

A Chip Off The Old Block

A direct descendant of one of the pioneers of Nelson, a pioneer farmer himself, and a credit to the family name he bears, Mr. Joseph Thomas Baigent, of Baigent Road, Wakatu, today, at 63 years of age, retains the rugged outlook and individually that marked the people who created the history of the Nelson province.

Joseph Baigent is a grandson of one of the first settlers at Wakefield, the late Edward Baigent, who landed in the colony with his wife by the ship Clifford on May 13, 1842.

Mr. Edward Baigent cut farms out of the bush in those early days. One of his five sons, Joseph, followed in his tradition, and, in the next generation, Joseph's son, the present Mr. Joseph Baigent, also turned to the land to cut out a farm from the bush-covered Buller district.

FAMILY SAGA

The history of the Baigent family, and those to whom they have married over the last century, makes up a big cross-section of the history of Nelson. Today Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Baigent's four daughters are great-grandchildren whose forebears all arrived in the Nelson province in 1842.

Mr. Edward Baigent, a native of Windlesham, Surrey, first resided in Brook Street Valley, Nelson, for 15 months, before moving to his Glen-it property

action, a very close friend, Mr. Harry Nicholas, was awarded the Victoria Cross. Mr. Baigent himself won the Military Medal in the fighting in Paschendale.

The loss of his arm saw Mr. Baigent in three hospitals, and finally transferred to Oakland Park Hospital, by the River Thames, which was principally for war amputees. There he took a six-month course in wool-classing.

DOWN TO THE BULLER

From the hospital Mr. Baigent returned to his mother's farm, and married in 1919. Shortly after his marriage, the young couple drew a block of Buller land by ballot, not far from Murchison, and with no road access. Undeterred by the isolation, and the dangers of always having to cross the Buller River, they set to work to clear a farm.

Living in a tent and a hut, they cleared first the flats and then the hills, and, once enough land was cleared, they started a milk delivery to a nearby Public Works camp when the men were building the railway from Glenhope. This meant crossing the Buller daily. Stock had to be swum across the river and driven to Murchison for any sale—a trip that took three days.

"Living meant hard work in those days," recalls Mr. Baigent, "but it was worth every minute as directed at Mr. Holyoake."

During the depression of it.

MINIST

Don't be surprised if 1961 turns out to be the Year of the Great Migration. We are prepared to predict that, whether they want to or not, New Zealand's Prime Minister and Cabinet members will knock out an overseas mileage equal to the greatest that Labour could produce, and that departmental men will not be far behind them.

Already the quick overseas jaunt planned by Mr. Holyoake for March—it is made necessary by the holding of a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference—is showing signs of getting out of hand. A trip to America to meet the new President, a foray into the world of Sixty-and-Sevens on the Continent, a stop-off in India, Pakistan, Indonesia—all these and others too are being stirred into the itinerary.

They are all highly necessary, as must clearly appear to the National Party now from the Government benches. The place of power, of course, is the target-area of criticism, but we wonder how some of those comments of a few months back would sound, should the Prime Minister travel so much? Should he be also our Minister of External Affairs?

In his 1961-63 session we may be the first to make such remarks, as directed at Mr. Holyoake. It is a good time to make them, seeing that so far he has not left the country. We are prepared to wager, however, that we shall not be the last.

Ministers Away

It is a fair prediction also that more than half the Cabinet will have managed an overseas trip, albeit a short one, by the end of this year.

The first in the field, the Minister of Industries and Commerce (Mr. J. Marshall) will be off to Australia shortly to have a close look at the Australian tariff system. The Government is committed to the setting up of a tariff advisory board, and Australia has one, which is purpose enough for his visit.

One might expect that Mr. Marshall, in his new role as Minister of Overseas Trade, will be the most travelled of all the new Cabinet. Logically he should be in the middle of the European trade skirmish, as well as being in Australia, Indonesia (where we hope to extend markets), in various other Pacific countries, and in India, Pakistan, and Africa. With trade posts either established or planned in these areas, Mr. Marshall will be one Minister never short of an excuse for travel—if he wishes to go.

Among others with early bookings must be included the Minister of Finance (Mr. H. R. Lake), the Minister of Maori Affairs (Mr. J. R. Hangan), the Minister of Labour (Mr. T. P. Shand), the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. W. H. Gillespie), and the Minister of Defence (Mr. D. J. Zyre).

The list may be expected to grow very rapidly after next Monday's meeting of Cabinet. The trips contemplated—and this applies particularly to Mr. Marshall's—will be hurried ones, by men eager to get on with the job. And the deci-

Mr. J. T. Baigent

at Wakefield, in 1844. He was the friend and confidant of Bishop Selwyn (in fact he once carried the Bishop on his shoulders through the surf to Motueka), Bishop Hobhouse, and Bishop Suter, a Member of Parliament in Sir George Grey's Government, and the patriarchal head of early Wakefield.

Mr. Edward Baigent established sawmills—today greatly expanded by Mr. L. E. Baigent—grandson through another branch of the family—and farms, erected largely at his own cost, St. John's Church, Wakefield, and built the first day school in Wakefield.

Mr. Edward Baigent died in November, 1892, his wife dying only a few days before him. Their fifth child, Joseph, was born three days after their arrival in Nelson, making him, it is believed, the seventh white child born in the infant province.

Mr. Joseph Baigent married Miss Charlotte Taylor, a daughter of a pioneer family that also came out in 1842, and they had eight children.

A BIG TASK

The late Mr. Joseph Baigent died shortly after the birth of the eighth child, in 1908, and Mrs. Charlotte Baigent was left the task of bringing up the children—their ages ranging from two years to 14 years—by herself on the family farm. The family comprised five boys and three girls.

In 1919 the second eldest boy, again named Joseph, married Miss Clarice Rickets, also a descendant of a family which arrived in 1842. Their marriage combined four families who all came out to Nelson in 1842, and all of whom had 11 children each: Mr. and Mrs. Edward Baigent, Mr. and Mrs. J. Taylor, Mr. and Mrs. S. Higgins, Mr. and Mrs. W. Rickets.

Young Joseph was educated first at the Wakefield School, then at the Nelson Central School, and finally he was among the first all-day pupils at the Nelson Technical School—a course which combined full teaching of academic and technical subjects. For three years young Joseph travelled by train between Wakefield and Nelson—an experience denied all Nelson children today.

TO WAR

Leaving school, Joseph worked on the family farm, but World War I shortly caught up with him and he went overseas with the 15th New Zealand Reinforcements. The troops travelled in the Tofua, and the journey to England took 11 weeks.

Once in France, Joseph joined the 15th Nelson Company of the First Canterbury Infantry Battalion, serving with them till December 3, 1917.

Mr. Joseph Baigent saw active service in the famous battles of Messines, Passchendaele, and Paschendale. He was wounded in a brigade attack on Polderheek Chateau, losing his right arm in the fighting. In that

things were tough, with wool fetching 31d, a pound, and fat 15s 9/- a head, but we won out."

BUTCHERY BUSINESS

A failure to sell some fat wetters set Joe Baigent into the butchery business in opposition to his friend, Mr. Dave Oxnam, and he made money. For three years he delivered meat three times weekly to his customers—mainly Public Works men—again having to cross and re-cross the Buller every time he went out.

During this period Mr. Baigent finally got a grant to establish road access to his farm—having paid rates for many years—but was only allowed 1500 for a 2500 job on the local engineer's estimates. He hired four men, made the road himself for under 1500, and made wages on the job for all five as well.

In 1932 the family bought the Foreka property in Murchison, and in 1938 Mr. Joe Baigent was able to leave his Buller property in the care of a manager.

"I promised my wife we would be there only five years, and we stayed 15," he laughingly comments. "We loved every bit of it."

Then came 1945, and rehabilitation, and Mr. Baigent, who had achieved his start in life through rehabilitation, was able to repay the country and release his two farms for servicemen's resettlement.

1929 EARTHQUAKE

"On June 7, 1929, Mr. Newton McConochie, his brother, and myself were probably the only three people in the area not to know about the destructive Murchison earthquake," he said, recalling the disaster. "We were crossing over undulating open country in a well-sprung car, and had no idea there had been an earthquake until informed of it when we were stopped by a road-block."

"The earthquake kept us landlocked for 10 days, but I had free rein in selling my meat," he chuckled.

"Mrs Baigent was at home at the time and the earthquake managed to slosh all the tea out of some cups she was serving without tipping over the cups," Mr. Baigent recalls.

"Carpenters were working on the house and they laughed heartily at being unable to hit nails because of the shaking. Later, when the full import of the earthquake was known, they did not laugh so much."

Mr. Baigent said that the area his farm was on shook almost incessantly. "We got very used to it and took no notice," he added. "However, it was most disconcerting for our visitors."

Mr. Baigent's sports included Rugby, which he played in Nelson, and later returned in both Nelson and Murchison. He also did a lot of shooting, some of it on the lower West Coast. He has also played golf and tennis. While in Murchison he served a term on the Murchison County Council, and, when he came to

NELSON NATURE 16—FRES

By A

A correspondent from Tadmor, N.D.2, Wakefield, writes in a asking if eels are dangerous. She stated that her grandson had been chased by a big black eel that had "two little white tusks or perhaps teeth on each side of its jaw, which curved upwards over the sides of the upper jaw or lip." My correspondent asks "Does such an eel exist?"

Well, the answer to this question is definitely no. The teeth of freshwater eels are minute and form bands on the roof of the

Nelson, a term on the Walmea County Council. He is a past-president of the Nelson Agricultural and Pastoral Association and was the first president of the present Stoke Progress League. He is a Justice of the Peace and is on the council of the Nelson branch of the Justices of the Peace Association. He has also worked hard on the affairs of the War Amputees' Association.

WIDE EXPERIENCE

Pioneer farming has given Mr. Joseph Baigent a tremendous background of experience in farming. He installed electricity on his farm in 1926, using a direct current hydro-electric plant. He suffered flood, famine, and fire, while isolated by the Buller, while in one disastrous fire early in his farming career on his own account the couple suffered the loss of 300 sheep.

On coming to Nelson the Freezing Works capitalised on his knowledge, and for the last 20 years Mr. Baigent has been a fat stock drifter—"although this is my last year," he comments. Mr. Baigent is now a director of the company.

To keep his hand in at farming, his beautifully situated home, with panoramic views of the Tasman Hills, Tasman Bay, and Wakapuaka, is surrounded by 140 acres of land running 300 ewes.

Recalling his first experience of driving a car, Mr. Baigent said that, shortly after he came back from World War I, he went driving with Mr. H. E. Everett, who suffered the loss of both his legs in the war. Mr. Everett had driven half the way from Richmond to his home, when he turned and said: "Come on, Joe, you've done it. I did it without legs, you do it without an arm!"

"Today we make films and write books idolising men who have triumphed in spite of physical disability. In Mr. Joseph Baigent's generation men just did things."

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