



In a lonely field on what was part of the original Otekaieke Station, but is now Campbell Park, in the Waitaki Valley, lies a forlorn headstone the story of which stretches back to the early days of farming in that area. There are many such stones throughout New Zealand, most of which are at risk of disappearing, but yet ought to be treasured and conserved because they contain some amazing stories from our past.

In 1908, towards the end of their period in office, the Liberal Government experimented with a new form of lease, the Renewable Lease-of Rural and Pastoral Land. The term for this new type of lease was 33 years, and it was to be renewable for similar periods, subject to a revaluation of rent and capital value for the property. One of the first estates to be settled under the provisions of this new legislation was Otekaieke in the Waitaki Valley in North Otago.

Otekaieke Station was originally known as run number 28, and its initial boundaries were Kurow Creek and Otekaieke Creek.⁶ Between these two creeks, the property ran back from the Waitaki River to the summit of the Saint Mary Range.

The run was first licensed to Samuel Hillier Pyke on 11 September 1854, but Pyke did not retain it for long, since by 1856 it was in the possession of John Parkin Taylor. Pyke and Taylor had both originally come 'overland' to the Waitaki from Nelson and had initially held land on the other side of the Waitaki River in South Canterbury. Like Pyke, Taylor held Otekaieke only for a short time.

In 1857 he sold the property to William Heywood Dansey and left for Southland where he was later appointed Superintendent of the Province. William Dansey had been born in

Wiltshire in 1830. The son of a Church of England clergyman, Rev William Dansey, he had been educated at Exeter College, Oxford. He arrived at Port Chalmers on 12 December 1854.

It is not known when sheep first arrived at Otekaieke, but there was a mention of stock in the transaction that took place in 1857 between Taylor and Dansey. By 1859, Dansey had 5,350 sheep on the property, and he was beginning to get himself established. He married in 1860.

Dansey's Pass was named after Dansey because he drove the sheep, imported from Australia, from the Port of Nelson down through the South Island and over the pass to his farm.

In 1861, local limestone on the property was quarried, and a simple dwelling was erected close by the cave which Taylor had used for his accommodation. Stocking a run during this period was extremely expensive, with sheep costing as much as £14 a head. Nevertheless, under Dansey's stewardship, the carrying capacity of Otekaieke was more than doubled.

However Dansey was a slack and inept farmer and in 1864 his creditors foreclosed, his assets were sold and he lost the farm. When the property was transferred to Robert Campbell in 1864, there were 12,300 sheep on it.

Dansey and family moved to Oamaru where he found employment with the Oamaru Borough Council in various capacities, including auditor and a collector of dog registration fees. However he was eventually dismissed for "discrepancies in the accounts". William Dansey is reputed to be the first person to get the Old Age pension in Oamaru. He died on 9 May 1909 at Kaponga.

William Dansey married Elizabeth Mary Wilson and they had four children, 1863, Guy Heywood who died at 3 months, 1864, Edith Kate, who died at 11 months, 1867, Clara Mary, who died at 5 months. Close by the original hut all of these children were buried on the farm, and commemorated by a simple headstone which is now very hard to read. The only surviving child, Minnie Cecilia, was born in 1865. The hut is close by the original cave in the limestone hillside used by Taylor as his living quarters but which in a later period was used to store ice for the homestead. The photograph shows Wendy Bayley at the children's gravesite with limestone grave marker in the foreground. There is nothing readable on the stone.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand from information in *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand, Otago Southland*, and *Southern People – a Dictionary of Otago Southland Biography*, and information kindly supplied by Wendy Bayley of Otekaieki Station.