



In Dunedin's lovely Southern Cemetery there are four clipped holly trees, one on each corner of the grave of Dr William Purdie. The headstone is down but intact.

William Purdie was born in Airdrie, Lanarkshire, Scotland on 31 August 1797. Little is known of his early life but his desire was to become a Doctor. To this end he regularly rode a bicycle 10 miles each way to Glasgow University to achieve his ambition. Later he attended Edinburgh University studying Surgery: completing his Degrees in Surgery (Edinburgh) in 1825, and Medicine (Glasgow) in 1834. Setting up practice in Canongate, Edinburgh in December 1827, where he remained until he migrated to New Zealand. However, it is interesting to note that he stated in an application for an Honorary Appointment: "In 1825, I held the situation of Surgeon on board the "*Elizabeth of Hull*", Whaler, with a crew of fifty-two men – the voyage lasted eight months [around Greenland], and though, during that period, fever prevailed to a considerable extent, I have the satisfaction to state, that none of the cases proved fatal".

Dr Purdie married Elizabeth Millar Robertson of Edinburgh and they had nine children before departing to New Zealand, two of whom died before departure and a three month old daughter, on the voyage out to this country.

"On 21 August 1829, William PURDIE was Admitted and received as BURGESS and FREEMAN of the said BURGH [Canongate]: and in and to the whole Libertys,

Privileges, & immunity there of'. It is understood that he was awarded this, for his services to Canongate, during a serious outbreak of Cholera which swept Edinburgh. This experience proved invaluable later, on the voyage to New Zealand.

William Purdie departed from Greenock Scotland, with his family, as Ship's Surgeon on the "*Mooltan*" of 640 tons, on 12 September 1849, arriving at Pt. Chalmers, on 26 December 1849. The voyage, a disastrous one, as a week out, cholera broke out, the cause was found to be due to one member who suffered it prior to boarding, and had brought the bedding that he used during his illness. Fortunately, due to the care of the Doctor, the casualties were low. Out of the total compliment of just over 180, only eight died of the disease, two of stomach disorders, including his own child, and one of whooping cough. The ship was becalmed and nearly wrecked on Tristan d'Acunha Island, only being saved by all males getting in the lifeboats and towing it away from rocks.

In February 1851 He selected his Town Section at 7p Elder St and his Suburban Section, 8 Newington St. In July 1850, he bought the house, stockyard and half an acre of open land, originally proposed for Captain Cargill. Licenses to Occupy Crown Lands were transferred to Wm Purdie on the 5th February 1861 of Run 307, (Cottesbrook Station); 34 000 acres, near Middlemarch. He took into partnership, the Hon. Thomas Dick, a close friend. It was managed by his son Henry Wight Purdie until sold in 1866.

Of interest to note, Dr Purdie was the first to bring the use of chloroform to New Zealand in child birth. Its use aroused a storm of controversy. Churchmen denounced it as contrary to the Word of God. Some said it was the equivalent of making a patient hopelessly intoxicated. The battle raged for years. He also introduced Homoeopathy to New Zealand.

Appointments :-

Magistrate, and spent a considerable time on the Bench.

Founder Vice Pres., Horticultural Society, Dunedin. 8 Feb 1851 (Later to become the A&P Association).

Board of Commissioners, Public Lands, Dunedin. 1 Apr 1854.

Wastelands Board, 5 Apr 1856.

On the Committee of 'Otago Maine Law League'.

Foundation Member of the Hanover St Baptist Church from c1851.

Dr Purdie died on 30 June 1876, and was buried in a family plot in the Southern (General) Cemetery, Dunedin. Lots 43- 45, Block 11.