

# 150-year-old Waipori murder commemorated

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Ashley Blair, Roger Cotton and Kerry Driscoll, direct descendants of murder victim Richard Atkinson, beside the memorial plaque.

A 150-year-old murder most foul has been commemorated in Waipori.

A commemorative bronze plaque was unveiled on Waipori Road on December 23 by the direct descendants of Richard Atkinson, a man who was stabbed along with his 18-year-old daughter Margaret Dickson at the Hibernian Accommodation House, exactly 150 years ago in 1865.

One of Atkinson's descendants, Ashley Blair, has spent decades writing a book about the murder. The book was released late last year.

It was a labour of love for Blair, who retired early in 2004 to work on the book, but was waylaid by a second career.

"My only regret is my mum isn't alive to see it because she used to tell me all the stories about Waipori."

While Atkinson and Dickson were hanging meat in the accommodation house, they were attacked by John Jones, who was thought to be plundering the house's cash box which contained nuggets of gold.

With nine inches of his bowel hanging out after the attack, Atkinson was treated by doctors with turpentine injections, mercury pills and a concoction of crushed beetles.

"When you think he got all of that, no wonder he died," Blair said.

Atkinson died a week later from his injuries while Dickson escaped with a small stab wound to her hip.

Jones was later caught by Mounted Constable John Dunne, convicted and hanged in Dunedin jail with the same rope that was used to hang Winton baby-murderer Minnie Dean 30 years later.

The foreword of Blair's book was written by Minister of Internal Affairs Peter Dunne, a descendant of Constable Dunne.