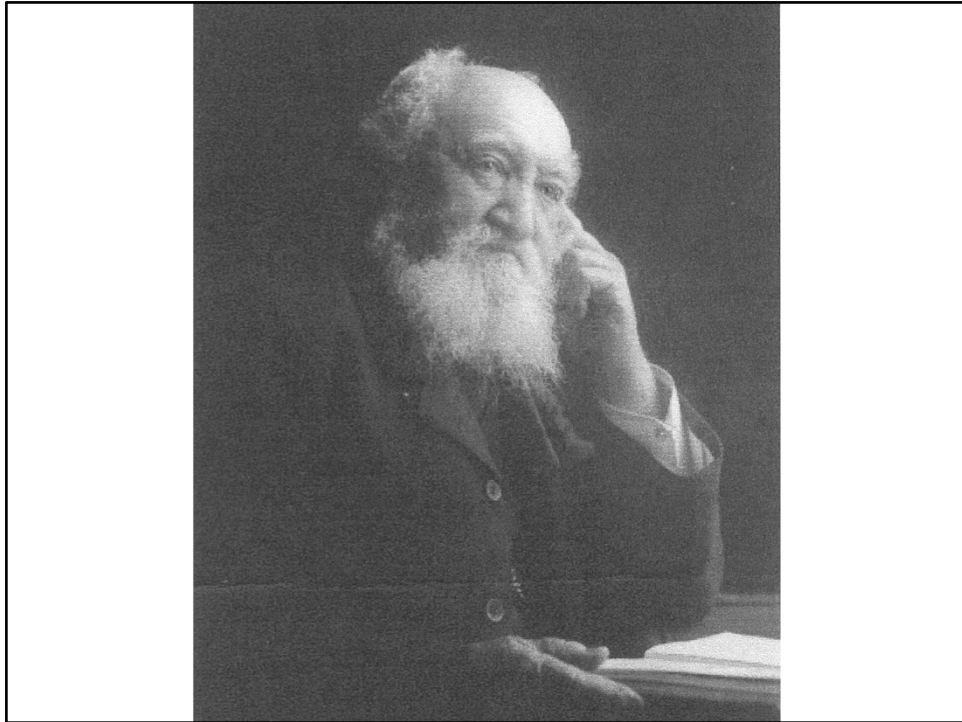


The Communion of Unitarian Saints



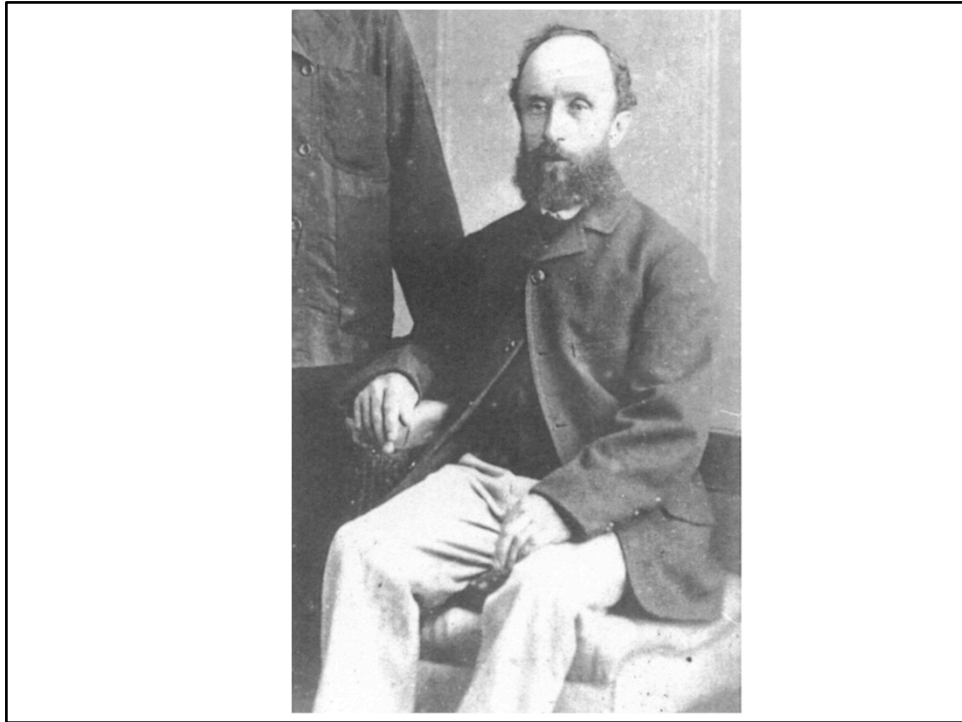
Auckland Unitarian Church

Love beyond belief



Franklin Bradley (1834-1909)

Born at Saintfield, County Down was a Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Minister. The Bradley family arrived in Auckland in 1863 to take up land under the Auckland Provincial Council Albertland land grant scheme. They stayed in Auckland because of the Waikato War and Franklin became minister to the Auckland Unitarian congregation 1863-65. The congregation opened a fund to build a chapel and asked the British & foreign Unitarian Association to send out a minister to replace Franklin, guaranteeing 150 pounds per annum towards the salary. A year after Franklin left to farm the congregation had faded away. Franklin went on to become a JP, farmer and community leader in Arapohue, Northern Wairoa, contesting the Marsden seat in the general election of 1876.



During Bradley tenure as the minister of the first Unitarian congregation in New Zealand, the secretary was Frederick James Utting, a surveyor who found the Bradley family land to buy at Arapahoue. Utting named the suburb of New Lynn in Auckland after his home place of Kings Lynn back in England. He kept the congregation going for up to a year after Franklin left, started a church building fund and wrote to the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in the UK (now the General Assembly) asking for help to recruit a replacement minister.



Sir Robert Stout was the 13th Premier of New Zealand on two occasions in the late 19th century, and later Chief Justice of New Zealand. He was the only person to hold both these offices. He was a life-long Unitarian.

He had a reformers heart. He sought changes to the civil service system to prevent cronyism, patronage and corruption. He strongly supported secondary and technical education. He was the single most influential figure in the development of New Zealand's university system. He was a leader in the fight for women's rights, supporting women's suffrage and property and inheritance rights. He put forth bills to permit women to serve in Parliament. He was appalled by sweatshops and poverty. While he once opposed state intervention in economic life, he came to believe that state intervention was required to remedy these evils. He did much to bring about labour reform. When he left Parliament he was appointed Justice of the High Court where he served for 27 years, presiding over 1400 cases, where he left his progressive stamp. In his later life he became a close friend of William Jellie and certainly would have attended the occasional service at the Auckland Unitarian Church.

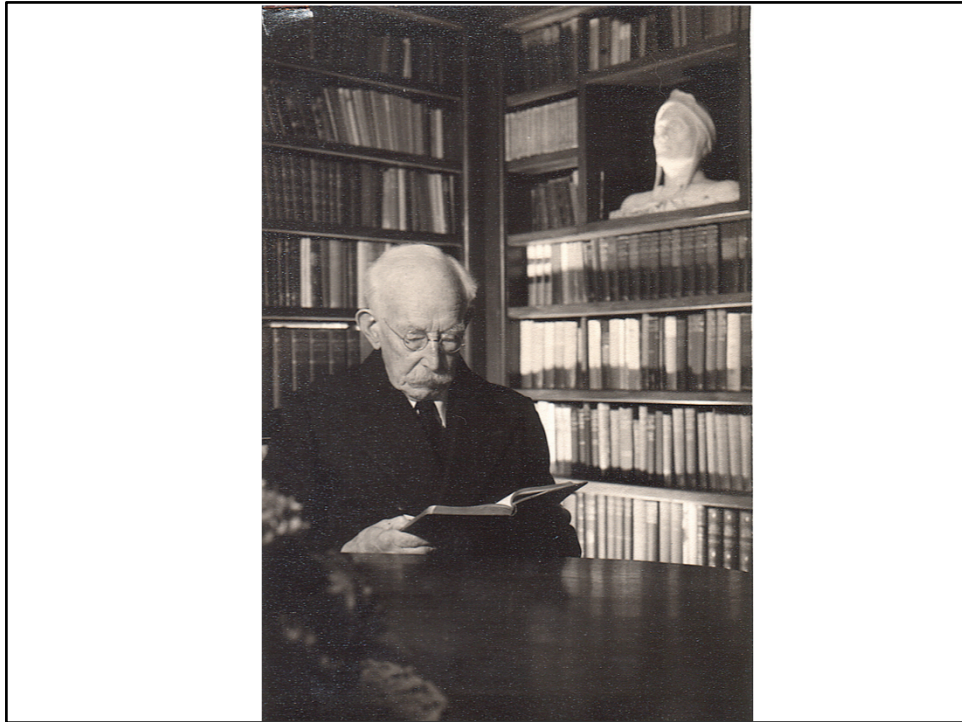


William Jellie (1865-1963) our first minister of the second Unitarian congregation studied for the Unitarian ministry at Manchester College. He removed from London to Oxford in his final year where a course in sociology, economics and social problems shaped his world view. It was taught by Philip Wicksteed, a Unitarian minister and economist. Wicksteed's course dealt with inequality and human suffering and in doing so made it plain that a Unitarian minister was expected to address these issues and not ignore them.

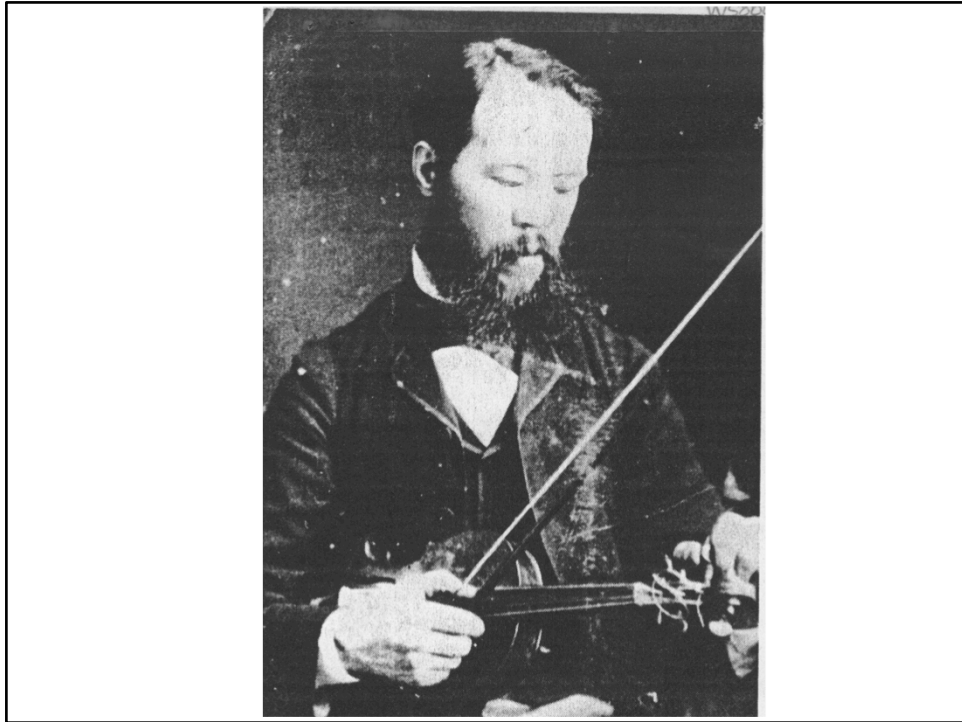
William Jellie worked in his first parish for six years in one of the poorest parts of London, experiencing first-hand the suffering and depredation of an unreformed capitalism.



Arriving in New Zealand in 1900 to organise the Unitarian cause, William Jellie brought a cultured and intellectual view of liberal religion to colonial life. He founded a church in Auckland and was instrumental in expanding the cause to other centres. Having married Elsa in New Zealand, he returned to England just before the outbreak of war in 1914, remaining for the next seven years. There his feelings for his country of birth, Ireland, led him to publicly support the call for independence, a call not accepted by many of his congregants.



The return of peace saw the return of the Jellie family to New Zealand. Now his ministerial work was much more subscribed and William Jellie turned to a new occupation, tutor for the Worker's Educational Association in Auckland. Throughout his life in New Zealand William Jellie undertook a strong defence of secular education and in so doing was aligned with the rationalist movement.



Thomas Henry White (1843-1923); a musician, water colour painter and the architect played a central role in building the Auckland Unitarian Church. It was Thomas White and William Jellie who searched for suitable building sites around Auckland and settled on the city council leasehold site in Ponsonby Road. Thomas White then designed the church and chaired the committee responsible for building it.

In addition to designing our church and overseeing its construction he was the leader of the Auckland Unitarian Church orchestra, being an accomplished violinist.



Laying the foundation stone of the Auckland Unitarian Church

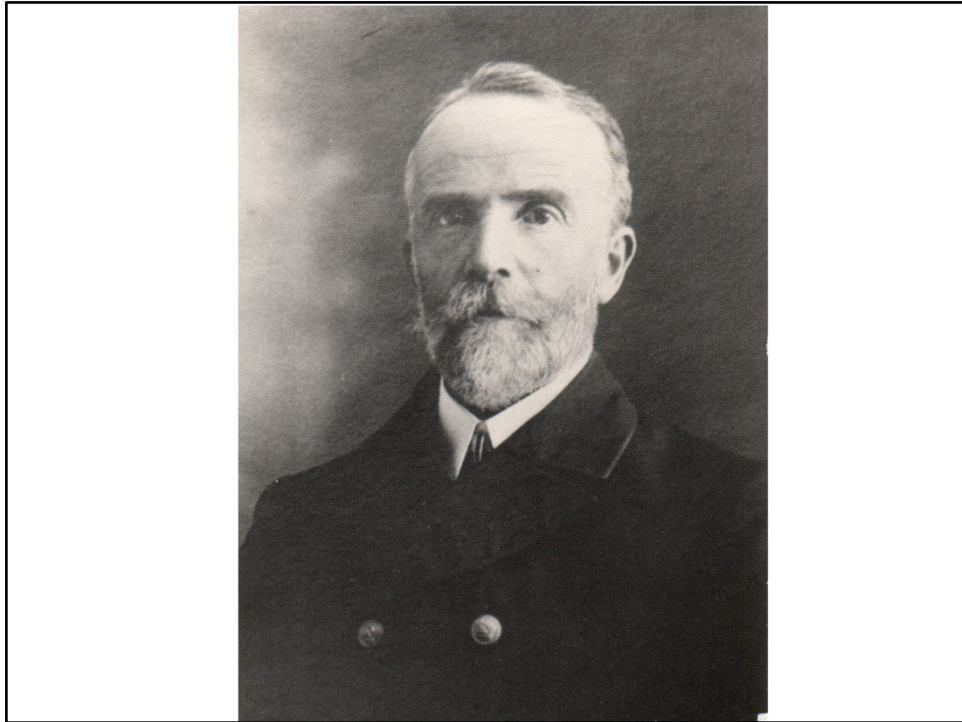
The Back Story:

- In 1897 an Australian Unitarian commercial traveler, Mr Porter, advertised in Auckland papers for Unitarians to contact him.
- A meeting held 3 March 1898 in the Tailoresses' Hall decided to form a church.
- Regular services begin conducted by Hugh McGready.
- The Auckland fellowship applied to the British and Foreign Unitarian Association [BFUA] for a minister.
- British Unitarians arranged for the Rev R H Lambley of the Melbourne Unitarian Church to visit Auckland. His 1899 report supported the appointment of a minister.
- Acting on the Lambley report the British Unitarians sent the Rev William Jellie who arrived at Auckland on 26 February 1900
- Jellie delivers his first two sermons on 4 March 1900 in the Oddfellows' Hall, Pitt Street on 'Our Aim' and 'The Principles and Doctrines of Unitarians'
- The congregation grows from 65 to 150 in nine months so a move was made to a larger hall
- A building fund is established and the building opened on 4 December 1901.
- Other clergy invited to attend but none did.
- Overnight someone painted '*This is the house of the devil,*' on the outside of the building.



Annie and Charles Newland, founding members of the church in 1898. Charles Newland (1863-1945) was an accountant and member of the church committee serving as treasurer throughout William Jellie's ministry. He, Jellie and the church's solicitor formed a committee to draft a new set of Rules and a trust Deed.

When Annie Newland died she bequeathed money for the establishment of a trust to help maintain the Auckland Unitarian Church. The present renovations are largely funded by her farsightedness.



Joseph Cochrane Macky (1855-1915) became the second chair of the Management Committee during the last year of his term of mayor of Devonport in 1901. He served in that position throughout William Jellie's first ministry at the church.

Joseph Macky came from a family which adhered to the Presbyterian tradition and had migrated from Northern Ireland around the middle of the nineteenth century. In his late forties when he joined the Unitarians, his life had had measures of success and sadness. Joseph enjoyed his political and commercial success; he was chairman of directors of a large trading enterprise, Macky, Logan, Caldwell Limited, which included the oldest men's clothing manufacturer in the Colony.

His wife Isabella died on 7 August 1887 aged 38 years. A little over a year later Joseph married again, to Mary Birrell (1858-1915)

His commitment to Unitarianism continues through to the present day. The Macky Trust that he established to further Unitarianism in New Zealand has made a grant to the church to help fund the present permanent minister for five years.



On the van: R J Hall

The Van Mission in NZ

Hall came to NZ to be William Jellie's successor, having already having had experience with the Van Mission in England.

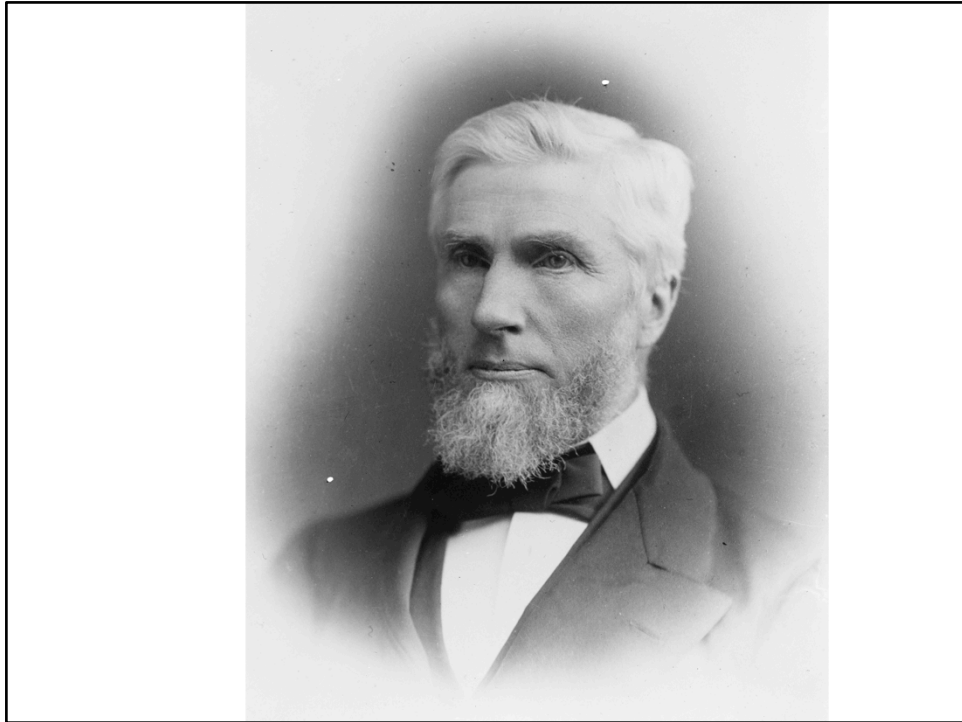
The first step was taken with the decision to form a Unitarian Missionary Conference on 12 July 1911, with Joseph Macky President, Harriet Morrison Treasurer, and Rev Richard Hall Secretary. The initiative for this came from Rev Hall. The purpose was to unite "...the Unitarian Churches and the scattered Unitarians of New Zealand in a Conference for Missionary work...

By 6 November 1911 the new van was ready for the road. From the young members group of the church, Hall selected young men on their speaking abilities and formed a team of young assistants. The Mission opened at the statue of Governor Grey in front of the Auckland Town Hall. Each evening in Auckland attendances rose to about 400 to 450 and collections were made among the crowd. The next weeks they visited Pukekohe, Huntly, the large Maori town of Ngaruawahia, Hamilton, and after a six day journey, Waihi, a gold mining town.

After three years left, to the disappointment of the congregation, to carry the message of Unitarianism to South Africa.



Jessie Heywood was the librarian of the Auckland Unitarian Church from 1906 to 1930. An immigrant from Manchester England where her father was elected mayor twice.



Col Robert Trimble, MP and brother-in-law of Jessie Heywood was a strong proponent of secular education.



Harriet Morison

In 1911 Harriet was treasurer of the NZ Unitarian Conference, in 1918 she was a member of the AUC management committee and from 1923 out first chairwoman.



Prior to her involvement at the Auckland Unitarian Church, Harriet Morison had already secured her place in history. She is one of the five women portrayed with Kate Shepherd in her Memorial in Christchurch for her work to win women's suffrage.



Harriet Morison

The sweating crusade, 1892

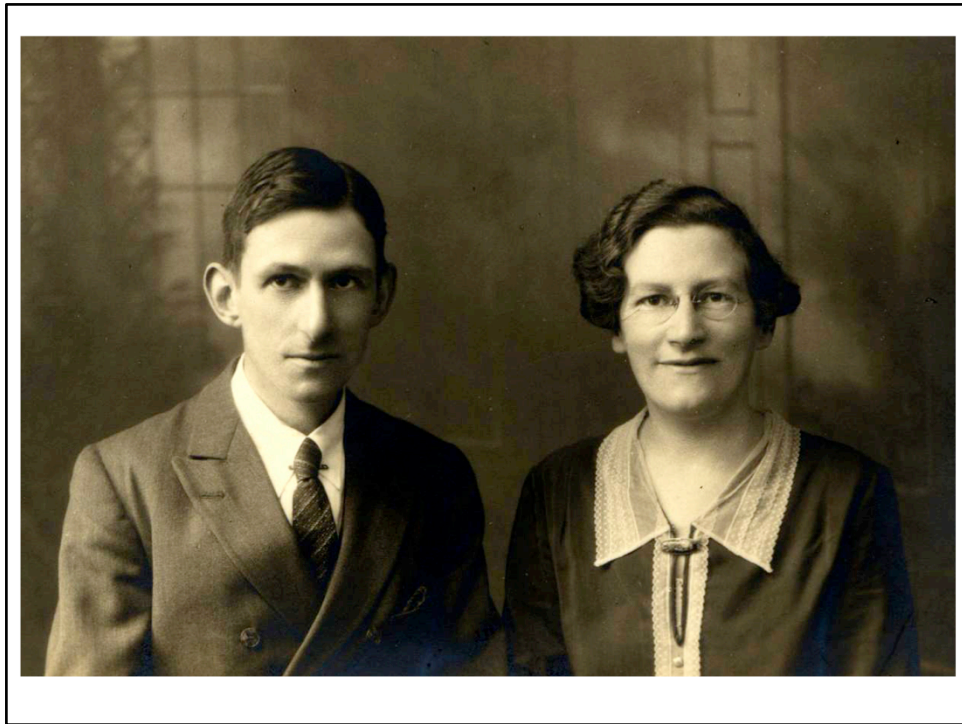


This cartoon shows union secretary Harriet Morison crusading against “sweating” – work in poor conditions with low pay.

The working conditions of women workers in clothing factories in Dunedin and other centres attracted criticism in the late 1880s and early 1890s, when employers wanted to cut costs because business was slow. The Tailoresses’ Union was set up in response.



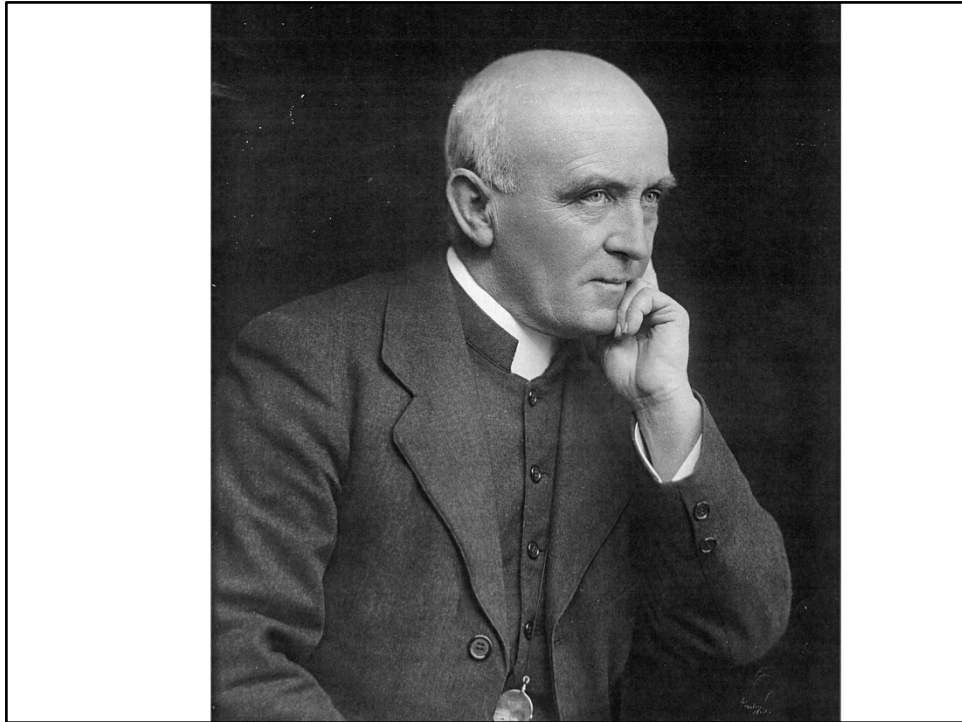
James Chapple, William Jellie, William Constable, Wilna Constable, R J Hall on the occasion of the Constable's installation as ministers of the Auckland Unitarian Church.



William and Wilna had a very successful joint ministry 1929-34. Wilna had the distinction of being the first woman minister, outside Salvation Army officers or visitors, in NZ and through lobbying got a change in the Marriage Act to allow women to officiate at weddings. Wilna was on the Auckland executive of the National Council for Women and ensured they led the lobbying.

During their ministry, Sunday services were broadcast on National Radio.

After their departure, William Jellie once again stepped into the breach for two years. During this time he joined with the Rationalist Society to oppose Bible in School.



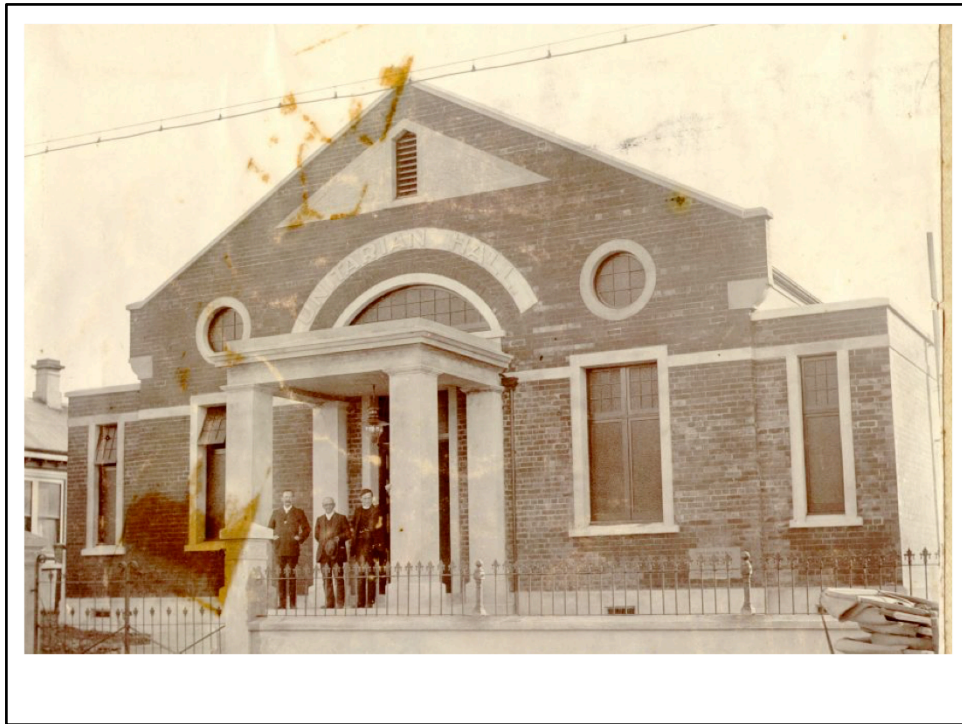
James Chapple (1865–1947) was a notable figure over three decades in New Zealand Unitarian history. Originally a Salvation Army officer, James Chapple became ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1903 but resigned from the church after chairing a public meeting for the noted English Rationalist, Joseph McCabe. Chapple then joined the Unitarians and went on to open a Unitarian church in Timaru in 1912.

Due to Chapple's opposition to World War I, he left for America in July 1915 with his wife Florence and 13 children, where they stayed at Oakland, California. There he engaged in anti-war work and socialism

When America entered WWI in 1917, he returned to New Zealand and started a Unitarian Church in Christchurch.

After speaking out publicly against the war in March 1918, he was convicted of sedition and sentenced to 11 months imprisonment. Some of the words that got him into trouble were:

You are under the heels of the warlords. ... A war is blasphemy. A woman goes down the valley of death to bring a child into the world, she nurses it, sends it to school, sees it through the sixth standards, and then comes the call to arms, and it goes away to war. What for? To die for its country? No; to die for the profiteer.



Unitarian Church of Timaru with Jellie, Chappel and Hall

Upon release he returned to the Christchurch Unitarian Church where he served until 1925.



William Jellie, James Chapple and R J Hall

Although now in retirement, William Jellie returned to the pulpit in the Auckland Unitarian Church prior to the outbreak of World War II. The church found it impossible to arrange a replacement minister and turned to Ken Thomas (1903–1978) to provide lay leadership. James Chapple was included in a three-way ministerial roster.

James Chapple was determined to follow the political line espoused by the Communist Party in support of the Soviet Union. So long as Germany only waged war in Western Europe, he was content to disparage the Allied war effort, which he portrayed as aggression by imperialist powers. This he did at the Auckland Unitarian Church while waving the newspaper of the New Zealand Communist Party, from the pulpit (before the paper was banned in June 1940). This did not endear him to most of his congregation. He decided not to continue delivering sermons. One member later wrote, "Somehow, we were sorry to lose him: we were beginning to develop an affection for him."



OWEN GLENBROOK HANSEN (24 September 1923-30 August 2006)

The youngest of nine children, Owen had eight older brothers and a sister. He was born into a farming family in the Waikato. His parents were married by William Jellie in 1904.

His father would later write that: "As for religion, we parents are free thinkers. We adhere to the good points in all religions and reject any portion of each religion which conscience or reason repels," Owen was well aware of his mother's Unitarianism. In his *Diary* he records a visit to the Auckland Unitarian Church on Sunday 1 February 1931, when he would have been seven years old, noting how they "saw Mr and Mrs Constable on the way home." Later Owen recorded in his *Diary* how he had listened on the radio to the evening service from the Unitarian Church on 31 May 1931.

He and his family were also vegetarians. He would write: "Part of vegetarianism is the belief that you shouldn't kill animals unnecessarily. In a way this consideration for others is similar with Christian values of life." It was during the inter-war period that pacifism and vegetarianism became closely allied, as the ethical views of both philosophies realised they had a common acceptance of the unity of life, be it human or animal.



Photo: Whenuaroa Detention Camp where Owen Hansen spent the war as a conscientious objector

In 1942 aged 19 Owen was called up for military service. Having passed the medical Owen decided not to report for duty at Hamilton. He appealed against military service on the grounds that he was a conscientious objector, but the appeal was declined and he was ordered to report for non-combatant service in the medical corp. When he failed to report for duty he was sentenced to a detention camp for the remainder of the war. There were 13 detention camps in New Zealand containing 803 men during WW2.



Photo: Whenuaroa Detention Camp

Conditions at the camp varied, during summer inmates were usually given four blankets with an extra blanket in winter; there were no mattresses . Men worked in gangs digging drains, cutting scrub, farming and producing food for themselves. For the vegetarian prisoners it was a struggle to obtain sufficient food to eat. They had access to books; Owen thought he read about 150 books during his detention.

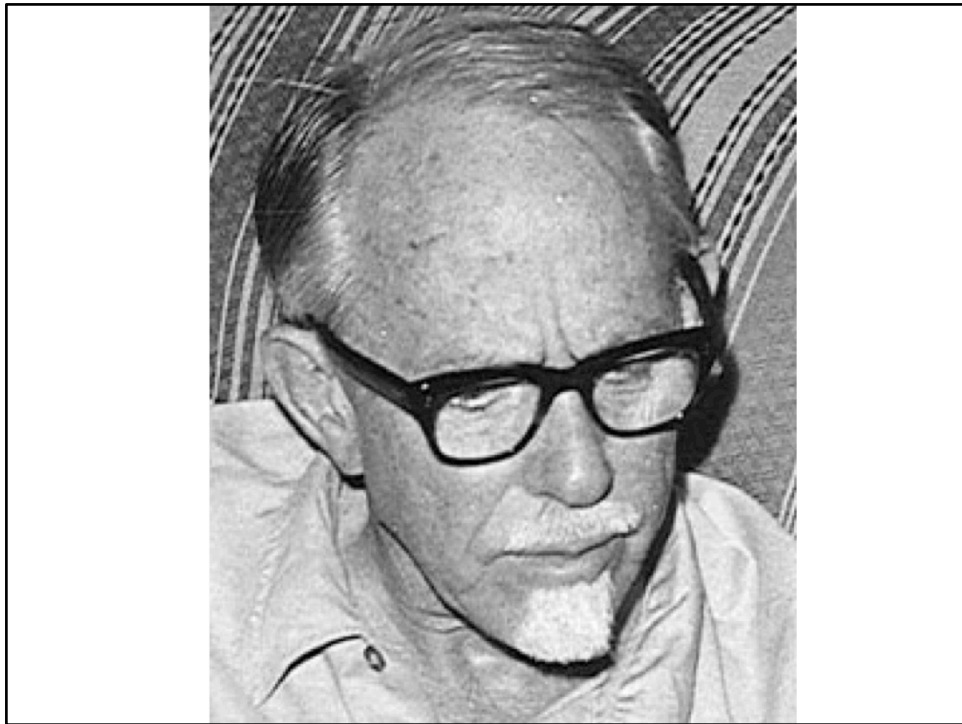


By 1946 when he was released (a year after the war finished in Europe and nine months after the Pacific war ended) Harold had been in prison for almost four years and Owen for three and a half years, including four months solitary confinement with 52 days on bread and water punishment for disobeying orders by visiting his brother Harold.

It was in the 1960's that he began taking an interest in the Auckland Unitarian Church, making the long drive from Orini to Auckland on a Sunday morning. He would be seen three or four times a year and formed friendships with a number of its members and enjoyed the fellowship. Owen continued his visits for the next forty years.



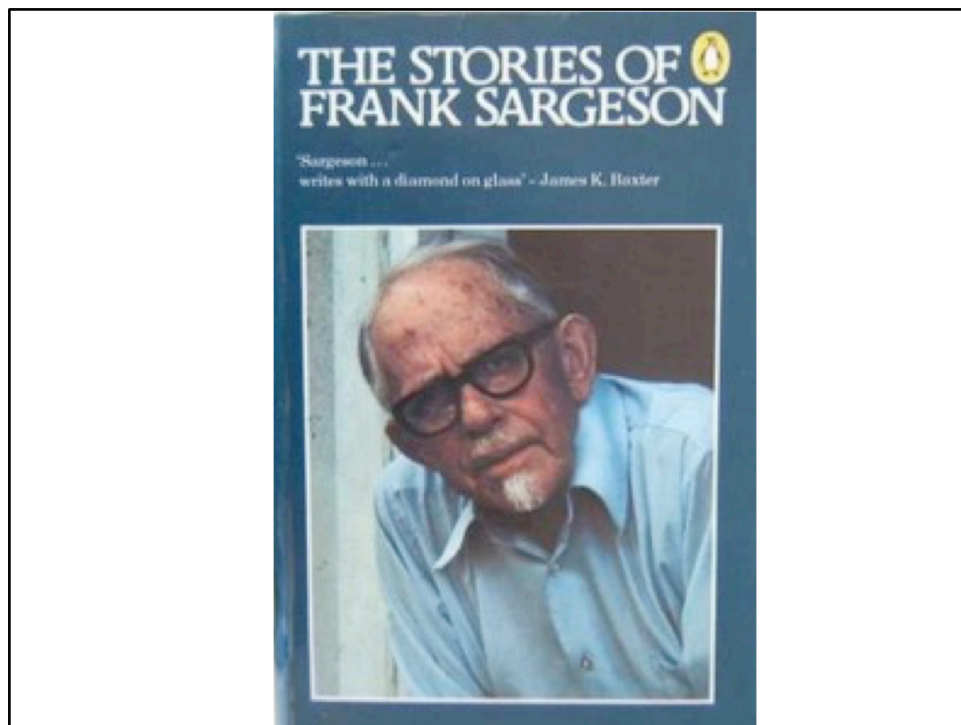
Rev Albert Thornhill was the minister for about ten years. Frank Sargeson, NZ's famous short story writer, was a fan. He liked it when he gave the Baptists around the corner hell.



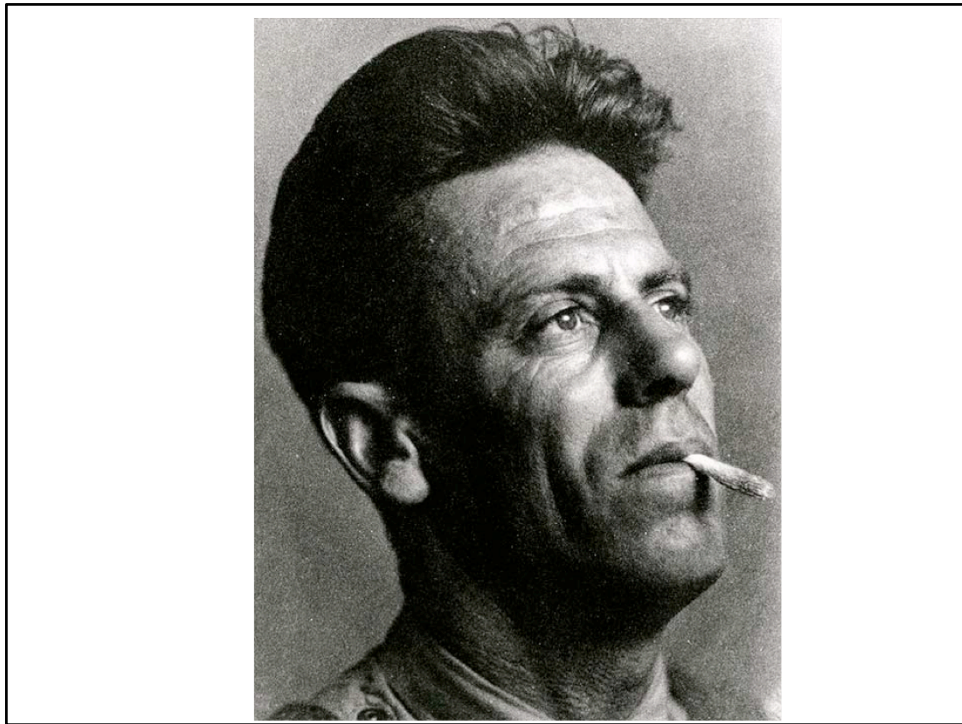
Frank Sargeson is considered one of New Zealand's foremost short story writers. Like Katherine Mansfield, Sargeson helped to put New Zealand literature on the world map.

He also nurtured New Zealand writers, including Janet Frame who lived at his property on Esmonde Road while writing her first novel.

During the 1930s and 40s, Sargeson experienced considerable economic hardship, as his literary output earned him very little money. This experience left him permanently sympathetic to the Left. For example, he quietly advocated closer relations between New Zealand and Maoist China. He was also gay at a time when sodomy was illegal in New Zealand. In 1929, he was arrested on a morals charge in Wellington, but later acquitted. Michael King believes that this trial explains why Sargeson adopted a pen name and never practised the legal profession for which he had trained.



The Auckland Unitarian Church featured in one of Frank Sargeson's short stories



RAK Mason

Most critics regard R.A.K. Mason as New Zealand's first authentic poet, with a poetic intensity attributed in part to his extraordinary youth. Mason was nineteen when he published his first collection, and four-fifths of his *Collected Poems* were written before he turned 25. Though described as 'a poetic medium rather than a maker of poems', by 1941 his gift had abandoned him and his poetic activity virtually ceased. Nevertheless, Mason continued to work in left-wing theatre, he wrote plays and edited a communist newspaper, and was assistant secretary of the Auckland Builders' and General Labourers' Union, for whom he edited *Challenge*.

RAK (Ron) Mason had a loose connection with the Auckland Unitarian Church. His play "THE BMA" (for British Medical Association, which is the NZMA today) performed its world premiere at the AUC in 1939. The play was about the BMA opposing socialised medicine, which we have today, that was introduced by the first Labour government.



One of the most important influences on Hone Tuwhare's development as a poet was his friendship with fellow poet and communist Ron (R. A. K.) Mason. Mason offered encouragement and advice, and published one of Tuwhare's first poems in the communist newspaper the *People's Voice* in 1950.



Hone Tuwhare, won many awards and honours as one of New Zealand's premier poets and first Maori poet to be published in English. He has been described as "the people's poet. He was loved and cherished by New Zealanders from all walks of life." The year before he died the Sunday Star-Times conducted a poll of New Zealanders' favourite poems. Choices were wide open. People could nominate verse from any country and any period. Even though competing against Shakespeare's sonnets, Wordsworth's Daffodils and The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Tuwhare's poem Rain won by a clear margin.

Hone Tuwhare, was a boilermaker, a strong trade unionist, a one-time communist who had an association with this congregation in the 1960's.

Both Hone and Ron Mason shared a non-religious outlook. Ron Mason was a member of the Rationalist Association and Sunday Freedom League. Hone Tuwhare '...had eschewed organized religion.. :: in his adult life, according to his biographer. The religion of his parents was rejected in favour of trade unionism and the 'ardour and philosophy of the New Zealand Communist Party.' He probably viewed the Unitarians as not being part of mainstream religion, because of their rejection of all creeds and acceptance of individual views, including humanist, finding them compatible with his own outlook. His involvement was simply part of the family life he developed with his wife Jean who came from a Unitarian family background.



Hone joined Pete Seeger at St Matthew-in-the-City for a concert to support the anti-Vietnam war effort on May 16, 1968
Clearly a poster made before desktop publishing was the norm.



Helen Clark congratulating Hone Tuwhare on his being the first recipient of the Prime Minister's Poetry Award in 2003.



Thelma Elvina (nee Stoker, 1929-2005) and Noel (b. 1916) Blyth were looking for a suitable place where their daughter Ann could have religious education. They looked at some of the Orthodox Church options but found them all wanting. They first heard of Unitarians through reading an American book about comparative religion. So in 1965 they sought out the AUC but were disappointed to find it in a bad way: attendance 5 to 10 people, no minister, no young people.

Their background was professional ballroom dance teachers with their own studio, Noel was also a professional photographer and Thelma was an up and coming singer and guitarist, having been a student of Willow Macky's who wrote the Christmas song Harinui and sang it for the first time in the church. The church committee accepted their suggestion that they provide a new morning service once a month, beginning in April 1965.



The Blythe's Family Program as they called their services grew in attendances to around over 100. Folk songs were sung, the congregation could join in. The sermon was in the form of short talks and sometimes was dialogue between Thelma and Noel. Guest speakers were invited to deliver sermons, often providing a more intellectual approach on purely secular issues. The Blyth's approach was more down to earth and more flamboyant, while retaining a religious content that was very wide ranging. They brought a humanistic style of service to the church.



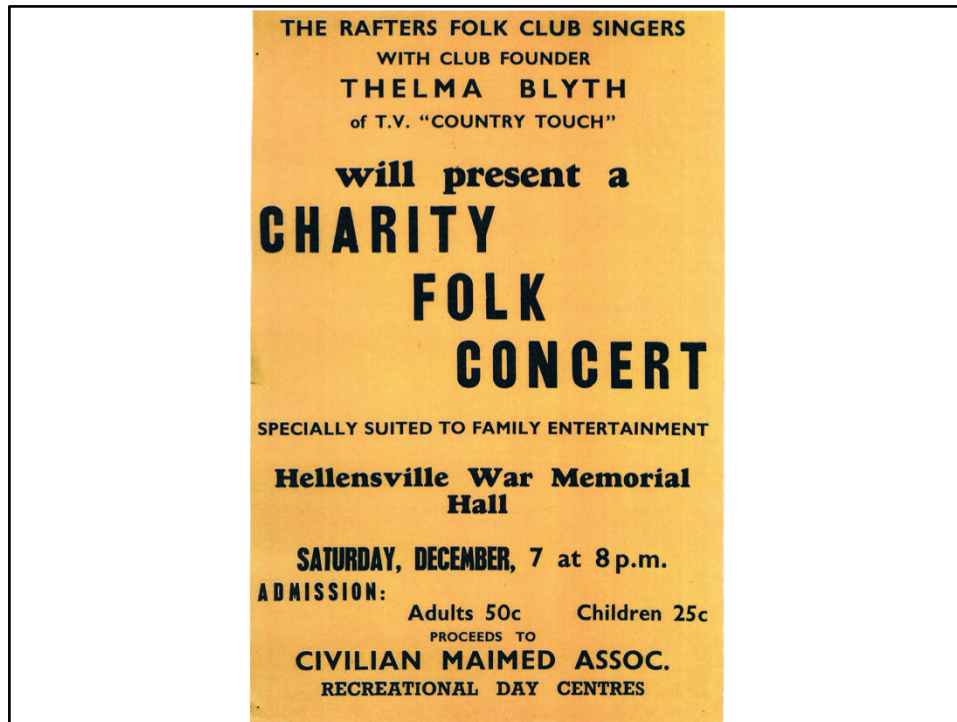
Thelma was performing at the Poles Apart Folk Club in Newmarket where she made a recording with the Hamilton County Bluegrass Band; she also recorded another album with the same Band comprising square dances. Thelma was a performer on the TV series, *Country Touch*.



'Country Touch' Stars

The regular performers on NZBC's new Country and Western series, "Country Touch." The show has been produced in Auckland by Bryan East. In front (from left): the Wellington duo, Paddy and Chris, and the show's square-dance caller, Thelma Blythe. Behind is the Hamilton County Blue Grass Band.

CLOUR: CHRIS MOORHOUSE



Thelma used her musical talent at the church and formed the Rafter's Folk Club which had great success. The Rafter's still meet at the church.



Photo: Humanists digging out and lining the downstairs of the church circa 1967

The Humanists found the environment created by the Blyth's very congenial and a number joined the church and began participating in services and other church activities, such as building the basement, digging out and lining downstairs, much to the appreciation of the Civilian Maimed Association and other groups who used the space.

Numbers continued to grow, Sunday attendances well over 100 with a large number of children. Publicity was generated in a lot of print media about the Family Program at the AUC culminating in a centre double page spread in the *New Zealand Herald*.

By now the Blyth's were putting in a considerable amount of time and resources and sought a small financial arrangement with the church committee to cover their expenses. Unfortunately the committee, possibly reflecting both an age and difference in religious outlook, would not agree to this request. Sadly the Blyth's decided they could no longer continue and in July 1967 a notice appeared in *News & Views* saying their services would be discontinued.

Noel still attends on occasion. He will be celebrating his 100th birthday in February of next year.