

· 2010 ·

# COLENZO

A Monthly Newsletter and Historical Review

DEVOTED TO

THE ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE OF WILLIAM COLENZO  
AND THE INTERESTS OF THE PRINTING, BOTANICAL, POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, SCIENTIFIC,  
ETHNOLOGICAL, LINGUISTIC, HISTORICAL AND RELATED TRADES

MAY



Wellington, New Zealand:

THE COLENZO SOCIETY, PROPRIETOR AND PUBLISHER  
2010

## Colenso's *kete* in the British Museum



If you go to [http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/aoa/b/basket\\_kete\\_whakairo.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aoa/b/basket_kete_whakairo.aspx) you will see this picture, along with some text, including, “Maori, possibly early 19th century AD, from New Zealand, Polynesia.... This basket was collected by the Englishman William Colenso (1811-99), a missionary for the Church Missionary Society.... This basket must have been collected by Colenso some time between 1834, when he arrived in New Zealand, and 1851, the year the basket was accessioned by the Royal Botanic Gardens. It was transferred to the collections of The British Museum in 1960.”

This must be the *kete whakairo* listed in Colenso's “Memorandum of New Zealand Plants, put up for Sir W. J. Hooker, June 1850”, with this note:

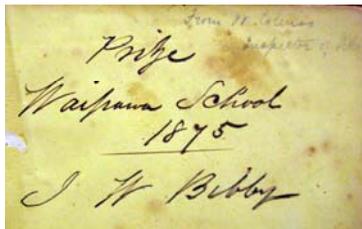
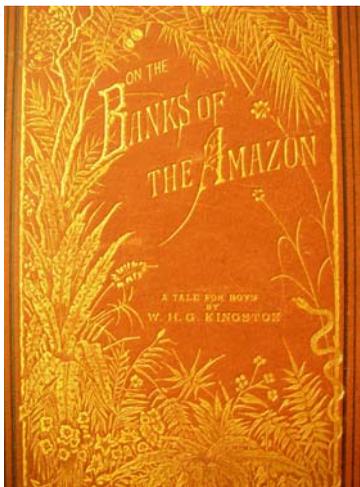
3936. An ornamental basket made of the leaves of *Phormium tenax*; these are only used by Chiefs, and by them only occasionally – to carry their clothes, &c., in. They are now getting very scarce. Native name a *kete*.

The cover of this issue of *Colenso* is modified from an 1890 cover of RC Harding's *Typo*. In its time *Typo* was highly regarded internationally for its typography and layouts, and though it can easily be imitated electronically today, such a fricassee of fonts is too full for our feebler fancies.

## Conundrum

Colenso set the following problem for students at Waipawa School during his 1873 school inspection: “A B C D went into partnership. A put into the business £674/13/6 for 4 yrs, 5 mths, 19 days. B put in £2463/14/8 for 2 yrs, 3 mths, 24 days. C put in £896/17/9 for 6 yrs, 8 mths, 17 days. D put in £346/18/7 for 3 yrs 4 mths. Their gross gain was £2487/13/2 and expenses in working the business was £596/15/9. I wish to know the nett gain and what was each partner’s share.”

The problem was answered correctly by James Woodhouse Bibby (1862–1959) an 11 year old Form I boy. Inspector Colenso presented him with a book as a prize. Young Bibby was a bright boy and he won again in 1875 . That prize book now resides in the Hawke’s Bay Museum and Art Gallery library; it is *On the banks of the Amazon* and is inscribed by Colenso.



## The plaque at Colenso Spur in the Ruahine:

photographs by Mike Lusk.



## Members' Brief Bios

**Dianne Bardsley** As a lexicographer, I am particularly interested in Colenso's lexis, his use of te reo Maori, and his coinages, so both his letters and his publications are significant sources for me. In addition to that, of course, is the real sense of the man and his perseverance and steadfastness that are revealed, particularly in the letters. In lexical terms, we should end up with a valuable case study of a colonial figure.

**Richard Stone** Born 1926 Wellington and schooled there. Medicine at Otago, graduating 1948, postgraduate study in UK, physician in Wanganui 1955-1991 with interests in diabetes and later in the alcohol and drug field. Involved in NZMA and local medical postgraduate education and Heart Foundation. Leisure interests in walking, canoeing, sailing, squash, croquet. Retired Wellington 1994. Long-term interests in medical history, reading/writing/photography/NZ books new and old. 1955 married Barbara, UK-trained GP in Lambeth, four children, one medically qualified working in Wellington. Interest in Colenso awakened by a son working in the advertising firm Colenso and reading about him in the 1980s and later more about his life as printer/traveller/auto-didact/ polymath and prickly one-time demi-outcast.

**Peter de Lange** My interest in William Colenso stems back to being a very nervous 12 year old lad giving a speech to my class mates about this amazing man. The speech taught me many things, especially that I should never use cue cards, make jokes and that 12 year olds are not really that interested in apparently ancient old men who liked plants.... The fact that the next speaker won the round by talking about his "friend" Jesus speaks volumes. Anyway... Colenso fascinates me - as anyone who has read the New Zealand Flora series and its precursors soon appreciates this was one very clever but I feel, much maligned man. Clearly Colenso did not help his case, he could be very arrogant, he was at times very racist (consider the Moa "discovery" and his attempt to refute the first find using an antisemitic angle), but he was also very, very intelligent and a damn sight more sympathetic to the "natives" than his colleagues ever were. Looking back I feel very sorry for him - he was dumped in a then little known part of the North Island with a woman who he detested (the feeling was mutual) and told to convert the heathen. He did this (to some extent anyway) but he also did so much more. Anyway, I admire him because he really put New Zealand botany on the map - he was in the right place at the right time. He tackled all the groups (flowering plants, ferns, fungi, seaweeds, mosses, liverworts etc) and when the Hookers and he went their separate ways he continued his work. While its clear that his contemporaries thought little of him, especially Thomas Kirk who even rather contemptuously named species Colenso had already recognised (and which Kirk knew about), like *Podocarpus hallii* for what is legitimately *P. cunninghamii*, or ones that he'd had a major part in discovering, like what is now *Manoao colensoi*, Colenso got on with it, and was very influential in teaching a younger generation to have an interest in our flora, fauna and indigenous people. During my work on *Kunzea* I was pleased to see that Colenso had correctly recognised three of the species I now recognise (but which I

have yet to publish - sorry). Like many modern botanists I don't entirely agree with all of Colenso's species and I do agree that toward the end of his life he became an "undisciplined splitter" but he deserves much better recognition than he ever got from his contemporaries or those that have followed him. I find it staggering that we can hold a celebration of Cheeseman's 1906 flora in 2006 but completely ignore Colenso's greater contributions. So I applaud Ian's efforts to set up this society. I have met a few of Colenso's descendants and they feel the same. As a biosystematist I have started to do my bit - like having *Colensoa* reinstated as a valid genus and I intend to do more - like showing what the real *Celmisia graminifolia* is and Colenso's part in its discovery.

**Allan Davidson** - I retired in 2009 after teaching church history at St John's College, Auckland, for twenty-seven years - the last eighteen included teaching through the Auckland Consortium for Theological Education and then the School of Theology in the University of Auckland. My research and writing has been in the area of New Zealand and Pacific religious history with a particular interest in the interaction of missionaries and indigenous people. I have published extensively in the field and also contributed to the area through editing the *New Zealand Religious History Newsletter*, establishing the Religious History Association of Aotearoa New Zealand and organising regular conferences. My interests in William Colenso are particularly to do with his role as a CMS printer and pamphleteer, reporter of the proceedings at Waitangi on 5 and 6 February 1840, his period as a missionary at Ahuriri, and after his dismissal his somewhat ambiguous relationship with the church.

**Christine Hardie** I attended Colenso High School (as it was then) although very little was taught at the school about its namesake. Twenty years later I took up a position at the HB Museum as Education Officer. During my time there I compiled information for schools that included Colenso as part of their studies about NZ history/colonisation. The students would sometimes be brought to the museum to view artefacts connected with Colenso such as his printing press, some of his writings and a number of photos. The education service also provided historic walk guides that included his house and grave, both on Napier Hill. As a tramper I have been into the Ruahine Ranges many times and, as part of the sesquicentennial celebrations in 1990 was one of a group traversing the range and supposedly re-tracing some of Colenso's travels on his way to the Inland Patea. We travelled west to east that time and discovered when we got to the bottom of Colenso Spur and read the memorial stone that we were five years early!

**Sydney J. Shep.** My interest in Colenso was an obvious fit with my day job as Senior Lecturer in Print & Book Culture at Victoria University of Wellington and The Printer at Wai-te-ata Press, VUW's letterpress teaching and research centre. I delved into Colenso's printing career while researching the history of paper and papermaking in colonial New Zealand. This led me to the records of the Church Missionary Society, now housed at the University of Birmingham, and I was able to track the various shipments of paper to NZ that Colenso subsequently used. Colenso was also interested in economic botany and I was keen to track later experiments with indigenous fibres such as phormium tenax and carex for papermak-

ing led by Sir James Hector and Baron von Mueller, among others. My current project is entitled "The Printers' Web: Typographical Journals and Global Communication Networks." Colenso also figures strongly here as long-time friend and correspondent with NZ's little-known but widely influential typographer and printer, Robert Coupland Harding. Harding's typographical journal, \*Typo\* (1887-1897), is a marvel of late nineteenth-century design and is now available electronically with an introduction at: <http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-SheTypo.html#name-121622-1>

**Sarah Carter** My interest in William Colenso began with a family connection. I am descended from his brother Richard V.T. Colenso whose daughter Fanny Colenso was my grandfather George Carter's mother. My grandfather was very interested in family history and spent much of his retirement researching the Colenso and Veale families, collecting documents, portraits, photos and artifacts on several visits to Penzance. I now have some of those. I teach Canadian history at the University of Alberta with a focus on the impact of colonization on Canada's Aboriginal people, but have interests in comparative colonial histories. I visited New Zealand for the first time in June, 2009 and gave a talk at the University of Otago at a conference on "Colonial Intimacies" where William and his son Wiremu were mentioned in several presentations. There was a great deal of interest in two photos I showed of Wiremu as no one there had seen them before. I also visited Napier and did a few days of research with a focus on Wiremu. I am writing an article (although I'm becoming convinced it could be a small book) on Wiremu with my colleague at the U of A Jane Samson, who is writing a book on missionaries of the South Pacific, including Colenso.

**Nita Harding** Great grand-daughter of Robert Coupland Harding, who was a close friend of William Colenso, and also named one of his sons after Colenso. I have an interest in family history and collated a family tree in 1987. However I am also interested in the stories that make up family history as these give an insight into the life of our forebears. I am interested in Colenso because he was an influential figure in early New Zealand, and also played an important part in the life of my great grand-father and his family.



*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](mailto:ian.stgeorge@rnzcgp.org.nz).



No pleasure is  
comparable to the  
standing upon  
the vantage-ground  
of truth

