

# MR. BRODIE'S DEATH OCCURS AT SEA



Photographed at work in his London office just before for his recent visit to New Zealand.

The death of Mr. John Brodie at sea on Monday, three days out from Southampton on his return to London after visiting New Zealand with his wife, was announced yesterday in a cable message from the special London correspondent of the New Zealand Press Association. He died aboard the Rangitiki from coronary thrombosis and was buried at sea.

Known in English-speaking countries as the novelist John Guthrie, Mr. Brodie, as a New Zealander, was held in affection and esteem by a wide circle of friends throughout the Dominion but especially at New Plymouth, where he spent his early years. The shock of his death at the age of 49 years was felt with particular emphasis at New Plymouth yesterday, not only by his family, but by hundreds of friends; for it was only a little more than a month since he concluded his first visit to them in 15 years.

## Visit To Relatives

With his American wife, formerly Mrs. Elinor Roddam, Mr. Brodie, whose home was in London, had come to New Zealand to see his mother, Mrs. M. D. Brodie, his brothers, Messrs. Alex. and Alan Brodie, and his sister, Mrs. Russell Matthews, all of whom live at New Plymouth. Another sister, Mrs. Nigel Palethorpe, formerly of England, now lives at Sydney.

Mr. Brodie had a distinguished career in several fields. From the Thames High School he was transferred to the New Plymouth Boys' High School where, in addition to his scholastic achievements that won him a Taranaki scholarship, he was known as an accomplished swimmer, boxer and rifle shot. He became head day boy.

But it was as cricketer and member of the school's first eleven, and Rugby footballer and member of the first fifteen that he was probably best known in those days. The football combination of which he was a part made the first fifteen famous among secondary schools.

These, however, were only stepping stones to greater things for Mr. Brodie. He went on to Canterbury University College to take his bachelor of arts degree and his diploma in journalism and become a college nominee for the Rhodes scholarship.

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A member of the college's first fifteen for four years and its captain for two, Mr. Brodie's prowess as a Rugby player was soon recognised. He played for New Zealand University and went to Australia with the university team. There he played for the Combined Australian and New Zealand Universities against New South Wales.

A bent for writing was developed at Canterbury College, where, in addition to an active interest in students' affairs which led to the vice-presidency of the students' association, he became editor of the college review. After leaving university he joined the Taranaki Daily News in 1927 as a reporter. In the four years he was with the Daily News Mr. Brodie's talent for wit and sparkle as a writer was widely acknowledged.

From New Plymouth he went to Wellington in 1933 to become assistant editor of the Radio Record, the predecessor of the New Zealand Listener, and in 1937 he went to England to broaden his career as a writer.

#### First Novel

Mr. Brodie was, however, already an author. While still at New Plymouth a football injury resulted in the amputation of his right leg and an operation that stiffened his left knee joint. For many months he suffered great pain and was confined to bed. But his spirit rose above these things and he wrote his first novel, "The Little Country," with New Plymouth as its setting, and followed this with another, "So They Began." His gift for characterisation and description made a picture of New Plymouth that was both vivid and faithful.

After some time in England Mr. Brodie returned to New Zealand, but he went back again until 1939. He was at New York on his way to New Zealand when he learned that Britain was at war; thereupon he took the first ship back to London, where, in spite of his physical handicaps, he joined the Royal Air Force, received a commission and became an acknowledged expert in night-fighter tactics.

The war interrupted Mr. Brodie's activities as a journalist and author, but with the arrival of peace he returned with redoubled effort to his chosen profession. He was successively editor of a highly regarded trade publication, Books of Today, a member of the editorial staff of World's Press News and, most recently, a special writer for a magazine syndicate.

#### More Novels

In addition to his journalistic duties, Mr. Brodie found time to write more novels, bringing his total to seven without counting "The Man in Our Lives," a "portrait" of his father. Two of the books were published in the United States, where, as in Britain, his reputation had been growing steadily.

His best-known story is "The Seekers," which was filmed in colour by the Rank organisation. With a plot based on the impact of Maoris and European in New Zealand in the early years of last century and bringing in also picturesque phases of life in England and at sea in the same period, the novel lent itself to vivid treatment by the author and to adaptation as a film.

Mr. Brodie married in 1952. He and his wife had intended to visit New Zealand over a year ago, but at the last moment Mr. Brodie became ill and the journey had to be postponed.