

Dods descendants remember

by Wynsley Wrigley

A PROMINENT colonial era Gisborne farming couple whose grandchildren included a stuntman and film editor of Hollywood's "golden age" have been honoured by their descendants at Makaraka Cemetery.

The headstone of Henry Deans Dods and Mary Catherine Dods, was one of 90 removed in the early 1970s and buried in a trench in 1982.

About 40 descendants proved Henry and Mary had not been forgotten by attending the rededication of their headstone, now restored and returned to the burial site in Gisborne's original cemetery.

Descendants held a service — Mary was known to be active in the United Mission church movement — and went on to enjoy "a big reunion".

"It was very special," said Tegwen Dods, a great-great-granddaughter of the couple.

Henry and Mary had seven children and descendants of four of them attended the re-dedication.

The pioneering couple, who married in 1867 in Scotland, the land of Henry's birth, settled in Poverty Bay with their children in 1886.

Henry had previously travelled around the colony in 1885-1886 looking for a final destination to settle, one which would be suitable for his health, before choosing Poverty Bay.

Henry had bad lungs and other health issues.

In his diary, from February 2, 1885, he described what is now officially known as Turanganui-a-Kiwa/Poverty Bay as "the prettiest bay we have seen yet".

His travels allowed him to take in many of the colony's sights including the Pink and White Terraces, later destroyed when Mt Tarawera erupted on June 10, 1886.

Once settled in Poverty Bay, the couple and their children farmed at Linburn in the Waimata Valley.

Their first two children had been born in India where Henry worked for the East India Company.

Georgina Harriet (Morice) was born in 1868 and William Angus in 1870.

The third, Mary Seymour (Bellerby) was born in 1872 in Canada where her mother had been born.

The remaining children were all born in England, Henry Heatly, in 1874, Stella (Mander) in 1878, Charles George, born 1881 and who died in 1887, and John Shirreff, in 1884.

But the family enjoyed a short time together in the district before Henry died in 1894.

He had been in hospital for a month



A 'very special' reunion

Descendants of Henry and Mary Dods, who settled in Poverty Bay in 1886, at the re-dedication of their headstone which has been restored and returned to the grave site in Makaraka Cemetery. Inset, the headstone of Henry Deans Dods and Mary Catherine Dods in Makaraka Cemetery.

Pictures supplied



and was aged only 54.

The Poverty Bay Herald described him as "one of the best known settlers of the Waimata Valley".

Mary lived until 1922 when she died at the age of 75.

Tegwen Dods said she first saw a photograph of Henry and Mary — who was wearing a velvet jacket — just a few months ago.

"When I saw the photo, I realised I had the jacket."

Her mother had given it to her 40 years previously and described it as "Granny Dods' coat".

Two of Henry and Mary's grandsons — sons of their oldest son William — went on to live fascinating lives in Hollywood.

Charles Howard Dods was a stuntman

and Hector Scolon Dods, a film editor.

Tegwen Dods said Charles drove a chariot in the original Ben Hur film starring the now forgotten Hollywood star Ramon Navarro.

The crowd extras during the chariot scenes featured a who's who of 1920s tinseltown including star Hollywood husband and wife couple, Douglas Fairbanks and wife Mary Pickford, John Gilbert, brothers John and Lionel Barrymore, Joan Crawford, Marion Davies, sisters Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Samuel Goldwyn, Harold Lloyd, Carole Lombard and Myrna Loy.

Charles became friends with legendary studio executive Darryl Zanuck and British actor David Niven.

Niven described Charles as the finest horseman he ever knew and mentioned him by his nickname of Bobs in his best-selling book Bring on the Empty Horses.

The two brothers also "mixed" with Shirley Temple, Tyrone Power and Tullulah Bankhead.

In 1938, Hector, then the head cutter at 20th Century Fox, travelled to Mexico with Power. The movie star was feted by the Mexican establishment and adored by his women fans.

Hector, an accomplished polo player, arranged for the two of them to play with the Mexican army team.



Mary and Henry Dods

There is a photograph on [pinterest.nz](https://www.pinterest.nz) of Hector speaking to Bankhead in 1944 during the making of her most highly praised film role, in Alfred Hitchcock's Lifeboat.

Hector also rests in Taruheru Cemetery where he was buried in July, 1969, aged 68.