

ROSE DALE 1861-1891

By Dale Hartle

Rose Dale was born in Castlemaine, Victoria in 1861. She was the 4th child and 3rd daughter of Charles Hawkins Dale and Eliza Mary Bolton Stow.

At the time of her birth there were two older sisters (Eliza and Lydia) and an older brother William.

She came to New Zealand with her parents and siblings when they emigrated to work in the Otago Goldfields in the early 1860s.

Rose married James Muir at St Matthew's Church, Dunedin on 12 March 1883.

Their marriage notice in the *Otago Daily Times*¹ read:

MARRIAGE - On the 12th March, at St Matthew's Church, Dunedin, by the Reg. Mr Byng, Mr James Muir, contractor, Dunedin, to Rose, third daughter of Charles Hawkens Dale, of Tapanui.

Together they had two children:

1. Rose Caroline Muir, 11 January 1884 in Wairau, d. 1970 Sydney
2. Charles James Muir, b. 1888 in Blenheim, d. 1935 London

Death - Rose Muir

Rose died suddenly on 21 June 1891 at Blenheim, aged 29 years. Her death was reported in a death notice in the paper and an obituary²:

It is with feelings of the greatest regret that we have today to report that Mrs Muir, the wife of our much-respected Inspector of Works, passed away yesterday. As many of our readers are aware the deceased lady had less than a week ago to undergo an operation of the most critical nature, to which she gradually succumbed, though at first the signs were very satisfactory. Mrs Muir had many friends in Blenheim, for though of a retiring nature her qualities were known to not a few, and those who knew her will best be acquainted with the heavy loss which has fallen on Mr Muir. In his hour of sorrow we respectfully tender him our expressions of regret and condolence.

The local newspaper reported two days prior³: "The many friends of our worthy Inspector of Works, will be glad to know that Mrs Muir, who had yesterday to undergo a very severe operation, is today in a satisfactory state."

At the time of her death, her two children Rose and Charles were 7 and 4 years of age.

Rose was buried at Omaka Cemetery near Blenheim, Block 11, row 0, Plot 13.

¹ OTAGO DAILY TIMES, ISSUE 6580, 17 MARCH 1883

² LOCAL AND GENERAL NEWS. MARLBOROUGH EXPRESS, VOLUME XXVII, ISSUE 135, 22 JUNE 1891

³ LOCAL AND GENERAL NEWS. MARLBOROUGH EXPRESS, VOLUME XXVII, ISSUE 133, 19 JUNE 1891

James Muir was appointed Superintendent of Works at the Blenheim Gas Works in January 1884⁴ and he wasted no time in setting about organising and improving the gas service to the residents of Blenheim.

Earlier the previous year on 8 December 1888⁵, the local Council had declined to award James Muir with a salary increase, and the local newspaper mocked the refusal saying that he “receives the extravagant pay of £150 per annum and a house, as Manager of the Gas Works.” They went on to say that “We call upon the Council to re-open this question – not on Mr Muir’s behalf, but on that of the ratepayers, who are admirably served, and who desire that service continued, and do not desire to see an exceptionally good and faithful officer driven forth by a miserable, narrow-gutted, starvation policy.”

James Muir had previously been in charge of the Blenheim Gas Works, and had become an employee of the Blenheim Borough Council.

The *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*⁶ has a short description of James Muir:

Mr. JAMES MUIR, Engineer and Surveyor to the Borough Council of Blenheim, and Manager of the Municipal Gas Works, was born in the year 1856, at Dunfermline, Fifeshire, Scotland, where he was educated. He emigrated to New Zealand as a youth, and shortly after his arrival, was apprenticed to Mr. S. Hutcheson, an engineer of Caversham, near Dunedin. About seven years later, Mr. Muir was sent to direct the construction of the present gasworks in Blenheim, and on their completion was appointed engineer to the company. Subsequently the works were municipalised, and Mr. Muir was appointed to his present office. Mr. Muir is a member of the Blenheim Bowling Club.



Death – James Muir

James Muir died suddenly on 1 March 1906 aged 48 years. He was buried in the Omaka cemetery with his wife Rose.

His substantial obituary in the *Marlborough Express*⁷ on 2/3 March tells the story of his life and work:

JAMES MUIR.

Death has claimed, in the prime of his usefulness, one of Blenheim's public servants least to be spared. This is in the person of Mr James Muir, Manager of the Corporation Gas Works, Borough Engineer, and Inspector of Works. Deceased had been suffering from an affection of the bowels, and the immediate cause of death, which took place at an early hour this morning, was heart failure. He had been confined to his house for the last nine weeks, having received extended leave of absence from the Borough Council; but his friends had

⁴ Page 1 Advertisements Column 2. MARLBOROUGH EXPRESS, VOLUME XX, ISSUE 1, 2 JANUARY 1884

⁵ PENNY-WISE AND POUND-FOOLISH. MARLBOROUGH EXPRESS, VOLUME XXIV, ISSUE 273, 8 DECEMBER 1888

⁶ <http://authority.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc05Cycl-t1-body1-d2-d5-d13.html>

⁷ MARLBOROUGH EXPRESS, VOLUME XXXIX, ISSUE 52, 2 MARCH 1906

MARLBOROUGH EXPRESS, VOLUME XXXIX, ISSUE 53, 3 MARCH 1906

noticed the signs of illness and distress long before that time, and had repeatedly urged him to take a rest. These admonitions were, however, without avail, deceased preferring to keep on his own shoulders to the very last all the numerous cares and responsibilities attached to the duties involved in the supervision of the gasworks and the Borough engineering affairs. The end was unexpected, and the sad news has caused deep concern among the public. Many flags are flying at half-mast to-day. Deceased, who was a native of Scotland, came out to New Zealand when a young man, and was employed in Otago for some years in connection with road and bridge construction works, a branch of usefulness in which he was very sound. When the late Mr Steve Hutchinson built the Caversham gas works, Mr Muir was connected with the laying of the mains, etc., and in 1883, when the Blenheim works were established by the same person, Mr Muir came here to act as foreman. These works were taken over early in 1886 (during the second term of Mr Geo. Henderson's Mayoralty) and the deceased's occupancy of the managership was confirmed. As years went on, his now-vacated complex position grew around him, until it has become one of the duties of which are onerous and multifarious. Shortly after his arrival in Blenheim, the late Mr Muir married Miss Daly [Dale], and the issue was a son and daughter, who are now left to mourn the loss of a loving father. Mrs Muir predeceased her husband about 15 years ago. The age of the deceased would be about 45 years, although he was generally taken to be much older. As a young man in Otago he took part in Volunteering, and his spare moments since his arrival in Blenheim have been simply taken up with games, conversation with travellers, and like pastimes. He was personally very popular, his kindly and courteous disposition gaining him hosts of friends and well-wishers. In his attention to his official duties he was conscientious to a fault, and his management of the Gasworks was characterised by an extreme desire to save the Council trouble and expense. In this branch of his duties he has not been without praise in high quarters. The asphaltting of footpaths was a specialty with him, and it is worthy of remark that on several occasions his advice has been sought by Boroughs in different parts of the colony as to the mode of preparation and application of this mixture. He visited several North Island towns on behalf of the Borough Council a few years ago, and returned with much useful information as to gasworks management, street lighting, etc. An episode that caused deceased a great amount of worry and anxiety, and must have told seriously on his health, was the threatened stoppage of the town's gas supply a few months ago on account of the apparent breakdown of the retorts. The defective set of retorts was found to be more amenable to adjustment than at first was supposed, and the trouble was remedied within forty-eight hours, but the strain on the manager's physical resources was severe. Now that Death has claimed his tribute, all classes of the community will be ready to recognise the sterling service rendered during a lengthy and trying period, by a willing official, and the municipality will doubtless give adequate acknowledgment of its debt. To the sorrowing children, now orphaned, we extend our sincerest sympathy.

Both Rose and James Muir died without making a will, so their daughter Rose Caroline Muir was granted probate in 1909.



1. Rose Caroline Muir 1884-1970

Rose was born on 12 January 1884 in Wairau. She was the first and only daughter of Rose Dale and James Muir.

In 1906 Rose began training as a nurse, and had a stellar career in nursing, contributing to the development and management of training nurses throughout New Zealand.

Photo shows a painting of Rose which hangs outside the cafeteria at Christchurch Hospital (Courtesy Murray Ballantine).

Rose was Matron of Christchurch Hospital during the 1918 Flu Epidemic and is pictured below in 1917 with her team of nurses in the Book "Black Flu, 1918 – The story of New Zealand's worst public health disaster".⁸



Nurses at Christchurch Hospital, c. 1917. Matron Rose Muir seated at centre. Staff Nurse Grace Beswick (right end, back row) died from the flu, as did Nurse Hilda Hooker. (North Canterbury Hospital Board photo)

In 1937 she was one of ten nurses who were the first members of the profession to be appointed an MBE. She is also remembered in a Rose Muir medal for outstanding nursing, and a stained-glass window was created as a memorial to her in the Nurses' Memorial Chapel in Christchurch.

⁸ Rice, Geoffrey W. Black Flu. 1918 – The Story of New Zealand's Worst Public Health Disaster. Canterbury University Press 2017. p.48.

Rose never married. She had tried to modernise her profession while maintaining its traditional 'true nursing spirit'.

You can read her fully story on [Te Ara](#)⁹.

2. Charles James Muir 1888-1935

Charles Muir was Rose Dale and James Muir's son. He became a marine engineer, and moved over to Ramsgate in Kent (not far from Margate where his grandparents Charles Hawkins Dale and Eliza Mary Bolton Stow came from). He met and married **Margaret HARDING** in 1916 in Kent, and they had two sons – **Charles** and **Frank**. This was the Frank Muir who worked at the BBC.

Honours

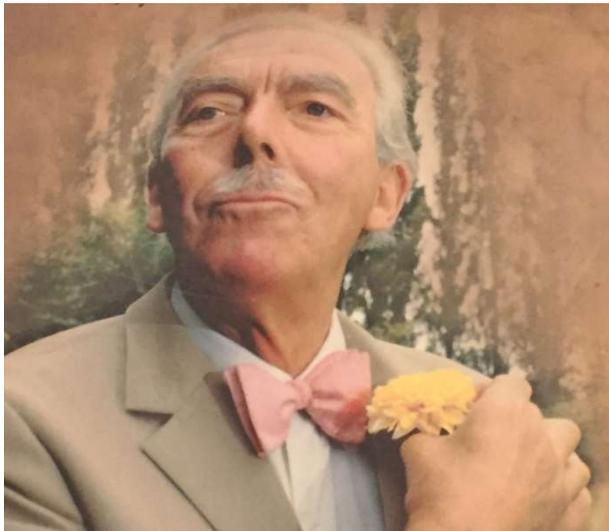
Two of Rose Dale's descendants were honoured by the Sovereign:

- Daughter Rose Caroline Muir MBE 1937
- Grandson Frank Herbert Muir CBE 1980

Charles Muir 1920-

Charles Muir Junior was born in 1920 in Kent. He married Joan NICHOLSON and they had three children: Gillian, Charles, and Andrew. Nothing more is known about Charles.

Frank Herbert Muir CBE, 1920-1998



Frank Herbert Muir was born on 5 February 1920 in his grandmother's pub, the Derby Arms (now closed) in Ramsgate, Kent, and was Charles James Muir and Margaret Harding's second son. His grandparents were Rose Dale and James Muir of Blenheim New Zealand. He had one older brother Charles born in 1918.

Muir joined the Royal Air Force at the outbreak of the Second World War when he was just 19 years of age. His service number was 931110 and he had a rank of Leading Aircraftsman by 1943. Frank spent several years in the photographic technical school taking slow-motion film of parachute jumps on a project intended to decrease the frequency of parachutes failing (sometimes called a 'Roman

Candle'). His work provided the manufacturers with the information they needed to improve both the equipment and the training, which was very effective in reducing the number of failures as well as the fatality and injury rate. He was also assigned to take pictures of the agents of the [Special Operations Executive](#) (SOE) for identity documents at the training centre at RAF Ringway.

Muir, as a photographic technician, was posted to Iceland, which was then a Danish possession under British occupation, and while there, he did some work for the forces radio station. Also while stationed in Iceland – as he described in his memoirs *A Kentish Lad* – Muir suffered a medical condition which required the surgical removal of one testicle.

⁹ <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4m66/muir-rose-caroline>

You can read his full story on [Wikipedia](#)¹⁰.

King of Comedy

After the war, Frank Herbert Muir was an eminent and popular English comedy writer, radio and television personality, and raconteur. He was famous for his six-foot-six-inch frame (known as “Lofty” during the war), mellifluous voice, bright pink bow ties and bushy RAF moustache which features in most photographs of him.

From 1977 on, he also wrote children's books based on his family dog, What-a-Mess. In 1997 he published his autobiography “*A Kentish Lad*”. He was popularly known as the “king of comedy” and had a distinguished career with the BBC. It’s a great read and is available from most New Zealand public libraries.

A list of Frank’s accumulated radio and television works in book form, as well as his ‘original’ books have been reproduced on the [FrankMuirBlog](#) website¹¹.

He was awarded the CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in the 1980 Queen's Birthday Honours List for his services to broadcasting.

View this [YouTube Video](#)¹² where Frank is singing the Cadbury’s Fruit and Nut Chocolate advertisement from 1976.

Frank married **Edith (Polly) McIRVINE** on 16 July 1949 at the church of the Holy Redeemer, Cheyne row, Chelsea. Together they had two children: **Peter James b. 1952** and **Sally, b. 1954**. Sally’s husband Geoffrey Wheatcroft is a British journalist and writer, and has his own Wikipedia¹³ page.

Frank died on 2 January 1998 at the age of 77 years of complications from a stroke, in Thorpe, Surrey, England. He was cremated and is buried at Crawley, Crawley Borough, West Sussex in England. His wife Polly died in 2004.

In November 1998, ten months after his death, he and Denis Norden were joint recipients of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain Writer of the Year Award¹⁴.

Corrections and updates:

If any member of the family finds an error or omission in this document, or is able to provide photographs, please contact Dale Hartle on email mjhartle@xtra.co.nz in Levin, New Zealand.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, there is bound to be mistakes and updates would be gratefully received.

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¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Muir

¹¹ <https://frankmuirblog.blogspot.com/2009/10/collected-works-of-frank-muir.html>

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOW3EDawJh4>

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoffrey_Wheatcroft

¹⁴ "The UK Comedy Guide" Chortle. Retrieved 12 June 2012.