

**‘So far from home’:
Tracing the endeavours of three Froebel trained teachers from Edinburgh, who
migrated to New Zealand in the early 20th century.**

A project by Kerry Bethell and Helen May

The International Froebel Society (IFS) conference planned in Edinburgh for June 2020 was cancelled due to the Covid-19 worldwide pandemic including the shut down of international travel and the ‘lockdown’ of countries.¹ As long-time attendees at IFS conferences we had planned to travel from Aotearoa New Zealand to Scotland. In March 2020 these plans and those of the IFS were abruptly crushed. We are hopeful that in new times the conference will take place in 2021. Meanwhile, amidst weeks of lockdown isolation we completed our papers, already in preparation, for dissemination through on-line websites. The papers are now fully referenced with a more fulsome text than possible in a conference presentation. In addition we have written an overall introduction to education in the New Zealand and the Scottish migration drawing upon a lecture Helen gave in Glasgow some years ago. Also included, is a selection of the prepared PowerPoint slides, along with other relevant images.

As historians of early childhood institutions in New Zealand our researches, collectively and separately, have included the archival unravelling and ‘discovery’ of the travels of early childhood people and ideas across transnational borders.² Some teachers travelled from New Zealand to seek and appraise new ventures, experiments and ideas, illustrated in Kerry’s *Traveling Teachers’* project funded by the Froebel Foundation, London.³ Other teachers brought their experience and ideas to the distant British colony of New Zealand in the ‘whirlwind’ of the ‘settler revolution’ described by historian James Belich in his book *Replenishing the Earth*.⁴ Our infant teachers from Edinburgh – Isabel Little, Agnes Inkpen and Isabella Jamieson - were exemplars of this ‘whirlwind’ arriving in New Zealand in the early years of the 20th century to the new Dominion of Britain proclaimed in 1907.

An IFS conference in Edinburgh in 2020, over a century later, seemed a fitting occasion to take our three teachers ‘home’; more particularly because the conference was to be held at Moray House School of Education and Sport at the University of Edinburgh which, in earlier times was the Free Church Training College where the teachers had trained. They had worked in infant classrooms around Edinburgh before immigrating to New Zealand.

Their arrival coincided with the growth of the kindergarten movement in New Zealand and a school system cautiously welcoming of the ‘modern methods’ of ‘new education’; influenced by kindergarten pedagogy but also the ideas of John Dewey and Maria Montessori.⁵ The three women brought their Scottish expertise of infant teaching into a receptive education environment, and in their new home embarked on a range of endeavours in schools, kindergartens and the wider community. For each, New Zealand became their permanent home. However, their links to Scotland remained strong and both Agnes and Isabella, at different times, travelled ‘home’ to visit family and friends.

Scottish – New Zealand connections

Planned settlement of New Zealand began in 1840 in the aftermath of the Treaty of Waitangi signed by the British Crown with Māori tribes. In 1848 a Scottish settlement was established in the lower South Island and named Dunedin – being the Gaelic form of Edinburgh - to become the ‘New Edinburgh’ of the South.





‘The Immigrants’ by William Allsworth, 1844. Te Papa Tongarewa.



Arrival of the ‘Phillip Laing’ at Port Chalmers 15th April 1848. ‘John Wickliffe at anchor’.



‘The Immigrants’ by Lindsay Crooks, for the 150th Jubilee of Scottish settlement in Dunedin.

Scottish education and church institutions were transplanted into the fledgling Dunedin settlement with child immigrants schooled en route for the several months on board ship. The first building in the settlement was a combined church and school. Each province established its own system of schooling. In 1877 by a national system of schooling was established that was compulsory, secular and free. It is useful to note some exemplars of Scottish – New Zealand connections:

- James Buchanan the teacher employed by the industrialist and educator, Robert Owen, at the first infant school at New Lanark in 1816 was later recruited by the New Zealand Company for a free passage on the first ship bound for New Zealand leaving London in 1839. The New Zealand Company colonists were determined that the latest ideas in education were transported to the new colony.⁶ Included in the hold of the ‘Adelaide’ was a purpose build, flat packed infant school including a gallery and accommodation for Buchanan and his family who were to follow. The outcome changed dramatically when Buchanan decided to leave the boat in South Africa. Buchanan’s assistant Miss Ann Tilke who had also been given a free passage set up a small infant school on arrival and such schools became an integral part of early schooling.⁷ The schoolhouse landed in Wellington but was sold and became instead the first public building and a hotel.



‘Barratt’s Hotel’ Wellington 1842-1845, by Samuel Charles Brees. The two-storey building with its veranda was built as an infant school. Author’s collection.

- William Sanderson Fitzgerald (1838-1920) was a towering figure in New Zealand education in the 19th century and particularly in the Otago-Southland area of the lower South Island. Born in Musselburgh near Edinburgh in Scotland he trained as a teacher between 1857 and 1859 at Moray House in Edinburgh, later teaching in Glasgow.⁸ In 1861 Fitzgerald with his wife Annie, an infant teacher, sailed to New Zealand firstly to the Church of England settlement of Christchurch. En route he was the ship’s schoolmaster and on arrival began organising a school in a small farming valley.

Fitzgerald later became a key figure in establishing education in the North Otago settlement of Oamaru. In 1867 he was employed by the Otago Education Board to establish a normal school and training college in Dunedin, after the model pioneered David Stow in Glasgow in 1836. The Presbyterian settlement of Dunedin established the Otago Education Board in 1857. John Hislop (1821-1904), also a Moray House trained teacher, was recruited from Scotland in 1856 under a scheme devised by the provincial government, and was soon appointed as Secretary and Inspector of Schools. By 1859 there were 20 schools in the district but with the discovery of gold in the hinterland there were soon 100 schools across the province. Hislop lobbied the provincial government to establish a training college and a prime site in Moray Place in the centre of Dunedin. In his role as Principal of the Normal School and College, Fitzgerald was credited with establishing a progressive system of training teachers, at George Street Normal School linked also to the new University College of Otago. This Scottish model was eventually established in four other provincial centres and still current except the training colleges have merged with universities.⁹ Fitzgerald was also a leading figure in the establish of the New Zealand Education Institute, a professional and industrial organisation for teachers, that currently represents primary and early childhood teachers.



Free Church Training College, Moray House, Edinburgh. Moray Place Training College, Dunedin

- The Scottish influence in the Dunedin kindergarten movement is also notable. Scottish born Learmonth Dalrymple (1827-1906) pioneered the establishment a secondary school for girls in the city that opened in 1871 and in the same year campaigned successfully for women to gain degrees at the University College of

Otago.¹⁰ Dalrymple was also a key figurehead for the establishment of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association in 1889, an organisation still operating today. Also of note is Sir Robert Stout (1844-1930), Premier of the colony of New Zealand (1884-1887), who was born in Lerwick in the Shetland Islands, Scotland. In 1858 he sat the teachers' qualifying exams and taught as a pupil-teacher in Lerwick before immigrating to New Zealand, arriving in Dunedin in 1864.¹¹ His contribution to the colony was wide ranging. Stout was a supporter of many education institutions, in particular the establishment of university education. Relevant to this paper is Stout's support of the fledgling kindergarten movement, firstly in Dunedin and later in Wellington. There is a curious story about Stout's kindergarten interest. Stout claimed to have been a kindergarten child himself in the Shetland Islands in 1849. He remembered playing with Froebel blocks, and reported that he recognised the voice of his teacher, Miss Jane Liston, thirty-five years later in the corridor of an Auckland school.¹² If correct this Shetland Islands kindergarten experience predates the first known kindergarten in Britain in 1851.¹³ In Dunedin, Stout's wife, Anna, born of Scottish parents, became a foundation member of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association. She was also active in the suffrage movement that won the vote for women in 1893. At the fourth annual meeting of the Association, which both Robert and Anna attended, Stout supported the idea of annexing the kindergarten system to the public school system, but noted with a politician's caution, 'This was, of course, a question of finance, but if the people desired it there was no doubt it would be a wise and profitable expenditure.'¹⁴ This did not happen, and our three Scottish teachers worked across the domains of school and kindergarten, as well as being active in organisations in support of women and children.

New Zealand setting

Following in the footsteps of our exemplar pioneers, our Scottish women teachers arrived in New Zealand in the early 20th century. By then, there was a population of around one million that included Māori whose population had dropped to 40,000 from an estimated 114,000 in 1840. Thereafter, the Māori population increased but was outpaced by European immigration. By 1900 there was primary schooling from age five (and compulsory at age seven) available for children even in most rural areas, including a network of Native Schools

for Māori children. Neither system was exclusive. There were also university and teacher training colleges, and secondary schools free for children who passed an exam at the end of the primary schooling. A smaller network of denominational fee paying private schools contributed to the mix. By the early 20th century there were free kindergarten associations in the four city settlements operating inner city kindergartens. From 1904, there was a small government subsidy for each child. There was also a tradition of kindergarten teaching in some primary schools where the first kindergartens had emerged in New Zealand in the 1870s.¹⁵

The education achievements of the new Dominion in such a short span of time, including the building of a national school system, is to be applauded. Notwithstanding the infrastructure was fragile, keeping pace of population growth and settlement expansion was problematic but so too was the reality that many buildings were not fit for purpose, particularly for the new education methods of activity, movement and conversation. Class sizes were large, older classrooms were still fitted with galleries and immovable desks, and despite the efforts of the new training colleges, many teachers were ill-equipped to manage the more kindly regime of modern education. The kindergarten associations established their own training programmes that included half-day work in the kindergartens. Not until 1910 was the first designed kindergarten built in Auckland relying, as did several others that followed, on private patronage.

Belich describes the late 19th century as the end of ‘progressive colonisation’ when growth began to outstrip the available infrastructure and resources. After this, ‘history slowed down’.¹⁶ Schooling was no exception. It was partly this change in tempo that created the possibility for a rethink of public education for the 20th century. This turn of the century appraisal included curriculum reform in the primary school, influenced in part by the international acclaim for Froebel’s kindergarten methods. The blocks, crafts, music and games provided the possibility of a specialist curriculum that could be adapted for infants in school.¹⁷ Sufficient teachers were demonstrating its potential and some school inspectors advocating its pedagogical value as evidenced in the 1900 report from Southland inspectors James Hendry and George Braik, both Scottish, who stated that, ‘There is hardly a school in the district in which kindergarten methods, or at least some of the principles of teaching given to the world by Pestalozzi and Froebel, has not been introduced.’¹⁸ They noted how in previous years teachers had been ‘compelled willy nilly ... by the daily march towards the examination’. In contrast, they looked forward to the possibility of a child being ‘solaced by

an occasional hour's "learning by doing" during which his natural tastes may freely manifest themselves.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the practise of introducing the 3Rs at a young age was not overturned and continued to be a strong characteristic of New Zealand's early schooling programmes, as it was in Scotland.

The new century rethink was made possible the appointment of George Hogben as Inspector-General of schools in 1899. Hogben was supportive of new education methods. As a teacher in the 1890s, he had supported the establishment of a kindergarten in Timaru to which he sent his sons.²⁰ Hogben introduced a new primary school syllabus. At a conference of inspectors in 1904, he acknowledged the challenge:

All the best teachers have, step by step, been led to change their point of view, and have altered their methods accordingly. To you therefore, the change, though rapid has been an evolution in educational ideas and methods, to *others* who have followed it less closely, or have allowed themselves to fall behind the change appears as a sudden and complete revolution ...²¹ (emphasis added)

This was overly optimistic and the 'others' Hogben cites comprised a significant number of teachers, and indeed some inspectors, who for several more decades, resisted and/or were unable to implement the new curriculum approaches. Hogben claimed that 'change was inevitable unless New Zealand was to be content to be left behind in the educational contest.' His priorities were clear:

The important thing... is not the amount of things that are taught, but the spirit, character, and method of teaching in relation to its purpose of developing the child's powers We must believe with Froebel and others of the most enlightened of the world's educators, that the child will learn best, not so much by reading about things in books as by doing: that is exercising his natural activities by making things, by observing and testing things for himself; and then afterwards by reasoning about them and expressing thoughts about them.²²

Photographic and documentary evidence from kindergartens in the early 20th century indicate a mix of Froebelian methods and apparatus, complemented by a range of activities. There are photos of children doing paper folding and using the Froebel blocks but also playing with large blocks, painting, riding bikes, and playing with dolls.²³ From the 1910s interest grew in Montessori methods with both kindergartens and schools adopting and adapting some of her approaches and apparatus. With a few exceptions this was not

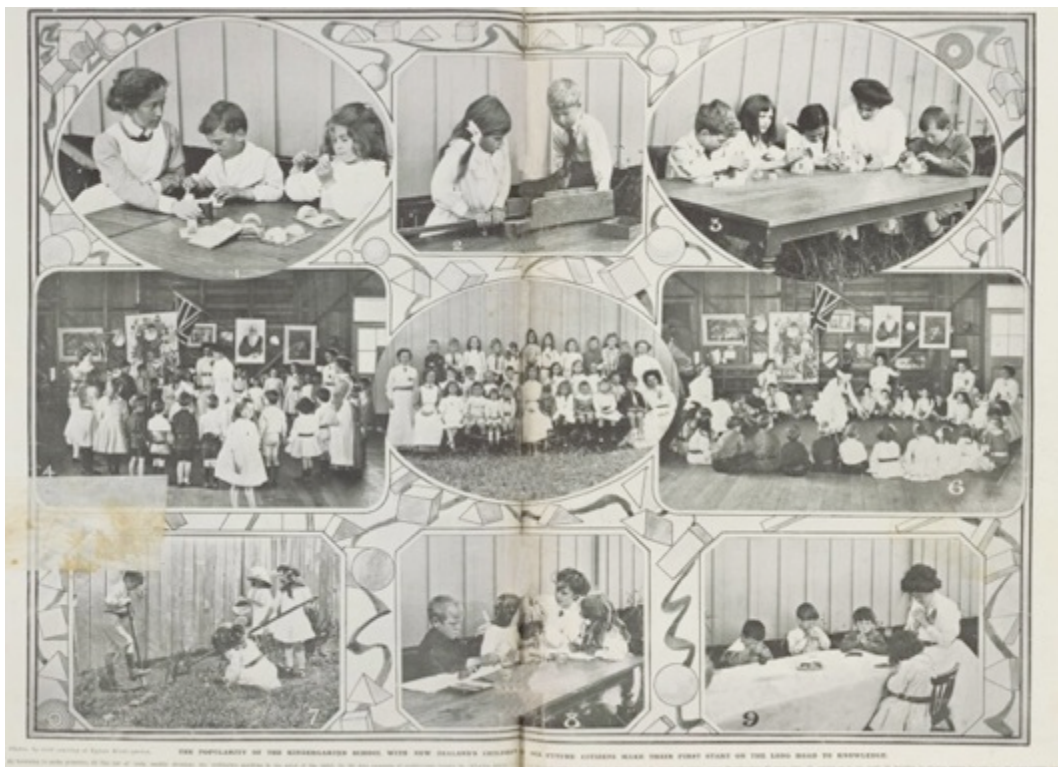
extensive, but rather added to the eclectic mix of ideas and activity evident in New Zealand kindergartens that, nevertheless, still regarded themselves as Froebelian.²⁴

Such was the education environment our three Scottish teachers found on arrival in New Zealand. They taught in an era in which there was both experiment and innovation, but combined with infrastructure overload, stagnation and resistance. There was a state system of education grappling with new education ideas during times of war and an economic depression.²⁵ There was also an independent kindergarten movement, mainly funded through charity and community enterprise, that more readily embraced the changes and could act more nimbly than schools. From 1912 the separate kindergarten associations worked towards forming a national advocacy voice, eventually constituted in 1926.²⁶ Collectively and over time, our three teachers worked across government and charitable education institutions as well as a raft of associated community organisations.

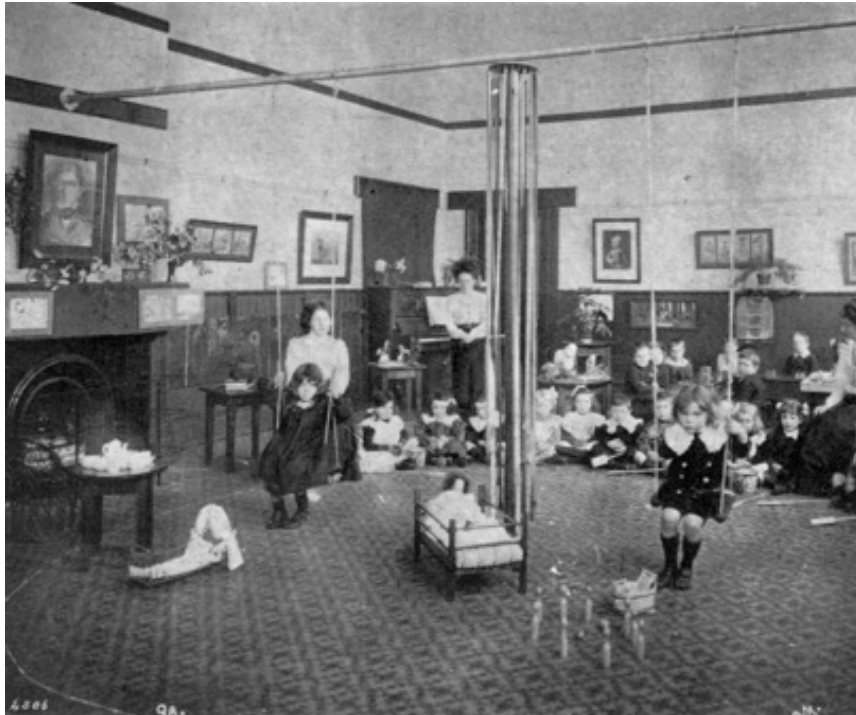
Attached case studies:

Kerry Bethell: *'Forever teachers, forever friends': Agnes F R Inkpen (1880-1952) and Isabella M Jamieson (1881-1964)*

Helen May: *"A Froebel trained 'Scot' from Edinburgh": Isabel Little (1876-1937)*



Logan Campbell Kindergarten, Auckland, NZ *Graphic* 5 July 1911.



Kindergarten room at George Street Normal School, Dunedin *Otago Witness*, 24 October, 1910.



Unidentified infant classroom in New Zealand, 1919, where playful activity would not have been possible. F-28162¼ Alexander Turnbull Library.



Kindergarten activities at Waikouaiti Native School, 1902, Dunedin. Archives NZ R14899e (L).

Preparatory class with slates, Te Hapua Native School, c. 1905, Far North. Archives NZ R14899K (R).



Montessori activities in Wellington infant classrooms, Eastern Hutt School, 1920, and Kelburn Normal School, 1923.

F-O25604½, Alexander Turnbull Library (L) and *Kelburn Normal School Jubilee 1914-1989*, p. 6. (R).



Wanganui Central Infant School, 1919 (L) and 1921 (R), Whanganui Regional Museum, Blennerhassett Family Papers

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- ⁴ James Belich (2009) *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ⁵ May, 2011.
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- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Gerald Fitzgerald (2016) *The Life of William Sanderson Fitzgerald: Pioneer of New Zealand Education*, Dunedin: Published by the author.
- ⁹ In 2007 I was appointed the foundation Dean of the newly merged University of Otago College of Education. I had the privilege of meeting Gerald Fitzgerald the grandson of William Sanderson Fitzgerald in 2016.
- ¹⁰ Dorothy Page, 'Learmonth Dalrymple' *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1d2/dalrymple-learmonth-white> [retrieved 2 April 2020]
- ¹¹ David Hamer, 'Robert Stout' *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2s48/stout-robert> [retrieved 18 March 2020]
- ¹² W. H. Dunn, & I. L. M. Richardson (1961) *Sir Robert Stout*. Wellington; Beryl Hughes, *Flags and Building Blocks, Formality and Fun: One Hundred Years of Free Kindergarten in New Zealand*, NZ Free Kindergarten Union, Wellington, 1989.
- ¹³ Some years ago I passed this information to kindergarten historian, Dr Jane Read at Froebel College Roehampton University, London. She was unable to verify this further.
- ¹⁴ *Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association Fourth Annual Report*, Dunedin, 1893, p.5, ARC-0261, MS1986/001, Hocken Collections, University of Otago.
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- ²⁰ Herbert Roth (1952) *George Hogben: A biography*, Wellington, NZCER, p.62.
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