



Bulleid News



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Two Journeys to Oamaru

After meeting so many of my new-found cousins in Australia, as described in the previous newsletter, Mary and I flew to New Zealand to follow in the footsteps of William and John Bulleid. The brothers had sailed from England aboard the 'Devana' on 12th April 1874, arriving at Port Chalmers, Dunedin, exactly three months later. William was 27 and John 22.

They had been born and brought up in North Tawton, Devon, where their grandfather, George, was a well-to-do yeoman farmer with two farms, Staddon and Hayne. He was an Overseer of the Poor and employed apprentices from poor families for both farms. His son Samuel, William and John's father, was a brewer in North Tawton and married to Elizabeth Lee, whose brother Samuel was a very successful draper in Teignmouth. Sadly, tragedy beset the family in North Tawton: several of George's offspring died prematurely and William and John's middle brother, Samuel Lee Bulleid, died at the age of six in a vat. His headstone reads: -

"Farewell sweet child, a long farewell to thee
From sin's pollution thou art ever free
Thy pilgrimage was not too brief to show
How every stage of life is mixed with woe."

Elizabeth's life was cut short by pulmonary consumption in 1862 at the age of forty four, when William was 15 and John 10. We do not know why the brothers did not continue to live with their father, but William was taken in by his uncle, Samuel Lee, and John by John and Jane Durant née Lee, Elizabeth's sister. It seems that John later went to live with Uncle Samuel, where he fell in love with his first cousin, Fanny Laura Snell Lee.

The brothers learned the drapery trade well in their uncle's store in Teignmouth and continued the trade following their arrival in New Zealand. William went into partnership in Invercargill, where Pryce and Bulleid had a store, with branches in Winton and Dunedin. John joined a drapery business in Dunedin and was sent to manage the Oamaru branch, which he subsequently acquired. Seven years after leaving Devon, John travelled to Melbourne, where he met his cousin, Fanny, and married her in St James' Church on 5th April 1881 two days after her arrival. They travelled on to New Zealand landing at Bluff on 25th April and Oamaru three days later, where their three children were to be born: Leah Elizabeth in 1882; Winifred (1883); and John Maurice (1885).



John and Fanny on their Wedding Day

John's department store and importing business in Oamaru, Bulleid & Co, prospered and in 1888 he was able to build the largest single-storey house

on the South Island. In the meantime, his brother William had married Marianne Vaughan Pugh following a whirlwind romance in London, where he was on a business trip. Their four children were born in Invercargill between 1881 and 1886, but the family's history of tragedy had followed them from England: their firstborn, Olive Ermintrude, died after two days and William at the age of 42, leaving his widow and three young children. She decided to return to her native Wales and, on the way, stayed for several months with John and Fanny in Oamaru. It is thought that Marianne suggested the name for the latter's new house, 'Pen-y-Bryn' (Brow of the Hill) after an ancient property in Bangor near her family home.

In 1892, John and Fanny took their family to Europe to do the 'Grand Tour' during which they acquired furnishings and fittings for the house.

Meanwhile, Marianne had returned to Wales with her three children, one of whom - Oliver Vaughan Snell Bulleid - was destined to become probably the most famous member of the family as Chief Mechanical Officer of Southern Railway and designer of the Bulleid Pacific steam locomotives and rolling stock.

John and Fanny arrived back in New Zealand four years to the day after their departure date, having spent much time in England and Italy. His business continued to prosper and at his peak he earned £5000 sterling p.a. at a time when income tax was only 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ % and a tradesman was lucky to earn 100 pounds. He employed a large staff and had more than 60 seamstresses in his workroom alone. Tragedy was never far away, however, and John suffered at least two breakdowns through overwork and sadly died at the age of 59.



John Bulleid & Co., Oamaru. Photos of the interior below.







Pen-y-Bryn, Oamaru

Mary and I arrived in Christchurch from Sydney on 23rd November and the following day drove to Oamaru, three and a half hours south on the east coast of New Zealand's South Island. Pen-y-Bryn is now a luxury guesthouse owned by Roy and Bernice Vannini, who have cherished and cared for the house for the past twelve years. Upon our arrival, Roy immediately gave us a tour of the property, pointing out in the Dining Room the plaster ceiling which John and Fanny had acquired in Florence; the oak flooring and carved oak paneling from England; the beautifully carved, large bookcase and fire surround, also from England; the lovely round table from France with holes drilled through its feet where it was secured to the deck during the voyage to New Zealand; and a dinner plate from the large Limoges set purchased by Fanny in France.

The large bedroom in which John and Fanny's three children slept, has a built-in wardrobe with stained glass windows and now houses a full size snooker table, apparently one of three made for New Zealand's Parliament. The TV room contains several old photographs provided by the Bulleid family of the house and gardens and the department store.

The house is built of wood to withstand earthquakes and Elizabethan in style. It covers 9,000 square feet and used to occupy an entire town block of garden, except for a quarter acre on the south eastern corner, which had a house on it. The garden is now much smaller, although still extensive, and surrounded by other properties. The views from the house, which is indeed on top of the hill, must have been spectacular when it was built. It is now a listed building and has had only four owners. However, Roy and Bernice have decided that the time has come to move on, so there is an opportunity for Pen-y-Bryn to return to Bulleid family ownership.



Pen-y-Bryn - Original Exterior



Present Exterior



Oak fire surround from England





We were served an exquisite four course dinner, prepared by Bernice who is self-taught, but would undoubtedly win "Masterchef of the Year" were she to enter. The following morning, we were met at the house by Victor Bulleid, John and Fanny's grandson, his wife Marion and daughter Debbie. They had driven from Dunedin, ninety minutes away, to greet us at Pen-y-Bryn and give us a personal account of the property, where Vic had lived until he was four years old. At ninety two, Vic is not quite the oldest member of the family in New Zealand and we were delighted subsequently to meet his elder brother, George.

Vic, Marion and Debbie treated us to a tour of Oamaru, before we set off for Dunedin. We saw the family graves in the attractive and well-maintained cemetery; the farm named Deborah, which Vic's father had acquired after the sale of Pen-y-Bryn and other properties owned in the past by family members. The department store still exists, although very little remains of the original interior, and is now a branch of the well-known New Zealand chain, Farmers.

We spent four nights in Dunedin and greatly enjoyed the warm hospitality offered by Vic and Marion, their daughter Gill and husband Graham, and Debbie and husband Neville. The view from Vic and Marion's retirement home, overlooking Dunedin Peninsula, is spectacular: -



For our final evening in Dunedin, the family had arranged a Dinner at a local Lodge, when we were delighted to meet Jeremy Bulleid from Christchurch, Brenda, Richard and Ngaire Bulleid from near Invercargill. The highlight of the evening came when Vic presented me with the first bound copy of his book 'Reflections on the Bulleids of Oamaru - Farm, Firm and Family'. It has taken him many years to compile this magnificent work, which will be treasured by younger generations of the family, as it is by me.

[Bulleid Web](#)

[Cathy Bullied Young](#) and her husband, Tom, came to last year's Festa in Devon and she has now completed this watercolour of the old family pub in Winkleigh, the King's Arms: -



It has been accepted for the South Carolina Juried Guild Show; congratulations, Cathy, we hope you win a prize.

That just about concludes another busy year in terms of family history and it is pleasing that so many more members have become users of the family website and Facebook group.

I wish everyone a happy and healthy New Year and look forward to continuing to exchange correspondence.

Geoff.

Family Internet Sites

www.bulliedfamily.com - private family site (tree, photos, documents, recordings, newsletters etc.)

www.facebook.com - Bulleid Family Worldwide (private group with up-to-date photos and videos)

www.devonheritage.org - See Geoff Ledden's Bulleid Family Pages