

THE ONSLOW HISTORIAN



ONSLOW HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



ONSLow HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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An autobiography by Doris Gordon, 1955.

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and the late Alan Jolly.

Front Cover:

Street sign Doris Gordon Crescent, on Spencer Street, Crofton Downs,
Wellington. Photographer: Simon Hoyle, 2013.

Portrait of Doris Gordon from *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor*, An autobiography
by Doris Gordon, 1955.

Back Cover:

The intersection at the entrance to Doris Gordon Crescent from Spencer Street,
Crofton Downs, Wellington. Photographer: Simon Hoyle, 2013.

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Doris Gordon

Crescent

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Introduction

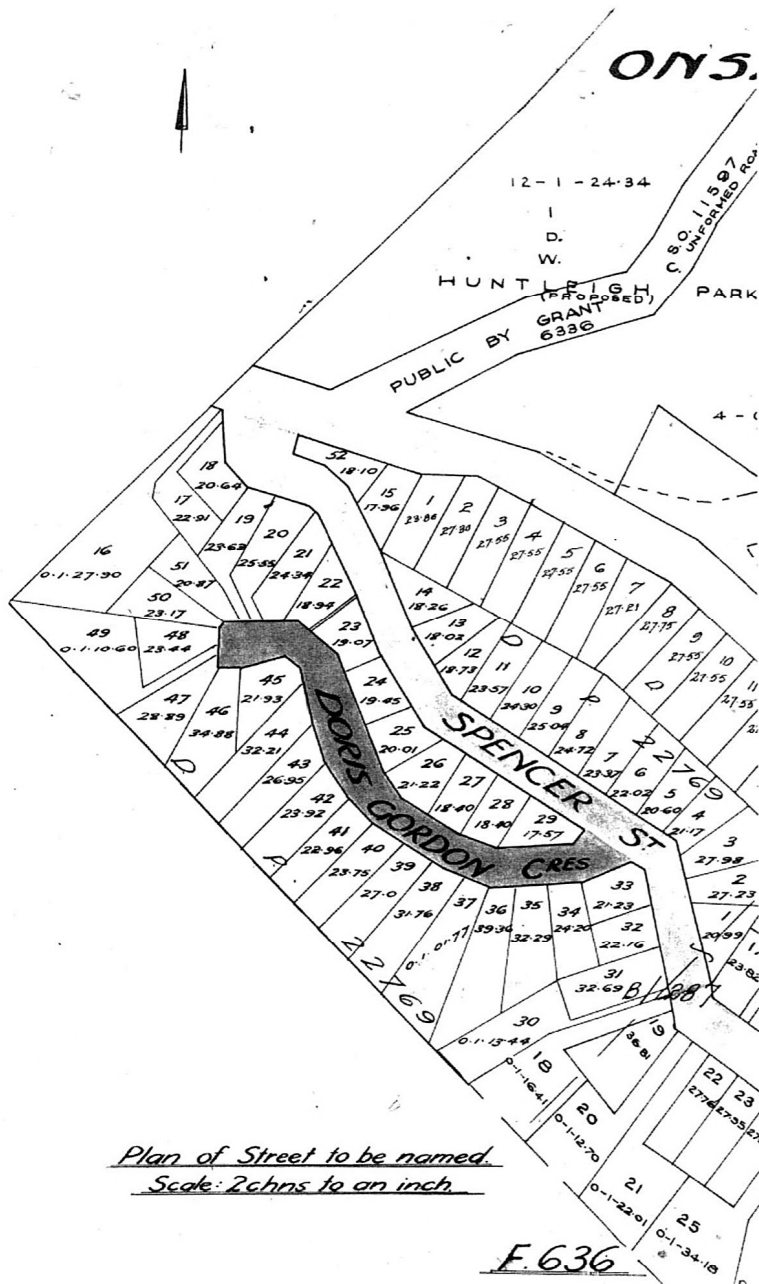
Doris Gordon Crescent is a short, no exit street in the suburb of Crofton Downs, Wellington. The development, on rural land, was planned in the 1940s and by 1954, 23 sections had been sold and eight houses built.

Crofton Downs commemorates the first English name given to the suburb of Ngaio. This originated in 1857 when Sir William Fox titled his property around the area of Kenya Street of today, Crofton. This was after his mother's maiden name; but he took the name with him when he moved to a new property near Feilding, Rangitikei, in 1862. The name Ngaio replaced it in 1908. The suburban development of the farmland on the western hills required a name of its own and Crofton Downs was chosen. The Crofton Downs Railway Station, designed by architect and Crofton Downs resident, Alan Minty, built on the east side of Churchill Drive became a signpost of its location.



The first houses built at Winston Street, and a few on the right at Spencer Street, Crofton Downs were captured on camera by Mick Brooker in 1961. The photograph was taken from Waikowhai Street, on vacant land, many years before it was developed into Bendbrook Way. Churchill Drive is just visible behind the gorse covered mound and there is a glimpse of the railway line in front of it. Later the land was levelled for new buildings. Doris Gordon Crescent is not in sight, it curved off Spencer Street north-west of these houses.

Photograph: Mick Brooker.



A street plan, c. 1960, showing the position of Doris Gordon Crescent, as it branches off Spencer Street. Further down the hill is Silverstream Road, the unmarked road running parallel with Spencer Street. It was at this time, during the earthworks creating Doris Gordon Crescent and establishing the building sites, that the corner of Spencer Street and Silverstream Road was widened, aligned for traffic use and the horse-shoe bend was constructed.



CITY ENGINEER'S OFFICE
WELLINGTON

C.E. FILE NO. 35/85
BWF:BW

DATE 27th June, 1961.

35
1260

MEMO FOR TOWN CLERK

PLEASE SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING REPORT AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY

SUBJECT STREET NAME -
CROFTON DOWNS
ESTATE.

T.C. FILE NO. _____

The Chairman of the Crofton Downs Estate Limited has written requesting that the name "Doris Gordon Crescent" be adopted for a new street on this Estate. He states that Dr. Doris Gordon's early home was close to the Crofton Downs area and states, further, that the proposal has the approval of her husband and family.

29 JUN 1961

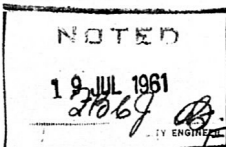
Application approved

COUNCIL

I have no objection to the adoption of the name proposed.

11/2 JUL 1961

COMMITTEE
REPORT ADOPTED



B.C. Jeffreys
City Engineer.

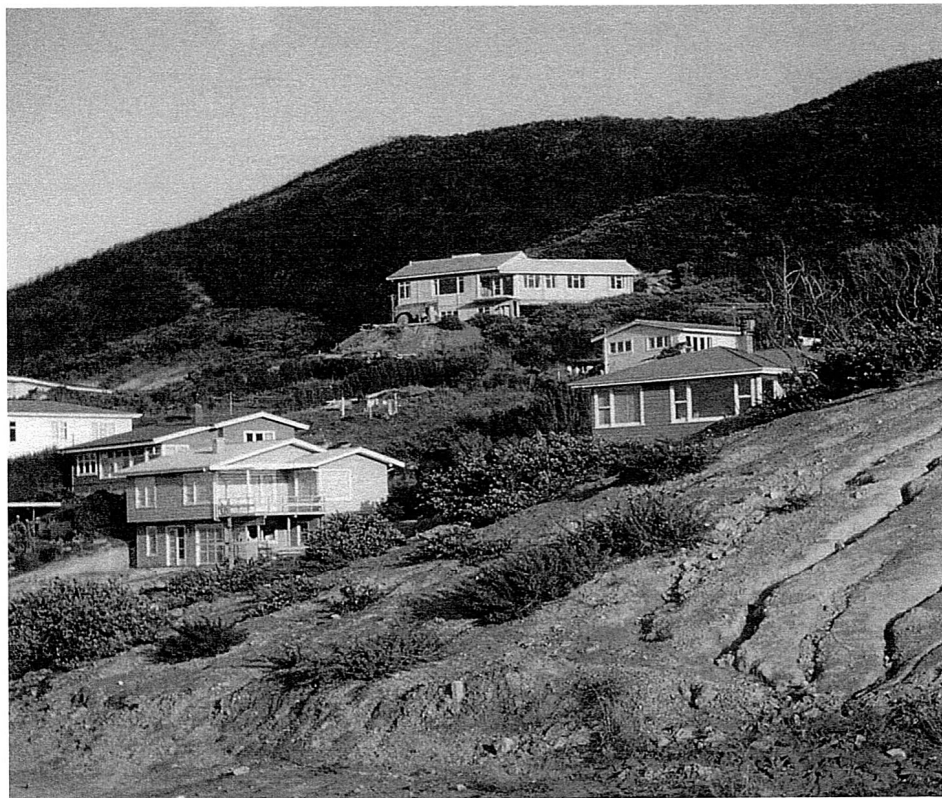
2 not phase & to let me have 18 copies of a suitable plan, Special order for the balance for forwarding to interested parties in due course. Has the same plan will suffice for both purposes.

13/8/61

115/8
13.7.61

Memo from the Wellington City Engineer, F.B.C. Jeffreys to the Town Clerk, dated 1961. The Crofton Downs Estate Limited development company was constructing a residential estate that would provide up to thirty three sections and was seeking approval of the name Doris Gordon Crescent. This was granted.

Wellington City Archives.



In 1964 bulldozers were flattening the land and establishing roads and building sites in the area of the Spencer Street continuation and the entrance to Doris Gordon Crescent. The progress was captured on camera by John Galloway, snr. showing the intersection of these two roads, looking south-east. The Galloway family were early residents in the suburb and the concrete slab house that John Galloway, personally, built for them can be seen at the top of the picture at 43 Spencer Street.

Photograph: John Galloway snr. Galloway Collection.

The person, or persons, who chose Doris Gordon as the name for the new crescent remains a mystery. The Company mentioned in the document on the opposite page, the Crofton Downs Estate Limited, needs to be researched and the Chairman and any of the Board members that are still alive, or their descendants would no doubt have this information; also, company documents would probably reveal this. Real estate agent and historian, Leigh Hunt, has been suggested. He was a driving force in the early development of this suburb and his opinion would have been respected. Doris's death in 1956 would have brought her contribution to New Zealand into the limelight, and would have been a reminder to those who knew of her childhood in Crofton.

Who was Doris Gordon?

By Elaine E. Bolitho

Dr Doris Gordon (1890-1956) MBE, MB, ChB, DPH (NZ), FRCS (Ed), FRCOG was the first woman to become a physician in New Zealand, the first woman in Australasia to be recognised by a Fellowship to the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh (1925), the first director of Maternal Health in New Zealand and the first woman outside the British royal family to be rewarded by the Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

To people living in Wellington's Onslow area, this sounds admirable but how was this woman who did so much for New Zealand mothers and babies linked to this part of New Zealand?

The admirable lady was not always Dr Doris Gordon. She began life in Australia in 1890 as Doris Clifton Jolly, the second child and only daughter of Alfred Jolly, 1861-1925, and his wife Lucy Clifton Jolly, nee Crouch, 1864-1939. Both Doris's parents were Australian-born with Alfred's descent being from Cornish Methodist miners from Wendron who had emigrated in 1857. Lucy's family from London included early officials who sailed to Tasmania in 1825. Her Australian-born father Thomas James Crouch, 1832-1889, became a successful Melbourne architect. Her mother Mary Emma Bloor, nee Turner, 1835-1904, was the tenth of 15 children born to pioneer Methodist missionaries the Rev Nathaniel and Ann Turner who arrived in New Zealand's far north in 1823.¹



When Alfred and Lucy Jolly married in 1887 Alfred was a Wesleyan Methodist minister but shortly after that moved into the banking profession and, despite his brilliance in this area, it was not a wise choice in times of depression. After the 1893 financial crash, Alfred and Lucy sailed for New Zealand in an attempt to improve their fortunes.

Doris Gordon, c. 1935. She wrote about being described as 'a great worker, a voluminous correspondent and the world's worst typist' by Dr Joe Meigs in 1954.

From *Doctor Down Under*. Faber and Faber, London, 1958.

Alexander Turnbull Library Ref F-127025-½.



SCHEDULE D.—28 Vict. No. 268.

CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE.

District St. Kilda No. in Register 29
 On 2 November 1887 at Wesleyan Church Balaklava
 Marriage by license was solemnized between us according to the
rites and ceremonies of the Wesleyan Church
 Signature Alfred Jolly

DESCRIPTION

Residence { Present Warragul
 Usual Warragul
 Age Twenty six years
 Rank or Profession Wesleyan Minister
 Condition Bachelor

If Widower { Former { Deceased in { Children
 Wife { Living { Dead {
 Birth Place Warragul South Australia

Parents' Names and { Father Francis Jolly gentleman
 Rank or Profession { Mother Eliza Jolly
 (Maiden Surname)

Signature Lucy Jolly Condon

DESCRIPTION

Residence { Present St. Kilda
 Usual St. Kilda
 Age Twenty three years
 Rank or Profession Spinster
 Condition Spinster

If Widow { Former { Deceased in { Children
 Husband { Living { Dead {
 Birth Place St. Kilda Victoria

Parents' Names and { Father Thomas James Condon Architect
 Rank or Profession { Mother Mary Emma P. Condon
 (Maiden Surname)

I John Hancock being the Wesleyan Minister
 do hereby certify that I have this day, at the Wesleyan Church Balaklava
 duly celebrated Marriage between Alfred Jolly of Warragul Wesleyan
Minister and Lucy Condon of St. Kilda
 after notice and declaration duly made and published as by law required.

Dated this Second day of November 1887.

Signature of Minister, Registrar-General,
 or other officer.

Witnesses {

Francis Jolly
John Hancock
John Hancock
John Hancock

Doris and her older brother Francis Leslie Gordon Jolly (Frank, 1889-1963) initially stayed behind with their Crouch and Turner relatives, where Frank, who suffered from eczema, received so much attention that Doris was largely left to entertain herself. In spring 1894 Lucy returned for the children. They sailed in the SS *Horoto* to Wellington and a reunion with their nearly-forgotten father. The family had somewhat 'come down in the world,' the only trappings of their former wealth being the canary 'Dicky' in a gilded cage, Lucy's sealskin coat, and her Thurmer piano² with which she would supplement their income by giving music lessons to children of church families.

Alfred and Lucy were active members of Wesley Church, Taranaki Street, and their inner city rental accommodation made it easy for them to attend services there so Doris and Frank soon joined close to 800 children enrolled in the Sunday school.³

But after nearly two years, in 1896, Alfred "decided that city living gave no security"⁴ and moved the family out to a new rental home in Crofton, as it was then called. Their address was 2 Collingwood Street, now number 32 Chelmswood Street, Ngaio. What a contrast to have only eighteen houses nearby, no school, no shops, no church or Sunday school. True, the Wellington-Manawatu Railway Company's trains steamed noisily, smokily through from Monday to Saturday. Their stops at the Crofton Station made it an ideal spot for Alfred to commute to his banking work in the city, and for Lucy to return to town on Tuesday and Friday afternoons to sell eggs and continue teaching her music pupils.

Only one train ran each way on Sundays, and it was not possible for sciatic Lucy to walk to Wesley Church or even to join their landlady, recently-widowed Mrs Esther Chew, who went to the closer Molesworth Street Methodist Church. Mrs Chew agreed with Lucy that they needed at least a Sunday school for the local children. When Lucy opened Crofton's first Methodist Sunday school in the Jolly home⁵ the neighbouring Radcliffe children, the children from the nearby Aplin farm and a number of others joined Frank and Doris each Sunday.

During the week, these children and the Radcliffe's fox terrier had a wonderful time in the bush setting which Crofton offered. Almost sixty years later Doris would write of "being as free as the rata vines on which we swung."⁶

The 'Growing Up' chapter in her autobiography *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor* reprinted in part from page 25 of this *Onslow Historian*, gives a valuable and delightful early child's eye account of turn-of-the century life in what would be renamed Ngaio in 1908. She and Frank had some formal lessons in the corner of the living room from her mother, who had matriculated in Melbourne, so in a sense Lucy was following in her Grandmother Turner's footsteps. Ann Bloor, 1774-1851, had been a governess in Staffordshire before marrying the Rev Nathaniel Turner. Frank was a quick learner, but Doris couldn't see any sense in it. However when it came to pioneering housekeeping and survival skills, Lucy taught her daughter to sew, care for hens and ducks, turn a suit, cook, preserve fruit, make jam and many other things she would put to good use later.



The house at 2 Collingwood Street, Ngaio, now 32 Chelmswood Street was built c.1900. This became the Jolly family home and was rented from Ngaio resident, and neighbour, Mrs Esther Chew, who invested in its construction. Crofton's first Methodist Sunday school classes and church services were held here. The stream that Doris refers to in her book disappeared from view when it was culverted under the Ngaio Town Hall during the construction of the hall in 1925.

Judy Siers Collection.



Crofton Railway Station c. 1895. This is the view young Doris Jolly would have seen of Crofton Station, the railway line and the houses on the eastern side of Crofton from her side of the valley. She would have taken the path in the foreground and climbed the wooden gate on the left to reach Collingwood Street. Chew Cottage is the house on the left of the picture, behind the large macrocarpa trees. The station was renamed Ngaio c. 1908.

Graham Radcliffe Collection, Onslow Historical Society.



Although Alfred was busy with his bank career, the Masonic Lodge and studying law by correspondence from Canterbury University College, he was inspired by Lucy's Sunday school and in 1896 decided to hold Crofton's first Methodist church services in the sitting room of their home. After all, he had had ministry training. He later recounted, "The first Sunday there was a howling southerly, and one adult present, in addition to the preacher's family. This man never came again – whether deterred by the weather or the faithful and searching character of the preaching is not known. On the next occasion the weather was worse, and no one came, but perseverance was afterwards rewarded by better times of blessings."⁷ In fact numbers grew to the point where people overflowed the kitchen and passage, and a wall was taken down to make a double-sized space to accommodate them all. It was just as well their landlady was one of the congregation!

Not only was Doris present at the first Sunday school and first Methodist services in Crofton, she was also present at the mid-week housewarming for the revamped space – Crofton's first recorded community-catered meal. The Sunday services and Sunday school classes continued until 1899 during the three happiest years of Doris's childhood.



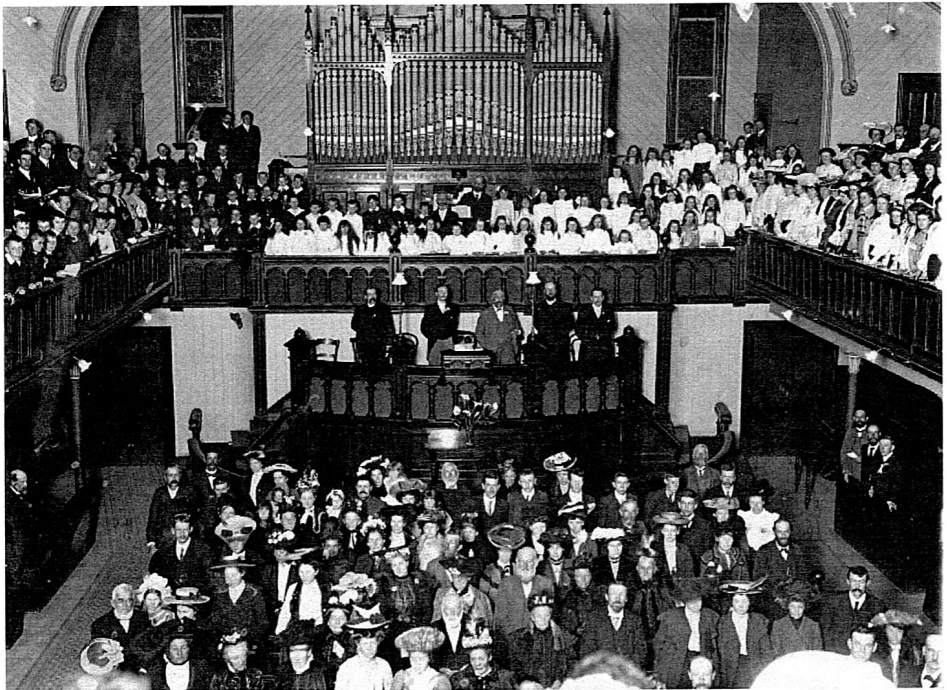
The Napier express heads up the Ngaio Gorge above tunnel number 5, in 1911.

The Story of Johnsonville Railway, Geoffrey B. Churchman, 1988. Godber Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library and New Zealand Railways Collection.

Then her parents decided that the children needed formal education. On returning to the city and a leased house at 55 Pirie Street, Mount Victoria, Doris was enrolled in Miss Shepherd's Academy for Young Ladies and the family returned to Wesley Church in Taranaki Street. Alfred was in demand there and at churches across Wellington as a preacher. He was also considered the greatest orator the Masonic Lodge ever produced.⁸ However, his name never appeared on church preaching plans as the National Bank hierarchy did not approve of their staff gaining attention in areas other than banking!



Alfred Jolly.



When Alfred Jolly was superintendent of the Wesley Methodist Sunday School, annual Sunday School Anniversaries – like this one in 1904 – were big events on the church calendar. What a contrast for the Jolly family to life at Crofton!

Centenary of Wesley Church Sunday School 1841 – 1941, published Wesley Church, Wellington, 1941.

For the next three years Doris and Frank constantly needed the doctor's attention, so the family moved to healthier Karaka Bay where rents were low, but it was more difficult for Alfred to commute to work. Initially a horse-drawn 'bus' was the only option, until the residents clubbed together to have their own ferry steamer, the *Loyalty*.

Each winter's night Doris had the task of lighting it into its berth, then catching the rope and mooring the vessel. During the day she attended Worser Bay School and was awarded a pass from Standard Five (Year 7), but after that she and her mother took care of each other and their health problems. Alfred demonstrated his Cornish versatility by building the family a spacious new seven-roomed home at Karaka Bay – the first they had owned since leaving Australia. They had only enjoyed it for a year when, in spring 1905, the National Bank shifted their accountant south to manage their Tapanui branch.⁹

Lucy had an uncle, Charles Wesley Turner, 1834-1906, in Christchurch, along with eleven surviving cousins.¹⁰ Another uncle, George Stanton Crouch, 1834-1914, had spent time in Invercargill from 1863 until 1871, so the family were aware of the Scots nature of the Otago and Southland settlements. On arrival they became Presbyterians, and this change of church affiliation was to prove significant for 16-year-old Doris.

'Miss Jolly' did not wish to go to school with the local children, so became the family housekeeper and learned to launder, clean and cook southern-style, even picking up prizes for her baking at the local A and P Show. Housekeeping was her work, music her accomplishment, billiards her favourite winter game,¹¹ and Sunday school teaching her Sunday role. Gradually she came to realise that her calling in life was to be a medical missionary – a massive undertaking for someone without even a certificate for completing primary school education. Alfred said that if she could pass matriculation – then required to enter university – he would pay for her medical training.

After passing a personal examination for 'Proficiency' – thanks to her father's coaching in decimals – she began eighteen months' secondary education, sat the matriculation examination – believing that if God wanted her to be a Presbyterian missionary in India she would pass. She did – including getting all the dreaded algebra problems correct! Twelve weeks later, in 1911, continuing to show her version of Cornish versatility and adaptability, she began her years at Medical School in Dunedin – becoming immersed fourteen hours a day six days a week.

On Sundays she was a Bible Class leader at Knox Presbyterian Church and, following in her father's footsteps, learnt to be a public speaker; a skill which would stand her in good stead for the future.

Doris's third year at Medical School included midwifery. This set her on her lifelong career with a love for and focus on the well-being of mothers and babies. But this was 1914 and when World War I commenced young men, including Doris's brother Frank, enlisted. The demand for Junior Medical Officers depleted the ranks of male medical students. Thus Doris and her one female 'fellow'-student had more surgical opportunities and challenges available to them than peace-time female students would receive. After four years Doris graduated with top marks in surgical and medical examinations and a few days later started 26 months' work as a house-surgeon at Dunedin Hospital.

In March 1917 she began working as a bacteriologist each afternoon, in addition to her morning and evening ward work. During this time William Patteson Pollock (Bill) Gordon, 1887-1980, of Belfast Scots descent and the youngest son of a Presbyterian manse, was bringing his ward specimens direct to Doris and taking more interest in bacteriology – or the bacteriologist.

Theirs was – in Doris's words – a typical wartime romance, as Bill, like all his fellow-graduates of 1917, volunteered for the Army on the night they received their final Medical School results. "Dr. Doris Jolly left Dunedin on April 4th, and Dr. Doris Gordon returned to Dunedin on April 10th."¹² Four days later, Bill began his overseas service as Medical Officer of the Second Otago Battalion.

Doris became a flat-dwelling university lecturer, making good use of the public speaking skills she had honed in her Bible Class leadership roles. She continued working three shifts a day including laboratory work in the bacteriology department at the same time as studying for her Diploma in Public Health – even giving a lecture, in the presence of the Governor-General, to the Wellington Red Cross on modern bacteriology and public health. Lucy and Alfred Jolly were very proud of her that night. She later wrote:

"My creed in the year 1917 was a simple one. I felt with Norvalis that "I touched Heaven whenever I laid my hand on a human body"; and I, a relatively uneducated country-bred woman, could sometimes do things which seemed impossible because, when I was utterly certain in my heart that what I was doing was *right*, I believed that God was my senior partner."¹³



Doris's brother, Francis (Frank), with their father, Alfred, shortly before Sgt 6/1889 Francis Leslie Gordon Jolly of the Canterbury Infantry Battalion departed for World War I. He would return home safely, with a war bride, and become a successful motor vehicle dealer.

AG Jolly Collection.

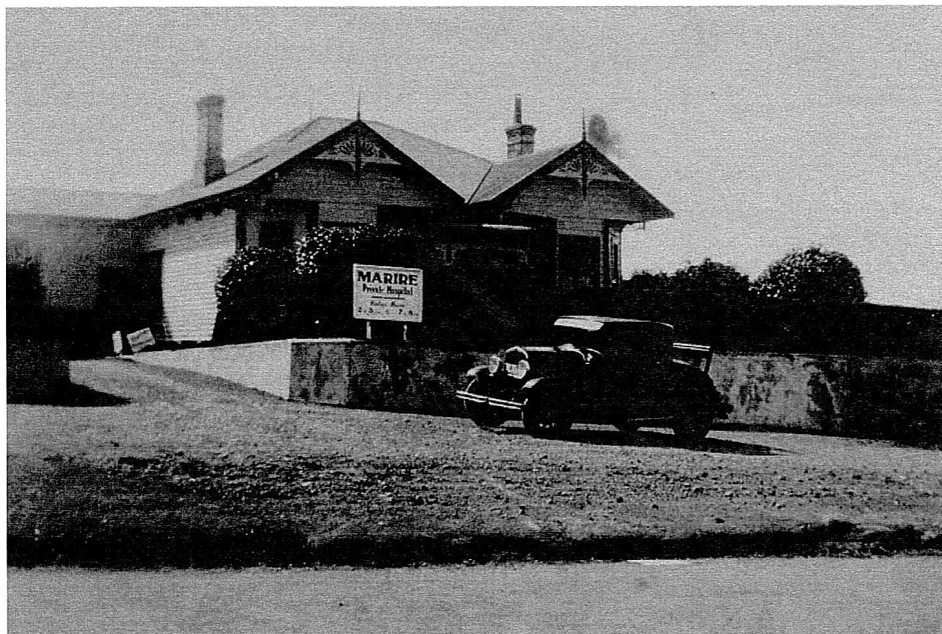
However, Lucy Jolly was not impressed with all her married daughter's activities during her time with the Health Department Head Office in Wellington – particularly not with her riding up Ngauranga Gorge in the side car of the Departmental motor bike to visit New Zealand's most modern septic tank installation!

After dealing with so many samples from tuberculosis patients, it was suspected that Doris herself had contracted the early stages of the disease, but fortunately ten weeks in the high country of Central Otago saw her in much better health, turning down jobs in the Health Department in favour of acting as a locum for doctors who needed a holiday.

That decision, with time in Stratford to relieve Dr Paget, included coping with the influenza epidemic at the end of the war. Later, after Bill's safe return, the Gordons would take over Dr Paget's practice and Marire Private Hospital, and be based in Stratford for the rest of their lives. This move took place after the Presbyterian Mission Department's examining doctors told Doris that her touch of TB precluded her from life as a missionary doctor in India.

So Doris's concern for the mothers and babies of India was translated into caring for New Zealand mothers and babies¹⁴ – and having four of her own who helped make their parents knowledgeable family practitioners. Amidst this, in 1924 Doris despatched her thesis to the London examiners for the New Zealand degree of Doctor of Medicine. The thesis – on pain relief in childbirth – was accepted with commendation, and Doris was congratulated for the work she was doing for midwifery. The thesis was also later read by Mrs Janet Fraser – wife of Peter Fraser, Labour MP and then Prime Minister. Many of its conclusions would become the blueprint of the Labour Party's model midwifery service.¹⁵

But before this would happen there were battles in the press as Doris's views that all women should be entitled to pain relief in childbirth clashed with those of the Minister of Health, the Director of Health, and Sir Truby King. The latter wrote to her that as her views differed from his she should resign the presidency of the Stratford branch of the Plunket Society and in 1925 the Health Department refused to provide letters of introduction to obstetricians and statisticians in Holland and Denmark, where she wanted to gather statistics about maternal and infant deaths.



Stratford's original Marire Private Hospital run by Doris and Bill Gordon. The picture was taken by Sister Doris Pederson, a gifted children's nurse and friend of the Gordon family. She worked at Marire and also helped care for their youngest child, Alison, when her mother visited Australia about 1934.

PA1-O-1005-11-1 – Doris Pederson Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library.

But introductions or no introductions, Bill and Doris set sail to be the first husband and wife simultaneously to sit the Edinburgh examinations for the Royal College of Surgeons Fellowship. Alfred Jolly helped them get a bank loan to pay for a *locum tenens* for their Stratford practice, and he and Lucy were delighted to have their two little grandsons John Bowie Gordon (Peter), 1921-1991, and Ross Clifton Gordon, 1922-2007, in their new Wellington home at 24 Glasgow Street, Kelburn. Sadly their grandfather would die unexpectedly before their parents returned.¹⁶

Bill worked as ship's surgeon on the voyage – a role he and Doris filled more than once. Six weeks after landing they successfully sat the Fellowship exams with Doris gaining top place among the 100 completing the surgery paper and second equal overall. Ten weeks study in Vienna impressed the Gordons, but Doris was horrified by the communal labour wards accommodating up to 20 women at a time. Her article about this in *The New Zealand Medical Journal* promptly led to privacy becoming a major policy matter, taken up by the National Council of Women, promised in election year and honoured ever since.

When, the New Zealand Obstetrical Society was founded in 1927, for the genuine welfare of every mother, Doris became the honorary secretary and Bill the honorary treasurer, roles they would fill until 1939. In 1929 the Society's major tasks were to raise £25,000 (\$50,000) to endow a Chair of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Otago University and to ask the Ministry of Health to build a modern obstetrical hospital for the Medical School. It was Doris who suggested that since there was less chance – in the face of approaching depression – of getting really large donations, that money be sought from the women of New Zealand. As secretary it fell to her to be the travelling fundraiser. Bill nobly ran their practice while she contacted newspapers,¹⁷ worked out a campaign plan with Mrs David Nathan and approached prospective wealthy donors. She toured New Zealand from Auckland south to Dunedin. A Hawkes Bay donor printed thousands of small coupon books, each holding twenty one-shilling (ten cent) tickets to sell towards the Chair. With donations large and small £31,750 (\$63,500) was raised, the Chair was endowed and a couple of years later the Government finally built the Queen Mary Hospital. For her efforts Doris was honoured with an MBE and would reflect later,



Alfred and Lucy Jolly's home at 24 Glasgow Street Kelburn shortly after their alterations extended the house from an Edwardian villa to a 1920's style home. This is as Doris and Bill Gordon would have seen it when they took their sons to stay in 1925. Lucy Jolly was a keen gardener, establishing beautiful gardens wherever she went as seen in this photograph. This love of gardening was inherited by her daughter, Doris, who initially had an acre and a half of gardens at Stratford, before the new Marire Hospital was built there.

Beverley and Susan Price Collection.

How like a fairy tale to tell the Dunedin women how the northern women wanted the Otago Medical School to have an up-to-date Maternity Unit – so backblocks wives should not die of obstetrical accidents, and way-back doctors not suffer the tortures of the damned, as Bill and I had done, while learning midwifery by the process of bitter experience.¹⁸

The Obstetrical Society's socialistic emphasis on the good of every mother gelled well with the 1935 Labour Government which introduced a socialised medical scheme. Doris had played a leading role in achieving the situation where

The New Zealand mother could depart to the hospital of her choice to have her baby, knowing that her own doctor would attend her there and that she would have an anaesthetist if necessary, and also an obstetrical consultant. Added to all this a full fourteen days' rest and care, and all at State expense.¹⁹



Doris Gordon with her third son, Graham, and their pet lamb at the family farm. As well as her medical tasks, Doris supervised the farm and meat, vegetables and eggs helped feed the Marire patients, demonstrating the Cornish versatility inherited through her father's family.

AG Jolly.

The NZ Obstetrical Society's next goal was a hospital where post graduate training could be offered in obstetrics and gynaecology – complementing the work already under way at Otago – and Doris was once again secretary through the war years until the first stage of this came to fruition. The backing of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in Britain – initiated when she was in England in 1939 – was valuable.

During the war, Doris, as well as carrying on the medical practice and supervising the farm and gardens which helped feed the patients, masterminded the new *Marire* hospital built in the acre and a half of gardens attached to their home in Page Street, Stratford. Their hospitals were called

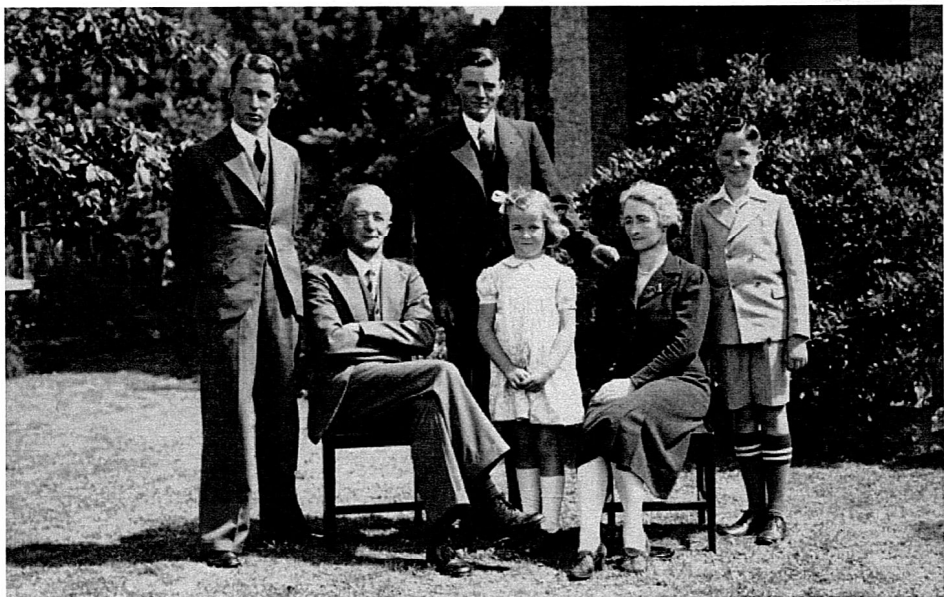
Marire – meaning peace and happiness in Maori. That symbolised their ideals. “If people had to be sick, let their surroundings be cushioned with peace and happiness.” Their oldest son Peter served in the Air Force and Bill again served his country, this time as Lieutenant Colonel in charge of the Hospital Ship *Maunganui*. He was fortunate to have three days leave to be home for the opening of the new hospital – almost on the date of their silver wedding anniversary.²⁰ But even at sea, Bill's thoughts were on the future plans for post-graduate work. While at home Doris and Obstetrical Society colleagues were working with the Auckland Hospital Board and Auckland University, at sea, Bill's paymaster came up with the idea of contacting an Auckland benefactor.

At the instigation of the Auckland Rotary Club, it would be Auckland benefactors – to the tune of £100,000 (\$200,000) who endowed the Postgraduate School of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Auckland University College in 1947, ensuring

that the teaching could come under the University of New Zealand and not be cramped by lack of funds. This was exactly what the Obstetrical Society wanted for while they – including Doris – were happy for the State to fund medical work, both were adamant that doctors should not be told by the State what they could and could not do. One case in 1922 particularly rankled with her – after saving the life of mother and baby by doing an emergency Caesarean, she had been told by the Health Department that she needed their permission to do such surgery!²¹

Once the post-war baby boom got underway, existing maternity services were unable to cope with the increased demand and Doris was appointed by the Health Department as Director of Maternal Health and Welfare from 1946-1948. This brought her back again to Wellington, but this time she could not stay with her mother. Lucy had died from a slow cerebral thrombosis when Bill and Doris were sailing back from a trip to Europe with sons Ross Clifton and Graham Rothwell Gordon, 1927-2004, in 1939.²²

During her term as director Doris lived at the Waterloo Hotel, very close to Parliament and the Health Department Offices. She felt that in addition to her own four children, 32 sponsored immigrants and the 2000-3000 babies she had delivered, she had also acquired a responsibility to hundreds of thousands of New Zealand children, both Maori and Pakeha!²³ Much as she loved to meet and work with the mothers and children she had to become much more involved in the political manoeuvring needed to increase the availability of hospitals where mothers could safely have their babies, without risk of cross infection from other wards. She was also frequently called on to write for the papers, presenting the Health Department in a good light. As a practical woman, seeking practical solutions to improving the lot of mothers and children, she found the divisions and restrictions of the public service frustrating and could see the disadvantages as well as the advantages of socialised medicine. At the end of her term she threatened – public service declaration of secrecy or not – to write a book sharing that part of her career.



Doctors Doris and Bill Gordon, c. 1939 with their family, left to right: Ross, Peter, Alison and Graham.
 PAColl-6809-7-07 Doris Pedersen Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library.

When she returned from Wellington to Stratford, Doris and Bill could take pride in having their sons Ross and Graham qualified as doctors, working in their Marire Hospital. The only daughter Alison Jean Gordon (later van der Oest, b 1932) would become a nurse, and as a probationer she too would work at Marire for a time. The oldest son, known as Peter, went farming in the Tapanui area where, earlier, the Jolly family had lived. He would become the National Member of Parliament for Clutha from 1966 until 1978, and also serve as a Cabinet Minister. Meantime, in between working with her husband and sons, Doris began work on her first autobiography *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor*.

A 1953 letter from the President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in London brought the exciting news that at their Silver Jubilee celebrations the College wished to confer on her the Honorary Fellowship of the College, in recognition of her great services to obstetrics and gynaecology. She had been elected Fellow of the College by examination in 1936 but the Honorary Fellowship was the highest award that could be bestowed by the College. She was at that time the only woman, outside of the Royal family, to have been so honoured.

As the award was to be conferred in person, Doris travelled to England again, this time as ship's surgeon on the *Wellington Star*. Peter Gordon, who was in England on a Nuffield Scholarship, was able to report to the rest of the family that on 13 July 1954 his mother looked 'quite regal'²⁴ in a dress she had made herself – using skills first learned as a small girl in Crofton! She was escorted by the Lord Chancellor of Great Britain into the ceremony which was the academic highlight of her career. Later that day met the Society's patron, Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother and eight days later was presented to the Queen and Duke at a royal garden party.

While in London she took her *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor* manuscript to her London agent. Advised that Faber and Faber would publish the book if it was cut by 40%, Doris moved to the quiet home of a friend to do this. Overlooking the Thames, down which her Turner forebears had sailed in 1822 on their missionary voyage to New Zealand, she successfully shortened her manuscript. The good news of its acceptance came on the voyage home where Doris, as surgeon on the *Empire Star* was transferring the skills learned in treating morning sickness to enable sea-sick female passengers to recover and enjoy the voyage. The book was duly published in 1955. She then began her second volume *Doctor Down Under* which was published posthumously after her death in 1956.

Both books are warmly recommended reading, and Doris's summary of what the second book would contain provides her own review -

It must outline the changes I had seen in the provincial medical work of Taranaki, must tell a little more of the fun and fears of raising a family here in Egmont's shadow. Above all, if I were to be true to my own ingrained conception of the glory of medical tradition, it must reveal and evaluate the changes, some undeniably good, some indisputably insidious, which Bill and I had noted wherever and whenever doctors were drawn willy-nilly into some form of State service. If the service had become in some ways more efficient, more stream-lined, more cheaply available, in other ways it had become colder, more impersonal, more mercenary. The price was too high. Somehow the old warm personal relationship must be restored between patient and doctor. This must be the essential theme of my new book.²⁵



Lucy Jolly, c 1930s.

A.G Jolly



Doris Gordon received the Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists – the highest honour they could bestow – in recognition of her services to the profession, mothers and babies.

Doctor Down Under, Faber and Faber, London 1958.

**BACK-
BLOCKS
BABY-
DOCTOR**

An Autobiography by

**Doris
Gordon**

PART I

Growing Up

The first twenty-five years of life give us the text; the next forty, the commentary.

Teutonic Proverb

20 House-hunting in Wellington even in 1894 was a problem. Landlords disliked children. Father was so fed up that he scandalized one Victorian capitalist by remarking dryly, "Of course, we could drown the children." The house he finally took for our first residence in New Zealand was in Buckle Street. It was respectable enough, but with its four rooms in two storeys it looked singularly like a matchbox stood on end. To mother, who remembered her three-acred home off St. Kilda Parade, this house was an atrocity. Adjacent houses of similar design were jammed so close that domestic arguments were heard three houses away. To us children, its one saving grace was that it overlooked the Basin Reserve where we could watch men in white do fascinating things with bat and ball.

From the beginning father and mother regarded Buckle Street merely as a temporary roof above our heads, and mother's desire for more play space for us reached its climax the day she found me fishing down the back drain. With the grating lifted from the evil-smelling water, I was sitting patiently dangling an improvised hook and line. "Whatever are you doing?" asked my Victorian-minded parent. "Trying to catch a fish," I replied blithely.

"But fish live in the sea, not in drains," said mother firmly.

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"Still, drains run into the sea, so a fish might really swim up the drain," I reasoned. The reward of this optimism was a bath of disinfectant.

An intensified search brought us what we wanted. A three-roomed dwelling set in a third of an acre on the highest point of the McDougall estate in Brougham Street. The McDougall rents worked in inverse ratio to elevation. Street-level houses were costly, but homes like ours, sixty steps up from the street, were reasonable. Every time mother dragged her sciatic leg to her hilltop home she comforted herself that each step meant twopence off the rent. Our precious cherry-wood "Thurmer" was manhandled up those steps, too. On that relic of more affluent days, mother was soon giving pianoforte lessons to small pupils found through Methodist Church circles. As father's salary was then fifty shillings weekly, the extra income from ten pupils, each at a pound a quarter, was valuable.

While mother taught other children scales, arpeggios and simple classical airs, Frank and I enjoyed relative freedom. Schooling was not yet compulsory. In any case, mother argued that Frank was too delicate and I was too young. So she gave Frank a few home lessons and otherwise we went to school in the great outdoors. One day a horrified neighbour interrupted a music lesson. "Do you know", she gasped, "that your children are at the top of Mr. McDougall's tallest pine?" But mother, who was rapidly acquiring a sane philosophy, amazed the good woman by replying, "Thank you. I will not call them down. They will come down more safely if left alone. When they are down I'll deal with them." There was emphasis on the *when* and *are*.

Twenty months later, with father's first rise in salary, my parents decided that the decencies required a house of more than three rooms. They found one at the top of Ellice Street. It had space for a kitchen garden and when we moved in there was a glorious clump of pink and white tiger lilies in full bloom near the front gate. Every day I pushed my wondering self in among the porcelain white faces of the lilies all studded with red velvet spots. I felt sure that fairies lived in these flowers

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and that the stamens were their slender legs dangling pollen-slippered feet. I spent many hours waiting at this lily shrine. But the fairies never came, and before the topmost pink bud had unfolded the house was sold over our heads. Father decided that city-dwelling gave no security, so he moved us out to Crofton, which was then merely a group of eighteen houses spread about a valley.

There were no shops. No school. No church. Nothing to indicate that Crofton would ever be the populous suburb of Ngaio. Around were sheep runs, and Aplin's one dairy farm. The hill-tops were still covered with native bush and long fingers of olive green swept down into the valleys marking the path of each small creek. Nature was fighting a losing battle with Mammon. What man assiduously burned off the rolling slopes she tried to resow with every freshet that overflowed the nooks and crannies of her creeks. One such pebbly stream crossed our holding, fringed with its unspoiled bush. To us children the possibilities of this bush and creek made life like heaven. Even if we were "gated" for some misdemeanour, we could still build a dam like beavers, and float the bathtub thereon. Mother, too, had enough of the Turner in her to rest her soul in her own private bush—even if it did mean that she and father had to sit up a few nights every autumn while the squatters were "burning off". This was in case a change of wind brought the fire raging down our gully, with its bush so close to outhouses and home.

In 1896 the main event of the Crofton day was the thundering through of the Napier and New Plymouth expresses, the latter then the only link between Auckland and Wellington. In constructing the Manawatu railway, the engineers had unwittingly given us a sizeable duckpond beside our holding, and father settled Aylesbury ducks thereon. What with ducks outside and hens within the property, mother soon made a barter treaty with Nanstead, the city grocer of Kent Terrace. Every Tuesday and Friday she departed for town with a huge basket of eggs which Nanstead sold at an extra penny a dozen under the label of "guaranteed fresh". In return, he left at Thorndon railway station, bi-monthly, the equivalent value of groceries. This deal

provided the whole family with new boots and shoes. It was natural that the day's tally of eggs should be a major topic at the nightly meal. I was delighted when one day I stumbled upon a duck's nest of fourteen eggs. It had been hidden in the scrub near the pond. Frank and I decided it would be a happy surprise for mother if the egg tally was a record, so added our treasure trove to the town basket. When the secret leaked out, twenty-four hours later, our parents were anything but pleased. Some twelve dozen eggs were rendered "iffy" and mother's "guaranteed fresh" reputation was in jeopardy.

"If I only knew which were the old eggs, I'd cook the lot and make you children eat them," roared father as we juvenile egg-dealers slunk off to bed.

Mother still gave her music lessons. She had engaged a "lady help"—at ten shillings weekly—to mind us while she went twice each week to the city. But on the other days she set about our education. Great-grandmother had been a governess in Staffordshire before she embraced Methodism and her Nathaniel, and set sail for the South Seas. Each generation since had been highly educated by the standards of the day. Mother had matriculated in Melbourne, and with her definite views about the processes of education she was bound to get results with one of us. In true early colonial fashion she set aside a corner of the living-room, and there we began our education. Frank's progress was a joy to mother. Perhaps because he was more docile, he knuckled down to work. At the age of nine he was romping through lessons well beyond those normal to his age. But I could see no sense in it. Nor could I see any benefit even in learning to read when my studious brother was always willing to read to me.

One spring morning the futility of figures especially annoyed me and I went on strike. I sat and sulked and made wild guesses at answers to the ten sums neatly set out in mother's pretty figures. From the adjacent kitchen came the sound of flat irons at work. From time to time I took my wild guesses to mother, only to have everything scored wrong with heavy red crosses. Nothing daunted this guesswork; not even mother's threat that

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I would have to stay inside after lunch until all my sums were right. After lunch I was still at it. The sounds from the kitchen this time suggested cake baking. I twined my feet round the chair legs, bit the end of my pencil, and stared out of the window. I saw the rounded tall hill we called the Crow's Nest and thought of the rabbit burrows half-way up, and of the clematis due to be unfolding like brides' veils on many trees. Then the window was pushed up and Frank's face appeared over the sill.

"Hurry up and get finished," he said, "then we can go up Rata Ridge."

"It will take an awful time to get all these right—even if I try." I was at least a candid rebel. Frank saw that gallantry was needed. He shinned through the window and did ten lightning calculations. A few minutes later mother was saying, "There, I knew you could do them if you tried!"

Rata Ridge was a secret we shared with the Radcliffe boys. Their fox terrier had introduced us to the *rata* swing. He had logged a rabbit and we all decided that the rabbit ought to be potted. With axes and saw, cautiously taken from home, we cleared away creepers and opened the log to the terrier's full satisfaction. Then we found that we had unwittingly made ourselves a wonderful swing. We had cut across the aerial root of a *rata* perched bushily in the fork of a tall *rimu* tree. Its first root, sent gropingly to the earth below, now swung free from its anchorage forty feet above us. It was as thick as a man's wrist.

You shinned up, sailor fashion, and the others towed the rope uphill; then they let go, and away you swung in a wide arc over the valley, to be caught by comrades as the pendulum returned. The boys loved the speed of its swoop. I think I loved best the view of the bush from this strange new vantage point, and this spring day I soon forgot all three "R's". Who cared for them when you could see the yellow bloom of *kowhai* and cascades of starry clematis; who cared, looking in wonder at the tracery of innumerable tree ferns? As I swung I could look down at the young fronds uncurling like furry fingers from the tree-fern's

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heart. Farthest from my thoughts were the consequences if I lost my grip or my confidence.

I was returning from my third swing when Frank grabbed me with a startling yell and a dead-white face. We both stumbled a few paces down the hill as usual. Then Frank pointed to the fork far above. The aerial root was hanging by a few frail shreds of its outer covering. We had worn it through!

The following Sunday mother wrote her usual weekly budget to her Melbourne sisters. This time she wrote:

"Frank makes most encouraging progress in Arithmetic, Parsing and Composition. Note the letter enclosed which he wrote entirely by himself. But I wish he did not get Bronchitis so frequently. I frankly feel that I do not understand Doris. She seems clear headed in practical things. As instance of this I must tell you of the awful earthquake we had three nights ago, which sent me bumping from one side of the passage to the other. It was 7.30 p.m. and Alf was reading to the children in front of the fire. Naturally I screamed loudly, and so would you girls if you were suddenly knocked about by one of our earthquakes. Somehow I managed to run to the family, thinking we'd all better die together. Alf met me by the door and then I saw Doris calmly standing steadying the kerosene lamp in position. Alf told me later that when everything started to rock, she jumped up from the floor and stopped the lamp from falling over into the open fire. She certainly is a strange child. In educational things it is as well she is a girl, for she will never be a student. I trust she will prove musical so she can earn her living if necessary as a music teacher."

I was, however, being educated in the good hard school of necessity and at the age of seven spent many long hours helping mother unpick one of father's Melbourne suits.

"Don't cut the cloth, whatever you do," admonished mother. The family's future demanded that father appear well dressed at bank headquarters, but suits cost money. So—we turned his old one.

Mother was no tailoress. She was merely the patient neat craftswoman of her period. But two years later when father

went to a tailor for his first New Zealand-made suit, he mentioned that Buckley and Nunn had made the old one. After appraising the Melbourne cloth, the tailor looked at father quizzically. "Did you say Buckley and Nunn made this, sir? I can hardly believe a firm of their standing would put the breast pocket on the wrong side!" Father laughed and confessed that mother had turned the suit. "Then tell her," said the tailor, "that she made a thundering good job of it."

After a few months in Crofton, father and mother missed their Sunday church so much that they decided to hold services in their own sitting-room. Father had been an eloquent lay preacher in his Melbourne days, and what with his sermons and mother's music they soon had a congregation which overflowed into passage and kitchen. So they decided to take down a dividing wall between two rooms. It was christened, this bigger room, with a mid-week house-warming.

The occasion called for one of those catering orgies so dear to New Zealand housewives. They planned to cope with this effort *en masse*, and at nine o'clock on the fateful morning all of Crofton's women gathered in our kitchen. Too many hands and too many tongues spoilt everything. So, at eleven o'clock someone suggested that they return to their own kitchens and start again. As lone cooks they succeeded.

Father's preaching fame spread, and during the next few years he appeared in the pulpit of every Nonconformist church in the Wellington and Marlborough area. But he was known merely as "Mr. Supply", for the bank disapproved of its officers becoming public figures in other than financial circles.

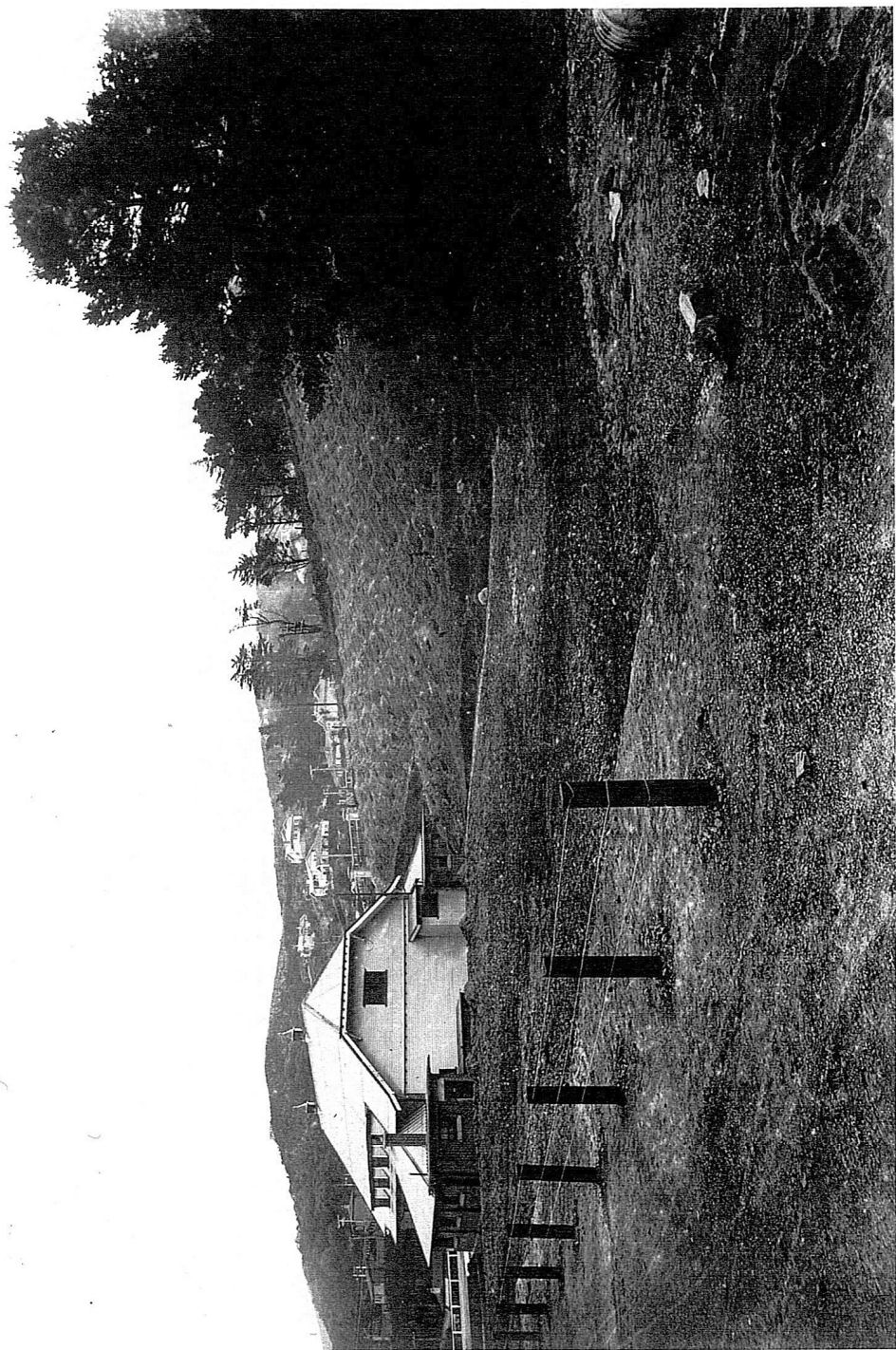
As well as bank duty by day, and sermon-preparation for week-ends, father also studied law at nights as a correspondence pupil of Canterbury College. Not surprisingly, his eyes gave out, and a sagacious general manager said, "Give up law, Jolly. You'll do just as well in the bank if you keep going the way you are." The only family memento of father's digression into law is a dual set of Kingsley's and Carlyle's works, each volume bearing the inscription in faded gold lettering: "University of New Zealand, Bowen Prize. Awarded 1898 to Alfred Jolly, for

best essay on 'The present and future prospects of the British in South Africa'." The next year the Boer War broke out.

In any bank's headquarters the incoming half-yearly balances provide a trying fortnight. But to mother waiting for father to arrive home to our lonely Crofton house it was equally a trial. There were no trains after 5.30 p.m. so for the fortnight he used to take the horse-tram to Wadestown and then walk across the hills, arriving any time after 11 o'clock. Mother would sit up sewing until he came in, glad that there was at least the lady-help in the house with her, and anxious for his safety. Father himself had a profound respect for burglars and bushrangers. He remembered the burning-out of the notorious Kelly gang in his own Australian district and thereafter was somewhat "Kelly conscious". In 1898 Mr. Seddon was just coining his epic phrase "God's Own Country". New Zealand was still experiencing the aftermath of a slump, and many assorted characters from the goldfields still wandered about. So for the Wadestown walks, father purchased a hefty shillelagh which swung in his hands by night, and was a surprising part of his business man's paraphernalia when he travelled citywards by train each morning.

I was nine when my parents decided that in the interests of serious education we must move into the city again. For the next three weeks I wept myself to sleep at the prospect of leaving my beloved open spaces, my tiny garden plot, my burbling creek, the ducks, hens and chickens—all that made life sweet. But with a reticence that was to grow with the years, I told my parents nothing of my grief. Possibly I sensed that they, too, were sad about leaving their spacious country home to reside again in a matchbox upturned.

As this was father's fifth move in five years, he decided to take a five-year lease of 55 Pirie Street, on the western slopes of Wellington's Mount Victoria. A lease, he felt, saved his reputation and was a deterrent to spending more money with the firm of professional house-movers who operated with a fleet of horse-drawn vans.





Two decades after Doris Jolly left Crofton, the Ngaio Town Hall was built, in 1925, on the corner of Ottawa Road and Collingwood Street. The area that Doris had enjoyed as her backyard wilderness had changed forever. The macrocarpa trees that bounded the property were felled and the land levelled for the hall construction. The site had been part of 'Millwood', the rural property developed by John and Esther Chew, of Chew Cottage. A large block of around three acres of land was sold to the Wellington City Council for recreational purposes, including the site for the proposed Ngaio Town Hall and to create Cummings Park along the banks of the river. In 1922 the Ngaio Progressive Association was formed and they lobbied the Council for improvements to the village and better amenities for the public.*

Left: The northern facade of the Ngaio Town Hall soon after construction, 1925; the view is from Ottawa Road looking south-west. Esther Chew's house that the Jolly family had lived in is the first among the cluster of houses on the hill above.

Evening Post Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand G EP 2481½

Above: The front entrance and the eastern facade of the Ngaio Town Hall, 1925. In the top left corner there is a glimpse of Esther Chew's house, behind the trees.

Evening Post Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand G EP 2486½

* Further information has been published in *The Onslow Historian* Volume 21, Number 1, 1991.

Endnotes

- 1 Endnotes
Family data researched through ancestry.com.
- 2 Gordon, DC *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor*, Faber and Faber, London, 1955, p 199.
- 3 Howe WE, in Centenary of the Wesley Methodist Sunday School, 1941, reports on p 15 a total of 850 on the roll in 1891 with 45 teachers and officers. On p 19 he notes that 1891-1908 were the peak years, 1903 having the largest roll of 859 with 41 teachers and officers. Alfred Jolly was at one time Superintendent of this Sunday school.
- 4 *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor*, p 25.
- 5 *The Outlook*, 8 October 1904, p 33, 'Laying of Foundation Stone at Crofton.'
- 6 Gordon DC, *Doctor Down Under*, Faber and Faber, London, 1958, p 53.
- 7 *The Outlook*, *ibid*.
- 8 *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor*, p 182.
- 9 Later the National Bank would move Alfred back to Wellington and, as he was often away inspecting branch offices, he and Lucy would live at the Hôtel Windsor in Willis Street, Wellington. In 1920 they would buy and alter 24 Glasgow Street, Kelburn, but seven years after Alfred's death Lucy would move in 1932 to Stratford to enjoy her baby grand-daughter Alison (see *Doctor Down Under* p 90); the Wellington house being let (as two flats) from then until Lucy's death in 1939.
- 10 None of Alfred Jolly's extended family appeared to have migrated to New Zealand. He had nine siblings who reached adulthood and numerous aunts and uncles who remained in Australia.
- 11 *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor*, pp 38-39 relates how billiards had been seen in the 1880s as a fitting pastime for wealthy Melbourne Methodists – providing they were not played in public places. Methodist homes often included a billiard room. The Jolly family had an improvised set-up to clamp on their dining table, and all, including Lucy and Doris enjoyed the game. Susan and Beverley Price, subsequent owners of the Jolly home at 24 Glasgow Street, Kelburn, advised 14.7.13 that a basement billiard room was added in 1924 during the Jolly's ownership.
- 12 *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor*, p 114.
- 13 *Ibid* p 117-118.
- 14 In her field of obstetrics and gynaecology Doris was also concerned about the ill effects of sexually transmitted diseases – a concern held in common with campaigner Ettie Rout – and also about dangerous 'back- street' abortions. With Francis Bennett she wrote *Gentlemen of the Jury* (1937) opposing indiscriminate contraception. Doris always strove for the greatest good of both mothers and babies, but it was unofficially known in Stratford that when there were extenuating circumstances, she would terminate a pregnancy. (Source – personal information given to the writer by Dame Margaret Sparrow, 21.7.13.) Far more women sought this service than were given it (see *Doctor Down Under* p 94).
- 15 *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor*, p 158.
- 16 Information in 2004 from Alan Jolly, Alfred's grandson, indicated that the death followed surgery which the family considered unnecessary.
- 17 See for example *NZ Truth*, 3 April 1930, 'Mothers and Babies,' "This appeal will make motherhood easier for your daughters and grand-daughters; and it needs women to work and it asks your menfolk to give."
- 18 *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor*, p 196. Their early learning included four maternal deaths in their first two hundred deliveries. Note too, that Dr Bill Gordon was honoured in 1970 with a CBE for his services to medicine. The medal was held in 2013 by Puke Ariki Museum, Taranaki.
- 19 *Ibid* p 207.
- 20 *Ibid* p 230.
- 21 *Ibid* p 159.
- 22 *Ibid* p 221.
- 23 *Doctor Down Under*, pp 65-68.
- 24 *Back-Blocks Baby-Doctor*, p 175.
- 25 *Doctor Down Under*, p190.



Front cover of *Changing With The Times Chartwell School 1970-1995*, by Eva Petro, published by Chartwell School, Wellington 1995.

There is very little history of the Crofton Downs suburb available in written record. Known memories of early residents from the 1950s onwards are few, and as time goes by it becomes more and more difficult to capture these, and photographs, of the families and their homes. Hopefully this issue of *The Onslow Historian* will inspire readers, and it will be the first of others that will follow and complete the story. The establishment of Chartwell and Crofton Downs as separate suburbs, alongside each other, is just a memory now as the two areas join seamlessly together; and they share the same school.

The above illustration is the front cover of the 166 page book that was published in 1995 on the occasion of the school's 25th year celebration. The first 10 pages contain historical information of the suburbs and are recommended reading for further information.

