

# It was a rat that finally did him in

Colourful butcher Richard Stennett Sandall courted controversy numerous times during his years in colonial Auckland.

It seems he had a knack for rubbing people up the wrong way – or vice versa.

Sandall's name first made the court pages of numerous newspapers in 1862 when he found himself accused of slaying Francis Bethell's goat in Newmarket.

Bethell, whose son John later settled at the west coast beach now bearing the family surname, believed Sandall was responsible for the killing and feared he might be next.

The pair had a volatile history and threats of a violent nature were made a couple of months earlier.

The case went to court where the defendant was also accused of loitering on the Bethell property a number of times before the incident.

A judge eventually threw the case out saying there was insufficient evidence to warrant a prosecution.

But it was not long before Sandall was in the



dock again. This time he pleaded guilty to keeping pigs in a "putrid state" by feeding them on "sheep's heads and entrails" in his yard.

He was fined 20 shillings – a pittance compared with the £5 penalty meted out in 1868 when he reoffended.

It was another 20 years before Sandall was in trouble once more.

He appeared in court in November 1888 alongside fellow butcher George Wells.

Both men were arrested while fighting outside a burning building on Eden Terrace.

Sandall was somehow linked to the blaze and asked Wells to help him save some furniture from the spreading flames. Wells refused and Sandall told him he was a disgrace to the community who should be drowned. The result-

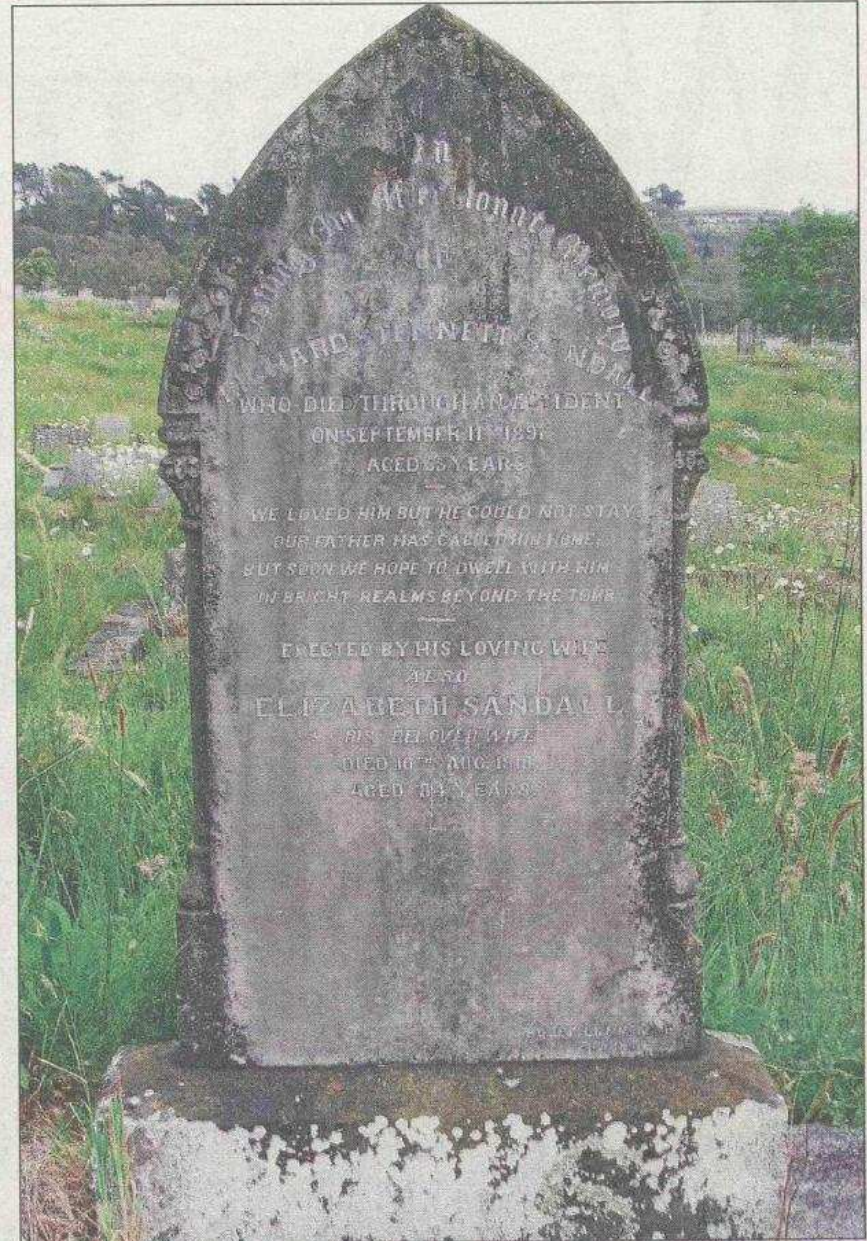
ing brawl was broken up by police and each combatant was fined 25 shillings and ordered to pay court costs.

Three years passed before Sandall's name appeared in print one last time.

The 53-year-old was chasing a rat around his butchery when he collided with a meat hook dangling from the rafters. The blow caught him just under the brow of the right eye and flung him backwards on to the floor.

Sandall bashed his head during the fall and was not his usual self when he finally got up again. He was rushed to Auckland Hospital in a delirious state and died half an hour after his admission on September 11, 1891.

Sandall is buried at Waikumete Cemetery with his wife Elizabeth.



**Accidental death:** Richard Sandall's antics landed him in and out of court a number of times.

Photo: MATTHEW GRAY