

History of Dalgleish Jewellers

85 Devon Street West, New Plymouth

24th. February, 1997

Speech prepared for "Ascot" members, Tainui Village, by L.M. (Betty) Dalgleish

The original building at 85 Devon Street West was of a wooden structure, late 1800's owned by Mr. J. Veale, who operated a grocery store on these premises. He received his supplies by surf boat on the beach near the present railway station. At one stage a stream ran through the property which was later filled in. Water was a problem to the shops in the area.

I find this area of New Plymouth most interesting because it is surrounded by history. Mount Eliot was opposite this site but flattened (Egmont Street). The Mangaotuku Stream, Puke Ariki landing, and the proposed development to take place by the New Plymouth District Council.

Also my maternal Great Grandmother (Thirzah Bishop) then aged two immigrated in 1841 with her parents, brothers and sister from Plymouth, England on the ship Oriental, the third ship to bring colonists to New Zealand, landing her passengers and cargo on the beach at the mouth of the Huatoki, a change from the practice of the William Bryan and the Amelia Thompson who landed their passengers and cargo at Moturoa. In consequence of the hazards of landing and the fact that the ship had narrowly escaped wreck while off the town, a public meeting was held on January 21st. 1842, which sent a lengthy petition to the New Zealand Company praying for the establishment of a Harbour.

In 1911 Mr. C.H. Drew took over the premises trading as a Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Optician. In 1911 the old wooden building was demolished and a concrete building was erected. Mr. Drew carried on business until the end of World War 1 (1918). Show old photos/Drew's catalogue/V. Dalgleish, - cutting shop showing Veale's building 1913 - Land Agent/Solicitor upstairs.

Mr. Garnham purchased the business from Mr. Drew, but only operated for a short period before selling to Mr. Virtue Dalgleish in (1919), 1921.

Mr. Dalgleish served his apprenticeship as a Watchmaker with Prouds Jewellers of Sydney, Australia. (Proud's Jewellers are now owned by the New Zealand Jewellers Pascoes). He was borne in Galashiels, Scotland in 1886, and immigrated to Timaru, New Zealand, with his parents and four brothers. He served as a Sergeant in the Army of the 1914/18 war, returning from Australia to New Zealand to enlist.

Before he married, Mr. Dalgleish lived on the shop premises at the rear of the building and would go down to the Criterion Hotel for his breakfast. I believe other business men in the area did likewise. He married Edith Lynch in 1925 (who was an assistant at the shop) and they resided in Wallace Place. They ran a successful business for thirty years when Mr. Dalgleish died aged 65, in 1951.

Ian their only child, on the death of his father returned from London (where he was practising as a qualified Accountant), to assist his mother with the running of the business, but apart from this, was returning to New Zealand in a few months. We met, married, and have a family of three children, a daughter, and two sons.

Ian's parents rented the shop from Mr. J. Veale, and on his death, his son who lived in Auckland. Mr. Veale senior made arrangements that the building could not be sold for thirty years after his death, due to family concerns. When this time was about to lapse Ian was approached with a price, (30,000 pounds) to purchase, which he refused, as in previous discussions with Mr. Veale was told he would accept 25,000 pounds, and for many months Ian commuted between Auckland and New Plymouth hoping to be successful, but Mr. Veale proved to be very difficult, and naturally would have sold if someone else came along at the higher price. We were placed in the position of purchasing another business in town for fear of losing the shop to another purchaser. At that time "Tait's" Chemist (Geof Hammond) was up for auction and Ian attended to bid, as did Victor Brownson - his business was situated on the same site the then Woolworth's - Woolworths were the successful purchases (now Deka). However, Huthnance Jewellers business and building on the flat came up for sale and we purchased that in 1956. Business on the flat was no good for us, the reason being we were established at 85 Devon Street West and people came to us there. We traded on the flat as Devon Jewellers. As it turned out, and to our relief, Mr. Veale did not find a purchaser more interested than ourselves, and we managed to purchase the building in 1959 at our price. The site on the flat we were fortunate to sell to the then John Roberts and Jack O'Carroll, Electricians in 1959.

The existing shop had little retail space, more storage and vacant land at the rear not being utilized. It was essential to enlarge customer floor space which was extended from 833 to 2482 square feet retail area, plus 732 square feet for watchmaker, jeweller, staff, and storage.

We were encouraged by an advertisement in the European "Watchmaker & Jewellers" magazine by the Swiss Watch Company "Omega" who we were Agents for, offering to modernise Jewellery Shops. We wrote and forwarded the footage of the area, and duly received their Architects plans. The local firm of Architects at that time, Bowering, Thomson, Boon & Associates carried out and adjusted the plans to local conditions, with Mr. Brian Chong as overseer in 1967. The shop is as it stands today from this plan. The shop (building) area which we purchased was extended taking in the land at the rear. The facade above the verandah was not altered. The entrance, windows, verandah were modernised. We built our office around the old strong room (safe) which has a heavy door like a bank vault. Also the office upstairs has one the same. Billing Little Fookes & Stromborn, Solicitors, rented the upstairs for many years, with Alan Budden the Land Agent. Billing & Co. vacated when they purchased their own building. Many others came and went for awhile, and after upgrading, Trevor Knowsley Solicitor has occupied.

Burglary/Dave Avery reported to Police, saw a gloved hand in window. The burglars came through outhouse window (toilets) separate building at rear of shop, then broke into shop. Foreigners (2) followed me into safe. Sovereigns made into rings. Case of man put his boot through front window so as to be put in prison. Expensive rings stolen while selling (we were on holiday). Tray of rings shoplifted - tray later found by a customer amongst shelf of books in Whitcoulls. In the cases that the Police were able to catch up on, the offenders were known to them as having a criminal background or drug related.

We retired and sold the business to Gary and Heather Hutchings in October 1992, After two generations trading (73 years).

(3)

Gary and Heather relocated last November to premises in the Mall. After trading at 85 Devon Street West for four years they found the shop too large for today's trading and opted for smaller premises in the central Mall.

Sadly 85 Devon Street West is empty at present, like many other shops in New Plymouth but we are hopeful a tenant will be found.

We have been proud to be part of the History of New Plymouth District - Taranaki, and thankful for the support of our many customers over the years.

Our son Bruce who is a Jeweller by trade now resides in London, is employed by Theo Fennell, Jeweller, Chelsea, London. The demand for the calibre of handcrafted jewellery he is producing is very limited in New Zealand (job satisfaction) hence his reason for returning to U.K. (1991).

22.09.2007

The Hutchings left New Plymouth to settle in Australia in 2005, and the business was purchased by Bill Roy, a Manufacturing Jeweller, who learned the trade in Wellington, and spent several years working in the U.K.

The original site of Dalgleish Jewellers, at 85 Devon Street West was converted into a high quality licensed restaurant in 2003, and is currently occupied by "Pankawalla", an Indian Restaurant.

Trevor Knowsley, Soliicitor, still occupies the upstairs rooms.

Compiled by L.M. Dalgleish (Betty)