***The search for a family, framed in time***

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**A CENTURY-OLD link stretching back from the Borders to the New Zealand of the late 19th century may now see the return of a collection of rare family photographs to the other side of the world.**

**Donna Thompson, who grew up in Bonchester Bridge and whose parents still live there, now stays in Stirling and works for the Scottish Youth Hostels Association.**

**In the mid-1990s, while cleaning out her grandparents' house in Biggar, Donna came across a collection of 50 old photographs.**

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**Now making preparations to move house, Donna has rediscovered the collection in one of her cupboards and decided it was time to try to track down the family featured in the pictures and reunite them with the images of their ancestors.**

**She contacted The Southern this month to explain the story: "I have around 50 photos from late 1800 up to around 1910, which I think were all sent to a Miss Agnes Spottiswoode.**

**"Agnes may have run the Melrose Post Office around this time as most of the envelopes are addressed to her there. An additional address is in Gattonside.**

**"She had a cousin Joseph (Joe) Hopkirk who lived in Hawera in New Zealand. I have a letter dated November 14, 1910. It is his headed memo paper with family news.**

**"There are additional photos with the name Brooklyn on the back and cards. I know this to be a suburb of Wellington, which would indicate additional family members in that area of New Zealand.**

**"An additional photo has a picture of a couple standing outside the front of a house with a name which, without a magnifying glass, I can't make out, but is something like 'Glendora'.**

**"I do hope that you can help me trace any family so I can return these items to them."**

**With a population of 10,950, Hawera is the second-largest town in the Taranaki region of New Zealand's North Island.**

**Hawera is the Maori term for 'burnt place', named for the fighting between two local sub-tribes which culminated in the setting ablaze of the sleeping 'whare' – or house – of the tribe under attack.**

**The name is also very apt as the town suffered extensive blazes in 1884, 1888 and 1912.**

**Well-known Hawera locals include the winner of golf's 2005 US Open Championship, Michael Campbell, All Blacks player Conrad Smith and former All Blacks player and rugby coach, John Mitchell.**

**Donna's detective work turned up information contained in an online encyclopedia about the districts of Taranaki, Hawke's Bay and Wellington about an engineer by the name of Joseph Hopkirk, who worked for an engineering and blacksmiths business in Nelson Street in Hawera.**

**The internet reference work states that Joseph Hopkirk was born in the village of Gattonside, near Melrose.**

**He moved to New Zealand in 1873, ending up in Wellington, where he served his time in the engineering trade. He gained experience in various parts of the colony and also at sea for a short time. For a few years he also worked in the flax-milling industry in conjunction with his brothers in the Waira-rapa district.**

**Hopkirk was eventually employed in erecting dredging machinery on the west coast of New Zealand for Messrs Luke and Company, before acquiring Houston’s engineering and blacksmiths firm in Hawera in 1902.**

**Donna says she would be delighted to hand over the photos to any surving members of the family in New Zealand or to descendants of Miss Spottiswoode still in our region.**

**“It would be fantastic if I was able to make contact with any surviving members of the family of the people in the pictures taken in New Zealand, or here in the Borders,” she said.**