

HEATHER Dennett Hersee and WHITE Mary Ann

contributed by great-great-grandson, Peter Wakeman

Dennett Hersee HEATHER (DHH) and his wife **Mary Ann** (nee White) left England in late 1838 and spent nearly a year in Sydney, where their first child was born. Leaving Sydney in early February 1840, their ship called at Russell just after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, before sailing for Port Nicholson. The next I know of them, they were living in Auckland on the edge of Hobson Bay about the end of 1840, as reported in the journals of James George, the baker. Piecing things together, I am sure that they were part of the crowd of 'disaffected settlers' who left the Wellington settlement in the ship '*Platina*' that beat the Government officials to Auckland by three days in September 1840. DHH is recorded, again by James George, as one of the collectors of funds to enable the building of the first Saint Paul's in Auckland, and when it opened in 1843 his two younger sons were christened there by the Rev Churton.

DHH and another person bought a block of land at the second set of land sales on the corner of what are now Pah Road and Manukau Road. Robert Forbes advertised in November 1841 that he was about to open a pub in that area to be called *The One Tree Hill Inn*, but the licensing records show that the licence for that intended pub was issued to DHH, so presumably the pub was to have been on his land. The licence was, however, shortly transferred to another pub at Epsom called *The Half Way House*, later called *The New Zealander*. My conclusions have been that the *One Tree Hill Inn* never eventuated, probably because DHH sold the One Tree Hill land at a good profit and bought again in Epsom. Robert Forbes then established the *New Leith Inn* at Onehunga.

DHH does not seem to have run the Epsom pub. He came from a farming background in England and it seems that he farmed the Epsom block and someone else ran the pub built there. That lasted till 1845 when, just after the sack of Russell in the North, the Heather family, now comprising husband wife and three sons, left on a trip back to England. Their ship was wrecked in Bass Strait; **Mary Ann and their eldest and youngest sons were drowned**, but DHH and his middle son **Arthur** made it by longboat to Flinders Island, from where they were eventually rescued. These two continued the return journey to England and Arthur was left there with his grandmother and maiden aunt to be educated whilst DHH returned to New Zealand. After a short time back in Auckland DHH sold the Epsom property and went as a trader to live in the Lower Waikato, near Te Awamutu. There he established a relationship with a local Maori woman who bore him a son who was christened by the Rev. Morgan. This son may have died, but in due course a second son, named **Stanley**, was born.

DHH's relationship with the local Maori was obviously good and his trading/farm establishment prospered until the early 1860s, but he was finally, like many other settlers, forced to withdraw. His house and store were looted and burnt. I believe that he probably continued trading with the friendly Waikato people either from Waiuku or Onehunga whilst this was possible, but at some stage he contracted cancer. I know that he made a trip back to England in 1864-1865, presumably to say goodbye. At the end of his life, it seems that he was boarding with Mr and Mrs Samuel Norman, Onehunga. I believe he would have known Samuel Norman for many years. They had mutual friends, the Shepherds, whom Samuel visited in the Waikato.

DHH died 28 January 1866 and is believed to be buried in **Saint Peter's Cemetery**.

Arthur Heather, Dennett's only surviving son, came back to New Zealand once his education was complete and joined his father for a time in the Waikato, long enough to learn the Maori language. He then joined the merchant firm of *Owen & Graham*, based in Auckland but with a branch at Waiuku. Arthur married **Maud Brown**, daughter of Joseph Brown (whom Bishop Selwyn had recruited from Eton/Windsor because of his abilities as both printer and musician.) The marriage was at Saint John's College in 1863. They lived in Ponsonby and were supporters of the new Anglican church there, and were on to their second child (my grandfather) when DHH died. Arthur became a successful merchant and came to live in Mount Eden, where Government House now is. He and his wife were staunch supporters of Saint Barnabas' Church, Mount Eden and a member of the Anglican Diocesan Synod. Later the family transferred their support to Saint Andrew's Church, Epsom, where many of my relatives are buried.

Following DHH's death, **Stanley Heather** was educated at Auckland schools, and then joined the firm of *A.B. Donald Ltd*; he was sent to the Pacific Islands as their representative. He married there - twice in fact, as his first wife died. Stanley himself died in heroic circumstances in Rarotonga during a huge storm. His descendants, bearing of course the name **Heather**, became one of Rarotonga's most established families.