

# **Constance Grande, nee Barnicoat**

**Articles relevant to her life and family**

## **Colonising Nelson, Trials of a Pioneer Family by Jane Hursthouse**

from *The Weekly News* 28 Jan 1942

## **Constance Grande by Julian Grande**

from *Constance Grande*, Chapter 1, Julian Grande, 1925  
London: Chapman and Hall

## **Barnicoat, Constance Alice 1872 - 1922 by Janet McCallum**

from *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 11 December 2002

more information about Constance's maternal grandfather William Hodgson and his descendants is available at <http://www.genealogy.ianskipworth.com/pdf/hodbk.pdf>

# Colonising Nelson

## *Trials of a Pioneer Family*

ROMANCE and tragedy is associated with this true story of a pioneer family of Nelson. At this time, when Nelson celebrates its centenary, interest lies in the fact that these records may well be those of hundreds of other pioneer families.

The story begins in England with the family of Tate, wealthy manufacturers, who were ardent buyers and collectors of the finest paintings which they could acquire. Mr and Mrs Henry Tate's home drew all London to see the pictures. Later, Henry Tate was created a baronet when he built the Tate gallery and bequeathed it to the nation with his pictures. A New Zealand great-niece of Sir Henry's who stayed with him before the Tate gallery was built described to the writer how artists and even Royalty - in those days King Edward VII and his lovely young Queen Alexandra - would visit the Tate home, where art connoisseurs would congregate.

SIR HENRY'S young<sup>1</sup> sisters then come into this narrative, forming an ancestral link with hundreds of present-day descendants of Nelson pioneers. William Hodgson, son of a formerly wealthy man<sup>2</sup> whose cotton industry was ruined by the introduction of machinery, married a young sister of Sir Henry. Very soon she died and the broken-hearted<sup>3</sup> husband married her elder<sup>1</sup> sister, Agnes. At that time the bill allowing such a marriage had not been passed, so the young couple ran away and

were united at Gretna Hall, (later marriages were at Gretna Green near by.)

By JANE HURSTHOUSE

A copy of the old marriage certificate duly witnessed by Alfred Tate and others is in the writer's possession.<sup>4</sup> The original was found in an old desk in 1934 and a copy published in a New Zealand paper. The ceremony took place on May 3, 1826.

Little did the young couple guess then that a life of adventure in far New Zealand would follow. The prejudice they incurred by their marriage brought much unhappiness,<sup>5</sup> and so, in 1842, "lured by the worthless New Zealand Company," as Hodgson said later in a letter, they set sail to begin a new life in Nelson, New Zealand.

THE weather was fair on the long voyage, but many other things marred their travel. The crew mutinied. "Due," says Hodgson, "to the captain, who was so brutal and selfish that I conceived a strong dislike to the Scottish national character! One of the ring-leaders of the mutiny was chained for two days to a bulkhead adjoining my cabin and those of the children. Never shall I forget the terror strongly depicted on the face of each little one as the ferocious ruffianly visage of the manacled sailor, unable to rise or move, peered just above the margin of the table. I almost

feared that one or other of them would have fallen into a fit."

Full of high hopes, this family left England. But no pioneer could have been less fitted to rough it than William Hodgson, middle-aged, and a delicate, cultured, university<sup>6</sup> man, more familiar with translating Greek than using a spade.

THE tendency in New Zealand annals has been to glorify the early days by glossing over the difficulties. But letters of nearly one hundred years ago have been kept which tell a tragic story of hard-ships which, in this case, killed the father and prematurely saddened the mother. Sheer hardship with starvation and a life of manual toil was their lot.

Owing to the lack of the sixpences needed for postage, it was actually some three years<sup>7</sup> before the Hodgson family began their series of letters to English relatives, but then they wrote in retrospect giving an account of trials and experiences which read vividly today. Their ship was the *Himalaya*. It reached Nelson at a time when there was dire distress. Men were digging their seed potatoes for food. The New Zealand Company was suspended. The fight at Wairau between Maoris and British surveyors resulted in the death of many surveyors, including Arthur Wakefield, of the New Zealand Company. A feeling of terror was noticeable. Wages were but 2/- a day. Bread was scarce. Agricult-

ural tools were prohibitive in price owing to profiteering.



FIRST impressions of arrival at Nelson (where their land had been bought from the New Zealand Company) were of disappointment. They had been given glowing accounts of Nelson "town" by a most unveracious traveller who had told them in England of his delightful inn there. They saw "wooden houses or sheds or mud huts, many of which are already falling into decay." Half a dozen brick houses. A population of 700. No inn, only a "low and miserable pot house." But the fine climate of New Zealand was not the least exaggerated, although the thin houses, unlined, let in both cold and rain, the hot weather shrinking the boards till the colonists' homes were like sieves. If rain came while the family was in bed they would use caps, coats, and umbrellas for protection.

For the first time, too, this family's teeth began to decay and all suffered from toothache as never before. This decay of the teeth is still one of the national health problems of New Zealand.



IN the first two years, through sheer hard work of the father and his sons, seven and a half acres were cultivated - entirely with the spade! No one else throughout the new settlement accomplished as much. Their method was to first cut down and burn the six-foot fern. Then there was toot (tutu) roots to dig up. One toot root was so long that it took father and son two hours to extract it. Then the land was dug to rough spits which were left to fallow for three months. It then had to be broken with an instrument such as a carpenter's adze and the fern roots thrown out. An incredible amount of roots accumulated. In fact, on half an acre there were 60 large

fires which kept burning for six hours.

Ashes were scattered and the ground forked, raked and picked again before the actual planting of potatoes. They discovered that the fern is not fully extracted from the New Zealand soil for at least three years. There were floods, too, and insects, "myriads of rapacious grasshoppers which for a great part of the year destroy everything of a vegetable nature." These insect pests were virulent in New Zealand's early days till more birds were introduced.



PIONEERS were only human and many suffered terribly from home-sickness. To leave densely-populated cities or peaceful cultivated country districts and to be given for their future sustenance land which was much worse than bare - which took years to rid of fern and scrub, or ancient forest trees, or marsh, before it was fit to use as farm land, needed not only the stoutest hearts, but physical stamina which few Britishers possessed till they had become hardened in New Zealand itself.

Nelson's best pioneers, curiously enough, were almost without exception men from families who had been educated folk for generations, unaccustomed to exhausting farm work. They kept their literary diaries as they travelled or worked in New Zealand as missionaries, surveyors, botanists, or farmers. Their old pencil sketches give us an excellent idea of the Maoris of a hundred and more years ago. Books of verse written by our New Zealand pioneers often had classical themes which strike one as strange contrast to the rough life which the writers led.

William Hodgson was such a one. He would teach his sons Latin and Greek while they dug the ground for potatoes, and one

son, William Charles Hodgson, left a book of poems with a preface by Alfred A. Grace, who ranks him with Dommett and Bracken. He also translated Greek and Roman works which are a goodly heritage for New Zealand scholars. All this while enduring extraordinary hardships as a pioneer farmer.



PERHAPS those who now enjoy the fruitful land of Nelson, with its cultivation and fertility, do not fully realise the personal stress which many pioneers endured. The Hodgson family was simply one of hundreds. They even had more advantages than some. Yet for months they were without comforts which a peasant would have as a right in England. The children had no shoes; the father but one pair. For months they lived exclusively on potatoes and boiled wheat, with roasted wheat for coffee. Milk, sugar, meat were luxuries they never tasted. They were often unable to afford oil for lamps. Later they were able to grow their own flour and now and then have a little pork. This hardship was through no fault of the father, who exercised most rigid self-denial and worked unremittingly.

And all this was very hard on the mother of the family who was a very delicate woman. Like so many New Zealand women on farms she was alone a great deal while her sons and husband worked and then, after work, they were too tired for talk. Her mother<sup>s</sup> sent her boxes of garments and small sums of money from England, and other relatives sent farm tools and money, all of which slightly alleviated her trials, and she had always the great consolation of a very affectionate family. But the worry of lack of capital for the most ordinary expenses for the farm was always there.



FROM these earliest colonising days the arrival of a "box" from relatives in the Homeland brought great excitement and cheer to the pioneers, many of whom, for years, felt isolated from all they held dear. Now and then, when a box would come for the Hodgson family filled with tools, garments, and useful articles, one of the gifts most envied by other settlers would be bundles of the Illustrated London News, which recalled to them their dear country and its doings.

In 1846 Nelson had only two-thirds of the number who lived there in 1844. Hodgson blamed the "worthless N.Z. Company" for this and at that time men were paid high wages working on the roads, and for 5s worth of work the company would pay £5. Land bought from the Company from the Maoris for £2000 was sold to the colonists for £400,000. From the sale of sections the Company received £300,000. Yet though many settlers had paid for an allotment of 201 acres no one had received more than 51 acres of their own land. Later, when the company was insolvent, Hodgson says that too many officials had been employed and too many worthless, ignorant emigrants brought from Britain. Even in the fifth year after the establishment

of the colony of Nelson only one-fifth of the land paid for was under cultivation. Hodgson was the first to set the example of refusing to accept worthless sterile land. For his firmness he received in exchange much superior land.

When things seemed worst the New Zealand Company stopped payment and dismissed every one of its hands. It was a terrible time for Nelson farmers who had bought their land through the company. Mr Fox, the company's agent, helped as much as he could. The Hodgson family were desperate and bartered precious nails (sent from England) for flour and potatoes. No nails meant no fencing, and cattle came down from the hills and gullies and destroyed crops where fences were lacking.



**B**UT when all seemed blackest, Fortune smiled again, for the new 150 acres of really good land delighted them with the contrast from their first sections, even though the sea flowed over the new land at high tide and much draining was needed. They were saved from starvation by sums of money from England. But all this time the father had been failing and had been enduring excruciating headaches for which

there was no cure, and later in the year, after being given better land, he died, broken by hardship.

His sons carried on the farm work and, in addition, were employed in town. William Charles, the eldest son, took the place of Dr Arnold (son of the famous Dr Arnold, of Rugby), as master at the Nelson Grammar School and later became inspector of schools for the whole Nelson Province. In the meantime wheat crops looked splendid and two steamers owned by Messers Willis were sent to trade between Nelson and Australian ports. Gradually difficulties were overcome and as the years passed the Hodgson sons and daughters married and had their own homes. They have left a great number of descendants in New Zealand.

Thus, after some thirty years had elapsed since the romantic Gretna marriage of William and Agnes Tate in 1826, their descendants were able to write to England with pride saying that they no longer wished to return. Their "wilderness had blossomed as the rose." Through sheer hard work and endurance reward had come, such as this new Homeland of New Zealand gives to all who delve into her responsive heart.

*This article which first appeared in 1942 has been retyped selecting fonts and layout which mimic the original as much as possible. There are minor inaccuracies in the article, but it should be remembered that this was written as an example of the experience of pioneering families in general. In that sense the mistakes don't matter, but they do if the article is taken as an authentic account of the Hodgson family history.*

*Notes referenced from the text:*

- 1. The sequence of the children in the Tate family is misunderstood: Sir Henry, born 1819, was the youngest of 12 children. Mary Ann, first wife of William Hodgson, born 1799, died 1819, was the eldest. Agnes, second wife of William Hodgson, born 1807, was the 5<sup>th</sup> child.*
- 2. There is confusion between William Hodgson and his father. His father (Benjamin) was never in the cotton industry, and wealthy would not fairly describe him. Aspiring middle class perhaps. For example, William's household in the 1841 census of England had one teenage servant-girl only, typical of lots of quite modest households at that time. On the other hand the households of Henry Tate (though not the other Tates), and to a lesser extent Eyre Lee, were wealthy.*

3. *Nine years elapsed between William's marriages to the Tate sisters. One would assume that his broken heart had mended somewhat in that time.*
4. *Now in Nelson Provincial Museum archives*
5. *As I have written in my story I find no evidence of prejudice between the Hodgsons and their relatives showing in the letters. The case for William's business failure forcing emigration is much more compelling.*
6. *His writing indicates that William was well educated, but it is unlikely that he attended a university. His father's will left money for apprenticeship, but he was orphaned quite young and I doubt any point would be seen in sending him to university. Practical business training was what was needed.*
7. *It is true that the correspondence with John Lee did not start until several years after their arrival in Nelson, but they were corresponding with Eyre Lee and Rebecca from the start. Money for postage was an issue, and Rebecca would enclose money for replies when she sent a parcel.*
8. *It was her sister-in-law Rebecca Lee who sent the parcels, sometimes with contributions from other family members. Agnes' mother was a widow aged about 70 at the period in question, hardly in a position to help very actively.*

*Janie's article (above) was based quite heavily on one that Constance [Barnicoat] Grande had written in the National Review [UK] of August, 1909. I have not seen the National Review article but I believe it is the basis for most of the first chapter of the book Constance Grande written by her husband Julian in 1925, a transcript of which follows. The remaining notes refer to this second article.*

9. *Julian knew of Constance's family only at second hand. He writes as if the Hodgsons originated from Devon, which has no basis.*
10. *There is valuable additional material in Julian's chapter which does not come from any of the extant letters and diaries and a suggestion that two of the sons wrote diaries of their voyage out. I have not located Ben's diary, but have had some excerpts shown me.*
11. *It is apparent that Constance did not have access to the series of letters which remained with the writing desk. Her interpretation of the reasons behind the family's emigration may have been different had she seen these other papers.*
12. *I am not convinced that her description of William Hodgson as a "University man" is sustainable, but the point is not worth labouring since there is no surviving evidence one way or the other. His name is not included in a publication Students at Oxford but that is not in itself conclusive. Certainly he had had a thorough classical education, as did his son, William Charles, at Manchester Grammar School in the latter case.*
13. *Ages at death of the Hodgson children were 72, 70, 67, 63, 46, 40 (?accident), 33, 33, and 17. Ages at death of Constance's Barnicoat siblings were 95, 88, 85, 56, 50, 27 (accident), 18. While it is true that there were an undue number of early deaths among the Hodgsons, the comfortable circumstances of the Barnicoats did not entirely protect them from premature demise.*

CHAPTER I

PIONEER COLONISTS

CONSTANCE ALICE BARNICOAT was one of the most gifted spirits whom the Dominion of New Zealand has given to the British Commonwealth of Nations. English by parentage, colonial by birth and education, Christian in faith, she grew up passionately loyal and Imperialist in sentiments and convictions, and her patriotism shaped her career. Born two years after the Franco-German war, she lived until nearly four years after the end of the World War, and in the drama of the last quarter of a century she played, as an international journalist, a very important and honourable part. Devoid though she was of selfish ambition, her sheer ability and efficiency always brought her to the centre of things, winning for her the friendship of many of the world's leaders of thought and action. Her whole life-work was far more that of an ardent patriot than of a professional literary woman. Her incessant labours and anxieties during the great war wore her strength out before the time, and she not only lived, but in a very real sense died, for her country. Conservative as she was in the highest things, she was yet essentially modern in the best meaning of the word, and few modern women, if any, have been more worthy of a permanent memorial.

Constance was singularly fortunate in her parents, who emigrated from Cornwall and Devonshire<sup>9</sup> to New Zealand in the early forties of last century, her father as a solitary pioneer, and her mother as one of a large family of young children brought out by her grandparents. Their spirit of adventure became like an oxygen in her blood, and while her own early life was comparatively sheltered and free from care, the imagination of all the dangers encountered and almost incredible hardships endured by her nearest and dearest ones of an older generation did much to mould her own quiet, persevering, indomitable nature, giving her mind a

bent and relish for equally real, if somewhat diverse, wanderings, hardships and perils.

In the *National Review* of August, 1909, there is an article by Constance bearing the attractive title "A Pioneer Colonist's Story." The colonist was her maternal grandfather, and the article was based partly on journals kept by two<sup>10</sup> of his sons, boys then in their early teens, during the voyage of the "Himalaya" to New Zealand, and partly on the long letters sent home to England during the first years of the emigrants in their new country.

But for one circumstance<sup>11</sup> it is probable that her grandfather, William Hodgson, would never have left his home and kindred in England. Having the misfortune to lose his young and childless wife, he married her sister, thus violating the well-known law which was not removed from the Statute Book till a few years ago. The strong prejudice, social and religious, ordinarily awakened in those days against anyone who ventured to take a step which now appears so innocent and natural was hard to bear, especially for a man of education and refinement, and Mr Hodgson, after having considerably passed middle life, at length determined to escape all the odium and begin a new life with his family under the Southern Cross.

He was, however, pathetically unfitted for the life of a pioneer colonist. He had been a student at Oxford,<sup>12</sup> where he injured a constitution never robust by over-study. The motto of Thomas a Kempis, "A book in a nook" (*Libellus in angello*), would have suited him exactly, and a life of studious seclusion, if it could have been his, would have completely satisfied him. It was therefore hard fate - he would rather have called it a mysterious providence - which constrained him, with his wife and eight children, the oldest only fifteen, to leave the "red earth" of Devon<sup>9</sup> and the shores of England, which none of that generation were ever to see again.

The hardships which they endured alike at sea and in the first years after their settlement were typical of what many pioneer colonists had then to go through. 'So painful,' writes Constance, 'were the memories of the voyage and the early days in the adopted

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country, that my mother, who was nearly twelve years old when she left England, never could be induced to speak of them. She never revisited the land of her birth, but by a curious coincidence, the liner which, more than half a century later, brought me to England - the first of her children to revisit the Old Country - bore the same name, the "Himalaya," as the sailing ship in which she herself went out.

'They that go down to the sea in the magnificent ships of to-day may find cause for thankfulness in comparing their luxurious lot with that of the mother of eight children on a sailing ship of that time. They will realise, if they know anything of modern ship discipline, that on this sailing ship there were at least a dozen occurrences any one of which, proved against the Captain of a liner to-day, would mean for him irretrievable disgrace.

'The voyage took from August 26, 1843, to January 10, 1844, one hundred and thirty-eight days - four and a half months - more than thrice the length of an ordinary voyage to New Zealand to-day. And yet the ship was a veritable greyhound, that ran down every other boat, save one, leaving them far behind.

'The Captain, with whom my grandfather was so justly incensed, was a Scotsman, brutal, profane, ill-tempered and drunken. A brutal Captain naturally made a brutal crew, and a brutal crew, one is almost inclined to think, made brutal passengers, for nothing is more striking in these old journals than the number of acts of senseless and wanton cruelty recorded as committed both by Captain and passengers, sometimes human beings, sometimes dumb animals, being the victims. Animals were brought on board only to die, no provision having been made for their receiving the food and care which alone could have kept them alive. A hare and a duck died, being reduced to nothing but skin and bone. The ship's monkey, Jacko, pining and low-spirited, was treated with rum, which made him so tipsy that he lay down among the sheep, and, being unable to rise, was smothered. The ship's cat, being convicted of filching, was thrown overboard. And so on throughout the voyage, getting worse and worse towards the close, till we read that some sheep taken on board at the last

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stopping place were so hungry that they ate the ropes and even attacked my uncle's coat-tails.

'The children were, except the dumb animals, the most pitiable of all the many pitiable creatures on board. They had the full benefit of the mate's and captain's curses. Doubtless frequently having to sleep on damp beds was partly responsible for much of their ill-health. There was an amount of illness unheard of on a modern liner not packed with invalids. Boys at sea nowadays are usually riotously well, but my poor uncles and aunts were often ill and confined to their berths. Most people at sea today grow plump, and fill out their clothes excellently; but on that ship they grew lean and lank, and their clothes hung about them. There was some excuse for those of the passengers who, when they landed at a port and could once more eat palatable food, did not know when they had had enough, and made themselves ill in consequence.'

Brawls were common, and the combat between a needy briefless barrister and the drowner of the ship's cat is recorded. 'As usual they quarrelled for nothing. When they came to blows the Captain would not interfere, and, in fact, he and the crew egged on the barrister and his opponent as if they had been two dogs. Exhaustion at length put an end to the spectacle, but not until they had covered the poop with blood. To crown all, there was a mutiny, some of the men having got drunk, and in the ensuing scuffle one of them overpowered the Captain, who was only saved by one of the passengers from falling overboard. The mutineers were put into irons and gradually reduced to subordination.'

The first port in New Zealand at which the ship touched was New Plymouth, on the west coast of the north island, and the first news that greeted the passengers was that of a massacre of whites by Maoris at Wairau, the most terrible in the history of the colony, in which Constance's father, who had come out from England in the previous year, was one of the few fortunate survivors.

'When the weary travellers at last landed in Nelson, their troubles were far from over; indeed, the worst were only beginning. The section of a "town" land allotted to them was a com-

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plete swamp, not as yet worth a farthing, while their "suburban" section was at least twenty miles from Nelson, and there was no road practicable for conveying their luggage. The family of ten, therefore, were forced to squeeze into a three-roomed house, until they could get their own put up, storing their packages as best they could.

'New Zealand,' Constance's narrative goes on, 'was in a truly "parlous" state. The colonists were dejected and depressed; the natives gave ceaseless trouble, and the Imperial troops, not yet "chucked out," were absolutely useless for the bush-fighting which was the only way of settling them. Moreover, the whole colony was still in the hands of the New Zealand Company, who were the very kings of muddlers, apparently in almost bankrupt condition, and deservedly grumbled at on every hand.

'My grandfather and his sons had few notions of the life to which they had come, and those few were mostly wrong. They were never told, for instance, that they would have to begin by clearing their land; while the difficulty and also the great cost of extirpating the tenacious New Zealand fern had both been absurdly understated. My grandfather, like all unsuitable colonists, took the gloomiest views of everything - whether of the natives ("savages" he termed them), the land, the climate, or his fellow settlers. All was for the worst in the worst of all possible colonies; and he was quite certain that "these islands will not, for centuries, repay the cost which *must* be incurred in their effectual reduction."

'He had, however, real cause alike for complaint and despondency. An allotment, for example, consisted of 201 acres, and two years and a half after landing he had not received more than 51 acres. No money was circulated, the "take-out" system being in force; the dearness of many everyday articles was only equalled by their badness; and settlers were leaving by every ship. In those early days England had not learned that a colony is not an Imperial rubbish-bin; and what emigrants were sent out were too often idle and worthless folk, lured by free passages and 28 shillings a week for doing nothing during the six months' voyage. These worthless emigrants were usually employed by the

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worthless New Zealand Company in constructing still more worthless roads and bridges.

'The first section allotted to my grandfather was fifty barren acres, over thirty miles from Nelson, and reached by cockle-shell boats and an almost impassable road. The journey might take anything between eight and twenty-eight hours, more probably the latter. This was too much, and my grandfather struck. A section of reasonably good land, a few miles from Nelson, was then given him, and on this he slaved and toiled, my three eldest uncles helping him. In two and a half years they had seven and a half acres broken up and under crop, which appears to have been a prodigious achievement, exceeding anyone else's in the time. And all this was literally spade-work.

'Like all English people, accustomed to substantial stone and brick houses, the new colonists suffered greatly from the cold in the thin wooden shanty that served them for a home. It was evidently a very amateurish affair, for after a little dry weather the thatch and boards became "quite pervious" to any shower of rain, "the former shrinking and the latter chinking." The roof resembled a colander, and if rain came on suddenly in the middle of the night, the family beds and clothing were saturated before any precautions could be taken.

'They also suffered much from the great changes of temperature during the day - the cold mornings and evenings, and hot mid-days. Ailments were common, and it was soon noticed that all the children's teeth began to decay, which to this day is an unexplained and almost universal trouble in New Zealand. Worst of all, the wolf was ever at the door.

'The labours and hardships of the first eighteen months after his arrival nearly brought my grandfather to his grave, and though he recovered somewhat, he quickly drooped again under a burden far too heavy for him to bear. He - the cultivated, scholarly, University man, - lacked, as he said, those common comforts which in England are enjoyed by the meanest peasant who can work. His little girls ran bare-foot, and he himself had scarcely a sole to his

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single pair of shoes. For months together they lived "entirely and exclusively" upon potatoes and boiled wheat, with roasted wheat for coffee. Fresh meat, sugar, milk, and tea were luxuries they never tasted and often they could not afford coal or salt, nor even oil for the lamps.'

The head of the family could use the pen far better than the spade. "How I bore up," he wrote in the third year after arrival, "under all this accumulation of difficulties, appears to me now, as I review all the circumstances, almost miraculous. My oldest son was little more than sixteen, my second son a stripling, with unformed limbs, and my third was a mere child, whom it was cruel to put to any severe labour, though it was done. I, an old man, never of robust make, wholly unused to manual toil, ignorant of agriculture, had at that time to be the mainstay of our family. If you knew the difficulty of fitting fern-land, such as ours, for receiving seed, you would commend our industry. The successful cultivation by our family has been, and is, the theme of general praise and wonder in the limited circle of Nelson. I am not blowing my own trumpet, for though I yield the palm of steady industry to no one, even in the operation of husbandry, I am not fit to be compared for efficiency with any one of my three eldest sons. I cannot, with any tool, perform one-sixth of what William does, or one-fourth of what Benjamin does, and even James beats me hollow at most kinds of work."

'Things were now so far better,' Constance continues, 'that they had enough flour from their own farm, and about two and a half pounds of pork a day, divided among the family of ten. But at one time, so hopeless was their outlook, and so enfeebled and emaciated did my grandfather and the elder boys become with their exhausting labours and insufficient food, that they almost began to lose heart. Indeed, even my stout-hearted Uncle William and my Uncle Ben, at other times a veritable Mark Tapley, for a few days absolutely gave way to despair, and once or twice, through bodily weakness and mental depression, they actually struck work; but the sight of their ageing and enfeebled father and their younger brother toiling indefatigably on together proved too

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much for them, and they again took up the seemingly hopeless struggle.

'Had not English relatives sent out not only repeated gifts of money, but also spades, forks, and other agricultural implements, nails (indispensable to a colonist, yet fabulously dear in New Zealand), clothes, books, grass seeds, and numerous other thoughtful presents, it is impossible to imagine what would have become of the luckless family.

'Little more than a year later, my grandfather died, more of a broken heart, I think, than of his six month's illness. When he died, there was neither money to bury him nor any food in the house. My father, who soon after married the eldest daughter of the family, supplied money to buy a coffin.

'Two of my uncles were now approaching manhood. Though my grandfather not unnaturally could never look upon New Zealand as the land of his adoption, his children soon learned to do so, and even began to love the desert which, inch by inch, at times hopeful, at times almost despairing, they had changed into smiling fields and blooming gardens. And in spite of all they had gone through, they felt that they would be reluctant indeed to leave what had grown up, as it were, under their hands.

'Both my eldest uncles, indeed, except for the once or twice when they got into Giant Despair's Castle, showed themselves real Greathearts. They saw a silver lining to every cloud. They never struck sail to a fear. In the fellest clutch of circumstances, they never winced nor cried aloud; and truly under the bludgeoning of chance, their young heads were bloody, but unbowed.'

William Charles, the eldest of the family and its best scholar, was destined to exercise a great influence over his niece. A letter of his, dated December 1, 1849, when he was 22, and sent to his father's cousin, John Lee of Kinver in Devonshire,<sup>9</sup> is worth quoting. "We learn to look upon Nelson, hateful as it once appeared to us, as, in truth, the land of our adoption; and considerable indeed must the temptation be, that would now

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induce us to quit it, even for Old England. A very few more years, and I feel that we shall become wholly unfitted for the restraint and conventionalisms of European society, should some unforeseen change of fortune place us a second time within their reach. We have, one and all, become thorough colonists. Though the produce of our united labour does not, and is not likely to, equal the salary of many an under-clerk in England, - though at times we have worked harder, and been worse fed than many of the most pitied labourers of the same land, though on every hand we are cramped by want of means, and implements, and a hundred other wants, - we should be reluctant indeed to quit the scene that we have changed so painfully and laboriously, that its progress, like the hour-hand of a clock, has been almost imperceptible. We have, at length, I hope, reached the turning point in our fortunes, and our future course will, unless I am much deceived, be much smoother than our past has been.

"About six weeks ago," he goes on, "I was offered the place of Master at the Nelson Grammar School, which had previously been occupied by a son of the late Dr Arnold of Rugby. After hesitating for some time whether or not to accept, my necessities (certainly not my *will*) compelled me to try it, and I have remained there ever since."

'As it was,' Constance's article concludes, 'they "muddled through somehow," though with a sad number of them the end was an early grave.<sup>13</sup> My Uncle Ben I never saw; he died very young. My Uncle William eventually became an inspector of schools; in spite of his brief time of education, he had been so well trained by his father that he was an admirable Greek and Latin scholar. It was a joy to hear him construe Horace, and the obscurest passage in Tacitus did not baffle him. Few men nowadays have such a wealth of classical quotation at command. He was also a good French scholar and well read in classical English literature - in the circumstances something of an achievement.

'When it is reflected how pitifully unfit was my grandfather for the life of a pioneer colonist, and how young and helpless the family he so soon left behind him, the wonder is not that things

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turned out so ill, but that they turned out anything like so well. True, my mother alone of all the children had quite her fair share of life's blessings, and lived the allotted span of human existence. The lives of all the others but one were either cut off in youth or in the prime of their days, and marred by tragedy.

'And when it is reflected how much of the history of British colonisation is merely a record of muddling through somehow, the wonder is not that we lost the American colonies, but that we did not lose all the others as well.'

In the year following the death of William Hodgson, his eldest daughter, Rebecca Lee, a girl of eighteen, became the wife of John Wallis Barnicoat, whose home, called Ashfield, was near Richmond, on the Waimea Plain, about eight miles from Nelson. Mr Barnicoat, then a man of thirty-five, was a native of Falmouth in Cornwall, who followed the profession of surveyor and civil engineer in England until 1841, when he sailed in the "Lord Auckland" for New Zealand, where he arrived early in 1842 after a passage of five months. He relates in the journal of his voyage that the Captain called at Wellington on his way to Nelson, as he was not clear as to the exact locality of the latter port, and that they had an adventurous trip of several days between the two ports.

On arrival at Nelson he was engaged in surveying the adjacent districts, known as Waimea East and Stoke, and in sub-dividing them into allotments of fifty acres, thus enabling those who purchased land from the New Zealand Company to occupy the areas assigned to them. He then, with a partner, similarly surveyed and subdivided ten thousand acres in the Montere Forest and Valley [Moutere], some miles further out. In 1843 he undertook a survey at Wairau, in the province of Marlborough. Two other survey parties were similarly engaged there. The Maories [sic] had all along declared their determination to prevent the survey and occupation of the Wairau lands by the settlers, and they had obstructed and removed two of the three survey parties. Mr Barnicoat's party was a strong one, and their survey was finished by the time the Maori obstructionists arrived at the Wairau. His party had returned to Nelson, but he remained behind, and accom-

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panied the Magistrate and armed party who came from Nelson to enforce possession of the land in dispute. The party opposing the Maoris numbered forty-eight, and twenty-four of them lost their lives in the attack and massacre. Mr Barnicoat, one of the survivors, was able to escape to the Government brig lying at Port Underwood, a few miles from the scene of bloodshed.

In the following year he occupied and began to cultivate his own land near Richmond. The soil was naturally good, and under his management it soon became a fertile and productive farm. During part of 1844 he was engaged with the Chief Surveyor of the New Zealand Company in exploring the Middle - now known as South - Island in search of a suitable site for the Church of Scotland settlement, which resulted in the selection of Otago. The capital, called at first New Edinburgh and afterwards Dunedin, is charmingly situated at the head of a natural harbour. Its site was at that time uncleared land, and the surveyors pitched their camp among fern and bulrushes, where Princes Street now stands.

When the Constitution Act came into operation, establishing six local Parliaments, Mr Barnicoat became a member of the Provincial Council of Nelson, and continued his membership during the twenty-two years of provincial government. He was the Speaker throughout, except in the first session. At the same time he was a member of other important bodies, notably the Education Board, of which he was Chairman for fifteen years, the Board of College Governors, and successive Synods of the Church of England. He was a man of strong religious convictions, and his untiring labours as Lay Reader for over forty years are still gratefully remembered by many in the congregation of Holy Trinity Church, Richmond.

His wife had a good education in England, and it was continued in New Zealand under the care of her father and her eldest brother. She was clever, affectionate, unselfish, deeply attached to her husband and children. Gardening and oversight of the household took up much of her time, but the atmosphere of the house was literary, and during every spare evening Mr Barnicoat was

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accustomed to read aloud from the best of the British magazines and reviews - the *Quarterly*, the *Edinburgh*, the *Saturday*, and *The Spectator*.

The family consisted of three sons and four daughters. The seventh child, who was eight years younger than the sixth, was born on November 27, 1872, and baptised in Holy Trinity Church as Constance Alice.

It would be difficult to imagine a happier home life than hers, or one more fitted for the nurture of a child of remarkable native gifts. When Constance was about thirty and working with Mr Stead on the *Review of Reviews*, she wrote a critique of a new book of Havelock Ellis's, "A Study of British Genius." After quoting the author's gloomy view of the effect of London (or any other great city) upon the human species, she says: "The healthy rural life, which is undoubtedly most conducive to the development of a healthy human body, appears to be equally efficacious in the production of exceptional intellectual capacity. If, as Cowper says, God made the country and man made the town, men of genius may be regarded as the supreme product of creative power; and it would seem that the Divine Maker in this, as in other respects, eclipses and out-distances His human rival."

In writing thus she had, of course, no thought of herself, but to-day, after an interval of twenty years, the application seems not unnatural. A rare spirit like hers could only have bloomed and ripened in the sunlight and freedom of Nature, and it is likewise difficult not to think of herself when she continues in these terms: "Another generalisation of Mr Havelock Ellis's is that men of genius are born as a rule in large families - that is to say, as a rule it is in families of six or more that you are more likely to find men and women of exceptional intellectual capacity. In such families they are more likely to be either the first or the last child. The new, often limited family, of one or two, seems, therefore, to have much less chance of producing genius than the more prolific household in which troops of children surround the family table."

McCallum, Janet. *'Barnicoat, Constance Alice 1872 - 1922'*. Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 11 December 2002

Constance Alice Barnicoat was born on 27 November 1872 in Richmond, Nelson, New Zealand. She was the last of seven children of Rebecca Lee Hodgson and her husband, early farming settler John Wallis Barnicoat, a member of the Nelson Provincial Council and of the Legislative Council. As the youngest by eight years, Constance was brought up virtually as an only child, especially after the early deaths of her nearest sister and a brother. She became an excellent horse rider, and received a classical education at home. Her parents kept in touch with the outside world through English periodicals.

Constance Barnicoat spent 1888 and 1889 at the Nelson College for Girls before enrolling for a BA at Canterbury College. Academically she excelled, particularly in English, taught by Professor John Macmillan Brown, who became a lifelong friend. Graduating in 1895 she worked in Wellington as secretary for nearly three years to F. H. D. Bell, member of the House of Representatives. In 1896 she was reputedly the country's first official female shorthand reporter, for a Legislative Council committee investigating the affairs of the Bank of New Zealand.

Barnicoat had obtained Pitman's first-class certificate in shorthand in 1895, and in May 1897 sailed for England for further training at the Metropolitan School for Shorthand and Languages, London, where she won a prize for first place in French and German. She could read Italian and Spanish, later becoming a fluent Spanish speaker through her travels. Her linguistic ability was an invaluable asset to her employer from 1898, W. T. Stead, founder-editor of the *Review of Reviews*. She accompanied him as secretary and interpreter to the 1899 Hague Peace Conference, and began reviewing foreign-language books for the *Review*, as well as free-lancing for the *Christchurch Weekly Press* and English journals.

In 1902 and 1903 Constance Barnicoat visited New Zealand. During her nine-month stay she was one of three women in a party making a crossing of the Copland Pass near Mt Cook. This formed the subject of the first of her articles about her mountaineering achievements. From the start she wore trousers in the mountains, which was uncommon at the time, and in Europe she made trips alone with male guides.

Returning to London, she joined the reviewing staff of the *Review of Reviews*. Her criticism of the parochialism, political affairs and lack of hard work of New Zealanders riled local commentators, who referred to this outspoken young woman as 'a first class scold'. She also instituted the Barnicoat Essay Prize for the boys' and girls' colleges in Nelson, to encourage the study of contemporary world history, an area in which she considered colonial education to be lacking.

Her mountaineering feats, however, earned the comment that 'The modern learned young woman...is much more likely to achieve things by training her muscles as well as her mind'. These expeditions included a 1905 ascent of the Ailefroide in the Dauphiné Alps, France, a 1907 trip to the Caucasus, and a 1911 winter ascent of Switzerland's Grosser Schreckhorn - her greatest achievement. Barnicoat was also an intrepid traveller to isolated locations in South America, and later visited North America, Scandinavia and the Middle East.

Through a mutual love of mountaineering and journalism she met journalist and lecturer Israel Julian Grande, a Romanian Jew. They married in London on 29 March 1911; there were no children of the marriage. In 1913 they settled in Bern, Switzerland, anticipating the value of being in 'the Plotting Ground and Listening Post of Europe' during the First World War. Correspondents for British, American and New Zealand newspapers, they also edited the English edition of the International Peace Bureau's journal from 1913 to 1914. Having opposed the South African War (1899--1902) because Britain had previously pledged not to interfere with the liberty and independence of the Boers, Constance Grande was a fervent supporter of the war against German imperialism. She and Julian countered German propaganda by editing a multi-lingual monthly journal and producing pamphlets, in addition

to their regular work. They were critical of British pacifists and anti-conscriptionists.

After the war they moved to Geneva, the seat of the League of Nations. The long hours Constance worked had affected her health from 1915, and she was able to attend only two sessions. She maintained, however, that the British Empire was more likely to endure than the league. When she died in Geneva on 16 September 1922, the Christchurch Press commented that her 'grip of facts added to an intimate knowledge of European politics and statesmen...had placed her in the front rank of women journalists'. She had also excelled as a woman mountaineer. A peak in the Southern Alps was named in her honour by Julian Grande in 1923 when on 6 March he made the first ascent of Mt Barnicoat.

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