

## "GUY"

### Guy Clayton Morris 1868-1918

Following on the heels of a piece I wrote in the last issue of The Postcard Pillar on Josiah Martin this article examines the work of another relatively unknown postcard photographer whose life was tragically cut short as a result of the influenza epidemic in 1918.

I make no bones about the fact that my hopes and aspirations regarding this series of articles on little known postcard photographers can be likened to "setting a sprat to catch a mackerel". I do so in the hope that there are collectors like me who are curious to find out more about certain individuals who have left their mark on the picture postcard industry in New Zealand. By drawing attention to them in this fashion, sometimes with little more than a biographical sketch concerning their life and times, I hope that this might unlock further information which lies hidden away in the minds of a few in our wider collecting fraternity.

That said, what follows is pretty basic information which has been gleaned from a number of sources which are duly acknowledged at the end of this article. Therefore it goes without saying that if anyone can add further information on Guy or his postcards, I would be pleased to publish this information in future editions of our journal.

Guy Morris was the youngest child in a family of six children. He was born in Manchester and arrived in Dunedin with his family in 1869. His father John Richard Morris held the position of valuer for the Dunedin City Council, so it is assumed Guy received a good education along with his other siblings. His eldest brother, J. R. Morris, was the first of three in the family to gain employment as a professional photographer when he took up work with Robert Clifford in Dunedin. By the mid to late 1870s the business had been expanded and renamed Clifford & Morris. It continued to grow and incorporated yet another partner who will be featured in the November issue of The Postcard Pillar, Charles Spencer.

J.R.'s influence on his younger brother would have been a guiding hand in more ways than one, not only from the viewpoint of choosing a career in photography, but in demonstrating some of the refinements of the art when it came to selecting and depicting suitable scenic matter for his camera. J.R. Morris not only operated a very successful portrait studio, but quickly established himself as one of the country's leading scenic photographers, with a series of South Island views which are greatly admired today for their concept and beauty. Some of J. R.'s postcards accompany this article.

It is not known for sure when Guy actually entered the workforce, but it must be assumed he worked for his brother in one of their portrait studios which were constantly being acquired in Dunedin. In 1900 it is reported that Guy started out on his own in a studio which had formerly belonged to Walter Burton. Walter Burton was the brother of Alfred, whose work is well known in postcard circles through his Maori and other studies which later appeared under the Muir & Moodie imprint.

By 1902 Guy was being noticed for his successes in various photographic competitions that were being run by The

Evening Star and The Otago Daily Times. These helped him shape his thinking towards earning a living with a camera in a manner which stepped outside the normal pattern of portraiture. One might be drawn to say that Guy could have been one of the very first photographers to work in New Zealand under a job description which eventually became known as freelance photographer, undertaking commissions and covering topical events for a number of publications.

Lending strength to this argument is the fact that Guy's activities embraced a period of our social history when newspapers and magazines were increasingly using photographs with accompanying text. At first, these were confined to special pictorial sections in weekly publications like the Otago Witness and the Auckland Weekly News. Generally they were printed on a finer grade of paper as distinct from basic newsprint. This technology was primarily confined to larger concerns in the printing trade who employed editors, writers, illustrators, type setters and machinists. The requirements that this technology placed on people like Guy who became part of this workforce were immense when it came to acquiring skills with new equipment and the concepts of photo reportage. The job of a photo journalist in the early 1900s required someone who not only had a good basic understanding of the traditional methods, but was not encumbered by the procedural dogma of a former generation, for instance, rigidly holding to a view camera mounted on top of a wooden tripod when working in the field. As flexible films gradually replaced glass plates and hand held cameras came into vogue, photographers were required to think on their feet in order to capture a picture that told a story. This ushered in a new generation of photographers like Joseph Zachariah and S.C. Smith of Wellington or F.N. Jones of Nelson. In Dunedin it found an ideal practitioner in the form of Guy Morris.

Building on the successes of his elder brother, Guy would have been able to make the transition into this new era of photography fairly comfortably. His ability to capture eye-catching images can be viewed in his postcards. Take for instance his postcards of Dunedin's beaches and coastline which appeared in his colour lithographed series. These studies show the ebb and flow of water around a rocky coastline. They also depict surf and stormy seas. His "S. W. Gale, Green Island Beach" is an exciting action-packed study in comparison to his elder brother's beautiful "Bush Scene". One might be drawn to say Guy's study is a demonstration of photo realism at its best. Then there are his street scenes with people going about their business. These are refreshingly different by choice of subject matter and the way they have been captured, with Dunedin's trams playing a very important part in his ordered compositions.

If further proof of Guy's abilities as a photo reporter is sought, then his contribution to the documentation of the wreck of the summer cruise ship, the Union Co's S.S. Waikare, in January 1910, should be considered. Guy, it would seem, managed to get on board the company's Moura which arrived two days after the Waikare foundered on an uncharted rock in Dusky Sound. The night before Guy arrived on the scene, the grounded vessel rolled over and slowly sank close to shore. Guy's camera recorded the hull of the ship the following day as it was just visible above the water

line from four different positions. These were published by the Auckland Weekly News on 13 January. Postcard editions followed which were distributed by the London Bookstall, an outlet he also employed to market his other postcards, including a real photo series on snow bound Naseby in Central Otago, c.1908.

Yet another demonstration of his talents was a series of real photo postcards of Dunedin's churches with an insert showing the incumbent pastor. As good as these were, they tend to pale by comparison with what must surely be his most successful series of a Moa being hunted by a group of Maori men in Dunedin's Botanical Gardens. I first became familiar with this series when I began to assemble photographs for a book I wrote 31 years ago called *Maori in Focus*. Since then I have tracked down three different views from this session which have been published by two companies. These were originally taken in 1904. Sales for these must have increased dramatically around the time of the Christchurch International Exhibition 1906-1907, when the Christchurch Weekly Press reprinted one which had originally appeared in the *Otago Witness*. As indicated earlier, these went through a number of editions with a very important fact being ignored by the companies who printed them. This was that the leading hunter in all three studies was a person that went on to become a leading politician and force in Maoridom, Sir Peter Buck. He was assisted in this very convincing re-enactment by students from Otago University, where he was

teaching at the time.

Although Guy's involvement with commercially published editions of his work does not seem to have extended to any great extent into the second decade of the 20th century, it would appear his firm continued to operate for some years after his death. The Prince of Wales visit to New Zealand in 1920 was covered by a veritable army of journalists, including photographers. One of those who recorded his visit to Rotorua was a representative of "Guy photo, Dunedin". As in his formative years as a photographer, the presence of the Morris family in so many photographic outlets and concerns in Dunedin may well have seen them take up an option on Guy's premises and business interests after his death in 1918.

Finally, I am very conscious of the fact that most of the basic facts I have provided about Guy as an individual have been obtained from various publications written by Hardwicke Knight, whom I acknowledge with gratitude. In particular, I would recommend *New Zealand Photographers - A Selection 1981* and a series of books concentrating on examples from the illustrated section from the *Otago Witness* spanning the first decades of the 20th century. All of my conclusions about Guy's work have been drawn from my collection of his postcards. While these are by no means as extensive or complete as I would like, they do indicate that he was a very talented photographer.

### **New Zealand Postcard** [undivided back, Guy photo.,]

Dunedin Harbour from St. Leonards [p.u.1907]

First Church, Dunedin [w. Burton Bros. premises p.u 1906]

Stalking the Moa, New Zealand (see also *Industria Series*)

The Caves, Cargill's Cliffs, Dunedin.

### **New Zealand Postcard** [colour lithographed views]

"Becalmed", Dusky Sound [vertical](see front cover)

Botanical Gardens, Dunedin, N.Z.

Cathedral and Convent, Dunedin, N.Z.

Caves, Dunedin, N.Z. [open sea left]

Caves, Dunedin, N.Z. [open sea right]

Dunedin, N.Z. From Garden Hills.

Highland Cattle Study, Dunedin, N.Z.

High School, Dunedin, N.Z. (see page 14)

Knox Church and Manse, Dunedin, N.Z.

Millford Sound, N.Z.

Octagon, Dunedin, Looking South.

Ocean Beach, Dunedin, a summer seascape

Port Chalmers, From Junction Road, Dunedin, N.Z.

Princes and High Street, Dunedin, N.Z.

Princes Street, Dunedin, N.Z. (see page 14)

Queenstown Gorge, N.Z.

Rapids, Arthur River, West Coast, N.Z. [vertical]

Silverstream, Dunedin, N.Z.

St. Clair, Dunedin, N.Z.

Sunset, Lake Wakatipu, N.Z.

Sunset, Ocean Beach, Dunedin, N.Z.

S.W. Gale, Green Island Beach, N.Z.

Water of Leith, Dunedin, N.Z.

"Young New Zealand", St. Clair Beach, Dunedin, N.Z.(see page 14)

### **London Bookstall Dunedin** (real photo & printed)

No.1 The Last of the Waikare, Wrecked in Dusky Sound  
Jan.4 1910 (Stop Island to left)

No.2 Wreck of the U.S.S.Waikare from Stop Island.

No.7 U.S.S. Waikare. Struck Rock in Dusky Sound 4/1/1910  
Capsized 5/1/1910

No.4 Dusky Sound Boats searching for Rock on which the  
"Waikare" Struck. Cross shows approximate position.

### **GUY** [real photos]

First Church, Dunedin, N.Z. Dr.Nisbet [insert portrait]

Knox Church, Dunedin, N.Z. ? [insert portrait]

No.756 Millers Glen, Outram, near Dunedin.London Bookstall.  
[p.u.1911]. See J.B.Series

Capping Procession Float - post 1910 [untitled, with Guy im  
print]

### **Naseby Snow Series** (real photos) London Bookstall

729 Naseby Hospital - Nurses Clearing Snow

730 Cutting Road Naseby to Ranfurly 9 Miles.

731 Winter's Snowy Mantle Naseby

733 Verandahs shattered by Snow, Naseby, N.Z.

734 Street Scene Naseby N.Z.

735 Packing Provisions to Naseby

737 State Nursery Under Snow, Naseby

738 Wreck of Mt. Ida Chronicle Office, Naseby

739 Naseby Flour Mill Snowed Up

745 Snow Plow at Work, Otago Central N.Z.

### **Superbus Series** [litho coloured views]

No.103 Portobello, near Dunedin (see page 14)

No.104 Mt. Earnslaw (9200 feet from Glenorchy) Lake  
Wakatipu

No.106 Port Chalmers and Tairua Heads, N.Z.

No.111 Mts. Cook, Tasman and Haidinger, N.Z..

No.112 The Sutherland Falls [vertical](see front cover)

### **F.T. (Fergusson & Taylor)**

F.T.Series

No.361 N.Z.Coast near Seacliffe (Embossed Sepia)

No.710 A Bush Settlement on the N.I.M.T. Railway, N.Z.

No 853 Lake Wakatipu, N.Z. [sepia bled off edges]

No 2033 Ohinemutu, Rotorua, N.Z. [sepia oval embossed]

No 2514A On the banks of the Wanganui (Glossine series)

No.2516A Houseboat, Wanganui River (Glossine series)

No 4817 Country Lane, Taieri District (Glossine series)

No 9587 Hunting the Moa [sepia real photo](see cover)

no number Ohinemutu, Rotorua, N.Z.

**Industria Series** Fergusson Limd. Sydney and London.

- [D & F prefix] mix of colour & monochrome views
- D.31 Dunedin Harbour, N.Z.
- D.43 Octagon Dunedin, N.Z. showing R. Burns Stationer.
- D.45 View of South Dunedin, N.Z. from Caversham Hill.
- D.47 Esplanade, St.Clair, Dunedin, N.Z.
- D.49 First Church, Dunedin, N.Z.
- D.50 Railway Station, Dunedin, N.Z.
- D.51 On the Beach, St.Clair Dunedin, N.Z.
- D.146 St.Clair Esplanade, Dunedin N.Z.
- F.25 Hunting for the Moa, New Zealand
- F.124 Arthur River Rapids on the Sutherland Falls track, West Coast, New Zealand.

**Standard Series** (late 1907?)

- D 34 Moeraki, Dunedin N.Z. Röder 124606
- D 38 Port Chalmers, N.Z. Röder 124610

**J.B. Series** (J.Braithwaite's Dunedin?)

No.107 Outram Glen, Taieri, near Dunedin

**Braithwaite's Series** (undivided back)

No.24 Larnach's Castle, Otago, N.Z.

Additional cards seen in the part work *New Zealand Heritage*.  
"On the Buller River, West Coast, N.Z. "Gold Dredging".  
Also seen a coloured version of "Hunting the Moa".

