

THE FIRST SHIPS

EARLY WELLINGTON FOUNDING PORT NICHOLSON & ARRIVAL OF THE PIONEERS

(By H. Fildes)

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I

In view of the fact that the long unrecognised historical claims of Petone are at last to have suitable recognition at the forthcoming visit of the Prince of Wales (arrived May 5, 1920), the following notes have been hastily strung together at odd moments, so that present-day readers may have some idea of the experiences and vicissitudes undergone by our forebears in the colonisation of these islands. It is now a rather difficult matter to offer an account in detail regarding the arrival of the first settlers on 22nd January, 1840. The first newspaper published was the New Zealand Gazette, issued from a tent on Petone Beach on 18th April, 1840 and but for the long voyage of the Adelaide bringing out from England the staff and plant, would have issued much earlier, so one finds no references in its columns to this subject. We have to look elsewhere for subject matter relating to all that occurred from the arrival of the Preliminary Party in the ship Tory on the 20th September, 1839, to the arrival of the Adelaide on the 7th March following. Several of the pioneer settlers kept diaries on the voyage out and recounted their arrival here, and these would appear to have been forwarded to their friends in England, where we may hope that while they are not available to us, they are still preserved in the families.

A SCHOOL OF “SHARKS”

So soon as information was received in Australia of the intention of the New Zealand Company to found a settlement here, quite a number of small vessels arrived in Port Nicholson, bringing land speculators, or land sharks as they were called, who hoped to anticipate the operations of the company by purchasing from the Natives areas of land, and dispose of them at considerable advantage to themselves. Fortunately, they only met with a small measure of success, and soon proceeded to Auckland, where they were more successful in seizing the opportunities offered by the Government of Governor Hobson. It may be said here that it is not intended to commemorate the arrival of these gentlemen in the pageant to be held at Petone next month.

THE GOOD SHIP TORY

The most important event in connection with the settlement of Wellington, and for that matter, Nelson, Wanganui, Taranaki, Otago, and Canterbury, was the arrival of the advance party in the ship Tory, under Colonel William Hayward Wakefield, the Principal Agent of the New Zealand Company. The causes leading up to it are an oft-told story, and need not be related here, but it will be sufficient to say for the purposes of this citation that the colonising negotiations of the public-spirited gentlemen then forming the directorate of the New Zealand Company, failing to obtain recognition from the anti-colonising Colonial Office of successive British Governments, had now proceeded so far that it was impossible to delay the matter further, and taking the bit between the teeth, instructions were given that the Tory was to set forth on the great adventure.

A London newspaper under the date of 11th May, 1939, referred to the vessel as follows: —

“Plymouth, 9th May. Among our last shipping arrivals is the barque Tory, from London, bound to New Zealand, which reached the Sound early yesterday morning. She is a fast-sailing, new vessel of 400 tons, armed with eight guns and small arms for all the ship’s company. She has only been on one previous voyage, and is the property of the New Zealand Company, lately formed in London. The present voyage is a remarkable one, being the first expedition dispatched by the company, with the view of exploring the country in order to the establishment of regular British settlements in New

Zealand. The Tory left Gravesend on Sunday, the 5th May, at 6 o'clock p.m., where a party of gentlemen connected with the company had assembled to take leave of their friends in the expedition, amidst the cheers of the spectators on the shore, which answered by a salute of 11 guns from the ship. She was towed by a steamer to the mouth of the Thames and had a very quick run of 38 hours from the Downs to Plymouth Sound. The ship is equipped in a very superior style, and carried all the necessary stores, provisions, and goods for barter, and was manned with a strong and picked crew.

THE SHIP'S COMPANY

“The expedition is under the orders of Colonel Wakefield a very distinguished officer, and the ship is commanded by Captain Chaffers, R.N., a skilful nautical surveyor, who was master of His Majesty's ship Beagle in Captain Fitzroy's surveying expedition to the South Seas. The Tory carries a surgeon Mr. George F. Robinson; another gentleman devoted to medical statistics; a naturalist, Dr. Dieffenbach, of Berlin; a draftsman, Mr. Heaphy. Mr. John Dorset, who had been promised the position of Colonial Surgeon; an interpreter named Naiti, chieftain, who was resided in England for two years, and has acquired the English language and habits; and Mr. Richard Lowry was the chief mate. It is understood this expedition is a preliminary one, for the purpose of selecting a site for a town and acquiring scientific information in regard to the country. The Tory is ordered to proceed to the company's territory on the west coast of the Northern Island, which embraces the harbours of Kaipara and Hokianga, and also Cook's strait, where it is probable a settlement will also be formed in the neighbourhood of Cloudy Bay or Port Nicholson. It is said the company is fitting out another vessel to follow the Tory in a few weeks, and that a large body of emigrants, consisting of most respectable families, will embark from London in the course of the present summer. The wind being now favourable for sea, the Tory is to sail from the Sound this evening or early on Friday morning at latest. The final instructions from the company in London reached Colonel Wakefield on board the Tory yesterday.”

Apart from those already named as forming the ship's party, there were Edward Jerningham Wakefield, the only son of the prime mover of this enterprise, namely, Mr. Edward Gibbon Wakefield; Robert Dodderly, the ship's storekeeper, and an additional interpreter, who had already been whaling on the coast of New Zealand; the second and third mates; Colonel Wakefield's servant, a steward, and cabin boys, who together with the ship's hands, amongst whom were a native of New Zealand, and one from the Marquesas, made a total, added to those mentioned in the Plymouth account of 35 souls. The Rev. Montague Tawtrey was to have been one of the party, but at the last moment intimated he was unable to proceed, and no other suitable clergyman was available at the time.

FAREWELL TO OLD ENGLAND

In keeping with her reputation, the Tory made a remarkably fast passage to New Zealand, getting away from Plymouth on 12th May, 1839, and not calling at any place on route. Her commander, Captain Edward Mein Chaffers, R.N., seems to have been an exceedingly able seaman, and only took up the position at twenty-four hours' notice. He has recorded that he was off Lisbon in five days and passed well to the eastward of Madeira on the seventh day out, and later had a distant view of the mountains of Las Palmas. On the fifteenth day the vessel was opposite the Cape Verde Island. Nearing the 'Line' the John Campbell, of Liverpool, was spoken, the Equator being crossed on the twenty-sixth day after leaving Plymouth, the ship having run down the N.E. trade 27 degrees west longitude, her commander having found, as he anticipated, that so soon as the wind failed in the region of calms, he would pick up the S.E. trade wind, four or five degrees north of the Line. At times the Tory was doing over eleven knots, but the average rate of sailing was about eight.

Captain Chaffers was extremely anxious to fall in with a man-of-war, so that he might try sailing powers with her, but, not being fortunate, had to be content with easily overhauling other vessels such as the fine large Spanish ship Colon, of Manilla, 1000 tons, and leaving them behind and out of sight. It is partly true that the tardy British Government did send a warship after him; this was the H.M.S. Druid commanded by Lord John Churchill, and conveying to New Zealand Captain Hobson, as British Consul, but she did not leave England until the Tory had already entered Cook Strait. So, they were too far behind!

Their crew had their regular watch and watch, hammocks up all day, and fore-castle cleared, and the crew mustered every Sunday. Periodically the ship was fumigated, according to Dr. Carmichael

Smith's method, with nitrous fumigation, while to further relieve the tediousness of the voyage, the sources of amusement was varied and educational. A study of the various seabirds, and albatross, with their elegant movements and inexhaustible strength of wing, passing glimpses of flying fish, porpoise, sharks, and other inhabitants of the air and deep, met with on a voyage of kind, stimulated curiosity, and desire for further information concerning them. A debating society was formed in the cabin, a weekly written newspaper prepared, and instruction in the Maori language given by Naiti. In six weeks the intrepid voyagers were of Rio de Janeiro, and on the 10th July, passed the Cape of Good Hope, when a course was adopted passing well to the north of the fortieth parallel, until reaching the meridian of the islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam, in the South Indian Ocean. Here much ocean sport was indulged in, shooting and baiting sea-birds and fish, the dead bodies, if not eaten, being turned over to the naturalist.

After rounding the Cape, the weather, however was generally unpleasant, the prevailing winds being contrary, coming from the south and north-west, the atmosphere thick and hazy, with squally conditions, sudden gales, accompanied by hail and sleet. A constant cross-sea produced incessant rolling of the little vessel, making life for a time uncomfortable and monotonous.

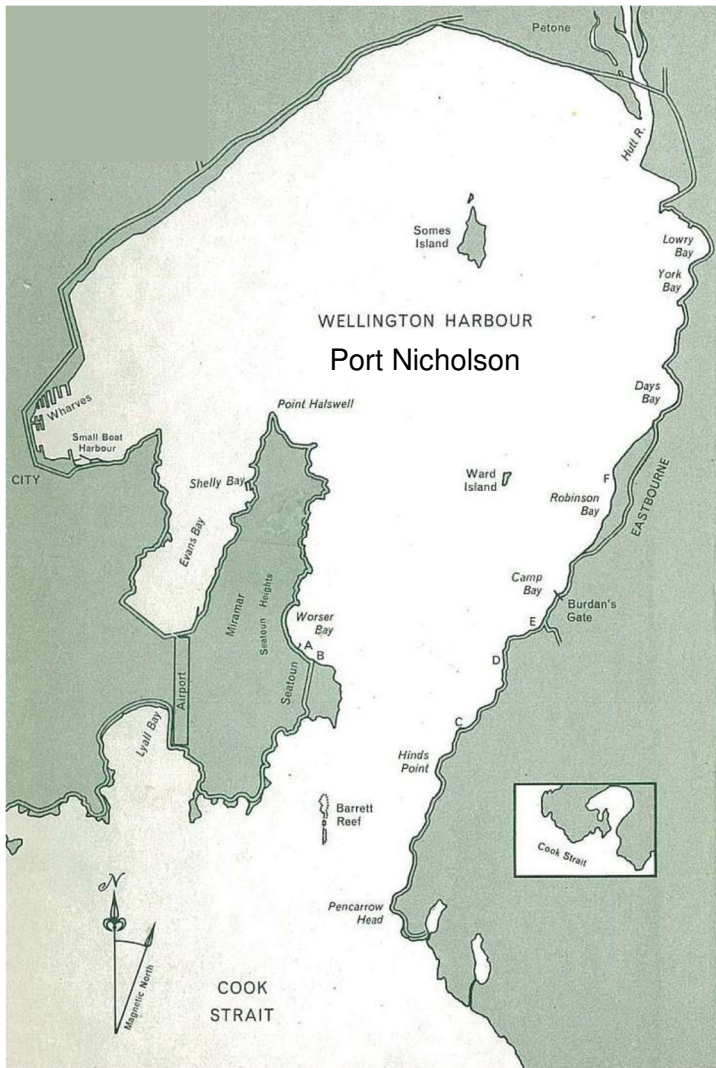
FIRST SIGHT OF NEW ZEALAND

After doubling the S.W. coast of Van Dieman's Land, New Zealand was first sighted at noon on 16th August, 1839 the land discernible being that a little south of Cape Farewell, where the sandspit was observed running out a distance of twenty-five miles in shoal water. Captain Chaffers then stood to the N.E. and hove to for the night in the middle of the Strait opposite Blind Bay. On the following day sight of the Northern Island was obtained, the Tararua mountains covered with snow being visible, while farther inland Ruapehu, with its snow-covered cone was seen. At daybreak sail had again been made, the islands of D'Urville and Stephen's rising abruptly from the sea with dense forests from the water's edge being passed, but nowhere did the appearance of the mainland offer promising prospects of a place for settlement.

In the neighbourhood of Jackson's Head, the Sound was entered, where Natives in canoes were first seen. These approached the ship, making fast their canoes to the main chains and clambering on board with the greatest of confidence. They were clothed in coarse mats, their bodies painted in red ochre, and altogether had a savage appearance and wild expression of countenance, while their energetic movements might have led to the belief that their intention were anything but friendly; they, however, soon shook hands with everyone and squatted down on the deck, one of them stationed himself at the wheel, and showed perfect familiarity with it. All more or less spoke broken English, inquired where the ship was likely to remain, asserted that their cove was the best place and generally assumed a complete air of authority. At 7 p.m. the Natives proceeded ashore, having left on board some fish, turnips, and potatoes in exchange for tobacco given them, and at the same time the anchor was dropped at the mouth of Ship's Cove, Captain Cook's refitting place of 1770, after a smart passage of 97 days. At daylight on Sunday, the 18th August the Tory was warped into the cove moored, eight of her guns were fired, and the New Zealand flag hoisted at the yard arm. In this vicinity the Tory remained several days, at one period threatened with an attack by a section of the more turbulent Natives. The adjacent country was thoroughly explored, but as it had an unpromising look anchor was weighed on the 31st of August and a course steered through a channel, ever since known as Tory Channel, where Te Awaiti and Port Underwood whaling stations were visited.

BOUND FOR PORT NICHOLSON

At Te Awaiti Colonel Wakefield first met Richard Barrett, the master whaler, who informed him that owing to numerous inter-tribal wars the ownership of the lands was in a very unsettled state. Hearing that Port Nicholson was one of the places to be visited, Barrett said he knew the place well and was related by marriage with some of the principal chiefs there, and that it contained land quite suitable for purposes of settlement. Following a great deal of sailing and exploration Te Awaiti was again visited, and on the 20th September the place was left at daybreak, Barrett acted in the capacity of pilot, while he was accompanied by quite a colony of Natives, who were accommodated in the ample 'tween decks of the ship. As the Tory drew under the high-land east of Cape Te Rawhiti, the N.W. breeze blew fresh over the hills, and under all sail the stout little vessel flew past the long reef



of pointed rocks off Sinclair Head and entered the harbour of Port Nicholson by way of the passage known as Chaffer's Passage. Hereabouts the Tory was boarded by the two principal chiefs, Te Puni and his nephew Wharepouri, who most likely put off from what is now Seatoun, and on it being explained to them it was Colonel Wakefield's desire to found a white settlement here, they expressed the liveliest satisfaction. The Tory continued her progress up the channel, and at 3 p.m. on the 20th September, 1839, dropped anchor on the northern side of the island then known as Matin, now Somes Island and observed by colonel Wakefield as admirably adapted for the purposes of a fort. Here she was boarded by a number of Natives who came in two canoes from the Petone beach and greeted Barrett as an old friend and companion in past dangers.

ANCHORING OFF PETONE

The anchor was no sooner dropped than the New Zealand flag was hoisted and saluted with a discharge of the ship's guns. At nightfall all the Natives, with the exception of the two chiefs referred

to, returned to the shore. Colonel Wakefield being engaged in discussion with the chiefs far into the night respecting the purchase of land, the Natives evincing great apprehension lest he should decide to locate the settlement elsewhere.

The following morning Colonel Wakefield and party proceeded ashore, where a small canoe, provided by Te Puni, was placed at their disposal, and having a chief named Amahau as guide, they proceeded up the Heretaunga or Hutt River. At its mouth they found that when the tide was in a large extent of land to either side was covered with water forming lagoons, the depth in the channel being seven or eight feet. On the eastern side was a Maori village, known as Hikoikoi, where a chief named Puakawa resided, and here was found the only white man residing on the whole shores of Port Nicholson, one Joe Robinson, evidently an ex-whaler, who had married a Native woman and was the father of two children.

He had been here two years and showed Colonel Wakefield an eight-ton boat he had constructed of white pine, having cut the timber with a hand-saw, warped it to shape in the heat of the sun, while the nails had been fashioned from old hoops. Not long afterwards Mr. Joe Robinson bore but an indifferent character in the settlement, but his vessel continued to do good work on the coast for long afterwards. Colonel Wakefield found the main branch of the river quite forty yards wide, and as he ascended that its course was obstructed by large trees carried down by the stream. The land on both sides was black soil, where in patches, or open places the Natives had cultivations of potatoes, Indian corn, and oats. These were growing amongst the stumps of half-destroyed trees and the most beautiful shrubs. At six or seven miles up-stream he found the river still of the same width and depth, but the obstruction of fallen trees was greater, while there were many collections of river-bed stones. Here two immense trees formed a partial dam across the river, against which impediment his Native paddles could not advance. A landing was made, and an attempt to proceed farther on foot was foiled by the impenetrable bush and matted vegetation to either side. Here he found a party of about fifty Natives, and a few higher up, who had fled from Petone in fear at hearing the sound of the Tory's

guns. He had now seen sufficient to confirm the opinion that the whole extent of the valley could be made capable of cultivation, and proceeded to return, having first reassured the alarmed party of Natives they had nothing to fear, while they showed their confidence by returning with him.

A FEAST OF POTATOES

On the downward journey they were hailed by some Maoris at a small settlement, who invited them ashore and provided a feast of potatoes cooked in their native ovens, the chiefs saying they “cared little what would be given for the land, but they wanted the white men and women to settle amongst them, and to bring cattle and grow corn; that the people of Port Jackson and the missionaries, when wanting to purchase land, had promised to come and live with them, but had never done so.” In the evening the exploring party returned to the ship.

On the third day, Sunday, 22nd September, it blew a great gale from the north-west, but some canoes came off, the occupants attending Divine service aboard the *Tory*. While coming alongside one of the canoes was thrown so heavily against the ship that it upset, throwing the Native men and women into the sea. They thought little of the accident and were soon aboard, provided with blankets, and dried themselves at the ship’s galley. In the evening the Natives were much disturbed at receiving tidings from Porirua that a party of Natives from the Waikato had arrived there, and it was feared would join up with Te Rauparaha and invade this territory; and at which they all hurried ashore to talk the matter over and make preparations.

THE LAND KORERO

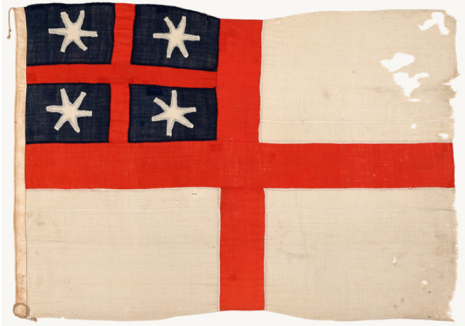
The following day Colonel Wakefield, his nephew (Jerningham Wakefield, a young nineteen-year old man, possessing considerable talent), Richard Barrett and others visited all the Native settlements on the shores of the harbour. At Nga-uranga they found Wharepouri and his tribe hard at work completing a canoe 60-feet in length. While here two large canoes, full of Natives, put in on being hailed by Wharepouri. They were on their way across the harbour to the principal village, at the mouth of the Hutt River, opposite to which the *Tory* still lay at anchor one mile from the shore and purposed attending a meeting to discuss the sale of their territory. The Native conference was commenced at Nga-uranga, being interrupted at noon by a feast of baked birds and potatoes provided by the tribe, and then continued into the afternoon, several speeches being made by the Chiefs Puakawa, Haumatangi and Wharepouri, the first-named vigorously opposing the sale, some striking examples of Maori oratory being given. It is interesting to note that the first important korero concerning the location of the founding of the New Zealand Company’s principal settlement occurred in this accidental manner at Nga-uranga. The discussion ended by a large majority being in favour of the sale, but it was to be renewed next day at Petone, and meanwhile Colonel Wakefield with his party proceeded in their boat to Pipitea and Te Aro and then returned to the *Tory*.

On Tuesday, 24th September, the debate was renewed at the principal village at Petone, and ended, as the day before, in a large majority deciding to sell all their rights in the harbour and district, the chiefs being told to go aboard the *Tory* on the next day to view what was to be tendered in payment, and at the same time informed that after survey every tenth section would be set apart as a Native reserve. The Wednesday was a crowd of one hundred Natives on the *Tory*, making it impossible to display the goods to advantage. Several cases and bales had been brought to the upper deck and opened up, but the crowd of curious and eager Natives was such the proceedings had to stop. Wharepouri standing on the hurricane deck ordered them all to leave the ship. On the 26th the chiefs, accompanied by their sons, were again on board, and after a strict examination of the goods, approved of the quantity and nature, the latter being bizarre and varied.

MUSKETS FOR LANDS

The more important articles were 100 muskets, 15 fowling-pieces, 21 kegs of gunpowder, ball cartridges, 100 tomahawks, 100 red blankets, 48 iron pots, adzes, spades, clothing of all kinds, dress material, and much more. The chiefs exhibited some embarrassment as to how division among the six different tribes was to be made, until Colonel Wakefield proposed the goods should be laid out in lots on the deck of the vessel. Here Puakawa made a violent speech in opposition to the sale, and this led to further debate, Wharepouri promised that the matter would be settled on the morrow. The 27th

saw the transaction completed, there being at first a little delay, overcome by Colonel Wakefield adding to the payment another case of muskets making 120 such weapons, when the division proceeded, being conducted by Wharepouri with great fairness, and reserving for himself some powder and cartridges only, his mission in life seemed to be that of a fighter. Puakawa, notwithstanding his violent and continued opposition, like a wise man, accepted his share; goods were placed in the ship's boats and taken ashore. Meanwhile the Deed of Purchase had been brought up on deck, explained by Barrett, and signed or marked by sixteen chiefs. This is what is known as the "First Deed of Purchase from the Natives," and relates to the District and Harbour of Port Nicholson. The next day the weather was so bad that nothing could be done, but on Sunday, after service, Colonel Wakefield visited all the villages with Wharepouri, finding the inhabitants well satisfied with what they had received, and invited them to a festival at Petone on the following day. This 30th September, 1839, is an important day in the annals of the settlement. Although the weather broke stormy, Natives from all parts mustered in force. In every direction the Native ovens were throwing up clouds of smoke.



An immense flagstaff had been erected on the beach, on which was to be hoisted the national flag of New Zealand, some colours that had been presented to the Native chiefs of New Zealand by the British Government as far back as 1834. They were the New Zealand colours and were therefore flown by the New Zealand Company's ships, and yet a few months later when flown at Port Nicholson were characterised as rebellious and treasonable, and ordered to be struck by Governor Hobson through his henchman, Lieut. Willoughby Shortland. The flag has since been adopted by the New Zealand Shipping Company, and (in the 1920's) may be seen at any time flying over their offices or on their vessels.

THE LANDING OF THE PAKEHA

In the afternoon the ship's party landed from the Tory, and were received by quite three hundred Natives, the male portion of whom were all armed with muskets, tomahawks, and spears, and were divided into two parties, one led by Wharepouri, clad in Colonel Wakefield's large Hussar cloak, and the other by Te Ka-ea-ea, Chief of Kaiwharewhare. The colours were at once hoisted and saluted with 21 guns from the Tory. The Natives, greatly excited, then shook off their clothes and gave a preparatory war-dance, after which they separated a distance of two hundred yards on the beach and broke out into a vigorous war dance. The two columns then passed one another at the utmost speed, firing their guns in the air, and suddenly wheeling about with great precision, took up different ground at a lesser distance. The native women had taken part in this, and with the men had made the most frightful distortions of countenance. A challenge to fight was then made by one of the parties, one of its bearers being Reihana, or Richard Davis, the Native Catechist, disguised in easy undress, body painted and head profusely decorated with huia feathers. However, as the day was fast drawing in, the sham-fight did not eventuate, this Native display ended with a war-song and haka, after which the Native ovens were opened and both Europeans and Maoris partook of a feast of fish, pork, and potatoes, while the health of the chiefs and people of Port Nicholson were toasted in champagne. Colonel Wakefield then took formal possession of the harbour and district, amidst the hearty cheers of his party and the assembled Natives.

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(To be continued.)