BROWN Robert

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

Daily Southern Cross: 13 July 1874

The Drowning of Robert Brown

An inquest was held on Saturday at the Manukau Hotel, Onehunga, on the body of **Robert Brown**, found drowned, before Captain Symonds' coroner, and the following jury : Messrs T. Armstrong (foreman), J. Neville, H. Charman, T. Sharp, W. Morris, J. O'Neale, J. J. Austin, D. McGregor, T. Abraham, W. Hollis, J. McKenzie, G. Palmer.

After viewing the body, the following evidence was called:

Mary Catherine Kenealy deposed to having seen the deceased at the bar of the hotel between 3 and 9 pm on the 8th inst. He took another man on board the *'Tawera'* and came back shortly afterwards for two glasses of brandy, which he took away with him. She identified the body and testified to his character as a quiet man.

John O'Neill, a seaman of the *'St. Kilda'* deposed to knowing the deceased for 14 or 15 years. He had seen him on the night of Wednesday, the 8th inst., at about six o'clock.

Barnard Greene, a constable in the Armed Constabulary, deposed to receiving information from Captain Flowerday as to the missing man on Thursday, the 9th instant. He made inquiries and learnt the man had left the *Manukau Hotel* at 10.30 p.m. on Wednesday to go onboard the *'St. Kilda'* or the *'Tawera'*. He learnt from a man named F. Wilhams that he had heard a splash on that night, but did not think anything of it, as the men were at work. Wilhams arranged with Captain Flowerday to search for the body, and on Friday morning the body was discovered at low tide, hooked and bought to the surface. There was a slight bruise on the back of the neck. The *'Tawera'* was lying on the eastern side of the wharf, and the *'St. Kilda'* on the west. Witness supposed that the man had fallen into the water in attempting to get on board. The *'Tawera'* sailed before the body was recovered, and consequently the witnesses on board were unable to attend.

Robert van Zinzan, MRCSE, deposed to examining the body, and found a slight abrasion on the back of the neck, which might have been caused by falling from the wharf. The man's age was about 33.

The Coroner stated that the evidence was before the jury, and there was nothing to show that any violence had been used.

The jury, after a short consultation, returned a verdict of:

" Found drowned by accidentally falling from the wharf. "

A rider was added, recommending the placing of an additional light on the wharf.

In response to Robert's death, the harbour authorities at Onehunga were explicitly advised to improve safety protocols. They were encouraged to place lights at much shorter, regular intervals along the wharf and to ensure that every vessel moored there displayed a prominent light at the top of its gangway to prevent future night-time falls.