



'Dufty' Bell and his motorcycle circa 1920

The Bell Family

Our thanks to Howick District Historical Society for the photos

Gift to Chapel from Robert Allan Bell Trust

With thanks to former College Archivist, Mr Warwick Bell

The Saint Kentigern Trust Board would like to express its utmost gratitude for the donation of a very substantial grant from the Trustees of the Robert Allan Bell Charitable Trust, in memory of Mr Robert Allan (Dufty) Bell, a former Saint Kentigern Trustee and generous Howick/Pakuranga benefactor.

The Chapel of Saint Kentigern was originally opened for worship on 30 July 1972 and will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2022. The generosity of this funding enabled the structural improvements and refurbishment of the Chapel that took place during the latter part of 2019, along with the addition of a toilet block to be constructed later this year. The improved facilities and installment of new audio-visual equipment will allow the Chapel to continue its vital role in the special character of a Saint Kentigern education.

With the Chapel re-opened for services at the start of this year, having been closed while the work took place throughout Term 4 2019, the planned 'formal' reopening, in acknowledgement of this kind donation, was sadly thwarted when New Zealand was placed in COVID-19 Lockdown. A plaque to commemorate this gift in memory of Mr Bell, who was a Saint Kentigern Trust Board Member from 1956 to 1973, has been installed inside the entrance to the refurbished Chapel and hopefully, this can be formally acknowledged at a later date.

Who was Robert Allan (Dufty) Bell?

The Bell family were Scottish settlers who came to New Zealand in 1868. Dufty's grandfather, David Bell purchased land in Pakuranga for him and his wife to raise their family of eight children. Not only did the family become enterprising farmers, growing a wide variety of crops and planting an orchard, but they were also involved in community affairs with both Dufty's father and later his brother, David becoming Clerk of the Manukau County Council. Dufty Bell fought for his country in Palestine and Egypt in 1914, and sadly lost his brother, Stephen, at Gallipoli in 1915.

Dufty himself lived in the Howick-Pakuranga area for almost 80 years. He became a local identity, well known for his many skills on

the Bell farm, where he cropped using horses, sowed and harvested grain, and established one of the country's finest Friesian herds. As an authority on that breed of milking cows, he was recognised within farming circles, at A & P shows and beyond for his pedigree cattle and his champion bull, Hope Farm Charlie, which according to an article in the Howick Pakuranga Times, won 32 awards between 1954 and 1957.

When the Saint Kentigern Trust Board purchased land for a school on the nearby Roberts' farm property in 1949, only a small portion was initially used for education. The remainder was a town milk supply dairy farm. Neighbouring farmer, Dufty Bell, was appointed to the Saint Kentigern Trust Board, with particular oversight of the farm management and responsibilities in the playing field development of the new College. He retired as a Trustee 1973.

Throughout his life, Dufty was a public-spirited man and benefactor, involved in many local activities, including having an interest in rugby. At the time of the Bell family centennial in 1968, he gave six acres of his Pakuranga farm to the Pakuranga United Rugby Football Club for the establishment of a new park and headquarters for rugby in the local area, adjacent to the planned Lloyd Elsmore Park.

Dufty and his wife, Annie Crawford resided in Howick after their marriage; Dufty's brother David and sister Elsie remained on the Pakuranga land and Elsie lived in the family homestead until her death. Both David and Elsie were also generous benefactors to Saint Kentigern and their funding of bursaries enabled some families suffering financial hardship to attend the College. At Elsie's wish, the family homestead was gifted to the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, into the keeping of the Howick and Districts Historical Society. As 'Bell House,' it holds a key place today in the Howick Historical Village.

Dufty Bell's personal benevolence, and the generosity of the R A Bell Trust established by him, have benefited many organisations in the Howick-Pakuranga area and Saint Kentigern is the latest beneficiary of his love for the area which became his family's home. We are very thankful for his kind donation that allowed the Chapel to be further upgraded to meet the needs of our current and future congregation.

