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WAINUIOMATA

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Dear Chris and John

Out with a good snifter of brandy Chris - this is another long one.

Thanks for your letter of 6 May - as you may have guessed, I have been pretty busy, especially as the school holidays started 8 May - no sooner packed Brett off to school than he was home again. Things are settling down again now though, and it would seem that Brett actually likes school which is even better - long may that attitude last. I'm still waiting for the swearing factor - its bound to come though at the moment our biggest hassle is grouchiness when he comes home - he is just worn out before teatime so its early tea and even earlier to bed for him. I gather thats quite normal though and fortunately in these winter months early to bed isn't such a bad idea.

It was good to receive your long newsy letter although it sounds as if John came back not a moment too soon - what else could you have bought given half the chance? Now that your Warmaire is functioning so well in this cold wet weather, does John still light the fire in the sittingroom and sit over it? Personally I think there is no comparison although an open fire is lovely to look at, even if slightly impractical by today's standards. I take it you haven't ignited after your combination of brandy and wine and fire in the interim - I haven't read about it in the paper and I'm sure that sort of news would make headlines!

Well, you will be pleased to learn that my house-painting has ground to a halt, and not only because of the weather. I have painted the two levels which are one storied but our house is much like yours and the front and one side are two-storied as I think I explained. Well, we haven't acquired the necessary scaffolding yet and although I don't want the job to wait around until next year, the weather we are having at present bodes no good at all.

I'm pleased to learn that you have your Turnbull photos at last. Mine arrived two weeks ago, and they were ordered on 7 December! They explained the delay by saying they had had a number of orders for one of the photos. I clarified the unexpected demand by explaining the number of Sinclair descendants I had advised of the photo's existence. They were pleased but I'm not sure I did myself a good turn when I consider the 6 month delay - I would still like a copy for myself as the one I ordered was just for the Historical Society.

Now that you have the picture of 'Moness' behind the hedge, and the river fords in front, you had better go and get it before you read the following:

Our local free paper editor has come across a book written by a chap as an autobiog of Richard Seddon and he mentions an old farmhouse which the Seddon family used as a fishing whare/bach in Wainui. We know the house well, it still exists in a slightly modified form and a young girl who used to maid the Seddon family still lives in the Valley - 90 yrs old last December. However, we

didn't know it was old at the time of the Seddon use. The editor has also come up with a reference to another family who used the Seddon whare and whose daughter was born in 'the old farmhouse' in 1894. This info is the key piece to the puzzle. They don't call it the Seddon whare in the latter reference, but describe it so well there is no doubt. Now, if the house in question was an 'old farm house' in 1894 then we have every reason to believe that it must have been there some years and if so it could well have been Auntie Belle's home. It fits the criteria well - on the bank, on a portion of old Sinclair land and slightly removed from the rest of the Sinclair homes though not remotely so. Since the Seddon tenure the house has had an upstairs incorporated in its high ceiling, but is otherwise very little altered. Will do my bit with the camera though I have already tried once and unfortunately the high hedge out front prevents me getting far enough back to get the whole house in the picture, except on an angle which doesn't show much. So there, I'm confident enough to say we have the remnants of a Sinclair home in our midst, still occupied and in reasonable repair. I did once peep in the kitchen window - very small and poky just as one hears the old scullerys were. I must get myself introduced to the present owners and take things from there.

Secondly, I have been spending some time studying the photo of 'Moness' etc along with a photo taken of the same area, but from a different angle, some 60 years later.

When I first started my Wainui research I interviewed an old lady who had accompanied the local vicar some years earlier to do a 'house cleansing' midway up Hine Road (the Sinclair Cemetery is at the top end of Hine Road). I wrote to the vicar (now in Tauranga I think) and he confirmed the 'cleansing'. Apparently there was a child crying and the family pet dog disturbed by something (presence?) and he felt there was sufficient cause to execute a cleansing. When the old lady described it to me she mentioned a woman, possibly a nurse, walking about wringing her hands, and a baby crying, and she described where the house in question was built/stands today.

This same lady also recalled, upon coming to Wainui in the early 1940's, riding in the present-day Hine Road area when it was all paddocks and grass, and riding by the ruins of a burnt house behind a high hedge where a couple of fruit trees sheltered. An old range lay amongst the ruins, but little else.

There is no doubt that these ruins were the remains of 'Moness'. Similarly, the house cleansing took place in the same vicinity almost exactly.

The point I am trying to make is: The distressed woman and crying child would fit well with the remiss nurse under whose (lack of) supervision young John Hugh Sinclair ate Lucifer matches and died. I must admit I did treat the old lady's reminiscences in this respect lightly at the time, although I recorded them. However, after we came across young John Hugh's inquest my brain starting ticking again, and I wrote to the vicar to query the matter. If you can't trust an Anglican vicar I guess you can't have much faith in anything, can you?

Anyway, if all the above fits, then the puzzle is - did John Sinclair and Louise live at 'Moness' after Agnes' death? Agnes

died in 1878, and John wed Louise that same year (uncertain of the date at the moment). I always understood that John had his own home 'Glenhill' and this is verified in Kate's reminiscences when she says '... my mother died and I went to live with my maternal grandmother...'. In the Turnbull photo another home is visible on the hill to the rear of 'Moness' and early memories of older Wainui residents do recall an old house in the same vicinity circa 1910 or later. This would seem to me to be 'Glenhill'.

From looking at the Turnbull photo it would seem that the house at 'Glenhill', slightly obscured by a large barn or outbuilding, is a typical farm cottage - it could have two rooms under the eaves, but these would be small. The upstairs rooms factor is important because in John Hugh's inquest considerable mention is made of the nurse going upstairs to pack, while another young girl (maid?) was also called on to give evidence. With at least two servants surely John and Louise would have been taking advantage of the empty house 'Moness' rather than living in what definitely appears to be a small cottage at 'Glenhill'. Duncan and Martha Sinclair would be living at 'Northbrook' by that time, so it would seem pointless to leave 'Moness' empty, especially with the large established orchard etc. It also seems to me that after her mother's death when Kate went to live with her Grandmother that John may have gone too but this is purely supposition. Be a bit pointless of him to have remained at 'Glenhill' though, rattling around in an empty house. Another point in favour of the John Sinclair's living at 'Moness' is the way in which Kate gives a full description of same in her reminiscences, yet says nothing about her parent's home.

Well, that should give you something to think about. Any comments, suggestions or whatever? All welcome.

A letter from Joyce Peck came in the same post and I had better get around to answering that too. Yes, Joyce was at the Cemetery Dedication though she doesn't appear in the photos as her husband is the descendant. If you have your Sinclair Cemetery Booklet handy, he is shown in one of the photos - John Peck. Joyce is a grandmother so is probably in her early 60's and is a lovely person. Friendly and quite clued up with her research so she is one of those people you can discuss 'the Family' with without having to explain relationships etc all the time. Our kind of family researcher.

I too think that Agnes' age at the time of her death was accurate but the puzzle about the two children dying in Australia is absorbing and your suggestions could all fit quite well. I'm hoping that Joyce may chase up some angles for us as she has made such good contacts in Australia. There are so many conflicting stories aren't there? - Hugh sailing on a convict ship, having an hotel and all the rest. And as for Agnes being a publican's daughter, writing so beautifully etc. The Spiers must have been one of the luckier Scots families, when one thinks of the great deportations of Scottish which took place last century. Young Joseph's names are a puzzler too and I wonder whether it is possible that he was a foster child. Hugh could possibly have slipped back to Aussie to collect Agnes though he would have had to be quick because he only fades from local knowledge around 1840-41 although we have been told he was in the Chathams at one time, swapping spirits for birds etc. It must have been between Jan 1840 and Sept 1841 because we can account for his movements before and

after those dates. John would have been conceived about Aug/Sept 1841. However it would appear that Hugh spent only a short time in the South Island trying to buy land with liquor - that fell though - then over to the Chathams which needn't have taken that long. Then of course he was back to salvage the whalebone from 'The Elbe' after December 1841. Oh to have all the answers now, but we are making headway slowly so they must come in the end. I am going to leave that lot for a little while, to mull over it and see what comes out. I did write to a Library in New South Wales a month or so ago, with no answer as yet but I'm hoping that its still early days yet.

I saw the new Winara Home advertised - did John like it, despite wanting to be in his own home? And are your glasses 100% better - all the better for studying Turnbull photos with for instance? I think your new car looks very smart and her turned up tail isn't too pert by any means. White again too - still if you are paying you should be able to get the colour combination you want though things have changed a bit since Henry Ford said "You can have any colour, so long as its black". I see too that John has relinquished the driver seat, on one occasion at least. How do I know all this? Well, on Mother's Day we were in the queue of cars lined up at the traffic lights at Waikanae waiting to head north while you were waiting to turn the corner. We were two cars behind you so by the time Ken had pointed you out and I had registered everything, you were driving up and over the railway line and it would have been pointless parping the horn - very distracting too. Just the same, the car looks lovely. What was John's reaction to it? Favourable I hope and I also hope that it didn't take too long to convince him of the good reasons for buying it. Now that you have power steering you shouldn't feel so exhausted after driving John up to Palmerston North or anywhere else you might have go to - like the Sinclair Cemetery in Wainuiomata for instance?

Whats this about begging the neighbours to get another cat? Are you hoping that the female Kitten from nextdoor will adopt and eventually become yours - your cats do have a habit of selecting you as owners rather than the other way around don't they. And aren't Abyssinians lovely, though to the layman they are just another cat. Actually the arrangement you have with your neighbours were be a very good working one - you act as babysitters during the day and enjoy the pleasure of the cats company, but no responsibility for them - ie, you can take off for the day or more without any catering arrangements to make first. The part I love though is having them on my knee or stretched out on the carpet while the fire is going, in the evenings. Do you get to enjoy that part too? If so then I think you had better consider buying the neighbours another cat - this one sounds like she has adopted you!

And whats this about old age being sitting in the sun, knitting in a corner etc - you've still got that ahead of you when you do get old, remember. Plenty of time yet and live life to the full till then old (sorry, young) girl. You might be interested in a Text which I saw in an old home in OtaKi. The home belongs to a descendent of William Colenso, via his Maori girlfriend Rebecca, not his wife, and I was quite taken with it - both the house and the Text:

Isn't it strange
That Princes and Kings

And Clowns that caper in sawdust rings
And ordinary people like you and me
Are builders of eternity
To each is given a bag of tools
An hour glass and a book of rules
And each must build, ere life is flown
A stumbling block or a stepping stone
Anon

I was so impressed with this that I am embroidering it as a sampler at the moment though anybody who has stopped to read it as I have been working hasn't been impressed - no sense of appreciation. Some of those old Texts were so clever and oh so true, weren't they, but so few people appreciate them today.

I note that you are getting new neighbours - I presume they are replacing those with the cats? Or is it the ones with the Scotty dog? Hope the latter rather than the former and that they are as keen on keeping the garden beautiful as you two. Thank heavens Arthur can get around occasionally. People say there isn't much work around and that Waikanae is mostly a retired persons area but to an energetic person clued up on gardening there could be quite a comfortable, not necessarily well endowed but certainly paying enough to live on, living, especially if one preferred the 'great outdoors'. Unfortunately for you and surely a lot of others, there aren't too many of that type of person around. A shame because maintaining your lovely garden must be the only drawback to perpetual residence at 53 Winara Avenue right?

Don't try and answer this in a hurry, but let it hang until a cold winter's evening when you are wined and dined well and dreaming in front of the Marmaire (without the Knitting!). Do you find your postage bill astronomical? I think I should be made a Life Member of the PO with all the associated perks, starting with free postage. If they close the little local PO I shall be lost. It's only three quarters of a mile away by bike, whereas the main PO is about 2 miles and all uphill coming back home - great for the leg muscles when biking I don't think. Maybe I'm not as fit as I like to think but I wouldn't be dashing down there in 5 mins just before school finishes.

Enough. It's nearly 2.30pm - Brett's hometime and as usual there are all sorts of things to be done. The forecast is for southerlys so that will be a good excuse to stay inside and work on the pantry, won't it. We just have the architraves to do and plastering, then I can get cracking with the paintbrush inside, and the wallpaper outside. Fortunately we have enough of the kitchen paper left to do alteration though it will be a lot whiter than the original paper which is 7 yrs old after all. Still, I'm not prepared to rewallpaper at present when we have a perfectly serviceable paper up which I like a lot. I like wallpapering too but not like my Aunt who insists on redoing her not-inconsiderable house every two years or whenever a paper catches her eye - whichever comes the soonest. She retires soon which means more time for wallpaper book browsing - poor old hubby will have to work forever to finance that lot!

Another cold night in the offing. Wainui must be a polluted valley on a cold still night. Lucky we can't see in the dark and don't dare go walking on the streets at that hour either.

all the Best - Vicki