

# eColenso

Volume 9 number 11 November 2018

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*eColenso* is the free email publication of the Colenso Society,  
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Past issues are at  
[www.colensostudy.id.au/Newletter%20Masthead.htm](http://www.colensostudy.id.au/Newletter%20Masthead.htm).

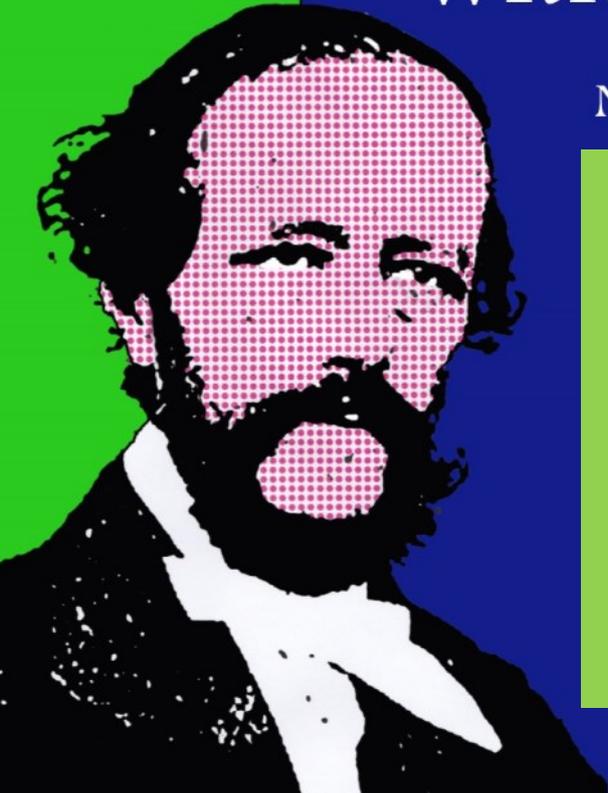


# Further wanderings with William Colenso

Napier 22–24 February 2019

The organising committee regrets that for a variety of reasons the conference has had to be cancelled.

We thank those who expressed an interest and are sorry for the inconvenience inevitably caused them.



# The Norsewood fires of March 1888

## TERRIBLE BUSH FIRES

NORSEWOOD IN RUINS  
IMMENSE DESTRUCTION  
OVER THIRTY BUILDINGS  
DESTROYED  
LIST OF HOUSES BURNT

[SPECIAL TO DAILY TELEGRAPH.]  
[OWN CORRESPONDENT.—BY TELEGRAPH.]

WAIPAWA, This day

The following is a list of houses burnt down at Norsewood last night so far as certain, but there are many more. The school was full of children. The teacher marched them off to Kopua Flat. The fire extended along the range on the road to Ormondville, where the English Church was only saved with difficulty, aided by the rain, which began to fall. Many houses

on this road were burnt. Petersen, blacksmith's shop; Hern, baker; Club House: Saunders, carpenter; Thomason, saddler; Small's private house; Olsen; Hegh's store; Bowerman's house; Ole Olsen's house; Magnussen's house; McCluskey's house; Mortensen's Accommodation House; Rees, Minister of Lutheran Church; Ole Christoffersen, Temperance Hall; Carl Joansen; W. Hansen; C. Christoffersen; Torkelsen; John Englebretzen; school-house, and schoolmaster's house; Christoffer Petersen; the first bridge on the road from Norsewood to Ormondville; Heig, Private; Peter Svensen; J. Moran; and Westlake's store at Norsewood.

—Daily Telegraph 17 March 1888  
from "Papers Past".

The *Telegraph's* Waipawa correspondent was Frederick William Howlett BA of Makaretu (his biography soon to be published).

Among the buildings destroyed was Hans Mortensen's Accommodation House, Fernhills, where Colenso used to lodge during his visits

to the Bush near Norsewood and on 20 March the *Hawke's Bay Herald* published this letter,

*Bis dat qui cito dat.*

SIR,—Referring to the very sad news given to us in your paper of this morning, of the extensive and highly calamitous fire and great loss of property at Norsewood three days ago—and thanking you for your prompt and stirring appeal to us (our and their fellow-settlers) to come forward early and assist those unfortunates in this their trying hour of suffering and want and loss:—I have great pleasure in sending you enclosed a cheque for £20 towards raising a subscription fund for that purpose.

For I believe in the sterling natural truth of the above quoted ancient motto,—“He gives twice who gives in time.” Moreover, I feel greatly for those poor hardworking patient Scandinavians (whom I have long known), now burnt out of house and home:—having, unfortunately, suffered myself in a similar way,—in 1852,—when I not only lost my dwelling-house and all by fire, but had no sympathising neighbors near me! nor even stores in the

district, whence I might have procured common necessaries!!

I trust this great and pressing emergency will be at once largely and nobly and cheerfully met. Solitary guineas from gentlemen and well-to-do settlers will scarcely do much good in this extensive and extreme disaster. May it be remembered by Christians of every denomination among us,—as well as by those of the good old Jewish Church,—“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord:” and, true “Charity ever begins at home.”—Far better (may I be permitted to remark, without giving offence) to give here to real want than to Melanesan Missions,\* or to “Dr. Barnardo’s (distant) Home.”—

One stipulation, however, I would venture to make, viz., that our subscriptions be for the relief of the Scandinavian residents at Norsewood, and not to aid or recoup losses which may fall on town and Country Mortgagees of property there.—I am &c.,

William Colenso.

Napier, March 19, 1888.

*The Herald’s* Norsewood correspondent wrote (21 March),

The public will be sorry to know that the fine Lutheran Church which was destroyed, and which cost £600, was only

insured for £200. By the destruction of the public school over £1000 worth of property was lost. Mr Wolstenholme, the schoolmaster, deserves great credit, for the manner in which he got the children safely away. A large number of pigs were burned, and also some poor cattle dogs that were tied up. Almost every man, woman, and child, is nearly blind from the effects of the smoke and heat, and a great many are homeless. We are all glad that no lives were lost, although there were many narrow escapes. Mr J. Nordlop met with a dreadful accident. A tree blew down, catching his right shoulder, knocking a hole in his forehead, and his left arm and chest were also much bruised. Mr K. Mortensen and Mr A. H. Andersen also had very narrow escapes on the main road between Matamau and Norsewood. A large rimu tree came down across the road as they were passing, some of the small branches striking them. A few bridges between Ormondville and Norsewood have been destroyed, and also part of the Manawatu bridge. But for the wind going down, and the rain that fortunately came, most if not all of the sawmills and bridges between Ormondville and Makatoku would have gone.

Many were not insured. Collections were taken up all over the country and much needed relief supplied. Mr Mahon reported to the Napier Charitable Aid Board,

My next effort was directed to ascertain if any were suffering from hunger. Unfortunately there were such in the person of Mrs Irwin and her six little children. This poor woman, who has been deserted by her husband, is the owner of about 30 acres of land on which she had a small hut comfortable house, and managed to bring up her children on the products of two or three head of cattle. She has lost everything, and at the time of my visit I found her and her children occupying an old outhouse, bereft of food, clothing, bedding, or furniture....

The next and most distressing case I visited was that of Ole Christophersen. This poor man, who had lost everything he possessed, has a wife and seven children. His wife had been prematurely confined during the fire; the baby died, and all were in the most desolate and destitute condition. The house was insured for £50 but mortgaged for the same amount. Thanks to the thoughtful kindness of some unknown benefactor in Napier, one of the parcels of clothing sent from there exactly suited the circumstances of Mrs Christophersen....

Another distressing case was that of Mr Peter Magnusson, who has a wife and seven children. They lost everything, including house, furniture, cattle feed, and clothing. He was mortgaged for £125 but not insured, and his future prospects are indeed gloomy unless the house is by some means reinstated....

The next in the way of distress is the case of Mr. Theoden Thorstensen, who with a wife and eight children I found without means of any kind, having lost his house, furniture, food, clothing, and everything he possessed. He is the owner of a quarter acre section, and had been insured for £60, but allowed the policy to lapse, he is mortgaged for £60, and his case is a very distressing one....

In the German Lines I also found an old man named August Fischer, whose sad case was not generally known in Norsewood. At the time of my visit he and his wife were endeavoring to make a meal out of a few of the very smallest kind of very bad potatoes. The old man was totally prostrated by the result of his losses, which consisted of a good seven-roomed house, a well-stocked hay shed (30ft long), good furniture, and everything needed to complete a comfortable home—all had gone in the disaster, and a gloomy future awaits the poor old man. He is insured for £150. but mortgaged for £135....

The Danish Consul Julius Toxward wrote to the *New Zealand Times* a week after the fires,

Already the green grass is springing upon the sites of the houses. Twenty families, including fully fifty children, have been rendered homeless and penniless. One painful incident was brought under my notice, but it was brightened by the self-

sacrificing act of Mr Rees, the Danish clergyman in the district. A settler's wife, the mother of eight children, whose name I cannot recall, was on the eve of her confinement. In the absence of her husband she had gone to bed, and was unable to move. Mr Rees, who was digging a hole to bury his valuable library of books—almost his sole possession—left his house and his wife, and lifting the woman into his buggy, drove some miles away through the dense smoke to a comparatively safe place. The mother gave birth to a stillborn child. On his return he found his own home burned to the ground with all his belongings, including all his cherished volumes. But he saved the woman's life.

Colenso was one of 17 men who attended the Fire Relief Fund Committee meeting in the Napier Council Chamber on 26 March, when it was noted that “£100 had been forwarded from Wanganui”. Not everyone was pleased with the Relief Committee: the *Telegraph* (27 March) editorialised,

The Norsewood Relief Committee, at its meeting yesterday, having omitted to pass a vote of thanks to the Mayor of Wanganui for the liberal donation subscribed by the people of that borough in aid of the relief of the settlers of Norsewood, it devolves on us, on behalf of our readers, who comprise four-fifths of the adult population of the provincial district of Hawke's Bay, to express our gratitude for

the generous assistance, and the heartfelt sympathy, tendered at a time when both were so much needed. Granted that the extent of devastation, and the amount of distress have been exaggerated: granted that Hawke's Bay is rich enough to relieve those of its settlers who have suffered by the fire, we think nothing is more to the honor of the colonists of New Zealand than the spontaneous assistance that is given when help is needed. The Kaitangata disaster was a case in point, and this Norsewood bush fire is another. Let it be remembered that in this last case, no appeal was made to the colony. A short telegram giving the bare recital of the fact was sufficient to go straight to the hearts of the people of New Zealand, and from one end of the country to the other assistance is offered. So ready have been the inhabitants of Wanganui to be in time with their help that their Mayor would not wait till the ordinary mail could reach Napier, but he telegraphed the money to the credit of the Committee. At Wellington the Garrison Band voluntarily gave an open-air performance in aid of the fund, and the audience subscribed £20. In Christchurch there is also a movement on foot for the same purpose. It would be ungracious in the extreme to refuse to accept the generous gifts which have been prompted by that benevolence of feeling, and sympathy for suffering, so characteristic of the settlers of this colony.

# WILLIAM COLENZO: A PENZANCE BENEFACTOR

Missionary—Printer in New Zealand, He  
Gave Native Town Over £3,600

[By Phyllis Colenso]

IN the Public Library at Penzance hangs a brass tablet commemorating the memory of the Rev. William Colenso, F.R.S., F.L.S., one of the missionary, botanist, printer and politician in New Zealand.

He was born on November 7th, 1811, in a large house in Market Jew Street, long since pulled down for road widening. His father was Samuel May Colenso, a saddler and town councillor and a cousin of his was the Rt Rev John William Colenso, that well-known Bishop of Natal.

The family can be traced back to the end of the sixteenth century, and the name seems to have originated from the Colenso farms in the parish of St. Hilary.

Some of the older people in Penzance will remember the William Colenso, Mayor of the town in the early nineteenth century, who died in 1842 at 97 years of age, and who was the nephew of the Rev. William, of New Zealand.

This latter William was baptized in St. Mary's Church by the Rev. C. V. le Grice and as a child he regularly attended this church, sitting with his parents in the family pew.

## APPRENTICE PRINTER

He appears to have had an independent spirit and when he left school at 15 his parents made sure he had a full-time job at once, to keep him occupied. They apprenticed him to a printer who was to "guard his moral behaviour" and to pay him 1/- a week, increasing this sum until he was earning 6/- a week at the age of 21.

It was lucky for him that he was able to read widely during these years, as he had a great thirst for knowledge. He also loved to walk through the lanes and over the hills and cliffs, being always interested in plants and natural history.

After his apprenticeship ended he worked for six months in St. Ives. During this time he walked the nine miles across country to work every Monday morning and walked back home again every Saturday evening, remembering all his life the view down over Penzance and the sea, from the top of the inland hills. In one of his journals, now kept in the library at Kew Gardens, he refers to the "daistes mead" of his father's land and he obviously never lost his love for Cornwall.

## HOMESICK IN LONDON

In London, where he spent about nine months working with printers for the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Church Missionary Society, he was depressed and desperately homesick for Cornwall.

He had become a Methodist and, having been accepted for the post of missionary printer in New Zealand, he paid a farewell visit to his home and sailed from Gravesend for Sydney on June 19th, 1834.

For a young man of 23 it must have been quite an undertaking to go across the world to a country where there were very few white people and where the native Maoris were still savages.

His first set-back was to find that the missionary society, who had not let him supervise the packing of his printing press and accessories, had omitted to put in much of the essential equipment, including paper.

Despite all these difficulties and living on only the same rations as the convicts in Sydney, he managed to produce an enormous amount of printed matter while coping with his other mission work and at the same time learning the Maori language.

## MAORI NEW TESTAMENT

In December, 1837, just two years after he landed, he published the Maori New Testament in Maori. It had 556 pages and 5,000 copies of it were printed, most of

it being done with no help and on a small hand press "that would feed only two octavo sheets at a time." His own copy of this book is in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington and between its well-worn pages are dried botanical specimens, presumably collected and pressed on his expeditions.

It was on these missionary journeys over all the North Island that Colenso was able to indulge to the full his love of natural history; in reading about them one appreciates the very human side of this man. He was the first white man ever to cross these mountain ranges and there were, of course, no paths as there are today, only tracks made by the bare feet of the Maoris. This meant there always had to be guides, but Colenso liked to press on ahead of them on his own, often losing sight of the natives.

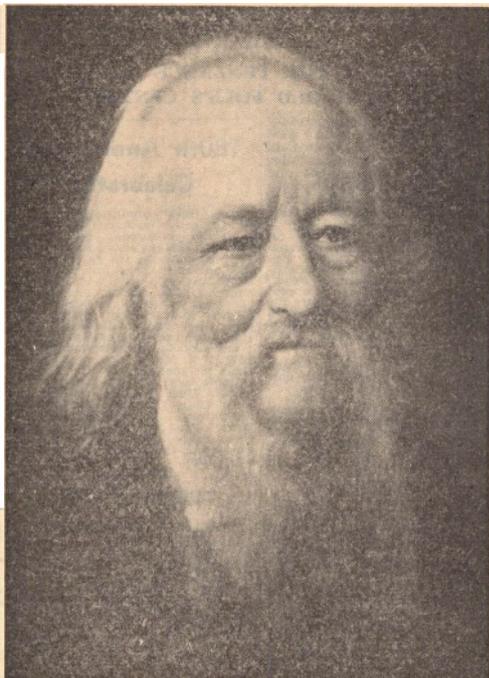
On one occasion, after being lost and spending a nightmare day on his own, he had a desperate time getting along the coast and around a headland with one guide. Eventually they had to settle under some trees for the night in the rain, with no food, water, fire or shelter. Yet in his diary he noted, "Thus closed one of the most eventful days of my life, Kahikatoa, with hairy calyx and berry; sandhills, 5-12 ft. Chara in watercourse. Coprosma....." What botanical enthusiasm!

## HIS TALL HAT

Plastic had not even been thought of in those days, and all the plants he collected had somehow to be carried carefully back to be examined and classified. He used to take off his coat and shirt and even his tall hat in order to load them up with specimens. His fervour is shown in his journals when, for instance, on his first journey to the Ruahine Range he was not well and, in trying to follow a narrow track, he stumbled and fell, but he still managed to note "a blue-flowered veronica and a fragrant New Zealand mint."

Allan Cunningham, the Australian botanist and explorer, was a great friend of Colenso's, and it was through a mutual friend that William Colenso met the great botanists William and Joseph Hooker. When the Antarctic Expedition ships Erebus and Terror anchored in the Bay of Islands one day in 1841, on board was Joseph Hooker with a letter to deliver to Colenso.

This meeting started a correspondence which lasted for 50 years; during that time he must have sent well over 1,000 specimens of plants to Kew to be identified, always accompanied by detailed letters des-



Rev. WILLIAM COLENZO

A photograph of the portrait painted in 1894 by Gottfried Lindauer, at Woodville, New Zealand.

cribing the plants and their habitat. These letters are now in the Kew Garden's library, and many of the samples were found to be new species and have had "colensoi" added to their names.

Primroses and blackberries from Cornwall are said to have been introduced to New Zealand by Colenso. He was certainly in the habit of having packages sent from his home town and he also used to order cases of Cornish sardines to be

Continued ▶▶





Wellington in 1843: from  
the *Illustrated London News*.  
Colenso first visited Wellington two  
years later, in March 1845.

VIEW OF FORT WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND.



Te Aro Flat

# Colenso and the founding of the New Zealand Society—*revisited*

*In an earlier treatment of this matter in the January 2013 eColenso I wrongly asserted Colenso had met Sir George Grey socially in Wellington during his missionary visits in the 1840s. In fact it was Lieutenant Governor Eyre whom Colenso visited. The question arises then, did Colenso know Grey well enough to discuss a NZ Society with him?*

At the Annual Meeting of the Wellington Philosophical Society on 14 March 1899 the Chairman Sir Walter Buller drew attention to the loss the Society had sustained by the death of the late Rev. W. Colenso, and Sir James Hector moved, “That a record be made in the minutes of the great services rendered by the deceased gentleman.”

In speaking to the motion he said (among other things) that he (Colenso) “was the founder, with the late Sir George Grey, of the New Zealand Society, upon which the Wellington Philosophical Society was engrafted....” [1] There is no other report of Colenso’s part in the founding of the New Zealand Society, and indeed Bagnall & Petersen wrote,

There seems... to be little basis for the statement that Colenso, with Grey, founded the New Zealand Society in 1851. The society was constituted in July, 1851, and the rules published at the time did not mention Colenso as being associated with the sixty members in any capacity. Following the inaugural meeting on 2nd July the society met twice monthly for the rest of the year, at the end of which time it had elected two honorary members, one of whom was William Swainson. The

other, unnamed in the brief history of the society prepared by Robert Pharazyn, who will be remembered as Colenso’s opponent in the first political struggles, may have been the deacon of Ahuriri. The omission is certainly peculiar, although at the time the society was organised Colenso was preoccupied in Ahuriri and would not have attended any meetings. [2]

## **1851: The New Zealand Society**

The Society, whose formation was “in great measure owing to the zealous exertion of its Secretary, Mr. Mantell” [3], and whose constitution would be “very similar to that of the Royal Society of Van Diemen’s Land”, held its first meeting on 5 July 1851, ...at which upwards of fifty members were present. Mr. Raymond having been voted into the chair, the acting Secretary of the Committee for the foundation of the Society read to the meeting the following abstract of its objects.

1. The development of the physical character of the New Zealand Group, its natural history, resources, and capabilities.
2. The collection and preservation of materials illustrative of the history of its native inhabitants; their language, customs, poetry, and traditions.
3. The publication of such papers on these and other subjects as may be deemed by the Council of sufficient importance.
4. The formation of a Library of Standard Works, and of a Museum in illustration of the above subjects.

5. The establishment in the sister settlements of corresponding societies in furtherance of the above objects.

The following resolutions were then put and carried unanimously: Proposed by Mr. Mantell, and seconded by Dr. Monteith: “That his Excellency Sir George Grey, K.C.B., Governor-in-Chief, be requested to accept office of President of this Society. Proposed by Capt. Rhodes, and seconded by Mr. Roberts: That his Excellency Lieutenant-Governor Eyre Lieutenant-Colonel M’Cleverty, Mr. Justice Chapman, and Archdeacon Hadfield, be elected Vice-Presidents. Proposed by Mr. J.H. Wallace, and seconded by Mr. J.M. Taylor: That Captain Rhodes be appointed Honorary Treasurer. Proposed by Mr. Stokes, and seconded by Mr. Waitt: That Mr. Mantell be elected a member of the Society. Proposed by Mr. Roberts, and seconded by Mr. J.M. Taylor. That Mr. Mantell be appointed Honorary Secretary. Proposed by Mr. Roberts, and seconded by Mr. Moore. That the First Council be elected for six months. Proposed by Mr. Mantell, and seconded by Dr. Monteith. That the following be the members of the first Council:— Mr. Fitzherbert, Mr. J. Woodward, Dr. Featherston, Mr. W.W. Taylor, Mr. R. Hart, Mr. Raymond, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Lyon. Proposed by Mr. R. Hart, and seconded by Mr. Mantell: That W. Swainson, Esq., F.R.S., (now absent from the colony,) be elected an honorary member of the Society. Thanks to the Chairman were then proposed by Mr. Fitzherbert, and carried unanimously. [4]

On the same day a correspondent to the *Wellington Independent* expressed outrage that men of so little talent should presume (so soon) to form such a society,

Sir,—A Society, assuming the name of the “New Zealand Society” has been prematurely organized by a few individuals in this settlement in consequence of some correspondence which had taken place between certain individuals here and others in Sydney. The gentlemen of New South Wales who

have thus propounded their wishes for a cooperation in the promotion of scientific and natural science, knew nothing, comparatively, of the estimate in which those to whom they had applied are held in this colony. The number of persons entitled to the appellation of scientific, in Wellington, is comparatively very small indeed;— probably that number may be reduced to a unit, certainly it would not extend very far beyond this, in any arrangements which might be made of these digits in expressing either quantity or quality. In the selection already made one unit may certainly stand conspicuously forward in natural science, in the name of Sir George Grey, K.C.B., as President. In addition to this, with the exception of His Excellency Lieut.-Governor Eyre, we know of none entitled to any distinction bearing upon the subject in question.... from the acknowledgement of the parties themselves who have been actively engaged in attempting to establish the foundation of this society, a packed majority of their own creatures has been invited by ticket to attend the preliminary meeting of members, so as that no possibility shall ever after occur that any Council shall be elected, the elements of which may be made up of persons favourable to progressive information. (signed) Æ. [5]

In a lavish speech Sir George Grey made no mention of Colenso, but referred to the likes of “Æ”,

I am told that some, dissenting from the views I have above expressed of the learning and talents of many in this colony, think that the amount of knowledge that we individually and collectively possess is so trifling, that the attempts we propose to make to preserve it, to increase it, and transmit it to others, are useless and uncalled for. [6]

William Colenso was not at the meeting, nor was he mentioned in

any newspaper report associated with the Society, nor is he mentioned in correspondence and lists of members held at the Turnbull Library [7] (despite a claim to the contrary [8]). In May 1851, two months before that meeting, his illegitimate son Wiremu was born, and his troubles were just beginning.

Swainson declined the honour of Honorary Membership, so at the meeting on 22 October 1851 Dr Mantell FRS and Professor Owen FRS were elected honorary members. [9] They were probably the two Pharazyn would later refer to—Bagnall & Petersen may have been wrong in deducing that Pharazyn (whom Colenso regarded as an upstart) had omitted his name.

After 1851 the Society met sporadically in Wellington, but Colenso was never numbered among those present, nor ever mentioned in the newspaper reports. He had last visited Wellington as a missionary in 1849, and as a parliamentarian from 1861 to 1865 he travelled to the capital, Auckland, returning to Wellington only in 1862 and in 1865 for the last time.

### 1867: Revival

In October 1867 the *Evening Post* reported,

A very neatly got-up little pamphlet of eight pages has been put into our hands by Robert Pharazyn, Esq., the acting secretary of the New Zealand Society. This is a scientific society, constituted in July, 1851, “for the development of the physical character of the New Zealand group, its natural history, resources, and capabilities.” The pamphlet describes in terse and well-chosen language its career from that time to the present, which does not seem to have been a brilliant one, as it has lingered through a feeble existence until now, when it is all but defunct, its property having been transferred, since 1865, to the Colonial Museum. It is with a view of

reviving an interest in this, which might become a most useful institution, that his Excellency, who is the president of the society, has invited its members and a large number of scientific gentlemen to a conversazione at Government House on Friday next. [10]

The *Wellington Independent* carried a report of that glittering conversazione, “to which upwards of four hundred invitations were given. There were at least three hundred persons present, and the evening passed off in a most agreeable manner.” [11]

The article listed many of those attending. William Colenso was in Napier. He had been defeated by McLean in the election for the House of Representatives two years earlier: he wrote to Catchpool from Wellington in August 1865, but that was his last visit.

### Colenso and Grey

George Grey served as Governor of New Zealand twice: from 1845 to 1853 in Auckland, and from 1861 to 1868 in Wellington. He was clearly the driving force behind the original New Zealand Society in 1851 and its revival under the New Zealand Institute Act in 1867.

James Hector came to Wellington in 1865 after Colenso’s last visit. Hector was not a man to make an inaccurate report to his Wellington Philosophical Institute colleagues, so the questions remain, was Colenso involved in the founding of the Society before 1851? And where did Hector get his information?

Could Colenso and Grey have hatched the idea of a society together before 1851? There is no other evidence, no letter on the subject in the Grey correspondence, no direct evidence that Colenso visited Auckland until his election to the House in 1861. It is possible the famed Crombie daguerrotypes of Colenso were taken on a visit to Auckland, but if so it would have been in 1853 or later.

Colenso knew Grey well later on—hardly surprising considering the range of their mutual interests. His first letter to Grey (that has survived) is formal, accompanying a petition, and is dated 17 July 1862. His first mention of meeting Grey is made in his “autobiography” [“...(in ¶2) I dined with the Govr. Sir G. Grey at Govt. House, as M.P. for Hawke’s Bay”], the next in a letter from Auckland to JD Hooker in October 1863...

*Sir G. Grey has had some Botanical conversation w. me. He wished me to go on w. Boty. of N.Z. I told him I needed a Macænas. He has promised his support. But I want more than that, i.e. some small certainty for the future. I offered him my literary (!) services, (& still remain in my own ho. at Hawkes Bay,) for £100 a yr. certain. I wished to be engaged on the Maori Lexicon – taking in cognate Polynesian dialects, which have been my study for a few years. Sir George promised me everything – but my old political foes, the Fox Ministry, are now in, & they have no generosity & less real love of the dulce or beautiful in their composition. I wonder the elements out of which such souls arise: Sulphur or carbon, or something worse. But I shall see Grey again.*

... and again in 1864,

*Sir G. Grey has had (I think) a letter from you; as he spoke to me about visiting the Chatham Islands (wh. I had sounded him on last year,) he mentioned your name: I pointed out the great necessity of exploring all the N.Z. islets – especially – 3 Kings – Poor Knights – Fanal Isles &c. – which he agreed to: we are to talk again on this matter.*

Colenso mentioned in a letter to Gunn that he had lost all his incoming mail when a vessel foundered off Hawke’s Bay early in the summer of 1850, so if there had been correspondence, that from Grey may have been lost.

Although he continued his missionary journeys in Hawke’s Bay and the Wairarapa until his removal by Bishop Selwyn in November 1852, Colenso did not visit Wellington again until 1862 as a Member of the House of Representatives. [12]

The Philosophical Society of Australasia was founded in Sydney in 1821. It became the Royal Society of New South Wales by Royal Assent in 1866. Who had corresponded with Sydney as “Æ” asserted in July 1851? Was Colenso’s 1850 letter to Ronald Campbell Gunn in Tasmania important?

*I think I saw in some Paper, brief mention made of a new Scientific Society having sprung up among you. What is it? Is it a Phoenix; arising from the ashes of its sire, of which it will not be ashamed, and which it is gloriously to surpass? or, is it a kind of anti-association? Seeing that our Colonies may almost be termed, the very prolific hotbed of opposition.— [13]*

The Tasmanian Society became the Royal Society of Van Diemen’s Land for Horticulture, Botany and the Advancement of Science. Colenso was a founding corresponding member: he wrote in 1892, “There are just 3 Corresponding Members left of Sir John Franklin’s original Sc. Socy. founded 1840,—Sir G. Grey, Sir J.D. Hooker, & W.C.!” [14 & see overleaf]

A branch was formed in Launceston in 1853, and perhaps it was the planning for this that Colenso asked Gunn about. Certainly the NZ Society based its Rules on those of the Tasmanian society.

## Conclusion

Here’s an informed guess, almost entirely lacking evidence: Grey and Colenso, men of shared intellectual interests and each a corresponding member of the Tasmanian Society since 1840, informally discussed the formation of a New Zealand Society. Colenso’s trou-

It is interesting to notice that the first list of corresponding Members of this Society contained some very distinguished names. Among them are to be found those of Captain James C. Ross, of H.M.S. *Erebus*, and Captain Francis R. M. Crozier, of H.M.S. *Terror*. Both these ships, as you are no doubt aware, visited Hobart on their outward voyage to the Antarctic regions in 1840, and on their return from those regions in 1841, after having ascertained the true position of the south magnetic pole. The list also includes the names of Mr. W. Macleay, of Sydney, a learned zoologist, and the father of Sir William Macleay, whose recent death we so deeply deplore,—no man in the present generation having done so much for the advancement of science in Australia; of Count Strzelecki, of London, the eminent zoologist; and of Mr. John Gould, of London, the great ornithologist, whose magnificent work on Birds is not only of rare artistic merit, but is still the standard work on the subject. All of these are no longer living. But three of the original corresponding Members of this Society still retain their health and vigour. They are the Rev. W. Colenso, whose investigations in botany and zoology, extending over a very lengthened period in New Zealand, have been very important and extensive, and who, moreover, is the greatest living authority on the folk lore of the Maories; Sir George Grey, whose brilliant services in his riper years in the political world have a tendency to somewhat cast in the shade services, scarcely less brilliant, which, as a younger man, he rendered in the field of exploration; and last, and by no means least, Sir Joseph Hooker, then the Assistant-Surgeon of H.M.S. *Erebus*; and it is no small satisfaction to Tasmanians that a man of the extraordinary powers and attainments of Sir Joseph Hooker should have devoted so much of them as he has done to the investigation and description of the nature, distribution, and affinities of the Tasmanian Flora.

bles at home and the loss of his mail prevented his further participation and Grey was acknowledged as the Society's founder in 1851. During the 1865 to 1867 discussions between Grey and Hector about reviving the Society, Grey recalled Colenso's early involvement, and Hector in due course reported it to the Wellington Philosophical Society after Colenso's death in 1899. Hector was only 65 in 1899, so it seems unlikely his memory was faulty.

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- Alexander Turnbull Library, MS-1070, MS-Papers-0121, qMS-1726-1730.
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# Memories of Methodists

In 1871 Colenso was working on his *Lexicon*. The third edition of Williams's Maori dictionary was published; he was re-elected to the Provincial Council; James Wood sold the *Hawke's Bay Herald*; *Fiat Justitia* was published. In 1872 he was appointed Inspector of Schools and *Willie's first English book* was published.

On 13 August he spoke at an important Napier event, reported in the *Hawke's Bay Times* of 21 August 1872....

The first anniversary of the establishment of the United Methodist Free Church in Napier was celebrated by a tea meeting in the Oddfellows Hall on Tuesday evening, which was as pleasant and successful as anything of the kind we have yet seen in Napier. The weather—which exercises so patent an influence on the success of gatherings of this kind—was all that could be desired, and the large hall was quite filled with the assembled company. The provision was abundant, varied, and of a quality reflecting the utmost credit on the providers. The arrangements were well carried out, and no hitch of any kind occurred to mar the proceedings. Precisely at half past 6, grace was sung, and the

first business of the evening began in earnest. At about a quarter to 8, the tables were cleared away, and the chair was taken by J. RHODES, Esq. An anthem having been sung by the choir, the proceedings were opened by a prayer from the Rev. D. SIDEX. Choir: "Sound the loud Timbrel."

The CHAIRMAN said that according to the next item on the programme he must call upon himself for an address. He would respond to the call; but his remarks would be brief. His good friend Mr COLENSO, whose name appeared in another part of the programme, would without doubt make up for any deficiency in the length of his address....

....  
Mr COLENSO said a question familiar to all present had arisen in his mind since he came here this evening. When the great prophet of Israel fled with a perturbed spirit, and lodged in a cave of the rocks amid the grand scenery of the wilderness of Horeb; after the storm raging among the mountains, the fire, and the earthquake—came a still small voice: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" It was a question like this that occurred to him where he stood; and he replied—Because of his love and regard for Methodism. He stood here

an advocate of Methodism such as that of the olden time—such as he had seen, known, and honored. In Cornwall—the part of England whence he came—were born, lived, and died some of the great heroes of Methodism; and well could he now remember the faces of some of those venerable old men who had lived the lives of faithful teachers, and died triumphantly, sustained by the faith they held. Prominent among them was the old man William Carvosso. In a local paper that evening he had read Professor Max Müller's tribute to the late Bishop of Melanesia, wherein he said that the name of Patteson would never be forgotten in the field in which he labored. So was it with the name of William Carvosso. Though treated as the offscouring of the earth, he and his fellow-workers, like their great master of old, went about doing good. He could remember his venerable figure in the chapel at Penzance, when too aged and infirm to say more, still exhorting the congregation in one sentence— "Have faith in God." It reminded him of the tradition regarding the dying charge of the beloved apostle, when carried for the last time into the presence of the congregation: "Little children, love one another." Looking back through a long vista of years—for it was the Methodism of a bygone time with which he was acquainted—he loved it for its admirable organization. He loved it, too, for this—that it sought, without the

intervention of any man or class of men, to bring the sinner close to his Saviour and Friend, his Father in Heaven. As he spoke he recalled through the years that had passed the face of many a faithful old preacher, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," and their countenances shone forth from his memory like the face of Moses when he had been communing with God. There were giants in those days, and their strength was derived from earnest, constant and faithful prayer, from their communings with God in private. There was one hymn, 344 of Wesley's collection—one in his opinion too sacred and solemn for congregational use, but which was truly expressive of the deepest feelings of many of these servants of God:

Thou hidden love of God, whose height,  
Whose depth unfathomed, no man knows;  
I see from far thy beauteous light,  
Inly I sigh for thy repose:  
My heart is pained, nor can, it be  
At rest, till it finds rest in Thee.  
Is there a thing beneath the sun  
That strives with thee my heart to share?  
Ah, tear it thence, and reign alone,  
The Lord of every motion there!  
Then shall my heart from earth be free,  
When it hath found repose in Thee,

—This was a darling hymn with many of the old Methodists—one which they used many times in their prayers, and when they came forth from their closets the world benefited by their previous preparation. An incident in his own, life showed

him the value of Methodism.. Forty years ago—a young man then—he landed in Sydney. There were then only two Church of England ministers there, and their duties were so heavy that they were obliged to conduct many of their services—those in the prison and elsewhere—on the Saturday, besides having five regular services—each to conduct every Sabbath. The Rev. Mr Hill, one of these ministers, asked him to visit a poor sick woman in a suburb. With great difficulty in the dusk of evening he found her, lying alone on the floor in a sad state of destitution; he saw at once that she had but two or three hours to live, and he told her so. He could never forget the indescribable expression on her face as she raised herself, and said, "O, sir, speak plainly." Thanks to Methodism, he was enabled to speak plainly. Few events of his life were more deeply impressed on his memory than this, and he loved Methodism because it spoke plainly to the soul. It was often asked: What is the definition of the Church? There was no definition equal to the short and simple one given by our Saviour:— "Where two or three are gathered together in My name." Many of the so-called churches had wrought much misery on this unhappy world. When the earth revealed her slain he believed it would be shown that the so-called Church of Christ had slain more than all the wars of wicked men—and all in the name of religion and the glory of God—and to that

church would apply the words of Scripture: "Ye neither know me, nor my Father." He then spoke of the mining accidents, the deaths by which average one daily in the county of Cornwall, and alluded to the power of Methodism, as shown, in the case of imprisoned miners, cut off from the upper earth, spending their last hours in prayers and praise. He saw a fair sprinkling of ladies before him to-night. Though he left England long ago—before any of the ladies now present were born—he well remembered the rows of neatly-dressed ladies in the large chapel of St. Ives, with their pretty white cottage bonnets trimmed with sulphur-colored ribbons, without a single bow. [Applause] If he was a Methodist preacher, before exerting his forces against drunkenness and the other mighty evils of the time, he would strongly protest against the over-dressing of the Methodist females,. The memory of that neatly-dressed congregation was one of the bonds of attachment binding his heart to his home, and he would like once more to take his seat in the old chapel, if only to see such another congregation. Luther had said three things were necessary for a minister—prayer, study, and temptation. To these he would add two—experience and love. He called upon all good Methodists to bear up their minister in their prayers, by which both teacher and taught would benefit. Of all churches on earth he believed, the most holy in the

sight of the Father of all was the one in which was to be found the greatest love to God and man. In conclusion—and he adverted to the humility of Solomon and of David by way of illustration—he exhorted them, to lowliness of mind, and love one to another. [The speaker, on resuming, his seat, was much applauded.]

The Choir here sung an anthem.

....  
The Rev. H. B. REDSTONE, in a few humorous remarks, moved a vote of thanks to the ladies who had provided the present entertainment, the singers, and the speakers. His theme, he said, was three-fold, ladies, music, and eloquence—all intimately connected. With respect to the ladies at Penzance and St. Ives in Cornwall, if Mr Colenso went there to seek the neat fashions of the Methodists of forty years ago, he would be sadly disappointed. He (Mr R.) while coinciding with Mr Colenso, had not moral courage to condemn the fashions as he ought—and they changed so much that, if he did, he would have to prepare a new lecture on the subject every week.

Mr RIDDING seconded the vote of thanks.

The Rev. R. TAYLOR proposed, and Mr HAWKEN seconded a vote of thanks to the chairman.

Both votes were carried by acclamation, and the proceedings closed with the national anthem.

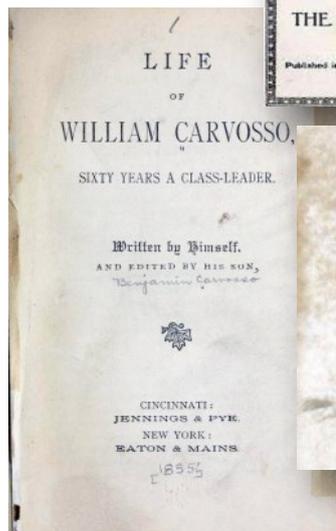
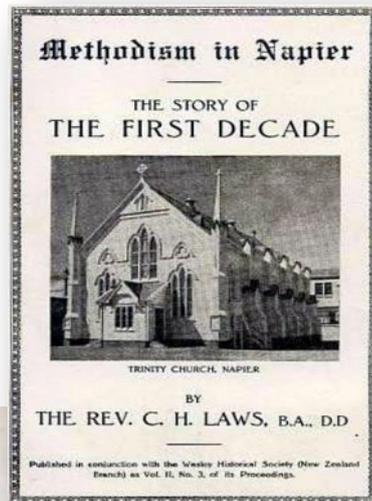
**William Carvosso** was an early Wesleyan leader in Cornwall. He was converted to Christianity at age 21 and went on to become a Class Leader in the Wesleyan Connexion. This was a Protestant nonconformist church formed in 1797 by secession from the Wesleyan Methodists because the Methodist conference was giving too much power to the ministers of the church, at the expense of the laity.

Rev. **Henry Blake Redstone** preached in Cornwall until his departure, at the request of the Connexional Committee, for Napier in 1870. He left Napier for Wellington in 1876.

Rev. Dr **David Sidey** was Presbyterian minister at Napier, inducted into the NZ Presbyterian church in February 1872. He was Moderator of Assembly in 1879.

**Joseph Rhodes** was a Hawke's Bay runholder but moved to Napier in 1869. He was one of the original trustees of the Methodist church in Napier and Deputy Superintendent of Hawke's Bay 1863–1871.

Rev. **Richard Taylor** had returned to Wanganui from England in November 1871 and died there in 1873.



WILLIAM CARVOSSE

## Historical Note: Units and Dimensions

Garry Tee

Alexander Peddie, *The Practical Measurer; or, Tradesman and Wood Merchant's Assistant, containing a Variety of Tables (et cetera)*, Blackie & Son, Glasgow, 1835. (10 + 230 pages)

Right Rev. J. W. Colenso, D.D., Lord Bishop of Natal, *Arithmetic designed for the use of schools: to which is added a chapter on Decimal Coinage*, New edition, thoroughly revised, Longmans Green & Co; London, 1879. (8 + 230 pages)

I have acquired these two 19<sup>th</sup>-century arithmetical books (both with 230 pages of text after the Preface), which form an interesting contrast. Alexander Peddie, at the end of his Preface (page vii), explains that:

"Notwithstanding every care has been taken in revising the Tables, and watching over the Press, errors may have crept in. for what human work is perfect? these the judicious will overlook and forgive. To point out any such errors when discovered, he considers to be the duty of his friends and well-wishers, and by doing so they will be performing at all times an acceptable service to their

Obedient servant,

ALEXR. PEDDIE

Perth, October 7th, 1822."

The author explained (1835 printing, page 97) that "there are various foot rules in use which are divided decimally, or the inch divided into 10 parts; but the rules generally in use among tradesmen are divided in another manner: thus,

2 Eighths make 1 Quarter inch.

2 Quarters, = 1 Half Inch.

4 Quarters, = 1 Inch.

.....

It would therefore be much more convenient, if the inch upon rules now in use were divided into 12 parts."

In accordance with that suggestion for a regular system of measures of length, much of the book uses duodecimal division of feet:

"In the construction of the Tables, the foot is divided into inches and parts, thus:

12 fourths make 1 third.

12 thirds = 1 second.

12 seconds = 1 inch.

12 inches = 1 foot." (page 1)

Thus, Peddie advocated a regular duodecimal system (though hardly a standard system, then or later). The text uses square feet and solid feet, and a few examples give answers in square feet. For instance on page 18, the number of superficial feet in an oblong square whose length is 36 feet and breadth is 18 feet is calculated as 648 square feet. But, almost all results of calculations of area and volume are expressed in feet, divided duodecimally!

That leads to some very curious results. On page 2,

"Note. — Feet multiplied by feet, give feet.

Feet multiplied by inches, give inches.

Inches multiplied by inches, give seconds.

Inches multiplied by seconds, give thirds.

Seconds multiplied by seconds, give fourths.

### EXAMPLES

1st, Multiply 9 feet, 4 inches, 6 seconds, by 4 feet, 3 inches, 9 seconds.

Ft.	In.	2ds.			
9	4	6			
4	3	9			
37	6	0			
2	4	1	6		
—	7	0	4	6	
Ans.	40	5	1	10	6

Or 40 feet, 5 inches, 1 second, 10 thirds, 6 fourths."

What understanding could the Tradesman or Wood Merchant have gained from such examples? The multiplication does correctly give an area which could be expressed in square feet, divided into duodecimal fractions,

as 40;5,1,10,6. But the preceding Note would hardly make the reader understand that, within the Answer, "inch" means 12 square inches, "second" means square inch, "third" means  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a square inch and "fourth" means  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a square inch. Similarly, on page 20, the volume of a log is expressed without explanation as 32 feet, 10 inches, 4 seconds, where "inch" has to be interpreted as 144 cubic inches. Until recent years, timber merchants in this country sold timber "by the foot". Should Alexander Peddie bear part of the blame for that confusion, which persisted as long as did the infamous Imperial system of weights and measures?

John William Colenso (1814 – 1883) was born at St. Austell Cornwall – he was a cousin of William Colenso F.R.S. (1811 – 1899), the missionary printer and pioneer naturalist in New Zealand. John William Colenso was a prolific author of elementary textbooks of arithmetic, algebra, geometry and trigonometry. His textbooks of Algebra (first published 1841) and of Arithmetic (first published 1843) became standard texts. In 1853 he was appointed Anglican Bishop of Natal.

As with traditional arithmetic textbooks generally, the major part of his Arithmetic is concerned with complexities of diverse systems of weight, measure and money. For example;

(Q.28, page 30) A Jewish shekel weighed 219 troy grains, and was worth 2s  $3\frac{1}{2}$  d.; what was the weight of a talent, containing 3000 shekels? and the value of 10000 talents? (Answer, Page 214) 114 lbs. 15 dwt; £3437500.

(Q.10, page 51) Find the value of 1 m. 5 fur. 91 yds. 2 ft. +  $2\frac{1}{2}$  of  $1\frac{1}{11}$ ;  $£3\frac{3}{4} + 9\frac{1}{16}s + 5\frac{1}{2}d.$

(Answer, page 217) 2 fur. 124 yds. 2 ft.; £4 2s 2d.

(Q.144, page 134) A rectangular cistern, of which the length is  $13\frac{1}{2}$ ft. and the breadth 6 ft., contains  $294\frac{1}{2}$  cubic feet of water; what is the depth of the cistern, and what the weight of water when one cubic inch contains

252.5 grains?

(Answer, page 227)  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft; 8 tons 3 cwt. 3 qrs.  $1\frac{1}{18}$ lbs.

Colenso's Arithmetic is much more clearly written than most textbooks of arithmetic had been. Rather than just stating rules he explained

the operations being taught, stating in some cases that no full justification could be given without the use of Algebra. Chapter 4 deals with Decimal Fractions (pages 57–73), and for the 1879 edition Colenso added Appendices on Decimal Coinage and on the Metric System (pages 149–166). He explained in the *Preface* the circumstances in which he had made those additions:

"Since this book was first published, some considerable additions have been made to it, besides further modifications, with a view to correcting any defects which experience has from time to time detected, and bringing it up to the requirements of the present day. These have been carried out under my sanction and superintendence, and to my entire satisfaction, by the Rev. J. HUNTER formerly of the National Society's Training College, Battersea, and chiefly at his suggestion; and I consider that the book has been much improved by them.

I have taken the opportunity, however, of my being in England for a few weeks, to insert some additional pages on the Metric System of Weights and Measures, the principles of which, by a rule of the Council of Education in force in 1872, were required to be taught to all children of Standards V. and VI. in schools under the control of the Government. The rule in question has, however, been since rescinded, as requiring too much from elementary schools, while the use of the Metric System has not yet been rendered compulsory by Act of Parliament. But the general adoption of that system in England is only, it seems plain, a question of time.

J. W. NATAL

LONDON: December 24, 1874."

Colenso's account of decimal currency and metric units makes it plain that most of the tedious complexity of the conventional exercises in arithmetic textbooks would simply not arise with decimal currency and the Metric System. And yet, despite Colenso's confident assertion (in 1874) that "the general adoption of that System in England is only, it plainly seems, a question of time", the U.K. has still not fully adopted the simple Metric System, but retains yet some vestiges of the chaotic Imperial units of weight and measure.

Appendix

Why did Bishop Colenso visit England in 1874?

When Colenso was appointed Anglican Bishop of Natal in 1853, he quickly learnt the language of the Zulus. He produced grammars and dictionaries of Zulu, which were largely written by his Zulu students and printed by them. He also tried to convert his Zulu students to Christianity by teaching them the doctrines of the Church of England, and explaining their foundation in the text of the Bible. His Zulu students found the Old Testament, with its tribal warfare, much more comprehensible than they found the New Testament, and they asked Colenso many penetrating questions about the biblical texts which he taught them. When Colenso responded to their questions, he came to realise that he could not honestly claim that every word in the Bible is literally true.

In Colenso's major theological treatise *Observations on the Pentateuch* (1862 – 1871), he acknowledged that the searching questions asked by his Zulu students had led him to re–think his understanding of the Bible. He explained that some parts of the Bible are allegory, legend or poetry; and that even in its historical books some passages are obviously not factual but are misinterpretations, exaggerations or distortions, as in historical documents generally. Such comments seem very mild today – but in Victorian England they produced the greatest upheavals and the bitterest controversies in the entire history of the Church of England. The “vicar – general of the Bishop of Capetown bade him depart from the House of God as one who had been handed over to the power of the Evil One” (cf. DNB) and a torrent of refutations of Colenso's heresies flooded from the press. Most of the authors devoted their efforts mainly to insulting and denouncing Colenso, rather than to disproving his ideas. On two occasions the Church of England

excommunicated Colenso – but he fought back through legal means and was re–instated as Bishop of Natal by the Privy Council. (The Church of England is controlled by politicians, rather than by theologians.) Colenso's income from his textbooks was important in enabling him to fight back against the Church of England.

Having been forcibly rejected by many of his countrymen, Bishop Colenso concentrated his efforts on helping his Zulu flock, for which he was virulently denounced by the pro–imperialist party in South Africa. That party (led by the infamous Sir John Bartle Frere), as part of their campaign to take the land from the Zulus, subjected the tribe of Chief Langaibalele to some particularly sordid oppression. Colenso made his trip to England in 1874 (during which he added the chapter on the Metric System to his *Arithmetic*) to gain legal redress for that tribe, and he succeeded in getting some partial redress for their sufferings.

In 1879 the imperialist party whipped up patriotic hysteria to the extent that war was declared against the Zulus, and a British army was despatched to take the land by exterminating the Zulus. But the Zulus defended themselves so effectively that they destroyed that army. The officers killed in that battle included the last prince of the Napoleonic dynasty. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli was then heard to sniff:

“Hm! Strange people, those Zulus! They defeat our generals, they convert our bishops, and they terminate our princely dynasties!!”.

Hm! Strange people, those English!

#### Author

Garry Tee is emeritus staff in the mathematics department at the University of Auckland. His diverse interests include history and biography and Numerical Methods. The New Zealand Mathematical Society conferred honorary life membership on him in 1998, in recognition of his outstanding services to mathematics in New Zealand. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Auckland University of Technology in 2003.

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In the Bidwill piece in the October issue, I wrote, *I can find no information on Henry Dyson, second to climb Ngauruhoe—and Colenso has recorded nothing of his 1851 visit.*

Clem Earp kindly tells us “Re Henry Dyson, his account of his ascent of Ngauruhoe, as told to Arthur Thomson, is in the *New Zealander* 30 March 1853”.