



Keith

by Lee McColl (aged 12)

My great-grandfather Keith Ernest Smith was an amateur photographer. The Leica camera he used is a family treasure and an emblem of Keith's determination and tenacity. After he lost the use of his right arm, he had to learn to operate the camera with his left hand. He would grip the leather casing so firmly that his finger marks still remain.

The Leica needed careful calculation and effort to handle. Small dials and buttons had to be adjusted to find the correct exposure, to focus the lens, and to wind the film on. Keith chose the Leica because with only one good hand, he needed a sturdy, precise camera.

Keith was born in Westport in 1925. He was the eldest of five: his siblings were triplet sisters and a brother. In his early twenties, Keith fell off his motorcycle and seriously damaged his right arm. He had to support it in a sling for many years, and then, when he was older, the bad arm had to be amputated. At the time of the accident, Keith was working at the Air Force Training and

Maintenance Centre, and he was unable to continue flying. He ended up being employed by the Ministry of Works, which was responsible for roadworks and civil engineering. Keith loved to build and fix odds and ends. He even helped build his own house. After he developed a passion for whitebaiting, he created a fishing stand for his net. Another of his favourite pastimes was to compose poetry. One of his collections was called *The Kaipara Killer*.

Keith married and had three daughters. After living a full, happy life, he passed away on 9 March 2017 at the glorious age of ninety-one.

Keith's Leica Camera

Keith's camera was a Leica IIIf – a famous brand. The company was the first to make a 35 mm camera, which was invented in 1913 by Oskar Barnack, a German photographer who worked for Leica. Barnack's idea was to use negatives that could be enlarged to print bigger, high-quality images. A 35 mm camera was small and easy to carry around. They became popular with amateurs like Keith as well as famous photo journalists.

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