

The ALEXANDER family in New Zealand.

Prepared by Roger KNIGHTS, Auckland, 2013

This is a necessarily brief document (just over 3,000 words excluding appendices) covering what I know from information I had, with substantially more discovered during a brief visit to the city of Dunedin in South Island of New Zealand in late April 2013. The story raises a few very interesting questions – the answers to which would require more substantial research. It is unlikely that such research will be carried out unless a member of the ALEXANDER family wishes to. The bulk of the story surrounds Edward William ALEXANDER. (“EdwardW” in this paper) and his son Edward Henry (“EdwardH”) and their work at Ashburn Hall, Dunedin, with more on the two women: Rose and Emily.

The thought behind this paper was to distil the information available for purely genealogical reasons. There are, essentially, two families interested: MOSSes and ALEXANDERS. A lot of information included may not interest the MOSS family, but I am in touch with two people keen to know about the ALEXANDERS from St Helena, so have tried to accommodate their interests as well.

The story begins in St Helena - the birth-place of both Edward William ALEXANDER and Rose Adelaide MOSS. Edward was born on 26 May 1829 and Rose in 1830 (exact date not certain). They were married on St Helena c. 1855. It is not part of this paper to go further back in the ALEXANDER or MOSS ancestry, but there are some interesting discoveries in EdwardW’s will which may be of interest to contemporary researchers of ALEXANDER line.

The next (indented) section is taken directly from an academic thesis described at end of this paper.

Edward William Alexander: Medical Officer (1882-1897)

Edward William Alexander was visiting medical officer then resident medical superintendent of Ashburn Hall from its opening in October 1882 until March 1897. E.W. Alexander was born in 1828 on the island of St Helena, a British colony in the South Atlantic. He travelled to London for his education, training principally at King’s College Hospital. He also trained in Paris. According to the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* he ‘attended the practice of the Hôpital-du-Midi’ before qualifying as a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in England in 1853. Alexander’s first appointment was as a civil servant, Colonial Surgeon to St Helena. He remained there until 1861. He was also appointed to positions as surgeon to the African Liberation Department, and to the Honourable East India Company’s Corps of Invalids. It is unclear exactly what authority would have been vested in Alexander during his appointment as Colonial Surgeon at St Helena, but he is likely to have been involved in areas such as the treatment of troops and police, and the supervision of hospitals and sanitation.

After leaving St Helena, E.W. Alexander returned to London, becoming a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians in 1861. He then travelled through Europe, visiting a number of French, Austrian, Swiss and Italian hospitals.

It is unclear exactly how much experience E.W. Alexander had in the management of asylums and treatment of the insane before coming to Dunedin in 1863. There was no formal instruction on the treatment of mental disease available at any educational institution in Britain until later in the century. Alexander may, however, have attended an informal course of public lectures on the treatment of the insane. The main educational influence on Alexander's treatment of the insane, however, was French. This impression is reinforced by his naming one of the first buildings at Ashburn after Philippe Pinel, rather than after an English asylum doctor. Part of Alexander's post-graduate study in the 1860s was undertaken at the Salpêtrière and Bicêtre asylums in Paris. The names of these two asylums are commonly associated with Philippe Pinel and the birth of French 'moral treatment' in the late eighteenth century. Despite some knowledge of E.W. Alexander's early experience as a physician, it remains unclear where his knowledge of the treatment of the insane was gained. He had some degree of experience in Paris, and possibly in England, St Helena, or other countries during his travels in Europe. The Otago Provincial Council selected him shortly after his arrival in Dunedin to be part of a Commission of Enquiry into Dunedin's hospital and lunatic asylum in 1863-4. E.W. Alexander was further involved with the Dunedin Lunatic Asylum in the 1870s, acting as medical officer in 1870 and 1876. Alexander's experience, wherever it was gained, and the knowledge he brought with him to New Zealand, were valuable assets in the colony. In choosing a replacement as well as assessing the type of treatment most appropriate for the New Zealand context, Alexander showed a respect for Scottish psychiatry. He corresponded with Thomas Clouston, Lecturer in Insanity at the University of Edinburgh and the superintendent of the Royal Edinburgh Asylum, to ask him to recommend a suitable doctor for the position of superintendent. Frank Hay, an assistant physician at the James Murray Royal Asylum in Perth, Scotland, arrived to take over as medical superintendent of Ashburn Hall in March 1897. Even after E.W. Alexander had handed the reins of medical superintendence over to Hay, he remained involved with keeping Ashburn Hall in step with international psychiatry. In February 1907, only three months before his death, E.W. Alexander discussed with the Inspector-General for Mental

Hospitals the ‘various projects he had for continuing to maintain [Ashburn Hall] in the van by anticipating up-to-date requirements’.

End of thesis extract re EdwardW

A very interesting side-bar here is that Frank HAY married a daughter of Richard SEDDON (NZ’s Prime Minister). SEDDON was almost an arch-enemy of Frederick Joseph MOSS! So EdwardW’s “partner” in the business was married to his brother-in-law’s political foe – some interesting discussion round the dining table☺

EdwardW was the Colonial Surgeon on St Helena. Between 1861 and March 1863 the ALEXANDERS lived in England. It was from here that they emigrated to NZ. They sailed on 8th April 1863 on the “Matoaka” leaving from London, landing on 3 July 1863 in Port Chalmers (Dunedin). As with other immigrants, we can only speculate as to reasons for going to NZ. My own suspicion is that the movement of all the MOSES from St Helena to NZ came to include EdwardW – maybe for potential future career or maybe for financial reasons (the MOSES being reasonably well-off, and Rose inherited a goodly sum from her father). EdwardW very quickly became part of the “establishment” in Dunedin which perhaps indicates that he had a position confirmed before leaving UK.

In 1863 he was a surgeon, and on 13 July that year their first-born arrived: Emily Agnes ALEXANDER.... just 10 days after landing, so Rose would have been pregnant when setting sail and in last stages of pregnancy on arrival while almost at full term. In 1865 EdwardW was living at Arthur St (Dunedin), and was also in the militia.

Ashburn Hall. This is a psychiatric facility. It was founded by EdwardW and a James HUME in 1882. (The facility still exists as Ashburn Clinic. It is highly regarded, and there have been numerous academic papers written on it in the 20th and 21st centuries). The above extract covers his education in England and Europe. EdwardW and Rose went to England for a period from 1890 to 1896, and it is assumed that Emily also went with them, but she may have gone at another time. I haven’t found the reason for this trip, but it is probably not coincidental that 1890 was the year their son (EdwardH) graduated. Rose and EdwardW returned to NZ in 1896, shortly before the death of his colleague James HUME. By 1896, a licence was held for fifty people in the clinic. In March 1897, EdwardW stepped down as Medical Superintendent, but kept a financial interest in the hospital. His successor was Dr Frank HAY, who held the position until 1904, when EdwardH took over. He stayed until 1911, when he stepped down and became a consulting physician. Then in 1914 EdwardH took over again. In his book “*The Ashburn Clinic: The Place and the People*”, Cameron Duder states that the younger ALEXANDER “lacked the drive of his father and Ashburn declined somewhat in efficiency and administration.” (This statement does not seem to be attributed in the book). By 1915 EdwardH was seeking to leave his position and sell his remaining interest in the hospital. He sold to Dr FALCONER, superintendent of Dunedin Hospital.

EdwardH committed suicide on 28th October 1916. I do not know the reason for this, but he shot himself. His last will was dated 24 June that same year. My suspicion is that he was in a severe state of depression: his father had died, his sister had died, AND it seems as if his parents had been estranged some time before his father’s death. (The evidence for this is estrangement is not strong – it is based on

fact that EdwardW was resident for some time prior to his death at 33 Melville St - The Dunedin Club – an exclusive club for professional men. Rose was still in residence at Jubilee St, Mornington, Dunedin.) On his death in 1907, EdwardW's interest in the hospital passed to his son EdwardH.

EdwardW died on 23 May 1907 aged 77 – predeceasing the rest of the family. He was buried at Southern Cemetery (Dunedin) on 25 May, and his estate was probated 31 May 1907.

Probate of EdwardW – extracts from documents is from probate files (held in Archives NZ, Dunedin). His will had three codicils, but nothing of huge import was in the codicils – rather adjustments to apportionment to beneficiaries. An edited transcript of his original will is appended. An interesting part of this is the mention of names of family members in the UK, and a substantial settlement to the Governor of St Helena, with a note of explanation as to why.

Emily Agnes ALEXANDER. It is known that Edward and Rose went to England between 1890 and 1896. It is only a presumption that Emily went with them, and most likely stayed in England. Time has not permitted a search for her return to NZ, but I doubt that she did. In papers of EdwardW there are details of drafts being sent to her on a regular basis – including for what appears to be for some time after his death. Nothing is known about her life in England. She died at St Leonards, England, on 5 October 1912 aged 49. She is described as a spinster in EdwardW's will. (Finding her probate might be possible in the UK, but just perhaps in Dunedin).

Edward Henry ALEXANDER. He was born in 1867, and was second and last child of EdwardW and Rose. Some of his career is covered above. His estate was substantial – thirty-seven thousand pounds, or close to five million dollars in today's equivalent. His will was not complicated, and it is interesting to note legacies to MOSS relatives. There are other substantial legacies to names which I do not recognise within our tree. Like his sister, he was 49 years old at date of death. Transcript of will etc of his will is also appended.

The next (indented) section is taken directly from the thesis described at end of this paper.

Edward Henry Alexander: Medical Superintendent (1904-1911)

Edward Henry Alexander, the last of the three medical superintendents, took over from Hay in 1904, staying at Ashburn Hall until 1911. He was the same age as Hay, born in Dunedin in 1867 and educated at Otago Boys' High School. He began his medical education at the new medical school at the University of Otago, and completed it at the University of Edinburgh. He graduated M.B.C.M. in 1890, the same year Hay graduated from Aberdeen, and served as an assistant in the Morningside and Fife Asylums in Scotland before returning to New Zealand in mid-1892. (*Note that EdwardW and Rose went to England in his graduation year*). E.H. Alexander studied at a university where there was instruction available on the treatment of insanity. A summer course on 'Medical Psychology: With Practical Instruction in Mental Diseases' had been available at the University of Edinburgh

since 1859, taught by Thomas Laycock. This was the first course of its kind in a British university, and many appointees to positions in British asylums had attended it. From 1879 to 1910, Thomas Clouston, Laycock's former student and superintendent of the Edinburgh Royal Asylum at Morningside, held the post of Lecturer in Insanity at the University of Edinburgh, continuing to teach the summer course. It included clinical instruction in the Royal Edinburgh Asylum, and demonstrations on the pathology of insanity using specimens and diagrams.

E.H. Alexander's position as an assistant physician at Morningside would have been gained through taking this course. His position at Fife Asylum may also have been gained through Clouston's influence. The choice of Edinburgh Medical School was due in part to the availability of the course on insanity, given his father's position as co-owner of Ashburn Hall. An education in medicine from Edinburgh, however, also carried with it a high degree of prestige. It was at the time Britain's largest medical school. A Scottish medical education was well respected, and students from all over the world, but especially Britain and the Empire, travelled to Scottish universities to study.

After E.H. Alexander returned to New Zealand he established himself in general practice at Blenheim before returning to Dunedin. He was an assistant medical officer to Hay in 1899-1900, but chose not to make the position permanent. When Hay left Ashburn Hall in 1904, E.W. Alexander filled in as medical superintendent for about a month, until E.H. Alexander took over the position.

In the 1907 Inspector-General's report, Hay wrote of E.H. Alexander's management of Ashburn Hall:

The entries in the case-book disclose a thoroughness and a scientific appreciation of the facts observed which is highly creditable, and Dr. E.H. Alexander's personal knowledge of his patients is very complete.

Contemporaries, therefore, praised E.H. Alexander's management of Ashburn Hall and there were several changes in the premises and care arrangements during E.H. Alexander's tenure as superintendent.

End of extract re EdwardH

Rose Adelaide ALEXANDER (nee MOSS). Born c. 1830 in St Helena; died 12 December 1916 in Dunedin aged 86. Parents were Isaac MOSS and Sarah (BRITTON). Travelled to UK as above with EdwardW, and again on her own to UK possibly after EdwardW's death, but maybe before. It seems as if her last years may have been sad, and certainly lonely. Her family all predeceased her. Her sister Agnes (SINCOCK) who lived in Dunedin, died 28 November 1915. No copy of Rose's will is appended – the reason is a bit complicated: she wrote a will while in England which was dated 10th June 1911 – i.e. after her husband's death. In this will she describes herself as a widow, residing at Eversfield Place at St Leonards on Sea in the county of Sussex. (This is almost certainly her daughter's address. Was she there when her daughter died in 1912?) It gets complicated because her son EdwardH (her named executor) had died just a few weeks before her, and this meant she was, in effect, intestate (without an "Administrator" in the language of the day). To solve the problem, George William MOSS (her brother, and last remaining MOSS of that generation) became her executor. However he was aged 78 and ill, living a distance away (in Masterton, North Island), and had to resign the task. The executorship then devolved to a lawyer under contract (it seems) of the Public Trust Office. Further complications were related to finding legatees. (The Public Trust of NZ looks after affairs of mentally ill, intestate estates, and similar). The probate file is huge – the lawyers would have had a field day. There was just over four thousand pounds in a final distribution to five legatees, and a transcript of the page showing this is appended. Rose had seven siblings – one died aged 19 in St Helena, and another (Phillip) seems to have disappeared. Her estate was divided evenly among her five known siblings or their descendants. Her final estate, which is that of the end of the ALEXANDERS was, in today's dollars, nearly \$450,000.00. (Calculated using Reserve Bank of NZ inflation calculator for Cost Price Index).

With the passing of Rose, the end of the line had been reached for the ALEXANDER family who came to NZ from St Helena. There may be some ALEXANDER items/objects of art etc in Dunedin – a challenge for some future researcher!

The ALEXANDER headstone at the Southern Cemetery of Dunedin names all four ALEXANDERS, noting Emily's date of and place of death. Photo was to have been appended, but is too large for this email I will try and get it in a form to send – although some already have it.

Questions still remain, but nothing can really be gained by finding the answers. Some unsolved queries are:-

Why did they come to NZ?

What drove EdwardH to suicide?

Were Rose and EdwardW living apart when he died, or was Rose in the UK?

And why did they go to England in 1890? (EdwardH's graduation?)

Why did Rose go to England again – she wrote her will there in 1911.

In one of the wills, income to the estate is shown from "Britton's Trust". Does this go back to Sarah's parents? (Rose's grandparents).

It is just possible that boxes of private and public correspondence and other documents exist for both Edwards, and also for Rose. There are a number of such boxes for F.J.MOSS in Christchurch, University of

Auckland and Auckland Public Library. The thesis used above also indicates more papers at the Hocken Library, Dunedin, but I was unable to get anything on my visit there.

Future research. For me, this will be limited, as there is so much to do for direct relatives (MOSES, LANDMANS, CAREWS, et al). There are four sources which could be followed up.

- One is a book entitled *“Ashburn Clinic: The Place and the People”*, Cameron Duder, 2007. There are only a few pages on the ALEXANDERS, bits of which are included above, and attributed. I may try and contact the author for more sources.
- Ashburn Hall itself is still in business, under the name Ashburn Clinic, and a visit to them may have positive results. Unfortunately time was been against me in April 2013 to do this.
- Dunedin City Council. I found the people here very helpful, and went out their way for me. Appended is the email I received which tends to indicate that EdwardW and Rose were estranged. I may follow this up, and see who was resident “when and where”. They certainly were not divorced, as my research would have thrown this up if they were.
- In 2011, a post-graduate student at Otago university presented a thesis for her MA on the very subject of management and administration at Ashburn Hall. By some fluke I managed to get to read it on the university website. The majority of it is academic and unrelated to the purposes of this paper, but does cover the ALEXANDERS’ education and related events. The whole thesis is 144 pages. She has kindly consented to quote from her paper, and this is attributed herewith. In an email, she said she was aware of EdwardH’s suicide, but nothing more than that.
- The thesis is: *“Respectability Religion and Psychiatry in New Zealand” A Case Study of Ashburn Hall, Dunedin, 1882 – 1910*. Prepared by: Elspeth Knewstubb, Otago University, Dunedin, February 2011. Everything in the extracts above has been thoroughly researched and all sources fully documented. I say this, because it is possible that your information may be different from this paper for whatever reason, and I would never seriously doubt the integrity of this thesis. (As an end-note, she can only be contacted by email, and I will not divulge that).
- FINALLY: I will attempt to research answers for any questions arising from this paper.

Transcript of legacies settled by Edward William ALEXANDER, and some relevant notes.

It is critical to note that this is a “selective” transcript of wills, probate and many other relevant documents. Errors of omission or commission may have occurred. Thus NO LEGAL reliance may be placed on the following. Any issues which may appear to arise from this paper should be investigated by contacting “Archives NZ, Dunedin, NZ” for original documents – copies of which might be obtained at a price.

EWA’s will was dated 4 August 1906, and had three codicils. I did not study these codicils in detail, but they seemed to be relatively minor adjustments to legacies.

Specific legacies were:

£1,250 was to “His Excellency the Governor for time being of the colony of St Helena..... for poor,..... necessitous inhabitants as may be native born” “Given by me in recognition of the fact that the said colony was my birthplace and that my family have been associated with it for a lengthy period.”

Silverware and jewellery to son, Edward Henry.

Artwork to Emily (daughter).

	£
• Ida Vowell Stacey, wife of Walter Stacey of NSW PublicWorks	350
• Major Hugh Vowell (London)	50 (paid 250)*
• George Alexander (NSW, Bank Clerk)	250
• Frank Alexander (Granville,NSW)	300
• Herbert Alexander (New Guinea Gold Mines)	250
• Margaret Jane Vowell (London)	300
• Arthur Vowell (Reigate, Civil Engineer)	300
• William Max Vowell (Mangatainoka)	300
• Charles Vowell (Piriaka, Surgeon)	300
• Emily Vowell, UK	200
• Gertrude Rutley (St Johns Wood)	200(paid 250)
• Harold Rutley (St Johns Wood)	200([paid 250)
• Edward Vowell (Godson)	100(paid150)

* Possibly Emily Vowell’s (see later)

The above were paid as indicated, plus:

• C.H.Vowell	300
• Charles West Alexander	100

Page2. Transcript of legacies settled by Edward William ALEXANDER, and some relevant notes.

The other specified assets were: his interest in Ashburn Hall to Edward Henry Alexander, with personal property and effects in trust for Rose, who also got an annuity of 300 pounds.

The balance of his estate was to be divided into fifths, and this gets a bit complicated!

One fifth to Edward, but if he predeceased Emily Agnes, to be divided between the children of his sister F.S.Vowell, and his brothers Charles S Alexander and William F Alexander.

On fifth to Rose, but if she predeceased Emily Agnes, to be divided between the children of his sister F.S.Vowell, and his brothers Charles S Alexander and William F Alexander.

Three of the remaining fifths to be equally divided between the children of his sister F.S.Vowell, and his brothers Charles S Alexander and William F Alexander.

Now the legal fun starts☺

EWAlexander had a sister: Francis Sophia VOWELL, and she had a daughter named Emily Maxwell Vowell (EW's neice). As it transpired, she stood to inherit £649.7.8 from her share of "the fifths" – a goodly sum in 1907. She could not be found. Amongst the correspondence between Dunedin and London lawyers, I got the impression she had changed name, and addresses. They thought they had her at an address, but got there too late, (she had moved) and that was end of the chase. I think her share was added back to Hugh Vowell.

It is extremely hard to know when to stop with so much detail. I trust the above is enough for the reader's purpose. My impression is that EWA had excellent legal advice, and the probate seemed to me to be well handled and in order – but it is quite large!

Transcript of legacies settled by Rose Adelaide ALEXANDER, and some relevant notes.

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The situation regarding Rose has been covered above. I believe that the legacies paid to her siblings or her siblings children was correct. The final settlements were to each of the following £866.8.8, or £4,332.3.7 in total.

- George Wm Moss (last of that generation living)
- Family of late Frederick J Moss, Auckland
- Family of late William Britton Moss, Ashburton
- Family of late Agnes Georgina Sincock, Dunedin
- Family of late Mrs Emma Jane Blachford (s/b Blackford), Chicago.

Transcript of legacies settled by Emily Agnes ALEXANDER, and some relevant notes.

It is critical to note that this is a “selective” transcript of wills, probate and many other relevant documents. Errors of omission or commission may have occurred. Thus NO LEGAL reliance may be placed on the following. Any issues which may appear to arise from this paper should be investigated by contacting “Archives NZ, Dunedin, NZ” for original documents – copies of which might be obtained at a price.

As covered earlier, very little is known about her, other than places and dates of birth and death. No documents yet located which indicate when and why she went to St Leonards, and if she stayed there. Of interest would be letters between the family – Dunedin to UK etc. She predeceased her brother and mother, and their probates mention nothing about anything from Emily’s estate. An affidavit signed by EHW states that Emily left her estate to her mother. EHW stated that Letters of Administration granted by the Probate Division in High Court of London dated 15 March 1913 is filed in this court (*Dunedin?*) for sealing purposes.... so: there may yet be something in NZ! Her estate was probated at £367.13.10, and there was no real estate.

An affidavit signed by GWMoss swears that Emily died intestate.

Transcript of legacies settled by Edward Henry ALEXANDER, and some relevant notes.

It is critical to note that this is a “selective” transcript of wills, probate and many other relevant documents. Errors of omission or commission may have occurred. Thus NO LEGAL reliance may be placed on the following. Any issues which may appear to arise from this paper should be investigated by contacting “Archives NZ, Dunedin, NZ” for original documents – copies of which might be obtained at a price.

I have somehow missed a page of his will which possibly contains some information☹.

Anyway:

Trustee to pay residuary estate.... to his mother during her life and after her death to hold the capital upon the following trusts namely:

Cousin Amy Moss of Auckland £1,000

Cousin Effie Simeon of Gisborne £1,000

Rest:

One quarter to Irwin William Walter Hunter or if he predeceased Rose and Emily, then to his widow.

One quarter to Mrs Elsie Milne

On half “for my friend George Robinson of the Survey Office, Christchurch”.

Edited email which is self-explanatory.

(edited because it also answered queries re KNIGHTS family, which have been cut)

To: nzdanenz@hotmail.com

From: **Chris Scott** (cscott@dcc.govt.nz)

Sent: Tuesday, 30 April 2013 2:09:49 p.m.

To: nzdanenz@hotmail.com (nzdanenz@hotmail.com)

Dear Roger,

Thank you for your enquiry regarding the residence of Dr. Edward William Alexander.

In 1907, Dr. Edward Henry Alexander was resident surgeon at Ashburn Hall; Dr. Edward William Alexander, retired surgeon, is listed as living at 33 Melville Street, which was and still is the Dunedin Club. He was one of three professional men listed as residing there.

I hope this information is of some use to you.

Regards,

Chris Scott
Archivist, Information Solutions
Dunedin City Council