



La Gazette

June 2025 #73



Libeau Descendants President's Report

Thank you all for attending our AGM today and honouring your Libeau connections. It's a humbling experience to know that everyone in this room is a relative.

2024/25 was another busy year for Libeau committee members.

At the Comte de Paris AGM in June Frances and I agreed to join their committee and it has been important to have our voice on various issues. In August we joined them for the Landing Day lunch at the Russley retirement village restaurant Abode. It is often a very wet day when we meet to celebrate the French arrival and history repeated itself – Peter Tremewan's translation of Captain Lavaud's log from the accompanying naval vessel L'Aube described the howling winds and freezing temperatures when they finally landed in Akaroa harbour after 5 months at sea.

“The weather was cold as the colonists went ashore at Akaroa to live under canvas. There had been rain and snow the previous day and overcast weather on the 19 August 1840. Families were

Inside this edition:

- President's Greeting/ AGM Report
- General Pau in 1919
- Pics from AGM
- Name badges
- Our ancestors' languages
- Libeau land deed
- Recipe
- Libeau-related photo
- Committee details

placed in one tent and single men in another.

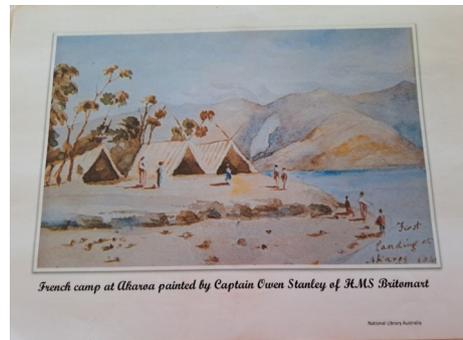
An officer was placed onshore to keep order amongst the colonists.”

The Comte de Paris AGM will be held at the Village hall Papanui Rd Sunday June 8 and we usually have a good turnout from the Libeau members at this meeting. The Landing Day lunch in August has confirmed the venue at The Old Vicarage in Halswell.

Website: libeau-family.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Libeau.Family

Contributions for La Gazette: fharrison55@hotmail.com



We had our Christmas function at Abode 2023 but as this venue is no longer available for functions we decided to plan our own event. Cameron and Heidi Parsonson hosted a delicious afternoon tea at their home in December. Twenty six family members joined us to celebrate the end of the year in style.

After deciding to republish the Libeau Family calendar Kevin Clark had produced in 2012, Frances used her inimitable skill to publish this in time for Christmas and the orders poured in. Supported by Suzanne who received the orders and posted them away, we are delighted to report that more than 60 calendars were sold.

Some went to France and many to younger family members. It provides a concise summary of the original settlers and is a keepsake as well as a calendar. We are looking at producing another one profiling the next generation ie our great grandparents.

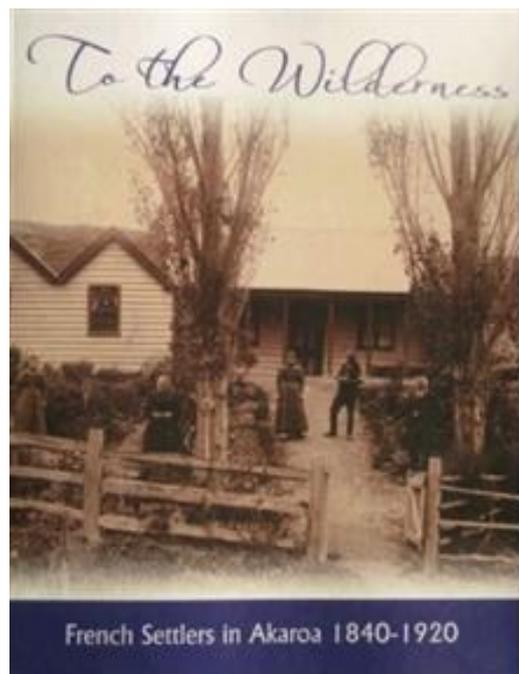
As well as the above, the committee has continued to focus on three areas.

Firstly the requirement to update the Constitution in line with government requirements. This was hanging over our heads until January when the subcommittee Cam Richard and I met to edit our current document to meet new requirements and have it ratified at this AGM.

Secondly. We are committed to updating the family genealogy which was last printed in 2012. At our last AGM we shared that the publisher had retired and refused to forward the database. Starting from scratch to scan information and develop a format to update new information has been challenging but Matt McNabb has competently spearheaded the process and we look forward to having this demonstrated this afternoon.

Lastly we are about to send the revised PDF of *To the Wilderness* for Amazon for the proof copy prior to publication through KDP – a wing of Amazon Publishing in Australia. It has been quite a journey investigating an economically efficient way to republish. I am currently re-reading it for my research and it summarises the lives of the French settlers in an accurate and engaging manner.

Initially 300 copies were printed and these sold out very quickly. There is much interest in the reprint-including relatives who missed out; the Akaroa Museum, secondary school French teachers and individuals keen on colonial history.



I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the committee members for their hard work and commitment to the cause. They bring a wide range of strengths including impressive publishing, genealogy research and tech skills; investing much of their time working towards our society goals. We meet regularly and enjoy the companionship of a wider Libeau family. My brother and son are part of the team. Without these hard working individuals much of our history would be lost.

WHY are we here today?

February 15 1840, our ancestor Joseph Libeau noticed a sign posted in the Rochefort town square.



Offering free passage to New Zealand in a few weeks' time, potential settlers were promised five acres of land in a beautiful bay and 18 months of free provisions. On the journey men and women would receive equal rations and children under 10 years would also be provided for. He must have rushed home to discuss this opportunity with his wife Magdelaine.

Frequently descendants question why Joseph and Magdelaine signed up for such a risky venture. After losing three babies already: Catherine 1829, Jean Baptiste 1837, and Sebastian 1838, she was pregnant again. Armand Isadore was born on the voyage and died the following year. Their two remaining children Catherine Melanie 9 and Joseph Lucien 6 were not likely to have much future in Rochefort. Joseph was a subsistence farmer— a gardener living off simple fare of chestnuts or buckwheat soup; vegetables and rough bread rubbed with garlic.

Living conditions were dire in France at that time with major upheaval after the Napoleonic wars. Was Akaroa potentially a better place to raise his family? Did this present a way to escape financial depression and poverty? The Nanto-Bordelaise venture organised by Captain Langlois promised a better life and possibly nothing could be worse than the life they had then.

Kevin Clark in *To The Wilderness* comments...

“With economic political and social unrest the prospect of a new life in a distant colony provided a lifeline to those prepared to take a risk and better themselves – our two included!”

They certainly displayed much courage and fortitude to leave Rochefort, particularly Magdelaine who was pregnant facing the knowledge of delivering her baby on board the ship. Coping with two school-aged children in a confined space was no mean feat either. After making up for the babies she had lost earlier, she added Clemence, Theodore, Francois, Joseph Lucien (most of us here are directly descended from him and his wife - fellow passenger Clemence Gendrot) but died in childbirth after her last child Julie Elizabeth (Laura and Frances link to her). Sadly her own mother had died in childbirth aged thirty seven.

Joseph Libeau was an entrepreneur in the making as he prospered in Akaroa – vegetables, stables, brick making; boot-legging wine in a time of prohibition and establishing the first dairy farm. Although the animals on board had not survived the journey, cuttings they brought of walnut, grape and fruit trees as well as French roses and a wide variety of seeds flourished in the microclimate of the peninsula and many are still found there today.

After Magdelaine died Joseph married Mary-Ann Hedgman; an English woman who produced several more children and was committed to Sunnyside asylum when pregnant with her last child. One of her daughters, 6 year old Emilie, returned to France with her godparents, and it is her descendants that we met in 2000 and will reconnect with in September. But that's a story for another day.

Most individuals embarking on tracing their family history have to start from scratch. We are so fortunate to have the Libeau Family genealogy book printed after the 1990 Family Reunion of more than 800 attendees –which was then updated 2012. Peter Tremewan's 'French Akaroa' and Kevin Clark and Angela Pyke's 'To the Wilderness' meticulously researched reference books are available to us too.

At a book launch recently I learned that while the Comte de Paris and L'Aube were sailing through stormy waters a French naval ship captained by Dumont D'Urville arrived in Akaroa on a scientific expedition and their journals give a glimpse of what Akaroa was like before the settlers arrived. They charted the harbour and went ashore for fresh water, shot pigeons and bought potatoes and beef, fish butter cheese milk, describing strong commercial activity under way between Maori, Europeans and visiting whaling ships when the settlers landed at Akaroa.

The Nanto-Bordelaise company representative and first mayor of Akaroa also had a science background and paid 60 pound by the Natural History Museum in Paris he sent seven specimen cases back of plants, insects birds returning to Paris with the last case in 1845. The French settlers also sent back cases of flora and fauna volcanic rocks; bell birds, molluscs; building up the Oceania collection at the Jardin des Plantes. I am looking forward to viewing these treasures soon in Paris.

Matt McNabb, Kevin Clark, Gilles Fournat, Anne West, Frances Harrison, Alison Hannah and other members continue to dig deep for the stories, and our La Gazette newsletter is committed to sharing these and documenting them for future generations.



Just before Peter Tremewan passed away in 2021 he handed me 12 boxes of his research- I have now sorted through these –unearthing some real gems; and my self-appointed task is to untangle fact from fiction and condense the complex history into an article accessible to those just beginning to learn about their past. I am uncovering more questions than answers and going down rabbit holes but plan to have something to share in September translated in French.

We are long overdue for a Rochefort reunion –as well as formal events 2000, 2007 some of us have returned to visit.

The cousins closed down the Rochefort-Akaroa Libeau branch in January after Gilles Fournat's comment that they were très vieux (very old) and les jeunes (young ones) n'étaient pas motivés. Our desire is that the September Petite Réunion will rekindle and reignite the Rochefort Akaroa connections. We all need to keep sharing the stories from our amazing, complicated, confronting and heart-warming ancestors. As you work with family to enter their details in the Libeau Family genealogy update, keep sharing the stories of those brave souls who travelled the sea and gave us our unique heritage.



Rochefort

General Pau's Visit to Akaroa 9 Jan 1919



Paul Marie César Gérald Pau, (29 November 1848 – 2 January 1932) was a French soldier and general who served in the Franco-Prussian War and in World War 1.

It was in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 that he suffered the loss of his lower right arm. By 1903, he had reached the rank of General, but retired from active service in 1911.

When war broke out in 1914, General Joffre recalled Pau from retirement to command the Army of Alsace. The Army of Alsace contained VII Corps (which took but failed to hold Mulhouse between 7 and 10 August), 44th Division, the 55th Reserve Division, the 8th Cavalry Division and the 1st Group of Reserve Divisions (58th, 63rd and 66th Reserve divisions).

Although initially successful, Pau was forced to withdraw after the defeat of the First Army at Morhange-Sarrebourg. When it was clear to Joffre that French hopes for a quick victory in Alsace had faded and that France now faced the real possibility of quick defeat. Pau's army was broken up and

sent north to participate in the First Battle of the Marne.

After this, Pau was not given another field command. After serving on the French Supreme War Council, he was sent in January 1916 as French representative to the Russian high command.

Pau also toured Australia, then New Zealand between September 1918 and January 1919 with the French Mission on a post-war diplomatic visit. While in New Zealand a kauri, *Aqathis australis*, was named the 'General Pau' in his honour.

General Pau visited Akaroa in 1919 and met with the mayor there along with descendants of the original French settlers who had arrived with hopes (quickly dashed) in 1840. 1919 was also the year that the last French passenger from the Comte de Paris, Joseph Libeau Jnr. died.



Top photo shows Pau in conversation with Etienne X Le Lievre and George Armstrong on the right. The man wearing the "trilby" is Joseph Lucien Libeau.





French Mission Parade down Rue Lavaud
1919



2018 Commemorations of ANZACs

You can order a Libeau family name badge

It has come to my attention that there are a few family members who don't know where to order a name badge for our social occasions.

I got mine a while back from

Precision Badges

PO-Box 7610

Sydenham

Christchurch

Tel: (03) 322 4058

Email: christchurch@precisionbadges.co.nz



Our AGM in pictures

After the President's Report an election of officers took place with minimal changes for the near future. We heard an update on the trip to Rochefort and the deferred FrenchFest now in 2026.



Information on how to input updates to the online genealogy section of our website was presented and then good news on progress of the *To the Wilderness* reprint.



Natter over a cuppa



Joseph Libeau land deed 1842-1845, approved 1852

No. 8.

Joseph Libeau.

5 Acres — Title from the Nanto-Bordelaise Company.
Date — 2nd April, 1845.

28 Acres — Title from the Nanto-Bordelaise Company.
Date — 18th September, 1842.

600 Square Metres — Title from the Nanto-Bordelaise Company.
Date — 14th October, 1842.

1 Acre — Title from the Nanto-Bordelaise Company.
Date — 24th August, 1842.

Requires — Crown Grant.

Description in Grant (for 5 acres in German Bay. see No. 33.)

Situated in German Bay in the harbour of Akaroa & bounded on the North by a road sixty links wide having a frontage on the aforesaid road of four chains & a depth of 1150 links — on the East by land the property of Philip Wooll & on the ^{West} by land the property of John Breitmeyer & containing four acres two roods sixteen poles.

Also all that allotment or parcel of land situated in German Bay — bounded on the West by the German Bay Road having a frontage on the said road of one hundred & ninety seven links — & on the North by the river road — with a depth of two hundred & twenty five links, containing one rood & twenty four poles.

Also all that allotment situated in Akaroa & on the top of Mount Benoit being a parallelogram twenty seven chains long & 1250 links wide — bounded on the South by an occupation road & on the North-East & West by unsold land & containing thirty three acres — is more particularly delineated in plan No. 1.

Also all that allotment situated at the North end of the Town of Akaroa & bounded on the South by the road reserved along the beach — on the East by land the property of Pierre Benoit & on the West by land the property of Joseph Price having a frontage

Application & Approval of Crown Grant 1852 4 parcels of 5000 / 28 acres / 600m² / 1 acre

No. 33

Joseph Libeau land deed continued...

to the aforesaid road of one hundred & fifty links - & a depth of seven chains, & containing one acre, is more particularly described in Plan No. 2.

Also all that allotment situated at the junction of Balguen Road & Joly Street having a frontage of ~~sixty-six~~^{ninety-nine} feet on the West side of Joly Street & of sixty-six feet on the North side of the Balguen Road - is more particularly described in Plan No. 3.

Proofs produced & evidence taken on Oath have been labelled, numbered as this & preserved for reference.

Copy of Report upon No. 8.

The Commissioner has the honor to report for the information of His Excellency the Governor in Chief that having carefully examined the Deeds laid before him in support of Claim No. 8, he is of opinion that it is satisfactorily established & that Claimant is therefore entitled to a Crown Grant of the Land.

January 1852.

J. C. Campbell
Clerk of Crown Lands, &c. &c.

✓ Crown Grant issued by J. C. Campbell

This is a land deed showing transactions between Joseph Libeau Senior and the Nanto-Bordelaise Company during 1842 and 1845. Application and Crown Grant approval occurred in 1852 involving 4 parcels of land. Descriptions are detailed above. What did he do with each of them? [Info supplied by Kevin Clark]

PÂTE À CRÊPES SUCRÉES

Environ 12 grandes crêpes

Ingrédients:

250 g de farine standard
4 oeufs entiers
50 g de beurre fondu
1 cuillère à soupe de rhum
500 ml de lait
50 g de sucre.

Recette:

- ❖ Mélanger tous les ingrédients ensemble.
- ❖ Laisser la pâte reposer au réfrigérateur au moins 2 heures.
- ❖ Cuire les crêpes à la poêle selon votre habitude.
- ❖ Déguster avec sucre, citron, confitures, chocolat.

SWEET PANCAKES

About 12 large pancakes

Ingredients:

250 g flour
4 eggs
50 g butter
1 tablespoon rum
500 ml milk
50 g sugar.

Method:

- ❖ Mix all the ingredients together.
- ❖ Chill in the fridge at least 2 hours.
- ❖ Fry the pancakes as usual.
- ❖ Enjoy with sugar, lemon, jam, chocolate.



Picnic at Akaroa (attendees unknown]. Note the French lace and lack of crinolines so circa 1890-1910.

Libeau Subscriptions NZ

Have you paid your [subscription](#) yet? It's currently **only \$20** 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 2025/26 \$20.00 You now have the option to pay by bank transfer. We are sending out invoices and tidying up our membership lists. The fee is very reasonable compared to other descendants groups and we hope you'll resubscribe with us for all the great benefits we are working on for you.

BNZ 02 0842 0171 8690 00 Contact, our Treasurer, Alastair membership@libeau-family.org

Libeau Subscriptions France

MADAME MCNABB SUZANNE

CR CHARENTE PERIGORD
AUBETERRE SAINT SEVERIN

Tel: 0969320036

Code établissement	Code guichet	Numéro de compte	Clé RIB
12406	00123	80024403037	90
IBAN (International Bank Account Number)			
FR76 1240 6001 2380 0244 0303 790			

Committee Contacts

President	Heather Libeau-Dow Ph 03 351 9006 or 021 351919	heatherlibeaudow@xtra.co.nz
Secretary	Desirée McKenzie Ph 03 689 8872	deay@xtra.co.nz
Treasurer	Alastair McGowan	membership@libeau-family.org
La Gazette Editor & membership communications	Frances Harrison Ph 021 08677582	fharrison55@hotmail.com
Web Masters & IT	Cameron Parsonson Richard Clark	camparsonson@gmail.com webmaster@libeau-family.org
Minutes secretary	Bruce Clark 03 942 1705	dianabruce1970@gmail.com
Other committee members:	Suzanne McNabb Matt McNabb Steve Wright Timothy Hewitt	suzannemcnabb@gmail.com matt.mcnabb@libeau-family.org whizzard17@gmail.com timhewitt88@gmail.com
Zone co-ordinators Southern North Is	Alison Hannah	alisonhannah@icloud.com
South Canterbury South Is	Desirée McKenzie	deay@xtra.co.nz
FRANCE rep	Alain Boussiron	alain.boussiron@orange.fr