

BACKHURST George and HILLIER Maria

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George Backhurst, his wife **Maria (nee Hillier)**, and their daughter **Ellen Frances**, sailed from England on the 'Celestial Queen' to arrive in Auckland, 30 July 1872. They were welcomed by George's sisters **Ellen (Jeffery)** and **Mercy (Williams)** who had come to New Zealand in 1864. How excited Ellen and Mercy must have been to see their brother and hear of family at 'home' in England.

(See biographies for **Richard and Ellen Jeffery** and **Thomas and Mercy Williams** on this website.)

George, Ellen and Mercy were three of the twelve children of **William Backhurst** and **Eliza Wilkins**. The Backhursts had been centred around the Kent town of Boughton-Monchelsea where they had been 'agricultural labourers', probably for centuries. **George**, like so many settlers of the age, would have realised that he had no hope of acquiring land in the old country and would have heard that his sisters were doing well in Onehunga. On arrival in Auckland he found work as a labourer/gardener on farms around Onehunga. He eventually was able to purchase a few pieces of land, in particular one on Mount Smart Road where he pursued market-garden interests.

George and Maria gave birth to five more children: **George Alfred** b.4 Jan 1873; **Annie Maria** b.12 May 1874; **Elizabeth** b. 30 Aug 1875; **William Hillier** b.8 Mar 1877; and **Francis Henry** b. 18 Aug 1878. All five children were baptised at Saint Peter's Church.

Tragically **Annie Maria** died 4 March 1875, aged but 9 months; she was buried in **Saint Peter's Cemetery** two days later.

Tragedy was to strike again, six years later. **George** suddenly became ill and died on 1 July 1881 of 'paralysis'. He was only 38 years old. What caused his sudden death is not known, but it may have been due to tetanus. He was buried in **Saint Peter's Cemetery** two days later in the same grave as his daughter **Annie Maria**.

Two years later, his widow, **Maria Hillier**, married **George McQuay**, 3 April 1883.

(**George McQuay's** first wife, **Eliza**, had died 20 January 1881, and was also buried in **Saint Peter's Cemetery**.)

George McQuay died 25 May 1914, and was buried in the same plot as his first wife, Eliza.)

Maria died in 12 January 1918, aged 78, and two days later was buried in *Mangere Cemetery*.