

Life Members of the Southland Branch

In 2008 the Southland Branch awarded Life Membership to three ladies who had been involved with the Branch almost since inception (their names appear in the list on page 4 and in the illustration on page 5), and who were still active members : Margaret Sutherland, Mary Stuart and Mary Murray. At this stage, they are the only Life Members.



Margaret Sutherland (Member #285)

Margaret was born in Invercargill but spent her first 5 years at Ryal Bush where her father managed the dairy factory. The family later moved to Milton and Dunedin before returning to Invercargill. Margaret went to several primary schools in Milton, Dunedin and Invercargill, but her secondary years were at Southland GHS. She worked at two places : JE Watson (mercantile firm) and Calder Mackay's. After marriage to Neville, they lived at Otatara for 10 years, then moved into Invercargill. She had a family of four boys.

Margaret's genealogy began in 1969 when she saw the advertisement of the inaugural meeting, and having no knowledge of her grandparents (she felt 'deprived') decided to ask Mary Stuart to go with her to the meeting. She became the second Convenor to the Branch in 1971. Her early memories are of family outings to transcribe cemetery headstones, and home meetings where young and not so young mothers worked at and shared their genealogy. The main highlight for her was involvement in the very successful NZSG AGM and Conference in Invercargill in 1989 - memorable also because it marked her 40th wedding anniversary.

Margaret and Neville travelled widely before Neville retired, and took in the UK, Europe and Asia. She also became involved in a series of family reunions, the first being in 1984, and has compiled, with family input, a large illustrated record of her extended family. And yes, she found her grandparents (a mix of Irish, Scots and English), though she says she is still looking for more detail.

Margaret has served the Branch as Convenor, Treasurer and committee member, and is still a regular attendee at Branch meetings.



Mary Stuart (Member #328)

Mary is a born-and-bred Southlander and has been based in Invercargill and environs all her life. She went to Middle School, St Josephs, then Southland Girls' High. Her first job was with the NZ Forest Service; later she moved to Inland Revenue. During a year overseas she was based in London and managed a 3-month tour of Europe whilst there. On her return to NZ she rejoined Inland Revenue. Marriage to Dave followed, and later a family of two boys.

Her start in genealogy came at the urging of Margaret Sutherland, who persuaded Mary to go with her to the inaugural meeting in November 1969 when the Southland Branch was formed. Mary recalls that it became the Southland Branch (as distinct from an Invercargill Branch) because many of those present came from rural localities like Otautau and Riverton. Mary's involvement in genealogy has continued from that time - she is one of only 3 people who have remained active in the Branch since inception.

Mary has held committee positions of Secretary-Treasurer, Convenor (on 3 occasions), and Vice-Convenor. She held the Australian Library for NZSG for 3 years before the days of the FRC.

Highlights for Mary include attending her first AGM in 1973 in Auckland; Peter Hunter was national president in those days. The event stands out because Mary was taken to task for allowing non-members of NZSG to attend Southland Branch meetings. The first AGM in the South Island was in Christchurch in 1983 and was attended by a strong Southland contingent, including Margaret Sutherland, Jenny McLaren, Mary Murray, Jack Tourelle, John Slattery, and Mary. Other memorable meetings have been the Lincoln Congress in 1997 and the Perth Congress in 2000. Mary was Convenor of the organising committee for the very successful AGM and Conference in Invercargill in 1989.



Mary Murray (Member #429)

Mary was born in Gore but grew up in Invercargill from an early age. She did her primary schooling at St Catherine's, and boarded in Dunedin for secondary schooling. After leaving school, she was a cleaner at the town hall where her father was caretaker, but soon left that to work in the Bing Harris hat factory. Later she joined the Invercargill Public Library, then in Wachner Place, and was one of a group of 8-9 librarians; there she learnt all aspects of library work which was to be of use in later life. Mary often thought of having her own library. She worked for Craigs for a while, then had a short spell as a postie. In 1956 she opened the Centennial Bookshop at 169 Tay Street which she operated for several years, eventually selling up when the family came.

Marriage to Richard Murray came in 1959, and eventually two children (Tom and Margaret). Richard died in 1986.

Mary started in genealogy with the encouragement of Mary Stuart, and subsequently joined NZSG around 1971. She has been researching her Irish ancestry (Kelly's and Donaghy's) and has come up against several dead ends. She is pleased that daughter Margaret has recently taken up where Mary left off. She says that grandchildren keep her busy nowadays.

Mary enjoys genealogy because it is socially a great hobby; there is no tension and it makes her get out and about. She recalls early family picnic outings in the past organised by the Branch, and some of the great raffles that used to be held for fundraising.

Mary has been the Branch's librarian since about 1977, following Mary Miller.