

# eColenso

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# Who was the princess on the Wanaka?

*eColenso* April 2014 carried an extract of a letter from Sophie Colenso. Sophie was the wife of Frank Colenso, a son of the Bishop of Natal and one of her brothers was Frederick Frankland who came to New Zealand. The letter-within-a-letter is from *his* wife (Sophie's sister-in-law) Miriam, born in NZ.

Sophie copied this from Miriam's letter,

*.... the Mrs Colenso I met on the steamer when we were returning from Napier on our 'reading trip' was the native wife—quite a handsome woman with curly hair: she and I sat together in the tiny tug boat which took us out in the stream to join our steamer "Wanaka" bound for Wellington. Mrs Colenso & I had cabins opposite each other."*

Petersen wrote on 17 May 1946,

*I am a little mystified by Mrs. Frankland's reference to meeting a Mrs. Colenso, a Maori lady, on the steamer between Napier and Wellington in 1880. I cannot think that this was Willie's mother, who was legally married to Hamuera and would not, in any case, assume the name of Colenso.*

We asked (rhetorically), who was that lady?

I recently found Miriam Frankland's letter at the Turnbull Library (ATL MS-Papers-10535-2). It says a good deal more than Sophie transcribed and it is annotated in red, presumably by Sophie. The first page is missing so it is undated, but Sophie had "just received" it in 1912.

*The first Mrs. Colenso was the white wife, but I do not know in what year the Rev. W. separated from her. Was it not a coincidence that I should share a cabin on the steamer with the "Princess Maori" Mrs Colenso (the 2nd.)—when we were returning from Napier to Wellington on our Honey-Moon trip? (about 1881) We were both of us drenched to the skin, through a very rough trip on a tiney tug boat—taking us out across the Napier Bay—to board our steamer, the old famous Wanaka, back to Wellington. Our clothes, corsets, shoes, etc, & everything being dried down in the engine room. The next morning we had breakfast together in our cabin, it being still too rough for us to get up—& our clothes not yet being ready!! for us! I did not know till later that my ship mate was then Mrs. Colenso—& so there-by hangs a tale!! & a sad tale too—for I believe the wife no. I was a lovely woman & by no means deserved the treatment, to be cast-off. The Rev. W. may have been on board but we did not know him, if he were there.*

*The fine monument to the Rev. W. Colenso still stands in the Napier Cemetery & was not destroyed during the great earth-quake, & when nearly the whole town was destroyed—taking the fine Hotel we, Fred & I had stayed at for a whole week, under the very nose of the "Princess"!!! With her beautiful glossy curley hair in wringlets at the sides such as the fashion is today. I have often wondered if Ridley Latimer was the only child\* to the Princess:—Mrs. Colenso—the 1st.—died at her daughter's home....*

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*\* Here my sister in law makes a big mistake! It was the ½ Maori (Penzance) son who was the Princess'.*

Actually the *Wanaka* departed Napier on 8 May 1879, as the *Hawke's Bay Herald* of the 9th reported.

## DEPARTURES.

May 8<sup>th</sup>—Saxon, schooner, for Auckland

May 8<sup>th</sup>—*Wanaka*, s.s., for the South.  
Passengers: Mr Tempsey and three Miss Tempseys, Messrs Cole, Skelly, Frankland, Roberts, Mesdames Frankland, Scott, and three natives.

Even though Miriam and Fred Frankland had been on their honeymoon, women and men had separate cabins, so the two drenched women had to share. Perhaps they introduced themselves only with first names as they disrobed, for *"I did not know till later that my ship mate was then Mrs. Colenso"*. Had Miriam been told at the time she would no doubt have had many questions.

*The Rev. W. may have been on board but we did not know him, if he were there.* In 1879 Colenso was 68 years old and was certainly living alone on Colenso Hill, Napier, having just relinquished his duties as School Inspector: there was no *"then Mrs. Colenso"*. He is not listed as a passenger on the *Wanaka* and his extant letters of late April and May 1879 are from Napier.

GC Petersen wrote *I cannot think that this was Willie's mother, who was legally married to Hamuera and would not, in any case, assume the name of Colenso.*

I am sure he was right. The *Wanaka* "Princess" who was (later) misidentified as Ripeka was a different Mrs Colenso—perhaps a Mrs Koreneho, married to a descendant of one baptised by Colenso—one of three nameless "natives" bound for Wellington that day.

## Thomas Lowry

On 6 September 1889 Colenso wrote to his naturalist/farmer friend David Balfour,

I thank you for the pretty spns. you have kindly sent me.— Perhaps, *both* are described by me: the *Clematis* (or a sp. near it) in Trans. N.Z.I. vol. XIV. p. 329: *C. quadribracteolata*:— and the little fern in a later vol., as *Asplenium*.

This was first found by me, when out with poor dear Lowry (*before* he married!) on the rocky summits of Pukekautuku, N. of Okawa: & since found by Hamilton in similar places.—

Thomas Lowry 1814–1881, son of an ordained priest, a graduate of the University of Cambridge, had arrived in New Zealand in 1846 and founded Okawa station in 1852. He married in 1862, so accompanied Colenso plant collecting during that decade of his life about which we know the least—1852 to 1862.

Colenso would describe the *Asplenium* as *A. melanolepis* (*Trans N.Z. I.* 20, 1887), stating, "Among crags on the summit of the high hill Pukekotuku, near Puketapu, County of Hawke's Bay; 1859: *W.C.* Petane Valley, north of Napier, same county; 1881: *Mr. A. Hamilton*." The specimen is at Te Papa, now identified with *A. trichomanes*.

In 1862 Colenso resumed his correspondence with Joseph Hooker, mentioning "I have, I think, a few wee floral novelties: – such they were to me; one a small fern...." and he mentioned it again in 1863,

I have a few spns. for you – which are novel to me: one is a Fern, closely bordering on Asplen. *Trichomanes* if not identical. But I have really done nothing for years – when I might have done a great deal. – By next mail I hope to send you a

small packet.... I purpose going about in the approaching spring after a few orchids, &c.

Probably, then, this 1859 plant collecting ramble up the hill with Lowry was unusual and indeed it was not till December 1865 that Colenso would again send plants to Kew—not all collected by himself.

Thomas Lowry would sign a petition to Governor Grey on Colenso's behalf in 1862 and would write to the government in support of Colenso later that year.

On 18 November 1881 Colenso wrote to Andrew Luff,

Of course you will have heard of Mr. Lowry's death: I don't think that you knew much of him: but we have lost a good old settler, and I, a good friend (perhaps my best, or only one). *I felt his loss*: I was inland at the time, so *not* at the funeral. He was the only remaining settler who had spent a night in my old & big Mission Station House....

Pukekautuku, or Pukekotuku (white heron hill), north of Okawa and near Puketapu, cannot now be found on the NZ topo map of the area; there is a Pukekotare (kingfisher hill) not far away.

## NOTICE.

**POISON** is laid on the hill called Pukekautuku, situated on my Run at Okawa.  
THOS. LOWRY.

April 14, 1868.

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Another old colonist has passed away in the person of Mr Thomas Lowry, who died yesterday at Taupo, at the age of 67 years. Mr Lowry was amongst the earliest settlers of the province of Nelson, but about 1849 left there for this Island, and lived two or three years in the Taupo district. In 1852 he became a Hawke's Bay settler, and took up the Okawa country, which he held at the time of his death. Mr Lowry led a very retired life, but he was a liberal supporter of all local charitable institutions. The remains of the deceased are to be brought to Napier, and the funeral will leave the Criterion Hotel to-morrow morning at 11 o'clock for the Puketapu cemetery.

## Provincial Government Gazette.

RETURN OF LANDS SOLD, AND DEPOSITS, GRANT FEES, AND ASSESSMENTS ON RUNS, RECEIVED AT THE CROWN LAND OFFICE AT NAPIER, IN THE PROVINCE OF HAWKE'S BAY, FROM THE 1ST TO THE 31ST MAY, 1860, INCLUSIVE.

NAME.	LAND SELECTED OR APPLIED FOR.	CONTENTS.			PAYMENT.			REMARKS.
		A	R	P	£	s.	d.	
Alfred Newman .....	On his Run .....	600	0	0	300	0	0	
Eugene McShane .....	Suburban sec. 88, Porangahau .....	38	1	0	26	2	0	Balance 9-10ths purchase at Auction.
William Hunter .....	Suburban sec. 32, 34, 38, 48, 52, 56, 59, and 60, Porangahau .....	306	0	4	266	8	0	Balance 9-10ths purchase at Auction.
William Fannin .....	On his Run .....	600	0	0	300	0	0	
Thomas Gill .....	Sub. sec. Nos. 29, 43, & 66 Porangahau .....	106	3	34	97	4	0	
J. Morgan & J. McCulloch .....	Section No. 21, Okawa Block .....	124	0	0	62	0	0	Simultaneous application, since withdrawn, and payment refunded.
Thomas Lowry .....	Sections Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, Okawa Block .....	2916	0	0	1458	0	0	
Thomas Tanner .....	In the Tikokino Block .....	5560	0	0	2780	0	0	
Frederick Dyett .....	Town sec. No. 72, Havelock .....	0	0	0	9	18	0	
Henry Sharpe .....	On E. S. Abbot's Run .....	50	0	0	25	0	0	
John R. Perry .....	In the Tikokino Block .....	1108	0	0	554	0	0	
Thomas Gill .....	" .....	639	0	0	319	0	0	
William Colenso .....	" .....	80	0	0	40	0	0	
John R. Perry .....	In the Okawa Block .....	98	0	0	49	0	0	
Thomas Lowry .....	Sections Nos. 3, 4, 7, 8, 18, 24, Okawa Block .....	986	0	0	493	0	0	
Thomas Lowry .....	Section No. 22, Okawa Block .....				3	0	0	Advance at Auction.
George Herbert .....	Near Eakdale .....	80	0	0	2	0	0	Deposit 10 per cent. on 5s. land.
Thomas Tanner .....	Tikokino Block .....	130	0	0	65	0	0	
Carried forward .....		13422	2	38	5879	12	0	

# The fight at Omarunui\*

Hawke's Bay was not seriously troubled by the Hauhau until late in 1866. Shortly after the Volkner tragedy at Opotiki in 1865 and the arrival of the Pai Marire prophets in the Poverty Bay and East Cape, Donald McLean and JD Ormond took measures to persuade the Hawke's Bay chiefs against the spread of Pai Marire in their territory.

McLean was Provincial Superintendent and was the Government Native Agent for the East Coast. Ormond had been elected to the House of Representatives in 1861. McLean called meetings of the Hawke's Bay chiefs to urge them to set their faces against the Pai Marire apostles. The principal *rangatira* of Ngati Kahungunu—Tareha, Te Moananui, and Renata Kawepo, supported by Karauria, Karaitiana Takamoana, and others—agreed to try to stay the spread of Hauhau unrest.

Colenso was invited but could not attend: he wrote to McLean (an undated note),

Many thanks for your kind note and invitation of this morning....

I should very much like to attend any Meeting of Natives in Town called by you—also to be at your Dinner today, (as I think some of the *old* pakehas should be there;) but I am far from well....

I am therefore obliged (believe me unwillingly) to beg you to accept my apology for not attending the dinner. —which I am glad to see got up & given to the Chiefs.

Colenso wrote to Native Minister Walter Mantell (6 March 1865),

Do not believe all—or a tithe—of what you may hear respecting our Natives and their Pai Maraire visitors. It is a great pity the venal local papers should go so far as they do—acting so unthinkingly. I believe Hapuku to be very very far from joining them.

Colenso was referring to an alarmist editorial in the *Hawke's Bay Herald* of 11 March 1865, by editor James Wood, now a Provincial Councillor,

The general tone of the meeting held at Pakowhai on the 7th instant may be considered, on the whole, as satisfactory, so far as concerns the probability of amicable relations being maintained between ourselves and the most influential of the native *hapus*. Indeed, a proper consideration for their own interests would tend to induce these great rent-receivers to maintain that peace on which their prosperity so much depends.

But a contingency was hinted at that deserves our serious consideration. Supposing the Hapuku were induced by the prospect of assistance from these new lights—these believers in *te Atua hau*—to open up afresh the old land dispute. If he were to attempt to reclaim the lands he lost in 1857, there would be another and very formidable question for the authorities to face. It would be derogatory to the British name were a recurrence of those disgraceful, though happily not very sanguinary, struggles that took place during the last small war here, to be again permitted. Yet what could be done? The Province is so defenceless, that the remonstrances of the authorities would be of little avail: and who could prophecy with any approach to certainty what would be the result of any outbreak of this description? Were the fight once begun, we know that there are plenty of natives ready to enter into it, or, indeed, into anything that promised mischief and devasta-

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\* The text is based on Cowan J. *The New Zealand Wars: a history of the Maori campaigns and the pioneering period*: Volume II: *The Hauhau Wars*, (1864–72). Chapter 14: The fight at Omarunui.



tion ; and though the peaceably-inclined Maoris here may be able to put down anything of the kind so far as the natives resident in this Province are concerned, who can say what would be the consequence of an irruption of some hundreds of beaten and irritated rebels, who would naturally be filled with feelings of exasperation against the *hapus* here that have rejected their overtures, and would be by no means unwilling to join the Hapuku or anyone else who would give them an excuse for an onslaught. That it would be the duty of the Government to say at once, "No, this shall not be," is clear enough ; but how could it enforce its dictum ? It would be a mere *brutum fulmen* ; and the knowledge of the weakness of the Government would expose it to the contempt of both sides.

The presence of bodies of the *hau hau* converts, or perverts, and their reception by Te Hapuku, shows us pretty plainly that on the will of a single chief depends the whole question. If he were a straightforward, well-judging man, in whom confidence could be placed, it would be something of a risk to run. But Te Hapuku has always been dark and inscrutable ; he has private wrongs to redress ; and, though his making any such movement would be considered the height of madness, who can guarantee his sanity ? At any moment, if he so chooses, or can in any way be induced to do so, he can cry "Havoc ! and let slip the dogs of war." And what then ? Is the Government to say "Oh ! fight away, we have nothing to do with it ;" or is it to unite its small force with that of Ta-

reha, Renata, and Karaitiana, and become a party to a feud which has nothing to do with the general question ? The Government should be strong enough to maintain law and order ; and without reference to the subject in dispute, be in a position to say at once, "There shall be no fighting." It should be strong enough to enforce peace and quietness on both parties. If fighting once begins, it will be on a different scale, and conducted with very different feelings, to what it was in 1857-8 ; and to what complications it may lead it is impossible to say. That the pakehas should escape without detriment it is absurd to suppose ; and, even if that could be guaranteed, it would be disgraceful on the part of the Government to allow of any such warfare for a day. And yet, in its present state of weakness, as regards this province, it would be powerless to prevent it.

For this, and indeed for many reasons, the armed force in the province must, by some means or other, be considerably increased. The less chance the Maoris find they have in opposing General Cameron, the more probability of their attempting to obtain "*Utu*" in any form that may be available. It is absurd to judge of their probable course of conduct by the rules that generally influence reasonable beings. Even when civilized nations go to war, they seem to labour under a temporary hallucination, and can we expect these uncivilized, half maddened savages to be more reasonable ?

When our neighbour's house is on fire, it is not wise to be unprepared for the pos-

sible consequences, and more especially when our own domicile is pretty well supplied with combustible materials.



Te Hapuku

The following year Colenso (in Wellington on parliamentary duties) wrote to McLean on 1 September 1866,

I find the "Rangatira" is to leave this port for Napier on Monday next, and I hasten to give you some information which I have lately (by "Queen") received from Napier. I have had 2

letters of warning, written by a friendly pair of Natives living between Havelock and Waipawa, (whose names and village I must not divulge,)—

The menace to European settlement in Hawke's Bay came not from Ngati Kahungunu but from an outpost of Hauhauism in the interior, on the mountain track to Taupo. At the beginning of October 1866, the Ngati Hineuru, from Te Haroto and Tarawera on the present Napier Taupo road, set out with the intention of attacking Napier, led by the chief Te Rangihiroa and the Pai Marire prophet Panapa. They had the approval of Rewi Maniapoto and other Kingite leaders.

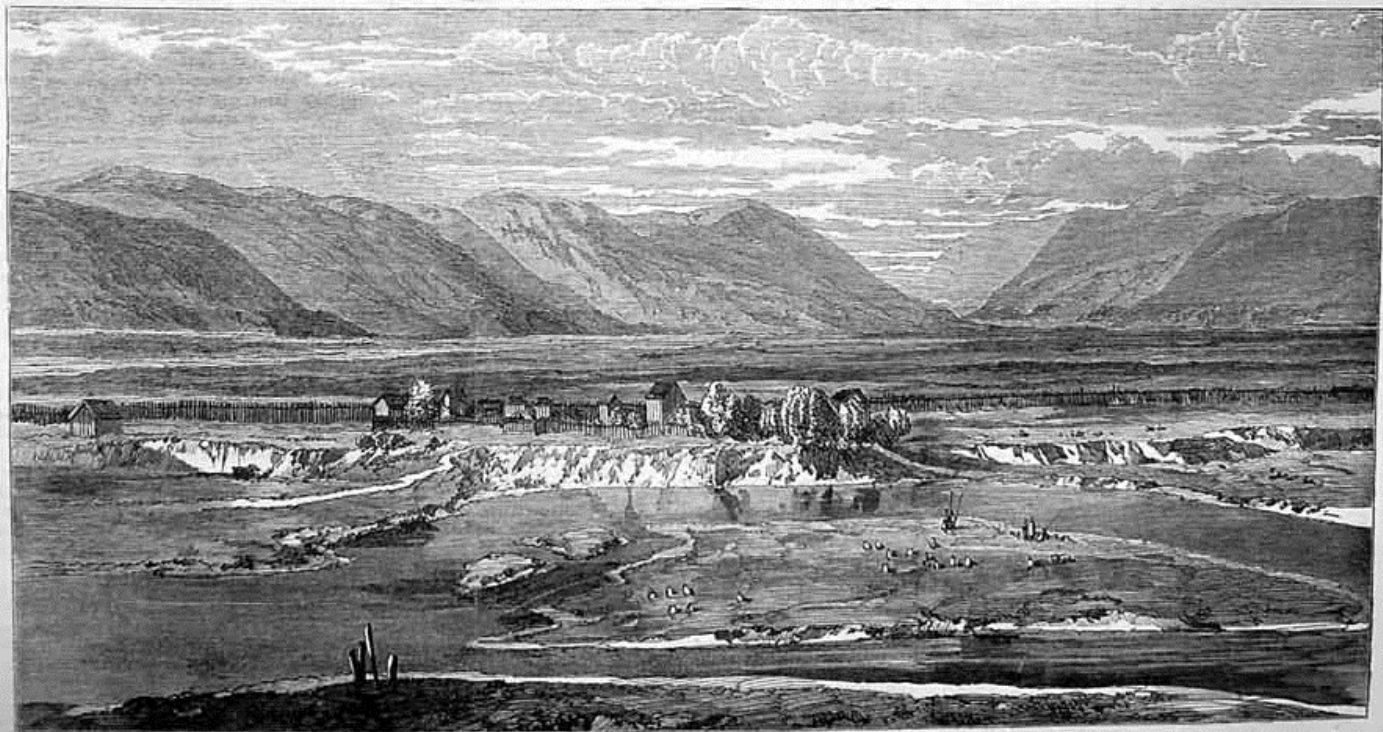
The war party of about eighty men marched over the range at Titiokura and descended to Pohue and the plains. At Te Pohue they were joined by recruits from Wairoa, making up a total strength of one hundred and thirty. Panapa went to Omarunui, on the Tutaekuri River, six miles from Napier, with the greater



LARGE MEETING OF SETTLERS AND MAORI AT A NATIVE VILLAGE NEAR NAPIER, HAWKE'S BAY, NEW ZEALAND.—SEE PAGE 466.

This scene at Pa Whakairo was photographed by Charles Robson and the engraving appeared in the *Illustrated London News* on 31 October 1863.





SCENE OF THE FIGHT WITH THE MAORIES ON TŌH TUTAEKURI, NEW ZEALAND.

Omarunui, *Illustrated London News* 1867



portion of the force, while Te Rangihiroa remained with about twenty-five mounted men. Te Rangihiroa was to make a night attack on the town by way of Petane, the settlement near the sea on the north side, while Panapa would deal with the out-settlements of *pakeha* and Māori and then join in the sack of Napier.

Omarunui was a fenced village on a flat above the cliffy bank of the Tutaekuri; Pa Whakairo, Tareha Te Moananui's pa, was a mile away.

At the same time Hauhau sections of Ngati Kahungunu would march on Porangahau and other settlements in the south. In the event of a successful attack on Napier the Hauhau in other districts would descend on *pakeha* and friendly Māori: the Urewera would make forays to the plains, and the Waikato Kingites would renew the war on their frontier. The fall of Napier, therefore, would have involved many other parts of the country in war and bloodshed.

Friendly Māori reported Panapa's arrival at Omarunui to McLean; and Mr. Hamlin, Native Interpreter to the Superintendent, who had been sent out to inquire the intentions of the strangers when they were halted at Petane, was now deputed to warn them to return to their homes, otherwise they would be attacked.

For a long time the Hauhau said nothing. At last Panapa said, enigmatically, that peace and war were both good—providing no clue as to his intentions. It seemed clear they meant mischief, although on Panapa's instructions they remained quiet.

Colenso offered to act as peacemaker: on 9 October he wrote to McLean,

*Thinking over the present state of affairs (Hauhaus and settlers) it has occurred to me—to offer you my personal services to go and see these unhappy people—this morning, if you approve of it. To try to bring them to a better state of*

*mind—or, at all events, to know their wants, and (if possible) their intentions—before proceeding to the last resource.*

*I suppose you know well the old Native Custom (which these half-wild peoples no doubt still hold) or in such matters to treat with “Chiefs”—or those whom they consider to be such.*

*I will call on you at your office at x a.m.*

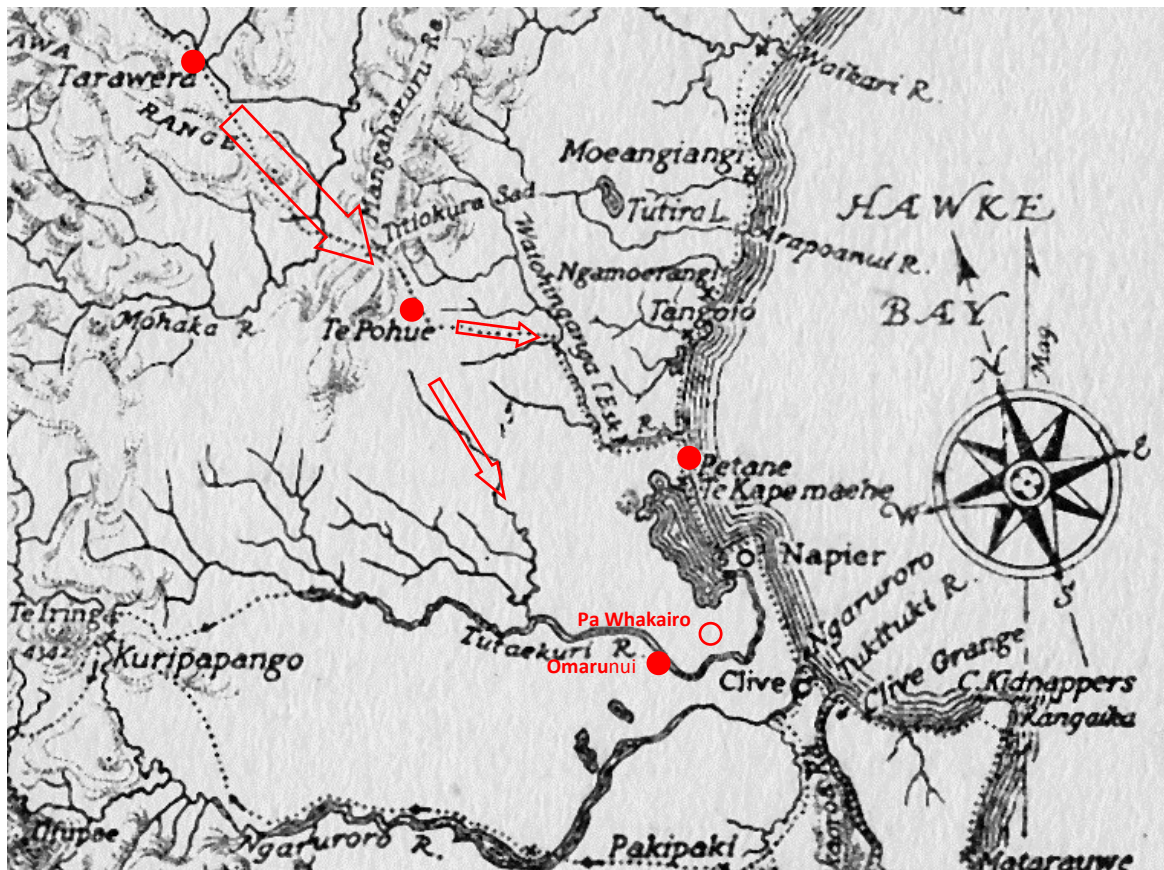
He was either ignored or he was too late. The people of Napier were now preparing for action. The armed militia numbered about one hundred and thirty men and youths and there was a company of forty-five Napier Rifle Volunteers. Major Fraser and forty men and a party of Wairoa Māori under Kopu Parapara and Ihaka Whanga reached Napier on 11 October.

Colonel George Whitmore commanded the Napier forces; he had left the Imperial army and was now a settler in Hawke's Bay. He despatched Fraser and his veterans to guard the approach from the Petane side against Te Rangihiroa and his party. Whitmore himself moved on Omarunui to demand the surrender of Panapa's force.

The Napier citizen soldiers marched out soon after midnight on 11 October and took up positions on the Tutaekuri with friendly Māori under Samuel Locke, Native Agent, and the chiefs Tareha, Renata Kawepo, and other tribal leaders. By daylight Omarunui was surrounded, the Māori contingent taking up a position on the edge of a swamp in the rear.



Major-General George Stoddart Whitmore



### The sack of Napier

Map based on detail from "Map of the Hawke's Bay & Taupo District 1845-1855" from Bagnall & Petersen, William Colenso, 1949.

Panapa, Te Rangihiroa and the Ngāti Hineuru Hauhau taua marched from Tarawera via Titokura to Te Pohue in 1866; Te Rangihiroa continued east to Petane while Panapa and his men came SE to Omarunui.

The plan was for Te Rangihiroa to attack Napier from the north, after which Panapa would join from the south.

In the event the Hauhau waited too long and militia helped by "friendly" Māori, superior in numbers, defeated them at Omarunui and Petane.

Hamlin was sent into the village under a flag of truce with a message from McLean demanding the Hauhau surrender in an hour or they would be fired upon. Hamlin reported that the Hauhau would not listen. After an hour the order was given to attack.

The Hauhau had not intended to take the offensive until the signal was given that Te Rangihiroa was attacking Napier, but there was no word from him. They thus allowed the militia to approach and so were at a disadvantage. Orders were now given to open fire and volleys were poured into the village from three sides. The Hauhau ran for the shelter of their *whares* and the large meeting-house and returned the fire; some skirmished out to the open, but a number fell, and the huts proved precarious cover. Panapa, the war-priest, came out into the open and was shot dead. The firing continued for over an hour, and the Hauhau casualties grew heavy. At last, seeing it hopeless to hold the village longer, and disheartened by the fall of their prophet, whom they had believed to be invulnerable to bullets, the majority of the survivors decided to surrender.

A number of the defenders rushed out in the rear and attempted to escape to the hills across the swamp, but Captain Gordon and his volunteer cavalry galloped round and intercepted the fugitives. All except one or two were killed, wounded, or captured. Those who remained alive in the village hoisted a white flag, and the "Cease fire" was ordered. The Hauhau lost twenty-one dead and about thirty wounded, of whom some died in hospital. Fifty-eight unwounded prisoners were taken. Whitmore's casualties were slight.

Those prisoners who could walk were marched to Napier whence they were shipped to the Chatham Islands.

Meanwhile Fraser's small force had gained an equally decisive victory at Petane. They intercepted Te Rangihiroa's twenty-five mounted men in a narrow pass. Fraser cut off their retreat and they had to fight against heavy odds. Te Rangihiroa was killed along with eleven of

his men; one was wounded and three were taken prisoner.

Thus the bold enterprise of Ngati Hineuru and their allies ended in complete disorder. That so small a war party would attack a well armed European settlement can be explained by the extraordinary confidence in supernatural aid roused by the Pai Marire preaching. Panapa's disciples believed their *atua* would endow them with strength to prevail over their enemies; Te Ua had assured them the *pakeha's* bullets could be averted by magic incantations and the favour of the gods.

Napier was never again menaced. A monument unveiled by JD Ormond at a jubilee gathering in 1916 stands on the battlefield of Omarunui; it was damaged in 1990.

In 1866 Colenso was busy: he would begin the mammoth task of his *Maori Lexicon*; would be defeated by McLean for the Napier seat in the House of Representatives; would argue about the publication of his Exhibition essays; would write *Willie's first English book*. But in the following years he was consistent in his conciliatory approach.

31 July 1868 to McLean,

... they don't like the aspect of things; they fear any incursion from inland, now that the returned natives are made desperate. They also wish their own people back from Poverty—do not like those Europeans in command, &c &c.—

... I regret exceedingly that the returned natives have been hunted. I think they might have been quietly managed.—But I fear it is too late now. Without very great care I foresee serious times—more for outlying settlers.

... There is much dissatisfaction among them I know,—the Europeans getting their land bit by bit for grog, &c. &c. forced upon them—their seeking to reduce the rents as agreed on by Lease—their mortgages—Bills of Sale, &c. &c., (as

Hapuku's and others)—Bp. Wms. building here & leaving his flock—the article which appeared in “Waka Maori” about lowering their rents—every thing tends to make them gloomy & sour. &c &c &c.—

...If I can be of any service you may depend upon me, although I fear that time is past.

28 July 1870 to McLean,

... on the subject of the Maori Prisoners at Otago. In the “Otago Witness,” of July 16, (which you may have seen) I find these words:— “Another of the Maori prisoners, Horopapera Hopu by name, died in the hospital on Sunday night. He was a sufferer from chronic asthma, which was the cause of his death. He was 25 years old. This is the eighth Maori prisoner who has succumbed to asthma.”—In other Dunedin & Southern papers, (which you also may have seen,) I have also noticed it said, that the Maori Prisoners will all be released by Death before the end of their Sentence (3 years).—

And it is just because that I, too, both believe & fear this, that I now take upon myself to write to you.—

Were you not so very well acquainted with the real natural wants & ailments of the Maoris, I should consider it a duty to shew them to you; but, as it is, I am sure I need only to call your attention to what you must have frequently noticed in former years, when, like myself, often travelling and sojourning among them: viz. (1) that they could not stand exposure to cold or wet (like Europeans), even in this Northern Island, where the climate is so very much warmer, especially in the winter season, than the rigorous one of Otago Province: (2) that they never could long exist deprived of fire, even in summer, to which they are invariably accustomed from their

infancy: (3) that “chronic asthma” is not a very common complaint among them (when living apart from Europeans), and even to those long afflicted with it, it rarely proves fatal—witness your old friend the aged Porokoru Mapu (who has been a sufferer from it ever since I knew him, in 1843,) old Rihara at Te Waipukurau, & Hoani Waikato: (4) that whenever the Maoris have been attacked with any disorder (real or fancied) and a few die, the remnant, giving way to their foolish belief, that they are doomed & will soon die too, fall off like sheep—and this would have a double effect upon them where they are, as they would be sure to be told that such was in the Papers.

... may I not ask, If something cannot be speedily devised and done by the Government to save the lives of the remnant of the prisoners—even if it should amount to the early removal of them to warmer & more congenial quarters?

Prisoners at home, (of a much worse stamp & class than these unhappy men,) when it is shown to the authorities that their health is endangered by confinement, are often humanely removed to other places, and not unfrequently liberated.

I notice too, that Kapa has asked for their liberation... that Wi Tako and others have sent in to the House of Representatives a certain petition as to the one sidedness of our laws, being wholly in our favour & against the Maoris,—and that similar language has been used by Tareha and Mete Kingi both in & out of the House; while here (as doubtless you know) Karaitiana & other Chiefs are loud in expressing similar opinions.

I recollect telling Mr. Ormond, that I considered your liberation of those Maori prisoners at Auckland last Summer, as a very excellent measure, both humane & diplomatic.—



Although not a few (who know not the Maori) ventured to disapprove of your doing so.

I could say more, but... this I will venture to add, in conclusion,—that I think you may very well and very easily arrange with Kepa & others as to the safe custody of those unhappy fellows.

In December 1871 he would write to the Governor Sir G.F. Bowen, about the Hauhau prisoner Kereopa,

Napier, December 22nd, 1871.

Governor Sir G.F. Bowen,

G.C.M.G., &c, &c, &c.

Sir,

I have the honour to address your Excellency in a few words, although personally a stranger, respecting the unhappy Native Kereopa now in our gaol here, to which, also, though such may be somewhat irregular, I would humbly beg your merciful consideration.

Before, however, that I enter on my subject, I would apologize for the informality of this communication, feeling assured, that, when your Excellency is informed,—that the Steamer “Luna” is expected here this very day on her way to Wellington,—that by her his Honor the Judge who tried the said Maori goes to Wellington,—and that we know not when there will be another Steamer going thither,—you will surely overlook all such, and allow of this apology.

I deem it to be my duty, Sir, as an old (if not the oldest) European residing in these parts, well-acquainted with the Natives here and elsewhere and with the true state of the Native mind,—as a well-wisher to the Colony and to the Government,—and as a loyal subject of Her Majesty the Queen, to make you acquainted with the following (although it may be

that I am shortly about to leave New Zealand, perhaps forever).

And to this I feel the more encouraged from perusing the very truthful and excellent maxim quoted by your Excellency, when writing on the execution of the Maoris, in your Despatch (No. 91, July 28, 1870.) to the Right Hon. Earl Grenville, in which you say,—“in this as in other countries the maxim holds good which declares, that ‘the grass soon grows over blood shed on the battlefield, but rarely over blood shed on the political scaffold’.”

At present there is a great and increasing spirit of dissatisfaction existing among the Maoris against the Government,—even among those who have been hitherto loyal and friendly; such is kept very secret among themselves,—still and deep.

Every thing of a harsh or severe tendency on the part of the Government against any of their people, or the common popular feeling, wonderfully strengthens the said spirit of dissatisfaction, and is secretly and extensively made use of as against the Government.

There is a very great feeling every where among them in favour of the prisoner, Kereopa, even among those of them who have suffered largely both in loss of property and relatives through the visit of the “Hauhaus” to the E. Coast.

All natives consider it as a political prosecution; though some speak of it as a revengeful one on the part of the Church.

It is highly doubtful whether Kereopa committed the various acts charged against him; or, if, in some degree, he did, whether such have not been both greatly exaggerated and colored by the Opotiki tribe in order to remove as far as possible from themselves (for various reasons) the stigma of

such an atrocious crime. Such, I may be allowed to remark, is a very common thing among the Maoris.

It is believed by many here, that one of the principal witnesses against him is the very man who placed the rope round Mr. Volkner's neck.

I may be allowed to mention, that I wrote a letter to the Editor of our principal Paper (the "Hawke's Bay Herald") on Kereopa being brought here as a Prisoner, shewing how on equitable grounds alone he ought not to be severely dealt with; (a Copy of this curtailed I also forward to your Excellency;) and finding I could not get the whole of it printed in the said Paper I have concluded to get it printed in a pamphlet form, but is not yet ready. I append, here too, a printed Resume taken from the same, to some portions of which I would venture to beg your Excellency's attention.—

After I had written the said letter I visited Kereopa in the gaol.

He told me, that he wished to get a number of witnesses on his behalf brought forward; and, at his request, I told Mr. Lee, his Counsel appointed by the Government, of it.

He also told me, on my asking what these were to prove in his behalf, that he wished them to prove:—

1. That the Instructions given to their Hauhau expedition when sent out by the Hauhau prophet Te Ua were, not to kill pakehas; and that they could not deviate from them.
2. That long before they had reached Opotiki it had been determined by some of the Opotiki Chiefs to kill Mr. Volkner as an utu (in revenge) for their slain Chiefs and people, who, they said, had been killed through certain information given to the Government by him, and that Mr. Volkner had known of this, and had, therefore, on being

warned and ordered off, as a few friendly natives could no longer protect him, timely taken away his wife and family. (See, Appendix Journal, Ho. of Represens. 1865, E. No. 5, Enclosure 2 No.5.)

3. That the deed was done by the Opotiki natives themselves, when inflamed with drink and their thirst for vengeance.
  4. That he had no hand in it; did not see Mr. Volkner put to death; and did not know who really did it, save by report.
  5. That he saved Mr. Grace from the same fate, through claiming him as "his pakeha".
  6. That the Hauhau visitors, being of a stranger tribe (or people—iwi) kept together, aloof: and here he appealed to me, from my knowledge of their Ancient Customs, whether they could, or he could, on such an occasion, possibly have commanded or ordered the Opotiki Tribe; and if he had even done so, whether they would have listened to him.
- And, Lastly, that those Natives of his own Tribe might hear the lies which these witnesses had deposed against him.

I only saw him on two occasions, although I had an Order from the Visiting Justice of the gaol, and had planned to visit him daily; my visiting him being most strangely interrupted through the Gaoler sending me word by the turnkey, that Kereopa positively would not see me any more! We were on the most friendly terms, and he seemed highly rejoiced to see me and parted from me with regret: I cannot account for this (?)alteration.

His attempt to commit suicide is no proof of his guilt—quite the contrary.

I firmly believe, Your Excellency, that mercy being shown to this unhappy deluded man Kereopa will be productive of great good both to the Maoris and to the Colony; particularly from the fact (in addition to what I have already adduced in

my Resume,) of £1000. having been paid for his capture; so that they will very clearly see that our Government and Rulers are equally as far above any sordid, as any revengeful, influences, arising from the payment of Public money.

I pointed out to Governor Browne, in 1861, (among many similar matters,) how very advantageously imprisonment with degradation might be used by the Government in dealing with high Maori Offenders, and that such was in their estimation worse than Death.

And again apologizing for this intrusion on your Excellency in a few ill-digested and hastily written sentences, which apology I trust you will under all the circumstances be pleased to accept, I am

Sir,

Your most obdt. Servant,

Wm. Colenso.

“Imprisonment with degradation... worse than death”? That is such an uncharacteristic opinion that one can only assume Colenso was appealing to Bowen’s least humane sentiments.

He would go on to publish his peace and appeasement masterwork, *Fiat Justitia; being a few thoughts respecting the Maori prisoner Kereopa now in Napier gaol, awaiting his trial for murder. Respectfully Addressed to the considerate and justice-loving Christian Settlers of Hawke’s Bay, and also to our Rulers, in a Letter to the Editor of the “Hawke’s Bay Herald.”*

He was ignored, of course. Kereopa was hanged as if he were a common criminal rather than treated as a war criminal.

## Robert Cathcart

The *Hawke’s Bay Herald* of 19 November 1878 carried shipping news, including this,

### PORT CHALMERS, November 18.

Arrivals—Agusta, barquentine, 45 days from Mauritius, with a cargo of sugar. Dunedin; ship, 86 days from London, brings 32 passengers, 2200 tons of cargo, and 40 tons of gunpowder. She spoke the following vessels:—Sept. 14, lat. 14°4 north, long. 25°40 west, ship Cornia, from London, for Wellington; October 4, lat. 27°47 south, long. 32°41 west, ship Loch Fleet from London, for Auckland. Captain Withon reports off Start Point August 27, Alexander Galbraith, ordinary seaman, while engaged dragging the fore-sheet, slipped on a rail and fell overboard. Two life buoys were thrown to him, and Robert Cathcart, able seaman, jumped overboard to his assistance. Boats were at once lowered, and after 20 minutes’ search Cathcart was picked up, but no trace of the poor boy was discovered. The night was pitch dark and it was imagined that he sank immediately. A

Rev. William Colenso must have read this and been moved by it to write to Cathcart, perhaps inspired to do so by his own son Willie’s occupation as a seaman. Cathcart must have replied and Colenso’s reply to *his* letter is in the Alexander Turnbull Library collections [ATL MS-3319],

Napier, Hawke's Bay,  
Monday, December 23,  
1878.

Dear Robert Cathcart,

This morning I was much pleased in receiving your letter of the 17<sup>th</sup>. instant, and lose no time in replying,—and as I find a Southern Mail closes here tomorrow. I thank you for accepting my small offer, and for your letter—truthfully and feelingly written, one that my heart responds to,—and I send you, enclosed, a P.O.O. for £15., which I hope may reach you in time to be considered a New Year's Gift;—and one most cheerfully given.

Should you ever come to Napier, and I alive and here, I shall be glad to see you. I suppose, from a remark of Capt. Whitson's, that you are now going to settle in N. Zealand, having had enough of the sea:—if so, I heartily wish you well:—may you prosper in whatever you put your hand to! Keep a good look-out ahead; always keep on a regular true course; *don't* seek to carry too much sail,—or, in other words, go too readily in for *speculating*: *don't* take up drinking habits; *don't* borrow, if you can help it: and with good health, a willing heart for work, and GOD'S blessing, you are sure to succeed.—

Permit an old experienced hand—nearing the “3 score & 10”—to give you those few words of advice.

I note, that you dwell much upon this point, that *if you had saved that poor boy, then you might have accepted what those kind passengers had offered you*: but there I differ, a wee bit from you,—for you did not leap overboard to save him to gain a sum offered, (like a horse entered in a race,) but merely as a volunteer of your own free will and feeling heart; just

as those soldiers, who are told off (and sometimes volunteer) for the “forlorn hope”,—for the desperate service of attacking a fort at close quarters; they know, when they set out, that there is (humanly speaking) no chance, for any of them,—that their comrades will march over their bodies and take that fort:—or, just as I have heard of some brave sailors, who, when some very dangerous work has to be done (in a gale, it may be,) come off and volunteer for it. I think my own sailor-boy has seen something of this. I thank you much for your kind expression concerning him; you may yet meet.

Excuse my long yarn (as I know you will); and just write me a line to let me know that the money sent has safely reached you; as we have pirates, and land-sharks too, in N.Z. And should you be writing to your old ship at Port Chalmers, just let the Captain know that you had heard from me.

And once more wishing you well, in every sense,—and wishing you a Happy New Year, and many of them,—Believe me, yours truly,

Wm. Colenso.

Should you ever be hard-up for a £., look *this way*.

Robert Cathcart certainly seems to have “had enough of the sea” and had been in the newspapers before this—from the *New Zealand Herald* of 6 October 1887...

Robert Cathcart, a seaman, belonging to the English barque Galatea, was arrested yesterday on a charge of having deserted from his ship on the 2nd instant. Three persons charged with drunkenness, one of whom is a woman, were also locked up.



... and the *Christchurch Press* of 21 February 1878,

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20.**  
[Before W. Donald, Esq., R.M.]  
**REFUSAL OF DUTY.**—F. Yates, Robert Cathcart, John Wilson, and James Dobbins, seamen, were charged by Captain Carey, of the barque *Glencoe*, with disobedience of orders. Mr H. N. Naider appeared in support of the charge. Dobbins was also charged with using threatening language. The Bench sentenced Yates, Cathcart, and Wilson to fourteen days, and Dobbins six weeks' hard labor.

A second Colenso letter has survived [ATL MS-3319],

Napier  
March 31<sup>st</sup>. 1879

Mr. Robert Cathcart,  
Dear Sir,

I was pleased to get your letter of the 16<sup>th</sup>. instant, for I had begun to think a little about you,—whether you had once more tried your luck on the Ocean, and gone back to our old Country in your old ship and Captain and mates. Indeed I kept a kind of look-out over our S. papers, to see of her sailing from Port Chalmers. Now, however, I certainly know all about it from your note.

I was sorry to hear of your hurt (sprained ankle), but pleased to find you were got over that, and that your old Captain had taken a run to see you, and (above all) that you had made a great number of friends at Lyttelton, which place you also say you now consider your home. This is all good: and I also

highly approve of your determination to say Goodbye to a seafaring life; for I perfectly agree with you that it is a most miserable life. I often think how much, how very much, we landsmen are *indebted* to our Sailors—(would that others also thought this!) Here, for instance, is the “Adamant”, which arrived from England to Hawke’s Bay, and only left yesterday, after nearly 3 months in our roadstead taking in cargo; well, just after she arrived here, some little row took place at the port among the crew of the Captain’s boat (which brought him on shore) and some landsmen, and on the Captain going thither, he was sworn at, and all that, by one of his crew—the poor fellow was laid hold of by a policeman, had up, & sent to gaol,—when his month was up he refused to go on board, so was again sent to gaol until the ship was ready, and so on: another of her people (a boy) deserted, and then, in the country, took a watch, he is now in gaol for a month, and what a poor prospect he has before him when his time is up!—

I thank you for your kind & thoughtful remark about my son; he will not, I believe, go to sea again as a sailor, although he is still passionately fond of the sea. He is residing with my brother in the W. of England, (where he has been now nearly 4 years,) and has a little craft of his own (a 6 ton boat which he got built to his own model) which he calls a yacht, and he spends his English summer in sailing about in Mount’s Bay and to the Land’s End England—in “the chops of the Channel”! It is a pleasant place, especially in summer, the sandy beaches being such good landing. He was once in Lyttelton as a sailor when in the “Merope” with poor Capt. Williams.

Many thanks for your likeness. I look at it and think on *that night* in the Channel when GOD preserved you. Ever put your trust *in Him*,—at all times & seasons, blow high or blow low,—and you will find you will get safely to port at last.—

Don't think of being again taken "in regalia",—no need of it; for my part I don't care about flags or fine feathers.—

I shall always be glad to hear from you whenever you may be inclined to write; and should you again meet with misfortune, in your work, and get laid up for a season, don't forget to look this way for a helping hand—or a £.—

And, Believe me,

Yours very truly

W. Colenso.

I am happy to say that my own health is pretty good.— W.C.

Perhaps Cathcart settled in Oamaru rather than the Lyttelton he considered his home, or perhaps the clipping below refers to a different Robert Cathcart—but this is the last we can find of one so named,

(PRESS ASSOCIATION TELEGRAM.)

OAMARU, May 18.

Robert Cathcart, aged 77, for 50 years a resident of Oamaru, collapsed while attending a Masonic lodge to-night, and died in a few minutes. He had been suffering from heart trouble.

(Christchurch Press 19 May 1926)

On 1 February at 5.30pm the Mayor of  
Wellington

will officially open

**William Colenso Square,**

beside the National Library

(this was cancelled in 2017 because of the  
earthquake).

After that at 6pm Fraser Books will launch  
Ian St George's new book

***Mr Colenso's Wairarapa.***

in the National Library

# To the editor

SIR,

## *Colenso Memorial Tablet*

Two pieces in the November *eColenso* tell two important stories about the Memorial Tablet for the Colenso Dole: “The Colenso Dole” by Ian St George about the discussions leading up to the decision to create the tablet; and “Rehousing the Colenso memorial tablet” by Ann Collins about its recovery and the redisplaying of it in the council offices after it was moved from its previous fixed location. But there is a third aspect which I suggest also deserves some attention. This is: where the tablet was displayed during the intervening 100 years or so before it was, relatively recently, moved to the council offices.

The photo shown in the first of these articles was taken by me in 2004 of the tablet *in situ* on an external granite wall in Penzance where it presumably had been for over a century since being mounted there in 1900. But where exactly had it been located after being removed from this location sometime between 2004 and 2016—when Ian asked Ann and myself what we knew about it, prompting Ann to begin her search for it?

When I was in Penzance in 2004, I came out of the building that was then the public library. I saw the tablet on an external wall just outside the library and took the photo. Asked about it in 2016, I couldn’t pin point where exactly this was until with the help of Google maps I worked out where it had been located all that time.

Before seeing the Google photos, I reported to Ian and Ann my best recollection that I had seen the tablet: “on the outside wall of what I then took to be the public library in Penzance—which was on Morab

Road.” And then that: “it was at eye level, the walls of the building were a dark shade of granite. I think the plaque was placed a little way to the right of the front door as you face the building and far enough from the door that you could easily miss it as you went in and out.”

Then I looked at the photo in the following link which shows three buildings in Morab Street, the left of which has the present entrance to the Library, with the double turquoise doors in the middle building presumably being the old entrance. This building has “FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY” in the stonework above the second floor windows (I assume the present library interior extends behind the frontage of the middle building which presumably used to house the entirety of the old library.)

[https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@50.1173201,-5.5395968,3a,79.1y,231.55h,91.14t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1s7\\_N0Jh4XWk\\_bpG9ZxM7f6A!2e0!7i13312!8i6656](https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@50.1173201,-5.5395968,3a,79.1y,231.55h,91.14t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1s7_N0Jh4XWk_bpG9ZxM7f6A!2e0!7i13312!8i6656)

Looking at this photo, my recollection, as described above, exactly fits with the location of the tablet being on the outside wall of the middle building—because the entrance to the left hand building is on the left of that building. This can be seen in the photo in the following Google link as the building with shop/office-type bay window frontage and with “PENZANCE LIBRARY” above what is now the entrance to the Library on the left of that building.

[https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@50.1172014,-5.5395323,3a,57.8y,249.96h,91.76t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sONkjpNV\\_tISnKN1z0\\_sWxg!2e0!7i13312!8i6656](https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@50.1172014,-5.5395323,3a,57.8y,249.96h,91.76t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sONkjpNV_tISnKN1z0_sWxg!2e0!7i13312!8i6656)

The texture and shade of the stone of the wall of the middle building also accords with my memory. And, although I said it could have been “one side or the other” of those double turquoise doors in the middle building, looking at it again, I am now pretty sure it would

have been on the left of those doors—i.e. on the side nearest to the present entrance to the library. To be more exact: in the photo in the first of the above two links, it is at eye level directly behind the line of sight of the short black lamppost, to the right of the white drain pipe.

So I am pretty sure that that's where it must have been for the whole of the twentieth century—and a bit more. There's no knowing where it would have been for the next century if it hadn't been for Ann's prodigious efforts in calling on the assistance of helpful council officers who eventually located it in one of the council offices—where it had been, in effect, in storage! As a result, it is now prominently displayed once again: this time in the entrance Hall of St John's Hall in Penzance—as shown in the photos with Ann's article in October *eColenso*.

One last comment: when I took the photo in 2004, for a hundred-year-old brass tablet, it looked in pretty good condition. I wonder if it had benefitted from regular polishing. If so, this reflects well on the recognition given to the legacy of William Colenso over that period.

Gwil Colenso  
October 2017.

On 22 and 23 February 2019

MTG Hawke's Bay  
and the

Colenso Society

will host

## The Third Colenso Conference

in Napier

at MTG Hawke's Bay.