

William Hopkinson

At the age of 22 William left Gravesend, Manchester, England on the maiden voyage of the Zealandia arriving at Lyttleton on the 20th September 1858. His entry to New Zealand appears dodgy as he did not know anyone in New Zealand who could sponsor his passage, but he illegally bought the much-needed nomination bill from a Samuel Smith, much to the concern of the ship's captain. None the less, William got his passage to New Zealand being registered in the ships log as a single male, aged 22 his occupation being recorded as a police constable. Aside from the fact that William illegally bought the necessary nomination bill, he was an assisted immigrant and his passage cost the Canterbury Provincial Government 17 pounds. William's ambition was to obtain land in this thinly populated country and in April 1865 he applied to the Waste Lands Board to purchase 25 acres in the Geraldine area at 2 pounds per acre for which he paid cash. On the 1st January 1866, William married Mary Fergusson Quaid. Mary aged 23 was the widow of Thomas Quaid. She was born in Dowally, Perthshire, Scotland on 9th November 1842. She was one of 12 children to Daniel & Catherine Fergusson, another early pioneer family and the first school master in the district. When William, a bachelor aged 29, married Mary he also took on the responsibility for her two infant children, James & Jessie Quaid. William was a talented business entrepreneur. He had purchased more land and owned 110 acres of land at Fairfield. As well as being a landowner and farmer he undertook earth-moving projects and in the gold mining rush was involved in transporting heavy mining equipment, mining outfits and stores to Gabriels Gully and the Clutha. Not only was he a contractor but also a bridge builder, building a number in the district. In the years 1878 to 1887 he was described as a wagoner/carter carrying wool, timber, and firewood to Temuka & Timaru from Geraldine and the back country. His wife Mary died giving birth to Ellen, their 11th child, leaving William to raise the children on his own. By 1894/95 William was a threshing machine owner and was later joined in this business by a Jim Goldsmith. William also ran a timber sawing plant that was later taken over by his son Daniel. William remarried in 1904 to a widow, Eliza Ellen Double and retired in 1906 from his business enterprises. He died peacefully at the age of 90 on 7th June 1926 and was buried in the Temuka Cemetery.

