

## **Alethea Major (nee Lamond)**

I am Alethea Major (nee Lamond). My parents are James Alexander and Clara Augusta Lamond (both deceased) who had 5 children; Mabel Ruth, Freer Masters, Alethea, Henry William and Alexander Stanley.

In about 1915 we moved to Whangaparapara where my father was sole teacher at the school there. We lived in a home on a point (opposite the wharf) that later became the whaling station I am told.

The kauri timber mill worker's children attended the school.

The wharf was always full of stacked timber and it was loaded onto boats. One day we were playing on the wharf when a stack of timber fell down. We all got clear except my sister Mabel, who was covered. Everybody available threw timber aside and when she could be seen it was discovered she was in a space by an upright beam - then a man crawled in and lifted the load off her. I have lost track of this brave man's name I am sorry to say.

The school was very small. I understand it is still there, rather dilapidated with a notice "Preserve your Heritage" beside it. Joyce Blake (mother of Peter Blake) featured it in one of her lovely painting books. Claude Gascoine, before he died, told me he remembered the first day I attended school.

In those days there were no roads, shops, etc. In fact no amenities at all, just a small store, the "Claymore" or "Clansman" came down once a week.

We used to row over to the wharf. Sometimes we looked back and our pig was following us. We had a long drop loo on the other side of the point. One of the residents was a professional fisherman, Mr Osborne. One day he threw a largish fish from his boat to our smaller boat and it landed inside. I was very impressed.

I learnt from a recent book, "The Way We Were" that the mill school was demolished in 1981. (If I remember right!).

From Whangaparapara we were moved to a school in Okupu up at the silver mine. Years and years later Hector Sanderson took my brother Alex, his wife Glad and myself up to the foot of Whitecliffs and, moving the growth aside, he showed us the stumps of where the school had been. The silver was taken to Coromandel by barge.

When that school closed we were moved to a school on the beach. That school and Tryphena school were run as 2 half-time schools.

My mother lived permanently at Tryphena in the schoolhouse with the youngest child, Henry. The rest of us went to the Okupu school with Dad for the half-time there. If the boat suited we went by it but we mostly walked over the mountains on the way back to Tryphena. When I saw the hills from the SuperFlyte ferry lately I wondered how we did it.

At first it was a long way along the coast and we eventually came out near Eyres at the Post Office. Later Victor Brathwaite and my father, who was a noted bushman, blazed a trail in a more direct route, coming out through Bob and Anna Bailey's property.

I remember having very tired legs. My father would give us little piggy-backs and he would make up poems for us as we walked along. There were beautiful springs on the way. We would make cups of Rangiora tree leaves and have a drink. Sometimes we saw wild pigs.

The Okupu school was small. I think it was corrugated iron. I do remember it had a corrugated iron lean-to that we girls slept in. There was a separate small building where we 'lived' and Dad slept. There was an open fireplace with iron rails and hanging pots etc. I remember mostly the boiled eggs and 'date rice pudding'. We would buy milk etc from Sandersons. There was a creek adjacent, it was very cold but we washed ourselves and our clothes in it.

One day Dad was alone at the Whangaparapara School. He was very busy and had some visiting to do inland after school, which made him very late. Darkness came and he could not continue. He was walking across inland, coming out through Kaitoke and Medlands. As I said, he was a good bush-man. He holed up in a hollow tree because there was quick-sand in the area.

Mum was extremely worried when Dad did not arrive home. Medlands went out searching, to no avail. There was huge relief when he arrived at Medland homestead next day and he rang home from there.

The Whangaparapara School was near Walter and Clara Sandersons - they had 3 children, Hector, Ivy and Myrtle. Myrtle got appendicitis through barnacles she swallowed when drinking water from an iron pipe coming from a spring.

Sometimes Dad would pay a Blackwell (Adam) to take us all around from Tryphena to Okupu so mum could meet the people there. Once Adam got a very bad headache and Dad had to take a turn at steering the launch. Once at Walter Sanderson's my sister Freer and I were climbing a tree when Freer got caught, slipped a bit and was swinging free with a branch caught right up under her dress! She was rescued but had a badly torn dress.

At Tryphena we had a cow, Rosie. Rosie was kept on a property owned by Adam Blackwell. We walked Rosie up the hill past Willie & Maggie Blackwell's and down to the schoolhouse. The property adjoined Bill Bailey's place. Bob's cows roamed from Bailey's over to the dividing fence between Bob & Adam's place. I often drove the cows home to be milked, after school. I used to help with the milking. My pet cow was 'Alma'. Bob bought me the first dress I had ever had. It was silk with blue piping.

Mum had to go up to Auckland when Alex was born. He was 'gassed' and was a sickly baby. I loved him and would patiently look after him and sing him to sleep.

One day Mum came to the school and said she could not find Alex. All the school children were looking for him. Mum took her slippers off and walked along the drain on the main road outside the school fence. She found him covered under the mud, hauled him up and I can see her now holding him up and shaking the mud out of him. He was washed thoroughly and he lived, much to our pleasure. He has always loved sport. He used to play cricket when the bat was nearly as big as him.

When Mrs John Medland was bring a new baby home once she was lowered into a rowboat (at Eyre's Pt) when the cook came out and threw a bucket of scraps over the boat rail and it landed on the new baby. In those days there was no wharf there and rowboats were used.

Medlands later built a wharf there. There were quarrels over the wharf, mostly. I remember once Mr Eyre Senior was pushed into the water from the wharf.

Everybody had the Farmer's catalogue. Once when Freer and I wanted to give mum a birthday present we inspected this book and sent away for a crystal salad bowl - we never had money in our hands and forgot (or did not know) that money was necessary. We were quite poor so of course the birthday present had to be returned. We had no real consciousness about money in hand - there was nowhere to spend it.

My sister Mabel was not well. She had rheumatic fever 3 times, at 7, 14 and 21.

We had boats, one was called "Delphi" and one was "Radcal". One day we had rowed over to Nairns in Shoal Bay, right across the harbour. A little time after we left (a bit late) a violent storm came up. Dad and Mabel were rowing. Mum was trying to hang onto the rest of us. Nairns rang Tom Blackwell at Mulberry Grove and they came out with lanterns, one of the beach and one on the point. They guided us in. It was very scary. To this day the old Barrier residents talk about the day the Lamonds were all nearly drowned.

From that experience Mabel got very ill with fever. Dad hired Johnathan Blackwell's launch to take Mabel up to Auckland to hospital. She was strapped onto a stretcher and it was laid across a rowboat and walked out to the launch, up to the walker's armpits. Mum was with her on the trip. It was very rough and Mabel was in great pain. They had to shelter at Colville and when the waves abated Auckland was rung up and an ambulance was waiting at the wharf to rush Mabel to hospital. She was away many months.

One day I was playing in a Maori war pit at the top of the hill in Bob Bailey's property just outside the schoolhouse fence when I found a Maori greenstone axe. It is lovely. When I showed it to a Maori lady a few years ago she said it was a good one and if I had found it in the last 12 years I would have to give it up to the Maoris.

The Medland brothers built the road from their place to Tryphena while we were there. During the second half of the road they lived in tents on the Adam Blackwell paddock. Every night they came to our place and mum provided a hot dinner for them. It was a big job for the Medland brothers.

We were at Tryphena when the Wiltshire was wrecked. (31<sup>st</sup> May 1922). It was a wild day and I will never forget the tug coming into the harbour blowing a loud horn. There was a communal ring (when everybody listens) telling of the wreck and asking able men to go out to Rosalie Bay and the women to cook food. Mum was a very good cook, as were the other women. When the rescued people went back to Auckland they sent money to the women cooks. Mum started a library in the school with her share.

I still see Alice Barich (nee Blackwell). We are practically identical ages. Alice was very 'down to earth'. One day I went crying vigorously to Dad saying "Alice says there is no Santa Claus". Dad sat me on his knee and pacified me by saying "Santa Claus is very real, he is everyone who does a kind deed".

I spent 40 years in Australia and on one of my trips home I caught up with Alice and fond her doing lovely paintings. She said "don't you remember your Dad gave me 100 out of 100 for drawing"? I did. I have her painting of the "Pa" on my wall.

When my husband died in 1977 I returned to NZ and lived in Mt Eden. Some years later my brother Alex, his wife Glad and myself had a holiday up in the hills of Okupu at Mr and Mrs Payne's bach house with the use of their car. We motored to Hector Sanderson's shop. Hector Sanderson told us our father told him to polish his shoes ever morning before coming to school and he had done just that every day of his life. His wife Jean confirmed that emphatically. Years later Hector died and when I was again visiting Les and Beverley Blackwell Jean was there. She told me that they dressed Hector up in a good suit and then said "we didn't polish his shoes" so they did just that. I love that true story. He was in his coffin when they took his shoes and polished them.

Back to the 'Wiltshire'. We were walking along Kaitoke Beach and there were tennis balls everywhere. We children packed them in our clothes and everything available. We walked up off the beach when a Customs Officer pounced on us and took every one. There was twink dye along the beach and surf, making a very pretty sight.

Once my sister Freer and I joined a party going up to Needle Rock, led by Joe Medland. Joe had heavy baggage and we thought it was food, lovely food. Imagine our disappointment when he opened the baggage and it was hymn books. The Medland's were strict Salvation Army people. At that moment we did not feel like praising God.

My brother Henry went to England in 1939 from Wigram where he was training to be a pilot. At whole class went. They were put in the R.A.F. when war broke out later in 1939. He flew Sunderlands in the war and taught classes. He was made a P.O.W. at Crete and was at 'Stalag Luft Camp' for nearly 4 years. After the war he stayed in the R.A.F teaching and married a Welsh girl and they were stationed at Bulawayo for some time where Britain had a training place. A few years ago he came to NZ for a holiday. He had previously delivered a plane to NZ. Henry was a Wing Commander in the R.A.F. when he returned.

We got brochures of most of NZ to see what parts of NZ Henry wanted to see again. We did not have a brochure of Great Barrier Island and that was the only place he wanted to go to. So my brother Alex took him there and they had a happy time of remembering. The only 'blot' he saw was the rusty old vehicles that offended him.

Once, about 18 years ago, I was in England with my niece, her husband and her child. We visited a Science building there and among the modern communications section I saw a reference to the 'Flying Pigeon Post' of Great Barrier Island. I was quite excited.

Great Barrier Island is 'in our blood'. We remember vividly the beautiful fish, fresh from the sea to the pan. I especially loved the rock cod. Once we caught a big snapper stranded in a Pa Beach pool, left by the tide.

If you know the pine tree in the school grounds at Tryphena, near the old school building Dad got the children to plant that as a remembrance after the 1914-1918 war. Adam Blackwell provided the seed (or the seedling).