

7.8 MARGARET ANN GILMER

Last Update 16 December 2012

Hamilton Gilmer's grave at Bolton Street Cemetery in Wellington contains a headstone for Margaret Ann Gilmer which reads:

*"In Loving Memory of Margaret Ann Gilmer
Late of Castleblaney Co. Monaghan
Died 6 April 1873 Age 17 years"*

Margaret Ann has been a mystery Gilmer without anyone knowing who she was. Jean Gilmer, a granddaughter of Hamilton Gilmer, says that after many of the graves in the cemetery were moved, to build the new freeway through Wellington, she found the headstone lying on the ground and arranged for it to be placed with the others on the Hamilton Gilmer grave. She did not know who Margaret was but because she was from Castleblaney and a Gilmer she thought it was likely Margaret was related.

However, Jean did not know what the relationship might be. To assist in resolving the issue, Jean obtained Margaret's death Certificate which identified that she was a pupil of Miss Greenwood's school and that she had died of Typhoid Fever.

| REGISTRAR'S RETURN OF ALL ENTRIES OF DEATHS IN THE REGISTER-BOOK FOR THE DISTRICT OF <i>Wellington (Town)</i> DURING THE | | | | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Number. | When Died and Where. | Name and Surname. | Sex. | Age. | Rank or Profession. | Cause of Death. |
| <i>49</i> | <i>April 6 1873 Wellington</i> | <i>Margaret Ann Gilmer</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>17</i> | <i>Pupil of Miss Greenwood</i> | <i>Typhoid Fever.</i> |

Margaret Ann Death Certificate

The informant on the notice was the Undertaker and hence there are no further details of her parents or family. As well, it is likely that the age is understated and the age of 17 years is more what he would have expected for a girl at school.

Miss Greenwood's school was a boarding school for young ladies to both educate them and finish them to be acceptable in society. The school was operated by Miss Greenwood from at least 1868 until the end of 1887 when it was taken over by Miss Malcolm. It was still advertised as a Ladies School.

When Margaret died death notices were inserted in the Grey River Argus on 8 April 1873 and as well as the Evening Post in Wellington:

LOCAL

DEATH

GILMER.—On the morning of the 7th April, at Wellington, Margaret Ann Gilmer,

Grey River Argus Greymouth 8 April 1873

On the 6th inst, of typhoid fever, Margaret Ann Gilmer, of Greymouth, late of Castleblaney, Ireland, aged 17 years.

Evening Post Wellington 7 April 1873

The Argus Notice clearly indicates that Margaret is from Greymouth and the notice in the Grey River Argus supports this otherwise there no reason for it to be placed there. The question then becomes was she related to the Gilmers in Greymouth? We believe the answer lies in the shipping records for the return of Hamilton Gilmer and his bride Elizabeth Hamilton from Ireland in 1871.

Hamilton and Elizabeth were married on 25 April 1871 at Broomfield, Parish of Muckno, Co. Monaghan. Hamilton and his bride returned to New Zealand via the United States of America. sailing from Liverpool on the S.S. Moravian on 25 July 1871 and arriving in Quebec, Canada on 4 August.

The ship's passenger record shows Hamilton Gilmer with an age of 39 which is quite incorrect as he would have been 33 at that time. Elizabeth's age was recorded as 29 which is correct. There was a third person with the name of Gilmer, a single female aged 19. The record for the first name is unclear although it could be an abbreviation of the name Margaret e.g. "Margt." The column headed "Profession, Rank or Calling" could be interpreted as "Sister".

| | | S. S. Moravian | | | | | | | | | | 839 | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|--|---------|--------------------------------|----|----------|---|----------|------------------------|------------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|----------|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Port of Embarkation. | Names of Passengers. | Age of each Adult of 12 years and upwards. | | Children between 1 & 12 Years. | | Infants. | Profession, Occupation, or Calling of Passengers. | Swedish. | | Norwegian. | | Danish. | | Finnish. | | Portuguese. | | Port at which Passengers have contracted to Land. | | | |
| | | Married. | Single. | | | | | Adults. | Boys & Girls under 12. | Adults. | Boys & Girls under 12. | Adults. | Boys & Girls under 12. | Adults. | Boys & Girls under 12. | Adults. | Boys & Girls under 12. | | | | |
| | | M. | F. | M. | F. | M. | | F. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| LIVERPOOL. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | LONDON. | | | |
| | 1400 Minnie Gilman | | 39 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Eliza | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Margaret | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 1405 M. H. H. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 1495 Edith Stann | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Ship Record SS Moravian 25 July 1871

The Gilmers sailed on the SS *Nevada*, under Captain Blethen, from San Francisco on 13 September, and from Honolulu on 26 September arriving in Auckland on 12 October 1871. The newspaper reported "Mr. Gilmer, wife and sister, for Wellington"¹² among the arriving passengers. The Nelson Examiner also reported the arrival but as Mr. & Mrs. Gilmer and Miss Gilmer³. We initially believed the second report to be incorrect and the first report describing the third person as sister was in fact a nursing sister to take care of Elizabeth. However this seems incorrect.

Given Margaret's age as 19 in 1871 her birth year would have been 1852. Margaret was born on 2 April 1852.⁴ Hugh Gilmer's wife Margaret Dorothea Hamilton died in 1846 and he remarried Ann Smith in the same year. It seems likely then that Margaret is the daughter of Hugh Gilmer and Ann Smith. Further support for this is evident in her name. Hugh seems to have named her after his first wife, Margaret, and given her his second wife's name, Ann, as a second name. We also note, perhaps coincidentally, that Sam Gilmer's daughter Edith also had the names of Margaret and Ann.

The Gilmers' journey from Auckland to Greymouth can be traced as far as Nelson. The SS *Wellington* met the *Nevada* and leaving Auckland on 13 October took the mail to Wellington, Nelson and then on to Lyttleton. The mail for the West Coast was transhipped to the SS *Murray* at Nelson on 15 October. Mr. & Mrs. Gilmer and Miss Gilmer were reported as incoming passengers on the *Wellington* at Nelson⁵. However, they were not reported as outgoing passengers on either the *Murray* or the *Wellington*.

¹ Grey River Argus 16 October 1871

² Daily Southern Cross 13 October 1871

³ Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle 18 October 1871

⁴ BirthdayBook JD Lockhart

⁵ Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle 18 October 1871

Having reached Greymouth and settling into New Zealand life again, it appears that Hamilton Gilmer decided to help his half sister Margaret to obtain an education and hopefully an improved place in society. Hamilton had demonstrated on the West Coast that he was a compassionate person and willing to assist his family. His wife would have had similar views. Therefore, we believe the Gilmers sent her to Miss Greenwood's ladies school on The Terrace in Wellington.

A BOARDING AND DAY SCHOOL

FOR YOUNG LADIES,

CONDUCTED by Miss Greenwood, will
be opened on Monday, 12th October, in the
house now occupied by W. Rolleston, Esq.,
on the Terrace.

Address—Miss Greenwood, Berlin House,
Mulgrave-street.

Evening Post 26 September 1868

With Margaret's death on 7 April and, given that she was a boarder in Wellington away from her Greymouth home, one would expect that Hamilton Gilmer would go to Wellington to make arrangements for her funeral and burial. The first available ship was the steamer *Wallace* which left Greymouth for Westport on 8 April 1873.⁶ This reached Nelson on 11 April with the passenger list showing "Mr. Gilmer" on board.⁷ He is subsequently shown on the passenger list for the steamer *Wellington* which was recorded as leaving for Picton on 14 April.⁸

The *Wellington* arrived on 15 April with "Mr. Gilmore"⁹ on board. Hamilton was in Wellington for just a few days long enough for him to arrangements in place to obtain a burial plot and organize a headstone. He started for home on 19 April on the *Ladybird* which reached Nelson on the 20th.¹⁰ The next steamer leaving for the West Coast was the *Charles Edward* on 23 April. We presume he went on it but cannot confirm this as the Greymouth newspaper was not reporting passenger lists.

⁶ Grey River Argus 9 April 1873

⁷ Nelson Evening Mail 12 April 1873

⁸ Nelson Evening Mail 15 April 1873

⁹ Evening Post 15 April 1873

¹⁰ Nelson Evening Mail 22 April 1873

The death of Margaret Ann was a tragedy for the Gilmer family. Having migrated from Ireland she would have been full of optimism and hope for a bountiful future, she had the great opportunity of a good education in one of the best schools, and most importantly being with her family of half brothers, she had the world at her feet.