



THE DARK DAD

War and trauma — a daughter's tale

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This book is dedicated to several groups of people: to the ordinary men who were part of the chaos of the Battle of Sidi Rezegh; to those who gave up their young lives for a cause barely understood; to the men who survived to fight another day; and to those who spent long years as POWs. The body, when wounded, can usually mend over time, but a damaged or broken mind often takes longer. I hope that other people of my generation who experienced childhoods like ours may find some solace in knowing that theirs was not an isolated experience and find the compassion to forgive their fathers when they didn't come up to the mark.

The Dark Dad is also dedicated to my brothers, John and Michael, my childhood partners in crime, whom I love and deeply admire and whose company I have treasured. Sadly, Michael didn't live to see this book published, but in the days before his death we talked a lot about what our family life had been like. I might have said that as a child he was the most anxious of all of us, but he brushed that aside, telling me that once John and I had left home things began to settle, and that he was glad to have had some pleasant years before he, too, flew the nest.

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The painting in the hallway: Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, which hangs in Mauritshuis, The Hague.

1.

The dark dad

I stand at the doorway, fists clenched, gazing up at the little painting that hangs on the narrow strip of wall above the telephone table. The young woman seems to be glancing in my direction, her hair covered by a blue and yellow turban, its fringed ends cascading down her back. I wonder if her hair is light or dark and I wish that she would unwrap the cloth for me to see. Her face is gentle, the large pearl earring shining so softly that I almost forget my fear. I want to reach up and touch the pearl, but know I will only touch the smooth, cool glass that protects her.

The dark frame of the doorway seems to close in on me as I turn to stare at the space beneath my narrow bed in the far corner. I take a deep breath, close my eyes tightly for a moment, and then run, leaping, sinking onto the complaining springs, rolling the bedding over my head. Slowly my breath calms. Quieter than a mouse, I peel back the sheet. The house is silent, apart from my younger brother's soft breath in the other bed, and in the dim light from the hall I can just make out the pale-blue stripes of his flannel pyjamas. Raindrops

trace their way down the window, illuminated by the street lamp beyond the front garden. My eyes grow heavier, and sleep wraps me softly in its arms.



Not every bedtime ends so well. Some nights I slide beneath the covers and weave my fingers through the wire-wove base under the mattress, the metal sharp against my skin. I have a choice — to hang on or to push my fingers into my ears. The sound of my brother's tight breaths tells me that he, too, is listening. Will the ugly noises we hear through the wall come closer, or will they soften and cease?

At the sudden sound of running, I roll quickly across the mattress, my face pressed into the narrow gap where the bed meets the wall, waiting for my mother to leap in beside me and hold me tight. I can sense the dark dad standing in the doorway. In my mind, he roars like a bull, but my mother knows he will not come closer while her children are there to protect her. As her panting subsides, we nestle closer, and after some time we all slip into a wary sleep.

Only once does the dark dad cross the threshold, and in an instant we are out the narrow window, leaving the metal hasp dangling. Mum has always been fleet, and we follow her like baby ducks in a line. Other times we leave by the front door. My older brother sleeps in the sunporch and must slip out the back and up the narrow path beside the house. What does he sense when my mother leaps into my bed? He must lie awake, too, listening for the slightest movement, but who will protect him if he is in the porch on his own?

Somehow or other, we find ourselves outside in the dark, our mother guiding us swiftly down the hill and across the road. Steep driveways lead down to a lower footpath, and we make our way to

a low stone wall, a dense hedge rearing up to one side. Huddled together, we wait until dawn, when the dark dad leaves the house. After we hear the truck driving away over the hill, Mum shepherds us home and back into bed. None of us will go to school that day, and Mum will write a note to our teachers saying we have all come down with a stomach bug or something similar.

Once, when Dad has pushed a lighted cigarette into the corner of Mum's eye, we climb over the low fence to our neighbours' house, and they tuck us into bed. We can hear Mum talking softly in their sitting room. Our neighbours are English, and even as a young child I recognise that their comfortable lives are very different from ours. Another time, when we are a bit older, a car comes and we are whisked away to my uncle's house in Remuera, where we lie in other people's beds, exhausted by the evening's events. I sense my uncle doesn't approve, and that somehow it is my mother's fault that things aren't ordered in our household.

One night, as Mum races into our bedroom, my younger brother starts to scream, a high-pitched wailing, on and on, as if the stripes on his pyjamas have risen up to slither through the air like silver-blue snakes. Sometimes at night I can't get the sound of Mike's distress out of my mind, and I am frightened that I, too, might start wailing, unable to stop, until the room fills with snakes and I can no longer breathe . . .



My father, Jack Arnott (left), aged five, with his sister, Jean, and brother Fred. *Jack Arnott archive*

2.

A difficult childhood

My father rarely talked about his early life. What little I knew came from my mother, who was convinced that many of Dad's problems stemmed from his unhappy childhood. We had had little contact with his brothers, although we knew his sister, Jean, better.

To find out more, in 2005 I went to see Dad's younger brother Eric. He had worked all his life on the railways before retiring to Hamilton with his wife, Val, and they swept me into their family as if I had simply been away for a while. It turned out my parents had seen quite a lot of them in later life, and Eric remembered them both with great affection. He confirmed that Dad had had a difficult childhood but, as a much younger brother, he had not witnessed it. He merely sensed an atmosphere on the rare occasions Dad went to visit. Gradually, with the help of Eric and his sister Jean's children, I began to piece together what my father's life had been like.

I did know that Dad's parents, Bill and Frances Arnott, were from Tasmania. Years before, on a visit to Hobart, I had decided to see what I could find out about them. Research can sometimes be

prolonged and frustrating, but in Hobart I found everything I needed to know between one set of covers. When I told the archivist at the Hobart library what I was after, he gazed at me, chuckled, and asked whether I was an Arnott or a Dyer, a name that meant nothing to me. He directed me to a book on the Dyer family, to whom, I discovered, the Arnotts were linked through marriage.¹

It turned out that my grandfather Bill Arnott's father, Henry, had grown up in Arngask, Perthshire, in Scotland, before sailing as an assisted passenger from Glasgow to Tasmania with his younger brother Robert on the *Broomilaw*.² On 15 March 1857, after four months at sea, they arrived in Launceston, where they were granted 50-acre blocks adjacent to each other on Carey's Road, West Kentish, where the rolling terrain rises to the impressive crags of Mount Roland.

It took a while to break in the land for farming, so Henry worked as a carpenter, later building a handsome home, 'Glentana', for himself and Dinah Dyer, whom he married in her father's house on 1 January 1868. He was 38 years old; she was 19. Henry and Dinah became early members of the Christian (Plymouth) Brethren in Kentish District. Dinah gave birth to nine children, including William (Bill) and his brother George. As an adult George remained within the faith, but Bill became *persona non grata* when he became a Presbyterian.³

My grandmother Frances York's parents were somewhat more colourful. Her mother, Myra, who worked as a teacher, was a lovely woman, but her father Sam was an infamous drunk, adept at smashing up the house. It seems Myra forgave his drinking because he was a severe asthmatic and she believed the beer helped him breathe.⁴

Bill Arnott went to New Zealand in the early 1900s, only to return to Tasmania after working for a while in Whakatāne. In 1913 he moved permanently to Dunedin, where two sets of relatives had already settled. Frances followed Bill to Dunedin in early 1914. They

had been sweethearts, but when Frances became pregnant, he knew from the start that the child she was carrying was his brother George's and not his own. It is assumed that he was encouraged to do the decent thing and avoid a family scandal, not least because George was religious, married and had a young family of his own.

Bill and Frances were married on 24 February at the North East Valley (now St David's) Presbyterian Church. My father was born three months later. The following year Frances gave birth to a second boy, Neville, who lived only a year; Jean followed in 1916; and Fred in 1919. There was a 10-year hiatus before Eric arrived.



Dad had always spoken fondly of Dunedin, and I was to make my next discovery there, in the Hocken Library. Records showed that for several years the family had lived in a small workman's cottage at 25 Bridgeman Street, Kensington, near the road leading out to Portobello on the peninsula. At the time, Bill worked for the Dunedin Power Corporation as a linesman. One of the few stories Dad told us was about being sent to work with his father, possibly when one of the other children was born. They were riding in the cab of an old lorry in which one of the floorboards was missing. Dad could see the road whizzing by beneath him. He was terrified, fearing Bill would push him through the hole.

In March 1920 Bill enrolled my father at Musselburgh Primary School, not far from the beach at St Kilda, giving Dad's birth date as 26 May, one day out. The original school is no longer standing, but photographs show that it was a handsome affair, with white stone quoins defining the corner of each wall and window. The photograph at the start of this chapter was probably taken around

the time Jack started school. He is wearing his best clothes — a dark shirt and shorts, woollen socks pulled up to his knees and a rather natty horizontally striped tie. His luxuriant dark curls, which remained the envy of both his brothers, stand in contrast to Jean and Fred's fair hair.⁵ He certainly looks like a cuckoo in the nest.

At some point Dad ran away from home and made his way into the Octagon, where he was found sitting under the statue of Robbie Burns. Who he had hoped to find we do not know, but it seems certain that he had run away after a beating, and no doubt he received another when he was delivered back home by the local policeman. His sister, Jean, told me that Bill never lost any opportunity to beat my father's bastardy into him; he would sit on his chest and strike him across the face, yelling that he was no child of his.

If Dad enjoyed Musselburgh School, it wasn't for long — school records show that he was withdrawn on 23 May 1923, when the family moved south to Milton, on the Tokomairiro Plains.

The town was established very early in New Zealand's colonial history, being incorporated in the 1850s to serve farmers and gold miners in Central Otago. A number of its streets carry poets' names, and so romantics believe it was named after John Milton, but it may simply be a more prosaic derivative of Mill Town. It has a somewhat sleepy aspect these days, but in the 1920s and 1930s it was a hive of trade and industry, with five working mills, including McGill's Flour Mill and the Bruce Woollen Mill, the latter boasting a famous garden. Today the flour mill is a mournful ghost of a building sitting in a field, its windows empty of light, and it takes a leap of imagination to picture it bustling with life.

The town also serviced a coal mine; numerous firms were linked to timber milling, and its pottery factory was graced with magnificent conical kilns. The factory was shut down in 1917 and the kilns demolished, but local pottery could be found in almost every home

in Milton.⁶ The town's left-wing newspaper, *The Bruce Herald*, ran from 1864 to 1971; it folded the year Dad arrived in Milton, but Bill Arnott certainly would not have condoned its presence in the house had it survived. The town also had the only high school in the area. At the southern end of the main street stands the Tokomairiro Presbyterian Church, designed by the architect R. A. Lawson, who also designed Dunedin's major landmark, First Church.⁷ Built of dark grey basalt from Port Chalmers and set off by decorative features in white Ōamaru limestone, a splendid tower rises high above its impressive façade. A relief of a pine tree set into a niche above the door may represent the Tree of Life but is also reminiscent of the fir trees of Scotland.



After contacting a local family through the Milton Community Facebook page, I paid a visit to the town in 2022, partly to locate where Dad had lived but also in the hope of finding any relevant material in the Milton Museum. Sue and Kevin Gorton, who own the last surviving timber mill in Milton, had arranged to meet me and my friend Scott at a local café, but it was bitterly cold and pelting so hard with rain that they whisked us off to the warm environs of the local pub where we could talk at leisure. Over the kind of hearty lunch that Southerners depend on, I was thrilled to discover that Kevin's mother had been a close childhood friend of Dad's sister, Jean.

Kevin directed me to two cottages at 18 Eden Street, one of which was Dad's home during the second part of his childhood. It is hard to reconstruct what they would have looked like in the 1920s, but today both are bleak and somewhat dilapidated, the cottage on the left opening out at the back onto a large, bare yard, its front door directly

onto the street. The cottage on the right has a painted picket fence and its back garden (according to Google Earth) is full of trees. Either would have been somewhat crowded with three children and two adults.

The cottages are close to the old railway station, now neglected, but in the 1920s the air would have been filled with the sound of shunting engines, jubilant train whistles and the smell of coal smoke. As the starting point of the Roxburgh line, the long platform also housed numerous buildings, including a refreshment room and a bookstall.

The gardens of 18 Eden Street were of immediate interest to me. My mother told me once that when they were quite small the Arnott children had scrumped windfall apples from the neighbour's garden and that when the neighbour complained, Dad had got the blame. Bill grabbed a jar of liquid honey and poured it over Dad's head, then pushed him into a cupboard and locked the door. He was left in there all night, his mother releasing him only when Bill left for work the following day. Jack had soiled himself, adding to his humiliation, but Frances would have kept that to herself. As Jean recounted quietly at her hundredth birthday party, their father never needed any excuse to 'lick into Jack', and from an early age she learned to get between them when trouble was brewing.

Nor did Bill let Frances forget that he had taken on 'damaged goods'. Such behaviour can have a subliminal effect on young children, and when Dad was in his cups he would accuse my mother of similar behaviour. Bill, however, was a teetotaller, so alcohol could not be blamed for his vindictiveness. Perhaps Bill's animosity towards my father is best demonstrated by the Arnott family book that records births, deaths and marriages from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. All four children — Jack, Jean, Fred and Eric — were originally listed, but at some point Bill scratched out Dad's name.

It was an unhappy house, but if the neighbours were aware of the

disharmony, they obeyed the unwritten rule that you didn't interfere with what went on behind closed doors. Dad always spoke with warmth of a woman from his early years nicknamed Queenie. She turned out to be Frances's close friend, Adelaide Milligan. During our lunch with the Gortons, a message arrived asking me to return to the Milton Museum, where another local had left some photocopied documents for me. These recorded a court case in which Queenie and her sons had sued her husband for maintenance, indicating that she had experienced serious violence in her own marriage and would have been more than ready to lend a sympathetic ear to Frances's woes.⁸

Bill, however, was not without some redeeming features. He was an excellent gardener, winning prizes for his leeks and onions, and according to articles I found in *Papers Past* he did well at cricket and bowls. The most exciting thing I learned from the Gortons, however, was that the Arnotts had had a crib at Taieri Mouth, where the Taieri River empties into the Pacific Ocean, some 35 kilometres south of Dunedin. The little crib was tucked into the bank on the other side of the bridge on the northern stretch of Taieri Mouth Road, which tracks the coast back to Dunedin.

So now I knew where Dad had spent his summer holidays. Scott and I drove out there through a creeping winter fog, so thick that we had no sense of the surrounding landscape until we were near the sea. The Otago coast is often stormy in winter, and even on a summer's day the water temperature demands a certain stoicism, but the beach, once past the more sheltered inlet, offers sand that stretches north; rocky outcrops provide a modicum of shelter, and children can roam out of sight of the adult world. To the south, the white sand stretches all the way to Taieri cemetery. My father never lost his love of this wild coast, and had he had his way, we would have grown up there, too.



Jack Arnott (right), with an unnamed man in Milton in the 1930s.
Jack Arnott archive



By the time Eric was born in 1929, my father had left home. Parents could take their children out of school from the age of 13, and Jack, having failed his Proficiency examination, became a labourer in Central Otago. A faded Kodachrome photograph taken when my parents travelled south many years later bears a tiny cross in ink, marking the spot where he earned a shilling and sixpence an hour shovelling shingle near the base of Kawarau (The Remarkables) on the far side of Lake Wakatipu. Road building was bone-jarring work, not least for a 13-year-old, and involved gathering up river stones and gravel that were then broken up with sledgehammers and spread on the roads.⁹

If you were young and fit, working out of doors was bearable, even exhilarating, in summer, but if it rained you got a drenching and the mud reached knee height. Clydesdale draught horses were put to work at such times, as they dealt with the conditions better than humans or motor vehicles. Later, Jack also worked on the roads on the West Coast. He once told us how he got into trouble when he drove the horse-drawn water cart that served as a fire engine too fast round a corner. The cart rolled, much to the consternation of both the draught horse and its owners, but we could tell that the incident had filled Dad with mischievous glee.

By the early 1930s, Jack had returned to Milton and was boarding with Mrs Milligan, although he must have visited home on occasion because Eric has an early memory of Dad making him wooden toys. In 1933, he found work with the newly formed construction company Fulton Hogan. Jean was now employed at the prosperous Bruce Woollen Mill, and also boarded with the Milligans after the rest of the family moved to Palmerston around 1935, possibly because Bill got another job.¹⁰ By now Jack was a handsome young man in his

early twenties, and Jean was proud to be seen on his arm. They went to all the local events together, including the sporting competitions in which he took part.

In those days, local newspapers reported on every event, no matter how inconsequential. The archives of the *Otago Daily Times* and the *Evening Star* hold quite a number of articles that refer to my father's prowess, not just at sprinting, but also at broad jump, pole vault, athletics, diving and cycling.¹¹ His first love, though, was boxing, for which he must have trained in Milton or Dunedin. In January 1934, weighing in at 10 stone 6 pounds, he won the welter-weight boxing match against an S. Hay, who had the disadvantage of being half a stone lighter.¹² Matches were often held at His Majesty's Theatre in Stuart Street, Dunedin, but the *Evening Star* ran a report of a bout between my father and M. O'Connell of Macraes on 24 December 1935 at the city's Pioneers' Hall:

[T]he majority of the bouts were fast and willing, although there were only three of the contestants — C. Spencer, of Makarewa, the winner in the feather-weight division, and M. O'Connell (Macraes) and J. Arnott (Milton), the finalist in the middle-weight championship — who could really be classed as outstanding ... The context between O'Connell and Arnott proved to be the most interesting bout of the evening, and the showing put up by the Milton lad against a fighter of the calibre of O'Connell came as a complete surprise even to those who knew him as a clever boxer. He gave one of the best exhibitions of boxing that has been seen in a local ring for many a day, and his clever defensive work and use of the ring earned him round after round of applause. O'Connell retained his title, but it must have been his aggressive fighting in the final round that gained him the

decision, as Arnott, with his beautifully moving left, piled up the points in his favour in the first round, and also scored repeatedly in the second . . .¹³

Dad's boxing cups stood on the mantelpiece at home, along with a silver salt and pepper set in the form of little Dutch boys whose heads flipped back to dispense their contents.

For the rest of the decade, as far as we know, Dad remained in Milton, and he was still working for Fulton Hogan when war broke out and he enlisted in Dunedin in 1940. He was 25 when he made the long train journey to the training camp at Papakura in Auckland.



My mother, Margaret Ethelwyn Gray, around 1917.

3.

Life on the hill

Christened Margaret Ethelwyn Gray, but known affectionately in family circles as Ewie, my mother was two years older than my father. In an early photograph, she is dressed sedately in white, her serious, somewhat determined little face peering out from under a wide-brimmed hat. Ethelwyn was the second eldest of five, but you wouldn't know it to look at family photos: in time, all her siblings towered over her.

Most of her childhood in the Auckland suburb of Mount Eden was harum-scarum, roaming Landscape Road and its environs, including the maunga, with her four siblings. At the bottom of the hill, the section of Mount Eden Road leading past Te Tātua-a-Riukiuta Three Kings was unsealed and lined with stone walls from the quarries that were then being excavated to extend the roads of Auckland. Fields dotted with the occasional house stretched from Landscape Road to the Mount Eden village.

My great-grandmother, Louisa Radnedge, had married Samuel Gray in Somerset in January 1880, just three weeks before they departed for New Zealand on the sailing ship *Trevelyan*. Sam had

inherited some money after the last of his family died when he was a child, and he was determined to set up a newspaper in the colony.

Louisa was 13 years older than him, but theirs was a true love match, Sam having first proposed to her when he was in his early teens and she was employed as the governess in the house where he was living with relatives in London.¹ Determined by nature, Louisa refused to go below decks when the *Trevelyan* sailed through the Roaring Forties and was happy to be tied to the mast to avoid being washed overboard. Louisa and Sam were setting out on an adventure, and she wasn't about to miss any of it.

After spending three years in Normanby in Taranaki, where Louisa gave birth to three children, including my grandfather, Maurice, they came by sea to Auckland and eventually bought a house at the end of Essex Road in Mount Eden, which they named Ellamore and where they raised seven children. Their three unmarried daughters were later bequeathed the rambling house, their parents feeling that their sons could look after themselves.

In 1909 Maurice married my grandmother, Ethel Steward Watts, who was from Quaker stock, combining gentleness with a determined, practical character. She excelled at architectural drawings and would have trained professionally had she not had to run a home and raise a rabble of children. Fortunately, they could afford a housekeeper, who kept the cleaning and cooking under control while my grandmother turned her attention out of doors. The garden was full of vegetables, fruit, flowers and wandering hens that spent their nights in a chook house designed and constructed by Ethel, alongside an equally handsome hutch for their pet rabbits.

Maurice Gray, who worked as an accountant in the city, was generally described as an amiable man who had a great interest in books and people, although the one thing sure to rouse him to a frenzy was his inability to attach a freshly starched collar to his shirt

every morning, and it took the first pipe of the day to placate him. But, as my mother would say, he only got angry with things, never with people. Every Sunday, Maurice and Ethel and their five children walked from Landscape Road to gather with the rest of the family at Ellamore. To get to work in the city during the week Maurice, had only to walk only as far as the Balmoral Road corner, where the tramline into town began.

A photograph, which stood in pride of place on our living-room sideboard when I was growing up, showed him sitting in the breakfast room of Ellamore in the 1940s, engrossed in a book, beloved pipe in hand. The mantelpiece behind him was relatively uncluttered — as it was when I visited as a child — apart from a little lead sculpture of an African boy in a loincloth struggling to control two rearing horses, whereas a small table adjacent groaned with books. The opposite wall was lined with volumes, framed hunting prints, and bound journals that arrived at regular intervals from Britain.

Ethel's mother, Emma, was a tiny, formidable Quaker who came out to New Zealand as an elderly woman. Photographs show her clad in widow's weeds, her pretty face peeking out beneath a modest little bonnet. Emma caused my grandfather much consternation by taking the blankets off the girls' beds and putting them on the boys'. He had come from a home where women were admired and respected, and he wouldn't tolerate it. He solved the problem by building a bungalow for his mother-in-law on the empty section four doors down the hill where they kept their donkey. As a girl, my mother's younger sister Win had the choice of practising her violin in their chook house or going down to number 37, because great-grandma was stone deaf and impervious to noise.

Emma had been on the Quaker roll in Ludlow, Shropshire, and was rapidly absorbed into the movement in New Zealand, even travelling to meetings in the South Island. Like so many women on my mother's

side of the family, she was a woman of spirit. In the 1920s, groups of cousins would take the train to Swanson, from where the girls would ride horses out to the west coast while the boys walked. Emma, in spite of her years and increasing deafness, happily went along as a chaperone. Grainy photos show them sitting in the sand dunes at Piha, the young women smartly dressed in fashionable cloche hats, cigarettes clasped between manicured fingers; the men in flannels and striped blazers; and a tiny, bonneted woman from another era perched in their midst.



My mother's family were storytellers, and memories of 'home' were kept alive by constant repetition, as they are in many immigrant families. Mum was immensely proud that she came from a clever, literary family: two generations of Grays were listed on the Auckland Grammar School honours board (and were equally skilled as rugby players). Two of the Ellamore aunts had gone to university at the beginning of the century, and the family home in Mount Eden was bustling with bluestockings, engineers, accountants and writers, including the journalist Alan Mulgan. Poetry competitions (which my great-aunt Nell invariably won) were de rigueur at the Sunday literary gatherings. The entire family took part in setting the world to rights. No one was ever turned away.

Given the family's high academic expectations, Ethelwyn's father was disappointed when she came top of the B and bottom of the A class at Epsom Girls' Grammar, unlike her younger sister Win, who was a straight A student who went on to play the violin in a number of amateur orchestras in Auckland. My mother longed to be a concert pianist, but her father discouraged her, believing she was

not strong enough physically or emotionally to withstand the strain of performing in public. She developed what was almost certainly anorexia as a teenager and was forced to leave school at 15 when the headmistress tired of her constant fainting.

Her weight gradually dropped to 3.5 stone (22.2 kilograms) and long hair grew on her back while little was left on her head. She was deeply conscious of passers-by who would whisper, 'There goes mad Miss Gray.' Her mother was advised by doctors that Ethelwyn's time was limited, and to take her to concerts, theatre and ballet performances while she still could. Mum fondly recalled how her mother queued overnight for tickets to see Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova perform at His Majesty's Theatre.

Her deteriorating health absorbed so much of her parents' attention that her younger siblings felt they were being somewhat overlooked. One day Ethelwyn collapsed on Symonds Street outside the premises of the herbalist William T. Anderton and was carried inside.² Anderton began treating her and ultimately succeeded where several doctors had failed. By the time she was 21, my mother was on the mend. However, her stomach remained delicate; eating continued to be a challenge for much of her life, and anxiety was never far away.

In spite of her father's fears that the exertion would be too much for her, in her twenties Ethelwyn sang in the chorus for *The Duchess of Dantzig* at His Majesty's Theatre in 1934. A sepia photograph, now lost, showed a massive chorus spread across the stage against a painted backdrop, my mother a tiny figure resplendent in court costume and a glittering faux tiara on the far right. She failed to tell me that a fellow chorus singer was the famous Freya Stark.



Jack at the Papakura Military Camp in 1940. *Jack Arnott archive*