



James Livingstone Macassey was one of the most brilliant members of the New Zealand Bar. He was born in Carrickfergus, County Antrim, Ireland, on 24 September 1842, the second of three sons of an Independent minister.

James came out to Adelaide, Australia, while still a mere boy, and was articled to Messrs Gwynne and Lawrence. His aptitude for legal pursuits, quickness of perception, retentive memory, and remarkable industry, soon attracted the attention of several prominent barristers.

On leaving Adelaide he went to Melbourne, and there entered the office of Mr Stephen. During the Otago goldrush Mr Macassey crossed the Tasman Sea to Dunedin, and entered the office of Messrs Richmond and Gillies as a common law clerk. In this situation his remarkable abilities gained for him the notice and commendation of Mr Justice Gresson. Mr Macassey made rapid progress in his profession. Admitted as a barrister on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1865, he entered into partnership with Mr Turton and soon acquired a leading position. They were subsequently joined by Mr John Hyde Harris, and the partnership continued for some years until its dissolution when he continued alone.

Mr Macassey then joined his brother-in-law, Mr C.C. Kettle (later District Court Judge Kettle) with whom he remained connected in business until his death.

Industrious in hunting up precedents on the various questions involved, and careful in the arrangement of his arguments, he was always dreaded as an opponent. He was engaged in most of the cases which came before the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal.

In 1875 he published a volume of reports of law cases argued and determined in the Otago and Southland district of the Supreme Court, and on appeal to the higher court, from 1861 to 1872. This work had considerable influence in moulding the practice of the Supreme Courts of the Colony.

Mr Macassey married the first female white child born in Dunedin – Miss Elizabeth Kettle, daughter of Mr Charles Kettle who surveyed the town of Dunedin. In the ranks of able and learned lawyers of the past, Mr Macassey undoubtedly was one of the most accomplished known in New Zealand.

James Livingstone Macassey died early, at age 38, on 9 May 1880, and is buried in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery with his wife, who lived until 1932, and two very young children.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand ([www.cemeteries.org.nz](http://www.cemeteries.org.nz)) from information in *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand, Otago/Southland*.