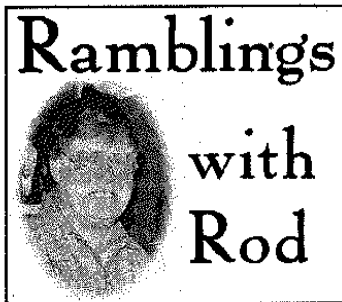


# Duder signals long family link to Devonport



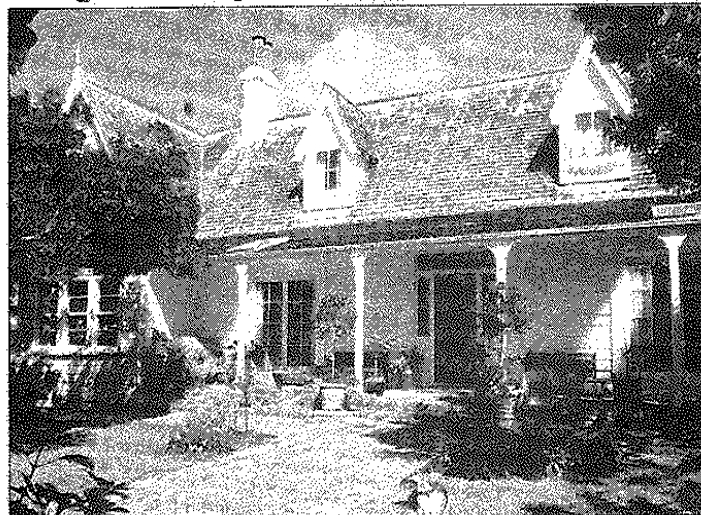
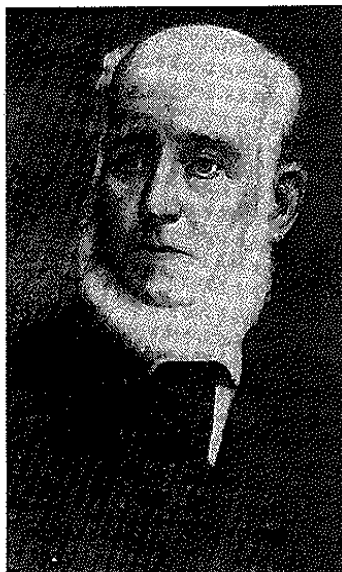
In this article I would like to cover another family which played a role in the development of the borough and the area.

The Duder family has a long and interesting association with Devonport. It is remembered today through Duder Avenue, named after Thomas Duder, one of the early settlers of Devonport. He was the start of a long line of family members who were destined to play major roles in the development of the borough.

The beautiful Duder homestead in Church Street is still in existence. There were many properties and dwellings owned and occupied by the family as it increased over the decades. Most of the homesteads have now vanished, so this surviving one is most significant. It was bought and extended by Robert Duder for his bride Polly in 1880 and the family occupied it for the next 90 years.

Thomas Duder himself first arrived in New Zealand on the HMS *Buffalo* around 1833. On this voyage, the *Buffalo* was carrying women convicts to New South Wales, Australia and then onto

Thomas Duder



The magnificent Duder homestead, still standing in Church St.

New Zealand to collect kauri spars for the British navy.

Duder returned in 1840, again on the *Buffalo*, which had taken convicts to Australia and picked up the wife and children of Governor Hobson from Sydney to bring them to the Bay of Islands before loading spars for the return journey to Portsmouth.

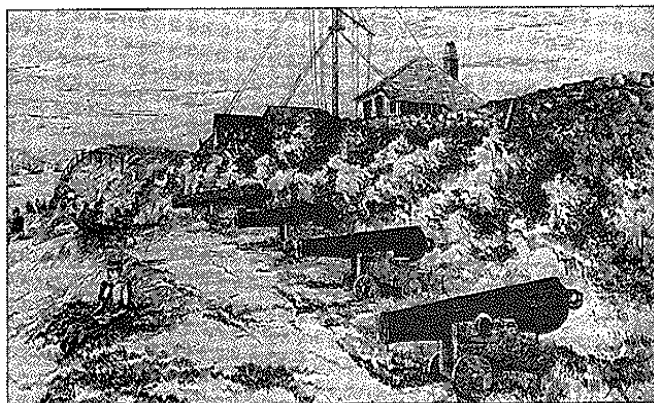
Unfortunately the magnificent vessel was wrecked on 28 July 1840 when she was driven ashore on a sandy beach at Mercury Bay on the Coromandel as she was trying to weather a storm. Two of the crew were drowned, but able seaman Duder survived and at the age of 32 stayed in New Zealand and came to Auckland. He purchased and sold land in the new city and on the North Shore while being employed as a signalman. He ended up owning most of Ngataranga Point, which he used for farming, as well

as five acres on the corner of Church St where the Masonic Hotel now stands and four acres at Victoria Road on the southwest corner of Mt Victoria.

He also purchased four acres on the eastern side of Church St, where he built a stone house and where later his sons Richard and Robert had their store which still stands on that corner of Church St and King Edward Parade.

In 1843, he was appointed signalman on Flagstaff Hill (Mt Victoria or Takarunga as it was known by the Maori). He was 37 years old and his time as signalman was to be filled with drama and dedication. His wife Margaret (nee Dunne) was the seventh child and sixth daughter of Daniel and Lucy Dunne of Castlemacadam County, Wicklow, Ireland. Her father died falling from a gig in 1833, leaving Lucy with 14 children to bring up. From 1841 on, all but two had migrated to Australia and then on to New Zealand. The youngest two arrived with

An early picture of the signalman's house on top of Mt Victoria.



their mother Lucy in Auckland in 1855. Margaret arrived with two of her sisters in Australia in 1841 and came to New Zealand, probably as a servant to Governor and Lady FitzRoy when they arrived in 1843 aboard the ship *Bangalore*. She must have met Thomas soon after arriving, because they were married in May 1845 at St Paul's Church, Auckland.

Thomas was 39 and Margaret was 28. They settled down to a married life in a wooden house on the summit of Mt Victoria. This house was presumably provided by the harbourmaster and must have replaced the tent he lived in on the top of Signal Hill after he was appointed as signalman in November 1843. He would have signalled in the ship *Bangalore* as it entered the channel that December. At that time he would not have known that on board was a young woman who two years later would become his wife.

Margaret must have been pleased to have found someone as well set-up as Thomas. Not only did he have a position of some importance in the new township, but he also had some large land holdings. One would have thought this should have made life easy for them both, starting out to support a new family.

Margaret gave birth to the first of their seven children, William Thomas on June 12, 1846. He could claim to be the first pakeha child to be born in Devonport. The following year in August their second son Thomas John was born, and in April 1849 their first daughter Emma Lucy. The following year in April 1851, Margaret gave birth to twins Robert Humphrey and Rich Willoughby. A busy life for the couple, with four children five years old and under, and Thomas's signalman work, meant long hours on the top of the mountain as Auckland's port became increasingly hectic.

Thomas was deprived of many of the privileges of other government workers. They had to work on Saturdays and Sundays and had no set hours – in fact, time on duty was unlimited. It was estimated that 15 hours a day was required to carry out the signalman's job – not much time to be around the house, which needed repairs.

In 1854, Captain Burgess, who was chief pilot for the harbour, requested from the board the sum of five pounds to have the fallen down chimney of the signalman's house repaired. At this time the salary paid to Thomas for his duties was one hundred pounds a year. This it seems was not sufficient to support his family, a point made when in 1856 there was a suggestion that the salary be reduced.

By this time, Thomas and Margaret had eight children, all under the age of 10. After 1853, however, Thomas had shifted to a house he had built on his land in King Edward Parade. This was a substantial

dwelling made of stone walls two feet thick. It had deep window recesses, huge inglenooks and stone fireplaces with steel cross-bars for hanging pots and kettles. This house was demolished in 1910. Thomas stayed on as signalman, despite his failing health, till he was 71, and only a few days before his death in 1875. He spent 32 years in the job, and despite fighting hard was not given a pension, which is possibly why he could not give up the job sooner even though his eyesight was failing.

Margaret lived until she was 62 years old, dying on 1 October 1879. She is buried alongside Thomas on the slopes of Mt Victoria, the place where they had spent so much of their lives together.

Marianne Philson, a great-granddaughter of Thomas Duder, has published an excellent family history, with copies still available from the family (*The Duder Family in New Zealand*, Bush Press, 1990, ISBN 0-908608-23-3).

One of the rewards of writing these articles is the letters and calls I get from readers who are related in some way or have further knowledge on the people and subject matter. Lately some of the direct descendants of the early families in Devonport having contacted me. In three cases members of these families had histories written by one of their past relations. In some cases, these have been updated by others from the family and along with photographic material and family trees have been printed out to be given to surviving relatives. In all cases the people involved have left a copy for the Devonport Museum. These documents are invaluable as they contain stories and facts that would only be known to the writers. There are many photographs that were taken by a family member or by professional photographers for the family.

As Devonport was such a close knit society, all of these histories contain references to one or more of the other early settlers in the area. They provide an excellent cross reference and link between



Margaret Duder in 1873.

the people, the business and the local government. In most instances, I have been able to use the information at the museum to add to these histories and therefore add material which extends the particular family story.

The Devonport Museum is in the process of computerising its collection. Some time in the future, these histories, with the family members' permission, will be available as a valuable reference tool via a computer terminal on the floor of the museum.

Contact me if you have details of your early history in the area, and I will see if we can add to such information – and of course we would like a copy for our archives.

• Rod Cornelius is president of the Devonport Museum and Historical Society.

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