

Mary Roberton

82 Great King Street, Edinburgh May 1842

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My Lord,

I suppose I am justified in troubling your Lordship with the following statement. A son of mine, named John Roberton, having made money at sea, settled at the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, and bought land there. He was lost in a pleasure boat on the 17th of October 1840, leaving a widow and two children and... By the New Zealand Herald of November 27th 1841 I learn that my daughter in law's house was burnt, she and one child murdered and the other missing. In this emergency and as these is valuable property, I apply to your Lordship for instructions how to proceed. If the missing child is found, I a widow, am its natural guardian, if it is not found it ... one to look after the property for the sake of the next heir. My son's first purchase is called Kelso and is let for £100 a year, the other at which he lived is called Roberton. My son was 33 years of age, the last of five... lost at sea. A daughter of my eldest son survives.

Dreadful Murders at the Bay of Islands

The infrequency of violent crimes in the Colony has been often a subject of congratulation to the Colonists, but we have now to record a frightful tragedy. The following account has been kindly communicated to us :—

Some persons on Saturday last, (we understand Mauries), visiting Robertons's Island, situated in Paroa Bay, within the Bay of Islands, discovered that the house of Mrs. Roberton was burned to the ground, and the inmates—that lady, one of her children, a European man-servant, named Thomas Bull, and a child, the grandson of the native chief Rivers,—were all murdered. The body of Mrs. Roberton was horribly mangled and mutilated; the man-servant had been decapitated; and the remains of a child were found burnt in the ashes of the house. Mrs. Roberton had two children, and as the body of one only as yet been found, it is hoped the other may have hid itself, or if carried away by the murderers, may escape the fate of its mother and the other victims.

Mrs. Roberton was well known and respected at the Bay of Islands, and her frightful fate has created there feelings of the deepest horror, and a universal sadness. Her husband, the late Capt. John Roberton, was drowned about twelve months ago, within view of his family, opposite to his own house, the scene of the above murders. We have been informed, that two or three Europeans have been apprehended on suspicion of being the perpetrators of this most shocking and inhuman atrocity.

New Zealand Herald and Auckland Gazette 27 November 1841