

## WELBY: CHARLES ANTHONY

**Born: 28 December 1892, Wellington, New Zealand**

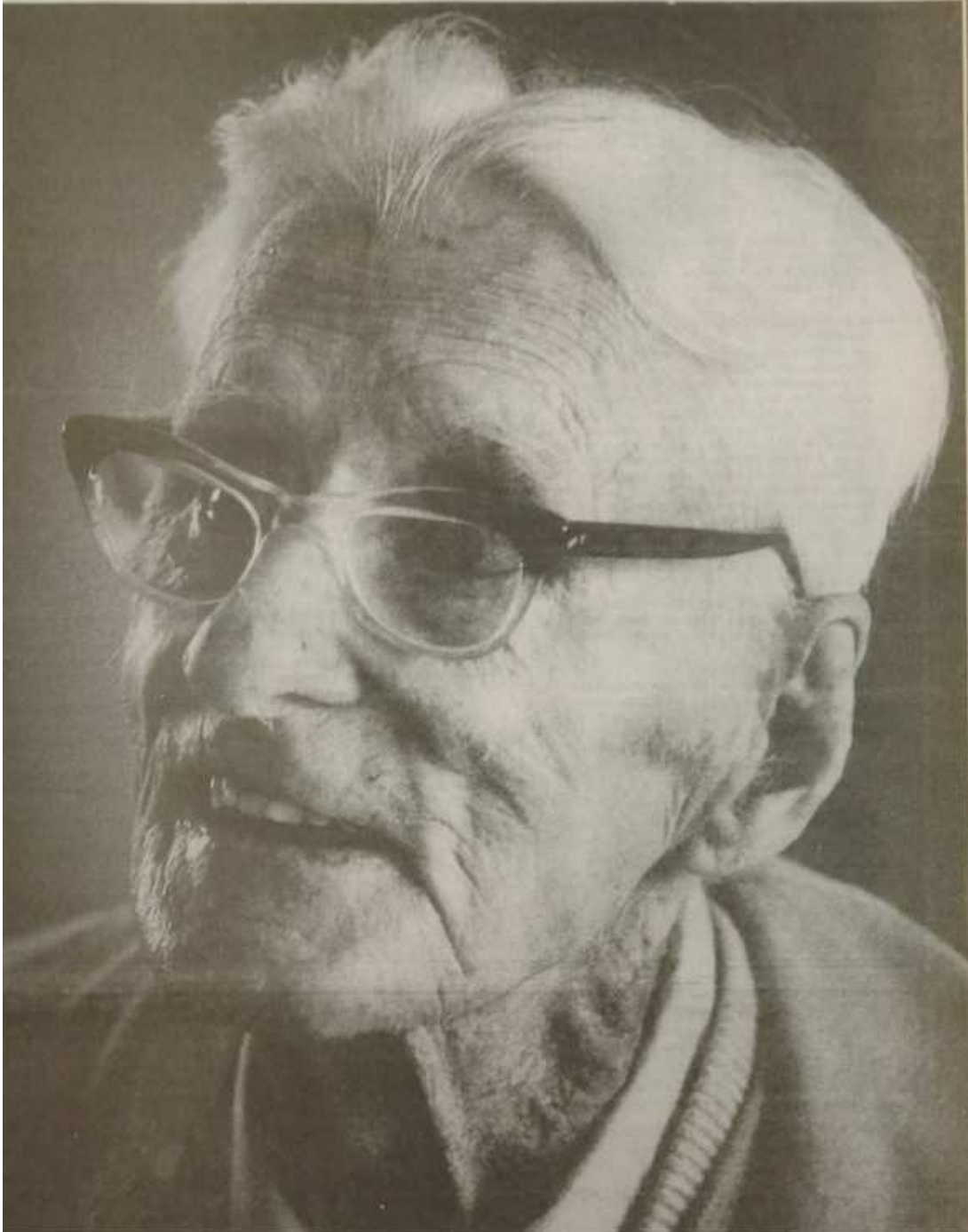
**Married: 29 Mar 1923, Rangiora, New Zealand**

**To: Vera Muriel Grimwood (1899 – 1988)**

**Died: 22 Sep 1995, Levin, New Zealand**

**Buried: The Avenue Cemetery, Levin, New Zealand**

es Welby celebrates 100 years



CHARLES WELBY ... never worried by the thought of growing old.

Tauherenikau."

Thirty years later his son Ron would be stationed at the

fun on the boat. They knew they were going home and they weren't going to start any-

local surveyor.

Still doing this when the Second World War broke, he volunteered for the army but

ly Waipapakauri near Kaitiaki.

"They like to shift you around a bit."

***Charles's parents were:***

Robert Jervois (1854 – 1900) & Mary (nee Sage) (1866 – 1946)

Stepfather: Daniel McKain (1851 – 1924) married Mary 1906

***Charles had 2 brothers & 3 sisters:***

Robert Thomas Sydney (1889 – 1904)

Agnes Mary (1891 – 1990)

Olive (1895 – 1986)

married Herbert John Ackroyd

Margaret (1897 – 1930)

married Ormonde Gladstone Tasker

Mary (1900 – 1993)

married Francis Osman

Thomas Basil (1903 – 1904)

***Charles had 2 half brothers***

Daniel McKain (1907 – 1989)

married Evelyn Rita Ross

Leslie Raymond McKain (1911 – 1971)

married Ethel Elizabeth Hopkins

***Charles & Vera had 5 children:***

Charles Jarvis (Tony) (1922 – 2023)

married Marjorie Airlie Burton

Ronald Sydney (1924 – 2003)

Stillborn (1926 – 1926)

Lorna May (1927 - )

married James Frederick (Jim) Wilton

Maurice Robert (1930 – 2011)

married Moira Josephine Edlin

***Charles & Vera have 15 grandchildren***

**Charles life:**

Charles was born at Wellington in December 1892. At the time his father was working at Luke & Son's Te Aro Foundry.

His father was seriously injured in an accident at the foundry in July 1886 when a very heavy weight fell on him and caused horrendous injuries.

The family moved to Levin, 5 months after he was born. His father purchased a 5 acre block in (what was then called) the Horowhenua settlement. His father died in 1900 leaving a widow with 5 children aged from 3 to 11. She married again to Daniel McKain in 1906.

*"I can still remember living down at the lake in a tent."*

Charles went to school at the one room CD farm school. He remembered the day when the Maori boys were allowed into the school and how they rode their horses from the other side of the lake to the school.

*(In the article on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday he stated he was born in a Maori whare just north of the present racing stables near a branch of Bartholomew's mill, where his father worked. He must have had a twinkle in his eye when he told the reporter this as we know – from his birth certificate – that he was born at Wellington.)*

He left school at the age of 13 to become an apprentice for the coach builders 'W B McIntosh Ltd' in Queen St East, just over the railway tracks. There is a photo of the young man, outside the workshop, on P 87 of Dreaver's book – 'Levin, the making of a town'. He never finished his training because of the damage to his lungs from the fumes from paint used in the business.

He was working on his uncle's farm and was due to have a season at the Masterton freezing works, when war broke out.

When he enlisted, on 4 August 1914, he was shown as living at Cornwall St, Masterton with next of kin his mother Mary McKain. He was a private in the Wellington Infantry Battalion and embarked on the 16 October 1914. In Egypt he celebrated his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

There was an early involvement for the young signaller when he was moved down with the infantry to the Suez Canal to thwart what was an expected bid by Turkish troops to take it. He did not participate in any fighting but was in the areas of activity. He was subsequently stationed at Heliopolis as a wireless operator.

About 2 miles from their camp was a site known as 'City of the Dead' where an ancient cemetery had been dug over and robbed by generations of grave robbers. Charles and his mate, Bill Bannister, decided to try their hand at a bit of archaeology at the 'Dead City'. There was no thought in their minds of any risk to the venture.

They had shovels and uncovered a marble slab and then a cavity big enough to put his head in – which he did, breathing dust and other particles whilst he found some beads etc.

The next day he was very sick. He was taken to hospital where they could not



figure out what was wrong. When he told them what had happened the doctors agreed it could have been the dust, however they put on his file, TB – lung. He was then shipped back to New Zealand on the next boat.

By the end of the war he was fit again so volunteered for overseas service in another capacity – as an army prisoner guard. He was sent to Tauherenikau to guard German POW's.

*(20 years later his son had the same role.)*

He also accompanied the German POW's when they sailed back to Europe after the end of the war.

After the war he worked in a variety of jobs, including returning to his coach painting job in Levin.

During the depression he was involved in a number of jobs, such as driving a taxi in Rangiora (where he met his wife), as chainman for a surveyor and lineman for the Horowhenua Electric Power Board and Hawkes Bay Power Board.

The Electoral Rolls show an interesting mix of places and jobs.

- 1922 Masterton as a labourer
- 1922 Nelson as a labourer
- 1925 & 1928 Otaki as a lineman
- 1931 Napier as a lineman
- 1935 Stanley St Levin as a labourer.

There was one more naughty piece of his life when living at Rangiora. In 1922 the Police Gazette published a Warrant

*for failing to provide for the future maintenance of his unborn illegitimate child. "Charles Anthony Welby, age 29, 5' 9", taxidriver, native of NZ, thin build, sallow complexion, dark hair, blue eyes, right forefinger missing, well dressed a navy blue or gray tweed suit and light coloured felt hat, good appearance.*

The complainant was Vera Muriel Grimwood, of Sandbrook. The warrant was cancelled in August 1932. Vera must have forgiven him as they married in March 1923!

When WW2 arrived Charles re-enlisted as he was still fit and keen to serve again. However he lost a lot of that keenness when he was posted as one of a group guarding the pipeline at Mangahao Dam behind Shannon. "Trudging in the mud up and down that pipeline was a dreadful job."

He then met up with a wireless operator in Levin who was with the Air Force who complained that he could not get overseas unless a replacement was found for him at Weraroa Station.

After passing a test he got the job (as the replacement) and was soon wearing Air Force blue. He became a signals instructor for the Air Force and after Kimberley he went to the station at Rotorua. Later he was stationed at Kaitaia. He used to go out on flying patrols, hoping to spot a Japanese sub, however he never did sight one. He ended WW2 as a signals instructor and Sergeant.

After this war he became a house painter which kept him active into his 70's when he finally decided to retire.

His only challenge in the town was his bicycle. At 95 he was still riding his bike, possibly the oldest person to do so in New Zealand. He admitted that he would be lost without his trusty old bike having had it for over 45 years, buying it as a fairly new bike for half price.

Charles Welby's spirit shined through everything he did, certainly in all the newspaper interviews he undertook.

"Without his bike how could he do his shopping and deliver to others the produce from his garden." He stated (in one interview when 95) that he was a bit wobbly on his feet. The fact that he had a card giving him concessions in travel as a member of the Blind Institute, he lightly brushed aside. "How can I ride my bike. I'm not that blind."

The family still have the Queens telegram when he turned 100 in 1992.

Charles Welby died in September 1995, aged 102 and is buried in the RSA section of The Avenue cemetery. His wife Vera is buried at Tiro Tiro Rd cemetery in Levin.

