

Charles Towsey of Henley upon Thames in the County of Wexford Gentleman

Mary Harriet Sparks

H. B. Moorhouse

W. Towsey

Just. Henley

Henley on Thames

Edw. Towsey

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TOWSEY TALES

NAME: William Charles Towsey

BIRTH DETAILS: March - June 1846 Henley-on-Thames

DEATH DETAILS: 30 March 1908 Devonport, Tasmania

CHART REF: Towsey Chart B7 & B1

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 13 October 1869 St.Pauls, Dunedin, NZ

SPOUSE: Annie Jones (widow, nee Watson)

William Charles was the first child of Charles Augustus and Mary Harriet Towsey.

We have no record of where he was educated but, unlike his next two younger brothers, who both attended a music college in Worcestershire, it is more likely that William was educated locally at Henley and, although he competently played the cello (and, according to the photo below, the viola), his education seems to have been more general. This assumption is based on his occupations as a postmaster and then as a bank manager.

The next we hear of William Charles, is the census of 1861 when, as a 15 years old student, he was staying with his great aunt, Susanna Terry at 67 Bell Street. This was not long after his father had been declared bankrupt with their house up the road being surrendered. For a period of time, the family do seem to have scattered about a bit and the fact that William is shown as a student and living in Henley, adds weight to the idea that he was educated locally. Also, over the coming years, William's mother, Mary Harriet Towsey, inherited a number of legacies from various relatives, through which she was able to give her younger children a better education, but this might not have been feasible during William's student years.

William Charles Towsey probably arrived in New Zealand a year or so earlier than his brothers, Arthur and Edward in 1866. At the time of their arrival in Dunedin, he was living at Napier in the Hawkes Bay area, on the south eastern coast of the north island.

William was by then, a member of the local militia; The Napier Rifle Volunteers, seeing active service over a two day period in October, 1866.

At the start of that month, word reached the authorities in Napier, that a large band of Maori warriors had come down from further north and assembled at a pa (a Maori defensive fortress), in Oamaru, thirteen miles from Napier, from whence they intended to attack the town.

The militia were called up on the 8th, for three days of drill, which no doubt involved teaching the new recruits how to handle the muzzle-loading rifles that they had at their disposal.

On the evening of the 11th, nearly two hundred volunteers, in several companies, accompanied by an equal number of friendly native troops, marched out of Napier, each company being sent on its way with three rousing cheers from the local residents.

It should be borne in mind, that the Maori fighters accompanying the militia, were not lackeys of the white colonialists. They were in fact, warriors of the local tribes, who resented the arrival of militant trouble-makers on their lands.

By morning, the militia had arrived at and surrounded the pa at Oamaru. They raised a white flag and sent someone out to convince the rebels to surrender.

An hour of negotiation achieved nothing, so the white flag was replaced by the Union Jack and the order given to attack. Moving forward and taking up positions, each company strafed the pa with repeated volleys of enfilading fire.

This was a drill that was popular before the invention of automatic weapons made continuous fire possible. It took some time to pour gunpowder into the barrel of a musket, followed by some wadding and a lead ball, all of which had to be rammed down. A bit more powder was then poured into the firing pan, into which either a smouldering cord or, by that time, a spark from a flint was directed by squeezing the trigger. If each soldier was firing in his own time, the enemy would be confronted by a line of men from whom the occasional pop of gunpowder would be heard.

A far greater psychological impact could be achieved by having everyone loaded at the same time, then the soldier at one end would fire. The man next to him would then do the same and so on down the line, so that the enemy was confronted by a far more dramatic cacophony lasting for thirty seconds or so.

On this occasion though, the band of rebels was not intimidated and the commander ordered a frontal attack on the pa. The Maoris either determined that the game was up or, just as likely, had decided in advance, that they would surrender if attacked in this way. As soon as the charge started, a white flag quickly rose above the pa.

Two militiamen were killed and on the other side, twenty one died with many wounded. The prisoners were marched back to Napier before being imprisoned on the Chatham Islands.

Although this was the end of William's military adventure, it was not the end of the story, because the prisoners escaped two years later and joined the famous rebel leader, Te Kooti in a massacre of settlers at Poverty Bay.

William moved south to the settlement of Waikouaiti, 26 miles north of Dunedin, where he became postmaster, some time before the end of 1868.

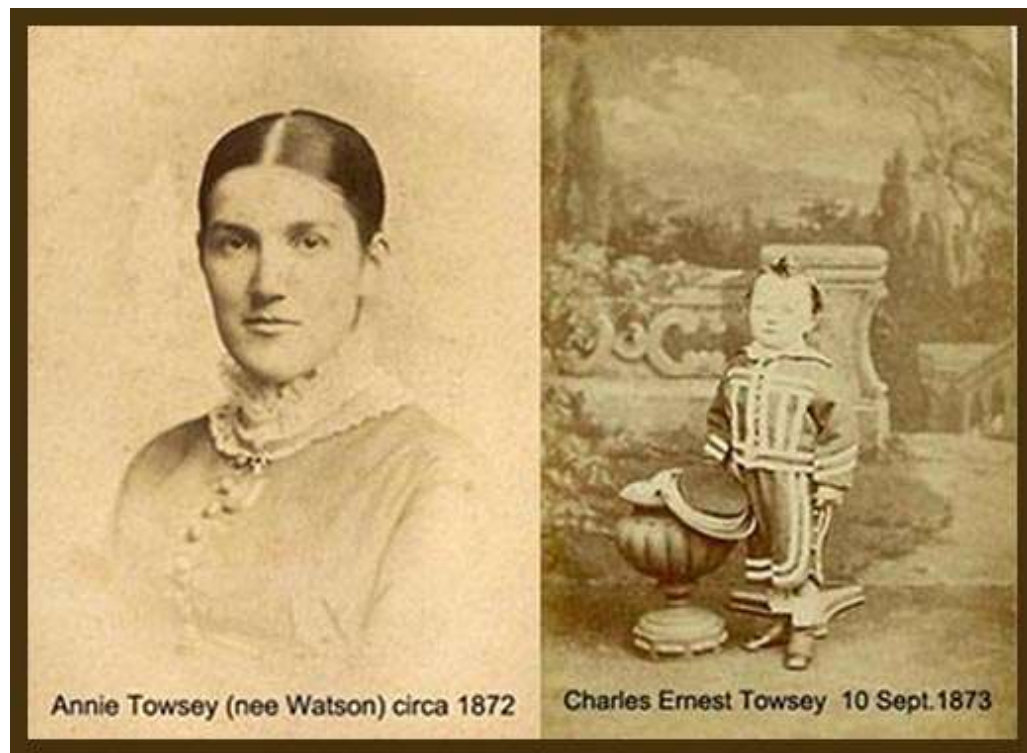
Waikouaiti was in fact, the first settlement in that area, starting off as a base for whaling operations by Johnny Jones, who had come over from Sydney and built a fleet of whaling ships and a number of settlements along the south east coast to service that fleet.

As the price of whale oil dropped, he put more effort into developing other profitable businesses, particularly trading ships, but also the settlements at Waikouaiti and down the coast at Dunedin, the rapid expansion of which was aided by the arrival of large numbers of Scottish migrants.

Johnny Jones had many children, but seems to have ended up with just a couple of sons to share his estates in New Zealand.

His son, Albert Sydney Jones, married Annie Watson, originally from Durham in England, the daughter of Reverend John Watson. Their daughter, Elizabeth Sarah Jones, was born on 4th March, 1867, at the Jones home, Cherry Farm at Waikouaiti. Five months later, Albert died, at the age of just twenty five.

Johnny Jones was still alive at that time and Annie and Elizabeth stayed on at Cherry Farm.



Annie Towsey (nee Watson) circa 1872

Charles Ernest Towsey 10 Sept. 1873

Johnny Jones died in March of 1869, leaving a large and complex estate. The large farm at Waikouaiti, and presumably other property, was divided between his granddaughter Elizabeth and one other relative. Then, seven months later, on 13th October, 1869, Annie married William Charles Towsey at St.Pauls in Dunedin.

Perhaps the timing is coincidental, but perhaps also there was some change in the atmosphere at Cherry Farm after the passing of Jonny Jones who, despite being a volatile, autocratic businessman, was also good with children and a proper gentleman with women.

It is most likely that William did not move onto

Cherry Farm and, as Annie was no longer an integral part of the Jones family, decided that the best way out was to marry William who was, after all, a proper English gentleman, rather than one of those nouveau-riche colonials.

1785

NEW ZEALAND COLONIAL FORCES.

Form of Application for the New Zealand War Medal.

Name and Address of Claimant.	William Charles Towsey, Waikouaiti Stage, N.Z. late of Napier Volunteer Coy.
Corps in which served; rank, and period of service; regimental number, if any.	Volunteers (Napier)
Period of service in the field; place and date when the claimant was actually under fire (specifying any distinguished service).	1000 Days 12 th 13 th (both) 1866 — Amaramui —
Remarks.	Admitted 5/11/72

I, the undersigned, make application for the New Zealand War Medal, and hereby declare that the above particulars are true.

Dated at _____ this _____ day of _____ 187 _____

I hereby certify that the above-mentioned was actually under fire (or conspicuously distinguished himself) on the date specified, and is entitled to the New Zealand War Medal, in accordance with the Resolution of the House of Representatives dated 1st September, 1869.

W. W. Williamson Capt. Commanding
Napier Rifle Volunteer Corp.

J. A. Mathews Major
Commanding N.Z. Rifle District.

Note.—In the event of the Officer Commanding the Corps or District being dead, or out of the Colony, the certificate can be signed by another Officer or Justice of the Peace, who must be able to testify to the truth of the statement made by the applicant.
This form, when properly filled up, must be addressed to the Acting Under Secretary for Defence, Wellington.

17 Feb. W. C. Towsey
Waikouaiti

Application for the War Medal
Waikouaiti Stage, N.Z.
Feb. 6th 1872

W. W. Williamson
Sent a form of
application 1/11/72
W. C. Towsey
letter re 12/2 1/12/72

Sir, I find on reference to
your gazette of 31. 10/71
that I am entitled to the
New Zealand War Medal as I
was in action with the
Napier Volunteers under Captain
Bushman at the taking of
Taranaki in the year 1869.

I have therefore the honor
to request that you will kindly
cause me to be provided with
the same.

I have the honor to be
Sir,
Your Obedt. Servant
W. C. Towsey
Waikouaiti

Waikouaiti Stage, 6.2.72

Dear Sir,

I have only just found out that as I was serving with the Napier volunteers at the taking of Taranaki, I am entitled to a war medal.

As it asking you too much if I ask you to be kind enough to get one for me, as I am very anxious to have one.

I have written to the Hon. the Defence Minister but fear that as my application is so late I shall not get it awarded to. — Had things I have written to ask this from you.

I am dear Sir,
Yours faithfully
W. C. Towsey

Waikouaiti
Sept. 29th 72

Dear Mr. Cooper

Will you think me very troublesome if I ask you to be so kind as to let me know if it is possible to get the N.Z. Medal which has been awarded to me before I leave New Zealand. I am going to Melbourne at the beginning of November and shall pass through Wellington on my way there.

I heard you were one of the

Commissioners, if so would you kindly give orders in the office for mine to be engraved so that I might get it if I called at the office when in Wellington.

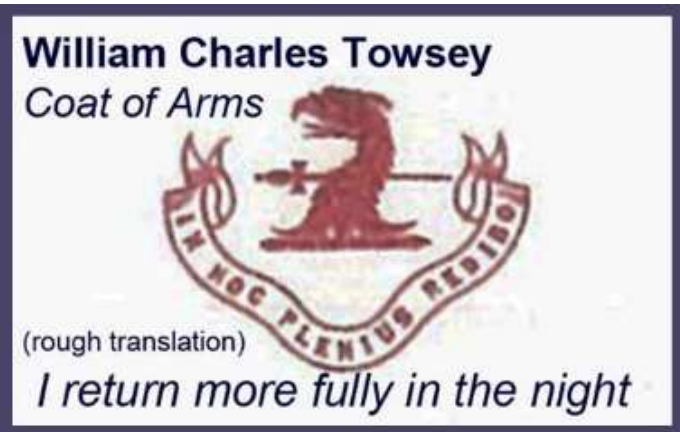
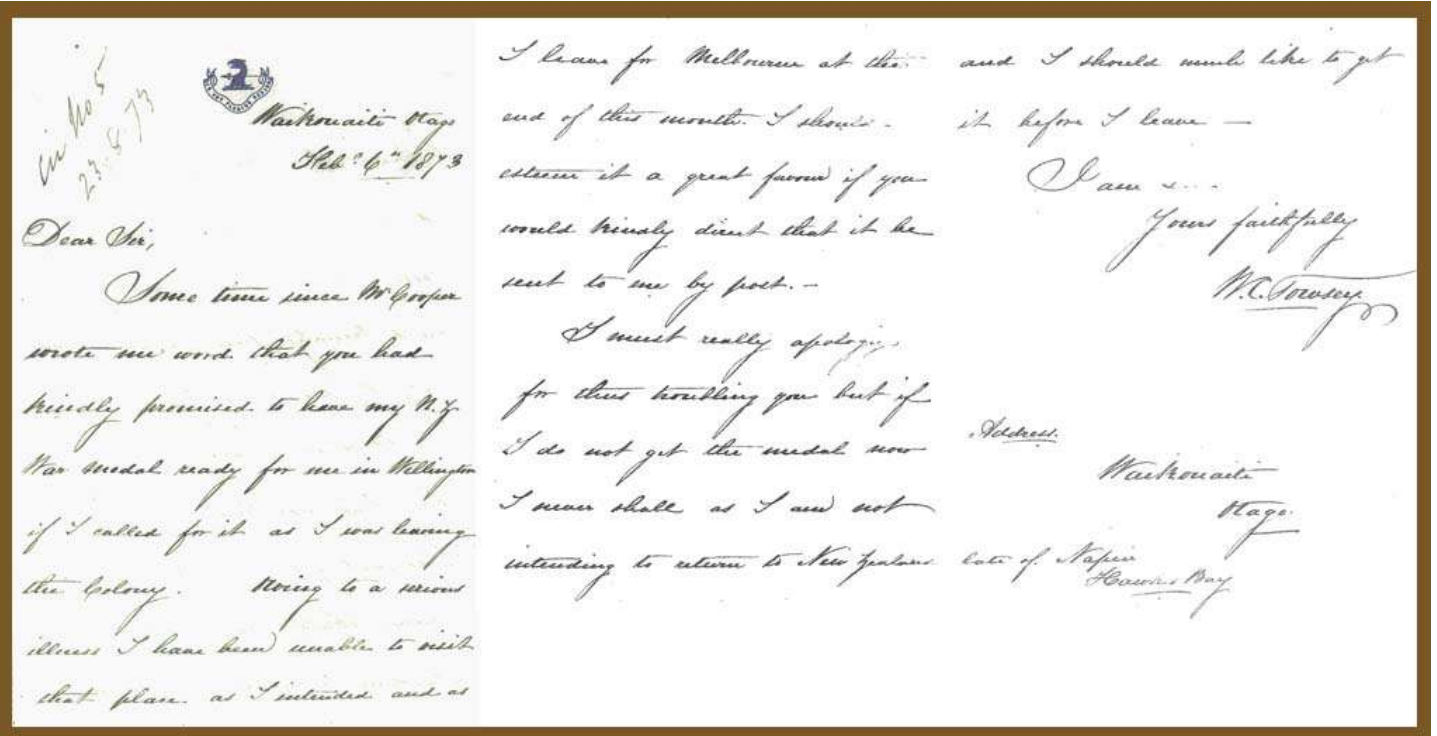
I would not thus trouble you but if I leave N.Z. without it I shall never get it.

With kind regards to
Mr. Cooper
Believe me
Yours faithfully
W. C. Towsey

William and Annie's first son, Charles Ernest Towsey, was born in 1870. They also had one daughter, Mary Isabel, born in August 1872. At this time the family were still living in Waikouaiti, and William Charles is listed as a

"Gentleman".

They planned to move to Melbourne in early November, 1872, but delayed the departure due to William being ill, and so as to attend the wedding of William's younger brother, Edward, on 10th December. William finally sailed for Melbourne of 26th December and sent back to 'Uncle Arthur', the above photo of Charles Ernest, taken on 10th September 1873. (Ugly little spud! And, who dreamt up that outfit!?).

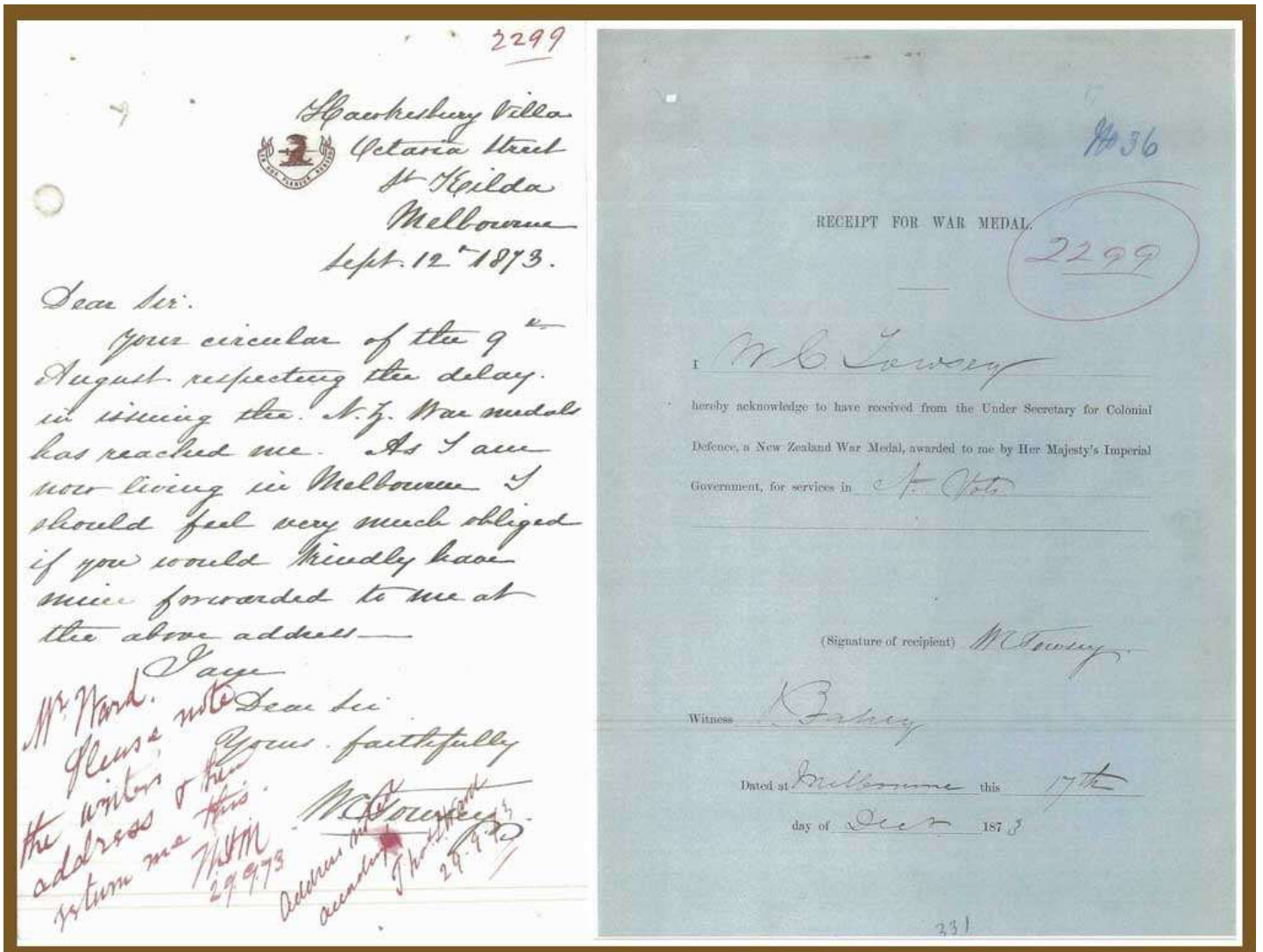


These letters, written by William in 1872 and 1873, detail the efforts to which he had to go, to receive the medal to which he was entitled for his service in the Maori Wars.

William and Annie's last child, who died young, was Cyril Stanley Towsey, born in 1878 in the Melbourne suburb of Prahran, where they stayed until 1880, when William took up a new position as manager of the National Bank in South Melbourne. At that time they moved to 24 Arthur Street, South Yarra.

There are no records of Annie's daughter, Elizabeth Jones being with them, though there is at least one ship's passenger list that shows, next to Mrs. Towsey with two children, a Miss Jones. We also have a photo of Annie in Melbourne, in about 1887.





Annie Towsey 1889

Lists of arriving and departing ship's passengers were always displayed in the newspapers, but annoyingly never gave Christian names of the passengers. Some passenger lists from the ships themselves, which do usually show these names, are kept in various records offices, but these are not complete.

There is no indication that Annie inherited any of the large Jones fortune, but it could well be that Jonny Jones had given Annie something before he died.

It may well be that Elizabeth, as heiress to a sizeable fortune, spent a good part of her childhood at Cherry Farm with the rest of the Jones family, awaiting the day when she would come of age and take control of her inheritance, whilst also visiting her mother in Melbourne from time to time. It is also reasonable to assume that Elizabeth would have been sent to England to complete her education.

Annie Towsey left William in Melbourne and took the children back to Dunedin at the start of 1887.

Annie's presence in Dunedin coincided with a case in the Supreme Court, to settle a discrepancy in the will of her late husband's father, which would affect the amount of land that now belonged to her daughter, Elizabeth Jones. Annie gave evidence in the case.

In 1887, Annie and the children were staying in a house on the corner of Arthur and Russell Streets, Dunedin.

On Tuesday, June 21st, 16 year-old Charles wanted to go shooting rabbits with his pea rifle, but was put off by the wet weather, so he put the rifle back in its usual position, above the clothes pegs in his bedroom.

Next morning at about eight o'clock, his sister Mary called for him to get up. Charles called back "all right!"

A few minutes later, a heavy thud was heard in Charles's room. Mary went in to see what had happened and saw him lying on the floor next to the bed with his rifle beside him and a bullet wound in his right eye. He would have died instantaneously.

As far as they could ascertain, it appears that when Charles put the rifle away the day before, he had neglected to unload it. When he reached up to pull his clothes down in the morning, the rifle fell and discharged. The jury at the inquest returned a verdict of accidental death.

At the end of that year, Mary Isabel Towsey won the writing prize in her class at school.

In March of 1888, Elizabeth Jones turned twenty one and came into her inheritance, which the newspapers estimated to be about forty nine thousand pounds which, at that time, would have been the equivalent of being a multi millionaire today.

Two months later, on 3rd May 1888, Elizabeth married George Edward Featherston Schultze, the son of a prominent family from Wellington.

The proximity of this wedding to Elizabeth's coming of age, possibly indicates some sort of plan on her part to quickly take full control of her estate away from her previous guardians.

Mr. And Mrs. George Schultze are shown in October of that year, as boarding an express train from Albury, on the New South Wales, Victoria border, going down to Melbourne. In those days, when travelling from Sydney to

Melbourne, it was necessary to change trains at the border, owing to different track gauges. The reason that the Australian colonies deliberately built rail networks of different gauges, was primarily the result of petty inter-colonial rivalry. They did not build a Standard Gauge line between Melbourne and Sydney until the 1960s.

This trip must have been the Schultze's honeymoon.

It is clear from newspaper articles in the years soon after, that Mr and Mrs Schultze were fully living the life of Dunedin society. There are a number of reports in the society columns of drag hunting parties at Cherry Farm. This is the same as fox hunting with a pack of dogs, except that because there were no foxes in New Zealand, they would drag the carcass of some dead animal over a predetermined course, then the dogs, followed by what seems to have been a large, disorganized pack of boisterous riders, would charge over a dozen or so specifically erected hedges, finishing with much merriment at Cherry Farm, where toasts were drunk to the health of Mr and Mrs Schultze.

There are other reports in the society pages of what Mrs Schultze was wearing at formal evenings and several references to race horses that she owned.

It would appear that Elizabeth Schultze lived to about 1924.

At the end of 1888, Annie Towsey was still in Dunedin, when her husband put an advertisement in the

local paper, stating that as she had left the family home, without his permission, taking his only remaining child with her, then he would not be responsible for any debts that she incurred.

This was a standard procedure at that time, by which a husband would remove himself from financial responsibility for a wife who had walked out of the marriage.

We know that Annie was still in New Zealand in 1889, when the above photos were taken at the Exhibition.

She and her daughter, Mary Isabel Towsey, were also still in Auckland in July 1890, when they attended a "musical soiree, attended by a large and fashionable audience", at which "Mrs. W. Towsey wore a black silk and claret plush opera cloak; Miss Towsey, white opera cloak".



William though, was not just sitting about pining during his wife's absence. It is obvious that he was actively involved in Melbourne life, as demonstrated by, what to us now, seems like a rather quaint lecture that he organized, to help allay the fears of the populace about the coming of electric lighting.

At that time, people knew very little about electricity and one fear, based on the experience of gas lighting, was that if you were to break a light bulb, then the electricity would leak out all over the floor and electrocute you:

THE ARGUS, Thurs. 4th July 1889

In the PRESENCE of HIS EXCELLENCY
Sir William Robinson G.C.M.G

**ELECTRIC LIGHT
ELECTRIC LIGHT
ELECTRIC LIGHT**

On THURSDAY 4th JULY
A LECTURE

Will be delivered in the Melbourne Town hall on the above subject by His Grace the Most Rev Dr CARR Archbishop of Melbourne. The Right Worshipful the Mayor Sir Benjamin Benjamin Kt. will preside. The lecture will be Illustrated by experiments. The proceeds will be in aid of St Joseph's Home for Destitute Children

Tickets: - Balcony 2s. Body of Hall 1s, at Allan's, Glen's, Kings and Stanley's or at the door.

W C TOWSEY Hon Sec

and for his repertoire of comic songs, usually performed in an appropriate costume.

On one occasion, in 1896, he took part in a street parade through Sale, dressed as Father Christmas, with his helpers throwing mock snowballs at the crowd.

It was at that time, that Britain had withdrawn most of its troops from the Australian colonies, precipitating the formation of various volunteer militias, including the Victorian Mounted Rifles, in which William was a volunteer during his years in Sale. He also helped to organize a number of fund raising concerts for the regiment, in which there was a predominance of uplifting military songs as well as displays of prowess with dumbbells. There were also infantry sword, cavalry sword and bayonet exercises performed.

A newspaper report of one such concert noted that: "every member who could sing a note at all was pressed into the service and had to face the battery of those thousands of eyes, and a good many of them appeared to be glad to retreat once they had discharged their obligation."

William was reposted to the National Bank, St.Kilda, in Melbourne, in February 1898.

At some point, Annie Towsey did return to her husband, William Charles. As there are no references to her participation in

In October 1889, William Charles moved down to Sale, which is a town in the Gippsland region in the south east of Victoria. He went there as manager of the National Bank.

William quickly became involved in many aspects of the life of Sale. He was treasurer of the Gippsland Hospital and eventually president of the Gippsland Hospital Management Committee. He was also a member of the Sale Horticultural Society, of the Committee of the Philharmonic Society of Sale, the committee of the Sale Coursing Club, the North Gippsland Agricultural Society and even on one occasion won a prize in a dog show for a fox terrier.

There are many references over the years, to William's involvement in fundraising events, mainly for the hospital. Apart from his organizational abilities, he was also commended for his musical accomplishments, as a cellist in various ensembles

The Gippsland Times.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1898

The steamboat excursion to Lake Wellington under the auspices of the Sale detachment V.M.R was well patronized on Thursday evening last. The occasion was taken advantage of to present Mr. W.C.Towsey, who is leaving the district, with a silver mounted riding whip, suitably inscribed. In making the presentation. Captain Borthwick remarked there was general regret amongst his fellow comrades at Mr.Towsey's departure, as he had always been looked upon as one of their best men. Mr.Towsey had seen active service in New Zealand and had always taken a foremost part in all social matters connected with the local corps. In reply Mr.Towsey said he was sorry to leave so many friends. He had been residing in the district eight or nine years and had spent some of the happiest days of his life in Sale. However, he trusted that he had not seen the last of his friends here, as it was his intention to pay a visit at the earliest opportunity.

any of the social events in which William was involved in Sale, it is more likely that she returned after he moved back to Melbourne, in 1898.

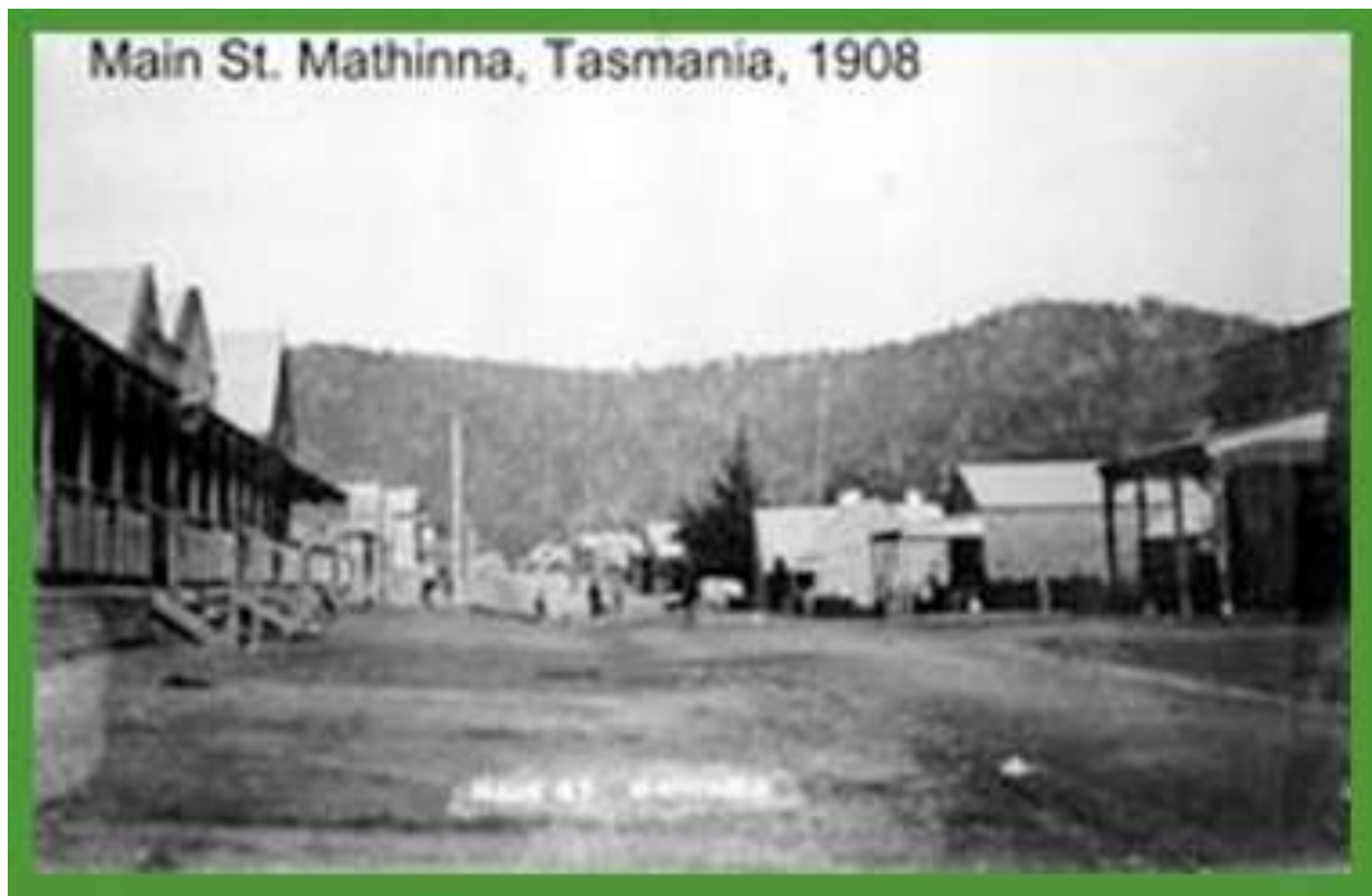
We know that Annie and Mary Isabel arrived in Sydney from New Zealand, aboard the S.S. Elingamite on 20th October, 1894. They may well have stayed in Dunedin until 1894, or their arrival in Sydney on that occasion might have been returning after a visit back to New Zealand. We do know though, that Annie and Mary were living at High Street, North Sydney, three months later, when Mary Isabel Towsey, married John Low (also spelt 'Lowe'), on 3rd January, 1895. He is shown as being an Assistant Purser, with his address being the steamship Mararoa, moored that day at Sydney's Margaret Street Wharf. Annie Towsey was a witness at the wedding and Mary's occupation is shown as 'Gentlewoman'.

Mary had a daughter, Dorothy Sydney Bell Lowe, also in 1895. It would be interesting to see if Dorothy was born after September. If she was born in about July, then we could assume that Mary and John Low had met aboard the Elingamite and that John Low had been whisked off the Mararoa during a stopover in Sydney and rushed up to the Church of Christ in Elizabeth Street, to 'do the right thing'.

I do not know why Mary and Annie had moved to Sydney, except that it would have been a more interesting place to live than boring Dunedin.

In 1899, after a quarter of a century of counting other people's money and listening to their financial problems, William opted for a more ethereally inclined clientele. He joined the Church of England and he and Annie moved to Tasmania, firstly as a church official near Launceston, then moved to Hobart where he trained as a minister, in which capacity he moved back up north to Mathinna in 1904.

Mathinna became established as a gold mining centre, shortly after gold was discovered in the area in the 1890s. The Golden Gate Mine in Mathinna, was one of Tasmania's highest-yield gold mines. At its peak in the late 1890s, the town sustained a population of over 5,000, including a large number of Chinese miners, making it the third largest town in Tasmania at the time.



From the many newspaper reports on William's activities, it would seem that he played an active and practical part in many aspect of the development of the young community at Mathinna. No doubt his years as a bank manager had given him many practical skills and he appears to have been well liked and respected amongst the parishioners.

Mary Isabel and John Lowe had a son, Stanley Cyril Lowe, in 1897. I have not found a record of his birth, but it could have been in Tasmania, where the Lowes settled, near to William and Annie. We know that Stanley attended Devonport Grammar School in Tasmania and that Dorothy won a prize in her final year, also in Devonport.

Maybe it was the pioneering spirit, or something restless that Mary Isabel had inherited from her mother, but by April of 1906, she seems to have been thoroughly tired of the quiet life of a small Tasmanian town. She had obviously also become tired of her husband. Could it be that the problems of marrying 'below her station' had become increasingly irritating once the flush of initial romance had worn off?

Perhaps because her mother had left her father for many years, Mary thought that she could do the same without repercussions. It can be easy to rationalize one's fantasies at times of stress.

Mary left her family in Tasmania and sailed to Melbourne, no doubt breathing in the sea air and feeling the thrill of her new freedom with each additional mile of ocean between the ship and her old, stifling life in boring little Tasmania. Some days later, she was joined in the rented house in the Melbourne suburb of Carlton, by an accountant from Tasmania named Hugh Eyeton.

After about a week of this new-found freedom, Mary received a letter from an unspecified member of her family in Tasmania, condemning her wickedness. This had a profound effect on Mary. Perhaps, within the context of the rigid code of acceptable behaviour in that Edwardian society, the harshness of the criticism snapped her out of her romantic reverie, shining a harsh light on her stark choices: live as a social outcast or return to the guilt and condemnation of her family and the frowns and whispers of Tasmania's small society.

Perhaps in view of her miserable options, Mary either chose a final act of defiance or sank into dark despair.

On April 25th, whilst Eyeton was out of the house, Mary took his revolver out of the drawer, put it up to her forehead and pulled the trigger. She was taken to the hospital where she died a day later.

It seems that Stanley and Dorothy were then brought up by Annie Towsey, their grandmother.

Two years after Mary's suicide, at 62 years of age, William Charles Towsey died of a heart attack. After that, Annie moved the short distance to Devonport.

This article appeared a week later in the Launceston Examiner newspaper –

LATE REV. W. C. TOWSEY AN APPRECIATION.

Just a week ago there was laid to rest at Devonport the mortal remains of the Rev. W. C. Towsey. It is right that one should voice the feeling of the Church of England, and, I believe the community at large in Mathinna, on the noble work given by this man in his first and last cure. Not every day, nor every year, are men found who at sixty years of age undertake the severe examination for holy orders, and, having failed once, strive on again undaunted. That at once marks a brave man, a man moved deeply to a purpose, and one who has confidence that there is work and use for all-even at the eleventh hour. And so four years ago Mr. Towsey came to Mathinna to live, alone and with not a few privations, working ever with true singleness of heart for the good of all. A most humble man, yet ever fearless in denouncing what was wrong, often standing out alone to do so. Many and severe were the troubles this man suffered, and yet he was always cheery and bright, and always encouraging others. And to the sick-well, how many others can testify? And how many more, also, who do not know how the man who visited them had himself risen from a bed of sickness? Again, perhaps, a lad laid up with an accident can tell how an old man rode out weekly six miles into the bush to teach him to read. And how the folk at Tower Hill settlement looked forward to his coming and his bright, yet earnest, exhortation. Yes, Mathinna now knows that a good man has been living amongst them these past years, and he will not be forgotten. The seed has been too well sown. Unconsciously the company of a man always wearing a brave face, always living with an unselfish motive in view, that of striving to alleviate distress and to help all to do what is right, affects the lives of others. To raise and to point onward, above the many pettinesses that occupy so many lives, to something nobler-that was Mr. Towsey's thought and care, and I who write know many know beyond all doubt many-who have learned to realize what a noble thing is an upright, courageous, and: unselfish life, and to see through it to the source from which all good springs. These people will themselves live more truly. And so it is on record that in this small corner of the world a brave heart has lived faithfully, leaving that corner brighter and better, and we who knew him seem to hear the words reach him, as the valley of the shadow was passed, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

There are quite a few newspaper reports from about that time, of various charity events with which Annie Towsey was involved. Miss Dorothy Lowe is often also mentioned as taking part.

Then, with the outbreak of war, Stanley Cyril Lowe joined the first Victorian contingent and was killed in 1917 at just twenty years of age.

Out of Annie and William Towsey's three children and two grandchildren, three had died from gunshot wounds.

Annie stayed on in Devonport, in the north of Tasmania, until her death in 1926.

We know from the electoral rolls, that Dorothy was still living with her grandmother in 1922 and no doubt continued to do so until Annie's death four years later.

Dorothy's occupation is shown as 'Domestic Duties'. There is some evidence that Dorothy Lowe then married, but without paying a ridiculous fee, the Tasmanian government will not give out that information.