

NAILSEA FAMILIES

COOMBS

A Link With New Zealand

By Anne Megget

&

Margie Lyall-Coombes Denniston



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Addendum Marriage on 25 June 1810 of a John Coombs and Frances Maria Brown.

Part 2

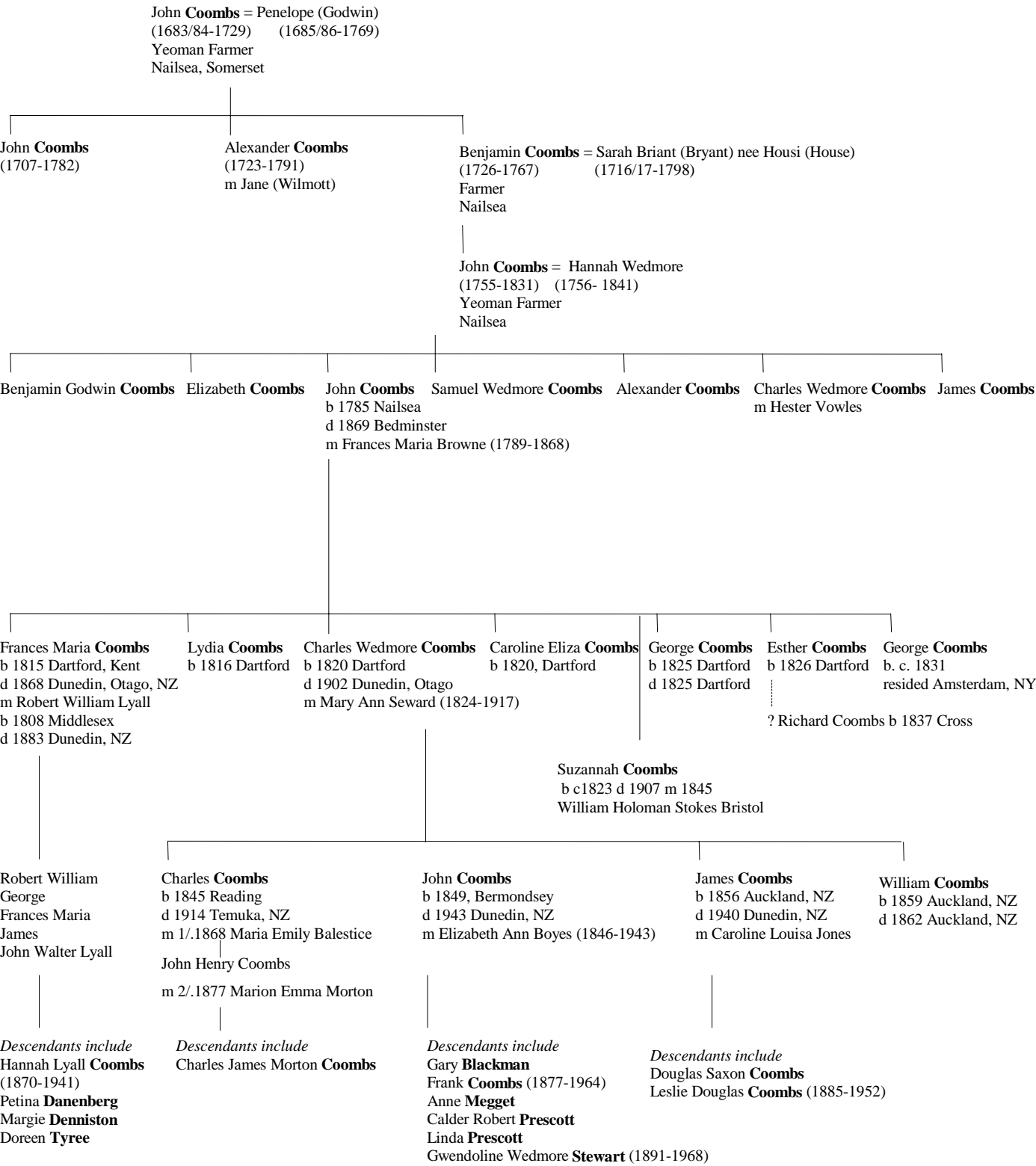
Coombs - A link with New Zealand by Margie Lyall-Coombes Denniston

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Addendum Robert Lyall and William Robert Lyall.

COOMBS FAMILY
A NEW ZEALAND LINK TO NAILSEA

b = born or baptised; d = died; m = married
(Chart does not identify all known descendants of John & Penelope)





Editor

Note - Investigations carried out in 2005 have failed to trace the "brass plate". The Bromley Local Studies Librarian has tried to ascertain details of where the plate is or may have been but was unsuccessful. The following reply was sent to Nailsea and District Local History Society "I am afraid that we have been unable to find evidence of its existence in both St Peter and St Paul's Church, Cudham, and the church of the same name in Central Bromley". Yet another mystery that currently defies the family historian!

Other versions exist in New Zealand. There is no recollection of a link with Bromley and examination of the text suggests that this is a copy of the original tombstone with additional data added.

Illustrations

These have been supplied by the authors apart from those indicating that the copyright lies elsewhere.

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INTRODUCTION

It has been your editor's privilege to be in a position where, with the aid of Phyllis Horman (and sometimes other members of Nailsea and District Local History Society) he has been able to help those researching their family connection with Nailsea. *Here as in the title of this book "Nailsea" has been taken to mean those particular areas which are of interest to the Society. These include Backwell, Nailsea, Tickenham and Wraxall and to a lesser extent Brockley, Chelvey and Failand.*

The Society has many queries referred to it over the years and it has not been unknown for visitors from overseas to come knocking on the editor's front door.

Not least of the names has been COOMBS (and some variant spellings). Much has been learnt of the family to the extent that your editor feels that he is an honorary member of the family being in touch with several branches and having had the pleasure of Margie (one of the authors of this book) and her husband Gary staying with him for a few days in 2003 while Anne Megget has also telephoned

Anne and Margie were asked to put together a few words on what had happened to the New Zealand branch of the family since its arrival in New Zealand. This book is the result. *It should be noted that in this volume the spelling of surnames is as per the source material.*

This is not the normal "local history" but it is well worth reading and justly deserves its place in our "People and Places" series.

If any reader has any further information on this family the editor will be pleased to receive it. See address on the back cover. Alternatively contact the authors whose addresses are contained in the text.

Peter Wright
Editor and Publisher for Nailsea and District Local History Society
17th November 2004

Footnote

Because of the new discoveries relating to the family parts of the text have had to be rewritten causing a delay in publication until late in 2005.



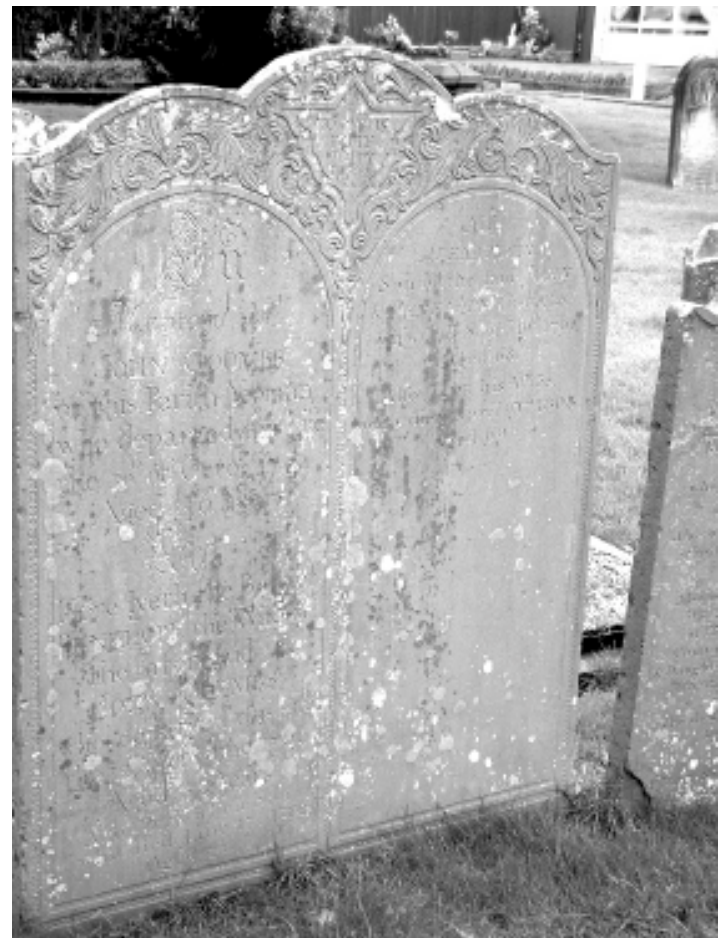
01 Holy Trinity Church Nailsea c1900 (N&DLHS)



02 Anne Megget beside John and Penelope Coombs' gravestone in Holy Trinity Churchyard Nailsea



04 Tombstone of John & Penelope etc beside Benjamin (N&DLHS)



03 Tombstone of John & Penelope at Holy Trinity Nailsea 2004 (PCW)

NAILSEA FAMILIES

COOMBS

A LINK WITH NEW ZEALAND

Part 1

by Anne Megget

Holy Trinity Church, Nailsea, Somerset (Pic. 01) is surrounded by tombstones, some recording the deaths of individuals from as early as 1636. One of a group (Pic. 02) of these tombstones is "In Memory of John COOMBS, of this Parish Yeoman, who departed this Life the 30 Octo^r 1729 Aged 46 Years" and "Penelope his wife, who died 25 June 1769 aged 88 years". (Pic 03) On this stone are also recorded the deaths of John and Penelope's sons, John and Alexander, and Alexander's wife, Jane. An adjacent tombstone records the deaths of Benjamin Coombs on 3 June 1767, aged 41, and Sarah his wife, on 8 May 1799, aged 82. (Pic. 04) There are some other details, which due to erosion of the stones, are now too difficult to read clearly. Transcriptions of these and other Coombs tombstones are included in the booklet on Holy Trinity Churchyard, Nailsea, Tombstone Inscriptions.

Descendants in New Zealand have copies of tolerable reproductions of the John Coombs headstone at Holy Trinity Church. They show Benjamin Coombs as a son of John and Penelope and his wife Sarah BRIANT, a widow, maiden surname HOUSI, with her age at death, 82. Spell-

ing of names in the 18th century, and even down to the present day, was of course often inconsistent and these names are probably to be equated with the more usual BRYANT and HOUSE. The texts continue with additional data that is not on the Nailsea headstones. John Coombs, son of Benjamin and Sarah, who was born at Nailsea, on 25 May 1755, died 4 May 1831, and was buried at Nailsea. (Pic. 05 *A Gatepost apparently bearing his initials*) He married, Hannah WEDMORE, who died 12 January 1841.



Their son John was born 2 April 1785 and his wife was Frances Maria BROWNE. Both were buried at Bedminster. One text concludes by noting that John and Frances Maria's son Charles Wedmore Coombs born at Dartford, Kent, 8th Oct 1818, resides now, 20th March 1881, at Dunedin New Zealand. He married Mary Ann SEWARD, born at Shinfield 6th April 1824. They were married at Reading, Berkshire, 27th April 1844.

The same information as this version is written on one side of a card, which was evidently sent to Dunedin. The card concludes with the words: "Their Son Charles

W Coombs resides now March 1881 at Dunedin New Zealand & this card is presented to him by his brother George Coombs with kind regards & best wishes." It also bears the words "Amsterdam N. Y." The other side of the card shows the Nailsea headstone with its exact inscription. There is clearly a long history of family interest in our Nailsea forebears!

The journey to New Zealand and the path that led from Nailsea via Dartford, Reading, and Bermondsey to the Antipodes is proving to be an interesting story, albeit a slow search.

The LDS film of Bishop's Transcripts for the Parish Church of Dartford, Kent records the baptisms of Charles Wedmore

(Coombs) and a sister, Caroline Eliza, on 3 December 1820. (Illus. 07) The dates of birth are not given and, as mentioned earlier, family records show Charles Wedmore was born on 8 October 1818. The parents' names were John and Frances Maria Coombe and John's trade was given as currier. The earlier 1818 baptisms for Dartford show two entries for children of this couple, Frances Maria was born 17 (month unclear but could be February) 1815, and Lydia on 3 December 1816, both daughters of John & Frances Maria Combe and, again, John's trade was currier. (Illus. 08) The 1825 register for Dartford records the baptism on 9 February of George, son of John and Frances Maria Coombs, and John's occupation was currier.

BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of *Dartford* in the County of *Kent* in the Year 1820

When Baptized	Child's Name	Parents' Name	Abode	Quality, Trade, or Profession	By whom performed
Christian Name	Surname				
1820 Dec 3 No. 633	Charles	John & Frances Maria	Dartford	Currier	J. Gurney
Dec 3 No. 634	Caroline Eliza	John & Frances Maria	Dartford	Currier	J. Gurney

07 Charles & Caroline Coombe Baptisms at Dartford 1820

BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of *Dartford* in the County of *Kent* in the Year 1818

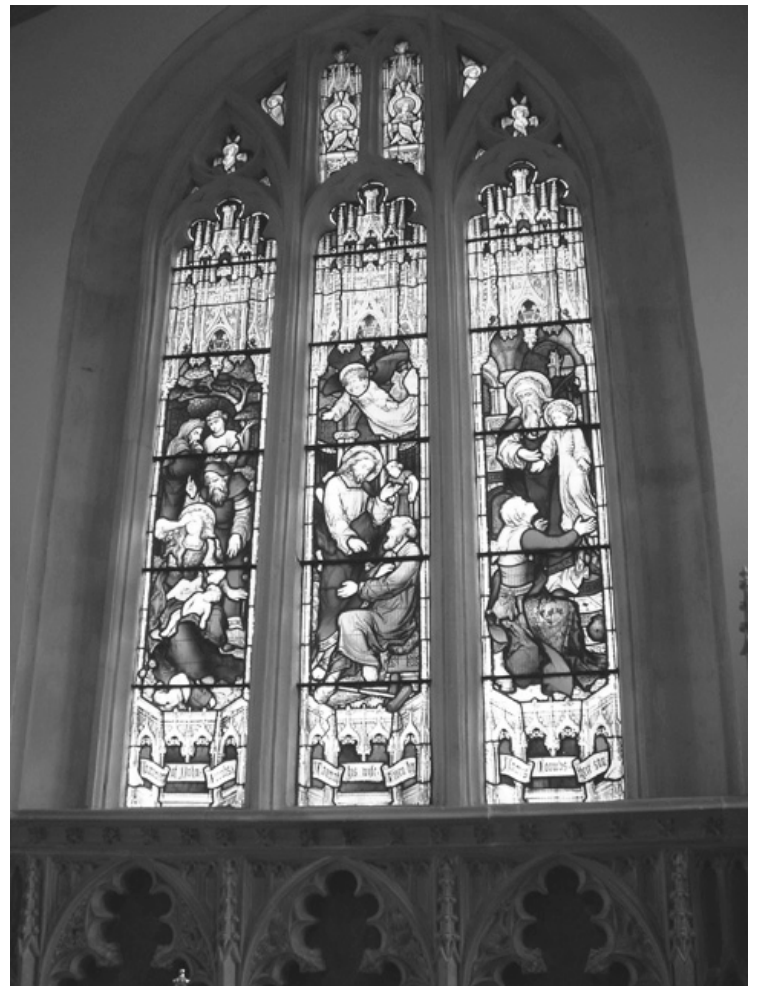
When Baptized	Child's Name	Parents' Name	Abode	Quality, Trade, or Profession	By whom performed
Christian Name	Surname				
1818 May No. 625	William	David & Sarah	Dartford	Builder	J. Gurney
May No. 626	Frances Maria	John & Frances Maria	Dartford	Currier	J. Gurney
May No. 627	Lydia	John & Frances Maria	Dartford	Currier	J. Gurney

08 Francis & Lydia Combe Baptisms at Dartford 1818



06 Charles W Coombs
& Mary Ann Coombs
nee Seward

09A Holy Trinity Church Nailsea
Coombs Window (PCW)



09B Extract from 09A



A George Coombs aged seven months appears in the 1825 burial record for Dartford. Because of the age this George would appear to be John and Frances Maria's son. If so a further son called George was born to them c.1830 and later emigrated to America. We know this in part from the 1874 will of John's brother, James Coombs, the donor of the east window in Holy Trinity Church, Nailsea. (Pic. 09A & 09B)

One of the beneficiaries listed in this will was James' nephew George, spelled out as a son of his brother John and "now" a resident of Cranesville, Montgomery County, New York. In the LDS 1880 United States Census CD resource a George Coombs, born in England, has been found living in Cranesville, Amsterdam, Montgomery County, New York. The occupation given was tanner. These two items of information tie in with the card, previously mentioned, sent by George in New York to his brother Charles in Dunedin, New Zealand.

When and why John Coombs (born 1785) went to Kent is still unknown. Why did he become a currier! Did he learn his trade at the Nailsea Tannery, departing from his ancestors' occupations as farmers! There had been a tannery at Nailsea since the middle of the 17th century and for several hundred years it had been a flourishing concern. The Holy Trinity vestry record for 1805 notes, "Received of Mr Davis in lieu of an apprentice for the Tanyard £8.0s.0d". John's parents, John and Hannah nee Wedmore had, at the time of John's death in 1831, six sons and one daughter. In John's will the sons, with the exception of John (born 1785), all inherited land and they all appear to have been farmers at the time the will was written. John junior inherited, instead of land, his father's share of seven

houses in Bristol, plus a share in one other property. In 1818, when John was having his children baptized in Kent, there was in Nailsea, besides the tannery, a glassworks and a number of coalmines. In 1811 the population of Nailsea was 1,093. In 1821, it was 1,678, a 50% plus increase in ten years. We do know that John returned to the West Country as he and Frances Maria both died in Bedminster in May 1869 and June 1868 respectively. An Index to the 1851 Census for Bristol and Avon area, which includes Bedminster, lists under the surname Coombs, John, aged 66, currier born Nailsea; Frances Maria aged 61 born Sandwich, Kent; Esther aged 25 bonnet maker, born Dartford; and Richard, grandson aged 14 errand boy, born Cross, Somerset.

(The LDS Film No. 00221105 of the 1851 Census for North Street, Bedminster, HO 107/1945 Folio 113 Enumeration District 1c confirms this information. There are two settlements called Cross in Somerset. One is adjacent to Congresbury, the other further south and some way from Nailsea. It is close to Compton Bishop where, according to the will of Hannah Coombs (nee Wedmore) signed in August 1838, her son John was residing. Two LDS films of the Parish Records for Compton Bishop have been searched, one included Cross. The period 1813-1837 on one film had illegible pages and no reference to the surname Coombs was found. The second film covered baptisms and burials for Compton Bishop for the period 1838-1858 and again no reference to the surname Coombs was found.)

The 1841 census for Nailsea does not list these people, although there are Coombs names. One of these is a Charles Coombs, who was a farmer at Youngwood, with his wife Hester and family. This was Charles Wedmore

Coombs another son of John and Hannah nee Wedmore and uncle of my ancestor, the Charles Wedmore Coombs, baptised 1820, who came to New Zealand. The Charles Wedmore on the 1841 census for Nailsea married, in 1826 in Wraxall, Hester VOWLES.

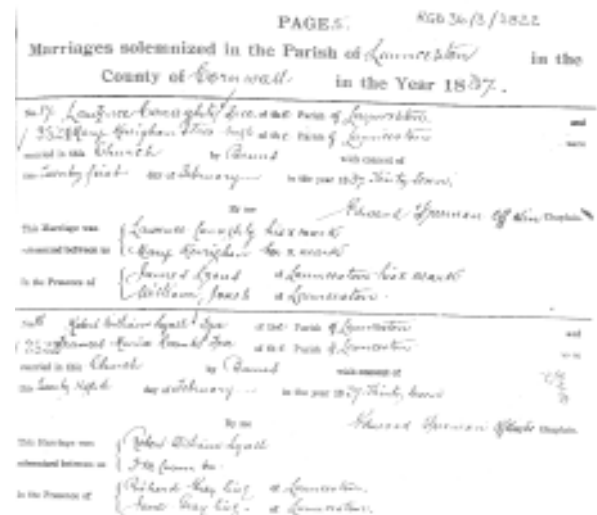
On April 27, 1844 Charles Wedmore Coombs (baptised 1820), married Mary Ann Seward in the Register Office in the District of Reading, Berkshire. The bride and groom were both of full age and their occupations were given as dressmaker and currier respectively. The witnesses do not appear (at this stage) to be family members. Charles and Mary Ann had a son named Charles, born 27 January 1845 at Reading, Berkshire and another son named John was born on 12 September 1849 at Cross Street, Bermondsey, Southwark. An 1850 Postal Directory for London lists Charles Coombs, currier, at Cross Street, Bermondsey. In the early 1800s Bermondsey was the centre of the English leather trade, and it is easy to speculate that Charles had gone there to further his craft and to have access to more work. To date no reference to Charles Wedmore and Mary Ann Coombs has been found on an 1851 Census.

Charles Wedmore's sister, Frances Maria Coombs travelled to Tasmania, Australia in 1836 under an emigration scheme. The question of why Frances Maria left her family and England is one of many still to be answered.

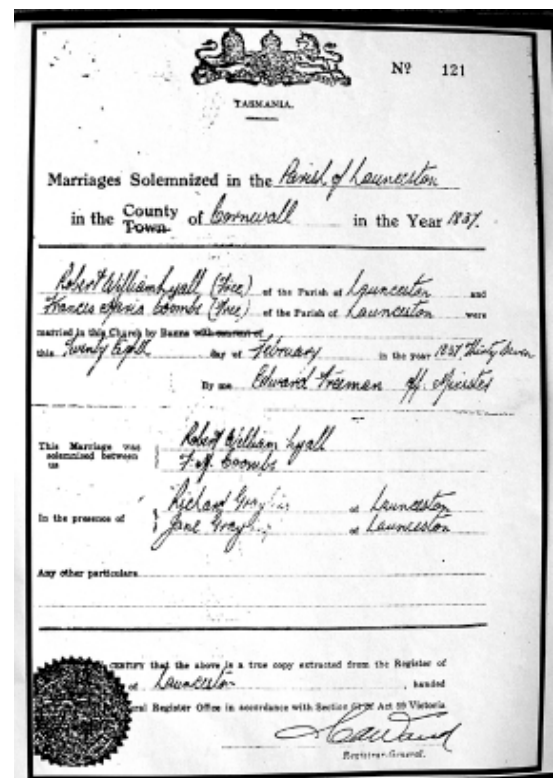
Part 2 of this volume gives details Frances Maria's emigration from her homeland.

Frances Maria Coombs married, Robert William LYALL in Launceston, Tasmania on the 28 February 1837. (Illus. 10 & 11) According to his descendants, Robert was a pardoned convict, having arrived in Hobart from England

aboard the vessel ARGYLE in 1831. A son was born to the couple on 17th January 1840 and baptised on 29th February 1840 at St James Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. The baptism record shows the child Robert William son of Robert William and Frances Maria Lyall.



10 Robert William Lyall & Frances Maria Coombs Marriage Register Launceston Tasmania



11 Robert William Lyall & Frances Maria Coombs Marriage Certificate Launceston Tasmania

At some stage, after the birth of his son in Melbourne, Robert William Lyall took his wife's surname but added an e and became Coombes. The true reason for this is unclear. Some descendants believe that Frances Maria was due an inheritance and by reverting to her maiden surname she would be traced. Was the "e" added because Robert had been a convict! I guess the truth will never be established. Some of Frances Maria and Robert's children had Lyall as a second or third christian name, as have some of subsequent generations. As to the inheritance, we are not aware that Frances Maria was the recipient of any such bequest. Wills have not been found for either of her parents and she died in Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand on 2 February 1868, predeceasing her father by 16 months and her mother by 5 months. However this is running ahead of the story.

Descendants of Frances Maria and Robert William Lyall have said that Bishop Selwyn or his ministers, employed Robert in the building of St John's Theological College in Auckland, New Zealand. There are amongst the early papers at St John's College and in a

copy of the Journal of the Rev W C Cotton, held at Auckland Museum Library, details of a Wm Coombes employed as a carpenter for the College. Wm Coombes is first mentioned in Nov 1844 with an account of carpenter's work performed for the Lord Bishop of New Zealand. In September 1845 Rev Cotton's Journal mentions a problem with Coombs and payment for his men for work on the College buildings. In February 1846 Wm Coombe was served notice for not completing the building work on time and two days later we find a copy of the reply from Wm Coombe where the alleged breach of contract is blamed on "variations of Contract and alterations ordered by the Lord Bishop Mr Cotton and Mr Thatcher...". The only address on all of these documents that refer to Wm Coombe (Coombs) is Auckland. *(It is interesting to note that present day Nailsea resident, Betty Brooks has identified this Wm Coombe/Coombs as a relative of hers.)*

In April 1849 Robert William and Frances Maria Coombes had their son George (born 19 August 1846) and daughter Frances Maria (born 17 February 1849) baptised at the St

Page 2.							
CHURCH REGISTER OF BAPTISMS.							
A. D. 1849.							
Name of Church, <i>St John's College Chapel.</i>							
Day of Baptism.	Name of Child.	Christian Names of Parents.	Surname of Parents.	Place of Abode.	Calling or Profession.	Signatures of Sponsors.	Signature of Officiating Clergyman.
<i>1849 April 8th</i>	<i>George</i>	<i>Robert William</i> <i>Frances Maria</i>	<i>Coombes</i>	<i>Ohakun</i>	<i>Carpenter</i>	<i>W. H. Cotton</i> <i>Wm Wood</i> <i>Wm Coombs</i>	<i>Frederick Thatcher</i>
<i>1849 April 8th</i>	<i>Frances Maria</i>	<i>Robert William</i> <i>Frances Maria</i>	<i>Coombes</i>	<i>Ohakun</i>	<i>Carpenter</i>	<i>W. H. Cotton</i> <i>Wm Coombs</i> <i>Wm Hopton</i> <i>Wm Berry</i>	<i>Frederick Thatcher</i> <i>Clark</i>
<i>1849 April 8th</i>	<i>Robert</i>	<i>Isabel</i>				<i>Wm Hopton</i> <i>Wm Berry</i>	

12 Baptism of George and Francis Coombes

John's College Chapel. (Illus. 12) Robert William was listed as a carpenter and their place of abode was Otahuhu. Otahuhu is situated approximately nine miles south of Auckland City, on the narrowest part of New Zealand. It was originally one of four pensioner settlements around Auckland set up, in the mid 1840s, by the Government for protection from any Maori troubles as well as for development of the land.

The next sighting in New Zealand of the two Coomb(e)s families is an advertisement in the Auckland newspaper *The New-Zealander*, dated Saturday 21 May 1853. The notice states " If Robert William Lyall will call at Mr G. McVay's,

Freeman's Bay, he will hear of Charles Coombs, Currier, from Bristol". (Illus. 13)

Inferences from this advertisement are that Charles Wedmore Coombs had recently arrived, or was about to arrive in Auckland and that he knew of his sister's marriage to Robert William Lyall but not necessarily the change of name. Searching has not revealed the ship that brought Frances Maria to New Zealand from Australia, nor the ship that carried Charles Wedmore Coombs to New Zealand and the date of his departure from England. He could have arrived at a New Zealand port other than Auckland and via more than one route. Checking the Auckland Port arrivals in the two newspapers of the day can be found vessels arriving from Sydney, Melbourne, San Francisco and London. Family oral history tells us that Charles Wedmore came without his wife and sons, who came later on the ship, the JOSEPHINE WILLIS. This is backed up by the inwards shipping at the Port of Auckland, New Zealand, reported in the newspaper *The Southern Cross* in 1855. "February 5 - Josephine Willis, ship, 750 tons, Edward Canny, from London via New Plymouth. Passengers -...Mrs Combs and 2 children...". The newspaper gives an account of the voyage on the new clipper-built Josephine Willis which left Gravesend on the 16th October 1854 and finally sailed from Plymouth on the 23rd October. The voyage took 92 days from Plymouth to reach New Plymouth, Taranaki, New Zealand. The ship then sailed for Auckland, where she arrived on the 5th of February. The account goes on to relate "...a portion of the crew, from the commencement have manifested a mutinous spirit, opposing all authority. On arrival of the ship at New Plymouth, five of the crew refused to do duty any longer, conduct-



13 New Zealander 21/05/1853 Chas Coombs seeking Robert William Lyall

ing themselves in a mutinous manner, the ship at the time being in great danger, owing to the wind springing up from the North, and threatening to blow hard. The remainder of the crew, assisted by the passengers, got the ship under weigh, and navigated her round to the port, the passage occupying ten days." The report finishes with the news that the mutineers were handed over to the authorities. In 1855 this journey would have been tough for Mary Ann, without her husband, and with two young boys. *Did Mary Ann and children (like her sister-in-law) travel to Gravesend alone or did family or friends help them to Gravesend and wish them God-speed?*

The photographs that the family have of Mary Ann depict a small boned and gentle looking old lady, whose diminutive stature may have belied an indomitable spirit. Oral history also tells us that the temporary home of Mary Ann and Charles when they were first in Dunedin was not entirely waterproof, and when it rained Mary Ann sat up in bed holding an umbrella to shield her sons from the rain.

Documentary evidence is sparse for the Coombs and Lyall Coombes families' time in Auckland. The year 1856 records the registration of the birth on 20th October at Freeman's Bay of James Coombs, son of Charles Coombs, Boatman and Mary Ann Coombs formerly Seward. The 1856 Electoral Rolls for the City of Auckland, Southern Division list an entry for Robert Combes, carpenter of Waiheke. Waiheke (which means cascading waters) is an island in the Waitemata Harbour about 20 miles east of Auckland City. The Supplementary Auckland Provincial Government Gazette dated

Wednesday 19 August 1857 lists Charles Coombs living in Freeman's Bay with the qualification Householder, and under the column Calling or Business, is "Currier".

The Electoral Rolls for 1857 and 1858 list Charles Coombes, currier at Freeman's Bay and Robert Combes still working as a carpenter and domiciled "Waiheke". To 1859, and the registration of another son's birth to Charles and Mary Ann. This fourth boy was named William born 29 October, and Charles is listed as a currier with Mechanics Bay Auckland as the address. Freeman's Bay and Mechanics Bay are both along Auckland's waterfront.

The list of objectors for the Parnell division in the 1861 Auckland Electoral Rolls has a Robert Coombes and the grounds of the objection was "Not resident in the district". (*This has not been proved to be our Robert.*) Then, in 1862, on 13 January, young William's death of whooping cough, at age two years two months, was registered. The informant was Charles Coombs, brother, currier of Parnell, Auckland and the father's name on the entry is Charles Coombs, currier. A marriage entry in the 29 May 1862 newspaper reports the marriage of Robert Wm Lyall, eldest son of Mr Robert Combes, of Auckland. This Robert William Lyall is the child who was baptised in Melbourne 22 years earlier and a witness was Charles Coombs, Currier of Parnell. Whether this is Charles the father or son is not known, although the signature is similar to that of Charles' senior.

Family stories tell us that while Charles was waiting for Mary Ann and their two sons to come from England he was friendly with some Auckland Maoris. One, a chief, wanted

Charles to marry his daughter and in return he would give him land. Charles declined this offer and remained on good terms with the Maoris who, with the approach of the Maori land wars, advised him to go south. Family tradition has it that Charles and family and his cousin (we believe this to be Robert William Lyall) sailed to Dunedin, Otago, in the vessel CLUTHA, taking with them wood to build a residence for Dr Andrew Buchanan, the first owner of the Chingford estate in North East Valley, Dunedin. As detailed earlier in this piece, descendants believe that Robert William Lyall had worked as a carpenter on St John's College in Auckland. This may have brought him to the notice of Dr Buchanan who was an Anglican, and who contracted him to build Chingford.

The book "Medical Practice in Otago and Southland in the Early Days by Robert Valpy Fulton, M.D., Edin." states that Dr Buchanan returned (from Auckland) in 1862 to Otago aboard "...the coasting topsail schooner *Clutha*, bringing more horses, a quantity of kauri timber, and some carpenters to erect a house for him. The *Clutha* took nearly a fortnight to get from Auckland to Port Chalmers, and on arrival the horses were lowered over the side of the ship, and allowed to swim on shore.the schooner sailing on, stuck on a mud or sand bankand had to be lightened of a good deal of her timber before she could be got up to Dunedin."

Proof that one of the voyages of the *Clutha* did convey some of the Coombs family to Dunedin has been found in the Shipping Intelligence column of *The Daily Southern Cross* for 16 June 1862 where under Cleared Outwards-Coastwise is detailed "14 June *Clutha* 150 tons, Anderson, for Dunedin, with

120,000 feet sawn timber. Passengers-Mrs Coombes and 2 children..." More research needs to be undertaken to establish which Mrs Coombs (es) this was and when did her husband and the other family go south. If it was Mary Ann then for the second time she had to undertake a sea voyage to the unknown without her husband. Hopefully he had travelled ahead and was there to meet her. *The Daily Southern Cross* also reports that the *Clutha's* voyage to Dunedin on this journey took 11 days from its departure at Auckland on 14 June. The reports of coastal shipping outwards from the Port of Auckland in the *The Daily Southern Cross* for the entire year of 1862 have been searched, and no further reference to the surname of Coombs has been found. Although the names of numerous passengers to Otago or Dunedin are recorded there are many reports of voyages where no surnames are mentioned.

One of the grand-daughters of John Coombs (son of Charles Wedmore) recalls him singing her and her siblings sea chanties that he learnt from the sailors on his voyage to Dunedin. John would often jig the youngest grandchild, at the time, on his foot and sing songs such as "What shall we do with a drunken sailor". Family stories also have it that the crew of the boat taught John the names of the clouds, knowledge which he imparted to his grandchildren before they were of an age to learn about clouds at school.

The last (at this stage) reference to the Coombs families in the Auckland papers is the notice of a marriage at Thames, in November 1873 of James, son of Robert Coombes, of Dunedin.



14 Looking NE over Dunedin from Canongate c1861. (*Photograph courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Te Puna-Matauranga o Aotearoa. Ref No 4372-1/2*)

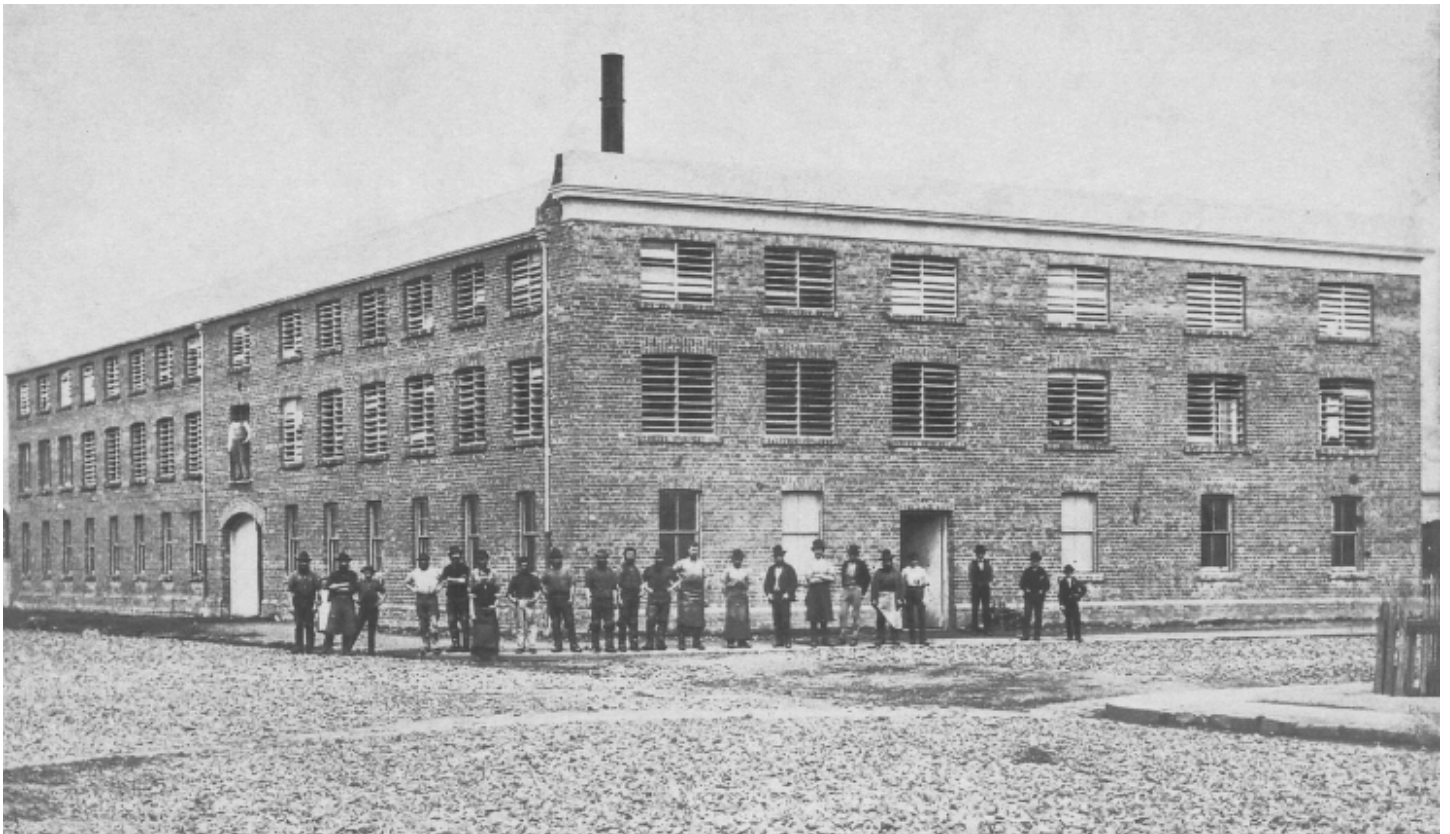
The settlement of Dunedin (Pic. 14) was founded in 1848. New Edinburgh had been the intended name for the new town which was earmarked for Scottish settlers. By 1862 its development had progressed considerably from what confronted John's future wife and her parents when they arrived from Edinburgh, Scotland in 1849. Photographs of Dunedin township, as it was c.1861, show a mixture of buildings, mainly of wooden construction with here and there one made of brick, or part brick. The layout of the city was taking shape and the roads were still mud.

In May, 1861, Gabriel READ discovered gold 60 miles inland from Dunedin. This discovery completely transformed the little settlement, and various histories relate that Dunedin became awash with prospectors eager to find posterity. Within three months from the date of proclamation of the discovery, diggers were landing in Dunedin from neighbouring colonies, sometimes at the rate of 1,000 a day. All of the requirements and infrastructure of the town were in short supply, and there was daily an increasing demand for the necessities of life. This naturally led to an increase in prices, and demand for more

housing. The need for a great extension and improvement in the town was urgent. Dozens of warehouses were being built and diverse dwelling houses were being erected in all directions. The town that the Coombs' families went to in 1862 was go-ahead and booming.

It is not certain what work the two families were engaged in immediately after their arrival in Dunedin. Within ten years Charles Wedmore Coombs had established a tannery in the northern part of the town and a few years after that John was taken into partnership by his father, and the firm became C. Coombs and Son. A fire razed the tannery in August 1875. It was insured and was quickly replaced by a new building in brick. The report of the fire printed in the *Otago Daily Times* stated that Mr Coombes estimated his loss at £10,000 and the report went on to say that "from the quantity of stuff stored in the building, we should be inclined to think

that this amount is somewhat under the mark...." The following day the *Otago Daily Times* had further comment on the fire. "The only further particulars we have been able to gather regarding the disastrous fire yesterday morning at Mr Coombes' tannery are to the effect that in the lean-to where the fire originated a quantity of lime was stored, and it is supposed that the wet had caused this to heat and thus set fire to some bags lying near. The burning bags ignited a quantity of tallow and shoddy, and this is surmised to be the real cause of the fire. Great sympathy is expressed for Mr Coombes in this loss - for a heavy one it must be...." Within the month the *Otago Daily Times* printed the following report under the heading New Building, Dunedin. "Messrs Coombes and Son, tanners, not at all dispirited by their recent heavy loss by fire which destroyed their premises, have cleared away the charred ruins, and commenced a substantial brick structure. (Pic. 15) Owing to the fine weather, the hands previously em-



15 The Second Coombs Tannery Dunedin c1880

ployed have been able to work in the open air, and thus have not suffered much loss of time. Eight new liquor pits have been constructed, and the tannery will, in a very short time, be again in full operation."

The 1880 Appendix to the Journals of the New Zealand House of Representatives (AJHR) reports the evidence of Mr Charles Coombes, of Coombes and Sons, Tanners, Dunedin, before the Commissioners. Charles was advocating equality in trade between NZ and Australia. He reported that when trade was slack in Victoria, or Adelaide the Australian manufacturers sent their surplus stock to New Zealand, sold it at a lower price and swamped the local manufacturers. However, as there was a 30-per-cent duty in both Victoria and Adelaide, Coombes and Son were unable to send their leathers to those states and instead had to send the hides over, which were made into leather and then sent back to New Zealand.

Charles asked to be placed on the same footing as his Australian counterparts were on. Either a 30-per-cent duty in both countries or none in either country. Charles' evidence stated that "A little while ago I had seventy men working for me; but trade became dull in Victoria, down came the leather from there wholesale, and I was obliged at once to discharge half my men. I have not thirty-five men now. I repeat that all we require is to be placed on the same footing as the Victorian tanners. I am not the least afraid of Victorians sending their leather down here if we were on the same footing as they are. We can produce a better article than they can; if that article was open to them, we could send them an article which would give us a good deal of their trade. But when trade is slack there, and they send us down their leather wholesale, we are obliged to send away our hides. That gives

them a double advantage over us."

Charles' evidence to the Commissioners also stated that boots and shoes made from their leather gained prizes for material and workmanship at the Sydney Exhibition and that saddlery also made from leather from the shop of Coombs and Son got a prize. In the same publication is printed a List of Awards from the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition, and sure enough, C Coombes and Son, Dunedin gained 4th for saddles, and 2nd for boots and shoes. In the remarks column against the award for boots and shoes (there were no remarks against the saddles), is written "Skilful workmanship in men's strong and light boots; good material; well adapted to the colonies."

The tannery of Coombs and Son continued on the rebuilt site until about 1884 or 1885 when Charles Wedmore retired to a farmlet near Waitati, north of Dunedin. The publication "A Return of The Freeholders of New Zealand, 1882" giving the names of land owners records Coombs; Charles & Co Tanners, Dunedin, having land in Dunedin valued at £10,000 and county land in Selwyn of 105 acres, £1,200.

At some stage Charles Wedmore had lost his right arm. We do not know if this was the result of an accident or to some other misadventure. He died on 12 September 1902 at Dunedin and his age was approx 84 years. His wife Mary Ann, maiden name Seward, lived until 1917. Mary Ann was instrumental in setting up the Baptist Church in Caversham, Dunedin, and was a foundation member of the Hanover Street Baptist Church in Dunedin. She also took an active part in philanthropic work, being a frequent visitor at the gaol, the hospital and the Benevolent Institution.

John Coombs (born 1849) had been married by the Rev Thomas Burns to Elizabeth Ann BOYES in the house of her father, Andrew, in

Caversham, Dunedin on 1 December 1870. John was 21, occupation currier, and Elizabeth was 24. In 1885 John Coombs and his cousin John Walter Lyall Coombes, son of Frances Maria, joined forces to trade variously as tanners, fellmongers and curriers under the name J & W Coombs. In 1893 the cousins made an application for registration of a trademark, Oak Tannery Dunedin. The tannery premises were in what is now Norwood Street, North East Valley, Dunedin. About 1901, the tannery was sold. J & W Coombs were last listed in Stones Directory for 1900. The tannery is mentioned in a booklet about the development of North East Valley, as being a manufacturing business, which (at the time) was unique in New Zealand. It was the original and only fur-dressing and dying plant. What work John did during five years from 1900 following the sale of the tannery is unclear. In the 1906 Stones Directory he was listed as a portmanteau maker and his son Frank, at the same address, was listed as a cardboard-box maker. They made portmantaus, leather bags, belts, etc., and in the box-making department, chocolate boxes for Aulsebrooks and Hudsons, plus hat boxes. Frank followed his father's footsteps and went into the leather industry and became a lecturer on tannery at the Technical College, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

John's youngest daughter Gwendoline Wedmore Coombs married in 1913 George STEWART. In 1917 George was trading in rabbit and sheepskins under the name of J K Mooney & Co. Ltd, and he asked his father-in-law to dress some rabbit skins. John Coombs was a leather tanner of the old school, he collected his bark and other ingredients and tanned the skins. This experiment proved succesful. There was a demand for fur trimmings and garments and soon the box factory was taking second place to furskin processing under the name 'Oak Tannery'. The success of this work led George Stewart to found in 1923

a firm of furriers, Mooney's Ltd, to make and sell fur garments locally, and, in 1927, Fur Dressers & Dyers Ltd to process furskins. John Coombs retired in 1926 at age 77, with a pension from Fur Dressers & Dyers of £4 a week, which he drew for another 17 years. John played the fiddle, and one of his granddaughters remembers him taking some of his grandchildren to the wharf to see the ships, and also by tram to the museum. Even when elderly he grew tomatoes in a glasshouse. John and Elizabeth Coombs had a family of two sons (Frank has already been mentioned) and three daughters. In December 1942 John and Elizabeth Coombs celebrated 72 years of marriage. The couple enjoyed excellent health, and until a month before his death, John was daily to be seen walking near his home. John and Elizabeth lived into their nineties, dying within six weeks of each other in 1943.

Charles Wedmore Coombs' eldest son, Charles, left his family in Dunedin in his early 20s, and went north to Christchurch, Canterbury, NZ where in 1868 he married Maria Emily BALESTICE. The Christchurch electoral roll of 1872-73 lists Charles Coombs living on the south side of Hereford Street East with a shop on the west side of Colombo Street South opposite the Triangle. Charles' wife died in 1876 leaving one son, John Henry, and in 1877 Charles married Marion Emma MORTON. There were five children from this marriage. Briefly, perhaps for only a year or two in about 1879 or 1880, Charles set up branches of Coombs & Son as leather and grindery warehouses in Cashel Street, Christchurch and in Dee Street, Invercargill, Southland. This venture was not entirely successful and he returned to Dunedin. In 1883 Charles was largely responsible for founding the Apollo Club, forerunner of the Dunedin Orchestral Society. In Stones Directory for 1886, Charles is listed as an agent and importer at Dowling Street and a partner with his brother James in C & J Coombs (leather and

boot and shoe manufacturers' agents) in Moray Place, Dunedin. The directories show that until about 1900, Charles and James continued in business at various addresses as wholesale merchants under the name of C & J Coombs. James then became a professional teacher of the violin in Dunedin and Charles became the proprietor of the Crown Hotel in Temuka, Canterbury.

Charles' family remember him as a fine cornet player and this is acknowledged in a lovely obituary for him in the *Christchurch Press* of 23 February 1914. The obituary states that besides being a part-owner in some well-known racing stock, Mr Coombs was a musician of some note and in the eighties he was described as the best cornet player in the Australian colonies. With his brother he was one of the founders of the Christchurch Orchestral Society in the early eighties. He was soloist for the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition at Dunedin in 1889-90, and he was also entrusted with the selection of most of the members of the orchestra, paying a visit to Australia for that purpose. Charles died aged 70 on 18 February 1914 in Temuka, Canterbury, New Zealand.

The youngest of the sons of Charles Wedmore Coombs and Mary Ann Seward to live to adulthood, James, (born Auckland 20 October 1856) has been mentioned above as being in partnership with his brother Charles. James early developed a talent and a great love for music, and seized every opportunity to acquire a knowledge and mastery of the violin. Wishing to receive higher instruction than was then available in Dunedin, James Coombs went to Melbourne where he studied under some of the leading instructors. On his return to New Zealand he went to Christchurch where he achieved musical success. He was one of the founders of the Christchurch Orchestral Society, and leader until he returned to Dunedin in 1885. James slid into the professional ranks in

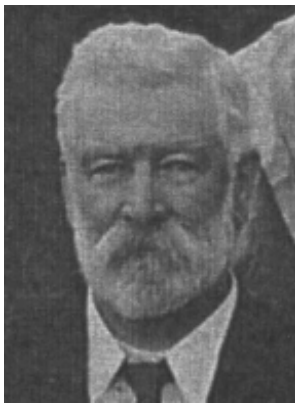
music following his return to Dunedin and he eventually gave up the leather trade and set up a studio to teach violin. He and his brother Charles were also two of the three founders of the Dunedin Orchestral Society. James first acted as leader, and for a period of 41 years, he was its popular conductor, retiring in 1930 when he was given a memorable complimentary farewell concert. James was also the first conductor of the Dunedin Choral Society and held other musical positions as well as being a successful teacher of music; many of his pupils distinguished themselves at musical examinations and competitions. James died on Christmas Day 1940 aged 84, and like his brother Charles, received a fine obituary.

In 1882 James had married Caroline Louisa JONES and they had two sons. The only one to live to adulthood, Leslie Douglas Coombs, was an architect. After early training with architects in Dunedin and Wellington, he went to England in 1910-11 and qualified as Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He visited Nailsea, probably the first of the many New Zealand Nailsea Coombs descendants who have done so, and there he met Albert Henry Coombs at Youngwood Farm.

Gwendoline Wedmore Stewart, daughter of the Dunedin John Coombs tanner, visited Nailsea on a trip to England for the 1937 Coronation. During his graduate-student days at Cambridge in 1951, one of Leslie's sons, Douglas Saxon Coombs also visited Nailsea and met Albert and his wife and sister, who at this time were at Cherry Orchard farm. (Pic.16 *This view from the farm was taken by him during his visit.*) Now geology Professor Emeritus, Douglas was recognised by his country in the 2002 New Year Honours list and was made Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM) for services to mineralogy.



16 View from Youngwood Farm c1946 (Douglas Coombs)



17 Charles Coombs 1845 - 1914



18 John Coombs 1849 - 1943



19 James Coombs 1856 - 1940



20 Frances Coombes (Notice of her death)

Musical ability has not been limited to Charles Wedmore's two sons. A great grandson Charles James Morton Coombs was, in his youth, the NZ Junior Cornet Champion. Again in the New Zealand 2002 New Year Honours a great, great, grandson of Charles Wedmore, Calder Robert PRESCOTT jazz musician, was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for his services to music.

Photographs of the brothers, (Pics. 17, 18 & 19) Charles, John and James, depict nice looking men, all fairly lean and smartly dressed, Charles and John with beards and James with a moustache. Newspaper articles and family memories tell of men of good character and disposition, well liked by others.

The Coombs surname still lives on in New Zealand and many living descendants of Charles Wedmore Coombs have Wedmore or Coombs as a second given name. The good genes inherited from those Nailsea ancestors mean that today there are great-grandchildren of Charles Wedmore and Frances Maria living in their 80s and 90s. Charles Wedmore's great-granddaughter, Linda Prescott, celebrated her 101st birthday on 13 December 2002.

Robert William Coombes formerly Lyall died in Dunedin on 6 December 1883, and the entry is recorded as Robert William Lyall Coombes, his wife Frances Maria having died in 1868 as mentioned earlier. (Illus. 20)

There are also a great many Lyall Coombes descendants in New Zealand. One who was especially well known and loved was Hannah Maria Lyall Coombes, 1870-1942, prominent as a Salvation Army worker. From Parish

Records, Census Returns and Wills, other Coombs family members, not mentioned in this article, have been identified and linked. Research, by various descendants, is still ongoing to unravel this family whose links go back to the family recorded on the Nailsea tombstone.

Other Sources used include:

Various publications from N&DLHS:

Holy Trinity Churchyard, Nailsea Tombstone Inscriptions 1978; (Pub N&DLHS)

Nailsea Tannery by Trevor Bowen; (Pub N&DLHS)

Nailsea A Handbook of Dates & Events, compiled by Peter Wright; - Pub Peter Wright
The Heritage Book of Nailsea by Margaret Thomas.

The Story of Early Dunedin by A H Reed published 1956

Cyclopedia of New Zealand, Volume 4 Otago and Southland

Australian Vital Records Index CD, 1788-1905 published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

Bristol CD.4 1851 Censuses of Bristol & Area Includes Bedminster, transcribed by Gordon W Beavington

British and New Zealand GRO copy entries Copy of will of Hannah Coombs (died 1841) and James Coombs per D Coombs

Copy of will of John Coombs (died 1831) per A Megget

Details on Frances Maria's emigration and marriage per P Danenberg and M Denniston Information on the advertisement of 1853 in The New-Zealander per P Danenberg and M Denniston

Tannery and Directory information per G Blackman

Photograph of Charles Wedmore and Mary

Ann Coombs per L Prescott

Photograph of Tannery per G Blackman

The narrative contained in Part 1 has been compiled by Anne Megget Unit 2 15 Waterview Road Papakura New Zealand email: amegget@ihug.co.nz

It is a collaboration of research carried out by Gary Blackman, Douglas Coombs, Petina Danenberg, Margie Denniston, Anne Megget and Doreen Tyree.

Addendum October 2004

by Anne Megget

LDS Film no 0973139 of the Parish Registers 1673-1823 for Kendal, Westmorland record a marriage on 25 June 1810 of a John Coombs and Frances Maria Brown.

The film covering Kendal from the Cumbria Record Office has a copy of the entry for the marriage by Banns on 25 June 1810 of John Coombs Batchelor and Frances Maria Brown Spinster, both of this parish.

When I told my 88 year old mother (John's great, great, grand daughter) of this she straight away said "Goodness what were they doing away up there".

A clue as to why may be in the entry on this film for 1811 where a John is christened, son of "Francis and Maria Combs Feby 17 born 1810 March 10". If this is our family Westmorland seems a long way to have to go to avoid disapprobation of a pregnancy before marriage.

This first child could well be the father of the grandson Richard living with his grandparents John and Frances Maria in Bedminster in the 1851 census. I believe Richard's father's

name to have been John, who was deceased at the time of Richard's marriage. Also on this census was Esther Coombs, aged 25. This is Hester Coombs who married in August 1866 George Wood SADDLER. Hester died in 1874 and appears to have had only one daughter, Mary Frances Saddler who married in 1889 John Bolter GOMMO. Of the other two daughters of John and Frances Maria Coombs whose baptisms are recorded at Dartford, Lydia married James WEDLOCK and had numerous children and of Caroline Eliza I don't know anything further.

Susannah Coombs' descendant Catherine Poarch of Bristol has a copy of Susannah's marriage registration to William STOKES and Susannah's father is recorded as John Coombs currier. Although Census records for Susannah have her born in approx 1823 and her birth place as Dartford, Kent, the film of Bishop's Transcripts for Dartford does not record a baptism for Susannah or any mention of her. There is a series of microfiche for London's Riverside Parishes which include Dartford baptisms for the years we are interested in and there is no reference there either for Susannah although baptisms are listed for her siblings that were found on the film of Bishop's Transcripts.

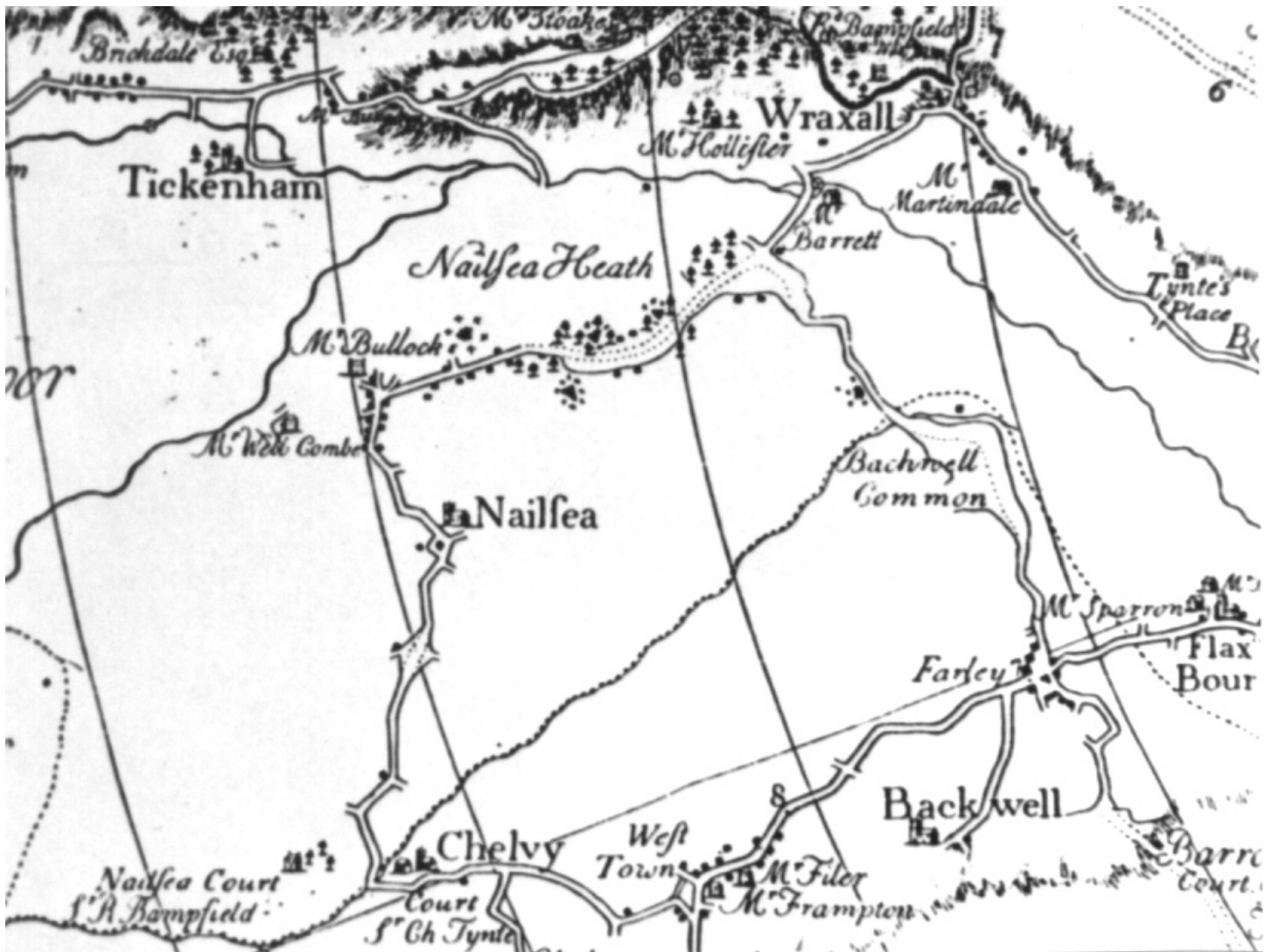
George Coombs who went to New York has also been found on a transcription of a Directory for Amsterdam dated 1869-1870 and he is listed with a postal address of Cranesville and under the occupation column it says tannery. The 1870 USA census lists George with his wife Mary with the surname spelt as Coons. The occupation on this census image could be either farmer or tanner.

In the Addresses by the European and Maori residents of Auckland to Sir George Grey

(Governor of New Zealand 1845 to 1868) on his seventy-fourth birthday in 1886, Robert Coombes signed his name and gave his date of arrival in the colony as 1840. *The New Zealand Advertiser & Bay of Islands Gazette* 5 November 1840 lists the arrival of the vessel CAROLINE which departed Hobart Town (Australia) and arrived Bay of Islands 1 November 1840 and amongst the passengers

were Mr & Mrs Combes and child. This could well be Robert William Lyall and Frances Maria Coombes and son Robert.

Family history is never completed and it is always so interesting when new details come to light and descendants are contacted who often have a piece of the puzzle that was eluding us.



Nailsea as it appeared on a map of 1786 soon after the death of Penelope Coombs



The banknote pictured here was purchased by N&DLHS and given to Somerset Record Office. Maybe John, son of Benjamin and Sarah would have seen it, or even handled it!

NAILSEA FAMILIES

COOMBS

A LINK WITH NEW ZEALAND

Part 2

by Margie Lyall-Coombes Denniston.

My story highlights the lives of Frances Maria Coombs, her husband and her children, the early days of this family history being well documented in Part 1.

Frances Maria COOMBS/COOMBES was born 17th February 1815 to John COOMBS and his wife Frances Maria BROWNE in the Parish of Dartford Kent. Three years later Frances Maria, along with her younger sister Lydia, was baptised 13th May 1818 under the surname COMBE. *Reference: Bishops Transcripts Film Number 1469338.*

When the British Government implemented the idea of collective female emigration to Australia the London Emigration Committee was authorised, eventually, to grant free passage to young single or widowed women between the ages of 15 and 30 years. Notices were placed throughout the Parishes stating the plan of the LEC {London Emigration Committee} and called for expression of interest from young women who would be suitably skilled for the proposed venture.

At the age of 21 years Frances Maria may well have been on the verge of considering a new pathway in her life, perhaps the Notice posted in her Parish was to sow the seeds of adventure in the heart of this young woman. An active member of the Holy Trinity Church in Nailsea, John Coombs may well have brought

the Notice to her attention.

Knowing his daughter to be a young woman of strong character, versed in the respected qualities of the church and society, well able to conduct herself with a sense of decorum, perhaps sensing that this possibility could give her better opportunities than the tiny village of Nailsea held for her, John may have encouraged Frances Maria to register her interest in the scheme. As to how her mother felt we can only wonder.

Frances Maria would have been interviewed by the LEC, a group of some 20 respected members of society representing the clergy, church members, merchants, bankers and other well respected members of their communities. Perhaps accompanied by her parents John and Frances the young Frances Maria presented herself along with the two required letters of recommendation as to her state of health and good character. Finally a personal interview, to be conducted by one of the committee members, would take place before the final acceptance papers would be issued.

Under this scheme 14 ships sailed from England to Australia in the period from 1833 to 1837 involving 3000 women in this first wave of female emigration. The women were required to be single or widowed, able bodied and prepared to leave the home of their birth. On board ship they were accompanied by a surgeon and often his wife or mature women known as matrons, selected for their ability to attend to the health and welfare of female passengers. The women were assured of care and protection by the Local Government upon arrival until suitable employment was arranged and agreed between the emigrant and the employer.

With her application accepted, passage paid for by the Government at cost of approximately £12, Frances Maria was selected to sail on board the AMELIA THOMPSON on 25th April 1836 from Gravesend. (Illus. 21)

List of Females who are allowed a free passage by the Amelia Thompson, Tomlinson, from London to Launceston, sailed 28th April 1836

Elizabeth Allen	24	Bartha Myers	18
Susanna Harley	23	Elizabeth Whittle	25
Ann West	18	Elizabeth Sutton	19
Bartha Harste	18	Sarah West	17
Elizabeth German	29	Ann Crope	23
Francis Maryweather	30	Mary Cary	16
Jane Dooling	17	Mary Kelly	22
Abigail Dodd	17	Mary Blunney	20
Mother Bywaters	23	Mary Manslow	17
Jane Kite	16	Ann Manslow	15
Mary Kite	12	Elizabeth Manslow	12
Abigail Fisher	12	Mary Ann Bury	15
Bartha Hawkins	16	Jane Liddon	17
Bartha Whitfield	19	Francis M. Coombs	21
Elizabeth Whittell	16	Jane Munn	23
Ann Whitfield	14	Margaret Cressy	24
Mary Ann Tully	17	Catherine O'Neill	20
Mary Ann Payne	26	Ann Smith	19
Mary Grayling	21	Mary Tinn	16
Ann Grayling	18	Margaret Freeman	25
Bartha Simmons	15	Bridget Barker	21
Ann Smith Topp	29	Margaret Marshall	25
Ann Morris	18	Mary Hogan	29
Margaret Burford	12	Widely Connell	20
Ann L. Halsey	20	Margaret Brody	24
Ann Bennett	18	Mary Burright	18

21 List of Females who are allowed a free passage by the AMELIA THOMPSON, from London to Launceston Ship sailed 28/04/ 1836 Francis Coombs marked x with Jane Luddon above

Reported in *The Norwich Mercury* on 13th February 1836. The splendid first class ship *Amelia Thompson*, of 477 tons, fitted up under the direction of the London Emigration Committee will sail from the Thames for Van Dieman's Land on the 25th April. {note: Van Dieman's Land is now known as Tasmania} Single Females from 15 to 30, when approved by the

Committee will be allowed free passage. Married agriculturists and mechanics of steady character will be conveyed in this ship on very moderate terms, being in great demand in the above colony. All particulars will be furnished on application to Mr. J. Marshall Agent to the Emigration Committee 26 Birchill Lane Cornhill London. If by letter it must be sent under cover addressed To The Secretary of State, Colonial Department London.

Frances Maria was now to say goodbye to her precious family and her friends and in preparing to do so, the final acceptance of leaving the land of her birth forever, this would have been a time of great emotion. Our family find it difficult to understand that John and his wife Frances could allow their first born to leave with the knowledge they would never meet again. Is it possible at this time that her brother Charles Wedmore Coombs was planning to make a similar journey to the colonies or did he make that decision some long time later? He advertised for the whereabouts of his family in New Zealand in 1853. How greatly her siblings missed their sister, perhaps she was even envied by others in her village for the opportunities and adventure that had come her way. In August 2003 Catherine Poarch living in Bristol {gt. gt. grand daughter of Susannah Coombs} and Margie Denniston from New Zealand {gt. gt. grand daughter of Frances Maria} met 167 years after the sisters parted. (see Pic. 33)

Frances M. Coombs was listed on the passenger list of the *Amelia Thompson*, aged 21 years, her occupation noted as a maid. I imagine much excitement tinged with some apprehension would have been experienced as the women settled on board, possibly laying the foundations of friendship on the voyage they were about to share, perhaps for some

only it seems. The Amelia Thompson set sail to Launceston in Van Dieman's Land 25th April 1836 under the command of Captain Tomlinson.

Not all was well. *The Times published on 29th April 1836 stated that soon after the women had been sent below a row was kicked up, some ladies dissatisfied with the sleeping places allotted to them.* Perhaps the Notice posted had mislead sections of society, some of the women stated they were not prepared to share a bunk and most decidedly not with women of inferior standing. Of course we have no way knowing of how Frances Maria may have felt. Written in the shipping record her name is listed next to the young Jane Luddon, in light of the marriage documentation {in 1837} we assume a friendship blossomed between the young women.

Records show there was mutiny on board ship a terrifying experience for women from a more sheltered background and even so for those who were more accustomed to an uncertain way of life. Captain Tomlinson having appeased his female passengers' accommodation difficulties was now faced with the prospect of them being in great danger from the mutineers. The Captain was able to quell the uprising with help from some of the senior personnel and the male emigrants, thus they were able to continue the voyage albeit under difficult circumstances. On arrival in Launceston the mutineers were arrested and sent to trial for their deed, paying the price of imprisonment for their unlawful actions.

Documents I have researched relating to Emigration from this scheme have proven that the welfare of these young ladies was well considered. Great concern was shown in all

aspects of their care. *The Ladies Committee of Launceston Van Dieman's Land*, {the second largest settlement on the island at this time} had been formed for the *Protection of Female Emigrants from England*. This would have been very reassuring for Frances Maria's parents.

On 26th August 1836, four months after beginning the journey, the ship left the rough seas, to begin the long sail up the Tamar River, passengers no doubt relieved to see land after the emotional turmoil and fears of the journey. The Lighthouse and the now famous George Town Signal Station in view, a little further on George Town.

Communication between George Town and Launceston was by semaphore. Signal Stations were set up on high points along the river. 180 combinations of flags enabled merchants and the general population, and in this case the Ladies Committee, to follow the ships progress up the river, enabling the Customs and the general community to be ready to meet and carry out the business of ships, people and ports. Perhaps Frances Maria stood on deck, the heavily covered bush hills surrounding the settlement would have presented her with a view of an entirely different vegetation from that of the soft greens of England, the dazzling sunlight in contrast with the mist of her Nailsea Village, the harsh call of the Kookaburra contrasting with memories of the sweet song of the Morning Thrush. The bustling Port Dalrymple surrounded by the town of Launceston was the journeys end, the place for the AMELIA THOMPSON to dock, the mutineers to face the consequences of their ill fated actions and for Frances Maria the first step on the soil of this land of opportu-

nity. The Ladies Committee warmly greeted the sea weary women and within a short space of time the more desirable women were chosen by committee members to serve in their households or those of their friends. (Illus. 22) Some women needed to be accommodated by the Government until positions of service could be agreed upon for them. On no account were the young ladies permitted to work in alehouses or non-family residences. It is nice to know Frances {both of them in fact} were chosen immediately reinforcing our belief of a fine young woman of good character.

Now the story of 'our' Frances Maria becomes a little more challenging. Under this particular emigration scheme there were only two ships that went to Launceston in Van Dieman's Land, the CHARLES KERR sailing in 1835, listed on board Frances Coomb aged 20 years. AMELIA THOMPSON sailing to Van Dieman's Land in 1836, listed on board Frances M Coombs aged 21 years.

It appears from the above that the girls were the same age, enrolled in the same emigration scheme, being sent to the same town, the difference being an 'e' and an 's' on their surnames, so we now have two young women called Frances Coombs/Coombe. Research done many years ago by family members through the Archive Office in Hobart Tasmania led us to believe 'our' Frances had sailed on the CHARLES KERR. Unaware that there were two young women with a surname so similar, we could be excused for accepting the 'e' was a simple error, we would not have thought this to be a common name.

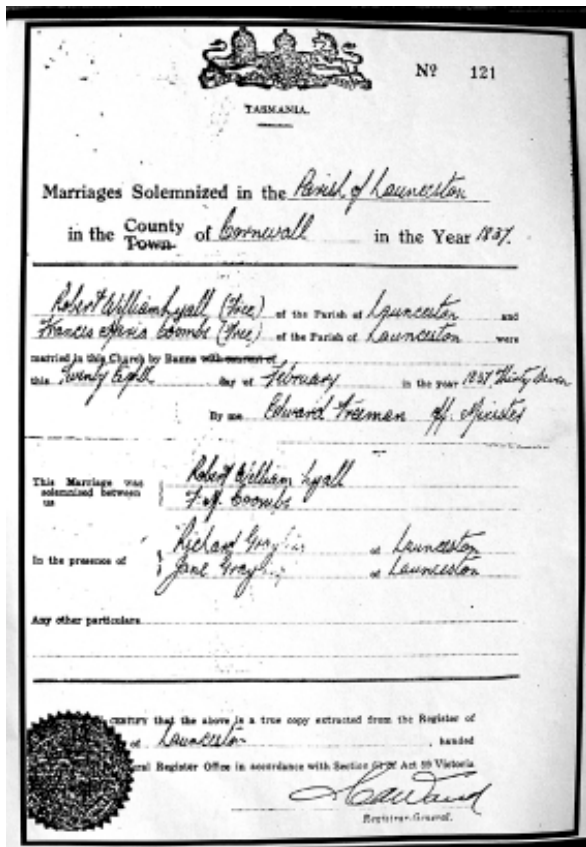
Disembarking from the CHARLES KERR

Frances Coombe was selected as a nursery or ladies maid along with Elizabeth Cunningham by Mrs Gilles, the family was of important stature in the town. Lewis Gilles was the co-founder of the Tamar Bank also owning farming stations and many properties situated in the town, all prime areas of the day.

Disembarking from the AMELIA THOMPSON Frances Coombs was selected by Mrs Harvey as amaid {unable to read this on document} Mr Harvey was a lawyer. Both young women were employed on arrival into households of the 'well to do' in the town of Launceston, it would be interesting to know if they ever met. Although not proven which Frances is 'ours' it would seem, after much discussion with family members, we agreed it is more likely, in light of her friendship with Jane Luddon, she would be the Frances on board the AMELIA THOMPSON.

There is no doubt whatsoever that our Frances Maria did marry William Robert Lyall, (Illus. 22) although I do not know when they met. The marriage was celebrated on 28th February 1837, by Banns, in the beautiful old Anglican Church of St. John, Parish of Cornwall in Launceston. (Illus. 23) The Certificate proving their marriage very clearly states Frances Maria Coombs. Stated beside their names on the Certificate of Marriage is the comment "Free". Once a convict had served his time of sentence, permission from the Government to marry was no longer required as he was now regarded as a free man. Of interest has always been "*in the presence of Richard Grayling and Jane Grayling*". Who were the Graylings? A token effort was made to discover the relationship but my research time in Tasmania was at an end.

Single and Free by Liz Rushen records details of a young woman called Jane Luddon, (Illus. 24) travelling on board the AMELIA THOMPSON, falling in love with Richard Grayling who was emigrating with his family to Van Dieman's Land, and so it was to be, the young Mr Richard and Mrs Jane Grayling stood in St Johns Church as witness, to the marriage of Frances Maria and Robert William Lyall. {often recorded as William Robert} The young couple, left Launceston on board THE EAGLE on 3rd March 1837, three days after their marriage, sailing to Port Phillip Melbourne. Reference: POL 458/2 page 78. There was much to look forward to for the new Mr and Mrs Lyall. The freedom to begin their married life together as founding citizens in the development of the new settlement of Melbourne and more especially, to the birth of their children.



22 Robert William Lyall & Francis Maria Coombs Marriage Certificate Launceston Tasmania

Now to introduce William Robert Lyall. William Robert came before the Old Bailey in Middlesex on 20th September 1830 charged with the offence of having stolen a pair of pistols, a thermometer and a telescope. Sergeant Arabin, well known for his unusual approach to the criminal and his crime, heard his case, sentencing William Robert to a 7-year term of transportation to be served in Van Dieman's Land. The transcriptions relating to this case, held at the London Metropolitan Archives, are in a very fragile state and not permitted to be viewed. Reference: *London Metropolitan Archives Research and Letters* 2002.

As William Robert pleaded guilty it would seem there would be no pages of interesting information for us to glean a little more perspective on his life and the reason for such a classy theft and not the usual loaf of bread or a handkerchief! (Illus. 25) Serving time on a prison hulk whilst waiting transportation his record shows him to have been a good prisoner. (*Hulk, commonly known as a floating prison, were large battle ships or frigates, masts removed, altered extensively to accommodate male prisoners awaiting transportation*). (Illus.26) Prisoners were required to work in the dock yard or the community during the day. Reference: *CON G-O 1831-1840*

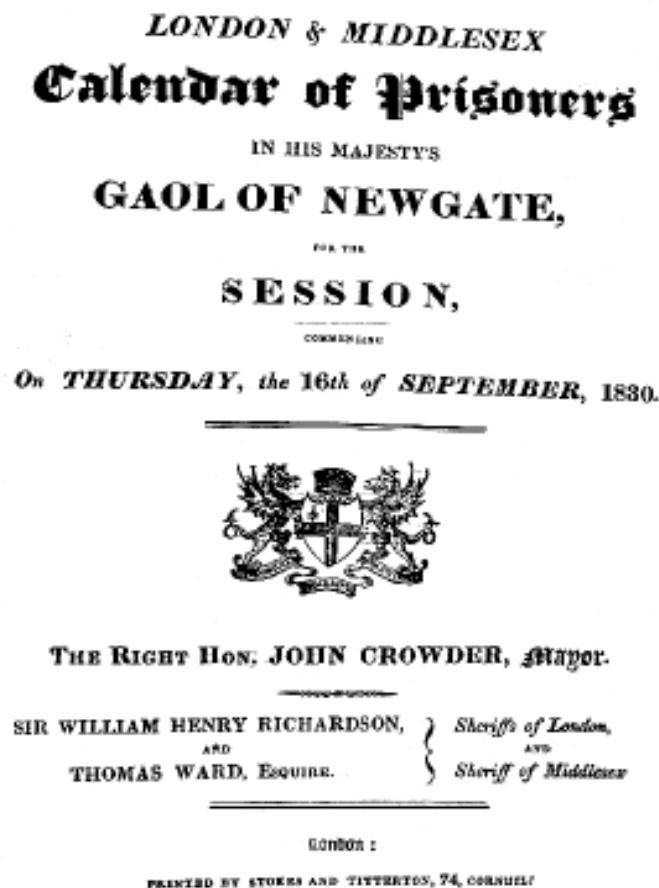
Leaving Portsmouth on board the ARGYLE on 18th March 1831, Prisoner 602, recorded as William Robert Lyall, was to find the sea journey difficult. On arrival in Hobart 4th August 1831, the Appropriation List Reference: *MM 33/6* records prisoner number 602 as ill. The Sergeant Superintendent Henry Brock, on board for the journey states, *few problems were encountered until rounding the Cape of Good Hope* from which point correspondence shows there to be annoyances between him-

23 St John's Anglican Church -
Launceston (built by convict labour)
From a painting of the church done in early
times, by permission of the Church Officer.



24 Jane Luddon servant to Mrs Jennings
Launceston

25 Calendar of Prisoners Newgate
Jail 16/09/1830

[illegible]

MIDDLESEX PRISONERS ON ORDERS.

Under Sentence of Transportation for Seven Years Continued.

<i>Timothy Green</i> (Hulke)	10	Sept. 1829	<i>Mary Anne</i>	42	Oct. 1828.
<i>Samuel White</i> do	12	"	<i>Mary Bailey</i>	57	April, 1829.
<i>Matthew Lapeck</i> do	18	"	<i>Mary Ann Davis</i>	44	Sept.
<i>William Thompson</i> do	25	"	<i>Martha George</i>	66	Oct.
<i>Richard Barrett</i> (Hulke)	29	"	<i>Mary Rickards</i>	90	Dec.
<i>John Liddard</i> do	31	"	<i>Elizabeth</i>	36	Jan. 1839.
<i>Thomas Langdale</i> do	18	"	<i>Mary Jones</i>	22	May.
<i>John Butler</i> do	18	"	<i>Isabella Anderson</i>	15	"
<i>John Menzies</i> do	22	"	<i>Samuel Beckwith</i>	19	"
<i>Henry Maule</i> do	46	"	<i>John Paine</i>	19	"
<i>Henry Wall</i> (Hulke)	19	"	<i>Margaret Garman</i>	22	"
<i>William Winder</i> do	34	"	<i>Estlin Loring</i>	71	"
<i>Henry Davis</i> do	44	"	<i>Mary Davis</i>	16	"
<i>Edmund Hill</i> do	22	"	<i>Mary Ann Allen</i>	53	July.
<i>Thomas Ellis</i> do	32	"	<i>Jesse Humphries</i>	24	"
<i>John Roberts</i> (Hulke)	34	"	<i>John Clapham</i>	27	"

#	Daniel Keefe	(Hulks)	14
	Feen Gwillim	do	40
	Robert William Lyall . . .	do	20
	Joseph McCarthy	do	28
	Joseph Marria	do	15
	Thomas Chittell	do	12

Henry Dool.....	do	do	24	to	Ann Brimble.....	19	to
James Smith.....	do	do	25	"	Bridget Griffin.....	19	"
Thomas Wafford.....	do	do	16	"	Joe Buckley.....	19	"
James Brock (Worcestershire Stn.)	do	do	17	"	Joe Allen.....	19	"
George Carr.....	do	do	17	"	Elizabeth Sloman.....	20	"
Henry Smith.....	do	do	14	"	Edward Frost.....	21	"
Thomas Henry (Worcestershire Stn.)	do	do	17	"	Elizabeth Chapman (Peasmarsh)	21	"
Charles Phillips.....	do	do	13	"	Jefferson Hardy.....	23	"
					Elizabeth Morris (Peasmarsh)	26	"
Miss Wilson alias Doolie.....	40	May, 1828.			Robert Aldridge.....	22	"
Lock Ashburn.....	24	"			Robert Skelton.....	21	"
John White.....	45	July,			Charles Watson.....	20	"

Under Sentence of Imprisonment for Felony and Misdemeanor.			
George Eastman . . . (Discharged)	21	Sept. 1880.	For fourteen days
Thomas Javel	41	"	"
Henry Park	46	"	For fifteen days
John Jones	66	"	For fourteen days
Thomas Manson	60	"	For ten days
James Parrott	60	"	For fifteen days
William Brown	64	"	ditto
John Jackson	64	"	For fourteen days

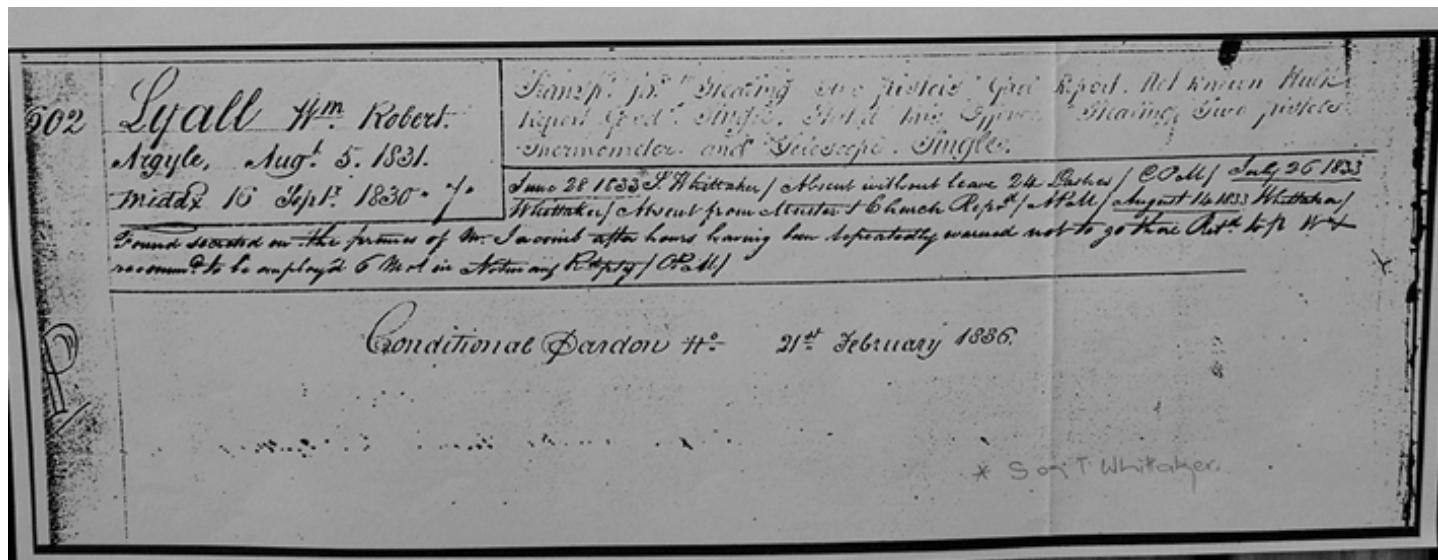
26 Prisoners awaiting transportation

(Middlesex) R W Lyall (*highlighted*)

self and Captain Stavers, relating to the management of the convicts, a story in its own right. Five convicts died during the voyage. Few of the Hobart hospital records have survived from this period. *Reference: The Proposed Appropriation List: 1/538-540 shows 10 men were admitted to hospital care.* Regaining his health William Robert was assigned to Mr. Whittaker. I have been unable to identify the exact location of this property, or type of business Mr. Whittaker operated. Perhaps this is where he learnt the trade of carpentry. William Robert worked here without misbehaviour until 28th June 1833 when he was reported as *Absent without Leave*. The Police Magistrate ordered him to receive 24 lashes. Absent from Church Muster 3 weeks later, there seems to have been a greater understanding shown on this occasion, he was merely reprimanded. Nineteen days later William Robert was again in trouble. Police Magistrate recommended he be employed for the duration of six months in the Notman Road Party. Mr. Notman was notorious, to be assigned to one of his road construction teams, was the worst possible punishment, so feared was Mr. Notman for his harsh treatment. For the next period of his sentence his behaviour seems to have been without fault.

William Robert was granted a *Conditional Pardon, Number 861, on 21st February 1836. {The convict could not leave the colony until expiry date of his original sentence imposed in England. A Conditional Pardon was designed to give the convict all the rights accorded to a free person but not the right to return to England, if he so wished}* State Archives Hobart} Reference CON 31/28602. (Illus. 27)

It was one year and one week after the Conditional Pardon was granted that Frances Maria and William Robert were to marry. Saying goodbye to their friends Richard and Jane Grayling, the new Mr and Mrs Lyall prepared to leave this island, leaving behind the convict stigma, perhaps. After arriving in Melbourne on board THE EAGLE (Illus. 28) the couple settled into establishing their new life together. William was perhaps in the carpentry trade at this point. Four years later the St. James Parish Records show the Registration of Birth of their son Robert William Lyall in 1840. *Reference: Church of England Registration of Birth Number 12317 read on fiche 267.*



27 William Robert Lyall - Conditional Pardon (21/02/1836)

For reasons unknown to our family the decision was made to leave Australia and set sail for New Zealand. About this time the couple chose to adopt Frances Maria's maiden name of Coombs, in later times spelling was to change {but not consistently} with the addition of an 'e' now to reading as Coombes. Although we do not know exactly the reason behind the name change, our views vary. Some family members follow the oral history that Frances Maria was due an inheritance from her family, thus adopting her family name would make it easier to locate her. To date no Will has been found to prove this line of thought. Other family members believe that the desire to begin a completely new life, free of the stigma of the past, a change of name and settling in a new country could provide the foundation for the future they so eagerly sought. In researching this section of my family, I have not been able to locate them in any shipping records that would relate to their arrival in New Zealand. Possibly, as they first settled in Auckland, this may have been the point of arrival.

Settling in Auckland the family lived in the small fencible settlement of Otahuhu at the time William Robert, from this point is recorded as Robert, and Frances Maria arranged for the baptism of their son George and daughter Frances Maria. The ceremony was celebrated in April 1849 in the Chapel at St. John's College. Recorded in the Register of Baptisms Robert stated his occupation as a carpenter. *Reference: Kinder Library SJC 3/3/2*. Anne Megget gives detailed outline of Robert's working life as a carpenter in section one. Later the family was to take residence on Waiheke Island, father and son owning and operating a trading cutter used to carry copper ore from the Great Barrier and Kawanau Islands. Son Robert had served an ap-

prenticeship as a shipwright with George Niccole.

The Christian name of William was not used again until his burial in Dunedin in the December of 1883. There is recorded in the Dunedin Southern Cemetery Records, a William Lyall Coombes died 6th December 1883. Of interest the document also states, *last came from Bristol*. His convict history denied perhaps? *Reference: Informant is noted, George Coombs*. This suggests that perhaps William Robert and Frances Maria did not tell their children about the convict period in their father's life, thus their assuming, quite naturally, that both parents had come directly from the Bristol area. The Certified copy of Entry in the Register of Deaths the name is recorded, Robert William Lyall Coombes died 6th December 1883. This colourful ancestor has led me on most intriguing path as I followed the passage of his time, right up to the final documents pertaining to the end of his life.

Issue of William Robert and Frances Maria: (Pic. 29)

Robert William: born 1840 in Melbourne. Married Mary Ann McCauley in May 1862. (Pic. 30) Living in Auckland Robert began an apprentice as a shipwright. Later working as a carpenter along side his father often carrying out repair work at Government House, the pair worked on many of the famous buildings of the early Auckland settlement. Serving a shipwright's apprentice- ship with Mr Niccole he was to help build a whaleboat competing in the Auckland Regatta, in which he took the position of coxswain. Robert helped to establish the Masonic Lodge in Parnell. When gold was discovered at Thames Robert sailed on the second boat from Auckland to stake his claim, calling it " Waiatai" a most

R.G. 917 Nº 86119

NEW ZEALAND
CERTIFIED COPY OF ENTRY OF MARRIAGE
in the Registrar-General's Office

Number	7	
When married	20 October 1873	
Where married	House of Robert Coombes Parawai	
	Groom	Bride
Name and surname	James Coombes	Mary Jane Renner
Age	28	18
Profession or occupation	Carpenter	Dress Maker
Marital status	Bachelor	Spinster
Birthplace		
Usual residence (in full)		

Certified to be a true copy of the above particulars included in a marriage entry in the records of the Registrar-General's Office.

Given under the seal of the Registrar-General at Lower Hutt, this
 29 day of January 19 86

CAUTION—Any person who (1) falsifies any of the particulars on this certificate, or (2) uses it as true, knowing it to be false, is liable to prosecution under the Crimes Act 1900.

REGISTERED COPY

31 James Lyall Coombes/ Mary Jane Renner Marriage Certificate (20/10/1873)

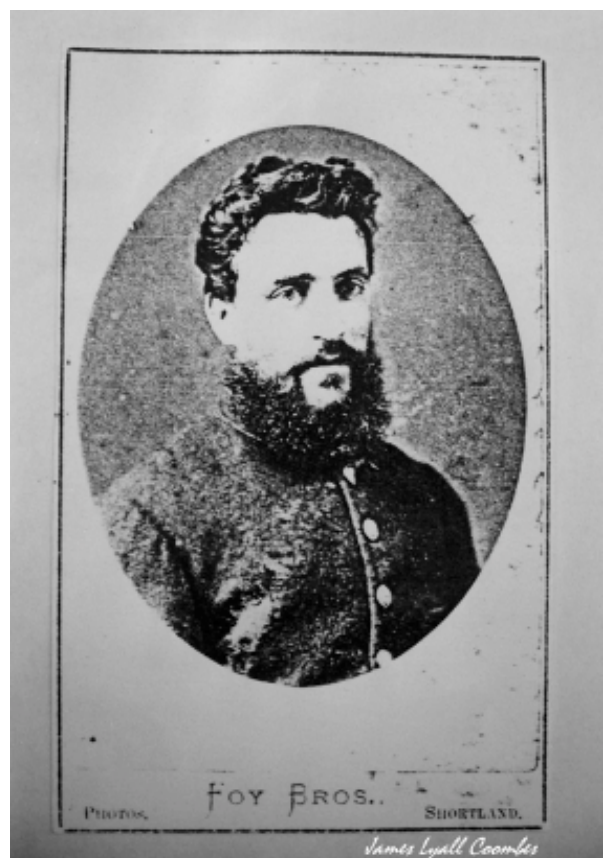
successful venture. *Although Robert William was baptised with the surname Lyall, he carried the Coombes surname in New Zealand on all official documents relating to his life here. Interestingly at the time of his marriage a newspaper reporting the event stating Robert William Lyall, eldest son of Mr Robert Coombes of Auckland had married Mary Anne McCauley.* The official entry in the Register of Marriages clearly states his name as Robert Lyle Coombes, mis-spelling Lyall. No surviving issue of this union. Robert and Mary are buried in Thames.

Mary Frances Bromley Lyall : born 1845. married Thomas KAY in May 1867. Sadly Mary died of childbirth fever 10 days after the birth of her daughter Mary Frances in 1884.

George Lyall : born 1846 baptised with his sister Frances Maria at St Johns College Chapel. Married Eliza GARDINER in January 1870, his occupation, carpenter. George and his family lived in Dunedin. Issue of nine children.

James: 1848 married Mary Jane RENNER at the home of his oldest brother Robert in Thames. (Illus. 31) The couple made their home in Thames. Occupation: Carpenter and Undertaker. Issue of eleven children. James (Pic. 32) and Mary Jane are buried in Thames. My line of descent.

Frances Maria: born 1850 married Er INGS 1869 in Dunedin. Issue of three children. Widowed. Married Thomas KAY 1885, widower of her sister Mary. Issue of three children. After the death of Thomas, Frances left Dunedin to live with her widowed brother Robert in Thames. Frances was the sole bene-



32 James Lyall Coombes

factress of the Will of her brother Robert.

John Walter: born 1854. Married Annie Jane TODD February 1880 in Dunedin. Occupation a Tanner. Issue of eight children. Died 1925.

They all carried the surname COOMBS/COOMBES, some also the name Lyall as a second name.

Frances Maria and her brother Charles Wedmore Coombs were to be re-united after 17 years of separation. *Newspaper Report: The New Zealander 21st May 1853. Notice asking for Robert William Lyall to make contact with Mr. G. McVay, Freemans Bay, he will hear of Charles Coombs from Bristol.* The celebration, time to hear the stories from Nailsea, news of her parents, her siblings and friends from her youth, the experience would be difficult for us to imagine, so different from this age of technology when we are in touch within moments.

Frances Maria and William Robert were eventually to settle in Dunedin residing at 6 Castle Street where they lived to their last days. The decision to settle in Dunedin, being perhaps

the need to be involved in the family circle that was establishing there, after being apart from her family for so many years. The working life of the family is detailed fully in Part One.

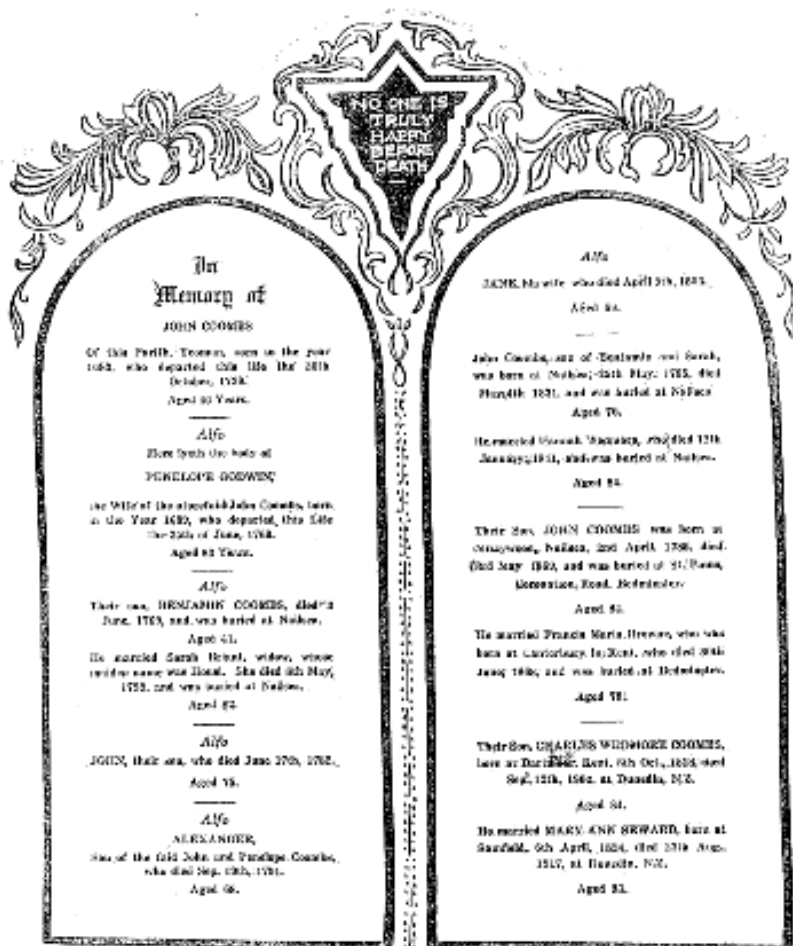
Frances Maria died 2nd February 1868, suddenly one morning whilst preparing to leave for morning church service, thus predeceasing both her parents. William Robert died in 1883. Buried beside each other in the Anglican Section of the Southern Cemetery in Dunedin. Entries of Death in the Register General's Records state Frances Maria Lyall Coombs and the cemetery records state Frances Marian Lyall Coombs. Recorded in the Register of Deaths is the entry for Robert William Lyall Coombes, but the cemetery records state William Lyall Coombes as previously explained.

Speculation relating to the name changes will always remain a matter of personal feeling, as we can never hope to know the true reason. Confusion over Frances Maria's husband William Robert or was he Robert William? My research has shown him to be recorded as both as the following references will indicate.

Robert William Lyall	Tried 20th September 1830. Reference London Middlesex Calendar of Prisoners in His Majesty's Goal of Newgate.
Robert William Lyall	Middlesex Prisoners Orders
Robert William Lyall	When assigned to The Hulks.
William Robert Lyall	Shipping List to the ship ARGYLE.
William Robert Lyall	Appropriation List MM33/6.
William Robert Lyall	Prisoner Number 602 House Servant aged 22 years.
William Robert Lyall	State Archives Office Hobart CON G-O 1831 - 1840.
William Robert Lyall	Conditional Pardon CON 31/28 Number 602
Robert William Lyall	Marriage Church of St. John Parish of Launceston RGD 13/3822
Robert William Lyall Coombes	Entry in Register of Death 06th December 1883
William Lyall Coombe	Southern Cemetery Church of England Records. Informant is stated as George Coombs.



33 Margie Denniston (left) & Catherine Poarch in Bristol 2003 (Catherine Poarch living in Bristol {gt.gt. grand daughter of Susannah Coombs} d Margie Denniston from New Zealand {gt.gt. granddaughter of Frances Maria} met 167 years after the sisters parted.)



34 Typed copy of "Gravestone" see also "Brass Plate" on page 6



35 Holy Trinity Curch, Nailsea 2004 (PCW)

Addendum:

During my research work in Tasmania I discovered there were two men bearing the names of Robert Lyall and Robert William or William Robert Lyall. During weeks of research at the State Archive Office in Hobart I followed and documented the lives of these two men fully. All references to prisoner number 602 sentence of 7 years transportation, relate to our family whilst prisoner 622 sentenced to 14 years transportation, did not.

Researching the life of Robert Lyall Prisoner number 622, to the small village of Westbury Van Dieman's Land, documentation held at State Archives in Hobart and the Historical Society documented a full and detailed life in this village. The wife and the two daughters of this Robert, remaining in England at the time of his transportation to Van Dieman's Land, were to join Robert some years later. I visited the cemetery on the Westbury hilltop, to find this Robert is buried alongside his wife Margaret his daughters and their families, thus assuring me that he was not connected to our family. Researching Prisoner 602 to the marriage of Frances Maria in Launceston Van Dieman's Land, settling in Melbourne Australia, eventually to New Zealand, living in Auckland before finally settling into the close family circle forming in Dunedin New Zealand, enables me to confirm my line of descent without doubt.

The recent discovery of another Frances seemed too unreal to be true. Two prisoners Lyall transported, their numbers 602 and 622. Two young women, same name in part, same age, travelling under the same emigration scheme, to the same place, marriage of two, could this possibly be? An interesting time it will be researching the other Frances and

documenting her life at some time in the future.

It is most important for the reader to note here that Anne Megget wrote her section of this family history some many months before the information relating to a second Frances was discovered.

References and Sources

Acknowledgement must be made to Peter Wright of Nailsea and District Local History Society for his unfailing dedication, support and encouragement during the research of our Nailsea family history.

I acknowledge also:

Z Coombes, P Danenburg, A Megget, D Tyree, D Coombs, F Hewitt, C Poarch, K Ruddle. Elizabeth Rushen
London Metropolitan Archives
The Norwich Mercury Newspaper 1836
The Times Newspaper 1836
Hobart Archive Office of Tasmania
Hobart City Library
George Town Signal Station
St. John's Church Launceston
Public Library Launceston
Genealogical Society of Launceston
National Archives Wellington New Zealand
New Zealand Society of Genealogists
Register of Birth Death and Marriage Records
Auckland Public Library
National Archive Office Auckland
Kinder Library
Dunedin Public Library
Settlers Museum Dunedin
Thames Public Library

(Margie Lyall-Coombes Denniston, 92 Darraghs Road Otumoetai Tauranga 3001 New Zealand. E denniston@clear.net.nz)

The Nailsea and District Local History Society was established in 1975 and aims to encourage and promote an interest in, and research into, the local history of the area.

The Society is open to all, and we meet on the second Monday of the month at Nailsea School. Here we have talks on wide range of subjects of interest to local people. In 2003 we were closely involved in the production of a new video "Nailsea - Bottle Green and Coal Black" on the History of Nailsea.

The purchase of the Tynesfield Estate for the nation by English Heritage has led to an increased interest in the history of the area. Our journal has often contained items on the Estate by those, and about those, who were born or worked there.

The Society is very much part and parcel of the community whose history it records. Various members of the society have helped people, from all over the world, with their enquiries about the history of the area

The Society is also very active in raising awareness of, and ensuring proper consultation in, development matters that may impact on the historical landscape of Nailsea and the surrounding district.

For information on how to join the Society, please visit our website at www.ndlhs.org.uk



The above glazed ceramic frieze, illustrating the glassworks and its various manufacturing processes, was designed and produced by Ned Heywood of the *Workshop Gallery* in Chepstow, incorporating fragments of glass excavated from the site.

