

5th March, 1999.....



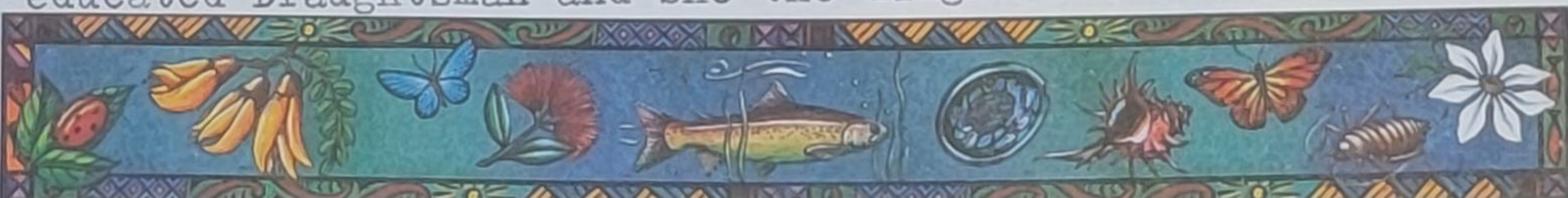
Dear Rachelle

Your Mum has asked me to tell you about your Great great Grand Parents who travelled from England to New Zealand on board the "STAR OF INDIA" - then known as the "EUTERPE" in 1879.

I think as you grow older you will become even more interested in your ancestors and it is most important to ask whatever you want to know from us as I have found by the time I became interested it was too late as my Grandparents had passed on. Grandma Rigby as I knew her, was born about 1857. She was the daughter of a Coal miner but I am unable to discover any more information on this family. Grandpa (whom I never knew) was born on 28th August 1854 and was the son of the Manager of the local Glassworks (these are still well known) in Staffordshire.

They were married on September 25th 1876 - he (Peter) aged 22 and she (Elizabeth nee Chapman) aged 19. The Marriage took place in the Parish Church at Wednesbury in the County of Stafford, England and the Certificate I have says that they were married 'According to the rights and Ceremony of the Established Church' by the Curate, James ^WWhite. The Certificate was signed by the Bridegroom's Father, but the Bride's Father could only attest with a Cross!

Considering the "Class" distinctions that existed in those days it would appear to us at present that this marriage was not popular with the Bridegroom's family - he being an educated Draughtsman and she the daughter of an apparently





uneduacted family. My Mother was very reluctant to speak about her family and so I can only conclude that there were some hidden secrets.

However by 1879 they had two daughters born in 1878 and 1879 repectively. On 2nd August 1879 the "EUTERPE" of 1179 tons sailed from London with eleven First Class passengers and 154 other Class passengers together with their Baggage and a small consignment of Freight, unfortunately the ship was run into by a steamer at Gravesend and had to put back to London for repairs. It sailed again on 12th August 1879 and arrived in Lyttelton, New Zealand 133 days later on the 24th December, 1879. During the period the Ship was in London for repairs the Rigby's second daughter, Mona, who was then about six months old was baptised on board the "Euterpe" at East India Dock. On arrival in New Zealand the couple settled in the Canterbury area and he was employed by the New Zealand Railways as a platelayer at the rate of six shillings (60 cents) a day. Over the years he was promoted to become a Ganger and eventually ended up in 1908 as Gate-keeper on the Rakaia River road/rail bridge. This bridge, about 1 and a quarter miles long, was a single lane used by both trains and wheeled vehicles. The job of the Gate-keeper was to close the gates to normal traffic when the train approached and re-open them again once the train crossed the bridge. I can remember crossing this bridge





on many occasions and it was not until after 1940 that
seperate bridges were built. The wage for the Gatekeeper in
1908 was seven shillings (70 cents) per day.

My Grandfather died when my Mother was 18 (1916) and my
grandmother lived until 1940 - I can remember her quite
clearly but unfortunately only as a confused old lady.

I have not got any worth while photos of the family sadly.

With much love from your Poppa -

Poppa

Keith Morrow Wilson.

