

GRANT & COOKE

Registered Surveyors

Gisborne 1881- 2002+

By Brian Cox

George Grant's Field Book 1 (held at Grant and Cooke) records, that he was working on the Mahia Peninsular on 24/12/1881; nothing was recorded for Christmas Day, but he was back at work on Boxing Day. He had arrived in Poverty Bay from Oamaru in 1881 to establish a practise in land surveying, engineering and valuing. His obituary says that after being connected with the Native Land Settlement Co., he commenced business on his own account, about 1886, leaving it unclear whether or not his association with the Company was as an employee or as a partner in his Oamaru firm of Dennison and Grant. However, *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand, 1902* states that after about seven years he retired from the firm of *Dennison and Grant* about 1886, to engage in general practice (in Gisborne) which appears to preclude the employee option.

So the practice commenced either, in about 1879 (in Oamaru) or in Gisborne in 1881 or 1886. The retired partners (Brian Cox and Cam Taylor) and the now sole principal Mark Clapham are happy to settle for 1881 as the firm's date of origin.

Grant was clearly a man of many talents, described as a "valuator", (District Government Valuer for 12 years), engineer, and surveyor, he was also president of the Beautifying Association, guarantor for the Score Point Reserve acquisition, secretary of the Poverty Bay Club, Turanganui Library committee member, maintained an interest in horticulture, was prominent in golf and tennis circles, had a "rare gift of skill at billiards", a director of the Gisborne Publishing Co and the Gisborne Gas Co, chairman of directors of the Palace Picture Co. The next line of his obituary comes as no great surprise; "The late gentleman was unmarried".

Born in London, educated in England and Germany, subsequently qualifying as a

civil engineering in London, and serving some time with Sir James Fox he came to New Zealand arriving in the ship *Otago* at Port Chalmers in 1871. It is however, as a surveyor that his name has endured not only in the *Grant and Cooke* name but also for the legacy of first class surveys that he left behind him. He was at the forefront in using iron spikes for traverse marks, some of which can still be located today, 100 years on.

Though there are many Crown Grant roads, Gisborne's Grant Road is a George Grant road. Grant became the first European on the title which originally included this road, when he purchased 5 acres from Raharuhi Rukupi in December 1884. The two-storied house near the end of the road, known for some years as the resident of George Nicholls, was built for George Grant, possibly about 1913.

Within the Lands and Survey Department field book index, *Grant and Goulding* was the 1904-1906 firm the name to which field books were issued, though like Hudson who was to follow briefly in 1913

Background photo: Arthur Cooke in the field 1940.



Caricature of George Grant (mid 1930s)
by Banjo Paterson.

Goulding is recorded as an Assistant Surveyor not a Licensed Surveyor. Then in October 1913 Grant took into partnership Arthur Campbell Cooke along with the Mr Hudson to form the partnership of *Grant Cooke and Hudson*. Within a year however, it appears that Hudson left the practise, leaving the firm of *Grant and Cooke* to ebb and flow through war, peace, depression, inflation, 80 Lowe Street, NZI Building, Nolan & Skeets Building, back to NZI building, then to Disraeli Street / Palmerston Road corner where the practice continues today from a villa which is very nearly as old as the practise itself. The firm has at times also had an office in Wairoa and in Ruatoria.

Grant was thrown from his horse and an agonising fortnight later, died (in January 1916). The accident occurred while Cooke was at the Great War, having left New Zealand in October 1915, only two years into his partnership with Grant. It makes it all the more remarkable that the title *Grant and Cooke* has endured until today when the original partners had practised together for only two short years. A letter from Cooke to the Survey Board 23 October 1923, reveals that with Cooke at war and Grant deceased, "Mr James Edmund Garner kept the business together in conjunction with the late Mr G J Winter." Winter was a Licensed

Surveyor, but Gardner, a long term employee of outstanding competence and skill, was not, so Cooke was petitioning the Board to grant Gardner a licence without requiring him to sit the examinations. Unauthenticated notes indicate that Gardner passed all exams except astronomy (by then he was in his mid forties), before the Board granted him a license carrying a rider that he could not practice outside New Zealand. He became a member of the NZIS in 1924 and a 1932 letter head implies that he was a partner in *Grant and Cooke* as well as being a Registered Engineer.

Ted Glanville (see later ref.) described Gardner and Cooke as complete opposites. Cooke was an extremely correct, short, erect, blimpish 1914/1918 NZ Field Artillery Captain (MM), seriously patriotic, very conscious of his position, whereas Gardner described himself as "a colonial Irish man, whatever the government is I'm agin it".. On one occasion his love of talk and argument saw his two cadets traipse off to a restaurant for a cup of tea while Gardner conducted a 3 hour 'hammer and tongs' session with a passer-by on the pavement beside his instrument.

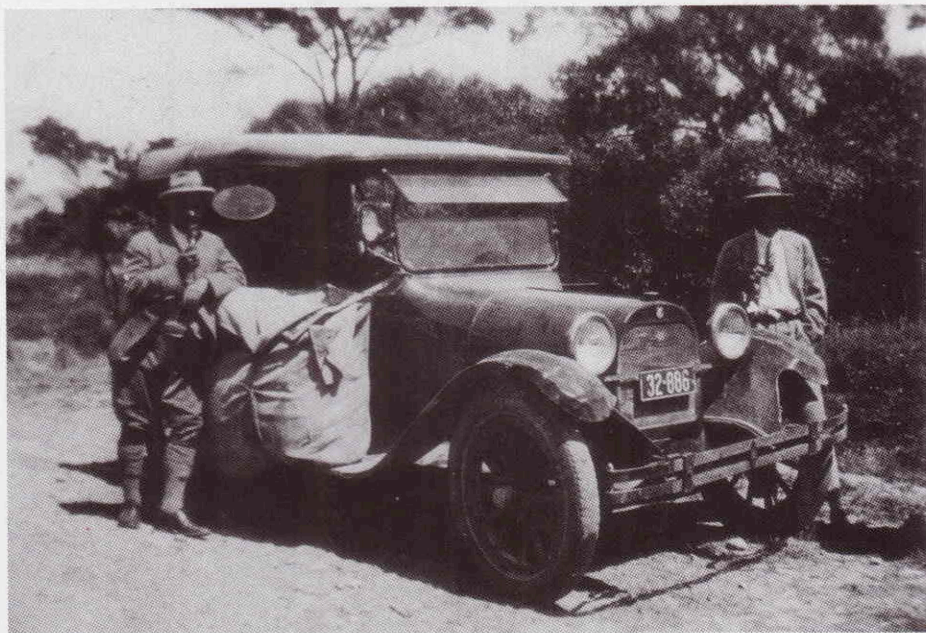
Arthur Campbell Cooke died in 1970 (obituary NZ Surveyor) having spent most of his later years at Whitianga, having retiring from *Grant and Cooke* 1947. He had not retired from surveying however, carrying on a practice for some years at Whitianga. Born in Malvern Victoria in 1890 he was educated there and at Nelson College. After serving his

cadetship with former Institute President F I Ledger of Nelson, and passing his examinations in 1913, he joined Grant in Gisborne. Like Grant he was a stalwart of the Poverty Bay Club where he was president 1945-1946 and he became both popular and widely known on the whole East Coast where he undertook extensive Maori Consolidation Scheme surveys. An energetic Surveyors' Institute member, he was Gisborne Branch Secretary 1927-1944, Chairman 1945-1948, NZIS Councillor 1939-1947, and NZIS Vice-President 1947-1948. Like Grant before him "The late gentleman was not married".

Robert Brian Horner (RBH) was perhaps *Grant and Cooke's* most widely known personality in his capacity as the author of that book of survey exam problems which was the bible and salvation for countless survey cadets. To those who crossed the path of RBH it will come as no surprise that Cooke wrote in 1923 that RBH "possessed ability much above that shown by the average cadet".

Edwin (Ted) Charles Glanville started his cadetship with Cooke in January 1924, staying until the early 1930s, when he moved to the Maori Land Court so that he could assist in Maori Land matters then being addressed by that outstanding Maori leader, politician, academic, etc Sir Apirana Ngata LLB, MA.

Then in the mid/late 1930s, suffering from ill health, Cooke persuaded a reluctant Ted Glanville to join him in the *Grant and Cooke* partnership, thus enabling Cooke to depart to Whitianga for a year to regain



Mr Cooke & Ted Glanville on the coast. Dodge car. Late 1920s.



Ted Glanville - fully equipped for a day's surveying.

his health. "The depression had hit," Ted wrote in his later years, "leaving work scarce and ill-paid." Just before Ted Glanville went into partnership, Gardner, having found a fine stand of White Pine at Hicks Bay, left *Grant and Cooke* to take up an interest in a timber and box company. Ted Glanville, although too old to be called up, immediately enlisted for service when war broke out in 1939, as did Jim Francis and Bob Hamilton (see later ref). So once again, war scattered partners and staff far and wide with Ted barely making it out of Singapore before it was overrun by the Japanese only to lose one hand in a grenade training accident after his return to New Zealand.

Mick Dow, first appears as a member of NZIS in the November 1937 edition of *NZ Surveyor* with the address c/- Caribbean Petroleum Co, Caricao, Venezuela. He first appeared on the *Grant and Cooke* wages records in 1928 so it seems that he had about 8 years with the firm before spending most of his working life in South America. Alex Taylor is thought to have started his cadetship about 1936 or perhaps a little earlier. After Glanville had left the Maori Affairs Dept to join Cooke in partnership, Taylor went to Maori Affairs to fill the position vacated by Glanville and subsequently, after war service, took up a number of exotic colonial service appointments, before retiring to his present address in Perth, Australia. At 86 years of age he is probably the oldest surviving *Grant and Cooke* surveyor.

Bob Hamilton's cadetship commenced

about a year after Alex Taylor's. This stream of cadets probably indicating that business was slowly recovering from the depression, and probably also indicating that cadets were the best form of cheap labour. They cost less than a chainman and when they were not working in the field they were useful in the office. However, whereas *NZ Surveyor* lists 40 student members in 1931, the numbers listed in 1935 had dropped to just 7, with a mild recovery evidenced by the 1938 list of 19 that included Taylor and Francis.

James Gisborne Francis who was eventually to become a sole principal of the firm started his association in April 1937 when Cooke employed him as an articulated cadet. But once again war was imminent sending Francis to the other side of the world with the Artillery Survey Unit, while Captain Cooke MM, in the Home Guard for this war, was sent to Napier to command the Bluff Hill gun battery. Again, an elderly surveyor (Charles Nurse) was instrumental in keeping the firm going through the war years though it seems likely that the gap was not too great between Cooke going to Napier and Ted Glanville returning minus one hand. Of necessity, now left-handed, Ted incredibly returned to fieldwork, a feat that perhaps only those of us who measured with the long steel band can fully appreciate. There were times when it was difficult enough to control that band with the hand of choice and the assistance of the other hand, never mind doing the job with one hand, and the wrong hand at that!

Ben Hudson started his cadetship and ten years employment at *Grant and Cooke* in April 1945 coinciding with the return of Lieutenant J G Francis from the Middle East and Italy. Then in 1947 Ted left to establish his own practice, Bob Hamilton went to Hawkes Bay, and Cooke left to take up permanent residence at Whitianga, leaving Francis as principal while Cooke remained a sleeping partner for about another 5 years. Two cadets Bill Selves and Snow Robinson, of this era did not go on to become registered surveyors.

Brian Cox started as a cadet to JG Francis in 1951 followed 3 years later by Cam Taylor. These two each had a few years away from *Grant and Cooke* before returning; Brian Cox first returned in 1960 as an employee then returned as a partner from 1965. Cam Taylor returned from

Borneo a year later to also join the partnership. M J Page was the last of the cadet era staff.

Mark Clapham, the first university trained surveyor to join the partnership, had worked for *Grant and Cooke* in his student years and also after graduating. Leaving *Grant and Cooke* he gained experience in Noumea and with *Harrison and Grierson* in Fiji before returning to the fold and becoming a partner in 1976.

The early days of this practice were characterised by remote bush surveys, access by foot or horse only, tough survey camp conditions for extended periods, road and rail legalisation surveys, bush rail surveys for milling purposes, chain and compass surveys of felled bush areas etc. Even in the 1920s, Ted Glanville wrote of sleeping "on a sheet of tarred paper on wet ground, in a disused fowl house near East Cape, in various tin sheds, cookhouses at Maori pa, and on one (and only one) occasion in an hotel". The *Grant and Cooke* cash book reveals that the Crown was this biggest client by far in the late 1920s with payments being received in the 250-450 pounds range while most other receipts tended to be below 75 pounds. A lot of this work would have been related to Maori Land surveys but there were no doubt legalisation and other Crown surveys as well. Local bodies were also significant clients probably with legalisation surveys as the main item.

Though there were also surveys on the foothills and fertile flats nearer to



James Gisborne Francis. Photo circa 1937-1939.

Gisborne there was little urban survey work as Gisborne City was laid out with more than adequate subdivision for some 50 years or so.

It was not until the late 1950s that urban subdivision involving roading and reticulation started to become a core sector of the *Grant and Cooke* practice. Involvement commonly started before the client had purchased the land, with the purchase price ultimately based on the subdivision potential and project costings estimated by *Grant and Cooke*. The next two and a half decades were often quite hectic with clients frequently commencing building on sites before the construction works were completed or titles available. Wrecked street footpaths and berms mired by builders vehicles tended to strain relationships between surveyors, client, and contractors. While allocating blame and pouring oil upon the troubled waters it was a time for the supervising surveyor to remember the words of that surveying icon A H Bogle that it may be necessary to "be a bastard but a fair bastard".

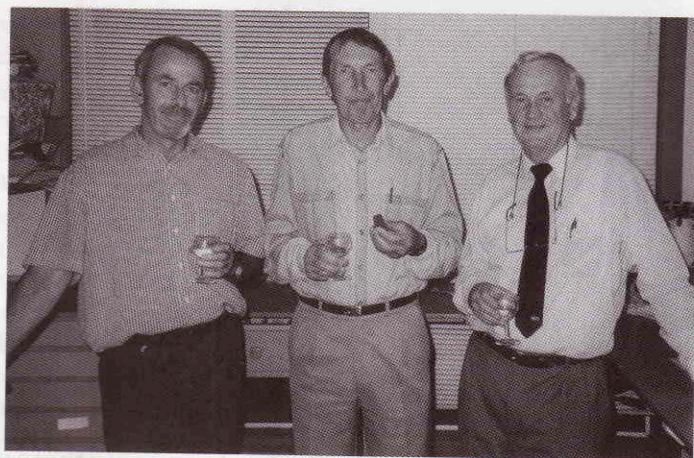
Grant and Cooke attended to engineering design, supervision, etc. as well as the title aspects of these green-fields subdivisions. Only the Housing Corporation was involved in this class of subdivision to the extent that *Grant and Cooke* was through these years. Rural subdivision ran along side these urban boom years with the usual hinterland farm subdivisions, as well as numerous Maori Land partitions, while the intensification of use on the rich fertile plains saw plenty of survey activity there also.

With the advent of the natural-gas pipeline *Grant and Cooke* virtually doubled staff and equipment to accommodate the extra (temporary) workload with its associated extended working hours. A memorable feature of this project was the frequent Friday night happy hours with not only the *Grant and Cooke* staff but all kinds of other staff from the project thronging the *Grant and Cooke* draughting room for convivial gatherings, well earned by the long hours that were worked.

Many of the substantial buildings in Gisborne were set out by *Grant and Cooke*, the new public hospital, Sandown Hotel, Gisborne Hotel, Watties Canneries frequent extensions (all recently demolished), freezing work extensions (also recently demolished) etc. etc.

As urban development was fading, forestry subdivision was growing, from its initial subdivision of unwanted rough areas from hill country pastoral farms to the complete purchase of farms followed by subdivision of unwanted homesteads as well as subdivision to facilitate sale of investment blocks.

Because of their expertise in green-fields subdivision, *Grant and Cooke* moved



Grant and Cooke partnership - Mark Clapham, Brian Cox and Cam Taylor at Brian's retirement in March 1997

quite naturally to providing a diminishing Local Body engineering office with surveys and reports which had in the past been undertaken by council staff. Basically the practise has always accommodated whatever the changing demands of the decades required, building a broad base which has support it (though staff numbers have at times varied greatly) through over 120 years of fluctuating fortunes.

Perhaps the most interesting little exercise the writer performed was to traverse up a winding two metre diameter tunnel to where the tunnelling machine had encountered soft ground, then to peg directly above the spot and say to the contractor, "Your machine is under that peg".

Under the able management of principal Mark Clapham, *Grant and Cooke* continue to offer a wide range of survey consultancy services in what is still a robust survey practice. Long may it continue.

Part of 1957 NZIS Conference photo (Cooke to Hudson).

1. A C Cooke, 2. J G Francis, 3. C B Taylor, 4. E C Glanville, 5. B C Cox, 6. W Selves, 7. R B Hudson.

