

Wanganui Branch – June 2026

Jim Watt, descendant of Wanganui's first mayor, William Hogg Watt, gave a well received presentation on his father, Morris Watt. He began with the arrival in New Zealand of his forebear George Watt in 1851 with his second wife Margaret. William Hogg Watt was one of George and Margaret's sons and Jim related the beginnings of the shipping and merchant firm Taylor and Watt, which operated in Wanganui for several decades.

He spoke of William meeting with fellow mariner Thomas Ballardie Taylor in Sydney and their arrival in Wanganui to set up business. Jim's father Morris Watt attended Otago Medical School and during the Great War served on an army hospital ship. Morris kept a diary of those times - many of the entries being recorded in Jim's book on family history.

Morris became a bacteriologist and lecturer at Otago and was also involved with allergy research.

He took a keen interest in entomology, philately, photography, and heraldry, producing many heraldic designs for both his own family and various organisations. He also recorded the arrival of every ship that arrived in Wanganui from 1839 until the mid-1950's, researched and wrote the NZ Section of All British Ships, a six-volume set that is highly regarded and available in most libraries. He also wrote a genealogy of his own family.

Jim's book concludes with a tribute to his mother Jean, who is credited with creating a stable and well run household which enabled her husband to concentrate on his many interests.

A most remarkable man.