

VOWLES Hannah Harriet Letitia

contributed by family researcher Tony Mattson, 99blackdogs@gmail.com

Hannah was only six months old when she was buried in **Saint Peter's Cemetery**.

Daughter of **Thomas Vowles** and **Louisa Bush**, Hannah was born in 1863 in Mulgrave, Victoria, Australia, and died in Onehunga, 26 April 1864.

This biography features the lives of her parents, **Thomas** and **Louisa**.

Thomas Vowles was born May 1829 in Blagdon, Somerset, England, the son of James Vowles and Hannah Veal.

At the age of twenty-one, Thomas emigrated to South Africa on the vessel '*British Tar*' that sailed from Plymouth on 13 July 1850 and arrived at Durban on 28 September 1850. Of the 102 passengers aboard, 83 were Wesleyans emigrating under the Reverend W. J. Irons' Emigration Scheme to provide support for the work of the missionary Reverend James Archbald, the first Wesleyan minister to settle in Natal (in 1842).

The Wesleyan Settler passenger list included **Thomas Bush** with wife **Sarah**, and children **Louisa**, James, Samuel, Thomas and William.

Louisa Bush, born 11 April 1836, in Bristol, Gloucester, England, was to marry **Thomas Vowles** five years later.

The Bushes were in Natal, South Africa, from September 1850 until at least 1853 (the death Certificate for Henry Bush, who died in Mulgrave in 1863 aged ten years, indicates his place of birth as being Natal.) In December 1852, Thomas Bush sailed for Australia on the '*Sarah Bell*'. His wife and the rest of the family left the colony for Cape Town, then on to Mulgrave, Victoria, Australia in September 1853, along with Thomas Vowles.

Thomas and Louisa next appear on the passenger list of the vessel '*Colchester*' which sailed from Melbourne in June 1855, arriving in Lyttelton Harbour, New Zealand, on 24 July 1855 as assisted immigrants. Thomas, 26, was listed as a '*general labourer*' and Louisa, 19, travelled separately as a '*servant*.' Thomas married Louisa in the Wesleyan Chapel in Lyttelton on 21st August 1855. She was five months pregnant at the time, giving birth to James Alfred Vowles in November of the same year.

Thomas and Louisa were to have four children in the five years following their arrival in New Zealand, during which time Thomas was a constable, based in Lyttelton.

In 1860 Thomas, Louisa and family lifted roots and returned to Mulgrave, Australia. During the next four years they gave birth to another child in Mulgrave, but lost two children to death.

The family returned to New Zealand in 1864 on the vessel '*Swiftsure*.' The passengers of this vessel were described in documents held by *Archives New Zealand*, as '*New Zealand Military Settlers*' under the military command of Captain Steward.

The '*Swiftsure*' landed at Onehunga in February 1864; the settlers were given small parcels of land before the regiment marched into the Waikato to provide military and defensive strength in the recently-taken area. However, within two months of returning to New Zealand, the Vowles lost another child, **Hannah**, born in November of the previous year in Mulgrave. **Hannah was buried in Saint Peter's Cemetery**.

Thomas and his family were amongst the military founders of the area known as *Kirikiritoa*, later renamed *Hamilton*. The story of the 4th Waikato Regiment is well-documented in the book '*Armed Settlers*' by H.C.M. Norris.

In August 1864, the military settlers of the 4th Waikato Regiment were provided with land at Hamilton in accordance with the provisions of their enlistment. The town plan was divided into eight parts (one for each company), four on each side of the river. One-acre town allotments were given out (by ballot to the rank-and-file), plus 1,000 feet of timber upon payment of ten pounds or a like-deduction from the soldier's pay (which for a private was only two shillings and sixpence per day.) This payment was refunded when the town house was completed. Farm sections were also provided - 50 acres for the lowest-ranked soldiers but substantially more for officers. In accordance with his enlistment, Thomas was given town-land in Hamilton. We have yet to trace the specific location of the farming-land; however there is a reference to *Victoria Street* in Louisa's death certificate. This refers to the town-allotment - now the site of Hamilton's Post Office.

In Hamilton, 1865, Louisa was to give birth to her seventh and last child; Julia Vowles was born 16 September 1865 but died on a few weeks later on 27th October. Four days later **Louisa** died of 'white leg', a deep-vein thrombosis following childbirth. She was 29, having given birth to seven children, and buried four of them.



On the completion of enlisted-duty in 1866, many military-settlers sold up and moved to the Thames district following discovery of gold in that area. After Louisa's death, Thomas and his three remaining children packed their possessions and followed other military-settlers to the gold fields at Thames, where the family settled. Some of Thomas' mining equipment is on display today in the Coromandel School of Mines and Historical Museum, 81 Rings Road, Coromandel.

This photo of Thomas was taken in 1900 (see John Clark's book '*Natal Settler-Agent*', p 251.)

Thomas died in Waihi on 30th December 1906. The '*NZ Herald*', 1st January 1907, reported '*an elderly man's sad fate.*' The newspaper's Waihi reporter wrote that Thomas had come to Waihi a week earlier to look after his son-in-law's house, while the family were away for their holidays. Thomas was last seen

by a neighbour to whom he talked briefly around 8.00pm. At midnight, a Mr. Wilton happened to be on his return from an eeling expedition when he noticed that the house was on fire. By the time he and a neighbour had raised the alarm and broken down the front door, the house was engulfed in flames. After the fire had cooled down, the Captain of the Brigade discovered Thomas's charred remains in a bedroom of the house, where the seat of the fire was thought to have been based.

The Coroner's verdict was one of '*accidental death by burning.*' **Thomas, seventy-seven years old,** described as a miner on his death certificate, **was buried at *Hamilton East Cemetery* alongside his wife, Louisa.**