

Context:

Gabriola Island history, Robert Dombrain.

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Barrie Humphrey, Come and gone, *SHALE* 2, p.36, March 2001

Barrie Humphrey, Come and gone again, *SHALE* 5, pp.42–43, December 2002

Barrie Humphrey, Come and gone again—this time for good? *SHALE* 6, pp.23–24, April 2003

Barrie Humphrey, Come and gone yet again, *SHALE* 8, pp.29–33, June 2004.

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Until well into the 1930s, Galiano, where the brothers had grown up, and where some of the Page family continued to live, had been the site of three herring salteries, employing mostly Japanese workers, and producing products for the Asian market.

The double tragedies of depression and war put an end to the industry, and the salteries were dismantled. Les bought lumber salvaged from the salteries and hauled it home to Gabriola. Building partly on land, but mostly on pilings, he used the lumber to build a wood-framed shed to store fishing nets, boat parts, and miscellaneous supplies.

The shed still survives at the marina where it comes in useful for storing dinghy sails and harbouring refugee kittens. Now a favourite target for tourists' cameras, it holds slivers of the history of two Gulf Islands. ◇

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### **Come and gone**—by *Barrie Humphrey*

We know the names of the settlers who remained on Gabriola for several generations—older residents remember them, or geographic features of the island have been named after them. Others however, now forgotten, lived here for a short time, then moved on or died without descendants who were willing to live and work here. Their passage is marked only by their names on a few pieces of official paper, or in the directories of the time.

One such was Robert P. Dombrain(e), who pre-empted land on Gabriola in 1870. His name is listed in the Nanaimo directories of 1869 and 1871, then disappears without a trace. We received what seemed might be a good lead as to where he came from when Nicholas d'Ombrain of New Brunswick e-mailed us to say that he had found a version of his family name on the museum

website. He says the name and family are Huguenot in origin, and can be traced to a Jacques d'Embrun who fled France from Rouen in 1572, just before the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. He believed that Robert P. might have been the same Dombrain who arrived in Melbourne, Australia on board the SS *True Briton* in September of 1868, aged 21.

Nicholas's Robert P. left no other trace in Australia and if he had been the Gabriola Dombrain, he would have come fairly directly from Australia to Vancouver Island, arriving sometime in 1869, pre-empting on Gabriola in 1870 (at age 23) and disappearing again after 1871. Alas, it proved not to be so. At the same time that Nicholas discovered another Robert Dombrain, this one in South Africa, we discovered that our Robert married a Sechelt woman named Lucy in Nanaimo in 1865.

So what happened to the family? Did they move to Washington or Oregon when BC became a province in that year? Many who held republican views did. Did Robert fall victim to drowning or disease, before deaths began to be officially registered in 1872? Or did they move on to another frontier?

Because they lived in an isolated area, during a time when there were few public records and no local newspaper, we may never know. Unless that is, a descendant of the *real* Robert Dombrain, reading this, writes to tell us the rest of the story. ◇

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### **A French note**—by *Nick Doe*

The first permanent, non-native settlement in the lower-mainland and Vancouver-Island region of BC was at Fort Langley on the Fraser River. It was founded in 1827. The list of Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)

## **Come and gone again**—by Barrie Humphrey

In an earlier *SHALE*,<sup>1</sup> I described our efforts to learn more about one of Gabriola's early land pre-emptors, Robert P. Dombrain. Apart from his name, which occurred in the Nanaimo directories of 1869 and again in 1871, nothing more was known about him, especially not why he came to Gabriola, and why he left.

Nicholas d'Ombrain of New Brunswick, believing that Robert might be part of his family, had e-mailed us with suggestions of several promising candidates. Since that article was written, in March 2001, new information has been discovered in the archives of the Anglican Diocese of Columbia, at 900 Vancouver Street in Victoria.<sup>2</sup>

The first interesting record is of a baptism, dated September 18, 1864, of one James Dumbrain (*sic*), born February 7, 1864 to Robert Dumbrain (a labourer) and See-ate-a-sult (a Sishel [Sechelt] woman). The baptism was performed by the Reverend John B Good, rector of St. Paul's Anglican Church in Nanaimo. More than a year later, Lucy Dumbrain, born of Indian parents, was baptized as an adult, on June 11, 1865, also by J.B. Good.

The birth of James in 1864 would have required Nicholas's favourite candidate to have arrived in Canada nine months before the birth, aged about 14—not a very likely scenario, which is why we gave him up. Nicholas however had suggested that we look for a marriage record that might tell us something of our Robert Dombrain's

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<sup>1</sup> Barrie Humphrey, *Come and gone*, *SHALE* 2, p.36, March 2001.

<sup>2</sup> The invaluable help of Stuart Daniel at the archives is acknowledged.

parentage. This proved to be a good recommendation.

Another trip to the Anglican Archives revealed a marriage (#14 in the St. Paul's parish registry), dated Christmas Day, 1865. Performed by John B. Good, this marriage united Robert Peel Dombrain, a bachelor of Nanaimo aged 28 (who now gave his occupation as "gentleman", his birthplace as "Canterbury, Kent, England", and his father as William, "a hop planter") and Lucy, a spinster of Nanaimo, aged 20, (who gave her birthplace as Seshel BC, and her father as "Indian"). The bride was given away by Andrew M. Fletcher, whose wife Mary (also Sishel or Seshel) was the bridesmaid. There were four witnesses, including a future Gabriolan, Theodore LeBoeuf,<sup>3</sup> who would himself take an aboriginal wife a year later.

Armed with Robert's age, birthplace, and parentage, Nicholas organized a search of the Canterbury Parish church archives. In early August of last year, he learned that a Robert Peel Dombrain was baptized on August 25, 1835, at St. Margaret's Church, Canterbury, the child of William Dombrain (1803–1880) and Jane Seguin (1796–1864).

William, our Dombrain's father, was a "wine and spirit merchant" according to the marriage certificate of one of his children, and was himself the son of Abraham Dombrain (1762–1837) and his second wife Elizabeth Aldridge (1757–1820). William's brother James, later Sir James, became the Commissioner of the Irish Coastguard. It is likely that Robert and Lucy's child was named for him.

So, a co-operative effort between Gabriola, New Brunswick, and Canterbury has now succeeded in extending Robert's stay in the

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<sup>3</sup> Lynda Poulton and Barrie Humphrey, *The LeBoeuf family*, *SHALE* 1, pp.22–25, November 2000.

Nanaimo area backward from three to nine years (1863–1871), and provided him with a child and a wife (in that order). However, we have still been unable to find any more about him after 1871. According to Nicholas d’Ombrain’s research, there is only one Dombrain anywhere in the US census, so migration to the south, as suggested in the earlier article, seems less likely.

So...we await further developments, and of course, as always, readers’ suggestions for other avenues of research. ◇

### **Aboriginal burials on Gabriola Island—by Dr. Brian Chisholm**

Simon Fraser University Press has recently published, in a slightly revised form, the work that went into A. Joanne Curtin’s PhD dissertation at Ohio State University.<sup>4</sup> The publication is in the form of a monograph, which remains organized in the style of a dissertation rather than a narrative, which lessens its appeal to the non-specialist reader. Nevertheless, the research she describes will be of general interest to those living on Gabriola and in the Nanaimo area, including of course the Snunéymux<sup>w</sup> themselves.

The monograph deals with the analysis of Aboriginal burials from rock shelters and caves on Gabriola Island, and a comparison is made between these burials and burials in the midden at False Narrows.

Curtin had three hypotheses that she wished to examine, specifically, that the two burial populations—the ones in the caves and the ones in the midden—represent either:

- two different peoples
- different times in the history of one people; or
- different social groups within one people.

Curtin introduces her work by discussing the topic of mortuary analysis, beginning with a brief summary of the development of the subject, followed by observations on its application on the Northwest Coast and on Gabriola Island. She then goes on to describe the geography, geology, and biology of the Gulf Islands, covering the time from the late Pleistocene to the present. She also provides an ethnographic overview of the study region, and a regional culture history for the Gulf of Georgia that relies on generally accepted chronologies and classifications. Last is a summary of the prehistory of the Nanaimo area, including Gabriola Island.

By the end of the first two relatively short chapters, a total of sixteen pages, the problem, its theoretical background and the context and prehistory of the study area have been summarized. While somewhat condensed, this provides the reader with the necessary background information to situate the analysis that follows.

Chapter 3 presents a description of the methods used by Curtin to address her hypotheses. It outlines the reconnaissance methods for the Gabriola Island sites, including definitions of the recorded data types. A description of the excavation and data collection methods for human remains follows, with appropriate definitions provided here also. The author describes how she reconstructed and conjoined the various bone fragments and elements found, and how she collected data from the reconstructed parts. A section on comparisons of the Gabriola Island burials

<sup>4</sup> Curtin, A. Joanne, *Prehistoric mortuary variability on Gabriola Island, British Columbia*. Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC.



So what's all this to do with *SHALE*? Well, being a museum journal and all, I think at least one issue of *SHALE* ought to have a picture of an ammonite. It's a "musty" tradition—so to speak. Our museum might not be able to come up with a specimen as beautiful as that shown on the previous page, but make no mistake, ammonites were here. The photograph above is of a specimen found by Paul Smith in the cliffs near the cemetery. Not world class, granted, but it is Gabriolan. No further excuse is needed to show it here. ◇

### **Come and gone again—this time for good?—by Barrie Humphrey**

Although we know something about the family history of many of the settlers who pre-empted land on Gabriola in the 1860s and 70s, there are others whose lives remain a mystery. One such pre-emptor was a self-styled "gentleman" by the name of Robert Peel Dombrain. As noted in previous *SHALEs*,<sup>1</sup> we started out knowing nothing

<sup>1</sup> Barrie Humphrey, *Come and gone*, *SHALE* No.2, p.36, March 2001 and *Come and gone again*, *SHALE* No.5, pp.42–3, December 2002.

more than his name, which appeared in the Nanaimo directory of 1869, and again in 1871, but then disappeared forever.

The christening of his son, James, in 1864 and his marriage a year later, to See-ate-a-sult of the Sechelt (called Lucy), in Nanaimo's St. Paul's Church, later turned up in the archives of the Anglican Diocese of Columbia in Victoria. With the help of Nicholas d'Ombraïn of New Brunswick, a relative who responded to the posting of the name on the museum website, information from the Victoria records eventually led to the identification of his parents and family in Canterbury, Kent.

At that point, his trail in British Columbia seemed to stop. We could find nothing prior to 1864 and nothing since the 1871 directory. We knew nothing of why, how, or when Robert arrived on the west coast, nor of what caused the family to disappear from Gabriola and Nanaimo without a trace. Worse, we could think of nowhere else to look.

But "fortune", as Louis Pasteur once said, "favours the prepared mind". Last December, during another visit to the Anglican Archives to look for some of the

passengers of the Hudson's Bay Company's immigrant ship the *Norman Morison*—a task unrelated to the mystery of Mr.

Dombrain—something jumped off the page:

DOMBRANE, Robert. Died in the Royal Hospital, age 43. Buried in Christ Church cemetery on July 24, 1871, H. Williams officiating.<sup>2</sup>

It is strange to think of working away in the Anglican Archives more than a year ago, trying to find the fate of Robert Dombrain in Gabriola or Nanaimo, when all the while he was lying less than a minute's walk away, in the old cemetery around the corner from the archives.

Outside, it was cold and wet—too miserable to poke around in cemeteries. Instead, I drove to the BC Archives, next door to the Royal BC Museum. Sure enough, in the *Victoria British Colonist* of "Sunday Morning, July 23, 1871" was this short entry:

DEATH AT THE ROYAL HOSPITAL—  
Robert Dumblane, a collier from Nanaimo and a native of England, died at the Royal Hospital yesterday morning at 8 o'clock. Deceased was afflicted with Bright's disease of the kidneys.

Nothing else. No age.<sup>3</sup> Nothing about a funeral in that edition or later, and nothing about survivors.

So, now we have some answers, and some more questions. What was Robert doing in Victoria? Did he go there to consult with one of the town's physicians, or was he just

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<sup>2</sup> I wonder if the numbers of his age were reversed. If he really was 43, he must have been born around 1828, seven years before he was baptized in August 1835. That's not impossible, but then he gave his age as 28 at his marriage in 1865, which would imply he was 34, rather than 43, at the time of death.

<sup>3</sup> Whether 43 or 34, he was still very young to be dying of kidney failure.

passing through when he became ill? What happened to Lucy and to young James (now seven years of age)?

Weeks after this latest find, in only slightly better weather, fellow researcher Lynda Poulton examined Pioneer Square for signs of a Dombrain grave.<sup>4</sup> Almost all the markers were sandstone, now much eroded and indecipherable. She photographed a tree which has grown around one of the stones. We'd like to think that, in its heartwood, protected from the elements, Robert Peel Dombrain's name lives on.



Lynda Poulton

The old cemetery, Victoria

*EDITOR: So this, it would seem, is the end of the Dombrain story...or so we all thought. But as it turns out, it isn't. Keep watching SHALE for a report from Barrie on yet more discoveries. ◇*

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<sup>4</sup> The Pioneer Square cemetery is on the east side of Quadra Street, next door to Christ Church Cathedral, and is generally known as "the old cemetery". The Ross Bay Cemetery didn't open until 1873 and although there are a few burials there dated before 1873—presumably having been moved there from elsewhere—Robert Dombrain's grave isn't among them.

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## Notes

This section of *SHALE* provides an opportunity for contributors to present the partial results of ongoing research, publish less-than-normal-length articles, and provide “interesting facts”.

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### **Come and gone yet again—by Barrie Humphrey**

This is becoming a long story, but it is nevertheless an excellent example of “what sometimes happens” when you do historical research. It goes like this.

Although we know something of the history of many of the settlers who pre-empted land on Gabriola in the 1860s and 70s, there are others whose lives remain a complete mystery. One such pre-emptor was Robert Peel Dombrain. As noted in earlier *SHALEs*,<sup>1</sup> the only thing we knew about him when we started this research was his name, which appeared in the Nanaimo Directory of 1869, and again in 1871, but never thereafter.

The first step in shedding some light on Mr. Dombrain’s life came with the discovery of the records of the christening of a son, and of his marriage to the son’s mother, Lucy from Sechelt, in 1865 in Nanaimo. These records were found in the archives of the Anglican Diocese of Columbia in Victoria.

With the help of Nicholas d’Ombrain of New Brunswick, information from the Victoria records eventually led to the identification of his parents and family in Canterbury, Kent. Since the 16th century, Kent has been famous for the growing of

hops to make beer, and Robert’s father was listed in the records as a “hop planter”.

So far so good. But why did Robert “disappear” in 1871? Only a lucky find provided the answer. In the Anglican archives, we came across the notification of the death of, “Robert Dumblane (*sic*), a collier from Nanaimo” in 1871, in Victoria, from what was said to be Bright’s disease of the kidneys. What happened to his wife Lucy after that, we can only guess.

This is the point we had arrived at in my last report to *SHALE*. By then, we had, starting from close to nothing, achieved practically all that a genealogist can usually hope to achieve working only from official records. But for this particular research, there was a bonus prize—a file stored away in the BC Archives containing seven letters of introduction for Robert Dombraine addressed to Governor James Douglas, each with its envelope, and a package in which all were wrapped.<sup>2</sup> The letters, all seven of which are printed here, tell an interesting story.

Robert appears to have been a member of a respected family that had lived in Canterbury for 300 years. He was the nephew of Sir James Dombrain. In 1858, he had sailed from England for British Columbia aboard the *Briseis*, but while still

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<sup>1</sup> Barrie Humphrey, *Come and gone*, *SHALE* 2, p.36, March 2001; *Come and gone again*, *SHALE* 5, pp.42–3, December 2002; *Come and gone again—this time for good?* *SHALE* 6, pp.23–24, April 2003.

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<sup>2</sup> British Columbia Archives & Records Service (BCARS) GR-1372: BC Colonial Correspondence Microfilm B01325, File 478c: DOMBRAINE, Robert Peel.

in the Atlantic Ocean, it had caught fire and he was taken by rescuers to Brazil. From there, he returned to England to make another attempt at emigration the following year.<sup>3</sup>

It is apparent from these letters of introduction, that it was Robert Dombain's expectation, or at least hope, that he would find employment with the Colonial Administration in Victoria. He presumably didn't, and so made his way to Nanaimo where he found work in the mines, and later pre-empted land on Gabriola.

With regard to the letters of introduction to James Douglas, we might learn something of their value from the following, which I ran into just recently. It's from a book by R. Byron Johnson, called *Very Far West Indeed*, first published in 1872 in London, England<sup>4</sup>. The author came out to British Columbia by way of Panama and San

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<sup>3</sup> The name *Briseis*, originally belonging to a woman associated with the Greek hero Achilles, was a popular name for ships in the late-18th and early-19th centuries. It has even found a place in the future, in the Star Trek stories. Dates from the letters of reference make it fairly certain that the *Briseis* that burned under Robert Dombain is the same *Briseis* that the Royal Engineers (sappers) had planned to sail on, on their way to keep the peace at the Cariboo gold rush in 1858. Fredrick W. Howay in an address on the work of the Royal Engineers in British Columbia, 1858–1863 in 1909, commented: "A portion of the stores and provisions for the detachment was sent out in the barque *Briseis*, which sailed from the Downs on 27th October, 1858. It had been intended to send on her four married men of the detachment under Corporal William Hall, but when the vessel was loaded it was found that there was not sufficient accommodations for them. This was fortunate, as the *Briseis* was burned at sea, and the passengers and crew suffered many hardships before reaching safety."

<sup>4</sup> R. Byron Johnson, *Very Far West Indeed—A few rough experiences on the North-West Pacific coast*, Sampson Low etc.: London, 1872. Reprinted in 1985.

Francisco in 1862, just a year or two later than Robert. He spent only a few days in Victoria, then went off to the Cariboo in search of gold. This quote is from page 45:

"...a visit to the residence of the Governor, to whom one of my letters of introduction was addressed.

"...After the first salutations had passed, the inevitable practical question came, 'Well, sir, what can I do for you?' I had some dim notion of the possibility of a snug government berth for a time, with nothing to do and plenty of pay, and hinted this misty idea in a subdued way to my friend the Governor. The only answer I got, or needed, was that gentleman's suddenly opening a huge drawer in his library, containing, I should fancy, a thousand or more 'letters of introduction'. This unhappy vision was supplemented by the advice—wholesome, certainly, if unpleasant—that if I was hard up, the best thing that offered was to go up country and work on the roads."

Matthew Macfie, writing in 1865, also offered this advice to would-be immigrants:<sup>5</sup>

"...Clerks, poor gentlemen of education and breeding in quest of Government appointments, governesses, school-masters, adventurers without funds and trained to no particular employment—all such classes are cautioned not to come. Openings, even for them, however, will...arise when the development of this country is more advanced."

While this really may be the end of the Dombain story, it does, as all research does, leave open questions. What, for example, happened to those thousand or more letters in Douglas's drawer? Do they wait in the BC Archives as fuel for further research?

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia—their history, resources, and prospects*, p.495, Longman etc.: London 1865. Reprinted Coles Publishing Co., Toronto, 1972.

## Robert Dombrain's letters of introduction—with research notes by Barrie Humphrey and Nicholas d'Ombrain

1 Colonial Office, Downing Street  
5<sup>th</sup> March 1859  
Sir,

This letter will be presented to you by *Mr. Dombrain* who is proceeding to *Vancouver Island*. He has been recommended to me by *The Hon. H. Butler Johnstone* at whose request I write this letter. It cannot, however, be too distinctly understood that I do not by this introduction, design to fetter in the slightest degree your discretion in the choice of Candidates for employment in the Public Service.

I remain, Sir  
Yours very faithfully  
E. B. Lytton

Governor Douglas  
P.S. Mr. Dombrain was a passenger in the *Briseis* which was unfortunately lost [?to?] fire and I grant this letter of introduction in lieu of one which he received from me before sailing by that vessel.

Letter 1 (*left*): E.B. Lytton is Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who was appointed Secretary for the Colonies in May 1858. It is safe to suppose that Robert's father, William, must have been well connected locally and was able to use his political connections to get this letter from the minister responsible for the colonies.

Bulwer Lytton seemed to be one of those interesting characters with more than 24 hours in his days, common in Victorian times. He was a prolific author, perhaps most famous for the opening line of one of his novels, "It was a dark and stormy night..." (*Paul Clifford*, 1830).

Given his stature (he was Douglas's boss), it's no wonder he felt it necessary to reassure Douglas that, "I do not...design to fetter...your discretion".

2 House of Commons  
[ Stamp]  
18 April 1859

I have the pleasure of knowing Mr Rob<sup>t</sup> Peel Dombraine and his worthy father who resides in Canterbury, also Sir James Dombraine his uncle who is one of my leading constituents in Dublin. Hearing that he is about to proceed to British Columbia I have great pleasure in recommending him for any position where Energy of Character, and the strictest integrity are required.

John Vance  
M.P. for City of Dublin

To His Excellency  
The Governor of British Columbia

3 [undated]

I believe Mr. Dombrain to be a very reputable person, deserving of every encouragement. It would give me much pleasure to hear of his future success.

W<sup>m</sup> M. Somerville  
M.P. for Canterbury

Letter 2 (*left*): One of three letters bearing the seal of the House of Commons, a good indication that William Dombrain, Robert's father, had enough property to vote under the 1832 Reform Act.

Letter 3 (*above*): Sir William Meredyth Somerville (Liberal) was one of the two Members of Parliament for Canterbury. The signature on this letter is impossible to read and we had to seek help to identify the writer.

4

Canterbury  
April 17, 1859

To His Excellency  
The Governor General of British Columbia  
May it please Your Excellency.

As Rector of the Parish of St. Margaret's, Canterbury, I beg leave most respectfully to introduce to the notice of Your Excellency the bearer of this letter, Mr. Robert Peel Dombraine a native of this city, and one of my parishioners, now embarking for British Columbia over which Colony you preside. He is the bearer of several letters which I trust may secure for him the attention and encouragement of the Colonial Authorities, [?and?will?] lead to his speedy appointment to some office of responsibility and importance [illegible] Government—but I felt it desirable that in addition he should be recommended to Your Excellency by his Pastor—and I trust that in every respect he may prove himself worthy of your Confidence and encouragement.

It is the more to be desired because some months ago Mr. Dombraine set out for the Colony and owing to the ship taking fire, he was exposed four or five days & nights in an open boat & was obliged to return to England under great discouragement & serious loss. I trust that on the present occasion he may be more fortunate, & in the success of his second voyage may forget the trials of the first.

Mr. Dombraine is the nephew of Sir James Dombraine, K<sup>t</sup> and a member of a highly respectable family resident nearly 300 years in this City. I trust he may add to the honors of his house—and prove himself a useful member of society in his newly adopted Country.

His tastes & talents fit him eminently for Colonial Life and I earnestly hope that the prayers and blessings which follow him may indeed rest upon him, and that he may be useful in whatever position he may be placed in.

With all respect I have the honor to be  
Your Excellency's Most Obedient Servant

Edward H. Woodall

Letter 4 (*left*): From Rev. Edward Harrison Woodall. He is listed in "Alumni Oxonienses", a list of students who attended Oxford University.

Letter 5 (*below*): Henry Butler-Johnstone (Conservative) was the second of the two Members of Parliament for Canterbury. He is referred to in Letter 1.

5

24 Park St London  
14th April 1859

Sir,

You will receive this letter from Mr. Robert Peel Dombraine, who wishes to be a settler in British Columbia.

I am induced to give him this introduction to you from the fact of my being intimately acquainted with him and his family, who have been for a great number of years residents of the City of Canterbury, where they are highly respected and esteemed.

Mr. Dombraine sailed from England last October on board the *Briseis* for British Columbia, the ship was discovered to be on fire on the 7th of December. The Crew after enduring the greatest hardships & loss, were picked up on the fifth day by a Brazilian Brig and carried to Pernambuco, from whence this young man made his way back to England having lost every valuable & essential article he possessed.

Not daunted by his misfortune, & feeling a strong desire for Colonial life, I believe him to be highly deserving of encouragement, & that he will do honor to his employers, & credit to my recommendation.

I have the Honor To remain Sir  
Your ob<sup>dt</sup> S<sup>t</sup>

H. Butler Johnstone  
M.P. for the City of Canterbury

To His Excellency  
The Governor of British Columbia &c.

6 Goodnestone Park  
Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> 1858

Sir,

I take the great liberty of introducing to your Notice the Bearer of this letter Mr. Robert Peel Dombtrain, the Son of a very Respect Inhabitants of the neighbouring City of Canterbury who has received a very good useful Education at the Kings School of that City and has borne up to this time (his age is 23) an excellent Character for several good [illegible] qualities and industry and activity in the various duties he has had to perform.

He is about to leave this Country for British Columbia in the hope of turning his talents to account in the service of his Country, and if you should be led to give him the opportunity of performing any public duties, do not fear that he would satisfy you and do credit to himself. I must as a Stranger ask your pardon for thus intruding upon you, but, I trust you will be of opinion that I am in Some measure excused by this knowledge I have of the Character of the Young Gentleman who is the bearer of my note.

I have the honor to be, Sir  
Your obed<sup>t</sup> Servant  
Brook W<sup>m</sup> Bridges

Letter 6 (*left*): From Brook William Bridges. He was a “prominent resident” (bigwig) of Canterbury.

His house, Goodnestone (pronounced “Gunstone”) Park, is just outside Canterbury and was built in the early 1700s. It is well known today for its gardens. Since Robert’s father was in some way connected with beer, wine, and spirits, we suspect he had a business relationship with Bridges—perhaps he bought hops grown on the estate.

Jane Austen was a frequent visitor to Goodnestone, and her brother Edward married Elizabeth Bridges. Elizabeth and Jane did not get along, Jane writing, “Ly Elizth [Lady Elizabeth] for a woman of her age & situation has astonishingly little to say for herself...”. According to one of Jane’s nieces, “...a little talent went a long way with the Goodnestone Bridges...& much talent must have gone a long way too far”.

Kings School claims to be the oldest public (i.e. private) school in England, and stands in the cathedral precincts. Robert Dombtrain was evidently a well-educated man and hence his styling himself as a “gentleman” on his marriage certificate in 1865.

Letter 7 (*below left*): George McCartney was a physician who knew Robert’s uncle, Sir James. We did not research him further. ◇

7  
I have much pleasure in recommending Mr. Robert Peel Dombtrain of Canterbury to the consideration of his Majesty’s Representative residing in British Columbia for employment having known intimately his uncle Sir James Dombtrain and several of the members of his family.

Given under my hand the 18th of April, 1859  
Geo. Macartney MD  
Co. Antrim Ireland

*We should like to thank the following for their generous help in researching these letters and their writers: Vancouver Island Regional Library: Reference Section, Nanaimo; Stuart Daniel, archivist of the Anglican archives, Victoria; Paul Blewitt, archivist for Canterbury Cathedral; Mari Takayanagi, assistant archivist, Parliamentary archives, House of Lords Record Office, London.*

*We also note Patrick A. Dunae’s book: Gentlemen emigrants—From the British public schools to the Canadian frontier, Douglas & McIntyre, 1981. ◇*