

A Sunny Little Enclave

By Barrie Woods

When they hear the name Captain Morgan most people will be more likely to think of dark Jamaican rum than a sunny enclave on the eastern slopes of Heathcote Valley. But for the wiser of us Heathcote locals, the name Captain Morgan might have a different association. Morgans Valley, you see, takes its name from one Captain Morgan, also a Welsh sea captain, but not the privateer and raider of the Caribbean after whom the rum is named – rather, a pious Wesleyan tea-totaller.



Morgans Valley, 2024

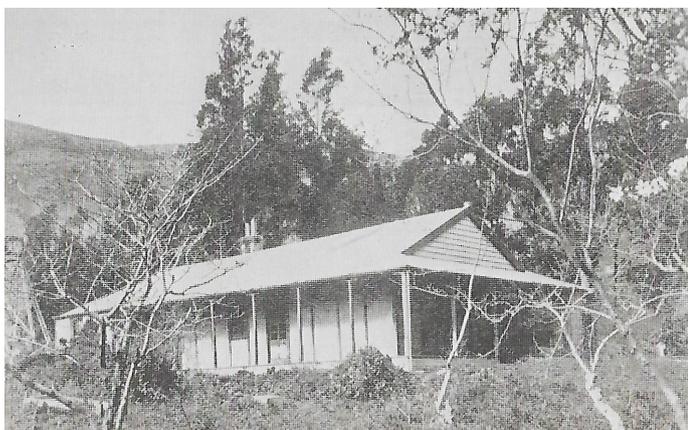
Our sea captain is Captain William Morgan, master of the barque 'Bangalore' an 877-ton barque built in 1843 on the Channel Island of Jersey. The Bangalore was, for a time, a convict ship which transported British and Irish prisoners to Australia. She made two such voyages under Captain Morgan's command, one to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in 1848 and then another to Moreton Bay in 1850. 1851 saw a change for the Bangalore when she transported new immigrants to New Zealand as the 12th ship of the Canterbury Association (some records say the 11th), arriving at Lyttelton on 21 August 1851.

We don't know a great deal about Captain Morgan's early life, other than that he was born in 1802 in Wales. He was married to Mary (nee Williams), and had three daughters, Mary Ann, Amy and Martha. William Morgan was a common name, and so too was Mary, making it difficult to trace the origins of the family, and there were a number of other Captain Morgans as well, just to make things more complicated.

Perhaps we can assume that when William arrived in Lyttelton he was nearing an age where he was ready to leave his life at sea and may have been inspired to acquire land in the new colony. Or it could have been a misfortune which occurred in July of 1852 whereby the Bangalore was totally wrecked at 'The Cape' on its passage home from India, with Captain Morgan in command. Fortunately, the captain and all on board were saved. Whichever it was, William made the decision to move his family to New Zealand where he purchased the plot of land that was to become known as Morgan's Valley. (We don't know for sure that Captain Morgan did not continue at sea after the loss of the Bangalore, and several mentions in shipping news of the time could refer to him or others of the same name. I suspect he captained the Egmont which arrived at Lyttelton from London in July 1862.)

Cwm House

William Morgan built a house for his family on his land in Heathcote Valley, where it stood until 1938.



Cwm House, 1910

The house, which was prefabricated in Wales and shipped to Lyttelton, was constructed of Baltic pine and large 3ft by 4ft slabs of Welsh slate. It was known as 'Cwm House', which can have a double meaning; 'cwm' being the Welsh word for 'valley', but also an acronym for Captain William Morgan.

According to Charlotte Godley, who had a reputation as being rather acid-tongued and was fairly frugal with her compliments, Captain Morgan was a "very nice little man." She was probably correct and there's nothing to indicate he was anything other than an upstanding and generous member of the community. Unlike many other immigrant families, the Captain Morgan and his family did not feature significantly in the social news of the day, and do not appear to have been involved in any scandals or controversy worthy of report.

Captain Morgan was elected unopposed in 1856 for the Lyttelton seat on the Provincial Council which Henry Sewell had vacated. He stood again in 1862 but did not put in an appearance on nomination day and gained only 4 votes. (Perhaps he had lost interest.)

As the Heathcote settlement began to grow, there was a need for schooling for local children, so in 1860 the Morgans made a room in their house available as a schoolroom. This was a temporary arrangement until a proper schoolhouse was opened in 1864.

In the early days of the Ferrymead railway, the Morgan farm was a favourite picnic spot for Christchurch school children and on one occasion in the early 1860s some 300 pupils from St Michael's and St Luke's schools took the train from town and gathered in Heathcote for a day out.

The land in the valley was productive and in 1862 a newspaper report described "a splendid apple, grown by Capt. Morgan in the Heathcote Valley, the weight of which is exactly 1½lbs. It is a beautiful colour and a very handsome specimen of the variety known by the name of the Emperor Alexander". It's interesting what trifles found their way into the newspapers of the day.

Sheep were run on this side of Heathcote Valley and on Mt. Pleasant. In later years, prior to the modern housing development, the old Morgan property was noted for its bright red-painted farm buildings and tall eucalyptus trees. Today there is little reminder left of the early days.

A Good Methodist

In keeping with his Welsh heritage, William Morgan appears to have been a good Methodist and gave land in Hills Road for the first Methodist church in Heathcote. He was a member of the Canterbury Auxiliary Bible Society and was chair of the Kaiapoi committee in his later years.

Apparently, Cwm House was used for the first meeting of the Christchurch Total Abstinence Society, though later meetings were held in the Town Hall. William became a trustee of the Wesleyan Church in Kaiapoi and in August 1870 he had the honour of laying the foundation stone for the new church building.

Accident Prone

In November of 1858 William Morgan found himself in the news when he was thrown from his horse on the bridle path and sustained severe injuries. He recovered at home and the accident was reported in the newspapers. It seems he may have been accident-prone as far as horse-drawn

conveyances were concerned as he was in the news again in 1866 when his horse bolted in Ferry Road, throwing him off. Then again, in 1866, The Lyttelton Times reported:

We regret to have to record a serious accident which occurred to Captain and Miss Morgan, of Kaiapoi, whilst driving from Kaiapoi to Christchurch on Saturday last. When about two miles from Kaiapoi, the horse in the trap shied at a wagon which was passing at the time, and bolted at a furious pace towards the Waimakariri bridge. Captain and Miss Morgan retained their seats for some time, the latter using every endeavour to arrest the further progress of the horse, but without avail, and, after proceeding some distance, both were thrown with terrific force into the road. They received severe injuries, Captain Morgan breaking his collar-bone, and Miss Morgan, besides other injuries, receiving a slight concussion of the brain. The horse continued his career at undiminished speed until on nearing the bridge he was captured by Mr. Joseph Felton. The injured parties were immediately conveyed to Kaiapoi, where Dr. Dudley was speedily in attendance and rendered every assistance in his power. We understand this is not the first time that the same horse has committed a like act, for on the evening of the late Avon election, whilst returning from Christchurch to Kaiapoi, Capt. Morgan and his wife were capsized into a ditch, but fortunately received no serious injuries.

Family

Records show that the Morgans' second daughter, Amy, was the first person to be married in the temporary Heathcote Valley Church, on Wednesday 1st June, 1859. She married James Dowling Rogers, Esq., of Marouen Station (near Hinds). It was an unfortunate marriage as James died by suicide in 1866, leaving Amy with two sons and a daughter. His undoing was said to be as a result of alcoholism and a £1200 gambling loss (massive for the day). Amy Rogers moved to

Opunake to be near her sister, and lived to the ripe old age of 95 years, dying on 16 June 1932.

The Morgans' youngest daughter, Martha, married Samuel Breach, a farmer from Opunake. Martha and Samuel died within a few days of each other in June 1915 and are buried in Hawera.

Mary Ann, the oldest daughter, remained a spinster and lived with her father until his death. In 1876 she was called as a witness in a very public scandal where the Rev Hubert Carlyon of the Kaiapoi Church of England faced twelve charges brought by the church hierarchy. He was found guilty on six and subsequently returned to England. Sometime after this, Mary Ann moved to Ballarat in Australia, where she died on 1 February 1905.

Property Investor

William Morgan purchased a considerable number of properties over the years, in Lyttelton, Heathcote, and later in Kaiapoi. He probably made a good income as a speculator and also a landlord as many of his properties were advertised to let over the years. Possibly he engaged in some level of farming on his own behalf, though this does not appear to have been his main occupation, which was simply recorded in his later years as 'gentleman'.

Around 1863, the Morgans moved from Heathcote to live in Kaiapoi and leased CWM House. The advertisement for the lease of Cwm House described it as follows:

The property of and now occupied by Captain Morgan, containing drawing room 22 ft x 13, dining room 18 ft x 13, four bedrooms, kitchen with new range and every convenience, servants' room, pantry, wash house, dairy. The outbuildings consist of a three stabled stable and hay loft, with man servant's room adjoining; coach house, cowshed, pigsties. The house is surrounded by a very fertile garden, abundantly stocked with fruit trees in full bearing, and about 85 acres of land, part of which is laid down in English grass and lucernes. There is

also included two cottages, let at a rental of £45 per annum. This house was built and the grounds laid out by Captain Morgan for his own occupation, and affords an opportunity for a family obtaining a comfortable and most agreeably situated dwelling house near Christchurch, rarely to be met with.

In Kaiapoi, William built a substantial house at 232 Williams Street, where he lived with his wife and eldest daughter, Mary Ann. Mary (William's wife) died on 17 May 1872 at 64 years of age. After William's death from apoplexy three years later, on 11 April 1875, Mary Ann stayed at the house for a few more years, before selling it to sawmiller, John Simms, in May 1881. This is probably when she moved to Australia. The house still stands and has a heritage listing, though the land was subdivided in later years.

William was an early investor in the Spinning and Weaving Company (later to become the Kaiapoi Woollen Mills), holding 50 shares. The business initially struggled to make money and likely offered William a poor return. He appears to have fared much better with his property investing, holding a considerable portfolio. After his death in April 1875 Captain Morgan's numerous properties were sold and the proceeds were divided between his three daughters under the terms of a somewhat complicated will, with five pages of handwritten instructions.

Though I can find no obvious trace of them, Captain Morgan very likely has living descendants through the Rogers and Breach family lines, however the Morgan name did not endure past his generation. Except, however, though the sunny little enclave that caught his eye when he first arrived in New Zealand, which