

COLENSO

—•— A MONTHLY JOURNAL AND HISTORICAL REVIEW.

—•— DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE REV. WILLIAM COLENZO. —•—

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Colenso's 2nd printing press

C O L U M B I A N P R I N T I N G P R E S S

This was not Colenso's original press, which was a Stanhope, and on which he printed the Māori New Testament in 1837. In 1842 the Church Missionary Society sent this press to Paihia, where it was used to print translations of the Bible, prayer books, and hymns.

Colenso used the press, as did his successor John Telford. Telford possibly printed William Wil-
liam's Dictionary of the New Zealand Language (1844) on this press.



Clymer and Dixon manufacturer 1841

In 1845 the press was taken to Auckland when the Church Missionary Society moved its printing shop. It was auctioned in 1875 and became a newspaper press at Akaroa. In 1890 it came into the possession of Robert Coupland Harding, who leased the press to a newspaper in Otaki. It was later acquired by the Levin Chronicle and remained in use well into the twentieth century. The newspaper's owners gifted it to the National Museum in 1974.

Lady Jane's microscope and other matters



LLAN Cunningham gave Colenso his own botanical magnifying glass in 1839, but the remarkable [Lady Jane Franklin](#) gave him his first microscope in 1841. It was probably similar to one of those illustrated here.



LEFT: Robert Brown's and William Hooker's microscopes. ABOVE: small Victorian field microscope.

Lady Jane was in the Bay of Islands 1 to 15 May 1841. Colenso wrote to William Hooker, “A few weeks since we were honored with a visit from Lady Franklin, who (whilst looking over a portion of my collection,) informed me, that she had lately seen your son, Dr. Hooker, at Hobart Town...”.

On her return to Hobart Lady Jane sent Colenso the microscope, and wrote, “I hope the accompanying botanic microscope of which I beg your kind acceptance may be of use to you in your researches if you have not one already, and I assure you that I shall feel exceedingly happy if you will give me in any way an opportunity of being useful to you – As our colony has the advantage of yours in age (for I will not imitate the prevailing Australasian trick of self-puffing by making any higher boast) it may perhaps be in our power to furnish you with some things which in your youthful state are not to be found in New Zealand”.

It was at her suggestion that Colenso wrote his fern paper for Gunn in Tasmania, and it was for her that he named *Hymenophyllum frankliniae* (“It has been named by the discoverer, in order to commemorate the condescending and intrepid tour made by Lady Franklin in New Zealand, as well as the kind patronage ever afforded by her ladyship to the different departments of natural science.”)

In 1864 he wrote to Hooker asking him to send a Coddington lens. Later for a time he used the skills and the powerful microscope of his GP friend [William Spencer](#) of



Napier: “Not being satisfied with the comparatively low power of my own microscope, I applied to Dr. Spencer, who has an excellent and powerful compound one, (which he has also used so very effectually in describing the fresh-water Algæ of New Zealand in his papers in past volumes of ‘Trans. N.Z. Inst.,’) and Dr. Spencer has very kindly examined the fruit, etc., of this little plant....” Colenso named *Plagiochila spenceriana* and *Peziza spencerii* for him.

Then in December 1884, at age 73, he wrote to JD Hooker asking for advice about a new microscope for himself so that he could see the teeth of mosses and the finer structures of *Hepaticæ* better. It arrived the following year but to his frustration the Napier customs officers lost a vital part in unpacking it for inspection.

Colenso had occasion to write about the Franklins much later. Upset by the inaccuracies of an article about an old settler named Ebenezer Baker in the Wellington *Evening Press*, he wrote a letter to the editor, first sending a copy to his friend Coupland Harding (12 November 1890): “I send it to you—for 2 reasons; 1, I wish you to read it *closely & amend if needed*; 2, it may not be published in Evg. P. so I should like for you at least to know of it.” Later he referred to the letter as having been published in the Supplement to the *Evening Press* on 22 November, but no copy of that issue exists: fortunately Harding kept his copy.

Colenso quotes a passage from the article, then comments on it....

6. “When Sir Benjamin Franklin visited the Bay of Islands, after his explorations in the Antarctic Ocean in the *Erebus* and *Terror*, he made his head quarters at the Mission house,”—No such person was ever there! Sir James Ross was Commander of that expedition. (Sir John Franklin (not Benjamin) was at that time Governor of van Diemen’s Land (now Tasmania). Sir James Ross did not make his head-quarters at that “Mission house”, he kept closely on board of his ship. [see below.] The said house (from Mr. C. Baker’s finally leaving it in April 1840, sixteen months before the arrival of the Antarctic Expedition in the Bay of Islands,) was let to a person named Tibby, who took in respectable boarders, among whom were several well-known to me, as Mr. Felton Matthew Surveyor-General, Dr. Sinclair, Dr. Dieffenbach, &c.

7. “Mr. Ebenezer Baker and an elder brother (now deceased), as boys piloted him [Sir Benjamin Franklin] about the bays and creeks in a canoe.” Astonishing! I dare disbelieve this. (1) Mr. E. Baker with his brother were then residing at Waikare—at the fresh-water head of that long arm—many miles (20) by sea distant from the anchorage, and those ships. (2) I never knew a single instance of any of the sons of the Missionaries there being allowed (or even being able!) to do such a thing. (3) It was the winter season. (4) Sir J. Ross, and all his officers, were very particular (for several weighty reasons), they had unremitting scientific duties to perform, and were well supplied with boats and with men. I will quote a few words from his published account:—

“The unceasing round of hourly observations” (on shore at the observatory, as well as on board of the two ships,) “was soon brought into operation, and provided full occupation for all of the executive officers of both ships, except only the senior

lieutenants, who remained in charge of the vessels. The medical officers, in their turn,” (Messrs. McCormick, and J.D. Hooker,) “made short excursions into the interior, for the purpose of increasing our collections of natural history; but the natives at the time of our visit were beginning to feel deeply, and express in terms of severe bitterness, their great disappointment at the effects of the Treaty of Waitangi, so that I did not consider it advisable to permit those officers to extend their researches to any considerable distance from the position we had taken up. And although it was necessary to despatch boats several miles up the river,” (on the Kawakawa arm, directly divergent from Waikare) “for the purpose of obtaining the spars we required, yet I thought it proper they should be well-armed and prepared to resist any attack which the natives seemed well disposed to make; indeed so strong was the impression on my mind of the readiness of the natives to seize any favourable opportunity of regaining possession of their lands and driving the Europeans out of the country, that I always felt much anxiety during the absence of our people.”—“*Sir James Ross’ Voyage to the S. Seas*,” vol.II, p.62. (5) I, myself, was the only one of the Mission who ever accompanied any of those officers, particularly the Botanist of the Expedition, my friend, the present Sir J.D. Hooker; who, on several occasions, went with me in my boat to Waikare forests, and to Waitangi, and to Kerikeri waterfalls: (*vide* his published works).

8. “*When Sir Benjamin Franklyn*” (B.F. again!) *was at the Bay of Islands Lady Franklyn was given one of the Mission House horse hair arm chairs, which the Maories attached poles to and carried her about the country.*”—Lady Franklin, the wife of Sir John Franklin Governor of van Diemen’s Land, visited the Bay of Islands in the *early summer* of 1841; but the Discovery ships in the *winter* of that same year. At that time (as I have already stated) Mr. E. Baker was living with his father at Waikare. Lady Franklin, having sprained her ankle, was so carried about (when on land), but not by Maoris while in the Bay of Islands; the boat’s crew did all that, and was always kindly attended by the late Capt. Beckham. The term here again used—“the Mission house,” is, to say the least of it, misleading: (1) the house in which Mr. Charles Baker, Catechist, had resided at the N. end of Paihia was never known by such a name: (2) if any one of the three missionaries houses in that station was, or should have been, so called, it was the one at the S. end, occupied by the Rev. H. Williams, (but I never once heard it so called,—who, perhaps, also supplied the “horsehair arm chair,” if such an article of luxury was then to found in the Mission (?). More likely, however, it was loyally and kindly furnished by Mr. James Busby, late the British Resident, for the Lady of the Governor of V.D.L., as he did possess such furniture, and if so then the article itself is now in my possession, having been purchased by me at the auction of Mr. Busby’s goods.—

The cover of this issue of *Colenso* is modified from
a cover of Robert Coupland Harding’s *Typo*.

The solitary reaper



OLENSO'S private letters to close friends were at times a cathartic outlet for a man brooding alone on the nature of truth, on delights and sorrows... and in them Colenso often abruptly pulled up his more obsessing paragraphs with a gruff "But I must stop this".

There is a grand wordsworthian quality in his isolation, alone in the forest, alone at home – communing with nature, travelling th'untrodden ways, greeting no visitors. "My own choice" he would write to his friends, and we think of Wordsworth's "self-suffering power of solitude".

In a rare passage of revealing intimacy, he wrote to David Balfour,

How I go with you—when you speak so feelingly of this want of a "Kindred spirit" & of your therefore, "living in a world of your own entirely alone";—Ah; I do understand you; but do, for a moment, think of me. No wife, no bairns, no visitors—I, too, am living in a world "entirely alone" as to human society; I had however a beautiful letter from a member in the Country (almost a stranger to me) on his reading my paper in Vol.XV. on my feeling in the forest, &c.

He was referring to a lyrical passage in his 1882 paper,

One of the prettiest fairy-like scenes I ever saw in our New Zealand woods, I have, on more than one occasion, witnessed, when reclining on the grass under the shade of one of these tree-ferns. It was noon, and the summer sun was high, and the view, on looking up through the interlacing overhanging foliage softly waving in the breeze, was truly enchanting, every vein and veinlet being highly translucent [hence, I had very nearly specifically named it translucens], and then the green of its arched fronds was of such a delicate hue, such a truly sparkling living green without a blemish. The finely-marked ever-changing traceries, and glints and gleams of vertical sun-light peering down through the many myriad veins in that living bower, on those occasions, were far beyond language! At such times one no longer wonders at our forefathers deeming those evergreen recesses and bowers to be the beloved haunts of wood nymphs and dryads, fays, fairies, and pixies—a belief also firmly and pleasingly held by the ancient New Zealander.

(1882 Trans. N.Z. Inst.15: 311-320).

Now that would compete with any host of golden daffodils. He was of course familiar with "Nature's Priest," Wordsworth....

In my longer journeys I always carried a few choice books with me, and among them a pocket edition of one of our Poets:—Ossian, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Gray, Goldsmith, Burns, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Walter Scott, Longfellow, Tennyson, &c.

(1884 In memoriam. *Daily Telegraph Office, Napier*. iv, 74 p.)

Colenso wrote no verse himself. His verses written in Waipukurau and addressed to his son Willie (“Lay me low”) are not his own, but modified from *Valedictory* by Adam Lindsay Gordon 1833-1870, an English poet (who moved to Australia, where, despite harsh criticism by GB Shaw among others, he was greatly admired: a statue was erected to his memory in Melbourne).

Significantly, Colenso ended his Ruahine paper with this beautiful passage from “Tintern Abbey”

“Though, changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I went among those hills;—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love.— And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky; and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.”——

WORDSWORTH.

In a passage on the relationship between science and religion, Colenso described a magical chain of gold or diamonds tying all things together, his own perception of Wordsworth’s “spirit that impels all thinking things” ...

... my strong and growing belief is, that there is an eternal invisible golden or adamantine chain, extending alike through all, and continually and securely binding all together in their proper sequence for good: future times will show the truth of this. Now and then, here and there, a link of this chain is found, hit upon accidentally as it were, discovered (much as we daily hear of gold, and precious stones, and still more precious medicines,) by energetic ever-seeking ever-advancing man, for the common good of our race. And this, as I take it, is the essence and meaning of true development.

Colenso, 1888. Anniversary Address by the President, Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute: RC Harding, Napier.

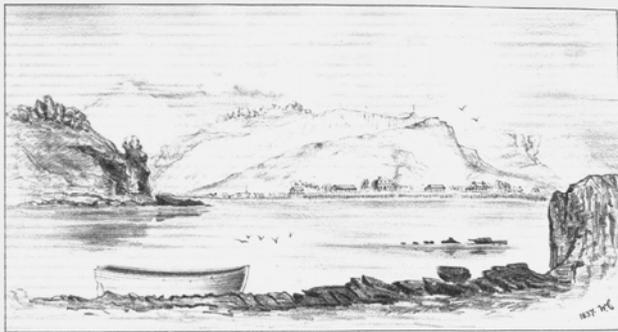
Next page: lithographs by *Hawke’s Bay Herald* from sketches by William Colenso; reproduced in Colenso W. 1888 Fifty years ago in New Zealand; a commemoration; a Jubilee paper; a retrospect; a plain and true story. R.C. Harding, Napier. →→→



H.B. HERALD LITHO.

The Anchorage, with Russell Bay of Islands
From top of the high hill behind Paiaha.

J. Blair del.



H.B. HERALD LITHO.

Paiaha from the islet Motuorangi.
The houses under the two birds where the NT was printed.

J. Blair del.



H.B. HERALD LITHO.

Between Paiaha and Waitangi
With Paiaha appearing in the foreground.

J. Blair del.

The wearing of the green



NEW ZEALANDERS abroad are apt to experience a warm glow of recognition when they spot a pounamu pendant below a friendly face. Colenso wrote to Harding, 20 September 1892, “But I must not omit, a *full third*, of my eldest son’s letter, written from Hythe, Southampton, dated 3/8/92, which may interest *you*. He was writing about his wife & daughter—their state of health; then he says, ‘Mr. Jno. Harding of Mt. Vernon, however will be able to give you a personal account. You will wonder how Mr. H. came across them. It was rather curious and all owing to that small greenstone pendant you sent me years ago, & which is the only ornament my wife has upon her watch-chain. She (& May, daughter) had been over to Southampton, & having to wait some time for the Hythe ferryboat walked on the pier, where they met an elderly man who recognising the greenstone entered into conversation, and turned out to be Mr. Jno H. I havent seen him, for tho my wife gave him our address he has not looked me up; he gave her “Hill Lane,” where he was staying with a niece or grand-daughter. He also said, he was going back in a fortnight, or so, & would certainly look you up.’——(verbatim.)”



The plaque at Waitangi, near Clive, Hawke’s Bay.



Cyathea colensoi

named *Alsophila Colensoi* by Joseph Dalton Hooker: "I have dedicated this beautiful Fern to its zealous discoverer," (Hooker JD. 1853: *The Botany of the Antarctic Voyage of H.M. Discovery Ships Erebus and Terror in the Years 1839-1843*. Vol. 2. Flora Novae-Zelandiae Part I. Flowering Plants. London, Lovell Reeve). Colenso collected the specimen from the Ruahine. Lithography by Walter Hood Fitch. Original description [here](#).



Colenso is a free email Newsletter published irregularly by the Colenso Society. The editor invites contributions on any matter relating to the life and work of the Rev. William Colenso FLS FRS.

Such contributions should be emailed to ian.stgeorge@rnzcgp.org.nz.

