

The Anglican Historical Society of New Zealand *Te Rōpu Hītori o te Hāhi Mīhinare ki Aotearoa*

Berenice Vivienne Ashton Luke

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*The name of
Berenice Vivienne Ashton Luke
is on a plaque in Wellington's Cathedral of St Paul,
and also,
on Plaques in St Mary's and Holy Trinity Cathedral, Auckland.
Who was she?
What was her connection with these Cathedrals?*

The Luke Family

Miss **Berenice Vivienne Ashton Luke** was a descendant of the well-known Luke family of Wellington.

Her grandparents were William Pearce Luke (1853-86), and Elizabeth Ann Luke (died 25 Aug 1937). William Luke was a brother of Sir Charles Manley Luke (Mayor of Wellington in 1895) who was grandfather of David Luke. William and Charles are among the sons of Sam Luke and Mary Ann Luke. Sam Luke was the founder of Luke's Foundry, which is commemorated by Luke's Lane, Wellington.

Berenice's Parents: William Webb Luke and Mary Ann Ashton

The couple married in New Zealand, 5 August 1903.

William Luke (born 1877) was 2nd Engineer and a survivor on the Penguin when it was shipwrecked on the south coast of Wellington on 12 February 1909. Later he gave evidence at the Commission of Enquiry.

After serving on the Tarawera, he joined the Navua as Second Engineer.¹ Sometime after that the family moved to Auckland, where they lived in

Otahuhu. He was well-known in Auckland cricket circles. Early in 1937, he was appointed ² acting Works Manager and Chief Engineer of the South Otago Freezing Works, during the absence overseas of the Manager. He must have been appointed permanently to the position of Works Manager, as it was later reported: 'Mr W. W. Luke, who has been works manager of the South Otago Freezing Company for the past six years, has resigned owing to ill-health.'³ He died suddenly on 27 May 1945 at his residence, North Balclutha, aged 68, and was interred at Karori Cemetery, Wellington. His occupation at the time of probate was given as Mechanical Engineer.

Mary Ann Luke died on 17 April 1962, aged 84. She also is interred at Karori Cemetery. No other information is known about her. It is not known where she died, or whether Berenice had been nursing her.

Berenice Luke

Berenice was born on 30 June 1905, the only daughter of William Webb Luke and Mary Ann Luke. Nothing is known about her schooling, or where she lived.

Newspaper news items indicate that as a young person in Auckland, Berenice passed music exams, and was involved in ballet. For example, at the Northcote Parish Show in November 1916 she won 2nd prize for Coconut Ice.⁴ At the age of 14, she was a soloist in 'Through War and Peace', a succession of Dance and Tableaux, in Auckland Town Hall in October 1919.⁵ In November 1919 she passed Division II, Grammar of Music, in the children's section of the Associated Board of the Royal Academy of Music and Royal College of Music, London.⁶ On 10 August 1922 the Amusements column of the Auckland Star advertised that Miss Daphne Knight's Pupils were performing in His Majesty's Theatre, Auckland. For the occasion, the Revd. Jasper Calder had written a special story called 'Carnival' which was given in the form of a ballet with a connecting dialogue and a song ... Berenice (aged 18) was a soloist in the Act Three dance.⁷

Marriage

On 19 January 1927 Berenice (aged 21) was married to **Leslie Claude Gladding** in St Mary's Cathedral, Auckland, by the Vicar, the Rev P. E. James (who later became Vicar of St Paul's pro-Cathedral, Wellington, 1929-39). It is believed that Berenice had been living in Parnell. The ceremony and marriage were well-reported in the newspaper of the time.

However, the marriage was short-lived, as they were divorced on 31 August 1938. Claude died on 16 February 2001 aged 98.

Nursing Career

Divorced in 1938, Berenice moved to Wellington, where she undertook nursing training. Nursing records show something of her career as a nurse.⁸ She was a student nurse at Wellington Hospital, entering on 1 May 1938, aged 33. She became a Registered Nurse (RN) in 1940, and a Registered

Midwife (RM) in 1942. She trained in midwifery at Alexandra Home Wellington. Alexandra Home for Unwed Mothers in Wellington, situated in Rintoul Street, had been established many years previously, and was used as a place for training midwives and maternity nurses. She joined the staff of Wellington Hospital as a Tutor Sister on 1 February 1943, and 1944-60. In 1946 she was awarded the Post Graduate Diploma of Schools of Nursing and Hospital Administration. She was appointed Acting Principal Tutor, Wellington Hospital, in November 1956, and was Supervising Sister until December 1963. In the words of Dean Michael Brown, 'She became Head Nurse of the Nurses.'

Later Years

The 1949 electoral roll has Miss Luke living at 159 Te Anau Rd, Wellington, and her marital status as 'spinster.' She is listed as a nurse in Wellington in 1959, and living at 159 Te Anau Road, where she was still living in 1972. By 1984 she was living at 1/A 236 Oriental Parade and retired. She is also said to have later been a music teacher in Wellington.

Death

Miss Luke died on 5 March 1993, aged 87, at Mary Potter Hospice, Wellington. Her occupation was given as Retired Nurse, and her address as Oriental Bay. Her private funeral was conducted by Dean Michael Brown in the Lady Chapel of Wellington Cathedral of St Paul on Tuesday, 9 March 1993. The Funeral Director was Ninness Funeral Home of Porirua. Her ashes were interred in Karori Cemetery along with her parents. A photograph of the plaque on the family grave is available on the Karori Cemetery website.

Bequests and Memorials

Miss Luke left a bequest to St Paul's Cathedral, Wellington which was used to pay for the Lady Chapel, given in memory of her parents William Webb Luke and Mary Ann Luke, both of whom are also commemorated in sanctuary windows in the Lady Chapel, The Nativity, and The Crucifixion.

She also left a bequest to Holy Trinity Cathedral in Auckland. This was used for windows on the

Parnell Road side of the nave of Saint Marys in Holy Trinity Cathedral. Apparently when she was married the sun shone through the blue windows of St Mary's, and she remembered this throughout her life.

One of Holy Trinity Cathedral's Guidebooks has this paragraph referring to the windows on the west wall of St Mary's.

The Luke Windows St Mary's in Holy Trinity Cathedral, Auckland

The Luke windows, completed in 2000, are the result of a legacy from Miss Berenice Luke who was married in St Mary's prior to World War 2. In her professional life, Miss Luke was a senior Nursing Sister who became Head of the Nursing School at Wellington Hall. Designed by Claudia Pond Eyley, the windows are a mixture of traditional symbolism, computer generated images, old maps and Māori design. They commemorate the life of the Virgin Mary and celebrate the contribution of Auckland women to church and society. Pictured are Sarah Selwyn and Eliza Cowie, two early bishops' wives, who are also celebrated in two much older apse windows given by Celia Kinder and other Auckland women. Also pictured is Mary Ann Martin, wife of the Chief Justice. These three women were much concerned with the welfare of Auckland women in the nineteenth century. Women's service in the twentieth century is represented by pictures of missionary nurses Kathleen Hall and Eunice Preece, who worked in China, and a group of women priests. Other windows portray scenes for the life of Mary, the Hikoi of Hope 1999, Queen Victoria School, and the Women's Suffrage Movement.

Sources

Information from Dean Michael Brown, The Dominion, NZ Herald, Auckland Star, Otago Daily Times, Papers Past, Ninness Funeral Home, Electoral Rolls. Ron Easthope Karori and Purewa Cemetery records. The Alexander Turnbull Library holds a photograph album, from Miss Luke's estate.

Please send any further information to johnmccaul40@gmail.com.

We are especially keen to have a photograph of Miss Luke.

Endnotes

¹ Evening Post, 19 Nov 1909

² Otago Daily Times, 27 March 1937

³ Otago Daily Times, 17 Jan 194

⁴ Auckland Star, 20 Nov 1916

⁵ Auckland Star, 23 October 1919

⁶ NZ Herald, 14 Jan 1920; Auckland Star, 12 Jan 1920

⁷ Auckland Star, 10 Aug 1922

⁸ Notes from Ron Easthope