



La Gazette

June 2024 #69



President's AGM report

Since the borders opened and Covid outbreaks settled it has been pleasing to attend events and catch up with family. However the flip side of this is that several committee members and our guest speaker are currently holidaying in Europe and one has Covid! Thank you for attending today and supporting your Libeau family.

The Maison de Crepes closed down early last year we had to find another venue for our end-of-year function. The Comte de Paris Landing Day lunch was held in August at the Russley Village restaurant *Abode* so we booked it for our event. Twenty four members enjoyed a delicious Christmas themed buffet in pleasant surroundings so I have pencilled in again for December 8 this year.

The Akaroa French Fest was finally held again after three years hiatus. Historically the arrival of French settlers was celebrated by a re-enactment in 1940, and in the mid 1980's the Akaroa Heritage Society organised a one day event annually. 1998 Montana Akaroa Heritage Festival February 28 was marked by the attendance of six members of the French Senate and a re-enactment of the 1840 Comte de Paris ship.

Inside this edition:

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- Archaeology report 56 rue Grehan, and more
- Update on Michele and Michel
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This was my first involvement as a Libeau committee representative aboard the sailing ship. Wearing a lawn confirmation gown purchased in Paris I was joined by other descendants in period costume we embarked at the main wharf, did a swing around the harbour to Green's Point and then sailed towards the beach to be transported by cutters and helped out onto the beach. After the historic retelling of the Comte de Paris arrival; descendants followed the brass band to the cricket grounds where the French ambassador opened the festival and the festivities began. The Christchurch City Council took over management of this for several years and then the C de P in mid 2020's were responsible for the bi-annual event.

Website: libeau-family.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Libeau.Family

Contributions for La Gazette: fharrison55@hotmail.com

When the organisation proved challenging as most of the committee lived in Christchurch a local couple stepped in not just to assist but to take over the running using a script that minimises the French impact. As some here will not be aware of the current situation I will share my feedback to Lincoln University French Fest Survey which is used for further funding. Frances will also share out her communication with the Akaroa Mail regarding our concerns.

Lincoln University French Fest Survey.

The Landings performance on the beach was far too long- almost two hours while the audience stood beside the beach in freezing conditions.

The script was more along the lines of pantomime rather than historical accuracy and included unnecessary sexual innuendo and profanity. Families with young children walked away in disgust during the proceedings. The original French landing re-enactment has been hijacked by a forceful couple who pay actors to role play the wider Peninsula history.

I am descended from two of the original French who arrived in Akaroa August 1840 on the Comte de Paris in August 1840, and am appalled at the offensive comments about them in the script in 2017. ie Captain Langlois “ These immigrants are all of the lower order. I had to go around all the pubs and taverns of Rochefort- couldn’t even get 60 individuals. And this ship is a pig! –too small and seriously overloaded!”

We requested that these comments be removed from the script for the October performance but this had not been done. The arrival of the French is given a five minute focus in the whole play about English settlers; whalers, sailors and local Maori.

Now it only possible for us to participate in the performance if we attend a full day rehearsal on the Friday before, which precludes most as member as they don’t reside in Akaroa. We had two members involved the beach arrival who were given a tiny part to play. The Comte de Paris descendants committee has produced a wardrobe of authentic costumes including bonnets based on drawings from the Rochefort museum. The director would not permit these and insisted on rags for headgear and blankets/old fur coats.

The Hardings who now produce this show are opinionated and forceful; unprepared to discuss anything. We have clearly communicated our concerns with the script and the costumes to no avail. The French settlement has clearly been marginalised. As the President of the Libeau Descendants Society I share these very real concerns on behalf of the families.

Our views are echoed by locals who watched the show and were unhappy about the obscenities and inappropriate comments in a family show. Those who remember the earlier authentic re-enactments with just the French descendants are very disappointed.

It is clearly no longer a French Fest but cultural appropriation in an Akaroa Festival. The committees of both the Comte de Paris and Libeau Descendants societies will meet later in the year to evaluate our continuing involvement in future festivals.

However on a positive note, The new French Ambassador and Cultural Consul attended the formal opening – Mme Laurence Beau spoke in a very informed address about the “almost French colony’ and was very interested in our stand in the Heritage Tent. Several Libeau family members were able to connect up with relatives and join the society for further family history links. There was a wider range of French food options and themed events like best dressed dog with a cabaret at night and a brocante/collectibles fair the next day.

I am no longer on the board of the Alliance Française but regularly attend their events and recommend the **French Film Festival** in June for a fabulous range of movies in several theatres. Brochures are available on the front desk of Alliance Française.

In “1971 New Zealand Heritage – the making of a nation” I recently came across a well- researched article about Akaroa. Navigating the claims and counter claims took years to unravel and finally our French forbears were given their promised freehold 5 acres land. They developed their farms and businesses –stables, brick kilns, vegetables. The confrontation and clash for sovereignty between England and France had been skilfully avoided by their representatives at the time.

The last colonist Joseph Lucian Libeau died 1919 aged 86. He had married Clemence Gendrot- a fellow passenger as a child on the Comte de Paris. The next generation intermarried with British settlers and gradually memories of France faded. Akaroa had not proved to be a satisfactory site- too isolated and cut off from Canterbury and the commercial centre of Christchurch but this may have helped preserve its unique character- quite different from any other New Zealand settlement.

Our committee focus this year is updating the Family genealogy and republishing **To the Wilderness-** both incredible documentation of our unique history. I encourage you to complete the information for your immediate family, and ensure that the photos, letters, artifacts are safeguarded for future generations. Recently I came across a package of letters from when I was born. Social history, close relationships cards and telegrams sharing intimate details - painted a picture of my parents life then. And the knowledge that I arrived earlier than expected and got the poor doctor out on Christmas morning. There was a letter from one of mum’s sisters, Ednaabout my arrival...which included a comment by her eldest son saying “See I told you Auntie Clem would have her baby on Christmas Day! Her grandson Tim is here today to find out more about his French Connection!

We purchased medals from a WW1 relative and have his story here today.

There was an article in the last newsletter about the heritage seeds sourced from Emeri de Malmanches French Farm gardens – Kaonga in KatiKati produces seeds from the original seeds from France and you are welcome to take home a packet of these to grow in your own garden.

I have also come across a family history written by Colin Drummond a self- appointed family historian from Joseph Libeau’s son Joseph Lucian as well as the second marriage to Maryann Hedgeman. He includes a foot note

“This information is as correct as I can possibly obtain and much has been left out particularly the younger descendants which would run into hundreds but as this account is predominantly a Libeau affair the main object is to prove beyond all doubt the relationship of those whose name is mis spelt or changed to Le Beau the correct spelling is Libeau. As I am a great grandson of Joseph Libeau senior I feel that if this history of 130 years is not compiled now it will be too late. This was signed 31.10.71 I met Colin who was a regular at Libeau meetings until his passing.”

I don't know whether he ever heard that the correct spelling is Libaud- on the building in Rochefort we saw in 2000! But he would be thrilled to know that we are planning to update the genealogy with the latest generations.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee members. Some were on the inaugural Libeau Descendants reunion committee in 1990 and have been faithfully involved since then. Our quarterly meetings held in my home are productive and congenial.

With a range of skillsets we are moving onto digital documentation and genealogy updates so special mention goes to Frances Harrison for impressive La gazette publications and the tech team- Matt, Richard and Cameron. We are keen to make progress on book publishing and perhaps a Libeau reunion in Rochefort 2025.

Best wishes

Heather



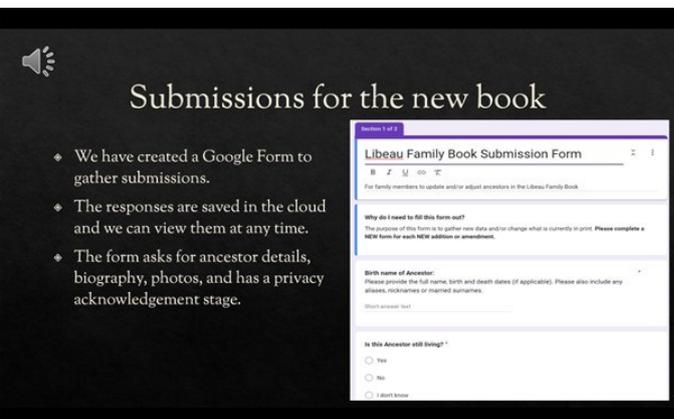
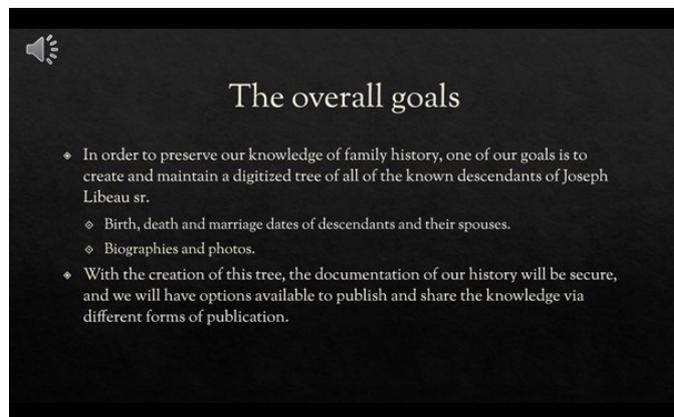
Our Libeau AGM 2024

The Libeau AGM held in the Alliance Francaise rooms on May 19th was attended by 30 interested descendants. The official business was covered with the election of officers (mainly re-election), the financial report and the President's report. Rounding out the meeting was a comprehensive power point report produced by Matt Mc Nabb and presented by Cameron Parsonson of the Libeau Family Book update committee on the updating of the Libeau genealogy.

Members who'd like a copy of the powerpoint please ask Matt mcnabb.nz.genealogy@gmail.com

Also commented on was the proposed visit to France in 2025 with some tips from Vaughan McEwan. The correspondence around the disappointing aspects of the last French Fest in Akaroa i.e. the lack of actual French input into the celebrations, was aired by Frances Harrison. All in all a very informative get together with a delicious, contributed afternoon tea to finish off.

- Caryl Kippenberger



Our Newest Committee members



Laura Gilray

I am the daughter of fellow committee member Frances Harrison. I work in Sales and live in Selwyn in the lovely countryside with my partner Chris and our two dogs. I enjoy cooking, travel and am finding my green thumb growing vegetables.

My lineage is the same as my mother's, who is a direct descendant from both Julie Eliza Libeau (last child of Joseph and Magdeleine) and Josephine Mary Libeau (first child of Joseph and Mary Ann Hedgman). My Great Great Grandmothers were Emily Libeau (1880-1955) and Emma Josephine Brocher (1878-1951).

I hope I can continue to serve the committee as the next generation after my Grandmother Rita and Mother Frances have done. I am very computer savvy and a fast typer so I can provide data entry and digital assistance to ensure the next generation can easily access family history and to assist in keeping records up to date for years to come.



Timothy Hewitt

I was honored to be asked to be a committee member. My father's passing a few years back has been disruptive, but has also marked the start of a new journey of discovery.

As a renowned scientist and artist, my father Allan left a legacy of personal kindness but also mystery - an invitation to discover what made him the man he was. I'm obsessed with storytelling by trade - design and branding is my day job. Legacy and family history also seem to be parts of my calling I can't escape. My wife and I are guardians of her father's legacy (a bit of a surf legend in Australia), and my mum's dad was a fighter pilot in WW1. She's in the middle of documenting his story. I have also been inspired and encouraged by the concept of whakapapa, and this has encouraged my wife Rach and me to dig deeper into our family history. I'm here to learn. Why do I love pastries and art so much? Is my emotional and passionate side born of a missing French connection? Let's find out together. Thanks for welcoming me in."

Letter from your Editor

I'm on a bit of a mission these days to put out into the public domain all I can on important stories and photos concerning our Libeau Family, for posterity. I've gone through Mum's old photos, trying to identify folks but Mum hasn't been capable of explaining things for years and now it's too late. Why, oh why don't we scribble names and dates on the back of photos? I'm also reminded of my own mortality and if I don't put what little I have online now it will be lost to future generations.

The 'watering-down' of French Akaroa has accelerated recently and is a big motivating factor for me too. This is behind my current series of articles on former Libeau properties.

Last edition we looked at # 60 rue Grehan which was on the market last year. The house at # 56 was burned down for fire-brigade practice in 2012 but that is the property which still has the historic kiln and stables.

You wouldn't know the place today; hardly any of the original orchard remains, the stables are completely enclosed now and the owners have truly modernised the area. They've made a lovely home for themselves but there is little left for we Libeaus to see on private property. I have reprinted, on the following pages, the archaeological report that had to be carried out before the newest owners could start new house construction. It's rather interesting.

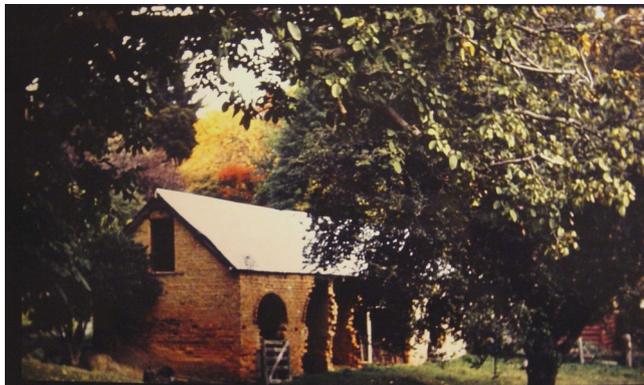


Frances in front of 6 Church Street, Akaroa recently. It has Libeau connections—Edward McNabb and Emma Josephine Brocher raised their children here, including my maternal grandfather.

FORMER LIBEAU BRICK KILN [preamble]— Frances



This is as far back as I can go. In front of the stables are Josephine Mary Libeau (m. Brocher) and her second husband Joseph Sergison. [One of her daughters was Emma J. Brocher mentioned elsewhere in this Gazette]. Her father Joseph Libeau Snr built the kiln and produced bricks, later helped by Josie's first husband (the 'dastardly' Etienne Brocher) and sometimes Joseph's son Donatien. The kiln was then closed in and became stables. The site fell into disrepair in the late 19th century and by the time these photos were taken circa 1918 the site wasn't well maintained by the couple.



1948



2006



2006



2012

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 1192

FORMER LIBEAU BRICK KILN AND SETTING 56 RUE GREHAN

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Historical and social values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular person, group, organisation, institution, event, phase or activity; the continuity and/or change of a phase or activity; social, historical, traditional, economic, political or other patterns.



The Rue Grehan Brick Kiln has historical and social significance for its association with the well-known Libeau family and contractor Edward Morey, as evidence of early industry in Akaroa and as remnant of one of the earliest known brick kilns in New Zealand. It is likely that the kiln was first built in the late 1850s or early 1860s. The oldest known surviving kiln in New Zealand is currently the Upohongaro kiln ruin in Wanganui,

which dates from 1857.

The land on which the kiln is located was purchased by Joseph Libeau sen. from fellow French settler Pierre Gendrot in 1857. In 1860 Joseph subdivided the site for his eldest son Joseph jun. and family and a cottage (54 Rue Grehan) was built to accommodate them on their return to Akaroa from a period farming at Duvauchelles. There is no reliable date for the commencement of brick-making on the site, but this would seem a likely date. Architect Samuel Farr, who left Akaroa for Christchurch in 1862, recalled 'a brick-kiln, belonging to Lebeau [sic] on Grehan Road' (*Star* 15/12/1900). Joseph was reputedly involved in the operation of the kiln for about eight years before returning to his farm.

By the mid 1870s, the brickworks was being operated by Akaroa builder and builder's merchant Edward Morey, who had earlier built Holy Trinity Church in Lyttelton and St John's Church in Okain's Bay. He offered the 'Grehan Road Brick Yard' for sale in July 1877. The Libeau family appear to have then resumed their interest, and the works were carried on by another two of Joseph senior's sons, Donatien and Alfred until Donatien's bankruptcy in 1885. Donatien then went abroad where he made a name for himself as a competitive walker and cyclist. There is no evidence that the yard operated after this time.

By the 1880s brick-making on an industrial scale had commenced in New Zealand, and the small Rue Grehan operation would no longer have been economic. At some time after this date, the kiln remains were adapted to serve as a shed or stable.

56 Rue Grehan remained in the hands of Joseph Libeau senior's descendants until the death of his grandson Augustus Sergison in 1966. The cottage at the front of the property was used as a holiday home from this time until its demolition in 2012. The kiln remains and sustained slight additional damage in the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010-2011.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural and spiritual values that demonstrate or are associated with the distinctive characteristics of a way of life, philosophy, tradition, religion, or other belief, including: the symbolic or commemorative value of the place; significance to Tangata Whenua; and/or associations with an identifiable group and esteemed by this group for its cultural values.

The Rue Grehan Brick Kiln has cultural significance for the illustration it provides of the small-scale and occasional nature of most industrial production in colonial New Zealand, and the manner in which it was often carried on in conjunction with both other remunerative pursuits and family life.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural and aesthetic values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular style, period or designer, design values, form, scale, colour, texture and material of the place.

The Rue Grehan Brick Kiln has some architectural value. In the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, most of the side and all of the rear walls of the kiln chambers were demolished and the arched kiln portals bricked-in to allow adaptation of the remains as a shed. The kiln remnants and its shed additions are in poor condition. They sustained slight additional damage in the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010-2011.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

Technological and craftsmanship values that demonstrate or are associated with: the nature and use of materials, finishes and/or technological or constructional methods which were innovative, or of notable quality for the period.

The Rue Grehan Brick Kiln has technological and craftsmanship significance as evidence of early industry in Akaroa, and as a remnant of one of the earliest known brick kilns in New Zealand. The remaining clay-mortared brick fabric, which includes arched portals and stubs of the chamber walls, would indicate that the kiln was of an early type superseded by the new, larger and technologically more advanced Hoffman-type kiln from the late 1870s.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Contextual values that demonstrate or are associated with: a relationship to the environment (constructed and natural), a landscape, setting, group, precinct or streetscape; a degree of consistency in terms of type, scale, form, materials, texture, colour, style and/or detail; recognised landmarks and landscape which are recognised and contribute to the unique identity of the environment.

The Rue Grehan Brick Kiln has contextual significance in its setting, which apparently encompasses much of the former brickworks site; its broader Rue Grehan locality, which contains a number of dwellings and dwelling sites associated with the Libeau family (particularly 54 and 60 Rue Grehan), and as part of the defining early colonial fabric of Akaroa.

The kiln is centrally located in its setting, a very long, narrow, over-grown land parcel which ascends steeply behind the kiln remains. This probably encompasses the wider brickworks site, although no remains other than the kiln are visible above ground. At the front of the parcel is the recently-cleared site of a former Libeau family cottage.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence an understanding about social historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.

The Rue Grehan Brick Kiln and its setting are of archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900. It is very likely that further archaeological evidence remains on site of other elements of the brick-making process, such as the pug mill site. The site potentially has the capacity to reveal considerable information on early brick production in New Zealand.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The Rue Grehan Brick Kiln and setting is of overall heritage significance to the Christchurch District including Banks Peninsula. It has historical and social significance for its association with the Libeau family and Edward Morey, as evidence of early industry in Akaroa and as a surviving remnant of one of the earliest known brick kilns in this country.

The kiln has cultural significance as an illustration of the small, family scale of most industrial production in colonial New Zealand. The kiln has technological and craftsmanship significance as one of the earliest surviving sites of brick production in this country, and as a rare surviving example of a significant remnant of an archaic-type pre-Hoffman kiln.



The kiln has contextual significance in relation to its setting which includes the wider brickworks site, in relation to neighbouring former Libeau family properties in Rue Grehan, and as a unique part of Akaroa's colonial fabric. The Libeau Brick Kiln has archaeological significance as it remains comparatively undisturbed, and has the capacity to reveal considerable information on early brick production in mid-nineteenth century New Zealand.

REFERENCES:

CCC Heritage File: Rue Grehan (Old Kiln)

REPORT DATED: 23/02/2015 PHOTOGRAPH: A. MARRIOTT 2012



Recent times before the new house was built at 56 rue Grehan. You can see number 60 on the left which featured in the previous la Gazette, the old Libeau kiln/stables as they were a few years ago when Rob and Jenny Williams built a garage at the front of the property to live in while building a



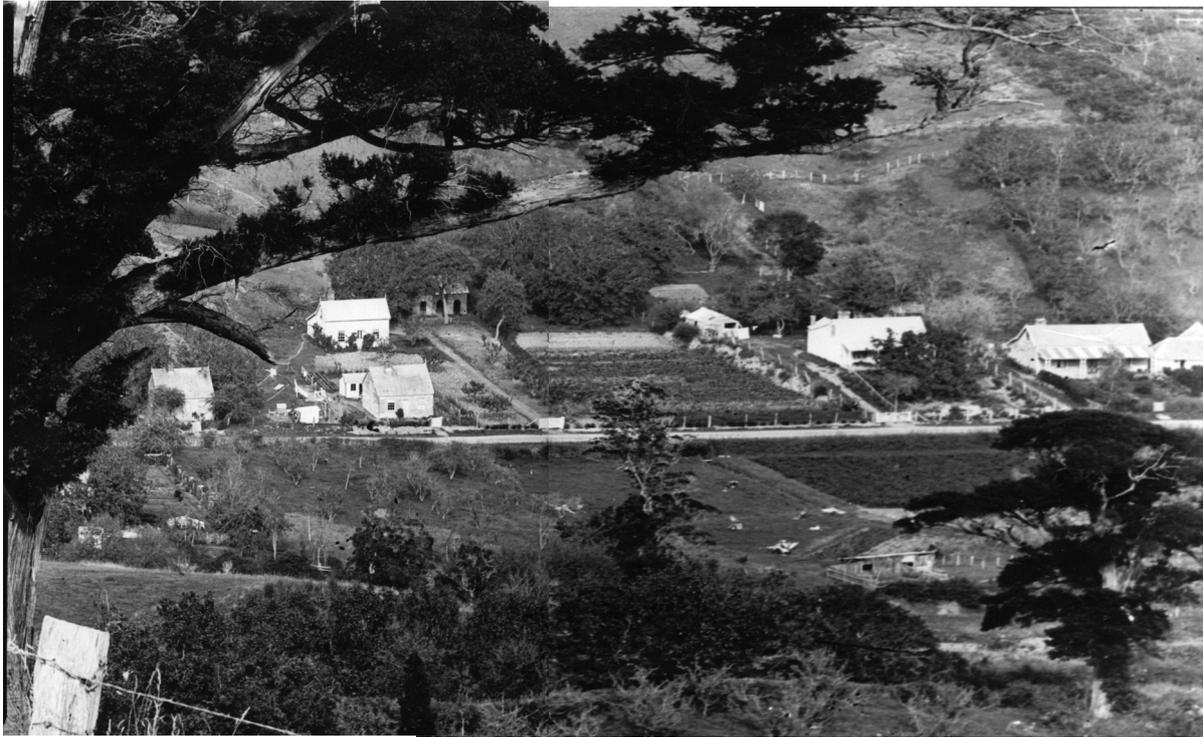
new house in front of the stables, 54 rue Grehan on the right which is in good order and will feature in the next edition.

Today—the stables are closed in but seem to be used as a shed? It's sad to see it like this and maybe its days are numbered though closing it in may preserve it a bit longer.

The garden created underneath a few remaining Libeau fruit trees. There are fewer fruit trees left now. There's just not much that's Libeau remaining in Akaroa now.

Yes, I was a bit presumptuous in taking photos but only of Libeau interests.





The Way We Were

Libeau properties along rue Grehan around 1918, taken from Woodhills Road. You can see the workers cottages 60 and 56, the manager's cottage at the back to the left of the stables, and 54. The market gardens are in between. If you go back a few years of La Gazettes to Autumn 2020 Edition 56 (coincidentally) you'll find an article on the demolished cottage at 56.

[Photos from Frances Harrison collection combined]. Below, the cottage at 56 before it was deliberately burnt down. Modifications are evident. And then after. Stables/Kiln at the back.



Suzanne McNabb's update while in France

So many of you will know and remember Michel and Michele Libaud from Rochefort.

You may have been lucky enough to experience their warm hospitality and commitment to maintaining the Libeau family connections.

Some time ago Michel was diagnosed with Parkinsons disease and although his mobility has diminished, his mind remains sharp.

Michele has been caring for him with some assistance from our equivalent of social services/Nurse Maude.

Sadly Michele had a serious fall a couple of months ago and cracked eleven ribs (how many do we have??). She was hospitalised for over three weeks and then a couple more in rehabilitation. Michel had to move to respite care in Saintes.

All of this has meant they are no longer able to stay in their home and beloved Rochefort. They have moved into care in a home in Paris, some fifteen minutes walk from their daughter Florence and grandson Enzo who visits several times a week.

I made a trip up to Paris from the Dordogne and shared a lovely lunch with them. I hope to see them again before I leave France.

As it is for so many, sudden changes and moving away from friends and all that has been familiar for 80 years is a wrench.

Sadly, lovely French cobblestoned streets don't lend themselves well to walkers or wheelchairs.

Hopefully Michel and Michele may be able to meet up with some of us if the planned trip for 2025 eventuates.



Left: Michele in front of Villa St Hilaire , Paris

Above: Michel and Michele together in their new accommodation

TARTE AU CHOCOLAT

4 - 6 personnes

Ingrédients:

pâte brisée (voir page 150)
200 g de chocolat à dessert
200 ml de crème fraîche liquide
2 oeufs entiers battus
1 cuillère à soupe de rhum
vanille en poudre.

Recette:

- ❖ Faire bouillir la crème fraîche.
- ❖ Verser la crème bouillante sur le chocolat en morceaux.
- ❖ Remuer jusqu'à l'obtention d'une pâte lisse.
- ❖ Ajouter les oeufs et remuer.
- ❖ Verser sur la pâte.
- ❖ Mettre au four préchauffé à 160°C environ 20 minutes.

Conseil: Saupoudrer de sucre glace.

CHOCOLATE TART

Serves 4 - 6

Ingredients:

200 g cooking chocolate
200 ml fresh cream
2 eggs beaten
1 tablespoon rum
vanilla powder.

Method:

- ❖ Prepare a shortcrust pastry as shown (page 151) and line a tart dish.
- ❖ Bring the fresh cream to the boil.
- ❖ Pour the boiled fresh cream onto the chocolate cut in pieces.
- ❖ Stir well until well mixed.
- ❖ Add the eggs and stir.
- ❖ Pour into the cooked pastry.
- ❖ Bake in a preheated oven at 160°C about 20 minutes.

Tip: Sprinkle icing sugar onto the tart.

Michael Gray releases album (Michael is a member of our family)

Hi All

Just to let you know about the release of a digital album of popular music by our son Michael prompted by the fact that his mother Kaye has dementia. He is using the digital album as a fundraiser for Dementia Australia and New Zealand.

Please visit **Mumsthealbum.com** and see what he has done. There are some really beautiful songs in there. (and that's without adding parental bias...)

Dereck Gray



Rue Grehan on the left at Akaroa, and Government Hill buildings below



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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. Membership requests for payment for 2024 \$15.00 You now have the option to pay by bank transfer



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