



President's Greeting.

At the recent committee meeting we finalised some of the big projects we have been working on for more than a year. You will read about the process for the family genealogy update in this issue, as well as how to pre-order

To The Wilderness as it is about to be re-published and the Family Calendar. It is a joy to work with a group of skilled, knowledgeable, committed members - and best of all we are all related!



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The weeks fly by so quickly in the lead up to Christmas. The preparations and experiences are so different down under in New Zealand and I often reminisce about the wonderful white Christmas experienced in France 15 years ago. We have our big family celebration dinner and gift exchange here on Christmas Eve. Christmas morning we meet again for a champagne breakfast to celebrate my birthday then go off in different directions for the rest of the day. Thirteen year old grandkids Saffron and Jesse took no persuading to dress up for an early Christmas photo shoot!

Merry Christmas and Joyeux Noel from my family to yours. Enjoy some summer/winter holidays and we'll be back in touch next year. Bises, Heather

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Alison Hannah's trip to France June 2024

This year Mike and I decided it was time to return to France and explore a few areas we hadn't previously visited. Travel arrangements and time made it difficult to include Rochefort in our itinerary but we did include La Rochelle, which we'd only caught a glimpse of when we stayed with Michèle et Michel Libaud on a previous visit in 2012.

We spent three enjoyable weeks in France arriving at Marseille Airport after a week in Slovenia. Driving via Aix-en-Provence, we based ourselves for a week in a converted flour mill in Cheval Blanc in the Luberon area. This proved central for taking day trips to explore the many hill-top villages in the region, which did not disappoint, and Avignon to visit the massive *Palais des Papes* and *Pont du Gard*. We visited Avignon on the day that the Olympic flame was there, causing havoc with parking arrangements.



Villages visited included Gordes, with its iconic *Chateau de Gordes* and the nearby *Abbey of Senanque* surrounded by lavender fields, though we were a little early to see the most vivid colour. Gordes is a very touristy village and we enjoyed some of the less popular villages more. Lourmarin with its famous market was fabulous, and a walk to the nearby *Château de Lourmarin* made for a great day out and stocks of cheeses, tapenade and olives for evening snacks. Roussillon with its ochre cliffs, Saignon with its lavender fields and the amazing drive through a gorge to get there, were amongst the many other villages we visited.

Back to Marseille and a flight to Bordeaux to commence the second section of our trip up the Atlantic Coast by train. In Bordeaux we enjoyed the juxtaposed historical and modern architecture. Its history as a wealthy port city, built on the wine and slave trade, with many of its iconic buildings built by Haussmann before Paris experienced his influence, was a very pleasant surprise.



We trained to La Rochelle for a very pleasant couple of days to soak up more history, wander the old port and town, and take a boat trip out to the entrance of the Charente river – a nod to my ancestors migration from Rochefort. Fort Boyard, obsolete technology before it was finished, and the fortifications on the Charente Estuary were viewed. The old town of La Rochelle was easily walkable from our hotel in the middle of the park.

Back onto the train to Nantes, a very accessible city with good public transport – free at the weekend. Nantes is home to the restored, medieval *Château des Ducs de Bretagne*, where the Dukes of Brittany once lived. The castle is now a local history museum with interesting multimedia exhibits, New Zealand even gets a mention. Nantes' quirkiest sight is the fantasy world - *Les Machines de l'Île de Nantes*. A popular initiative to help revitalise the city, with a wacky workshop with mechanical contraptions galore displayed in plant-filled hothouses – where you can fly giant her-

ons in La Galerie des Machines and prance around like a maharajah on a 12 m-tall, 48 tonne mechanical elephant with a secret lounge in its belly.



The third part of our trip was a road trip around Brittany, this sparsely populated area of France holds amazing history. Our first stop was Rennes and it surprised us with a beautiful botanical garden with a free Sunday concert and many people picnicing on the lawns. On the walk back to our apartment through the centre of the city a huge armed police presence and boarded-up shop windows caught us by surprise until we realised it was the evening of the second French national election. We decided it was not the place to linger, though we didn't hear of any problems eventuating. Once again, an interesting small city with many half-timbered houses that hark back to the Middle Ages, and our introduction to galettes – the signature dish of Brittany.

We moved on to St Malo, via the scenic Dinan – a definite must for a visit with its very old buildings and castle. St Malo is once again touristy though getting out to the nearly smugglers coves and walks along the sand dunes was a diversion.



Leaving St Malo, we headed along the coast and inland to spend a night in Sizun, a tiny town with the *Église Saint-Suliau* and its amazing triumphal arch and a tiny but fascinating museum. Many of the villages had similarly distinctive churches and embellishments dating back to medieval times. On to *Pointe du Raz* where we walked out to the rugged, almost westernmost point of France and a popular tourist destination. Concarneau was our next stop at a hotel close to the massive Friday market and the medieval *Ville Close*, a walled town on a long island in the centre of the harbour.

Our final days were spent in Carnac, world famous for its standing stones, *the Alignments of Carnac*, and the main reason for our visit to Brittany. It's a significant site with more than 3000 megaliths and tombs erected around 4000BC, plus a visitor centre and the museum. The museum is small but packed with history about the standing stones and the fascinating artefacts found in the *Saint Michel Tumulus*, such as the jadelike beads that came from central Spain. Easy to spend a day walking amongst the stones and visiting the museum before a leisurely last day visiting some of the local beaches and enjoying a long lunch. Finally back to Nantes, catching the TGV train to Charles de Gaulle airport for our trip back to the southern hemisphere. All the places visited are highly recommended and mostly away from the tourist trail.

Alison Hannah

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Cheval Blanc



Michel and Michele at their retirement home, near Paris, September 2024.

Michel has been continuing the family horticultural traditions and been supervising the planter boxes.

He asked me to move one that was past its best and bring another one near the terrace so it was joyful to look at during lunch.

Suzanne McNabb



Notre Dame de Paris Cathedral reopens

This festive season let's celebrate the reopening of Notre Dame de Paris after the horrendous inferno she suffered in 2019. We were so close to losing her.

I remember that dreadful day so well. It was 15 April in Paris but it was the morning of 16 April, my birthday, at my home in New Zealand.

Horrified, I watched the destruction being streamed live on my laptop, tears streaming down my face because it's not a church to me, I'm not religious. It is the sum of all those amazing artisans and Parisians who have made the cathedral what it is over so, so many centuries. The participation of all those amazing and horrifying historical events since construction started in **1163** on Île de la Cité, under the reign of King Louis VII, and the cathedral was largely completed by 1345. If walls could talk.

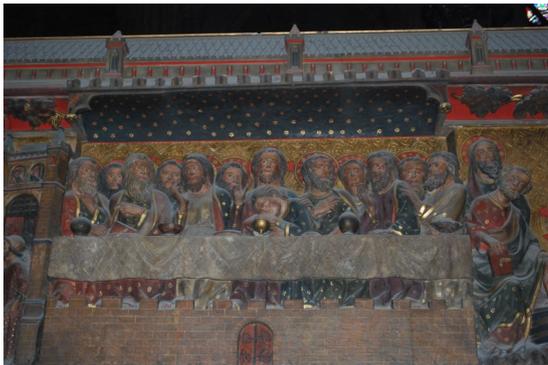
So, she's reopening **to the public on 7 and 8 December 2024**. What an incredible achievement.

There is still much restoration to be done. The cathedral is NOT yet open to groups (we must wait for May/June 2025), just individuals who want to visit and see the interior, and the exterior with the new roof and spire.

- the **restoration of the chevet and sacristy in 2025**
- the **installation of stained glass windows in 2026**
- the **restoration of the forecourt and the approach to the cathedral, its vegetation and the enhancement of the façade, under the direction of Belgian architect and landscape designer Bas Smets, to be completed in 2027**

These photos were taken in 2010, showing her interior blackened by the centuries of dirt and pollution. We will soon see her in all her restored and colourful glory.

- Frances



Why we were interested in our French ancestry and wrote

To The Wilderness

Kevin Clark

My father Geoff Clark talked about his French ancestry and he had a copy of Lindsay Buick's 1928 book *The French at Akaroa: An Adventure in Colonization* that belonged to his father Andrew Clark. Buick's book mentions the Libeau family and it includes a photo of Joseph Lucien Libeau my great great-grandfather. In fact, my father, born in 1909, met him. After his mother died in 1912 when he was four years old, the family (his father, brother and two sisters) moved to Little River and lived with his grandmother, now Marie Heyward, for some time before his father remarried to Isa Hawkins in 1917. He remembers Joseph Lucien as a large man who came to visit from Duvauchelle on horseback.

My interest was stimulated by the 1990 Libeau Family Reunion but I didn't do much more until the early 2000s. I remember thinking that we only knew a little of the family story and various family members has snippets of information. As someone who enjoys research, I started to investigate and the story grew with a lot of help from many different people. There was interest within the family in putting all the jigsaw puzzle pieces together.

There were lots of challenges – conflicting information, many gaps, what period of time to cover, uncomfortable truths. The search was aided in about 2012 when Papers Past digitised *The Akaroa Mail* and a quick search of the family names yielded over 1000 references. Eventually after searching archives and various government agency files, visiting museums in various parts of New Zealand and France and gathering family knowledge (stories and photos) there was enough genealogical information and stories to give a fuller picture of the family history. We decided to begin the story with an outline of the family in France before they sailed to New Zealand with some conjecture as to why Joseph and Magdelaine Libeau with their children Melanie and Joseph sailed on the Comte de Paris in Akaroa in 1840 and to end the story with the death of Joseph Lucien Libeau the last surviving settler who died in 1919.

I was a researcher and not a writer so I asked my niece Angela, who was a talented writer, if she would be interested in working with me to produce a book which was interesting to read. She agreed and the book *To the Wilderness* took shape. As well as documenting the factual genealogical information and stories that had been gathered, we started each chapter with a fictionalise interaction between some family members, which Angela skillfully produced.

The book is the story as we know it, incomplete but with enough information to give a sense of the era and the people involved. One of the most satisfying 'finds' just before the book was ready to go to the designer was the cover photo of Joseph Lucien and Clemence Libeau outside their house in Duvauchelle. I had been looking for such a photo for 10 years and was visiting the Akaroa Museum and one of the staff said they had just received some photos related to the Libeau family and they included that photo.

As more information comes to light we hope that people can share this through *La Gazette* and also undertake their own research of their particular family from where this book ends to the present day.

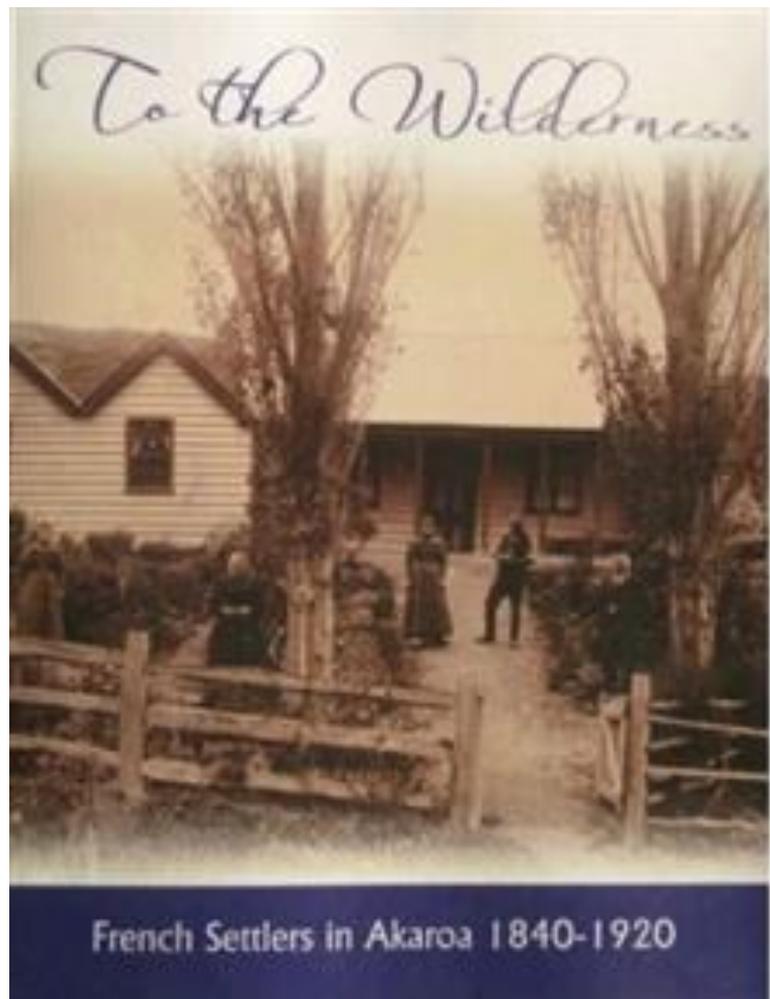
Angela Pyke

I also attended the 1990 Libeau Family Reunion, but at the age of seven I imagine my main interest would have been playing with my cousins and finding other kids to join our games. I do remember enjoying having so many family members in one place, and meeting new people who I couldn't believe were all part of my extended family. While I didn't know the Māori term 'whanaungatanga' at the time, I now recognise that this best describes what I experienced that day – people brought together by shared experiences and creating a sense of community, family and belonging.

At about the same age, I discovered a love of creative writing. I have no doubt this was a result of being surrounded by storytelling at home. My mum would read to my sister and me, and my dad would make up stories full of colourful characters. Both parents encouraged my desire to create my own stories, which peaked in my intermediate and secondary years. After school, I went to university where I studied English and Communications. I would sometimes study at Grandma (Gert Clark) and Pop's (Geoff Clark) house. They would often tell me about their earlier days, which I thoroughly enjoyed and probably found much more interesting than the essay I was working on. They were also big supporters of my writing.

After I graduated, I dabbled in journalism. While I enjoyed the research and storytelling, I felt I was lacking an outlet for creative writing. Needless to say, when Kevin asked me if I was interested in producing a book with him, I jumped at the chance. Not only would there be a fictional element to fill my creative void, but also a very meaningful subject matter – my family.

To this day, I feel honoured to have been asked to join Kevin on this adventure and grateful to all those who supported us. I hope people continue to enjoy reading it and adding to the stories of the Libeau family.



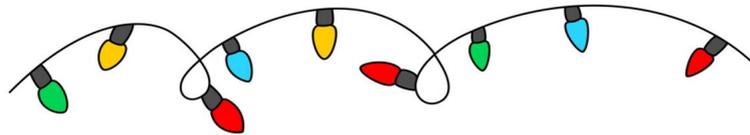
Libeau Family trip to Rochefort 2025



Several members of our family are planning to visit Rochefort, France next year, spending the weekend of 26-28 September in the city with so much relevance to our history. Mr & Mrs Libeau left France from Rochefort port.

If you would like more information or would like to register interest in joining the group please contact

Suzanne McNabb suzannemcnabb@gmail.com



Libeau Christmas function

This year we've plumped for something different for your family. We'll be meeting up at Cameron and Heidi Parsonson's home at 123 Joy St, Christchurch 1st December, starting at 2.30pm. You can bring your immediate family (children are welcome) and there is no cost to you for this excellent HIGH TEA. Please **bring your own preferred beverage**.

Please RSVP to Heather heatherlibeaudow@xtra.co.nz

Book and Calendar Updates

The committee is working on revising our family genealogy book. We're now accepting book revision submissions via <https://www.kiwiheritage.co.nz/libeau-submit/>. Please contribute.

We are also in the early stages of producing a Libeau family historical calendar.

It is planned to cover January 2025—December 2025. Cost is likely to be around **\$25+ P&P** and content includes text and graphics about the descendants of Joseph Libeau Senior and both of his wives. It is centrally spiral bound so you can hang it flat.

Pre-order your limited copy from Suzanne McNabb suzannemcnabb@gmail.com

To the Wilderness new edition

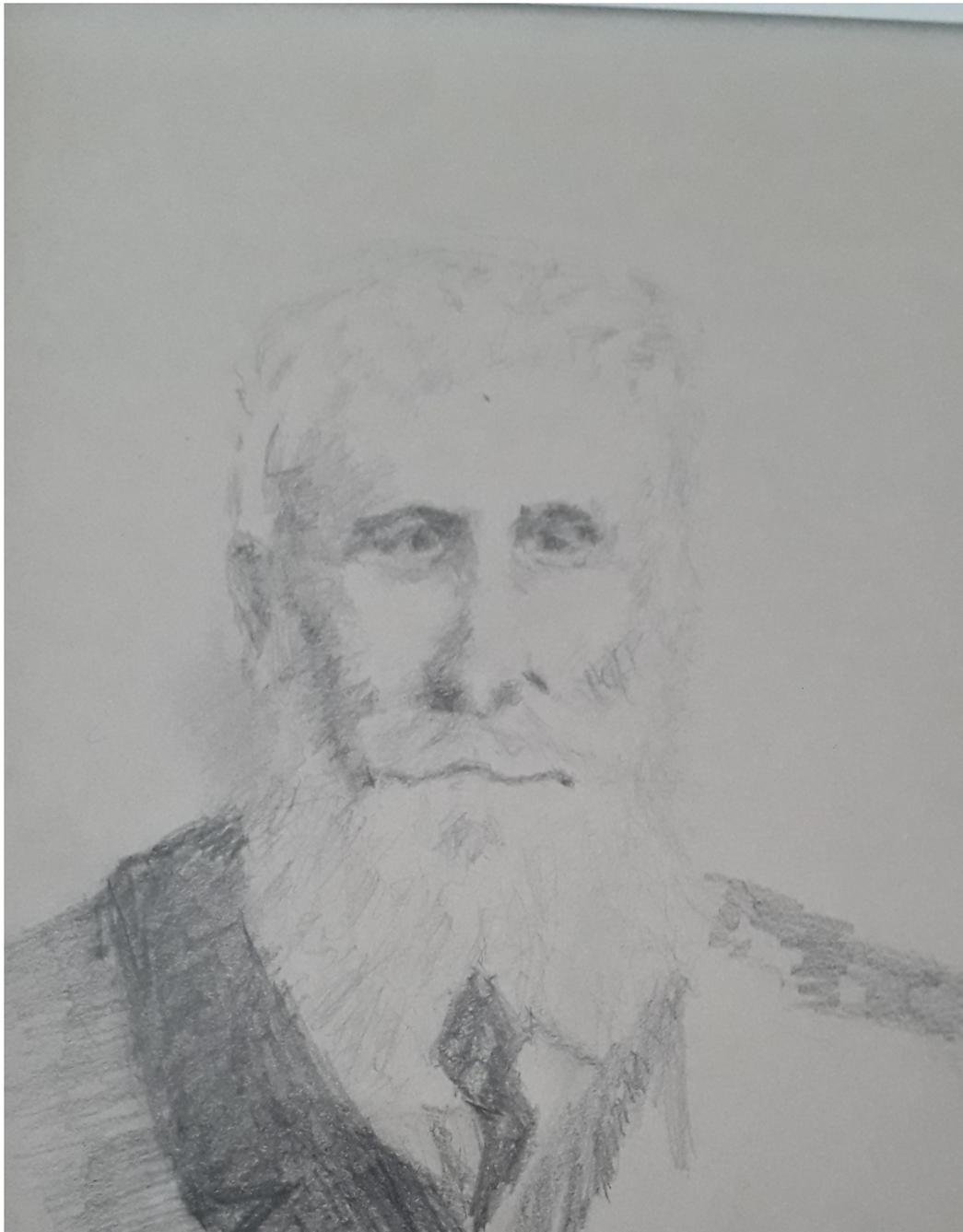
We are republishing this amazing family book with corrections made. We'll send it to the publisher for a proof copy. It will initially be made available at a great wholesale price to family members for **\$30 + packing and postage**. Recommended retail price will be higher than that. Send pre-orders to Suzanne suzannemcnabb@gmail.com

Juliet Palmer sketches Joseph Lucien Libeau

Joseph Lucien Libeau was my great-great-great grandfather, through his daughter Victoire Hunt.

Her son, Frederick Hunt, was my grandmother's father. Frederick and Grandma's mother (Alice Maud Reynish) were not married.

Grandma was Gladys Emily Palmer (nee Hunt); then come my father, Graham Donald Palmer, my siblings and me (Juliet Mary Palmer) and my son is Alexander Bjorn Halasz.



PANIERS DE TOMATES AU COUSCOUS

4 personnes

Ingrédients:

80 g de raisins secs

200 g de couscous

4 tomates

1 bouquet de persil finement ciselé

4 pincées de cumin

3 cuillères à soupe d'huile d'olive

jus d'un citron

sel, poivre.

Recette:

- ❖ Cuire le couscous comme indiqué sur le paquet.
- ❖ Creuser les tomates.
- ❖ Dans un saladier mettre la pulpe des tomates, les raisins secs, le persil, l'huile d'olive, le jus de citron et le couscous.
- ❖ Bien mélanger le tout.
- ❖ Remplir les tomates, les mettre au frais jusqu'au moment de servir.

Conseil: On peut ajouter une échalote hachée
ou des petits bouts de concombre.

TOMATO BASKETS WITH COUSCOUS

Serves 4

Ingredients:

80 g raisins

200 g couscous

4 tomatoes

1 bunch parsley finely chopped

1/2 teaspoon cumin powder

3 tablespoons olive oil

juice of 1 lemon

salt, pepper.

Method:

- ❖ Cook couscous according to the instructions on the packet.
- ❖ Scoop out the flesh of the tomatoes.
- ❖ In a bowl, put the tomato pulp, raisins, parsley, olive oil, lemon juice and the couscous.
- ❖ Mix well.
- ❖ Fill the tomatoes with the mixture, refrigerate until ready to eat.

Tip: Possibly add a finely chopped shallot and diced cucumber.

VEGETABLE FLAN

Serves 4 - 6

Ingredients:

600 g courgettes sliced
2 leeks sliced
200 g broccoli florets
150 g grated cheese
2 eggs
300 ml fresh cream
salt, pepper, nutmeg.

Method:

- ❖ Steam the vegetables.
- ❖ Put the vegetables in an ovenproof dish.
- ❖ In a bowl, mix fresh cream, eggs, grated cheese, salt, pepper and nutmeg.
- ❖ Pour the mixture onto the vegetables.
- ❖ Bake in a preheated oven at 160°C about 30 minutes.



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