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Notes on an Exhibition: Joseph Hooker: Putting plants in their place – with some reflections on connections among Joseph Hooker and William Colenso and his cousin, John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal

The Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art, Kew Gardens, London, UK, 25 March 2016 – 17 September 2017.

By Gwil Colenso

A friend alerted me to an episode of the BBC Radio 4 programme: “Inside Science” which had included mention of William Colenso. I checked on the BBC *iPlayer*¹ and found the item had been on an exhibition on Joseph Hooker at Kew Gardens in London and mention was made of William Colenso.² The person speaking on the radio was Jim Endersby, keynote speaker for the 2011 William Colenso Bicentenary Conference in Napier and author of the book *Imperial Nature* which includes a substantial discussion of the relationship between Hooker and William Colenso.³

The web site information for the exhibition reads,

To mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of one of Victorian Britain's most important scientists, Joseph Hooker (1817–1911), an exhibition of a selection of his photographs, journals and paintings.

Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911) was a tireless traveller and plant collector, a founder of modern botanical classification and a close friend of Charles Darwin. Kew was at the heart of Hooker's career and he helped add thousands of

specimens to its collections.

Hooker believed that botany revolved around putting plants in their place: collecting and classifying them, better understanding their habitat and creating a place for botany to elevate its scientific status. To mark the 200 years since his birth, this exhibition seeks to commemorate the life of an influential pioneer of botany by exhibiting an eclectic range of journals, artefacts, paintings and sketches owned and drawn by Hooker himself. He once told a botanical collector at Kew to “practice drawing incessantly”, advice he certainly took himself.

Much of Hooker’s career outlined in the exhibition followed the little book by Pat Griggs, *Joseph Hooker: Botanical Trail Blazer*, with an introduction by Jim Endersby.⁴ This booklet is based on an exhibi-

1. *iplayer* provides online playback of BBC radio and TV programmes.

2. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08zzlv9>

3. Jim Endersby, *Imperial nature : Joseph Hooker and the practices of Victorian science* (2008).

4. Pat Griggs, *Joseph Hooker: Botanical Trailblazer with an introduction by Jim Endersby*. (Kew Publishing, 2011).



Joseph Dalton Hooker in the 1860s

tion: *Joseph Hooker: Naturalist, Traveller and More* shown in the same gallery in November 2011–April 2012. The two exhibitions possibly used similar material to illustrate the career of Joseph Hooker but I think one key difference between them may have been more emphasis in the recent exhibition on the important part played by the collectors in the colonies who supplied Joseph Hooker with plant specimens from various parts of Empire to add to the botanical collection at Kew. This is what Endersby's book, *Imperial Nature*, is largely about. Amongst these colonial collectors was William Colenso.

Introduction and displayed items on biography of Joseph Hooker

1839 HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* set sail on The Antarctic Expedition which was to take 4 years. Joseph Hooker went as “ship’s assistant surgeon and expedition’s botanist”. Charles Lyell gave Joseph Hooker Charles Darwin’s *Voyage of the Beagle* published 1839

1841 William Hooker (Joseph Hooker’s father) appointed Director of Kew Gardens

1847 Joseph Hooker elected Fellow of Royal Society

1855 Joseph Hooker appointed Assistant Director at Kew

1865 (on death of his father), Joseph Hooker appointed Director at Kew

1873–78 Joseph Hooker President of Royal Society: the first botanist as President of the Royal Society since Joseph Banks

Expeditions

The Antarctic 1839–1843 (Calling at Australia and New Zealand in 1840–41)

The Himalayas and India 1847–1851

Palestine 1860

Morocco 1871

Western United States 1877

Text boards

Explanatory text on boards summarised Joseph Hooker’s work. The second text board says that Hooker had “a global network of plant collectors”. The

two collectors mentioned are Ronald Campbell Gunn in Tasmania and Rev William Colenso in New Zealand – both of whom “pursued botany as a pleasant diversion”. Hooker met both men on his voyage on the *Erebus*.

But mention is also made of Hooker’s differences with his collectors. He is quoted expressing his annoyance at the use of names of “insignificant hamlets or streams” to confirm the location of plants – whereas Colenso, for example, was concerned to give sufficient local information to enable other botanists to find the plant described.

Local artists were also employed to provide illustrations of plants. But these were sometimes over-ruled by Hooker. An indication of Hooker exercising control from the centre is his approval of the “correcting” by the botanical artist and lithographer Walter Hood Fitch (who had never been to India) of a painting by an unknown Indian painter which had been commissioned by J F Cathcart in India.⁵

Displayed items – including some relating to William Colenso

Darwin’s *Journal of Researches*

The copy of Charles Darwin’s *Journal of Researches*, later re-titled *Voyage of the Beagle*, given to Joseph Hooker by Charles Lyell before Hooker set sail on the *Erebus* in 1839. The book had only just been published. Hooker’s copy is inscribed “JDH, HMS *Erebus*, 1839”.

Plants or plant derivatives as useful commodities

Items brought back by Joseph Hooker from his expeditions included a large block of “Brick tea” from Tibet and India rubber, showing his interests included products derived from plants for utilitarian purposes.

Phormium Colensoi

Drawing of a New Zealand flax plant which was named by Gunn *Phormium Hookeri*. But it had already been named by Hooker as *Phormium Colensoi* after Colenso.

Vasculum

Vasculum (specimen case) that was given to William Colenso by Joseph Hooker during his visit to New Zealand from the *Erebus* and is on loan to Kew for the exhibition from the museum in Napier, New Zealand, MTG Hawke’s Bay, which hosted the conference on William Colenso in November 2011.

Ornamental gourd

An ornamental gourd which William Colenso had sent to the Kew Museum of Economic Botany (and which he said were “getting scarce” in New Zealand) etched with a Moko – the designs for the permanent body and face marking used by Maori, which are unique to each individual and in some respects are equivalent to a signature. On a note provided with it, Colenso tells us: “on it is etched a correct delineation of the ‘human face’...tattooed”. This item arrived at Kew on 2 December 1853.⁶ It was the subject of “Colenso’s calabash” in the October 2013 *eColenso* where we are told that it was included by William Colenso with a large collection of plants and other specimens sent with his letter of 31 January 1853.⁷ The date of accession of this item at Kew is significant as will be pointed out in the comments below.

5. Fitch provided illustrations for many publications by Joseph Hooker and his father.

6. Catalogue no. 54668, Economic Botany Collection, Kew. See <http://apps.kew.org/ecbot/specimen/54668>.

7. “Colenso’s calabash” *eColenso*, October 2013. See also No.8 below.

Hand tinted photo of William Colenso

Hand tinted photo of William Colenso, dated about 1890. The caption says it was a gift from William Colenso to Hooker. This photo is shown in Tanya Zoe Robinson's paper, in the collected papers of the 2011 Colenso Conference.⁸

Veronica Colensoi

Watercolour and lithograph of *Veronica Colensoi*. The watercolour is by Matilda Smith and the lithograph by Walter Hood Fitch for *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*.⁹

James Rattray's Botanical Chart

James Rattray's Botanical Chart or the concise introduction to the Linnaean system of Botany. According to the caption, this pocket guide was a gift to William Colenso from Joseph Hooker's father, William Hooker, with whom William Colenso corresponded before meeting Joseph Hooker.¹⁰

At Kew, the Shirley Sherwood Gallery which housed the Hooker Exhibition adjoins the Marianne North Gallery which has on display over 800 paintings by the artist Marianne North who travelled the world painting tropical and exotic plants as well as scenes from the countries she visited. She travelled to Australia and New Zealand in 1880–81 and South Africa in 1882–83 where one of her paintings is entitled, “A View of Table Mountain from Bishop Colenso's house, Natal” [Fig. 1]

John William Colenso (1814-1883), the first Bishop of Natal, was a first cousin of William Colenso of New Zealand. “Bishop Colenso's house” was the Colenso family homestead known as Bishopstowe. The scene depicted in this painting may well correspond to a view of the flat-topped Table Mountain which the bishop had from his study window, and which Mrs Colenso said,

“faces Bishopstowe, like a majestic altar.... The bishop loved

it from first to last.... His study was without a fireplace, but he could never be persuaded to change it for an equally convenient and quieter room, because he ‘could not see the mountain’. And the same reason met us when we wanted to put his writing-table in what we thought a better light.”¹¹



Fig.1: ‘View of a Table Mountain from Bishop Colenso's House, Natal’ by Marianne North, 1882/3. Painting 364, Marianne North Gallery, Kew Gardens.

8. Tanya Zoe Robinson, ‘For their Museum: shaping identity as “men of science” at the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute, 1874-1899’ in Ian St George, Eloise Wallace and Peter Wells (eds.), *Gazing with a trained eye: fifteen aspects of William Colenso* (Napier: MTG Hawke's Bay, 2013), 85 - 100.
9. *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* was edited by Joseph Hooker.
10. See comments below for a discussion of William Colenso's contact with Joseph Hooker's father before he met the younger Hooker in New Zealand.
11. G.W. Cox. *The Life of John William Colenso* 2 Vols (London: W. Ridgeway, 1888), I, 77.

That this painting should hang in a gallery adjoining that housing an exhibition featuring the Natal bishop's cousin in New Zealand is coincidental. But we shall discuss below connections between the two cousins through the subject of the exhibition, Joseph Hooker.

Questions raised by the exhibition

Did Joseph Hooker's father introduce him to William Colenso?

The caption accompanying the Rattray pocket guide says that William Colenso corresponded with William Hooker before he met his son, Joseph. But did he introduce Joseph to William Colenso?

Joseph Hooker first met William Colenso at Paihia when HMS *Erebus* arrived in the Bay of Islands in the north of North Island, New Zealand in August 1841.¹² Before arriving in New Zealand, Hooker already knew of William Colenso since he came bearing a letter for delivery to him. The letter was from Captain King, a friend of Allan Cunningham, the former Colonial Botanist of New South Wales who, in 1838, had spent several months in New Zealand with Colenso and had afterwards corresponded with him on botanic matters before his untimely death in 1839. Furthermore, earlier in 1841, Colenso had been visited in Paihia by Lady Jane Franklin who he had been greatly impressed with his botanic work.¹³ Lady Franklin was the wife of Sir John Franklin, Governor of Tasmania¹⁴ where the *Erebus* had remained for several months in the latter part of 1840 before departing for the Antarctic. The following April the *Erebus* returned to Tasmania where the ship remained for a three month "refit" before leaving for New Zealand in July 1841. There was a connection between Lady Franklin and the *Erebus* through her husband, Sir John Franklin, a naval officer. Relations between the Franklins and the Captain and crew of the *Erebus* were close and cordial. During the months when

the *Erebus* was moored in the River Derwent at Hobart in Tasmania, the Franklins were invited on the *Erebus* for dinner¹⁵ and the Captain and officers of the *Erebus* received hospitality from the Franklins on shore. This included "a picnic with some of the officers to Lady Jane's 'mountain garden' in which Mr Hooker (later Sir Joseph) figures in an amusing incident". The incident involved Hooker bending over to inspect an orchid, together with a "Mr Gunn" who was also a guest at the picnic.¹⁶ We have seen Gunn referred to in the exhibition which identified Ronald Campbell Gunn in Tasmania and William Colenso in New Zealand as the two leading examples of Hooker's "global network of plant collectors".¹⁷ On 7 July, When the *Erebus* was due to sail for New Zealand, "Sir John Franklin came on board ... [and when he] left the ship [we] saluted him with cheers..."¹⁸

Lady Franklin returned from her trip to New Zealand in mid June, three weeks before the departure of the *Erebus* from Tasmania.¹⁹ She was well aware of Hooker's interest in botany and, given that they

12. William Colenso was sent to New Zealand by the Church Missionary Society in 1834 in response to requests for a printer on missionaries at the Paihia mission station in the Bay of Islands.

13. A. G. Bagnall and G. C. Peterson, *William Colenso*, 72-3, 83.

14. A. G. Bagnall and G. C. Peterson, *William Colenso*, 84.

15. "There was a formal dinner on the *Erebus* for the Franklins and friends. [Lady Jane noted in her diary] '... the *Erebus* with her two guns saluted us as we approached ... the gun room was used as a drawing room and we sat down 14 to dinner.'" Frank Debenham, *The Erebus and Terror at Hobart*, 472. My thanks to Ann Collins for alerting me to this source and for providing copies of the relevant extracts

16. *ibid.*, 472.

17. See above under the heading "Text Boards"

18. Antarctic Journal of Sir J. D. Hooker, 7th July 1841, <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/53628785>, 139. In 1845 John Franklin was to captain the ill-fated expedition with the *Erebus* and *Terror* to find the North West passage on which both ships were lost with all hands, including Franklin.

19. Debenham, *The Erebus and Terror at Hobart*, 472

were personally acquainted (as evidenced by the picnic) it seems likely she would have found the opportunity during this period to impart to Hooker news of Colenso's botanic work in New Zealand.

An entry in Hooker's journal for the day that he arrived in Paihia, makes clear that Hooker had come intending to seek Colenso out.

*Landing in the N of the bay we started for Paihia the missionary settlement where I had a letter to deliver to Mr Colenso the printer to the establishment from Capt. King.... Asking for Mr Colenso [sic] from an intelligent native we were directed to a square brick one storied cottage....*²⁰

But this leaves open the question as to who it was that had first made Hooker aware of the young missionary in New Zealand who busied himself collecting botanic specimens.

By the time Hooker arrived in New Zealand William Colenso had already been in touch with Joseph's father, William Hooker. This is probably what is referred to in the following further extract from Joseph Hooker's journal on the same day:

*Mr. Colenso received us very kindly and talked of some fine collections he had sent home and of the gratification this immediate acknowledgment gave him from Glasgow.*²¹

This "immediate acknowledgment" was presumably from Joseph Hooker's father who was then Professor of Botany at Glasgow. Indeed, we know that William Colenso boldly introduced himself to William Hooker in his letter of 14 February 1840 which begins,

*My dear Sir, An entire stranger, wishing to advance the science of Botany, takes on himself the liberty of addressing you without an introduction and also to send you a few specimens of Plants, among which he hopes you will find at least a few that may prove an acquisition to your Herbarium.*²²

William Hooker had replied to this approach from William Colenso and sent a parcel of books (possibly including the Rattray pocket guide on display at the exhibition). We know this from William Colenso's letter of 20 July 1841 to William Hooker, which begins,

*My dear Sir William, I cannot tell you how happy I am in the receipt of your very frank and welcome letter of Aug. 6 and 10th/40. It was a long while in coming hither, and I had almost concluded that the few specimens I had forwarded must have gone to the bottom of the Sea, when yours arrived, dispelled my fears, and assured me of their safety. The valuable parcel of Books too, came to hand last week all in good condition, for which I will not attempt to describe my thankfulness....*²³

These books may have been among those which Joseph Hooker recorded in his journal entry for 19 August 1841 when he visited William Colenso's house in Paihia,

*In the sitting room [were] ... some of my Father's botanical works on a table.*²⁴

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20. Antarctic Journal of Sir J. D. Hooker, 19th August 1841, <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/53628785>, 156; part quoted in A. G. Bagnall and G. C. Peterson, *William Colenso*, 84-5.
21. Antarctic Journal of Sir J. D. Hooker, 19th August 1841, quoted in A. G. Bagnall and G. C. Peterson, *William Colenso*, 85. See October 2013 *eColenso* for an expanded extract from Joseph Hooker's journal giving his first impressions of Paihia and of his first meeting with William Colenso.
22. William Colenso to William Hooker, 14 February 1840, transcribed in *Colenso's Collections*, compiled by Ian St George (Wellington: The New Zealand Native Orchid Group Inc., 2009), 145.
23. William Colenso to William Hooker, 20 July 1841, transcribed in *Colenso's Collections*, compiled by Ian St George (Wellington: The New Zealand Native Orchid Group Inc., 2009), 146.
24. Antarctic Journal of Sir J. D. Hooker, 19th August 1841, quoted in Bagnall and Peterson, *William Colenso*, 85.

So, by August 1840, one year before the arrival of the *Erebus* at the Bay of Islands, Joseph's father had already received, and acknowledged receipt of, botanic specimens from William Colenso in New Zealand. This raises the possibility that during this year, August 1840 to August 1841, there may have been time for Hooker senior to communicate with his son on the *Erebus* somewhere on its voyage en route to New Zealand (possibly when stopping at Cape Town or Australia). If so, William Hooker could have notified his son of the bright young botanist in New Zealand and suggested that he visit him when stopping there.

What part did William Colenso play in the Hookers' "global network of plant collectors"?

Joseph Hooker spent three months in New Zealand, frequently going on botanical excursions with William Colenso. On leaving the Bay of Islands, Hooker wrote to his father

*Two days ago I bade goodbye to my most kind and amiable friend, Colenso.... we formed an intimacy which shall never be forgotten by me....*²⁵

The two were to begin a correspondence with one another which was to last for the next fifty years, with William Colenso supplying botanic specimens to Hooker and his father at Kew over much of this period.²⁶

Twelve years later, in November 1853, Joseph Hooker published *Volume II* of his account of the Antarctic voyage. Part I of this volume, sub-titled *II. Flora Novae Zelandiae, Part I. Flowering Plants*, was jointly dedicated, along with two others, to "The Rev. William Colenso".²⁷

In 1886, Joseph Hooker was one of those nominating William Colenso for election as a Fellow of the Royal Society, a position which William had long sought. In support of the nomination, Hooker said,

*Mr Colenso's labours as a naturalist, philologist and ethnologist in New Zealand commenced half a century ago, and have continued ever since ... he has contributed largely to a knowledge of the flora and fauna of the islands.*²⁸

Their relationship was not without its difficulties, Hooker at one point, declaring himself exasperated with Colenso's method of collecting.²⁹ However, after Colenso's death, Hooker said,

Our intimacy (which began in the Bay of Islands in 1841) then led to a warm friendship which continued uninterruptedly till his death.

And he acknowledged how crucial the botanical research of William Colenso had been to his own published work. In regard to two of Hooker's books – *Flora Novae Zelandiae* and *The Handbook of New Zealand Flora* – Hooker said,

*These works are to a great extent based on the results of Wm Colenso's indefatigable labours as a traveller & collector.*³⁰

25. J D Hooker to William Hooker, 23 November 1841, quoted in Bagnall and Peterson, *William Colenso*, 86.

26. Bagnall and Petersen, *William Colenso*, 84.

27. J D Hooker, *The Botany of the Antarctica voyage of H.M. Discovery-Ships Erebus and Terror, in the Years 1839-1843, under the command of Captain Sir James Clark Ross, II. Flora Novae Zelandicae.....* 1853. See Bagnall and Petersen, *William Colenso*, 354.

28. Bagnall and Petersen, *William Colenso*, 427-8; Peter Wells, *The Hungry Heart, Journeys with William Colenso* (New Zealand: Random House, 2011), 369-70.

29. See "Editor's Inbox" in this issue of *eColenso*

30. Peter Wells, *The Hungry Heart*, 370.

Ian St George estimates that by 1865 William Colenso had supplied the Hookers at Kew with 6,500 specimens, 1,619 being provided in a single consignment in January 1851 and 2,225 in another consignment in January 1853.³¹ 6,000 of the specimens supplied by William Colenso are still retained at Kew Gardens.³²

William had ended his letter of self introduction to William Hooker,

*Excuse this intrusion of a stranger who wishes well to science, and who has it not in his power from his multitudinous duties, either to examine for himself or to make known the Botany of this interesting portion of the vegetable kingdom, save through one of the practical Botanists of the day....*³³

In seeking to establish a relationship with William Hooker, William Colenso is here offering to make accessible to scientific investigation *this interesting portion of the vegetable kingdom*. He saw himself as playing an important part in a wider, indeed worldwide, endeavour, in which his role was to bring the wealth and richness of the flora of New Zealand to the attention of *practical Botanists of the day*. As Peter Wells comments, through his collaboration with the Hookers, William Colenso “was making New Zealand a horticultural colony of the imperial capital of the botanic universe, the Royal Botanic Gardens.”³⁴

However, as suggested by some of the items donated by him and displayed in the exhibition, William Colenso not only sent plant specimens to the Hookers; he also sent them the products of plants. In doing so, he was responding to the fact that the Hookers were not only interested in plants for the purpose of scientific study. They were also interested in the practical uses of plants. As noted above, items brought back by Joseph Hooker from his expeditions, and displayed in the exhibition, included a large block of “Brick tea” from Tibet and an India rubber plant. To further this aspect of their interest

in plants William Hooker opened the Museum of Economic Botany. The Museum was established in 1847, and was promoted by William Hooker in *A Popular Guide to the Useful and Remarkable Vegetable Products of the Museum of the Royal Gardens of Kew* in which he described the Museum as dedicated to the collection and display of “**useful and curious Vegetable Products**, which neither the living plants of the Garden nor the specimens in the Herbarium could exhibit”.³⁵ [my emphasis]

Thus, the Museum of Economic Botany was clearly distinguished from the Herbarium which was established six years later. Kew, as envisaged by William Hooker and later by his son, was therefore a repository not just for botanic specimens collected for the purpose of classification, and to further the study of the natural world. It was also intended for the collection and display of plants, or products derived from plants, which were of *economic interest and value*. A separate collection was established for this purpose in the belief “that such a collection would render great service, not only to the scientific botanist, but to the merchant, the manufacturer, the physician, the chemist, the druggist, the dyer, the carpenter and cabinet-maker, and artisans of every description”.³⁶

31. William Colenso to William Hooker, 22 January 1851, 31 January 1853, transcribed in *Colenso's Collections*, compiled by Ian St George (Wellington: The New Zealand Native Orchid Group Inc., 2009), 246, 276.

32. *Ibid.*, 346, 351.

33. William Colenso to William Hooker, 14 February 1840, transcribed in *Colenso's Collections*, compiled by Ian St George (Wellington: The New Zealand Native Orchid Group Inc., 2009), 146.

34. Peter Wells, *The Hungry Heart*, 345-51.

35. William Hooker, *Museum of Economic Botany: or, A Popular Guide to the Useful and Remarkable Vegetable Products of the Museum of the Royal Gardens of Kew* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855).

36. *Ibid.*, 3

In the title of Hooker's *Popular Guide*, the term "Products" suggests a recognition of the ingenuity of indigenous peoples in making use of the flora of the natural world. In effect, the Museum was to function as a means of systemically gathering and collating the material evidence of know-how and craftsmanship developed by colonised peoples, as embodied in the material products kept in the museum. The objects so gathered, and the information provided with them on labels and captions, could be regarded as a resource to be made available for those in the metropole as well as settlers in the colonies.

Indeed, in this regard, William Hooker saw himself working with the Colonial and India Offices to *improve plant productivity across the British Empire*. His son was later to describe this aspect of Kew's role as such: "Kew has become the botanical centre of the work and literally carries on all economic and scientific botanical work of the Empire, under the direction of the various departments of the State."³⁷

It is to be expected that William Colenso bought into this grand purpose of the Museum. But I suspect that he may have had a further purpose in sending artefacts to Kew. We have noted that the calabash donated by William Colenso to the museum is described by him as "getting scarce". This warning was also attached to other objects that he donated. In 1842, he sent "A Mat of Native manufacture... which I obtained from one of the principal Chiefs of Wakawitira". He added, "These Mats are getting very scarce, and will soon be unknown".³⁸ And in 1851 he donated an "ornamental basket" adding "They are now getting very scarce."³⁹ His donation of artefacts to the Museum was perhaps, at least in part, motivated by his concern at the possible loss of Maori culture and technology and in the hope that these objects being held by the Museum might contribute to the recovery and preservation of the art and craftsmanship which they represented and which, he may have feared, were in danger of dying out.

At Kew Gardens today, the successor to the Museum of Economic Botany is the Economic Botany Collection. The Kew Gardens website confirms that "the collection now holds around 100,000 objects. These include raw plant materials and artefacts representing all aspects of craft and daily life worldwide, including medicines, textiles, basketry, dyes, gums and resins, foods, and woods. All plant uses and most parts of the world are represented, with an emphasis on the former British Empire. Most specimens date to the period 1847 to 1930..."⁴⁰

Significantly for us, we are told that when the Museum of Economic Botany opened in September 1847, the first ethnographic object recorded as received into the Museum's collection was one donated by William Colenso: a doormat, made of *Phormium tenax* (flax) which was among the "various specimens received from different sources & which had been collected from time to time in the Garden",⁴¹ as noted on p.1 of the Entry Book [Fig.2] The mat was transferred to the British Museum in 1960,⁴² as indicated in a note in red ink against the

37. RBGK Archives, Kew Administration, 1864-1925, JD Hooker to the Office of Works, "Memorandum relative to the requirements of Kew Gardens," 1881, f. 36. Quoted in *Mobile Museum, Economic Botany Papers: Working Paper 1 The Economic Botany Collection at Kew: Analysis of Accessions Data*, Caroline Cornish, Felix Driver & Mark Nesbitt June 2017, 9.
38. William Colenso to William Hooker, 1 December 1842, *Kew Directors' Correspondence LXXIII: p. 46; ATL Micro-Ms-Coll-10 Reel 3: E342*, transcribed in St George, *Colenso's Collections*, 172.
39. William Colenso to William Hooker, 22 January 1851, *Kew Directors' Correspondence LXXIII: p42; ATL Micro-Ms-Coll-10 Reel 3: E328*, transcribed in St George, *Colenso's Collections*, 173.
40. <https://www.kew.org/science/collections/economic-botany-collection>
41. The 'Garden' refers to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew where objects were presumably collected before Museums were formally established on the site.
42. Personal communication, Dr Caroline Cornish. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Economic Botany Collection – Museum Entry Book 1847-1855, 1. See *Mobile Museum, Economic Botany Papers: Working Paper 1 The Economic Botany Collection at Kew: Analysis of Accessions Data*, Caroline Cornish, Felix Driver & Mark Nesbitt June 2017, 23.

original entry. Of the thousands of items William Colenso donated to Kew, it is not known how many were considered to be “vegetable products” and were placed in the Museum of Economic Botany. We refer loosely to these objects as “artefacts”, implying they are of human construction, though they can include raw plant material made into products for human use.⁴³ Not all of these objects can now be traced, but of those existing, 24 remain at Kew, now in the Economic Botany Collection, the remainder having been transferred to the British Museum, either in 1866 or 1960, or to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, either in 1897 or 1961, or possibly to other museums.

The objects transferred to the British Museum include two mats, a cloak, and baskets—all items of utility derived from plants.⁴⁴ Items transferred to the Pitt Rivers Museum comprise 3 baskets, 2 mats and one bark vessel for holding water. Three of these have images on the website, all with labels with “W Colenso” or “Rev W. Colenso” visible. These are: a basket, 1897.31.1; the bark water holder, 1897.3.3; and a mat, 1897.3.4. As we shall see, of these, the last can be identified as a specific numbered donation originally made to Kew by William Colenso in 1851 and transferred to Pitt Rivers in 1897.⁴⁵

Objects still at Kew include four sent in the same consignment containing the ornamental gourd which arrived at Kew on 2 December 1853 (see above). These are variously categorised as “Fibres”, “Flax” or “Bark”. In some cases, an attached note or covering letter from William indicated the preparation and practical utility of the item. For example, in the case of *Phormium* leaves used as fibre, Colenso comments, “Phormium: having dark-edged leaves, and much prized by the natives for its long and fine fibre (flax), and for the ease with which it is worked – a stout and large plant, nearly equalling Ph. tenax. WC.”⁴⁶

Extracts from William Colenso’s covering letters include the following examples taken from Colenso’s letter to William Hooker, 22 January 1851 (each description is preceded by William Colenso’s reference number and lettering is added for ease of reference),

3925, (a) “A bundle of fibres from the large roots of *Cordyline Australis*. These roots the natives dig up & bake & boil in scarce seasons, and gain there-

from a very sweet and somewhat pulpy mess. These fibres are from roots which have been so used.”;

3928, (b) “The oil is extracted from the large woody seed, thus:— The seeds are collected into a peculiar long pouch, made of the leaves of *Phormium*, in which, after having been softened by baking and steaming in the native ovens, they are well beaten, and the long pouch is twisted and the oil drops. This which I now send, has stood 12 months to purify.”;

3932, (c) “A hank of cord – spun by hand (in former days) upon the bare thigh – a slow and painful labour – *Phormium*”;

3937, (d) “A small loaf made of the Pollen of *Typha*... They are considered choice morsels by the natives when fresh (i.e. newly baked). It has a very rich smell resembling gingerbread”;⁴⁷

3933, (e) “A fine (& to them), valuable garment, [or cloak] made of the fibres of the leaves of my fine *Cordyline* (No. 1508). – *C. utilis*. These are only made by the Mountain Tribes; are everlasting, greatly prized, & realize a high price. It is called a *Toi* [*To-ee*, pron.] It *may* do for your Museum? The black dye is from the bark of the large-leaved *Fagus*; probably, *T. robusta*, (2478), or *T. fusca*”;

3934, (f) “A Mat made of the leaves of the *Kie-kie*”;

3936, (g) “An ornamental basket made of the leaves of *Phormium tenax*; these are only used by Chiefs, and by them only occasionally – to carry their clothes, &c in. They are now getting very scarce. Native name a *kete*”;

43. Also referred to in the present-day literature as “ethnobotanical objects” or “ethnographic objects”.

44. http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx?searchText=William+colenso. For details of some of these artefacts see eColenso of February where a further object in the British Museum, another engraved gourd, also possibly donated by Colenso, is discussed.

45. http://databases.prm.ox.ac.uk/fmi/webd/objects_online

46. William Colenso to William Hooker, 22 January 1851, *Kew Directors’ Correspondence LXXIII: p42; ATL Micro-Ms-Coll-10 Reel 3: E328*, transcribed in St George, *Colenso’s Collections*, 273.

47. <http://apps.kew.org/ecbot/results?text=Colenso>.

3935, (h) “A mat made of the leaves of *Phormium tenax*;⁴⁸ both these are used by Chiefs for sitting and sleeping on, generally the latter. They call them (here) Tienga; and (in the North) Takapau.”

However, it can be seen from the figures quoted earlier that the number of “ethnobotanical objects” donated by William Colenso was far outweighed by the thousands of plant specimens he sent to Kew.

For example, the same letter to Hooker refers to William Colenso dispatching to him 3 cases and a bale containing in total of 1,619 items, of which only 15 were not plant specimens. Of these 15, one was a collection of butterflies, the remaining 14 being artefacts or natural products. These therefore accounted for less than 1% of the number of objects or specimens sent in this consignment. Therefore, while he sent thousands of plant specimens to Kew, the numbers of artefacts or natural products were probably numbered in dozens or scores.

But, of the artefacts donated by William, many have survived – at Kew or elsewhere. Consignments received from William Colenso were diligently recorded in the Museum’s Entry Books at Kew. In some cases, accessions recorded in the Entry Book can be correlated with a letter from William Colenso listing the items included in the consignment dispatched.⁴⁹ For example, if we take Colenso’s letter to William Hooker, 22 January 1851, referred to above, of the 14 artefacts listed in it, we can find eight of these recorded in the Kew Entry Book, 1847–1855, for 10 June 1851 with records entered of descriptions of each item, in most cases, reproduced word-for-word from the descriptions in William’s letter. On pages 93–95 of the Entry Book, using William Colenso’s own numbering, items 3925, 3928 and 3932–37 are listed along with descriptions provided by William in his

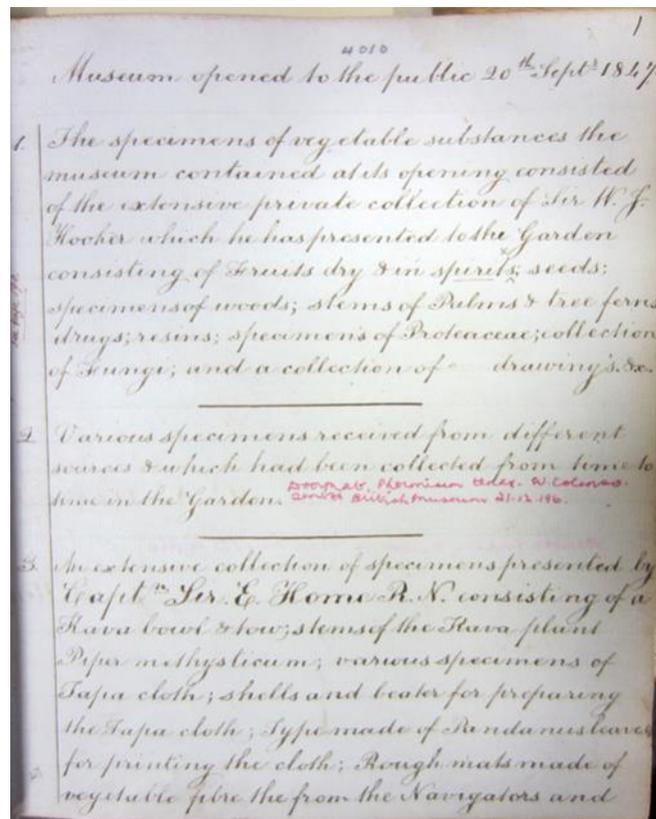


Fig.2: Page 1 of the Museum of Economic History Entry Book for 1847-1855. Point 2 refers to “various specimens received from different sources & which had been collected from time to time in the Garden,” with a reference added in red ink to the mat from William Colenso.

48. William Colenso is referring to this mat (3935) and the one listed immediately prior to it (3934) in his letter.

49. It is only possible to do this by reference to the invaluable resource of the transcriptions of William’s letters provided by Ian St George in his monumental *Colenso’s Collections*.

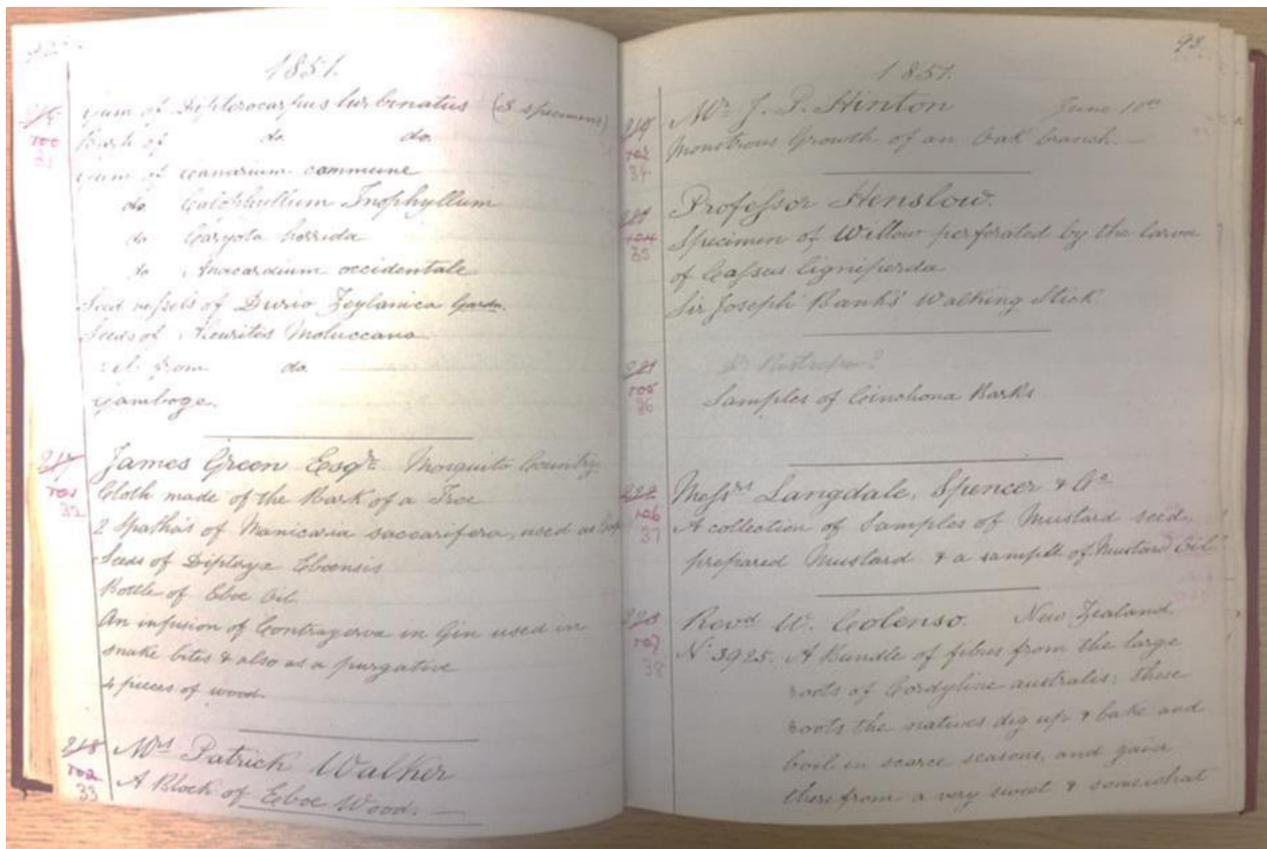


Fig.3: Page 93 of the 'Museum of Economic History Entry Book for 1847-1855' with notes on accessions received on 10 June 1851. The bottom entry is an extract from a covering letter by William Colenso which describes a bundle of fibres. This was received on the same day as the walking stick of Joseph Banks (near the top of the page/ ringed in red) donated by the botanist John Henslow, Darwin's friend and mentor and the future father-in-law to Joseph Hooker.

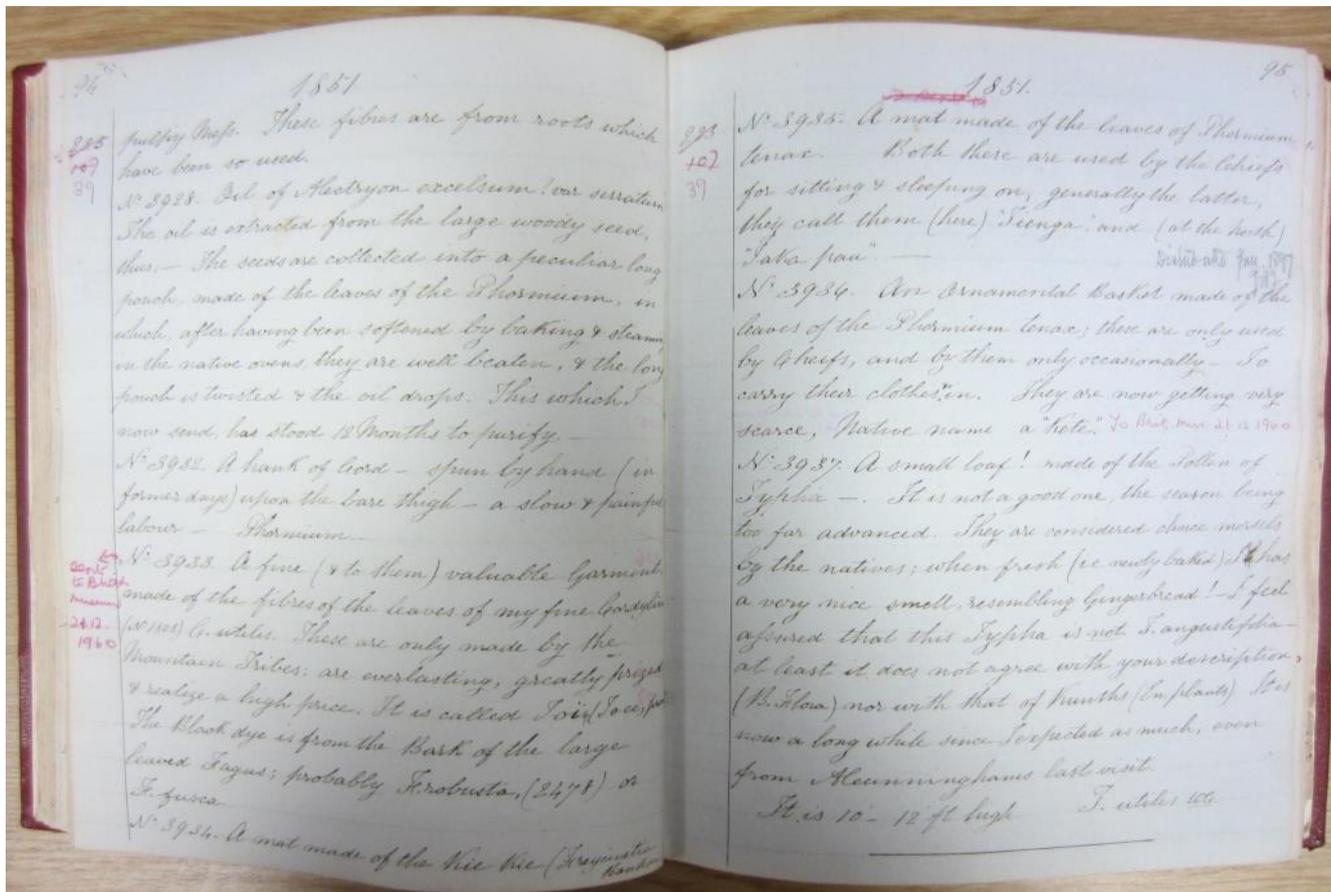


Fig. 4: Pages 94–95 of the 'Museum of Economic History Entry Book for 1847–1855' with records of accessions received on 10 June 1851 from William Colenso.

letter. Of these eight objects, one, a bundle of fibres, (WC 3925 description (a) above) is recorded on page 93 of the entry book headed 10 June 1851 [Fig 3].⁵⁰ This object cannot be found in any museum catalogues searched. If we turn the page, we find the remaining seven objects listed to pages 94–95 of the entry book [Fig 4]. Three of these are now in the Economic Botany Collection. These are, “oil extracted from seeds”, (WC ref 3298, Kew Cat. No: 62303, description b above); “a hank of Cord” (WC ref 3932, Kew Cat. No: 30017, description c); and a small loaf (WC ref 3937, Kew Cat. No: 34556, description d). Three of the objects were transferred to the British Museum in 1960: a “valuable garment”, (WC ref 3933, British Museum number Oc1960,11.70, description e) – a note in the margin against this item says “sent to British Museum 21.12.1960” (where it is referred to as “cloak”); a mat (WC ref 3934, BM no. Oc1960,11.11, description f); and an “ornamental basket” (WC ref 3936, BM no. Oc1960,11.5, description g).⁵¹ One of the objects is in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford: A mat. (WC ref 3935, Pitt Rivers ref 1897.3.4, description h).⁵²

The first three of the above objects were therefore all retained at Kew. In the catalogue, all three have the same reference “EBN: 39.1851” which it is assumed refers to their accession in that year and also corresponds to the number 39 in the margin against all the items donated by William Colenso listed in the Entry Book on pages 94–5. In addition, the entries for each of these objects have a line with “Donor date”, shown as 1851, and a line: “Donor: Colenso Rev W”.

The next three of the above objects were all sent to the British Museum where, in the catalogue, all three have a Museum Number beginning “Oc 1960” which presumably refers to the year of transfer to the Museum. The entry for the “ornamental basket” has “Additional IDs: 223-1851 (Royal Botanic Gardens accession number)”, which is consistent with its year of accession at Kew. The entries for all three

items transferred to the British Museum have , against “acquisition name”, “Transferred from: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Field Collection by: Rev William Colenso”.

This last of the above objects can be identified as the mat now at the Pitt Rivers Museum with catalogue reference: 1897.3.4. That this is the mat donated by William Colenso to Kew in 1851 can be confirmed by a combination of factors: because the wording on the label at Pitt Rivers almost exactly replicates that in the Kew Entry book and in William’s letter (see description (h) above); because the date of acquisition given in the Pitt Rivers catalogue entry, “Acquired: Donated January 1897”, corresponds exactly with the note against the item in the Kew Entry Book, “Distributed Jan. 1897” [see Fig. 4] – perhaps “distributed” because this was the second mat received in this batch; and, most tellingly, by the inclusion in the description in the Pitt Rivers catalogue of William Colenso’s reference number: 3935. This reference correlates with the number given to this object in William’s letter of 22 January 1851, and with the number recorded against the entry for the object listed in the Kew Entry Book among the accessions received on 10 June 1851. This unequivocally pin points this object as the actual mat donated by William Colenso to Kew in January 1851 and transferred to Pitt Rivers in 1897!

It is worth pausing here for a moment to consider the significance of this. William’s painstaking sequential numbering of his specimens into the six thousands, over several decades, may have seemed to some to be obsessive. But I would suggest that his attention to detail

50. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Economic Botany Collection, Museum Entry Book 1847-1855, 93.

51. http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx?searchText=Colenso. The “valuable garment” (or “cloak”) and mat are included in “Colenso’s Māori artefacts in the British Museum” in the February issue of *eColenso*, p 8, and the “ornamental basket” appears in May 2010 *eColenso*.

52. <http://objects.prm.ox.ac.uk/pages/PRMUID42085.html>.

is vindicated by such a case as this. For the reference number that William gave to this mat travelled with it, as it were, first in 1851, in his letter from New Zealand to Kew where it was recorded in the Entry Book; and then 48 years later, in 1897, from Kew to the Pitt Rivers Museum where, in the Catalogue there, (and on the label attached to the object), it can be seen today, identifying the mat dispatched by William from New Zealand 167 years ago!

Did William Colenso's cousin, Bishop Colenso of Natal, also provide specimens to Kew?

But William Colenso was not the only member of his family to donate items to the Museum of Economic Botany at Kew. His cousin, John William Colenso, was also to make donations to the Museum.

When William Colenso's Maori gourd or calabash arrived at Kew on 2 December 1853 (see above), John William Colenso, had just been consecrated as the first Bishop of Natal, a recently established British colony on the eastern seaboard of today's South Africa. Only a few months later, in August 1854, following his return to Britain from Natal, Bishop Colenso was to deposit "Zulu" artefacts from Natal at Kew. The Bishop was returning from a brief reconnaissance visit to the colony which he recorded in his book, *Ten Weeks in Natal*, published in 1855.⁵³ This account of Bishop Colenso's visit to Natal focused on his preoccupation with establishing a Church of England mission in the colony. For this purpose he toured Natal meeting a number of the chiefs, his primary concern being to assess the possibility of the conversion of the colony's African population to Christianity. But, during his tour of Natal, he also collected some objects of interest which, on his return to Britain later in 1854, he deposited at the Museum of Economic Botany. This aspect of Bishop Colenso's visit to Natal in 1854 is discussed by Catherine Elliott Weinberg in

her chapter, "Provenancing Objects from Colonial Natal..." in the recently published volume on archival material pertaining to Southern KwaZulu-Natal.⁵⁴

Elliott Weinberg's account highlights the fact that Bishop Colenso saw himself not just as a missionary but also as a collector of objects of interest from the colonies.⁵⁵ She cites a letter to William Hooker dated August 1854 which refers to Bishop Colenso's giving or sending Hooker "roots" or "bulbs" in a basket "of Zulu construction" and seeking a meeting with Hooker at Kew.⁵⁶ [Fig 5] From this letter we can gain an indication of Bishop Colenso's strong interest in working with Hooker to bring plants, or plant products, of economic value to Kew. The bishop had a family connection with William Hooker through his wife. Mrs Colenso later wrote "My dear Mother, when a young girl, knew Sir W. who kindly patronised her very juvenile botanical studies."⁵⁷ But he does not refer to this connection. Adopting a formal manner, referring to himself in the third person, Bishop Colenso sought Hooker's

... advice as to the natural products, which might be introduced with advantage in the colony of Natal, ... a few choice English seeds or plants for exportation.

53. *Ten Weeks in Natal: A Journal of a First Tour of Visitation among the Colonists and Zulu Kafirs of Natal* (Cambridge: Macmillan & Co, 1955).

54. Catherine Elliott Weinberg, "'The Name of Zulu is Now Given': Provenancing Objects from Colonial Natal in the British Museum's Christy Collection" in Carolyn Hamilton and Nessa Leibhammer (eds.) *Tribing and untribing the archive: identity and the material record in Southern KwaZulu-Natal in the late independent and colonial periods*, 477-500.

55. *Ibid* 489.

56. *Ibid* 489, n. 37.

57. Mrs Colenso to Katherine Lyell 23 April 1888, in Wyn Rees, *Colenso Letters*, 421.

Fig.5:

A letter from Bishop Colenso to Sir William Hooker dated August 1854 seeking

"... advice as to the natural products, which might be introduced with advantage in the colony of Natal and asking 'Can Sir Wm name to him any small manual, which contains directions for drying & preparing plants for scientific purposes?'"

3 Lambton Place
Victoria Road
Kensington
Aug 7. 1854

The Bishop of Natal (Dr. Colenso) presents his compliments to Sir Wm Hooker, & begs his acceptance of a few roots which he brought from Kafirland. He fears they may be worthless - but they were gathered in a wild district by a friend, who gave them to him - and may possibly be worth rearing.

The Bishop of Natal has

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been long intending to send himself the pleasure of calling on Sir Wm Hooker - and, in fact, had contemplated doing either with his brother-in-law, Mr. G. Douglas from Borneo, & his friends, Lord & Lady Anniker, on Saturday week. But a press of business has hitherto prevented him from getting apart on afternoons for leisure. He wishes much, however, to consult Sir Wm Hooker, before starting again for South Africa - as he would

Kind to obtain some advice as
to the natural products, which
might be introduced with
advantage into the colony of Natal,
and also would ask the favour
of Mr. Hooker's supplying
him with a few choice English
seeds or plants for experiment.

The Bishop, however, does
not expect to leave England till
after Christmas: & between
this & then will make a
point of visiting Kew some days,
for the above purpose. He would,
of course, be delighted to further
Mr. Hooker's views in any

way by sending home specimens
of the vegetable products of Natal.

Can Mr. Wm. name to him
any small mammal, which
contains directions for
drying & preparing plants
for scientific purposes?

The basket, in which the balls
are packed, is of Salter
Construction, if Mr. Wm. Hooker
comes to keep it.

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*He [Bishop Colenso] would, of course, be delighted to further Sir Wm Hooker's views in any way by bringing home specimens of the vegetable fruits of Natal. Can Sir Wm name to him any small manual, which contains directions for dry-
ing & preparing plants for scientific purposes?⁵⁸*

It is not known whether the hoped for meeting took place. But, it is clear from this letter that Bishop Colenso was not only keen to bring back plant products and plant specimens from Natal, but also in taking out seeds and plants to Natal. It therefore seems that he wished to be fully involved in William Hooker's endeavour to improve plant productivity across the British Empire.

In the catalogue of the British Museum Collection there are 19 objects attributed originally to being donated by Bishop Colenso to Kew. Under "details of acquisition" they are all described as "Donated by: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Previous owner/ex-collection: Bishop of Natal". One further object has a complicated provenance having been originally donated by Bishop Colenso to Kew and then sold on to another collector but finding its way on to British Museum. Of these 20 objects originally donated by Bishop Colenso to Kew, 10 were transferred from Kew to the British Museum in 1866, two were transferred in during the 1860s, one in 1877; and seven are listed as being transferred in 1960 when, as we have seen, a number of objects originally donated to Kew by William Colenso were transferred to the British Museum.

These objects comprise: 4 snuff containers made out of hollow reed; one snuff spoon made out of bone; 8 penis sheaths made of grass or split cane; one basket or bag made of palm leaf; one bowl made out of woven plant fibre; two beer strainers made of palm leaf; two necklaces of yam tubers strung on leather thongs or string; one sash or belt made of cord and beads; one "badge of wood" or breast ornament worn by a chief's councillor.⁵⁹ The last of these objects is re-

ferred to by Elliott Weinberg who identifies the chief in question as Mmini Mthuli.⁶⁰

In the Economic Botany Collection catalogue, five objects are listed as having been donated by Bishop Colenso. These are: a necklace made of Palm nuts (Cat No. 36382); necklaces made from tubers (Cat No. 37018); a necklace made of Tobacco and beads (Cat No.48308); "Native Snuff Boxes" (Cat No.29112); Flue-Cured Tobacco (Cat No.48396), the last being the only one given an accession date which is 1856.

Therefore, all in all, three are 25 artefacts originally deposited by Bishop Colenso at Kew and now held either in the Economic Botany Collection at Kew or in the British Museum collection.

But when did Bishop Colenso deposit these artefacts at Kew? And did the Hookers play a part in inspiring or facilitating the bishop's donating to Kew – as they did in the case of his cousin in New Zealand?

We have seen that ten of these artefacts were transferred to the British Museum in 1866 and so must have been received at Kew before that date. Before 1866, Bishop Colenso made two return visits to Britain. In 1854, he returned

58. Bishop J W Colenso to W Hooker, DC/34/211, Kew Directors' Correspondence Vol 34, English Letters 1854, folio 211. My thanks to Catherine Elliott Weinberg for bringing this letter to my attention. Although the letter refers to Bishop Colenso in the third person, the handwriting is similar to the Bishop's and the address of the sender is 3 Cambridge Place where "The heretical Bishop John William Colenso was the one early resident of note here; he lived at No. 3 Cambridge Place in 1853–5, excepting the months in 1853–4 when he first went out to take up the see of Natal." <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol42/pp130-150>.

59. http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx?searchText=Bishop+of+Natal.

60. Elliott Weinberg op cit 490.

from his exploratory sojourn to Natal arriving in Britain probably in June 1854 and remaining until his departure for Natal in March 1855 with his family to take up permanent residence in the colony. In 1862 he returned to Britain, partly to publish his work of Biblical criticism, remaining until 1865 when he returned to Natal. We therefore cannot tell from the information in the catalogue whether these objects were deposited by the bishop during his visits to Britain in 1854-5 or the 1860s,

The bishop's letter to Hooker in August 1854, cited above, makes no mention of any of the 25 artefacts now held at Kew and the British Museum. From this it could be argued that, if he had had brought any of these objects with him on his return from Natal on that occasion, he would have mentioned them in this letter. However, it could also be argued that, as his letter focuses on plants and vegetables, at that time, he may not have been aware that Hooker was also interested in artefacts. If, following further communications, or a meeting, with Hooker, Bishop Colenso had become aware of Hooker's broader interest, he may have deposited further objects during the remaining seven months of his stay in Britain in 1854/55.

Elliot Weinberg points out that, in his *Ten Weeks in Natal*, Bishop Colenso makes numerous references to various "native" artefacts, one of which is a double snuff container very similar to one of the items referred to above now in the British Museum collection (Af1960.20.105.a.b).⁶¹ She also notes that Bishop Colenso refers to "Kafir curiosities", which a Zulu "petty chief" was to "procure for me".⁶² It is therefore very possible that when he returned to Britain in 1854, Bishop Colenso did bring with him artefacts which were subsequently sent or taken to Kew.

Alternatively, the Bishop may have brought some or all of these ten artefacts to Britain during his visit in 1862-5. But, as we shall see, during this visit, he was to meet Joseph Hooker on a number of occasions, giving them ample opportunity to discuss the bishop's donations to Kew. It seems unlikely that they would not have done so, and unlikely that Joseph Hooker and his father would not have taken an active interest in the Museum at Kew receiving artefacts

brought or sent by the Bishop. Another possibility is that Bishop Colenso sent artefacts by post from Natal. But, if this was before his 1862 visit to Britain, Hooker would have known about them before they met during that visit. The only other possibility is that they were sent very soon after the bishop arrived back in Natal in late 1865. But if that were the case, it suggests a sudden burst of enthusiasm immediately after arriving back in Natal, which could have been inspired by discussions with Hooker while in Britain. Furthermore, though it is not known whether Bishop Colenso did meet William Hooker in 1854, as intended, it is unlikely that the bishop would not have maintained contact with him, either during the remainder of his stay in Britain in 1854/5, or after that, by letter.

In summary, it is clear that both Colenso cousins were providing Kew with specimens – even if on a very different scale and from different colonies half a world apart! We also know that, for William Colenso, the Hookers played a crucial part in this process. But, it is possible that the Hookers may also have collaborated with Bishop Colenso in this regard and may, therefore, have facilitated donations being received at Kew from both Colenso cousins. Interestingly, when looking at the objects transferred to the British Museum, from Kew Catherine Elliott Weinberg found that the British Museum had conflated the two cousins in their database, attributing some objects which had been collected by Bishop Colenso in Natal to his cousin in New Zealand!⁶³

Other connections between the Colenso cousins and Joseph Hooker

There is another, though less direct, connection between the Colenso cousins and the Hookers. This is through the part played by the geologist, Charles Lyell.

61. Elliott Weinberg op cit 489

62. Elliott Weinberg op cit 490 quoting Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal*, 211.

63. Pers. comm. from Catherine Elliott Weinberg who reports that she has since edited these database entries to reflect their correct provenance.

We have seen that one item on display in the exhibition was the copy of Charles Darwin's recently published *Journal of Researches* given to Joseph Hooker by Charles Lyell just before the *Erebus* set sail on the Antarctic expedition in 1839. However, Hooker was later to reveal that, while he was preparing for the expedition, and before publication of Darwin's book, Lyell had passed on to him proofsheets which Hooker noted,

“impressed me profoundly . . . [with what is required] in a naturalist to follow in Darwin's footsteps whilst they stimulated me to enthusiasm in the desire to travel and observe.”

Hooker expressed his debt to Darwin in his Introductory *Essay* to the *Flora Novae Zelandiae*, published in 1853,

I should never have taken up the subject [the study of the variation of species] in its present form, but for the advantages I have derived from his [Darwin's] friendship and encouragement.⁶⁴

Hooker was to become one of Darwin's closest friends and a staunch supporter of him in the controversy following the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859.

But Charles Lyell had played a more important part than Hooker in facilitating the acceptance of Darwin's theory of evolution within the scientific community. And, as Darwinism became an “intellectual empire”, Darwin referred to Lyell affectionately as his “Chancellor of the Exchequer”.⁶⁵ Similarly, Lyell exercised a behind-the-scenes influence in furthering the careers of other scientists and in fostering connections they made with one another and with others outside the scientific community. Lyell was also to play a pivotal role in Bishop Colenso's affairs. The bishop and his family were in London in the mid 1860s, having come to England from Natal, partly for the bishop to publish his *Critical Examination of the Pentateuch*, and partly to arrange to defend himself against the onslaught of criticism he knew he would be subject to as a result of its publication.⁶⁶ Amidst the furore surrounding the publication of his book, Lyell “had taken the Colensos under his wing during these trying times”, inviting them into his home which was then a meeting place for leading scientific and

literary figures of the day.⁶⁷ Lyell's hospitality no doubt contributed to the bishop's getting support from many members of this circle and perhaps also led to dinner invitations and to his invitation to attend a meeting of the group of Darwinian scientists later known as the “X Club” – of which Joseph Hooker was a prominent member.⁶⁸ Over three decades later, from amongst this circle, Mrs Colenso was to remember Joseph Hooker second only to their former hosts, Charles Lyell and his wife. On receiving a biography of Charles Darwin, she reminisced fondly about their “many dear and honoured friends”, mentioning, “First and foremost, dear Sir Charles and Lady Lyell. But, besides them, we knew Sir J. (then Dr.) Hooker”.⁶⁹

Joseph Hooker was one of the several prominent scientists in England who subscribed to the “Colenso Fund”⁷⁰ to raise money for the bishop's appeal against the verdict following his trial for “Erroneous Teaching”, conducted in his absence in Cape Town in 1863. The

64. A. C. Seward, *Sir Joseph Hooker and Charles Darwin: The History of a Forty Years' Friendship*, 198-199: <http://online.library.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1469-8137.1912.tb05637.x/pdf>.

65. William Irvine, *Apes, Angels and Victorians: A Joint Biography of Darwin and Huxley* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1955), 56.

66. Between 1862 and 1865 Bishop Colenso published five parts of his seven-part work of biblical criticism.

67. Wyn Rees, *Colenso Letters from Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, 1958), 86-7.

68. Gwilym Colenso, “The Pentateuch in Perspective: Bishop Colenso's Biblical Criticism in its Colonial Context” in J. A. Draper (ed.), *The Eye of the Storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Inspiration* (London: T & T Clark Int.; Pietermaritzburg, Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2003), 136-167, 163. The dining club, later called the X Club, was established on 3 November 1864. Its initial membership consisted of Hooker, John Tyndall, Thomas Henry Huxley, George Busk, Edward Frankland, Herbert Spencer, John Lubbock, and Thomas Archer Hirst; William Spottiswoode joined at the December meeting. The members were united by friendship and a ‘devotion to science, pure and free, untrammelled by religious dogmas’.

69. Frances S. Colenso to Katherine Lyle, 23 April 1888, Wyn Rees, *Colenso Letters*, 421.

70. Wyn Rees, *Colenso Letters*, 83.

court, convened and presided over by Bishop Colenso's Metropolitan Bishop, found Colenso guilty on nine "Articles of Accusation" and sentenced him to the "deprivation" of his position as bishop – unless he recanted within four months. At this point, Bishop Colenso was in the same boat as his cousin, William Colenso in New Zealand, found himself in, a little over a decade earlier. In 1852 William Colenso had been dismissed by his bishop from his position as Deacon and missionary of the Church of England in New Zealand⁷¹ – though under circumstances less publicised than those surrounding the deposition of his cousin in Natal, and with less rallying-round of prominent people to support him.

William in New Zealand was well aware of his cousin's plight and mentioned this in his letters to Joseph Hooker. He suggested similarities in their views and hinted at parallels between them in the way his own bishop had treated him, writing to Joseph Hooker, "Not a few of his views were mine: (we were very close correspondents until the Bp. of New Zealand divided us!)"⁷²

William was also aware of his cousin's visit to England in the 1860s in connection with his critique of the Pentateuch and had urged Hooker to make his acquaintance, writing in 1864,

*You may make (or have made) the acq. of my good (1st) cousin "Natal", at the meeting – not too great an heretic for you!*⁷³

And in January 1865, he wrote to Hooker, "Did you make my good Cousin's (Natal) acquaintance at Bath?"⁷⁴ Hooker went to the meeting at Bath. He "enjoyed it most thoroughly" and did indeed see Bishop Colenso there. He reported to Darwin that the bishop had, received a "cordial welcome" at the meeting and "in the sections he was greeted with hearty applause on entering the rooms".⁷⁵

William later commended Hooker for his support for Bishop Colen-

so, writing, "I was very glad to see your name among the subscribers to the Natal fund. I think my good cousin has had hard times of it."⁷⁶

In William's concern that Hooker should establish relations with Bishop Colenso when he was in England, we can see another connection between the Colenso cousins through Joseph Hooker.

With the support of Hooker and others, Bishop Colenso won his appeal and, in 1865, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council found the Cape Town verdict to be "Null and void in law", thus enabling Colenso to continue in his position as Bishop of Natal.

As well as supporting Bishop Colenso in his dispute and legal battle with the Church, Joseph Hooker had visited him while he was in England and had,

... stayed a couple of days with Colenso in the country, and

71. Bagnall and Petersen, *William Colenso*, 339-40.

72. William Colenso to Joseph Hooker 30 November 1864., transcribed in *Colenso's Collections*, 312. William's bishop in New Zealand was Bishop Selwyn who coincidentally had been to the same Cambridge college as Bishop Colenso but was vehemently opposed to his biblical criticism. So it is perhaps not surprising that he had intervened to prevent or discourage William from corresponding with his cousin in Natal.

73. William Colenso to Joseph Hooker 30 November 1864, *Colenso's Collections*, 312.

74. William Colenso to Joseph Hooker, 3 January 1865, *Colenso's Collections*, 313. The meeting referred to in both letters was probably the meeting of The British Association for the Advancement of Science held in Bath in September 1864, www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/93072#page/5/mode/1u.

75. J. D. Hooker to Charles Darwin, [19 September 1864], Darwin Correspondence Project, "Letter no. 4616," accessed on 22 January 2018, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/DCP-LETT-4616>.

76. William Colenso to Joseph Hooker, 3 November 1865, *Colenso's Collections*, 317. The "Natal fund" was the "Colenso Fund" which, as noted above, Hooker contributed to.

was pleased with his calmness, dignity and charity towards his opponents....”⁷⁷

Though on one occasion after dining with the bishop Hooker expressed his irritation with him, complaining to Darwin that, “... his incessant prating about his own ‘affair’ is quite wearisome.”⁷⁸

It could be argued that Charles Lyell sparked Joseph Hooker’s interest in Darwin’s work and that it was his following of Darwin’s focus on the variation of species that inspired Hooker to promote the “global network of plant collectors”. This was in effect, to make him and William Colenso working colleagues, thus cementing their lifelong friendship. It could also be argued that Lyell played a part in introducing Bishop Colenso to the circle of Darwinian scientists which brought him into contact with Joseph Hooker, leading Hooker to take an interest in the bishop’s work. Though this connection made through Lyell may have re-enforced the connection already made with the Hookers a decade earlier when, as we have noted, Bishop Colenso deposited artefacts from Natal at the Museum of Economic Botany at Kew.

But Lyell not only exercised an influence on connections made between the men of scientific and literary circles. The hospitality offered by him and his wife to the Colensos in London also led to a lifelong friendship and correspondence between Bishop Colenso’s wife, Frances, and Charles Lyell’s wife, Mary, as well as his sister-in-law, Katherine Lyell – who was a botanist and a friend of Joseph Hooker.⁷⁹ From Natal, Frances wrote to both sisters on a range of matters including her love of the “flowers of our fields and gardens” and of her despair at the impossibility of painting them all. “I find my flower painting engrosses a great deal of time”, she wrote to Mary Lyell.⁸⁰ Her painting and drawing of flowers was not only a hobby but a response to the call from Hooker for botanic specimens or illustrations to be supplied by those overseas.⁸¹ Hence, it was to Katherine

Lyell, that she sent her artwork, clearly intending it to be passed on to Katherine’s friend, Joseph Hooker, and emphasising (modestly) that,

*My poor drawings have not been offered to you as works of art... but as contributions towards [the study of] the Flora of these parts.... I see in the last meeting of the British Association Sir J Hooker exhorts travellers to exert themselves in collecting the various plants in different regions....*⁸²

Frances Colenso pursued her interest in the flora of Natal as if following Hooker’s advice to a botanical collector at Kew to “practice drawing incessantly”.⁸³ Her fascination with the colours of plants in Natal, and her passion for painting them, perhaps prefigured the visit by Marian North to Bishopstowe in 1882–3, referred to above. With such a strong interest in painting the natural world around her, Mrs Colenso must have been greatly gratified that such an accomplished artist should stop at Bishopstowe to paint the scene so beloved by her husband. In supplying, through Katherine Lyell, botanic illustrations to Hooker from Natal, it might be said that Frances Colenso was working in parallel with her husband’s cousin, William Colenso, who

77. Jeff Guy *The Heretic: A Study of the Life of John William Colenso 1814 – 1883* (PMB, University of Natal Press, 1983), 110, quoting from L. Huxley, *Life and letters of Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker* (London, 1918) II, 58.

78. JD Hooker to Darwin [7–8 April 1865], Darwin Correspondence Project, “Letter no. 4807,” accessed on 23 January 2018, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/DCP-LETT-4807>.

79. Wyn Rees, *Colenso Letters* 86–7.

80. Frances S. Colenso to Mary Lyell, 5 November 1871, Wyn Rees, *Colenso Letters*, 238–40.

81. Wyn Rees, *Colenso Letters*, 240, note 1.

82. Frances S. Colenso to Katherine Lyell, 16 Oct 1881, Wyn Rees, *Colenso Letters*, 357. Thanks to Ann Collins for drawing my attention to the significance of Frances Colenso’s interest in painting and drawing flowers and for pointing me to the relevant references in Rees.

83. See the last sentence of the introductory information for the exhibition as quoted at the start of this article.

was supplying botanic specimens to Hooker from New Zealand. They both played their parts, though in different degree, in the “global network of plant collectors”, referred to in the exhibition, which centred on the Hookers at Kew.

So, again, albeit in more of a roundabout way, through Charles Lyell, his wife and sister-in-law, and also through Bishop Colenso's wife, we can trace connections between both Colenso cousins and Joseph Hooker, the subject of the exhibition at Kew.

Acknowledgments

Images of the Kew Entry Books shown in Figs 2, 3 & 4 are reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Copyright for these images is Caroline Cornish. Images shown in Fig 5 of the letter from Bishop Colenso to William Hooker, held in the archives at Kew, are reproduced with the kind permission of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

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The editor's inbox

Geoff Bil emailed,

‘... while researching at Kew, I came across an undated letter from JD Hooker to William Henry Harvey concerning Colenso's affair with Ripeka Meretene. Jim Endersby (*Imperial Nature*, 347n62) notes that "the scandal of Colenso's marital difficulties would have made it impossible for Hooker to mix socially with him had they both been in Britain; the colonial distance had its advantages, since Colenso seems to have successfully concealed many aspects of his situation from Hooker." In his letter to Harvey, however, Hooker makes reference to a 20-page letter from Colenso "detailing all his misfortunes & indeed all his sin, putting himself all the time in the position of a most injured man & asking me to get him a Church in England!" While Colenso failed to conceal his "misfortunes," of course, Hooker's reaction is more or less consistent with Endersby's observations regarding the social difficulties attending these kinds of admissions in Victorian Britain.

‘I've attached a copy of the letter (JDH to William Henry Harvey, n.d. [ca. 1855], KEW: JDH/2/3/5, 274), which I've not seen referenced elsewhere, thinking you might perhaps find it useful for the Colenso newsletter or otherwise. Unfortunately, I was unable to track down the letter from Harvey that prompted Hooker's reply.’

Dear Harvey

Hurrah! I am right glad that you are rid of Zoology on all & every account. Your letter to Lloyd is a capital one & I do not wonder

that it did the trick.

Alas poor Colenso, I have not written in answer to two long ones of his (one of 20 pages) – one detailing all his misfortunes & indeed all his sin, putting himself all the time in the position of a much injured man & asking me to get him a Church in England! There was no answering such a painful letter, it shocked & grieved me exceedingly – I put it by for 2 years pondering what was to be done & burned it only a few weeks ago. The worst of it is that he implores me to tell him all I think & feel about his misfortunes as he calls them, & upon these I could not touch.

Oddly enough I got a letter from him along with yours, & I must now write. Reeve has an order to send him N.Z. Flora regularly & I have paid for it – so it has gone or ought to have – I will see about it.

I had quite forgotten our arrangement about Fl.N.Z. but will see how the matter stands with Reeve – many thanks for your kind offer – you certainly shall not buy a copy though you may pay for the colouring.

As to Colenso's collecting, I heartily wish he would not go on collecting, his lucubrations are dreadful & specimens worse. --- he wants now to sell plants, & this I cannot encourage him to do.

*Ever yours in haste
Jos D Hooker*

Kew Tuesday

All relationships undergo periods of strain. That between Colenso and JD Hooker had become tense even before Colenso's affair became public knowledge late in 1852. In his letter to WJ Hooker of 31 January 1853 Colenso quoted JD Hooker, "I assure you that miscellaneous scraps such as you sent and all so carefully numbered are not worth the time and trouble of looking over". Again: "literally $\frac{3}{4}$ are seedling mosses & Hepaticæ, dead and decaying Lichens, bleached imperfect Seaweeds, mycelia of fungi, &c., &c., – do spare yourself

the trouble and expense of collecting such things." Clearly that hurt.

The next two surviving letters from Colenso to JD Hooker are dated 28 August 1854 and 23 February 1855. The former is the 20 page reaction to Hooker's comments, coldly formal, full of corrections of perceived errors in Hooker's formal descriptions and opinions of New Zealand plants. (Oxford: lucubration = a learned or pedantic piece of writing).

Colenso's 23 February 1855 letter would have been received by JD Hooker in May or June: in it there is an implied threat that he would start selling plants (ie, rather than collecting *gratis* for Kew).

[Chevalier Smith] greatly wished me to sell many of my specimens, and urged me to put myself in correspondence with some rich & scientific individuals on the Continent....

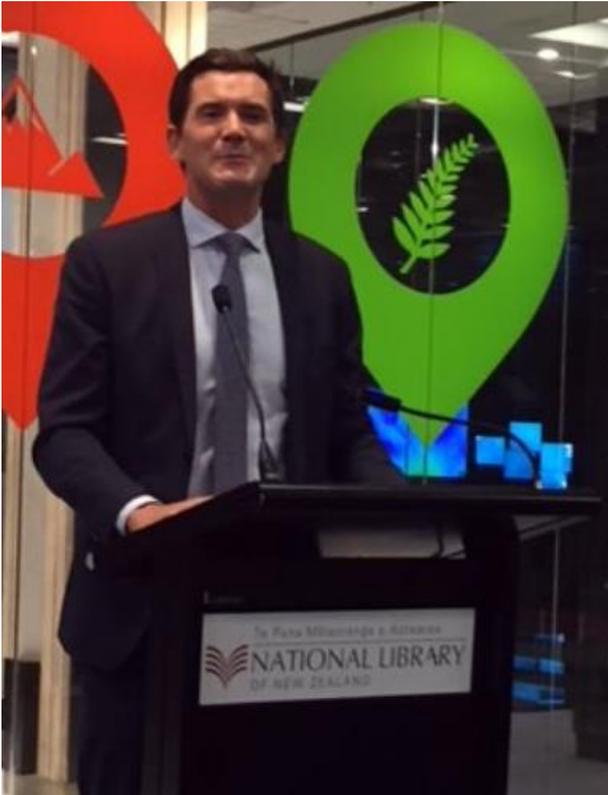
These are what made Hooker react so testily. His letter to Harvey was written after receiving the second, ie after May or June 1855. The confessional letter from Colenso that Hooker burned would probably have been written by early 1853; Hooker "put it by" for two years (ie, perhaps till early 1855). Harvey had arrived back in Dublin from three years in the Pacific in October 1856, so Hooker's undated and rather informal letter was possibly written then.

Colenso did not write to Hooker again until seven years later, in September 1862, from Parliament in Wellington, with just a hint that the status imbalance in their relationship might now be readjusted,

A few days ago, I was happy in supporting a motion in the House for £500 for a Manual of N.Z. Botany to be executed by you. We had previously talked it over among a few of us, Members, so that in bringing it forward, we had secured support.

Their intimacy flourished after that, apparently with genuine warmth on both sides.

William Colenso Square officially opened



His Worship the Mayor of Wellington Justin Lester, prevented in 2016 by the Kaikoura earthquake from opening William Colenso Square, did so with aplomb on 1 February.

Ian St George spoke: William Colenso was one of the great Victorian polymaths, not a generalist who knew a little about a lot, but a multispecialist who knew a lot about a lot. He came here to Wellington first as a missionary, later as the Member of the House of Representatives for Napier.

He was in the House of Representatives from 1861 to 1866—during the Fox, Domett, Whitaker-Fox, Weld and Stafford Ministries.

When Wellington replaced Auckland as capital city, its population was 4,900. Parliament officially met here for the first time in July 1865; Colenso was there. He wrote to his friend Edward Catchpool from the General Assembly Library,

An ugly Wellgn. morning rain & wind—& severe hail storms... I went ...in the evening to my lodgings ... in Wingfield St.—not far from the House.... My rooms are small, but the only 2 in the little cottage (save the skillion & garret, into which the man & his wife & child stow themselves!) the front door, open to the S.,—opens bang into the sitting room, ditto the back-door, ditto their ladder & trapdoor to the upper, & the fire place (such as I never saw) just large enough to roast a lark, & chimney smoky! The Bedroom, on the ground floor, is very damp—from which I have a good share of Rheumatism.... I spend most of my time in “the House”—or its Library, and Dine at Bellamy’s at 6.—

His letter is an interesting account of the first day’s sitting of a Wellington Parliament...

Yesterday we commenced in good earnest at noon, & sat till 1 this morning, mostly on the reply: sharp & bitter things were said on both sides:—by Stafford, agt. Weld (!) & Sewell—by Weld in reply—by Williamson agt. the Ministry, & by sarcastic Richardson.... I spoke, against some parts of the reply—.... We go at it again this day.... There will be lots of sparring this Session—Stafford seems to be regularly primed: & now that Weld has come out, too, so bitterly & tauntingly (which Stafford cannot stand)—mischief will be brewing.... Wellington is wonderfully improved outwardly. The Asphalté foot pavement all along Lambton Quay makes it dry & nice walking.

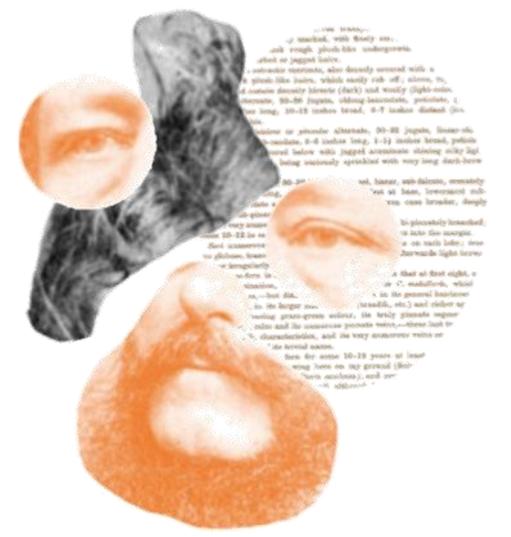
Wellington was indeed wonderfully improved compared to its primitive state on his missionary visits 1843 to 1849—and it is even more so now. What was Wingfield St is now William Colenso Square. The damp cottage where Colenso lodged was on the north side – with its front door banging in the southerly, its chimney belching smoke from a fire only big enough to roast a lark, and its ladder up through a trapdoor to the skillion and garret where the landlord and his wife and child slept.

Just to the south of it now is the National Library, where many of Colenso’s surviving manuscripts are preserved among our national treasures. He was a cleric, explorer, botanist, ethnologist and linguist of considerable ability and productivity. He is an important national figure and it is apt that this space is now named for him.

He wrote to his friend Sir Joseph Hooker in London,

It is ... quite possible ... that... a generation or two hence – when all shall be known, the Austral lyre (shall) be resuscitated & retouched by some unborn Orpheus – and I shall have a monument erected to my memory!!

Thank you Mr Mayor for being that southern Orpheus. Now we await the erection of the monument.



Colenso 3

The 3rd Colenso conference will be held in Napier on 22 and 23 February 2019