

The People of Pendle Hill.

Samuel Fletcher was born in 1838 in Lancashire, to John and Sarah and soon after he had two Sisters Eliza and Ellen, during this time they lived at Clitheroe, Lancashire in an Inn called The Bird in Hand, it was in very close proximity to Pendle Hill.



John Fletcher and many others used to poach rabbits on local estates and the slopes of Pendle Hill, unfortunately the game keeper was killed when he intervened one evening, although John was not there that evening, he was a suspect, so the quick thinking John decided to vanish. Sarah never heard from John for many years, so she told the children that their father had gone to America. Sarah met James Peers and she took his name but never married him for fear of bigamy as she was still married to John.

In 1856 Sarah, and James Peers, decided to emigrate to New Zealand, so along with Sam's Sisters Eliza and Ellen they set off on the Ship Alma destined for Christchurch. During the voyage they became friendly with the Lomas family.

The Fletcher, Peers and Lomas families all ended up settling in Wellington where Sam worked constructing roads but after a few months he decided to work his way up to Hawkes Bay which he had been told had a wonderful climate and very good prospects of obtaining land.

He continued working on roads while he made his way to HB and then obtained a job as a Bullock Driver. After becoming a professional Bullock Driver he purchased his own Wagon and Bullock team with three others. They carted stores from Port Ahuriri to Te Aute and on to Onga Onga, there they split Totara loaded onto the Wagons and proceeded back to Napier.

The Totara was used for railway sleepers and bridge building.

This journey took approximately Three weeks each way, there were 12 Oxen in each team and by travelling together they could help each other if they got into difficulties. They travelled along the coastline then river beds and overland tracks used by local Maori.

Within a few years, Sam had earned enough money to enable him to buy some land, Sam was suspicious of the lower lying land because of flooding, so looked at the higher country being offered for settlement.

He chose land even closer to the ranges and it was the curve of the great hill that looked so familiar to him that determined his choice.

The first 40 acres of Pendle Hill were purchased in 1862, this was followed by another 5 purchases at later dates.

In the early 1860's Sam worked as a shearer, roadmaker and fencer to provide his income.

Over the years the farm grew to 1080 acres.

On a journey to Wellington for Xmas Sam went to visit the Lomas family who had travelled to NZ on the same ship, their daughter Harriet and Sam fell in love, but the family felt at 16 she was too young to marry, so they proposed that if he came back in a years' time and they felt the same they could marry. One year to the day Sam returned to Wellington and asked for Harriet's hand in marriage. Within a few weeks they were married.

Sam and Harriet travelled by ship to Ahuriri and by wagon to Ongaonga where they camped until Sam had cleared a track sufficiently for a Bullock wagon to take their possessions to their chosen piece of land. Sam convinced her of the amazing similarities of Pendle Hill in England, so they were in agreement that from then on it would be named Pendle Hill.NZ

That night they slept under the wagon and the next day Sam made a Whare of bark and raupo as a roof over their heads until they built their permanent home.

The new home was made from great sods of earth taken from nearby by wheelbarrow and put into place, the home was named the Clayhouse.

Their nearest neighbours were a Maori sub tribe who occupied a Pa seven miles away near Tikokino, the Maori women showed Harriet which of the barks and lichens to use for dying and the medicinal use of native plants. .In return Harriet taught the women how to bake bread.

The establishment of Flower and vegetable gardens were an important priority as they had to be entirely self-sufficient.



About this time Sam wrote to a friend in Masterton who had had the foresight to bring with him various seeds from the old country, suggesting he would like to plant a gorse hedge for shelter, an envelope arrived and the precious seeds were received by Sam, with a letter to say that the gorse hedge planted in Masterton was doing well and suited the climate, we all know the result.

For Harriets first pregnancy it was decided it would be wise for her to take the journey back to Wellington to stay with her parents. Harriets first child, a daughter they named Elizabeth was born in 1867.

At this time Harriet's mother was also pregnant, however after giving birth to a daughter she died 12 days later of pneumonia aged 44 years.

Sam kindly offered Harriets father and the children to come and live at Pendle Hill however Harriet returned with her two sisters and her baby Elizabeth.

There was great joy when Sam and Harriet were reunited at Port Ahururi after being six months apart, Harriet took great comfort in being home with Sam and seeing for herself the growth in the garden and the progress the stock had made.

Elizabeth Ann Lomas, Harriet's sister had been a delicate baby from birth and died in the Clay house on the 31st July 1867 from dysentery just four months and 15 days old. Her burial took place on the slopes of pendle hill and thus began the Family Cemetery.

From the Hawkes Bay Branch bus commentary compiled by Phil Smith

