

GEORGE DAVIDSON – OLYMPIAN (Compiled by Jay Venables – Genealogist Clan Davidson NZ)

Those of you who attended the gathering at Christchurch in 2015 will recall Nick Hide's entertaining after-dinner power point presentation. I was intrigued by George Davidson, the athlete who represented New Zealand as a sprinter at the 1920 Olympic Games held in Antwerp.

George wasn't placed in the 100 meters, but came 5th in the 200 meters finals. Under the circumstances he did very well as the team had only arrived in Europe two days before the Games began, after a long sea voyage of almost ten weeks, when the ship suffered two delays in Melbourne and South Africa. The athletes obviously were not able to train as comprehensively as they would have wished, and all were sick when they finally arrived, with nowhere to stay. They were generously taken in by the American contingent.



Could George be a Davidson Clansman? – I couldn't resist the challenge, so set about researching him and his family. Maureen MacDonald contributed an article about four years ago to the newsletter, but we have more information to impart on the family history. George's father Charles Davidson, was the son of Charles and Elizabeth Davidson born on 15 February 1865 at Peterhead, Aberdeenshire. Charles and Elizabeth (nee Davidson) were cousins and married in 1861. They also had a daughter Isabella b.c.1863. Charles (senior) was a shipmaster. By the time of the 1871 census, Elizabeth had died and Charles, aged 31, widower, was at home with his two children and a female general servant.

In the 1881 census the younger Charles was 16 and listed as a seaman. He was living with his maternal grandmother Isabella, aged 59, also born at Peterhead. She was Isabella Hay (b.c.1822) who married John Davidson, and was the mother of Elizabeth. Charles (senior)'s parents were George Davidson and Elizabeth nee Forrest, all of Peterhead. Charles Davidson, aged 18 years, a seaman, departed from Glasgow on "The Firth of Una" arriving in Sydney on 5th April 1884 There is Charles Davidson, seaman, living at Chapel Road, (now named Federal Street) Auckland in the 1890 electoral rolls. In 1893 New Zealand women were the first in the world to get to vote. Alice Davidson of Baker Street, Auckland was on the roll, even though she was not 21 years old. Alice Whittingham, aged 17, domestic servant, left from London on 7 December 1891 bound for Maryborough, Queensland on the "India". Alice was born on 7 January 1874 in Walford,

Herefordshire, the daughter of William and Mary Whittingham. She had one older sister, Bertha, and two younger brothers. A marriage for Charles and Alice was given as 17 May (or June) 1893 at Sydney, though this has not been proved in the NSW records.

Their arrival in New Zealand can be placed between May/June 1893 and October/November of that year, when Alice's name appeared in the 1893 Women's Electoral Roll. Alice's arrival in Queensland (or Sydney) would have been in early 1892, but how she met Charles will never be known. However within a little more than a year they were married and living in Auckland.

Charles and Alice lived at Baker Street, Auckland and later at 74 Franklin Road, Ponsonby, Auckland. Whilst living in New Zealand, Charles's occupation was either as a labourer or waterside worker. George's parents, Charles and Alice Davidson, had a family of five sons and one daughter. George, born on 8 October 1898 was the third son. The eldest, Charles Kenneth (born 1894) was killed in action at Messines on 7 June 1917. The other children of the marriage were William John born 1897; Reginald born 1901; Benjamin born 1902 and Isabella (a.k.a. Doris or "Tootsie") born 1905.

In 1926 George married Phyllis Courtney McGinniss and they lived in Auckland. George died suddenly at the early age of 49 on 25 September 1948. After his career as a rugby league player he became a commercial traveller of pharmaceuticals. They had no children. Phyllis died 24 May 1979.

Clan Davidson Society member Gary Davidson is a great-nephew of George.