

RIDSDALES AND MILLAGES

Mabel Garnett married Percy Ridsdale (of another Cawnpore family) prior to the Great War, and they had two children Barbara (Bunty) and Philip. Ken Millage arrived in Cawnpore in 1934 with the Royal Exchange Insurance and he married Barbara — they lived in Calcutta mainly, but also in Cawnpore. He was a fine piano player and wrote musical scores. Barbara's brother Philip Ridsdale was sent to school at Felsted in Essex, and he joined the Royal Air Force just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. He remained in the air force as his chosen career and achieved the rank of Group Captain upon retirement (as noted elsewhere in these notes). During the war, Millage joined the Royal Indian Navy Volunteer Reserve and was commissioned Lieutenant. He was a good sportsman, playing competitive golf, squash and rugby fives. Their eldest son Barry was born in India and subsequently three other children Maralyn, Toby and Jack. Ken Millage and family came to New Zealand in 1949 when Ken was appointed to the role of Manager N.Z. for Royal Exchange — they lived initially in the Wellington suburb of Paraoaraumu. Maralyn married Rob Pierson who served as a Lieutenant Commander in the Royal New Zealand Navy operating on frigates; he spent weeks away from home on confidential exercises. Ken Millage died in 1982 at the age of 73.

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Maralyn set up a successful primary school in Auckland, but died of cancer in 1999.

Philip Ridsdale told this interesting story: When Major Garnett was appointed Inspector for the quality of leather goods at the North West Tannery he rejected so many pieces that a protest was mounted by the work force. Garnett was called before the Directors at a meeting and asked to explain himself. He asked for a pair of shoes to be sent for and when they came, bent the shoes in two and putting it between his teeth which were very strong/ pulled away the sole from the uppers, thus making his point.

Group Captain Philip Ridsdale, RAF (retd.) died in 1991. He had a great respect for his grandfather William Garnett, and on the reverse of this photo had written: "Philip G.M.Ridsdale's maternal grandfather: Major William Garnett M.B.E., Indian Army. A fine horseman, a great man, much admired by me. I spent holidays in Westcliff, from boarding school 1927-33. P.R."

Mabel Ridsdale (nee Garnett) served with the Womens Volunteer Service (WVS) for a number of years, and was awarded the 'Kaiser-i-Hind' (Emperor of India) medal during the early part of the Second World War. The award was introduced by Queen Victoria in 1900 and was for those who had performed useful public service in India. Recipients included Indians as well as British, and the title was selected because the word 'kaiser' is the same in both Sanskrit and Persian, thus being appropriate for both Hindus and Muslims.

The citation for Mabel Ridsdale reads: 'You have unselfishly devoted your time and your energies to the organization of the women's war work in Cawnpore and helped in every way possible the well-being of the soldier. At one time, you undertook the management of all hospital amenities in Cawnpore, almost single-handed, and later on very successfully organised the railway canteen with the help of other voluntary workers. I congratulate you upon the Kaiser-i-Hind Bronze Medal which is a fitting recognition of your valuable work.'

Mabel's sister Ethel and daughter Barbara (Bunty) also took up nursing in India and worked at the hospital in Naini Tal. Barbara married Ken Millage of the insurance company Royal Exchange, and they were living at Glen View, Cawnpore at the time of the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the same house occupied by Major William Garnett and family so many years before.



Bessie Garnett with daughters Mabel Hilda and Ethel May, Cawnpore 1896



An early view of Glenview, Cawnpore



Major William Garnett, M.B.E. - 2nd Afghan War veteran
Over 30 years at Cawnpore Cantonment on the River Ganges



At the presentation of the Kaiser-i-Hind in Cawnpore, c. 1942 – left to right
Lt.Col. Davidson, Medical Officer, Mrs. Menzies, Chairman Women's Voluntary Service, Miss Ellison,
Matron, Lady Wavell, wife of the C-in-C. India, Lady Hallett, wife of the Governor of United Provinces,
Mabel Ridsdale and Captain Jones, Assistant Medical Officer.