



Richard Driver, Otago Harbour's first official pilot thought so highly of his adopted province that he told new arrivals he would rather be hanged in Otago than die a natural death in Wellington.

Born in Bristol, Richard Driver went to sea aged 14 in the *Governor Ready* to Hobart. He became second mate of the American whaling ship *John and Edward* which arrived off Murdering Beach in early 1839 in search of water. Reputedly the boat was attacked and Richard was saved by Motoitoi, daughter of Kahutia, who threw her father's cloak over his shoulders. They were married by local custom and lived in a large cave at the beach which they made comfortable with a thatch and sapling wall.

Richard made a living by piloting ships into the harbour, by selling produce, and by catching an occasional whale. Though he sometimes ill-treated Motoitoi they had three daughters:

Maria Catherine, born 5 November 1840, later Mrs William Stevens, then Mrs Peter Mouat.

Emma Paerata, born in 1841, who became Mrs John Tregarthen, founder of the Tirikatene family, then Mrs William Joss

Mary Titawa who became Mrs John Te Aika of Kaiapoi.

After Motoitoi died on 31 August 1846, Richard had a son, John Poroki, by his Maori housekeeper, but all the children went to relatives when he went back to sea.

On his return in the whaling ship *Northwest* he resumed his earlier activities but met competition from John Washburn Hunter and James Fowler, the swiftest boat collecting the 5 pounds pilotage fee. Governor Grey appointed Driver the official pilot (gazetted 6 April 1848) and as such he brought the *John Wickliffe* and *Philip Laing* to anchor in Port Chalmers. On 1 September 1856 the Provincial Council appointed him a pilot for the upper harbour.

Rev Thomas Burns married Driver to 17-year-old Elizabeth Robertson, a passenger on the *Philip Laing*, on 30 May 1849. They lived at Harrington Point, with his daughter Maria, and had three children, Richard, Elizabeth and Emma. But the next seven babies were born dead and on medical advice they moved to Purakaunui in 1860, then still in bush with birds and fish in abundance. Produce was boated round to Port Chalmers or taken by donkey on a circuitous track.

When a Road Board was established it met in Richard's house, and he was chairman in 1870. He was also a link with Maori residents, organising races for Maori crews at Port Chalmers regattas.

His family grew with the births of Aida, Ellen, Frederick, Thomas, Charles, Annie, William and Agnes, and their descendants today now number many hundreds.

However tragedy struck the family on 27 April 1890 when young Agnes fell off a cliff and died from injuries.

From the Otago Witness , Issue 1892, 15 May 1890, Page 11 we learn more.

An inquest was held at Long Beach, Purakaunui, yesterday morning before Mr E. G. Allen, J.P., and a jury of six (Mr John Foote, foreman) on the body of **Agnes Driver**, who died from injuries sustained through falling over a cliff.

Elizabeth **Driver**, mother of the deceased, deposed that her daughter's age was 13 years and 10 months. Witness remembered Sunday, the 27th of April. On that day deceased was about the house in the early part of the afternoon, but about 3 o'clock she disappeared, and witness thought she had gone for the cows as she was in the habit of doing. She was then in good health. It was milking time at 4 o'clock, but she had not then returned. Search was made for her, but she was not found. Next day she was brought home from a neighbour's house, terribly bruised and cut about the head. She was sensible, and told witness that on Sunday afternoon after leaving home she went over to the cliff, where her hat blew off, and in making an effort to catch it she tripped on a vine and fell to the bottom of the cliff.

Charles **Driver**, a young man, stated that deceased was his sister. When he missed her on Sunday, the 27th April, he went with others to look for her, and about 10 o'clock at night he found her lying at the bottom of a cliff. She told him she had fallen from the top of the cliff. She was removed to Mrs Liddell's house, half a mile away. Dr Cunningham was at once sent for from Port Chalmers, and arrived about 1 o'clock next morning and attended to the girl.

Dr Cunningham said he remembered being called to attend deceased. He saw her between 1 and 2 o'clock on the morning of Monday, the 28th ult., at the house of Mrs Liddle, Long Beach. She was suffering from severe shock, and had two severe scalp wounds, laying bare the crown of the skull for a length of about 6in on either side, the wound being filled with debris such as small pieces of rock and leaves. She also had sustained a dislocation of the left shoulder joint, a fracture of the right shoulder blade bone, contusion of the right lung, and a fracture of the left side of the pelvis, while there were severe bruises all over the body. She was perfectly conscious and lingered until last Wednesday night at 6 o'clock, when she died in witness' presence. The immediate cause of death was due to the injury to the pelvis. In conversation with deceased witness learned from her that while she was sitting on the edge of the cliff her hat blew off, and in attempting to regain it she tripped and rolled over the cliff. The place where the girl fell over had been pointed out to witness, and he estimated that she must have fallen a distance of 200 ft.

The jury returned a verdict to the effect that deceased died from injuries received through accidentally falling over a cliff.

Richard died on 19 January 1897 and Elizabeth on 9 May 1897 and both are buried in the Purakaunui Cemetery.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand
www.cemeteries.org.nz) from Otago Witness report in PapersPast and from Ian Church's biography in *Southern People a Dictionary of Otago Southland Biography*