



# La Gazette

Autumn 2020 #56



## President's Greeting

The summer holidays are a distant memory . Now halfway through Term One, the mornings are distinctly cooler as autumn kicks in.

My thoughts for this edition of La Gazette have been sidelined as every aspect of our lives has been impacted by a virus that has gone viral. A year on from the devastating mosque attack the Memorial planned in Christchurch has been cancelled along with many other international events. It is a matter of “ wait and see” as things unfold, but travel plans are clearly at risk. We planned our AGM date around committee overseas trips but as things stand we may still all be in Christchurch in May.



However it was great to attend the opening night of the annual French Film Festival last evening in the Art Gallery for a catch up wine and cheese with Francophiles and enjoy a typical Parisian romantic comedy. The film Deux Moi concerned a young couple in Paris.

Next weekend we look forward to hosting French relatives Remy and Ghislaine Blot from the Sarthe region who share a link with our Gendrot ancestors. They are currently touring New Zealand and will visit key Libeau sites around Akaroa next weekend.

## Libeau Family AGM + 180th Celebrations

**Come along** May 24 Alliance Française, 275 Cashel St Christchurch 2.00 pm. Bring a plate for shared afternoon tea. Transport available if required.

Celebration of 180 years since the arrival of the Comte de Paris during the last weekend in October at Akaroa – see the enrolment form. Plan to bring family for a wonderful reunion!

### **Inside this edition:**

- President's message
- News from France
- What we lost at number 56
- Alliance Française
- Births, Deaths and Marriages
- 180 year celebrations
- Committee details
- Subscriptions
- Historic photos

Warm regards  
Heather

**Don't hesitate to email any news, stories, photos or other contributions to share in our family newsletter in either English or French.**

***Want to keep in touch? Easy...***

**Website:** [libeau-family.org](http://libeau-family.org)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/Libeau.Family](http://www.facebook.com/Libeau.Family)

**Contributions for La Gazette:** [fharrison55@hotmail.com](mailto:fharrison55@hotmail.com)

## News from our French cousins

Dear cousins and friends,

France is facing its 12th day of lockdown and our Prime minister announced 2 more weeks and perhaps more... After China and Italy, Spain and France have to cope with that unexpected hardship. Even UK and USA are now suffering the attack. We know that even in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Australia and New Zealand are now affected.

Our experience shows that lockdown must be strictly respected. The virus couldn't care less about fortune, skin colour, nationality, religion or political opinion. So STAY AT HOME ! Listen to music, play chess, read, try to put some order in your papers and photographs, slog away your French, cook a delicious "blanquette de veau", a "Pavlova", try to learn more about types of vines, world capitals, mountain summits.



As for us, Micheline and Gilles, our children and grand children (and soon our great granddaughter!) we try to keep safe and vigilant. One of our grand children is an ambulance driver and things are very hard for him. Several others are nurses, doctors. Like in the hospitals, all over the world, they face hard tension in their job.

We watch New Zealand news. Madame Jacinda Ardern seems to make a good job. She is intelligent, compassionate and forceful and people here asked us our feeling about her. Well it's not my business and only the Kiwis can decide. Our French friends are puzzled when we tell them that New Zealand was the first country to decide that women can vote as well as men in 1893 (France : 1946, shame on us !). So far we had only one female PM, Edith Cresson and she stayed only one year in office.

We will give you other news : CHEER UP! BON COURAGE! during this lockdown = confinement.

Vive la grande famille du "Comte de Paris". Nous vous embrassons (from far!)

*Micheline et Gilles*

## Looking back on what we have lost

As the years go by and we oldies die off so much family history information disappears too.

Recently I tried to find the house at number 56 Rue Grehan, Akaroa. It had been the property of Joseph Libeau Snr and the site of the stables and later brick kiln. The ruins of the brick kiln still remain. My daughter and I had visited it in 2006. I couldn't find the cottage. Instead a small house had been built on the left side of the land. Curious and concerned, I stopped to chat with the couple who are now living there.

Rob and Jenny Williams own the property which consists of the old stable/kiln, a creek and an old orchard full of very productive plums, along with some outbuildings and their new garage/home. They are very interested in the French history of their property and to that end we sat down to discuss it. I gave them some photos so they could reproduce them and frame them. The Williams were required to commission an archeological report in order to build, and changed their minds about seeking a consent to demolish the kiln. The results of the report are as follows:

Joseph subdivided the land from Rural Section 7512 in 1869. He had bought the entire 11 acre section from Gendrot in 1857. At the time he was a gardener, beekeeper, and brickmaker. The first subdivision was what is currently number 54 which was conveyed to his son Joseph Jnr in 1860. He made another subdivision in 1869 and ownership of this passed to his daughter Josephine and remained her's until her death in 1903 when it passed to her second husband Joseph Sergison. Josephine first married Etienne Brocher who made bricks bearing the letters EB during 1878-1882 until he abandoned his family.

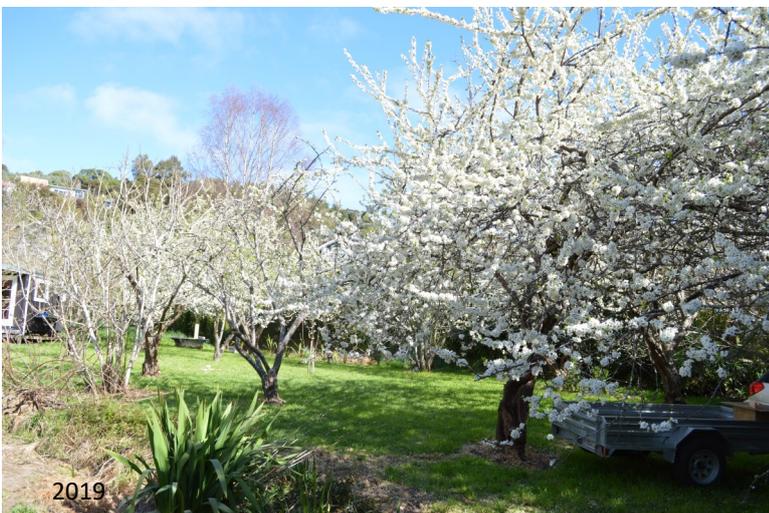




Following the fire brigade practice (stables/kiln in background)

56 Rue Grehan has probably been occupied since at least 1857. Prior to the 2011 earthquake, a cottage had stood where the Williams' garage now stands. (See the photos on the preceding page). Over the years it had become tenanted with resulting deterioration and sometime after 2012 was sold and the new owner had the fire brigade burn it down. Unfortunately the Libeau family was not alerted

to this before the destruction occurred.



Such a shame as there is nothing that can't be restored these days if the spirit is willing. We have lost an important part of our family history. Each time I visit Akaroa I sadly note the increasing number of colonial cottages falling into ruin. Why do people buy these special places if they can't afford to restore and maintain them? European countries seem to respect their history more than kiwis do.

### What the excavations uncovered

Fragments of a plate and one creamware eggcup (probably part of a breakfast set). The plate was decorated with Asiatic Pheasants under glaze. Glass artefacts included a black beer bottle and a glass stopper. They are consistent with 19th century manufacture. There were also two brick features, probably part of a drive way. The soil was yellow clay. —**Frances Harrison**

## Births, Deaths & Marriages

### Births

**Alastair (brother of our Libeau president) & Annette McGowan** have news to share of 3 more grandchildren (Alastair is a descendent of Joseph Libeau Snr (via Joseph Lucien & Clemence, Marie & James Clark, Clemence & James White, Clemence & Ian McGowan)

1. Leah Marie Samara **JAEGER**  
b. 16/11/2018  
4th child of Nathan & Kirsty McGowan; 8<sup>th</sup> grandchild of Alastair & Annette
2. Levi Caleb Seth **McGOWAN**  
b. 17/11/2018  
3<sup>rd</sup> child of Stephen & Debbie Jaeger; 9<sup>th</sup> grandchild of Alastair and Annette McGowan. Both the above were born in Christchurch, 2 hours apart but on different days.
3. Violet Kate Anne **ENGLAND**  
b. 28.11.2019  
1<sup>st</sup> child of Stephen & Roanna England; 10<sup>th</sup> grandchild of Alastair and Annette McGowan

**Deaths** **Winifred May Clark nee Hawke**, b 11 Feb 34 d 9 Jan 2020. Much loved wife of Albert George Clark (deceased) and mother to Sue, Tony, Christine, Lynda and Jean-Michel. May was the daughter of the late Winifred and Earnest Hawke.

Fay Rabone and Joy Masters in local papers. Fay is no longer with us.

## 70 years of friendship – and counting

By Sophie Cornish

AS THE saying goes, it takes a long time to grow an old friend.

And for this group of ladies, it's been a long time – close to 70 years in fact.

As 14-year-olds, the group of women met when they were placed in the same class at Avonside Girls' High School in 1950 and have reunited every year since.

For three, Rosemary Harper, Valerie Percy and Eleanor Gillespie, all now in their 80s, their friendship dates back to when they were five-years-old, after meeting at Opawa School in 1941.

"We had some breaks in meeting to be young wives and mothers. We are all either 83 or 84 now, but were only 14 when these special friendships were made. We meet each two to three months and stay in touch. We are still the same women," Mrs Gillespie said.

Mostly the group meet at each others homes for afternoon tea and each bring a plate of food to share.

This way they can laugh and make as much noise as they like, Mrs Gillespie said.

Three of the group have passed away, including most



recently, Fay Rabone-Powell, in December.

"It was a month to the day that we met (this month). She badly wanted to come too, she knew all about it. But she had been in and out of hospital, sick. We use to go to Fay's quite a bit, she had a big home," Mrs Gillespie said.

The group were in a small class of 21 at Avonside, where most had 30 pupils, something they believe may have contributed to their close friendships.

"I don't know what the secret is; it is very special, especially for the women who are widowed. I just want to tell any young people, it's difficult when

you have young children but suddenly it becomes very special. Your school friends, you have to make a point of staying in touch," Mrs Gillespie said.

Between them, they have 26 children, 54 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren, with another on the way.



**FRIENDSHIP:** A group of friends who met at Avonside Girls' High School in 1950 have come together to meet every year since. Their class was form 3CB (above). (Back row, from left) – Norma-Ann Prior, Valerie Percy, Anita Blake and Rosalind (Rosie) Fahey. (Front row) – Moira Forsyth, Joy Masters, Eleanor Gillespie, Alison Royfee and Rosemary Harper. PHOTO: GEOFF SLOAN

"We have been quite productive haven't we," Mrs Gillespie said.

The women were placed in a commercial course after school and most ended up as secretaries, in banks, law firms or offices, some even ended up working for the same companies.

### Obituary - Clotilde Beth Hewson née White.

Clotilde was born in 1921 and died in her 98th year, 1919 at Glenwood home in Timaru. She lived out her childhood amongst the high volcanic hills of Banks Peninsula on a small dairy farm on the Old Coach Road which wound uphill from the township of Little River to Akaroa. Clo's ancestry on her mother's side went back to the French settlers. Her mother Clémence was the daughter of Marie Clark/ Heyward nee Libeau. Marie and her husband James Clark bought this land from Marie's uncle Francois Libeau and 5 generations of Libeau descendants lived and worked on this land.

Clotilde was part of a large and loving family surrounded by 7 sisters and 2 brothers. She grew up through the Depression and WW2 and although she would have liked to have trained as a Karitane nurse she had to stay at home to help with the milking and housekeeping. She attend Little River School and later went by train each day to attend Technical College in Christchurch. With a bright, friendly cheerful personality she was a loved aunt of her nieces and nephews. When she married Tom Hewson and went to live in Sth Canterbury they extended a welcome and open door to everyone passing by. They had 4 sons, Bill, Murray, Malcolm and Rodney. In order to make ends meet in the early days they took in boarders who grew to regard themselves as part of this loving family.



Clo was very musical and played on the piano any tune you asked for, by ear. She sang in choirs and took full part in the life of the Methodist Church in Timaru. Her faith, learnt at her devoted mother's knee, was the cornerstone on which her life was built, She loved gardening and worked hard in the corner dairy / grocery shop that she and Tom ran for a number of years.

There was always a loving hug and a cuppa whenever you called by.

Her place in the community and in the hearts of her relatives and friends was shown by the attendance at her funeral of about 250 people. She went out on her last journey to the triumphant musical strains of "Hallelujah" from Handel's "Messiah". Well done Aunty Clo!

## HURRAY FOR JESSIE MOULD !

Jessie Jane Golder Mould ( 17 May 1916- 30 Dec 2010) was born at Robinsons Bay , Banks Peninsula and remained a staunch advocate of Peninsula history and in particular of Akaroa , all her life . As a child she roamed the hills loving and knowing the names of every plant and tree She retired to an historic little cottage , 18 rue Balguerie in 1967 . It was previously owned by the Misses Lizzie and Maria Parsons. Jessie's great love of her life could be seen at this cottage in the form of old roses!! They grew with riotous abandon , hanging in long garlands from established trees and snaking long tendrils across the verandah, between the heaps of blossom one could see the little cottage cosily secure in the past ! Inside Jessie had piles of literature , papers and memorabilia- all of historical value. She hesitated to repair the cottage unless she could find a tradesman who understood how to deal with the old structure.



Jessie's fondness for old roses can be summed up in the line :

*"Rose amiable et chérie , tu charmes notre vie. "*

She writes of this in her pamphlet " Roses for a French Cottage Garden" . She notes that cemeteries contain the history of the rose in NZ . and unfortunately the Old French Cemetery at Akaroa was ruthlessly tidied in the 1921 and old plants were lost . Nothing remains of the wooden crosses , artistic chain fences and tangled roses. It is heartening to note recently that renovations may take place here and old roses planted once again.

Jessie notes that Rosa Gallica is the oldest of all French roses and the variety Charles de Mills arrived here on the Comte de Paris in 1840. One of the loveliest, it has deep wine- cerise petals with a centre like a green cavity . My mother as a little school girl , around 1917 , walked in her buttoned up boots on the main road from Akaroa to Little River School . On the way she often picked a bunch of Charles de Mills for her teacher. It grew on the bank outside the cottage of a settler. When I grew up she showed me that spot and we took a cutting. Sadly now I think road reconstruction and weed spray has destroyed that sweet link with the past.



Jessie in her panama hat

Around the early 1970's Jessie got busy and stirred up interest in the graves of the old original settlers , many unmarked. I remember she asked for donations of about \$5 to help mark these graves with simple plaques . Good on you Jessie for your foresight ! That is how the unmarked grave of our ancestor , Joseph Libeau , came to have a small white plaque set in the grass of his resting place.

Two booklets written by her reveal her passion for local history - "More Tales of Banks Peninsula" and "The Old Water Wheel" . Her funeral was an occasion for expressing the love and gratitude her family felt for her , held in the old Anglican Church at Akaroa . Rest In Peace Jessie , the effect of your life well lived , lingers on like the scent of those old roses in your garden.

*Written by Désirée McKenzie whose mother ,Annie ,shared the same love of the Peninsula with Jessie. 1<sup>st</sup> child of Stephen & Roanna England; 10<sup>th</sup> grandchild of Alastair and Annette McGowan.*

## 180 Year Celebrations in Akaroa

The Comte de Paris Descendants Group (Libeau Society and other Comte de Paris Family Groups) are organising an event to celebrate 180 years since the arrival of our ancestors in Akaroa on the Comte de Paris in 1840. We are thinking of the last weekend in October to more likely get sunshine and fine days – 30, 31st October and 1st November 2020.

The celebrations will be centred on the newly refurbished **Gaiety Hall**, which was damaged during the 2011 earthquake. The planned programme is:

### Friday night

7-11pm Conversation with Cocktail food provided.

### Saturday Morning

Possible unveiling of the Memorial Entrance. 10am. This will depend on the Council Consents being issues and building completed. Most senior descendant to cut the ribbon with most junior or closest generation to the settlers.

Self-guided Walks – routes provided. Comte de Paris Walk, General History Walk, Libeau Walk, Le-lievre Walk, Cemetery Walk.

### Saturday Afternoon 1 – 5.00pm

Self-guided Walks – routes provided. Comte de Paris Walk, General History Walk, Libeau Walk, Le-lievre Walk, Cemetery Walk.

Cutting of Cake, 'Drop In' centre, displays, photographs, tea/coffee, photocopying facility, Information sharing. Photographs.

Merchandise table

Guest Speaker

### Saturday Evening 7 - 12.00 pm

Buffet dinner—Tables labelled with less well-known Comte de Paris settlers – Dulac, Benoit, Jouy, Hahn, Waeckerle, Michel, Fleuret, Francois, David, Rousselot, Eteveneaux, etc. Spot prizes.

### Sunday

Church services available.

Self-guided Walks

Shared lunch on the St Patricks Lawn

Farewell.

**Cost.** The cost of the celebrations will be costed separately between the Registration, the Friday night and the Saturday night events. We appreciate that members may not be able to attend all events planned.

### Expression of Interest Form

For those members who may wish to attend this event please fill in the form at the back of this La Gazette and return it to Linda Sutherland as indicated on the form, if possible by the end of January 2020. This is not a commitment, but will give us an indication of numbers for our initial planning.

Please also pass this form on to anyone else, who may not be a member, if they also express an interest in attending.

## Expression of Interest Form – 180 year celebrations

The Comte de Paris Descendants Group and the Libeau Family are planning a weekend of activities for all descendants to mix, mingle, share stories and thoroughly enjoy the experience of celebrating 180 years since the arrival of our hardy and very courageous forebears.

The weekend will run from Friday evening 30th October through to Sunday afternoon and will include several opportunities to gather, chat, reconnect and make new connections.

### DETAILS

Registration: \$30/person – includes a 'Welcome Pack'.

Friday evening 7-11pm: Conversation - \$25/person. Complimentary drink. Cash bar.

Saturday afternoon: 1-5pm - displays, 'Open House', Walks, photographs, tea/coffee – no cost.

Saturday Dinner and Dance: 7pm -12mn - \$65/person. Buffet dinner, band, staff and complimentary drink included. Cash bar.

Total for the weekend: \$120.00/ person.

The subcommittee are working hard with the planning and mindful of costs however we hope the above will be affordable for most. There will be a range of merchandise for sale.

### To register your interest please complete the details below:

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Ancestor Family:

Numbers attending:

### Forward this information to:

Linda Sunderland  
Secretary, Comte de Paris descendants Group Inc.  
13 Kiteroa Place  
Cashmere  
Christchurch 8022  
Email: [lindasunderland07@gmail.com](mailto:lindasunderland07@gmail.com)

Please come and join us and make this a most memorable occasion.

## Committee Contacts

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## Subscriptions

Have you paid your [subscription](#) yet? It's only \$15 per year to keep in touch with other members via newsletters, have activities organised by your committee and learn about your personal history. **Some Members have yet to pay their 2019/2020 year subscriptions.**

Thankyou to those who are maintaining their subscriptions.



Stables/kiln Rue Grehan, Akaroa circa 1920s

Rita Libeau (nee McNabb) collection