

The Deerness family: By Jack Algie

I had 2 hours with one of the 'Deerness' in Wanganui at the end of July 2013.

He has been to the Orkneys 14 times. He's was a bachelor of 67 years old.

He had a writing desk of information. I got him to copy out 4 pages off his computer for me, but I'll just record the stuff relevant to the descendants of **Alexander & Jemima**.

These first **Deerness** to come to NZ was **Jemima's** oldest brother, **John Spence Deerness**, born 1832, 15 years older than **Jemima**.

He was born in the Kirkwall, St Ola, Orkney Islands. He came to NZ in 1856 and bought land at Pukekohe East, where he farmed for 40 years. Retiring to Auckland. He gave a part of his farm to the community of Pukekohe East for a church to be built.

His father, **James Deerness**, was born 26/5/1805, on Eday, Orkney. He married **Lara Muir**, born in 1806 and they had 4 children.

John Spence Deerness 1832.

William Spence Deerness, 1836.

Sarah Deerness 1843 – married **George Chalmers**.

Jemima Deerness 1847, married **Alec Algie**.

Like I said before, **William (Bill)** his father **James Deerness** and John built the Pukekohe East Church in 1863. Before that they had built a temporary church combined with school.

Pukekohe Township was not there at that time. It was still Maori land. It came to being in ??

William Alexis Logie Spence Deerness, 1836-1942.

Bill Deerness (name now spelt Deerness) became one of the first builders around Pukekohe, but he spent quite a bit of his early life with the Colonial Defense Force as a Trooper and was issued a service medal (NZ Wars 1860-1870). He died in 1891, 30th October, leaving 8 children and his widow **Victoria** lived till 1942. Dying at the age of 95.

I've just included him because of my Grandma's association with Pukekohe, OK?

We will look at my Grandma's family, **May Elisabeth Algie**, later on.

A bit about the boarding house, **Jemimas** cousin **Bill Deerness** came up and he built the original part with the help of **Will & Jack**.

The idea was to give work for his daughters although I think Sissy (**Sarah**) would have been teaching by then or not long after.

The second part built on a few years later I think, was built by Will with the help of Jack.

Then between about 1916 and 1918 the annex, known to us later as the green mansions, was built by the original cottage and actually joined the cottage and extended nearly to the post office. A lot of the timber came out of a scow wrecked on the back of Kawau Island.

Around 1920 the 3 roomed bach was built of fibrolite on the south eastern side, opposite the children's room and Emma's room.

I also think the bathroom by the children's room was later added on too.

The washhouse was on the seaward side of the oak tree below **Evan's** house.

The large verandah with the roof over it was built in 1927 before Christmas and was used for concerts, dances, church services, missionary meetings etc. and later to hang nets on and the **Mera's** lines were drawn up on the floor.

That was my Mum's (**Chips**) first Christmas there.

The last part built was Grandpa & Grandma's sunporch or lounge, built by **Alf Roke** about 1941 or 1942. I can remember him building it.

I lived with Grandma & Grandpa from mid 1941 to mid 1942 and **Marion** lived with **Steve & Alma**, she had just turned one and Mum came home from hospital 1 year later. Dad & **Steve** were in the mounted rifles for half that time and **Athol** & Grandpa kept the show going and the boarding house closed.