

Death records

If you are not sure when someone may have died check their last date of entry in directories or electoral rolls before going to the following sources. The *Index to pre-1900 New Zealand Probates* (on microfiche) is also useful if the person died before 1900. Try to look for clues from the details of other known relatives, eg., a headstone transcript may contain the death dates of several members of the same family.

◆ Registrar-General's Index to Deaths

This is in the microfiche collection. Searches can be carried out alphabetically year-by-year from 1848-1990 for all of New Zealand. Remember that these indexes give the year of registration which is not necessarily the year of death eg., the death of someone in November one year may not have been registered until January of the next year.

Early years are compiled together on one set of fiche. For the first few years there is only one index and the year is given beside the folio number eg., 48/215 (year is 1848 and folio number is 215). But from 1859-1863 there are separate pages for each year for each letter of the alphabet eg., all the individuals whose surnames began with 'A' and who died in 1861 will be listed separately from those who died in 1862.

Folio numbers can indicate the quarter of the year and place of registration by using the district keys books which are available up to 1955. First make sure you have the correct year (indicated at the bottom of each page) and then look for a folio number closest to, but less than the one you have. For example, the death of an individual with the folio number 642 in 1908 will have been registered in Dunedin some time between January and March 1908. For those who died in 1956 the place of death is only given for some individuals. From 1957 there is a separate column for each entry on the microfiche providing the place of death however the quarter of the year that the death occurred is not provided.

Registration of European deaths became compulsory in 1856 but registration of Maori deaths was not compulsory until 1913. Maori deaths for the period 1913-1960 are on separate microfiche and are arranged alphabetically for the whole period and not separate years. They do not indicate which quarter of the year or place of registration. There are also separate microfiche for War Deaths for the periods 1914-1919 and 1939-1945.

Once an individual is located you can then apply for a certified death certificate (currently costs \$26 and needed for legal purposes), or an electronic printout of the death register entry (costs \$26 for printouts from the years 1848-1874, or \$20 for the years after 1874) which usually contains more information and will be free from transcription errors, and is available for the years 1848-1997. Apply to the Registrar-General, by freephone 0800 22 52 52, by e-mail to bdm.nz@dia.govt.nz or by writing to PO Box 10-526, Wellington or PO Box 6147, Wellesley Street, Auckland. Check the Registrar-General's website (www.bdm.govt.nz) for current prices and contact details.

◆ Cemetery records

These are in the microfiche collection, although hard copies of Otago and Southland cemeteries are also located in the ready reference area. Use the overall guide book *New Zealand Cemetery Records A List of Holdings* to see what cemeteries are listed for a particular district and to help you locate the fiche numbers which contain the records for a particular cemetery. Take note of the date range covered and whether the transcript includes headstone and/or burial register information. Check the index for the surname and locate details via the entry number.

◆ Cremation records

There is one volume in the ready reference area that contains entries for cremations in Dunedin for the period 1927-1950. There is an alphabetical index to surnames at the front of the volume. Cemetery records may also contain entries for cremations in situations where the person's ashes have been interred there.

◆ **Undertakers' records**

There is one volume in the ready reference area containing a transcript of Cole and Springer, Dunedin undertakers, Registration of Death and Ledger Book for the period 1896-1902. There is an alphabetical index to surnames at the end of the volume. For the holdings of other undertakers' records you should check Hakena, the archives and manuscripts catalogue.

◆ **Newspapers**

These are used to locate death notices and obituaries. Check holdings of the closest local newspaper for the individual, depending on the place of death and/or residence, in the publications catalogue or ask staff to view the *Union List of Newspapers*.

You may be able to locate obituaries for the period 1946-1990 in the *Otago Daily Times Headlines Index*. It is available electronically on the database computers in the reference area and you can make a search by an individual's name. It is also available in printed volumes in the ready reference area, and obituaries may be located using the nominal index. The *Newspaper Index* available through the Dunedin Public Library website also contains references to obituaries. Catholic death notices and obituaries for the period 1873-1996 from the *New Zealand Tablet* and Catholic death notices for the period 1861-1990 from the *Otago Daily Times* have been compiled by Michael Rombouts and they are located in the ready reference section. Ask staff to check the OASES database which contains death notices for the period 1848-1861 from newspapers published in Dunedin. The *Alexander Turnbull Library Biographical Index* (on microfiche) may also be useful for locating obituaries and dates of death. Remember that it may take some days after death for an obituary to be published, and look out for other notices such as funeral notices. Note the pattern each newspaper develops for the places where such items are usually located i.e., before the editorial column. Also note that while death notices that appeared in the *Otago Daily Times* were then published in the *Otago Witness* they did not include the funeral details.

◆ **Biographical dictionaries**

The main ones, eg., *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (various editions), *Southern People* and *Who's Who in New Zealand*, are located in the ready reference collection. Entries are usually arranged alphabetically, but also check the indexes. There is a separate obituary section in *Who's Who in New Zealand* which gives the date and place of death for those who have died since the publication of the last edition.

◆ **Index to New Zealand Probates pre-1900**

This is in the microfiche collection (general folder). It is arranged alphabetically by surname. It gives the date of death (sometimes only the year is given) and shows whether a will or other papers are held. It also gives the date filed, which court and the probate number which allows you to contact the nearest office of Archives New Zealand which will now hold the actual probate records (however the Nelson High Court still holds records for that area). The Dunedin Regional Office of Archives New Zealand holds wills for Otago and Southland.