

Interview Abstract



Interviewee: William (Bill) Wilson

Interviewer: Ross Naylor

Date recorded: 11 June 2021

Abstractor: Sue Mort

File 01

Time	
00:00:00	WILLIAM (BILL) CLAUDE WILSON
1.10	<p>Mothers name ALICE HEPBURN, fathers name WILLIAM RICHARD WILSON who was known as 'BLAISE' WILSON. Brother STANLEY RICHARD.</p> <p>Bill was nearly 10 when his mother went over on her knee and was in RANFURLY hospital for six weeks. Bill visited her. A housekeeper was employed. Mother returned from hospital with a red headed baby in a bassinet. Bill's hair was black and curly. Bill was told she found him under a gooseberry bush. Remarking that that was a strange place, was the end of the story.</p>
	<p>Father WILLIAM RICHARD WILSON 1895 – 1964.</p> <p>At least four WILSON brothers came to NEW ZEALAND from NORTHERN IRELAND in the late 1880s. One of them had BROOKDALE (Canterbury), one WANAKA STATION, one had DOWNSHIRE and one a property somewhere near ROXBURGH.</p> <p>Bill's grandfather worked for DOWNSHIRE WILSON as a butcher delivering sheep and cattle by cart around the district. He also broke in horses.</p>
6.50	<p>Grandfather WILLIAM WILSON born 1861 married AGNES PEARSON. AGNES arrived at PORT CHALMERS with her mother, an invalid, and father, an alcoholic. The whole family ended up in care in DUNEDIN.</p> <p>The children all went to different families. One to a Scottish family and spoke broad Scotch, one to the Salvation Army, and POLLY married a VERCOE from CLYDE.</p>

	<p>They reunited several years later.</p> <p>Grandparents WILLIAM and AGNES 1872 – 1951, lived on a 200-acre block gifted by WILLIAM’s brother. In Bill’s memory two daughters AILEEN a Dressmaker and GWEN who lived with their parents, never marrying.</p>
	<p>An Aunt on the WILSON side, PHOEBE married an AUSTRALIAN VIC SHEA. They lived in Dunedin. He was a war amputee and became a bootmaker.</p> <p>Father (memory hazy) was a musterer and rabbitier working on different properties. Came home from the war took over father’s share of the farm and added to it. Perhaps three different blocks. BILL farmed this property.</p> <p>Uncle HERBERT GEORGE WILSON, known as BARNEY WILSON married a SUTHERLAND, ANN CLARE from the MATAKANUI area. SUTHERLANDS a well-known family whose members died through TB.</p> <p>He got wounded in the 1st World War and returned to New Zealand. Father and Uncle were partners at DRYBREAD. They split up and BARNEY stayed put.</p>
	JOHN EDWARD WILSON, no memory died before BILL was born.
	OLIVE AILEEN, single, looked after BILL’s grandmother. She was a dressmaker working from home.
10.02	<p>GWENDOLINE MARY worked in the office at CALDWELL’S garage, bicycling three miles to work.</p> <p>BUD HEPBURN BILL’S mother’s brother.</p> <p>ALICE HEPBURN came from Earnsclough, Father, a Scot, worked on the dredge.</p> <p>Her eldest brother GORD HAMILTON HEPBURN was a talented man. He left school at age 12 and self-taught became an electrician, made his own radios and furniture.</p>
	GORD married ELIZABETH from LAWRENCE. He walked from Dunedin to Lawrence to visit her.
	Brother DAVID JOHN HEPBURN married a NEVILLE, a moneyed person from POOLBURN, HANNAH MARY. Everyone called her LULE. DAVID was a school teacher at Moa Creek School. He then taught down in West Otago, Oxford ending up at TIMARU Main School where he retired. JOHN & HANNAH buried in TIMARU Lawn Cemetery.
	STANLEY HEPBURN went to the 1 st World War, contracted TB and died age 25 at home.

13.14	<p>MARGARET (Maggie) HEPBURN married WALTER HEENAN who might have worked on the Earncleugh Dredge. Farmed at Earnsceugh, had a large family.</p> <p>BUD HEPBURN married GWENDOLINE WILSON. BUD worked on dredges. Ended up being the dredge master between Clyde and Alexandra. Supervised its dismantling. Owned by a British company.</p> <p>BILL met HONORA (LILY) ELIZABETH DONNELLY his future wife, in 1942. BILL biked up to DONNELLY's to collect a pup. Granny Donnelly put the pup in a sugar bag ready to take home. A nine year old girl, HONORA, came up to BILL with a baby in a pram for him to admire, her younger sister MARY. He didn't see her again until she was fifteen when they were playing tennis. And away it went.</p>
17.18	<p>LILY died in 2008.</p> <p>LILY's parents AILEEN MAUREEN & FRANK DONNELLY were a well-known family in the district and talented at sports. Family members competed in professional sport pre-World War 1 and won gold coins. This made them ineligible for the Olympics. The DONNELLY offspring still coming through as good sports people.</p> <p>LILY's elder sister was COLLEEN then there was NED, MONICA and MAUREEN. MAUREEN and one of BILL's daughters both played hockey for New Zealand. MAUREEN captained the team, going on overseas tours.</p> <p>The MATAKANUI family well established and well known in the area.</p> <p>PAT (P.D.) and JACK never married. There were three children.</p> <p>The story of how P.D. died at Thomson's Creek.</p>
20.05	<p>ERIC NAYLOR, President of the Racing Club took FRANK DONNELLY to a meeting. After a relaxing session FRANK came into the bedroom at 2 a.m. soaked and cold. They had run into the creek half a mile below the house. ERIC was still at the scene. BILL had a look around and found P.D.'s body floating in the water. Without telling Eric what had happened because he was in a state of shock, he delivered him to MABEL trying to explain P.D. was dead.</p>
22.13	<p>BILL's vague memories of living at THE BLOCK at the bottom of THOMSON's Gorge. Until he was ten he lived in a house that belonged to the STAFFORDS. A mud brick building that still exists.</p> <p>Grandmother and Aunt lived across the road. Bill spent a lot of time with them. The blacksmith's shop was one hundred yards from the house. In the 1930's recession tools were serviced there. BILL was on his own for</p>

	<p>ten years, saw no people except at the blacksmith's. He had a pup for company.</p> <p>Started school at SPOTTS CREEK. HE went with JOAN WILSON, daughter of his father's cousin, and NED BURKE whose father was on the staff of FRED WILSON'S. Biked to school under supervision until OMAKAU School was built in 1937. Three rooms opened in the school opposite the railway station. For a year, infants went to the supper room at the Hall.</p> <p>A committee was formed to organise building a central school. After a vote, the central school went to Lauder, not Omakau.</p> <p>25.06 CYRIL DEAKER, MURRAY DEAKER's father, was BILL'S school teacher. He later on became a rugby selector. When Bill went to CARISBROOK on his own, CYRIL would sit and talk to him. Bill said he would choke if he had to call CYRIL by his Christian name. You're Mr DEAKER to me until the day you die. A respected school teacher.</p> <p>CYRIL DEAKER was a good tennis player. He started a tennis club in OMAKAU. CYRIL would have instigated teaching tennis in the district.</p> <p>VERDUN DONNELLY had a natural talent for tennis. He went to MATAKANUI school so would not have been coached by CYRIL. VERDUN went to Auckland and won national competitions more than once.</p> <p>VERDUN died young because he had asthma and a lot of trouble breathing. He died accidentally from drowning in a ditch not far from BILL's house.</p> <p>VERDUN's parents were FELIX and GRACE at the NEWTOWN Hotel in MATAKANUI. It was very popular. The ZINGARI (Richmond Rugby Club, Dunedin) stayed there every year for at least 30 years maybe up to 50, to play MATAKANUI for the DARK HORSE CUP.</p> <p>They came Good Friday, on the Central Train, returned Easter Monday, socialising around the district.</p> <p>VERDUN's family had sporting ability.</p>
29.10	<p>TED & BARBARA DUGGAN owned the MATAKANUI STORE.</p> <p>TED was well known for being a talented secretary of a lot of clubs.</p> <p>His son went to WAITAKI with BILL. He was a good self-taught tennis player.</p> <p>The STORE was also a post office, very busy in its heyday.</p>

	<p>TEDDY Duggan became a Councillor and a really public-spirited person He was a character who was called The Merchant.</p> <p>BILL and LILY had quite a bit to do with FRANCIS DONNELLY. He was noted for his ability to entertain people. Very well known in elite racing circles that raced horses from Auckland to the Bluff. FRANCIS instrumental in putting VINCENT Jockey Club on the popularity list for owners and trainers to bring their horse to the races. Patron of OMAKAU Tennis Club. Also as a good tennis player.</p>
32.29	BILL & LILY's children SUSAN, BEVAN, STEPHANIE, CHARLENE, SHARI*
	<p>SUSAN went to OMAKAU School and then DUNSTAN High School, representing the school at hockey</p> <p>STEPHANIE good at hockey and tennis. She was a junior and senior tennis champion. Later on she played hockey for CENTRAL OTAGO and HAWKES BAY. STEPHANIE married EVAN ROBSON, an ALEXANDRA boy who became a school teacher.</p> <p>They had two boys GERON & HAISLEY. GERON committed suicide in his last year of study to be a lawyer. HAISLEY went into teaching and is now headmaster of a HAWKE'S BAY school. He has three daughters</p>
	BEVAN A high achiever in sport, tennis and rugby. He played for Otago and the All Blacks, for three years. A knee injury cut short his rugby career.
	<p>BEVAN & MARY had two daughters REBECCA and MONIQUE</p> <p>REBECCA (at time of interview) having a baby. Monique works in an Auckland bank. Both talented hockey players.</p> <p>STEPHANIE has a son HAYDEN and daughter, TARA.</p> <p>CHARLENE lost her husband when youngest child small. He got crushed under a baler.</p> <p>She has NIKITA talented at sport, TALIA in her first year training to be a doctor and LANI who is a psychiatrist</p>
	<p>Bill's involvement with sport in the OMAKAU MATAKANUI area both before and after he married LILY, was influenced by Cyril Deaker, - rugby and tennis, as were many other boys and girls. LILY was from a sporting family. LILY played tennis and hockey. She was going away to work but when a local hockey team was formed she decided to stay.</p> <p>LILY's two younger sisters were good at sport. COLLEEN her older sister was a representative basketball player for SOUTH CANTERBURY. She</p>

	<p>married PAT CALLBOY noted for being the trainer of GREYWAY, a top racehorse.</p>
40.41	<p>BILL's rugby career. CYRIL DEAKER kicked it off even though he did not play. He was always conscientious about the team looking the part, even if you weren't. You pulled your socks up and stayed together as a team at a tournament. You were loyal to one another. He enjoyed it but didn't think he was any different to the rest of us.</p> <p>BILL started as half back at High School. He went to first five and fullback. Bill was part of the famous 52 CLUB which is a club of players that had a long holding of the WHITEHORSE CUP. They lost it one season to PATAEORA but had the right to the final challenge at the end of the season. They won it back, celebrating until late into Sunday. Players in THE CLUB got together once a yeay at thre CHATTO CREEK HOTEL.</p> <p>There were a lot of talented players. There were the FLANNERY"S, the DUNCAN brothers and the ANDERSONS – JOHNNY, LEN and PAT.</p>
43.47	<p>Some of those would have gone on and been in the 63 CLUB.</p> <p>There are 4 members still alive from the 52 CLUB. JIM MORGAN DON MATHESON, BILL and a 'boy' who was from Southland.</p> <p>BILL went to 5 ALL Black TRIALS. In 52 the All Blacks were in ENGLAND and AUSTRALIA . He had been told he would be picked but, unfortunately got mumps in his testicles. The doctor came out with IRV MCKNIGHT and said you can play. IRV MCKNIGHT said you'll need a bloody wheel bearer to whittle his balls in. On was like a goose egg.</p>
	<p>Went close in 56 to play. CHARLIE SEXTON advised BILL where to stand on the pitch. The opponent's flanker split his eye open which needed stitching and iodine treatment so he couldn't see. Got back on the pitch but was seeing two balls.</p> <p>You can thank CHARLIE SEXTON. The closest BILL got in 56 was to play for the SOUTH ISLAND.</p> <p><i>'A few close shows but I honestly don't think I was good enough for an All Black pre-league'</i></p>
47.55	<p>BILL's involvement with the Vincent Jockey Club</p> <p>BILL's father was the CLUB caretaker for years, getting deaf as he aged. When BILL left school his father wanted him to go to CLUB meetings to report on what he had missed hearing. He was made a steward at only 17 or 18.</p>

53.00	<p>For years he irrigated the track, ran sheep on it. Originally the track was a mile and a quarter clay. The WILSONS have been involved from when the Club was started.</p> <p>BEVAN did time as Vice President.</p> <p>BILL's Horses. The best one was REGALITUS. BEVAN owned a share of REGALITUS but because he was underage, at 16, the share ran in LIL's name. She was bought at the WAIKATO Sales, winning 3 races as a two year old.</p> <p>REGALITUS as broodmare kicked BEVAN off with good horses.</p> <p>REGALO won two hurdle races at Riccarton.</p> <p>Racing and the training were enjoyable. Accidents did happen with horses, one getting loose on the road and breaking its leg.</p> <p>SANDY, BILL's brother got involved in racing with a mate, BARRY JONES, who was a jockey then a trainer. The only horse SANDY had won one race.</p> <p>Social events and entertainment, what sort of things did you get up to. ?</p> <p>Pictures twice a week at Lauder and Omakau. In the winter there was a dance every Saturday night, and possibly a ball or something like that thrown in on a Friday . A lot of tennis was played.</p> <p>Competitions were held between CHATTO CREEK, LAUDER, OPHIR, MATAKANUI, BECKS, CAMBRIAN and OTUREHUA Top class players were involved.</p> <p>Tennis was very social. For instance MATAKANUI used to have games on Sundays, which were a hatching ground for finding wives, example KEN LUSK played for OPHIR and found his wife BEATTY HUDDLESTON at MATAKANUI courts. RUSSELL MILNE picked up MARGARET, his wife at tennis.</p> <p>You played with anyone and everyone with age ranging from primary school kids, parents in their 40's and older people.</p> <p>The MATAKANUI New Year Tournament was very popular, attracting players from CROMWELL, CLYDE, ALEX., and RANFURLY.</p> <p>It started at 8am on New Year's day and went until dark. The store was open, adding to the enjoyment. On Sundays, because of the popularity of the tennis and the courting couples both store and pub were open – probably illegally.</p> <p>In the days of BILL's youth drinking hours were 6pm closing. Then it went to 8pm and 10 pm.</p>
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57.30	<p>There was no drinking alcohol at the socials. Occasionally, there was a bit in the boot of a car. Policemen monitored the socials.</p> <p>Things changed and you were allowed to drink in the room the dance or ball was being held.</p>
1.00.00	<p>Bill attended WAITAKI Boys High School 1942 -43. He didn't particularly enjoy it because it was in the middle of the War. The masters too old for the War, were in their 50's and 60's and the women were older maids. Not the best teachers. Pupils had to keep the grounds tidy.</p> <p>BILLO left on Armistice Day, the 11th November 1943 to come home to drive the team because 5 men had been called up to go overseas.</p> <p>RUSSELL MILNE got called up.</p> <p>Leaving school with two suitcase BILL walked a couple of miles to catch the midnight train to DUNEDIN, change to the Central train at 7 in the morning getting home around 2 o'clock.</p> <p>MURRAY MILNE, at the end of term, rode BILL's bike home from school, through DANSEY's PASS.</p> <p>Remembering teachers at WAITAKI.</p> <p>FRANK MILNER was the Rector very much old English style discipline. Boarders had to do half an hour's physical exercise before breakfast. Half mile runs, cold showers or baths winter and summer. Slept in dormitories with canvas shutters and 'put a foot of air above that'.</p> <p>Discipline at primary school and Waitaki. Straps at primary school and the cane, BILL got once. A WAITAKI whacks were given for putting two hands at once in your pockets.</p> <p>ALAN HOLLAND got his share of whacks when in the third form with BILL and ended up chief Justice. The BUCKINGHAM brothers were top ones for the cane, ended up in the mining industry. So did the HARRISES and SOUTHWAITES, who were in Canterbury's elite class, and MURRAY ELLIS, a prefect went to the Antarctic with SIR EDMUND HILARY.</p> <p>Pupils were never stopped from speaking Maori at WAITAKI, but they had no desire to. They were taught Maori songs and music and a bit of history.</p> <p>Games played at school apart from rugby and tennis. With table tennis BILL remembers once they ran out of bats so he got an apple case board as a substitute and won his first game against a fellow that had a proper bat. Squash and Fives also played.</p>
1.04.00	<p>BILL left school at 15, his first job was at a racecourse.</p>

<p>1.08.00</p>	<p>On the farm, up at 6 a.m. to feed 8 horses and have them ready to pull the plough at 8 a.m. Brush them, put on collars and harness, and out to the paddock. Stop for lunch maybe 20 minutes, water the horses. Knocked off at 5 p.m. so you were pulling the plough for a good 8 hours. BILL earned thirty shillings a week (\$3). Living at home he didn't give any money for his keep.</p> <p>BILL's father was Anglican and mother Presbyterian. BILL was christened as an Anglican when nearly five with NANCY HEPBURN. It was the first christening at OMAKAU. His father and uncle shifted the church to OMAKAU from TARRAS.</p> <p>Bill went to Presbyterian Sunday school because all his mates were Presbyterian. MURRAY MILNE, OWEN GLASSFORD, GEORGE ROBERTSON who interchanged staying for weekends. They all had to go, so BILL went too. Most of the time they were writing notes to each other and eating raisins.</p> <p>BILL and LILY</p> <p>Lily was 15 not long left school, waitressing at MARGARET MILNE's wedding because she helped at the pub and sometimes at THE COMMERCIAL.</p> <p>BILL was an usher because he knew both sides of the family, so they got stuck together for the night. Afterwards BILL thought she was quite a nice friendly girl. Wedding photos were sent to the families and guests, and there was LILY the nice girl. It never entered BILL's head that they would end up getting married.</p> <p>BILL's Mum said he should keep away from those Catholic girls.</p> <p>18 year old LESTER HARVEY asked BILL if he would like to join The Lodge. BILL's father and uncle were in it. Bill said no, I'm a bit young I'll hang fire.</p> <p>LILY had a bloody lot of boys hanging around her, as interested as BILL.</p> <p>LILY was the only girlfriend BILL ever had.</p> <p>LILY was 4 years younger than BILL (died 2018), from a long living family. BILL speculated on her religion. The reason P.D. and JACK weren't married was because of religion. P.D. was pretty much wrapped up in a SUTHERLAND. JACK was pretty matey with a girl called Jean, but never married.</p> <p>Businesses in OMAKAU</p> <p>JIMMY came from a Roxburgh dairy unit to milk cows at Matakanui Station. JIMMY was a qualified blacksmith in engineering and BILL with the help of</p>
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1.13	<p>NOEL HEPBURN, moneywise, decided to buy the engineering shop in OMAKAU. JIMMY had a contracting business too, with a man running it, ploughing, discing and harrowing. HARRY INGAM was the chaff cutter. BOB SUTHERLAND did a wee bit of contracting.</p> <p>The PERKINS family had THE COMMERCIAL HOTEL in OMAKAU for 30 odd years. It originally started as a coaching station because OMAKAU didn't exist until the railway was built. The Station Master's house was right across the road from the school and there were three houses for gangers and servicemen. The railway came through about 1904. It was said it was the biggest station for stock outside of ADDINGTON. POOLBURN farmers loaded there.</p> <p>Memories of picking up railway pieces around the bicycle shed at school where there were hollyhocks growing.</p> <p>The stables out the back of THE COMMERCIAL HOTEL used to be part of the MATAKANUI RUGBY CLUB changing rooms.</p> <p>Bill recalls the stable as just a big shed with junk in it.</p> <p>Recollections of religion coming into rugby with the Welsh from CAMBRIAN and the Catholic Irish from ST BATHANS.</p> <p><i>Miscellaneous recollections</i></p> <p>Swimming in the Ministry of Works race up somewhere near MATAKANUI. The HOME GUARD.</p> <p>Poole's Dam was built (might have been the 1930s recession. The Home guard used to camp there at weekends.</p> <p>Locally comparable to Dad's Army, HUNTER DENNISON was the General, ERIC NAYLOR 2IC. They had wooden guns and BARNEY WILSON had been a signaller at GALIPOLI. He got a bullet in his lung fighting there. They did have night manouveres with signalling exercises. WOLFE MILNE was Officer of the Guard at the gate.</p> <p>The ambulance room was the jail and it had lots of rope and three stretchers and 'bugger all else'. In one antic BLAISE tied a noose around WOLFE's (depressed at the time) neck so he could hang himself and they both got tied up properly.</p> <p>CLIFF CALDWELL</p> <p>He lived in a roughcast house going up OMAKAU's Racecourse Road.</p>
1.23.00	

1.29.00	<p>It is now shearers' quarters. CLIFF CALDWELL's garage became HICKEY's wool store. CLIFF worked on his own mostly, but he may have had the odd apprentice. Then CHARLIE DRAKE started a business with two trucks and a shed that ended up as the wool store. CHARLIE and wife POLLY lived in a wee wooden house. Mrs DRAKE drove the school bus. BILL was the first boy on the bus each morning.</p> <p>The DRAKES had a Hotel followed by NED PIRATA from the North Island, then JACK MERCER who was very popular and keen on bowls. He was publican in the days when women couldn't drink at the bar. They were in the Bar Parlour.</p> <p>There were a couple of shops in OMAKAU. The top shop was CRAIG's. They sold coal from it. The boy scouts used to meet in the coal store. BILL was a scout for a short time.</p> <p>Mrs JONES had the tearooms which were attached to MACKAY's shop which is now MUDDY CREEK café.</p> <p>At the bottom end of the café was the National Bank office. The banker would come twice a week.</p> <p>There was a baker, now the grocery store. HUGHIE SINCLAIR was the last baker. The baker delivered twice a week and the mail too. CARLINES butchery from ALEXANDRA delivered to farms and OMAKAU every week. BOB CRAIG who did farm slaughtering carried on when CARLINES knocked off.</p> <p>Recollections of various characters and the things they got up to.</p> <p>Mr JEFFS was a hairdresser with two chairs. He did shaves. The building with a bit added was the ice cream parlour that had milk shakes.</p> <p>OMAKAU Hall built by GEORGE HARVEY during the recession in the 1930's. GEORGE HARVEY and JIMMY NEVILLE had the money.</p> <p>PAUL BYRNE and GEORGE built the block the tearooms were in. The tearooms had panelled walls and real high class china and cups of tea and sandwiches and cakes on tiered stands. When you went to anywhere and had tea, you drank out of flash cups. AMY JONES ran the tearooms and she had a tearoom at the railway station.</p>
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