

This year 2011 has been a challenge. I'm acutely aware of the need to gather the raw material required to complete the family history, while the current family members are alive.

At the end of 2010 we lost Athol Stace. Athol was my father's first cousin, and his mother Rita Benner. This had the benefit of unearthing a large amount of data Athol had stored in his back sheds. Obviously long forgotten about. My appreciation goes out to his executor Peter Johnson for ensuring as many of the letters and photos were passed on and not just dumped in the dumpster.

We were able to secure and transcribe letters from William Benner, our great grandfather Albert's older brother, who had moved to Indianapolis (USA) with their eldest brother Arthur. These are now [on this website](#) in original and transcribed form.

Also my mother Renee Benner ( nee Maude ) moved permanently to Carter House Rest Home. As a result my brother Stephen and I cleared her home and managed to secure and save many valuable documents and photos.

With the wealth of material from previous efforts, there is a huge amount to process, and this will be done in due course.

In regards to the family 'tree', I have managed to document now the family lines back to at least when they came to New Zealand, and in many cases well back from there. If anyone wants a copy of these I have them in PDF form, and will email them to you. As most of these contain details of living persons they are not published online.

I have a couple of challenges I want to overcome asap. The first is to determine exactly the birth of William Henry Phillips Jnr. Anecdotal evidence indicates he was born in Truro Cornwall in 1845. There is no such record in the British BDM Registers, however it may have been elsewhere in Cornwall, or even Plymouth, which while being close by, is actually in Devon County. His elder sister Bessie was born in St Clement, Truro, whilst his younger sister Annie was born in Devon.

Another challenge is the death and burial details of his birth mother Betsy Jane Phillips ( nee Callaway ). She apparently died in 1868 ( mentioned on the marriage certificate of his father to a second wife Elizabeth Phillipps - note the two 'P's ). There is no formal record of her death, or location of burial. W.H. Phillips Snr is recorded as being buried in Marawera cemetery in Tapawera, where the rest of the family are buried, but there is no headstone. There is only a blank spot alongside his second wife's plot. It is possible he is buried elsewhere beside his first wife, wherever that is. In my next visit to Nelson I want to check out the cemeteries in Motueka.

Finally we have the mystery of what happened to [Theodore William Hickson](#) . Whilst not a direct descendent of mine, his story is quite captivating. He was a surveyor and inventor in New Zealand. He left his family here in the late 1880's and travelled to Australia, then the USA. Patent application records have him living in New York in 1898, and then the trail goes cold. There are family stories of him remarrying in the USA, but nothing firm.

That's it for now. More news as it hits the presses.

Gary