, and James R. Turnbull.

Papers Past — Southland Times — 23 November 1888 — Wallace County Council. Page 2 of 7

Wallace County Council.

THURSDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER.

The monthly meeting of the Council was attended by the Chairman (Mr W. Johnston) and Councillors Bastian, Mackinnon, Walker, Littleton, McIntyre, Hamilton, and McPetersen.

The Southland Land Board wrote acknowledging the Council's reply relative to the expenditure of deferred payment moneys, and thanking them for answering their enquiries so fully.—Received.

Wm. Bastian offered his services as dog-tax collector for the Mararoa riding.—Accepted.

Susan Hopcroft was granted permission to erect a verandah in front of her house at Oteke.

O. D. McDonald wrote stating that he had lost a valuable horse through the bad state of the road leading to the Woodlaw siding.—It was resolved, on the motion of Councillor Littleton, to inform the writer that while sympathising with him in his loss, the Council could not grant him any compensation.

George Howell protested, by letter, against certain contracts for cutting tracks in the Longwood district having been let to other persons, he being the lowest tenderer.—Received.

The Hospital and Charitable Aid Board's application for the contribution of the second quarter of the Council for the current year was granted.

Peter McNeil, of Flint's Bush, wrote asking the Council to take steps to have a road at the Yellow Bluff properly defined and the obstructions on the correct road-line removed.—Referred to the Engineer.

Peter died 12th June 1915 in his 82nd year and is interred at the Riverton Cemetery along with his wife Margaret who lived to be 86 and died 1st January 1935. Peter and Margaret left behind many descendants who continued farming after them in the area up until recent times and there are still McNeill's living in the province of Southland today.



Left, Allan McNeill, Peter's grandson, right Bob (Robert) McNeill, Peter's great grandson. Photo taken in 2011.



Peter and Margaret's gravestone in Riverton Cemetery. Two of their unmarried children are included on the stone. Note the spelling of the surname that was used at that time.

267. **McNIELL.** In loving memory of Peter McNiell beloved husband of Margaret McNiell and youngest son of the late Robert McNiell Ballyenack Glen, Arran, Bateshire, Scotland who died at Thornbury June 12th 1915 in his 82nd year; also Margaret wife of Peter McNiell died 1 January 1935 aged 86 years; also their second son Laughlin McNiell died 6 October 1941 aged 70 years; also their daughter Catherine May McNiell died 9 May 1970 aged 75 years.
Sacred to the memory of the infant son of Peter McNiell also Robert McNiell died 26 March 1962 in his 84th year; and Henry McNiell died 20 June 1962 in his 80th year.



