

George Landon-Lane (1861-1958)

A hard-working active outdoor life

"A hard working, active outdoor life with good living is all that is needed" was Mr George Landon-Lane's reply to reporter Jeff Newport asking how one could live to such an age as the one that George had reached.

George was 95 at the time of this interview in 1956 at the local *Express* in Picton, where he resided with his daughter Coralie Corrigan. He warned that alcohol was to be put aside but smoking was 'permissible', although George himself didn't start until after the age of 50 years.



George was well-known in the outback of Marlborough and the Kaikoura ranges. He was the second son to Geo and Susan but third child to the pair and was raised in the Nelson and Tasman areas with Motupiko being the main stomping ground for the family for some years. Paul Corrigan, Grandson of George, states that at a young age George was out working bullocks between mills supposedly at the age of ten years due to his father's absence from home. It's during this time that George's family lived in Wakefield and states that the driving of bullocks between mills and farms was 'His Schooling'.

Perhaps it was the best schooling for him because just seven years later he was under the employment of Mr. William Atkinson of Molesworth Station in the year 1878. This was also the year that Mr. Atkinson sold out to two partners Herman Fuhrmann and Charles Willis, but before they took ownership George recalled that he helped in rounding up over 600 wild back-country cattle. Seeing the winter coming on and the fact his employer had departed for other ventures, George returned home to wait out the winter before being reemployed by Fuhrmann and Willis to work at the Tarndale Station. He worked here for three years before returning to the Molesworth where he was employed by Mr. Thomas Carter as head shepherd in the same locality as the [Murder-Suicide](#) that happened in the late 1860's.

It was during his time at the Carter Station that George along with his working partners were shearing 51,000 sheep in one year. George went on to own various properties around Marlborough and to work on such stations as Hillersden and Upcot.

After his time at Molesworth, George was put in charge of six men who were put to work eradicating the Scabby Sheep problem. Over 4,000 sheep were exterminated in the areas of Tophouse, Mt. Hope and the Red Hills over a two year period until on the 8th of March, 1890, George's gang shot and killed the last sheep on the slopes of Mt. Patriarch. George being the leader of the gang was paid 12 shillings a day and is possibly the man who killed the last scabby sheep.

After he was done with his government work he took up the [Charles Redwood](#) property. The original homestead still stands today and is simply known as the Cob Cottage. He resided here for nine years and it was during this time he married Maria Minnie White. Minnie was the daughter of William and Eleanor of Kekerengu and was born in 1875. Her father was working as a linesman at Kekerengu at the time of the marriage and had done similar work at Tophouse and other places in the region. The wedding was performed by Rev. Grace at the Riverlands Property. Minnie had a sister who died up north and is buried with her mother in law, a victim of the Napier Earthquake in 1931.

In the 1890's George's own father sued him for a pension as he wasn't paying him or keeping him with a roof over his head. George could not see the reason for giving his father a pension; He was able bodied and was not present during his childhood. He even credited his childhood to his mother Susan. Despite being sued by his father he was able to put it behind him and pay for his father Mizpah George's funeral bills, which cost £15.

Minnie and George soon started a family in the 1890's and also bought property at D'Urville Island in the Marlborough Sounds called Patuki where they raised five daughters and four sons. Life was going fairly decently until the morning of the 5th of April, 1917 when his son Arthur fell from a cliff and died. George had been collecting firewood in his boat with his kids and the local school teacher and had sent his kids away while he fetched the boat to its mooring when he heard his children calling out to him that Arthur had fallen (he may have even witnessed the accident). Arthur had been walking with his siblings around a sheep track some 30 feet above the beach and had fallen and landed on his head. He took Arthur to his home where Minnie bandaged him up and wrapped him in blankets while George went to check for a doctor on the S.S. Hinemoa, where he found there was none. He was said to have "rung up" for a larger launch than his own to convey them to a hospital, but because the sea was rough it couldn't get into Patuki. George made the decision to use his own launch to get as far as they could. Arthur was placed into the launch 'Louis' owned by the King-Turner family in either Bulwer or Admiralty Bay and was taken the rest of the way to Havelock by them. One can hardly imagine the hours spent on the 'Louis' trying to get to Havelock as fast as possible.

George and Minnie's eldest son Henry George was working as a clerk in Blenheim and had been in charge of arranging for an ambulance to pick up Arthur from Havelock. By the time the launch reached Havelock it had been over five hours travel and Arthur was far too weak to go on. In Newspapers of the time it's said he died between Havelock and Blenheim, however it is also said he died in his brother Henry's arms as he was loaded into the ambulance. Arthur was buried in the Number One Lawn of [Omaka Cemetery](#) alongside his grandfather William White.

William was apparently a nice grandfather and in fact had spent the day before his own death making a costume for his grandson for the Cantata at the local Town Hall. This accident that cost Arthur his life contributed to George selling the property and moving away. He took his family to the Awatere Valley where he bought the Awapiri Station which he farmed until the end of the Second World War when he was 85 and going blind. He had an accident chopping wood at the station which eventually resulted in him losing all his eyesight. This, if tended to sooner, would not have happened. He went into retirement with his wife and lived amongst his children's families up until his passing on the 6th of July, 1958 at the age of 97.



He was well-respected amongst his peers and the younger generation as a man who completely embodied the high-country farmer lifestyle as did the wider family of his. George was buried close to the road in the newer section of Omaka Cemetery alongside his daughter Veronica who contracted tuberculosis teaching in the London Slums and his granddaughter Susan, child of George's son Ronald who served with the Long Range Desert Group during the Second World War. George's wife Minnie was later interred alongside him in 1966. His siblings Edward and Jane are also buried nearby. The pair had nine children with all but two not having families of their own. One grandson became the ambassador of New Zealand for Brazil and another a published author.

Refs:

Hindmarsh, G. (2018, July 28) Outpost pioneer stories worth retelling. *Nelson Mail* on Stuff: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/nelson-mail/105770156/outpost-pioneer-stories-worth-retelling>

Thomas Fairweather, June 2020