

BAKER Lydia

these biographical notes were curated by John McAlpine,
and they await confirmation/correction, and further detail/expansion from family descendants ...

The Burial Register of **Saint Peter's Church, Onehunga** lists **Lydia BAKER**, aged 22 years, as being buried in Saint Peter's Cemetery, 13 March 1891. The officiating priest was the Rev W E Mulgan, Vicar of Onehunga. The Baker family lived in Church Street, Onehunga.

NZ Herald, 12 March 1891

A SERIOUS CASE.

THE TREATMENT OF A COSTLEY HOME PATIENT – A STATEMENT BY DR. SCOTT.

A young woman, named Lydia Baker, 20 years of age, died at Onehunga yesterday, at the residence of her mother, in Church Street, from brain disease and paralysis. She had been an inmate of the Costley Home, but was removed from that institution on Sunday last, and was afterwards under the charge of Dr Scott. As the doctor considers that an inquest should be held, it is to take place at Onehunga yesterday, at the Railway Terminus Hotel, before Colonel De Quincey. The following particulars regarding this case have been supplied by Dr Scott:

"The girl Lydia Baker had for about four-five years past been suffering from a form of lunacy, which included paralysis more or less violent, and had been treated in the Auckland and Wellington Asylums. In the middle of January of the present year she was removed to the Costley Home from her parents' residence at Onehunga, At that time she was quite bedridden, and was in such a state of mental stupidity that she was filthy in her habits. During the seven or eight weeks she had been in the Costley Home, she developed bedsores, including two of immense size and depth— one on either side of the hip, exposing three or four inches of the thighbone on both sides, the tissues having decomposed. This showed that she must have lain upon her bare hipbones for some time past. When she went into the Costley Home her condition was such that bed sores would be rapidly formed, and this should have induced the authorities to guard against that as much as possible, and to have done everything that could be done to mitigate the severity of the sores, and the pain which they would cause. I believe that could be done only by means of properly equipped beds, having water or air cushions, or, better still, water or air beds, with bed urinals, and that the nursing of such cases should be continuous, so that the risk of producing bed sores would be minimised. I understand that Mrs Moss has been most assiduous in her attentions to the case, and I believe Dr King has also done his duty to the best of his ability, but there are not in the Home the proper appliances for the treatment of such a case. Dr King has reported this to the Board and Mrs. Moss has asked for assistance; but the Board have deferred the consideration of the matter.

I am told by the mother of the girl that she had been nursed, first by a woman somewhere about 40 years of age, another inmate of the Home, who could use only one arm and one leg, and after a further period by a woman 50 years of age, and that when the mother of the girl was present liquid nourishment, in the shape of milk and beef tea, was refused to the patient. I am informed that the two nurses were in the habit of showing the bedsores to visitors to the Home, but that Mrs. Moss very properly objected, on the ground that this disturbed the patient. To show how necessary it is that these cases should be specially provided for I will mention another circumstance: It is a recognised fact that no person who comes into contact with decaying and decomposing tissues should at the same time be attending to maternity cases. This is a fundamental and rigorous law, but it has been repeatedly broken

at the Home, for whilst Dr Walker (who had acted during the absence of Dr King) protested that everything had been done that could have been done by the staff, he showed that Mrs. Moss had attended this case three times a day, dressing the wounds, and three times a week had attended maternity cases.

The girl was removed from the Home on Sunday last in a dying condition, and somebody ought to have stopped it. She existed dying until Tuesday morning. She was removed by order of her mother, but it was a most risky proceeding in her precarious condition. Mrs. Moss is said to have dressed the wounds three times a day, as often as could be expected of her, with the other duties she must perform; but this attendance was nothing like what was required by the case. During the time which would elapse between the visits of Mrs. Moss, the patient's condition would become filthy; and in the absence of Mrs. Moss there were only two other inmates, cripples, to attend to the woman. The presumption is that they were incapable of giving her proper attention. What is wanted is a small ward for a case like this, and a trained nurse. Such a case would be dangerous in a hospital. There should be a special, and if possible, isolated ward at the Costley Institute for cases like this, and they should be kept away from the maternity department of the Home."

Dr King, when questioned on this subject, said that when the girl was brought to the Costley Home, he objected to her admittance, on the ground that the Home is for aged poor, and not for people from the Lunatic Asylum. He is of opinion that Mrs Moss requires assistance in the work of the Home, but says that, so far as he knows, there has been only one maternity case there since the 1st of January, and that that occurred last week.

NZ Herald, 13 March 1891

THE CASE OF LYDIA BAKER

INQUEST AT ONEHUNGA

An inquest was commenced at the Railway Terminus Hotel, Onehunga, yesterday, at three o'clock, by Colonel De Quincey, to enquire into the circumstances surrounding the death of Lydia Baker. A jury of six were empanelled, of which Mr. Moselen was elected foreman. Mr S. Hesketh appeared on behalf of the Charitable Aid Board. There were also present: Dr W. G. Scott and Dr King, Mr Strathern, and Mr and Mrs Moss.

The first witness called was Mrs Baker, mother of deceased, who deposed that on Sunday last she brought her daughter from the Costley Home, and on Tuesday she died, at witness' residence, in Church Street. Her reason for bringing deceased to her residence was that she considered insufficient attention was given at the Home. She had been an inmate for seven weeks, suffering from paralysis and imbecility. When deceased was taken to the Cosdey Home, she was free from sores, although bedridden. At times she was sensible, while at other eha seemed absent-minded. She had been committed to the Lunatic Asylum on the 1st March 1890, by the Onehunga Bench, and remained there about two months, when witness got permission from Dr. Hlassell to remove deceased, on the condition that nourishing food would be provided for her as she was very weak at the time. After keeping deceased for four months, witness made application for her readmission to the Asylum, but she was informed that the course of committal would again have to be gone through. Witness then consulted with Rev Mulgan, and he got deceased admitted to the Costley Home. At that time, she was unable to use her limbs. Witness visited deceased in the Home a month after her admission, and was then told by a nurse, named Madam, that she had sores on her side, and on a subsequent occasion when she visited, the same nurse told witness that the other

side of deceased was getting as bad as the one she had previously seen. At a later period, deceased was removed upstairs in the building, and placed in charge of another nurse, Mrs Duncan, who also showed witness the sores on deceased's body, when she visited her. Dr King was present at the time, and witness drew his attention to the state of deceased's body. The bed she was lying on was a mattress filled with straw. The day previous to deceased being removed from the Home, a water pillow was provided for her to place under the sores. Witness only knew the name of the first nurse as 'Madam' who said she had only the use of one arm and had to assist herself on the floor by the chairs.

By the Foreman: When deceased was admitted to the Home she had no sores on her body; when witness visited her a month later, deceased's condition was very much worse than when she entered, and had the appearance of insufficient attention, which she complained about, saying "they had neglected her." The reason she took deceased away from the Home was on account of the nurses' grumbling; and, further, she considered that she (witness) could give deceased greater attention.

By Mr Hesketh: When deceased was admitted to the Wellington Asylum, about two years ago, she was in a bad state of health—insane—but not dangerous. Since then, she had become worse both mentally and physically. Six weeks after arrival in Auckland witness consulted Dr Beale on deceased's condition. He prescribed for her with success for a time, but the doctor did not accomplish a permanent good, and she continued getting worse till taken to the Asylum. She took her daughter to the Costley Home on account of Mr How complaining of the noise she made in the house. She was able to give her daughter the same attention in her house as what she could have got in the Costley Home. If she had not got her daughter into the Costley Home, she did not know where she could have put her. This completed Mrs. Baker's evidence, and the inquest was then adjourned till ten o'clock this (Friday) morning."

NZ Herald, 14 March 1891

THE DEATH OF LYDIA BAKER

"The inquest on the remains of the girl Lydia Baker was resumed yesterday, at the Railway Terminus Hotel, Onehunga, before Colonel De Quincey. Dr Scott gave evidence that deceased was a person who required a large amount of attention not to be obtained at home. She was a patient that should have been received into something like a workhouse infirmary. She wanted good attention, but not too much restraint, and he thought the Costley Home to have been the best place for her, and the authorities having received her there, should have taken the proper steps to have bestowed every attention to her, in fact, a skilled nurse should have been in constant attendance upon her. Dr Scott spoke as to the condition of deceased, and said he thought her death was accelerated by the slouching of the bedsores. In addition to those already mentioned, there was a large sore involving the whole of the heel, the skin being gangrenous. There was also an angular one on the right wrist, due, perhaps, to the presence of braid, which it is said was used to tie the wrists together. There were more than twenty bed sores.

Mrs Moss, matron of the Home, deposed that she received great assistance from strong and willing persons in the institution. Witness had all necessary appliances for ordinary cases of sickness. It had never been suggested to her that other appliances were necessary. Mrs Baker, when she fetched deceased from the Home, thanked witness for the kindness shown her, and said "as deceased was failing, she would like her to die at home." Mrs. Baker also said, "that if she had her daughter at home, even with more help, she could not have done as much for her as was done at the Costley Home." Deceased's hands were tied once with a pocket-handkerchief, but as soon as witness knew of it, she untied them and gave instructions that they were not to be tied again. Deceased was attended to as

frequently as was deemed necessary. Witness had attended only one maternity case since deceased was in the Home, and that was on the 6th of March. Dr King gave evidence as to the condition of deceased and deposed that he had told Mrs. Baker that if her daughter was moved from the home, it would be at Mrs Baker's own risk, and that the journey might be fatal. Mrs. Baker then seemed perfectly satisfied with what had been done for her daughter. Deceased was suffering from general debility. He had asked the secretary of the Board for a waterbed but was informed that the only one they had was at the Hospital out of repair. The cause of her death was, in his opinion, brought on by the breaking of her system, accelerated by a bad habit of deceased. He had objected to such a case being admitted to the Home.

Mr S. Hesketh addressed the jury, who the returned a verdict of " Death from natural causes", adding a rider "That Dr Scott be exonerated from blame in bringing the matter forward."