

Thankful for Albert's vision

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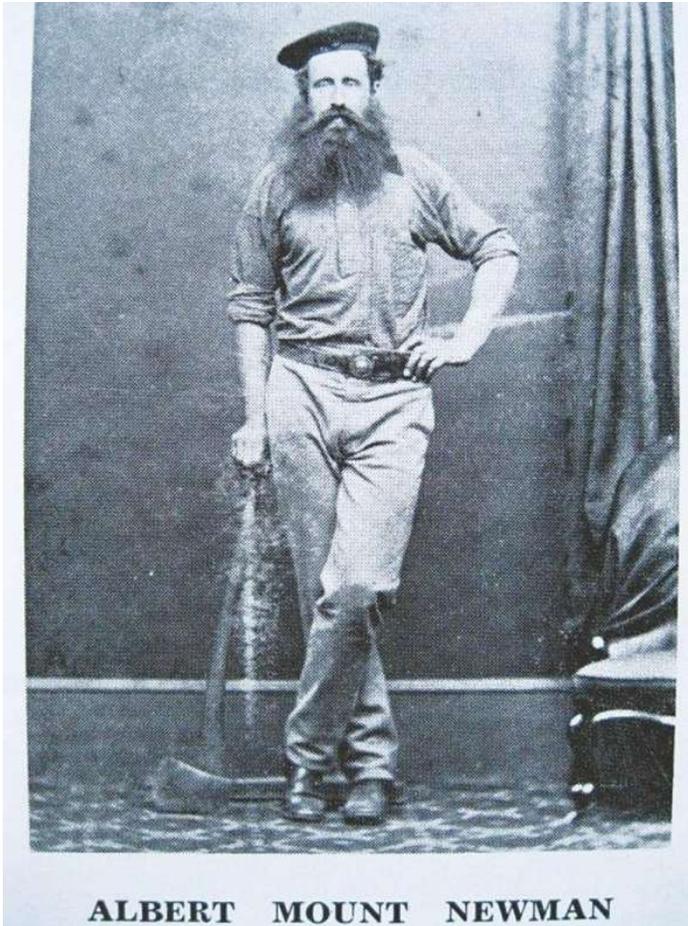
HONOURED AND TREASURED ALWAYS: Janice Hobbs and brother John Newman honour their grandparents Albert and Phoebe Newman and other relatives at their grave site at Ormond Cemetery. Albert settled in New Zealand in 1855 and died in 1919, 15 years before his wife. The couple do not rest alone at Ormond Cemetery. Their infant son Fredric, son Albert Junior, and the ashes of son Roy and his wife, are all buried on the same grave site while daughter Ada Buscke is buried elsewhere in the cemetery. The grave site was repaired and cleaned up in time for a family reunion marking the centenary of Albert's death. The family are not happy with the state of Ormond Cemetery. Picture by Liam Clayton

More than 50 descendants have honoured pioneering Poverty Bay settler Albert Mount Newman a century after his death.

English-born Albert (1840-1919) who married New Zealand-born Phoebe Bee (1858-1934) at the home of her English parents at Patutahi on March 30, 1881, arrived in New Zealand in 1855.

The couple went on to have nine children and 23 grandchildren.

Grandson John Newman was repairing and cleaning up Albert and Phoebe's grave site at Ormond Cemetery earlier this year when he noticed the centenary of Albert's death was near.



The ensuing Newman family reunion at Ormond honoured Albert and Phoebe and, in a way, all of the early pioneering settlers, said John's sister Janice Hobbs.

Like others, Albert sailed for months from the other side of the world, worked hard in primitive conditions, and raised families, whose descendants still live in the district today.

Albert and Phoebe have more than 340 descendants — and will have three more before the end of the year, Mrs Hobbs said.

Family from Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Taupo and Auckland attended the reunion, including eight of the 12 grandchildren still living.

One grandson, James Newman, the son of Albert Newman Junior, served in the RNZAF and was killed in World War 2.

MAN OF THE LAND: Albert Mount Newman was a hardworking Ormond farmer whose descendants still live in the district 100 years after his death. Picture supplied

Family members enjoyed a Powerpoint presentation on their family history and role playing of Albert's life.

They also attended a service of remembrance at Ormond Cemetery.

Grandson Bruce Newman said the reunion was 'a very special occasion for all'.

Albert was only 15 when he arrived in New Zealand with his brother James on the 533-ton marque Queen Margaret in 1855. Their voyage from London to Nelson took 116 days.

The boys left five siblings and their parents in England.

The brothers, well-educated and bright according to surviving letters from school masters, worked as farming cadets on their Uncle Alfred's Arlington Station in Hawke's Bay.

How they made their way from Nelson to Hawke's Bay remains unknown.

Shortly afterwards their father James followed them to New Zealand, intending to settle.

But he quickly decided the colony was not to his liking.

He remained in Hawke's Bay for only 10 days before travelling to Wellington, and after a five-week wait, embarked on a second long voyage which returned him to England.

The boys never saw their father again and he died just three years later.

Albert bought land and farmed in Hawke's Bay and also served in the Hampden Militia before moving to Poverty Bay.

He originally leased land at Makauri.

It was around that time he met and courted Phoebe.

He went on to lease and later purchase 900 acres at Ngakarua, Ormond.

The property was named Homebush, and four generations later, remains in the family.

Albert and Phoebe moved on to a new 10-acre property at Ormond, known as Riverford, with Albert continuing to farm at Homebush from Monday to Saturday.

He would return by horse to Riverford for the weekends.

'On Friday, I begin to wonder how the old woman and the kids are getting on, and resolve that on the morrow I will clear for home,' Albert wrote.

'When I arrive, I meet some of the kids at the gate, and have to look twice at them to make sure they are my own.'

In the 1950s Riverford was sold to the Department of Education and became the site of Ormond School.

It was here in the hall where the Newman family reunion was held.

Albert and Phoebe were known for their hospitality and owned one of the first tennis courts in the district.

Phoebe was an acclaimed gardener and some of her camellia trees still remain.

Albert was a prolific writer of letters to the Poverty Bay Herald.

His letters were regularly published for nearly 30 years and covered contemporary events such as World War 1, prohibition, universal suffrage and many issues familiar to readers of today such as roads, drainage and flooding.

The Poverty Bay Herald described Albert on August 1, 1919, the day after his death, as "a gentleman well respected by a large circle of friends throughout this district, and was known for his kindly and generous disposition".

Bruce Newman describes his grandfather as a pioneer.

'He obviously had the courage and strength of mind to venture to the other side of the world.

'In 1855 the whole idea was full of unknowns.

'In spite of all this he made his mark as a farmer from the mid-1800s.

'Life during those years would have been all hard work — pick and shovel, an axe and horse power.

'There was no machinery.

'Even in my early years, I remember shovelling gravel on to a dray, shoulder high from the river bed while the horse waited.

'I think to myself, with great gratitude, for grandfather, that he came to New Zealand.

'He might not have known it at the time, but we believe it's one of the best places in the world.

'We are all grateful.

'We are possibly a part of his extended vision.

'God bless him.'