

Dr F. A. Bett Was A Man Of Many Parts

Dr. Francis Arnot Bett, of Nile street, died in Nelson on Saturday morning at the age of 83. He fell ill on Friday and was removed to the Nelson Public Hospital, of which he was a former Medical Superintendent, and did not recover. He practised his profession in Nelson for nearly 50 years and, as an absorbing hobby which occupied a great deal of his time, was a collector and authority on

tions of M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. (London). Returning to New Zealand, he was a house surgeon at the Timaru Public Hospital in 1903 and also at Christchurch Public Hospital in the same year. The next year he came to Nelson as Medical Superintendent of the Nelson Public Hospital. After acting in a similar capacity as locum tenens at Thames, he returned to the Christchurch Public Hospital in 1906 as Acting Medical Superintendent for a year.

About 1907 Dr. Bett came back to Nelson, took over the practice of the late Dr. J. Hudson and entered into partnership with Dr. P. O. Andrew and Dr. S. A. Lucas. Later the partnership became that of Drs Lucas, Bett and Johnston.

During the First World War Dr. Bett served as a doctor in the hospital ship Maheno. He often used to say that the toughest times in his professional career were during the post-war influenza epidemic in Nelson when he was called to work day and night on end, with little sleep.

Dr. Bett was always a keen collector, beginning with stamps, but it was during his contact with patients, particularly those whose memories carried them back a good way, that he developed a taste for Nelson history. He spent much effort, time and money in the collection of documentary source material, papers and books. The volumes of the Nelson "Examiner" which he so carefully built up are probably the best in New Zealand. He also collected early paintings and saved much valuable material from destruction in a period when the community's historical sense was not so well developed as it is now becoming. For incidents—amusing and otherwise—of the early days in Nelson Dr. Bett had a very retentive memory and to listen to him retelling them was a stimulating experience.

Recognition of him as a keen collector and as the leading authority on this sector of our history brought many enquiries to him from inside and outside New Zealand and he kept up a considerable correspondence while continuing to practise his profession. During the last few years, in his retirement, he devoted himself almost entirely to his hobby and only a few days ago was busy with enquiries about fresh material. Many a student has cause to be thankful for his help and guidance. He was a member of the committee which advises on the production of the standard history of Nelson being written by Mrs Ruth Allan, of Wellington. He was also patron of the Nelson Historical Society from its inception and a life member of the Nelson Institute from 1941 onwards.

It was Dr. Bett's desire that his valuable collection should be preserved for the people of Nelson.

In 1910 Dr. Bett married the widow of Mr J. C. Andrew, a Wellington solicitor, Jessie, daughter of J. Morrison, "Blairlogie," Wairarapa. She died in August of last year. There are two stepsons, Mr James Andrew, of "Ica" station, Wairarapa, part of the original property taken up by the Rev. J. C. Andrew, his grandfather, who was a former Headmaster of Nelson College—and much else—and Mr Philip Andrew, of "Langdale," Wairarapa.

Dr. Bett's funeral took place in Nelson this afternoon.



The late Dr Bett

early Nelson provincial history with a Dominion-wide reputation.

Dr. Bett was born in 1873 in the rural Otago settlement of Tapanui, where his father, the Rev. A. Bett, was Presbyterian minister. In later times Dr. Bett often spoke of his boyhood days in early Tapanui. The family transferred to Dunedin, and Francis attended Otago Boys' High School, where he did well, coming out as dux of the school and being prominent in sport. First he went into a bank but, after two or three years, decided to switch to the study of medicine, entering the Otago University Medical School.

While there he played football for Pirates and tennis with C. H. Broad, a former Headmaster of Nelson College, who still lives in Nelson. In Christchurch later he encouraged Anthony Wilding as a junior. He also showed considerable ability in boxing, winning the New Zealand University heavyweight title. In these sports he retained his interest long after he had ceased to participate in them. For many years he had a tennis court of his own.

Graduating M.B., Ch.B., in 1901, Dr. Bett went to England to further his studies at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, obtaining the qualifica-

Family of
Rev. John Chapman

Andrew 1822-1905
+ wife

Emma Fendall 1832-1878

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