



Mary Cuddie gave birth to a son the very night the emigrants first sighted New Zealand, and the event was duly noted in the Diary of Rev Thomas Burns. Their first-born died 10 days after landing at Port Chalmers from the Philip Laing. The ship's cow had been poorly fed on the voyage so had been unable to provide milk to nourish the infant, and during a storm it had died. Mary was pregnant and unable to feed the child her milk. Shipboard diets were largely unscientific and unsuitable for children. Thomas Burns diary of April 13, 1848, recorded : Thomas Cuddie's wife was delivered of a boy about midnight. Both doing well."

The accommodation on shore was not ready so the women stayed on board. The exception was Mary Cuddie who went ashore to the little house built with Nelson bricks for Mr Tuckett, the surveyor. With her went the little baby, not yet a week old. With her went her husband carrying the older boy, now desperately ill. She set herself to nurse them both. Shortly she was joined by another passenger – the young man Alexander Livingston, dying of tuberculosis. She took over nursing him too.

On April 13 the ailing child died. Burns gave the father a note to Cargill requesting burial in the cemetery reserve in Dunedin, and Thomas took the body up to Dunedin in the boat. We can imagine the father plodding up the hill [the cemetery was on the corner of Arthur Street and City Road], the small coffin, a grave dug in the so far undisturbed soil, a prayer, a little wooden cross, and then the long journey back up the harbour to Port Chalmers. He child, named Thomas Alexander Cuddie was the first burial in the Dunedin cemetery. Livingston lingered for another 10 days and died on May 8,

and his body was interred beside the child. The monument on the Arthur Street Reserve records the names to this day.

Thomas and Mary Cuddie came from a community of weavers in the village of Maybole, a small market town in Ayrshire, Scotland. Their story is one of great hardship, yet great determination, from the beginning to the end, and while it is too long to recount here it well rewards anyone reading it.

In 1889, when she was 66, Mary hurt herself while handling a sack in her Mosgiel shop. Dr Allen operated but she died five days later. She had born 10 children, she had kept the family together, brought them up as she thought right, seen them launched, given them all the parental blessing in the form of a little property, and kept the Saddle Hill farm in the Cuddie family for many years to come.

She is buried in the east Taieri Cemetery with her husband, her father, Richard Parkinson, and her two sons.

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