



# La Gazette

August 2021 #60

## President's Greeting



In spite of torrential rain which prevented members from South Canterbury attending the AGM the meeting was congenial and the guest speakers were excellent.

We had just heard of Peter Tremewan's sudden passing and I was asked to speak of his major contribution to our Libeau family (locating the descendant's of Emilie) at the memorial service. Then a little over a month later I was at Christine's funeral. Such a loss but we have Peter's documented histories and articles that live on. I forwarded the lovely condolence emails from France to his daughters who have been warmed by the special connection with Libeau descendants.

Sadly we also learnt of Jeanne Mazet's beloved uncle's passing in Salzburg—Francis Fournat ( brother of Gilles and Christian) and Eileen Broome; the lady who cut the reunion cake.

Recently a Christchurch French teacher inquired about the letter in the Akaroa museum from Emilie in France requesting permission to marry from her father Joseph. We located this and I sent her the story of Emilie and the Seal (newsletter 59). Her students translated this after their field trip to Akaroa and we share this with you.

The French Film festival was a sell-out across New Zealand as grounded Francophiles had their fill of the latest movies from France. My favourites were *les Parfums* ;*The Rosemaker* and *The Godmother*.

The annual Landing Day dinner was held at the Cashmere Club where Comte de Paris members could catch up; enjoy a meal and shared history.

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The Akaroa French Festival details are out and we look forward to seeing many of you the weekend of Oct 15-17.

We are in the depths of winter with some light snow week and endless rain. However days are slightly longer, my magnolias are out and all around are signs of the promise of spring!

Much love

Heather

***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)

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## Remembering Peter and Christine Tremewan - by Frances Harrison

TREMEWAN, Peter John: Passed away peacefully surrounded by his family on May 27, 2021, aged 79.

TREMEWAN, Christine Marion (nee Mosey):

Passed away peacefully on July 3, 2021, aged 82. Dearly loved wife of the late Peter.

Peter, a retired adjunct associate professor at University of Canterbury, is well known for his authoring of books on colonial NZ, as it relates to the French and German settlement at Akaroa, but also the historical experiences of French Marist monks in Northland in those early days. He had found diary records in Rome and decided to translate and publish the records of Marist priest Father Antoine Garin.

Peter was fluent in French, though he told me he hated using it on the telephone as communication that way was more difficult. Christine had a talent for Te Reo and assisted Peter greatly in his research and book preparation where her understanding of the culture and history was an essential component. While neither Peter nor Christine were Libeau descendants they had a keen interest in the settlement history of Akaroa and had attended past Libeau AGMs.

I first met Peter and Christine in 2011 while living in France. My friend Jean-Claude and I made a pilgrimage to the Poitou-Charente region to meet my distant cousins. Coincidentally that weekend, Peter and Christine were also in the area we wanted to visit. Initially we met at Alain and Annick's house. We later all headed off to Ile de Madame near the Charente Estuary, where the Comte de Paris set off for Akaroa, for a Franco/Kiwi luncheon. It was lovely to do this in a location so important to our Libeau family.

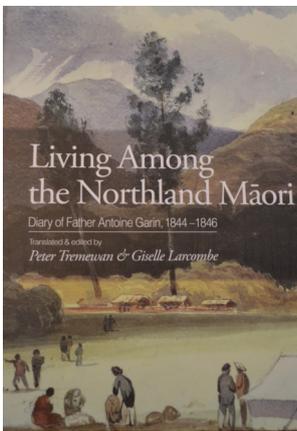


*Christine and Peter in France 2011*

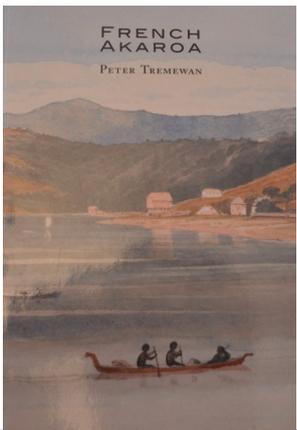


*Photo left to right: Michele and Michelle, Annick, Peter and Christine Tremewan, Gilles and Micheline Fournat, Alain Boussiron and me (JC behind the camera)*

Several years later, in 2018, I was on a short term contract with the University of Canterbury at the time Peter was about to publish his last major work “Living among the Northland Maori”. I was to assist in the launch of this via media releases for University Press and had the opportunity to interview him as part of that.



He explained there was plenty of material for a sequel of the book of edited and translated diaries. A couple of years cannot yet be found of the diaries so clearly there is more info out there which, sadly, Peter and Christine will not be able to bring to life. Peter remarked at the time of our interview that his health was deteriorating.



This book gives a fascinating look at the early interaction between Europeans and Maori. Daily conversations and interactions give us a glimpse of what mattered to both cultures. It doesn't include much information on what was happening in Akaroa as Father Gavin did not make visits to the area.



*Peter, Frances, Alain, Michelle*

## Libeau Descendants AGM 2021



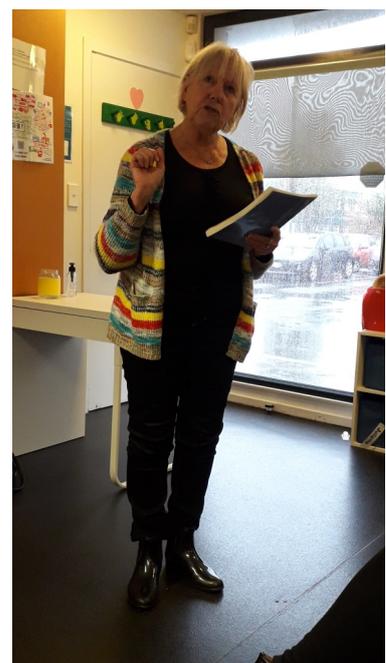
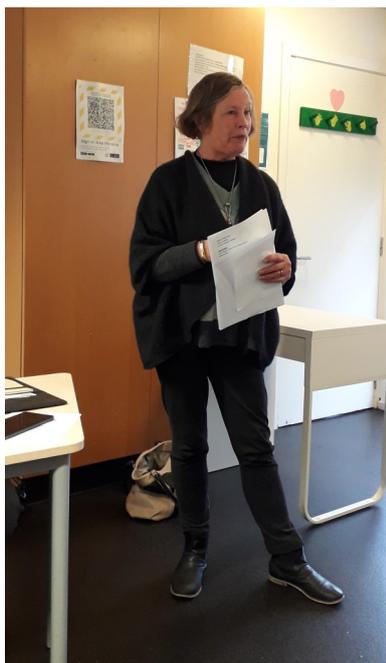
Our AGM was held at the Alliance Française, 175 Cashel St, May 30th at 2pm.

Linda Sutherland, president of the Comte de Paris group gave us an update on works in progress and possible directions for the future.

Our guest speaker was Lynda Wallace from the Akaroa Museum. What a fountain of French family history she is. She should probably write a book on the daily challenges our ancestors faced.

Our Patron Madame Martine Marshall-Durieux informed us that there was a fascinating and rare resource put together in 1991 on the lives of French colonists and other relevant information. Published in French, La Colloque includes varied chapters covering d'Urville's explorations in the Pacific, Bishop Pompallier, painter Charles Meryon, Anglo-French rivalries in the Pacific.

I contacted the French Embassy in Wellington and they put me in touch with Tinakori Books who sell used copies. I was able to obtain one —Frances.



## Emilie et le phoque - a translation of the story in our previous edition

Joseph et Magdaleine Libeau sont arrivées à Akaroa en août 1840 avec un nouveau-né et deux jeunes enfants, à la recherche d'une meilleure vie et un nouveau départ après une vie difficile en France après Napoléon.

Joseph avait apporté des graines et des boutures, et il s'est très bien établi en fournissant de la nourriture à la colonie croissante. Il a aussi créé la briqueterie Libeau, une entreprise très rentable.

Madeleine est morte peu après la naissance de son sixième enfant, et Joseph s'est marié avec une anglaise, MaryAnn Hedgeman. Elle a eu huit enfants de suite. Aux dires de tous, c'était une liaison malheureuse, et après les comptes rendus de l'alcoolisme de Joseph et sa manière abusive, Maryann était internée à l'Hôpital Psychiatrique de Sunnyside, où elle habitait jusqu'à la fin de ses jours.

Une de ses enfants, Emilie (âgée de six ans) est retournée en France en 1863 avec son parrain et sa marraine - le couple Benoît. Plus tard, elle a écrit à son père à Akaroa en cherchant la permission de se marier, car elle était mineure. Cette lettre poignante nous donne un aperçu de sa vie et de son inquiétude évidente à propos de la santé de sa mère. Elle a épousé son conjoint, Suire, et après, on n'a enregistré que deux ou trois lettres adressées à ses sœurs.

Il n'y avait plus de contact jusqu'en 1987 quand Dr Peter Tremewan, un professeur de français à l'Université de Canterbury a fait des recherches sur les colons pour son livre "French Akaroa".

Peter a écrit une lettre à la poste de Cram-Chaban où Emilie avait vécu, et on a fini par le mettre en contact avec sa petite-fille Madeleine Morisset. Elle était consciente de ses liens néo-zélandais et elle a invité Peter de rester chez elle. Elle a montré des manteaux maoris qui avaient été donnés à Emilie quand elle a quitté Akaroa, et un phoque taxidermie que les marins de navire lui avait présenté.

Peter a ensuite communiqué avec son ami d'université Grant Wright (un descendant de la famille Libeau qui habitait sur Paris), aussi bien que les membres de la famille à Christchurch qui ont établi la "Libeau Descendant's Society" en 1989.

Madeleine est venue à la réunion inaugurale de cette société en 1990 où 856 descendants y compris des français et des américains ont fêté leur ascendance partagée.



Elle a retourné les manteaux au musée d'Akaroa et elle est revenue plusieurs années plus tard avec d'autres membres de la famille pour rester avec la famille Tremewan. Elle réjouissait de l'occasion d'entrer en contact avec sa famille dans la terre de la naissance de sa grand-mère.

Je lui ai rendu visite en 2004, et après un repas délicieux, elle m'a demandé "voulez-vous regarder ma phoque?"

N'ayant aucune idée de ce qu'elle disait, je l'ai suivi à la pièce voisine où elle m'a présenté au phoque - un cadeau surprenant pour une jeune fille sur un long voyage maritime, et un véritable objet ancien de l'histoire de la famille Libeau en cours.

Quand j'ai visité la tombe de Madeleine en 2014, j'ai appris que le phoque était à sa dernière demeure dans une chambre d'amis chez son neveu.

*Traduction: les élèves de français en Première et Terminale au Lycée de Riccarton, à Christchurch en Nouvelle-Zélande.*



*Les élèves de français a Akaroa*

## French Fest in Akaroa 2021

Diary **15-17 October 2021** for the biennial French Festival. It involves a landing(s) re-enactment, a street parade, stalls, heaps of entertainment as well as plenty for kids, even a circus and market this year. This October the offerings are bigger and better than ever and our Libeau family continues to be involved in activities over the 3 days of French Fest. There is a lot of info and access to bookings for events on Facebook.

**If you can help out by donating a small chunk of your time to make our presence felt please contact Cameron Parsonson [camparsonson@gmail.com](mailto:camparsonson@gmail.com)**

We need help manning our stall and for some of you to take photographs for us throughout the weekend.

There will be an opportunity to go out in a dingy for the re-enactment but you need to get on the list and it is limited to direct descendants. Maybe a harbour cruise is more your thing? Book accommodation as Saturday night is always fun and come in costume if you'd like. There seems to be a greater emphasis on things French as part of the event and this is very encouraging.



We all had a wonderful time back in 2019, despite the cold weather. The town really gets behind this. It's our biggest and best opportunity to learn about our ancestors, meet family, support Akaroa and have a fun time together. Dress warmly as weather can be unsettled.

### Contact for info and participation:

[lesleyburkesharding@gmail.com](mailto:lesleyburkesharding@gmail.com) 021 527 184 , Blythcliffe, 37 rue Balguerie, Akaroa.



## The BRIÈRE family

Anne Victoire BRIÈRE came to New Zealand on the 'Comte de Paris' with her husband Pierre GENDROT and daughter Clémence Rosalie. Searching for information on Anne Victoire does not yield many results. We know she came from the village of Villaines-la-Gonais, east of Le Mans.

Let's look back to the generations who preceded her: the BRIÈRE family are recorded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Ceton, 15 km east of Villaines-la-Gonais. Antoine BRIÈRE was born in 1684, son of Pierre BRIÈRE and Marie GESLAIN. An agricultural labourer, he married in 1711 at Saint-Bomer to Marie BAILLAU. Four children of this marriage were baptised at Saint-Bomer – Marie Louise 1712, Antoine 1713, Françoise 1715 and Louis 1716. After the death of Marie, Antoine remarried and another son Antoine was born in 1736.

Louis BRIÈRE (1716) was married in 1754 at Villaines-la-Gonais to Anne PASQUIER, a widow 18 years his senior. No children were born to this couple, but Anne had 11 children by her two previous husbands, who had both been millers. Louis was also a miller, after Anne's death in 1761 he married Anne BOULAY. They were to have 10 children, one of these stillborn, 5 died as infants, 3 others died between ages 10 and 20. The 9<sup>th</sup> of the 10 siblings was François Denis BRIÈRE, who was to be known as Denis.

Denis BRIÈRE was born in 1774 at Villaines-la-Gonais. He was orphaned at the age of thirteen, the only member of the immediate family to survive after the deaths of his parents and 9 siblings, Denis followed his father's trade of miller. His uncle Antoine BRIÈRE (1736) was also living in Villaines-la-Gonais at this time, so Denis was not entirely alone.

Denis married in 1794 to Jeanne MOUSSARD and they had 11 children. Their house and mill at Moulin-de-l'Isle can be located on Google maps, just 1 kilometre to the west of the village Villaines-la-Gonais, on the river Huisne. Three daughters and one son died as infants. I have found no trace of the other son apart from his baptism, he may have also died young. Six of the daughters survived to adulthood and married, including our Anne Victoire BRIÈRE, but their parents died young, Denis in 1814 and Jeanne in 1816.

Anne Victoire BRIÈRE (1809), the tenth of 11 siblings, was orphaned at age 6. She did have several older sisters, one of whom was by then married. Anne Victoire was working as a domestic servant in 1831 when she married Pierre GENDROT, a widower with a five-year-old son. Three daughters were born in Torcé-en-Vallée, but only one of these survived past infancy – Anne Victoire (1833–1834), Clémence Rosalie (1834 – 1908) and Léontine Marie (1837–1838).

Moving on to 1840, Anne Victoire was living in Paris with husband Pierre GENDROT and daughter Clémence Rosalie, when they decided to join the group of colonists bound for New Zealand on the 'Comte de Paris'.

Another daughter was born in 1848 in Akaroa, baby Josephine lived but mother Anne Victoire died shortly after this birth.

The surname BRIÈRE did not continue in New Zealand, but daughters Clémence and Josephine married and produced large families; Clémence with Joseph LIBEAU, and Josephine with Pierre Samuel DAVID. Many of us descend from these women.

Written by Anne West



*"Le Moulin de l'Isle at Villaines-la-Gonais, where the BRIÈRE family lived and worked."  
Source: "Archives Départementales de la Sarthe"*

## Births, Deaths and Marriages

### Deaths

**Eileen Broome May 23**—passed away in Rangiora aged 93. Wife of the late Jim. A mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She cut the cake at our 180th celebrations earlier this year.

### **Peter Tremewan May 27**

Condoleances from Alain et Annick Boussiron ,Andrée Fournat ,Micheline et Gilles Fournat, Marie-Claire Gau-tronneau, Catherine Huon, Florence Libaud, Michèle and Michel Libaud ,Jeanne et Baudouin Mazet, Gisèle Tauzin, Grant Wright

**Christine Tremewan 3rd July**—wife of Peter, mother of Tanya and Kevin, Pip and Dale, and Mark

**Francis Fournat**—passed away in France following an operation. Survived by his brother Gilles as well as his wife Andrée and daughters Pascale and Dominique.



*Peter and Christie Tremewan with Gilles and Micheline Fournat, Michelle and Michele Libaud and Frances Harrison setting out for Ile de Madame on the Charente estuary 2011.*

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Louisa Victoire Brocher was born in Akaroa 1880 and died in 1949. Her parents were Josephine Libeau and the infamous Etienne Brocher. Her mother later married Joseph Sergison. Her older sister Emma married Edward (Ted ) McNabb.

Louisa married George Kington and farmed at Robinson's Bay.

Her second husband was Herbert Bunny. She later moved back to Akaroa but died in Christchurch.



[Frances Harrison collection]

*These photos are of Louisa and George's engagement and wedding.*