

AUCKRAM George and daughter Mary Ann

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George Auckram, son of **Stephen and Elizabeth Hockham** (nee Potter), born 31st January 1803, was baptised 20th February 1803 at All Saints Church, Wandsworth, Surrey, England.

He had seven siblings: Stephen (half-brother from his father's first marriage), William, James, John, Maurice, Harriot, and Henry.

I have traced the surname name **'Hockham'** back to the 1400s in Sussex; it appears to originate from a farming area in East Sussex (north of Pevensey). The first known Hockham ancestor is a 'John the Elder' who took up land near Cuckfield, Sussex in 1472. The Hockhams were Yeoman, farming several properties on the High Weald of West Sussex, England for the next 300-plus years. The name went through various spellings and pronunciations with quite a variance over a 400-year period. Our Hockham branch settled at Reigate, Surrey in the 1650s. George's father, Stephen (snr), after the death of his first wife and remarriage, moved to Wandsworth, Surrey (1790s), situated on the river Wandle, which flows into the nearby Thames River. Stephen (snr) died in October 1821 (was buried as Stephen 'Ockham'). When George joined the British army, he was pronouncing the family surname 'Ock-krim' - hence the army produced **'Auckram'**, and this spelling and pronunciation followed George when he joined the Royal New Zealand Fencibles.

George's elder brother, Stephen (jnr), had served with the Duke of Wellington during the Peninsular War in Spain, seeing action at the Battle of Salamanca in 1809. In December 1821, George, aged 18, joined the 13th Light Dragoons, serving until discharged in August 1840, most of that time spent in India, (primarily in Bangalore, but also Mysore, Arcot, and Arnee), receiving three good conduct badges during the Bellary Campaign: 'a good and efficient soldier, trustworthy and sober.'

After his discharge, George returned to Wandsworth where he married **Catherine Fletcher** (daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Fletcher), 11th July 1842, in St Mary's Church, Putney, Surrey, and joined the Fletcher family at Point Pleasant, Wandsworth, where their first three children were born: **George** b. 1843; **John** b. 1845; and **Elizabeth** b. 1847.

This family of five came to Auckland on the ship 'Berhampore', arriving 16th June 1849. Their fourth child **Mary Ann** was born in Onehunga, 12th August 1849, followed by **Thomas Alfred**, 23rd July 1852 – both children baptised at **Saint Peter's Church**, Onehunga.

On arrival, George was allotted a section in the 'Top Settlement' of Onehunga. Today, the address would be 839/841 Manukau Road, Royal Oak. At first, George worked for the Government on road building; he then found employment on farms at Epsom. As a Fencible with the Onehunga force he was called to duty once at Mechanics Bay in April 1851.

Tragedy struck on 30th December 1853: George, while working at Epsom, was butchering a sheep when he cut himself badly, and was carried to the Onehunga doctor. Though admitted to Auckland Provincial Hospital, his wound become infected, and he died on 13th January 1854. He was buried in **Saint Peter's Church Cemetery** (his grave situated next to the church).

Catherine, thus widowed, was left with five children to support. She had to fight with the authorities over the allotment, as George hadn't completed the seven years' service expected of Fencible soldiers.

Captain John Jermyn Symonds insisted she and the children vacate the allotment before he'd pay her the £15 gratuity, but Catherine would not vacate until she had her money as she had no means to support her family of five. Symonds refused to pay and told her to look for support from 'some Auckland benevolent who might assist her'. She did one better than this; she petitioned acting-Governor Wynyard, telling him to 'make Symonds pay her the money.' Her courage and tenacity paid off and she moved to where she could support and raise her children - Little Muddy Creek (today's Laingholm). Symonds, her-now-adversary, had land nearby (Symonds Bay). How their relationship ensued, it's not known, though the whole affair caused a generational family bitterness with most authorities.

Tragedy struck the Auckram family a second time on 28th July 1856. **Mary Ann**, aged nearly 7, was using a piece of raupo to gather ashes in the hearth. As she knelt, pushing ashes together, her little brother Tommy, stood by watching - next moment her linen frock burst into flames. She spun round, startled, then screaming, ran out of their nikau cottage towards the neighbours, the Colleys. Her screams sounded through the valley. William Sheldrake, boat builder of Onehunga, came out of Coley's house, and grabbed a gummy bag to smother the flames. Mrs. Cain and Rebecca Coley came and took Mary Ann inside where they began covering her wounds with flour. Catherine Auckram was returning from James and Catherine Nixon's, having borrowed sugar, when a boy named Smith met her on the path and blurted out that her little girl had been burnt to death. Running to Coley's, Catherine saw her child was still alive, but dreadfully burnt. Catherine declared, 'I left no fire, there are no matches' and rounding on Tommy demanded: 'what happened?' Tommy, half-crying, said, 'I tried to pull the burning clothes off.' Mary Ann was shivering, wincing in pain, and asking her mother to take her home. Medical help was only available in Onehunga, some 12 miles away, and only by boat. William Horne, bushman, arrived at the Coley's house, and was asked if he could ferry the mother and child to Onehunga. Catherine's three elder children, George, John, and Bertha (Elizabeth) were now home from working in the bush. Catherine, Mary Ann and William left Big Muddy Creek (Parau) about five that evening and rowed to Onehunga. Shortly before reaching Onehunga, Mary Ann died in her mother's arms. Catherine took the child to the Royal Hotel on Lower Princess Street, Onehunga. There, on 30th July 1856, a coroner's verdict of 'accidental death' was returned. Mary Ann was buried with her father at **Saint Peter's Church Cemetery**.

In September 1858, Rev Arthur Purchas, vicar of St Peter's Church Onehunga, consecrated the new church after the relocation of its tower and spire. This relocation involved building over some earlier burial sites situated next to the church, including the Auckram site. Apparently, this upset the Auckram family, especially eldest son George Henry, who complained about it for the rest of his life. As for Catherine, it's not known how she felt, probably unhappily, going by the response of her son. She left the Anglican Church and attended the Presbyterian Church, but this could have been more a move of convenience for where she lived (Titirangi Hills), a Presbyterian minister was the only minister to visit that area.

Today, a brass plaque, sited on the western edge of Saint Peter's Church proudly commemorates George and Mary Ann Auckram's connection to St Peter's Church, the Fencibles, Onehunga, and all their Auckram descendants.

William Horne (1819-1896), who had ferried Mary Ann and her mother, was to marry Catherine six years later (April 1862). Catherine and William planned to marry at St Peter's (Source: Intention to Marry), but the marriage did not take place as intended. On Catherine's death certificate it states she was married at Awhitu, more likely at the Presbyterian Mission, as that was the church she was then

attending. Both her death certificate and the newspaper article spelt her then surname incorrectly, spelling it Horan, when in fact it was **Horne**. William Horne had several occupations over the years: bushman, bricklayer, and gum digger. The Auckrams and Hornes lived and worked along the north Manukau coast from Kakamatua, Cornwallis, Mill Bay and both Big and Little Muddy Creeks. When Catherine died, 27th August 1881, she and William were living at Waikumiti (sic) in the vicinity of today's Kaurilands Road.

Catherine was buried in an unmarked grave at the Whau Presbyterian Church (today's Saint Ninian's Avondale) by Rev Sommerville.

William Horne died in December 1896 and was buried in a pauper's grave at Waikumete Cemetery.