

A topsy Turvey family adventure

By DAVID HILL

The historic connection between Woodend and the English village of Turvey is being recorded for posterity. Several families from Turvey in Bedfordshire settled in Woodend in the 1850s and several descendants have since returned to visit their ancestral towns. Researchers in Turvey have received a United Kingdom Heritage Lottery Fund grant to establish a website, and historian John Warwick is keen to hear from Turvey descendants in New Zealand.

"My interest in the New Zealand connection came about when I noticed the large number of New Zealanders who had written comments in the church's visitors' book. I'm interested in any digital images that people might have that connects New Zealanders with Turvey.

"My dream would be to have a letter between the families in New Zealand and Turvey. However, old and modern pictures would be great, plus any documentation."

Mr Warwick says the first wave of Turvey families left in 1855 and included the Ayres, Bailey, Gibbs and Stanton families. Other families followed in 1858, including other members of the Ayres (now spelt Ayers), Gibbs and Stanton families, as well as the Skevington, Wooding and Howe families.

Members of the Gibbs family had arrived earlier, in 1851, and the family's early influence meant Woodend was originally called Gibbstown.

"We will not be launching the site until early next year and are now in the process of writing a range of articles and establishing a digital archive on Turvey's heritage," Mr Warwick says.

Turveyes to arrive in Woodend were Thomas and Elizabeth



Old style . . . Turvey House in Rangiora with the shed to the left, which was the original building on the site.

(nee Gibbs) Ayers, and their much-altered home in Woodend still stands.

The couple's son, Samuel, built Turvey House in Rangiora in the 1870s, to keep the family's hometown connection alive.

He bought the King Street section in 1873, first building a shed to store his equipment and then the house, which he moved into after marrying his wife Sarah Ann (nee Judson) in 1875.

The couple's grand-daughter, Rachel Tregurtha, still resides in Turvey House, which has changed little.

Turvey House has local Landmark status, and is a registered category-two building with Heritage New Zealand.

Waimakariri Mayor David Ayers is a descendent of Thomas and Elizabeth Ayers and their son Samuel.

Anyone wanting to assist with the Turvey research can email turveyhistory@gmail.com.

For Safety's Sake

NEVER TOUCH FALLEN LINES

Keep clear, warn others of the danger and phone MainPower immediately

