

# Ladbrooks named after its first family

(By W. J. HARRIS)

A district name is the only remaining local evidence of one of Canterbury's early farming families.

William Ladbrook and his brother arrived in New Zealand from England in 1842 and began business in Wellington. After fire destroyed their premises they went to Sydney. Here William contracted a fever which was to permanently affect his health and caused his return to Auckland.

Five years later, in 1853, William, by then married with three children, moved from Day's Bay, Wellington, to Canterbury, and after a period at Addington he purchased his first 50 acres for £150.

Located near "Prebble Farm", the land was described as cow pasture. This probably accounts for the family's address being "Cow Pasture Farm".

William Ladbrook built his first home of four rooms, one being used as a dairy. The land was extremely fertile and bounded on the east by a swamp which extended to the Port Hills.

To break in the property he bought a team of four bullocks and a plough, but as this was too difficult for one man to handle, his wife was called to take the plough while Ladbrook controlled the bullocks.

## Plough champion

Their two eldest sons, William Charles holding the plough and George driving the bullocks, took over the team work at an early age. Their hands became scarred from the labours, but the experience brought them into championship class when later they competed, with their horse teams, at ploughing matches in Canterbury and Southland.

Using ploughs built by James Blyth, the Prebbleton blacksmith, the younger William was often champion with George in second place. Their younger brother, Henry Alfred, was senior champion at Kaiapoi in 1870.

Because of illness, William Ladbrook was advised by

doctors to return to England, having made a similar voyage for his health in 1848.

In 1863 his farm was leased and a clearing sale held. The 40 head of cattle sold included 12 milkers and among the plant was a combined mowing and reaping machine built by A. Samuelson.

As the family could not obtain a direct ship to England they went to Sydney, where they camped until they could secure a passage in the *Vernon*, a converted frigate. The three-month voyage to England included 17 perilous days among ice floes near Cape Horn.

## Returned to N.Z.

Ladbrook soon found he had no time for the Old Country and after 11 months returned to New Zealand. He died in 1873, aged 55, and his will has been retained by the Justice Department. William Wilson, a noted Christchurch nurseryman, was a trustee and Thomas I. Joynt, solicitor, a witness.

Before Ladbrook's last departure for England a codicil was added to his will providing for the event of all the family being lost at sea, in which case the estate would pass to a relative in England.

A sketch plan showed how the farm was divided between his five sons—William Charles, George, Henry Alfred, James and John.

William took over the farming of the land as one unit then sold out with an extensive clearing sale conducted by H. Bennetts and Co. and moved to Charlton, near Gore, in 1861. He had been active in community affairs, then centred on Lincoln, where he was a member of the Road Board, the Agricultural Club Committee and the Cricket Club.

George and Henry also settled in Southland, John was drowned, and James killed in a sawmill locomotive accident. Their only sister, Selina, married Thomas H. Bates, a Minister of the Church of Christ in which succeeding generations of the Ladbrook family have held prominent positions.

Before moving south George, in partnership with

Herbert Langford, had established a successful milk round in Christchurch. But in about 1805 Langford joined his brother, Walter, in an undertakers' business which later included John Rhind, who took over the firm.

The Ladbrook family became well established in Southland farming circles and William Charles, who had been a successful exhibitor of bacon, hams and Brahma poultry, became recognised as a keen breeder of Romney sheep.

His son, William G., born at Ladbrooks, was taken into partnership to be one of Southlands best-known stud sheep breeders. He also competed as a ploughman throughout the South Island.

In 1887 George won the championship cup and silver medal at the Waimea Plains ploughing meeting. This handsome medal, given by H. S. Valentine, is now held by a grandson who attended the Ladbrooks School.

## St Paul's

William Charles and George had some education at a school on the site of the Christchurch Hospital. Henry attended St Paul's, Papanui, on a Government scholarship.

William Charles's older children began their schooling at Lincoln. Then in 1889 a school was opened at Ladbrooks with Mrs Christina Prebble as teacher.

The new school served parts from each of the neighbouring Halswell, Tai Tapu, Lincoln and Prebbleton school districts. Karl Kippenberger, in charge from 1892 to 1906, was one of the best-known teachers, and his son, Howard (later Sir Howard), was one of the school's most widely known pupils.

A need to identify the district came with the formation of the railway. The name was probably first used in a progress report which recorded that work had reached "Ladbrooke's". It was then spelt with an "e", as was the railway station, 12 miles from Christchurch.

The first portion of the "Racecourse and Ellesmere Railway" (via Lincoln) was

opened on April 26, 1871, and the section to Southbridge opened three months later.

Although family tradition says the station was built in their back yard, it is also claimed that the site was owned by Daniel Day, brother of William Ladbrook's wife, Eliza, who probably purchased a small area from Ladbrook before moving to Springston to become one of that district's first settlers.

Thomas Foster began farming at Ladbrooks in 1906. Soon afterwards he ploughed up what was believed to be the floor of William Ladbrook's original home, about 200 yards east of the railway station. Boulders had been cemented together with a mixture of clay and cow dung.

The only other evidence of habitation was a vigorous growth of fat hen which Mrs Elizabeth Banwell recounted to James Foster was used as a vegetable in the Ladbrook's time.

She also remembered

Maoris camped at an eel site on the property. There was on a narrow piece of high ground projecting in the swamp near where artefacts and oven stones had been found.

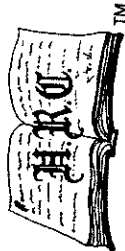
Charles Banwell, an employee of the Ladbrook was in charge of the family's portable steam threshing plant. Wheat, oats, barley and linseed were grown and W. C. Ladbrook reported his results from linseed to the Corn Exchange.

In 1879, 30 acres yielded 23 bushels of feed per acre but the straw was burnt because there were no local processing facilities.

At the corner of Spring and Robinson's Roads a cairn commemorates the world ploughing championship held nearby in 1907. An inscription reads "Let people cultivate the fields." Champions from many countries met there on fields where a failing farmer, his wife and two small boys struggled with their bullocks to turn the first furrows. Ladbrook district, by name, honoured well, its first family.

# Family Name History

## Ladbrook



The English surname Ladbrook (alternatively spelt Ladbroke) is local in origin, belonging to that category of names derived from the place where a man once dwelt or held land. It was common practice in medieval times prior to the establishment of a formal system of hereditary surnames, for an individual to be identified in relation to his place of residence or a topographic feature which distinguished it. This both gave him an immediate identity within the community and distinguished him from other individuals bearing the same personal name. In this case, the name simply denotes "of Ladbrook", the name of a parish in Warwickshire, between Oxford and Coventry, and as such, simply designates one who came from this township. The actual significance of the name itself is unclear, although it would appear to be composed of two elements - the Old English "lathe" ("lad-"), meaning "barn, grange", and "broke", which denotes "brook", hence "barn by the brook".

The earliest recorded instances of this name in English records date from the late 13th century, although, as a place-name, Ladbrook existed at the time of the Domesday Book (records of land returns compiled in 1086 after the Norman conquests), when the Count of Meulin held land there. The first records of the surname are those of the Hundred Rolls in 1273: one Juliana de Lathebroc of Oxford, and one Henry de Ladbroc of Warwick are cited therein. Early instances of such names were generally prefixed with "de", "of/from", an Old English term used to denote names of local origin. In most cases, this early preposition was lost at a later date.

**BLAZON OF ARMS:** Azure a chevron argent.  
**CREST** : A hawk rising proper  
ducally gorged and belled  
at.  
**ORIGIN** : England.



Verification of the signat  
affixed with  
on this day

1991

By

Registration Number

✓ Road to Prebbleton  
and Christchurch

Map of Cow Pasture  
Farm.

George	2557	30 acres
Ladbrook	7.6.60	

John 2106  
Ladbroke 50 acres  
14. 7. 59.

James Adolphus  
Ladbrook 2107  
50 acres  
14.7.59. 2108

Henry Alfred  
Ladbroke

Robert 2109 30 acres.  
Day 14. 7. 59.

Daniel Day	2505
10.5.60	20 acres

2910

1342

Raupo Stream

50 acres

27.9.50

William

Ladbrook

William Charles  
Ladbrook

~~Robinson~~  
George  
Site of house  
(Reunion on Saturday  
Afternoon)

Ladbrook

2309

2821

2177

Drawn by  
Irvine Black  
Temuka  
28.5.1991.

Scale  
1:9900.

Road to Lincoln