

# eColenso

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*eColenso* is the free email publication of the Colenso Society, 32 Hawkestone St, Thorndon, Wellington 6011: please forward it to interested others. Contributions should be emailed to the editor, Ian St George, [istge@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:istge@yahoo.co.nz).

Past issues are at [www.colensostudy.id.au/Newletter%20Masthead.htm](http://www.colensostudy.id.au/Newletter%20Masthead.htm).

# Taupiri

Taupiri on the Waikato river was a significant place for the Colensos.

**William Colenso** was on the Waikato on 27 January 1842, as he related in his journal,

Met a man with a live, sp. of Coot; app. new, wh. I purchased for a fig. tob. It was a most graceful bird; gen. color, dark, almost black;—head, grey, fore neck & breast ferruginous, wings barred with white, bill produced & sharp, feet & legs beautiful & olivaceous—eye, light & very animated. I kept it till evening thinkg. to kill & stuff it, but, as I had not any time to spare, & as the creature looked so very graceful I cod. not find it in my heart to do so.—I let it go; it swam & dived, & disappeared.\* After Sunset &c. we landed, for the night, at a little village named, here I held Service in the open air & preached from 1 John I, 1–3 &c, to abt. 100 natives, among whom were some Baptd. ones, who were exceedg. attentive. A chief died just after my arrival; he had been some time ill; & was quite insensible when I arrd.—he was unbaptized & I fear ignorant of Jesus. Oh! the exceeding apathy displayed by the N. Zealander towards his sick & dying relatives & friends!

28th. Left early... about 11 a.m. landed at Pukatea to see Mr. & Mrs. Ashwell who were there, on pr. return from paying a visit to Mr. & Mrs. Morgan at Otawao; spent an hour or two here with them—contind. our course down the river... sunset brought up for the night on the banks, the mosquitoes were very thick.—

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\* It was probably the Australian coot.

**Benjamin Yates Ashwell** arrived in New Zealand in 1835.

Because he appeared somewhat temperamental he was not at first entrusted with a mission station, but, instead, occupied himself ministering to the Europeans at Kororareka. When at length he joined Maunsell at Waikato Heads, his temperament provoked hostility among the Maoris. Later he was allowed to open his own mission station at Kaitotehe, near Taupiri, where, to the surprise of his superiors, his ministrations met with instant and impressive success. Besides the normal duties of his mission, Ashwell had to cover a large district. In 1839 he opened branch missions at Te Awamutu and Otawhao, again with spectacular success. The latter was taken over by Morgan in 1841.

—ASHWELL, Benjamin Yates, from *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, edited by AH McLintock, 1966. Te Ara the Encyclopedia of NZ. URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/1966/ashwell-benjamin-yates> ]

He set up the Taupiri Mission School in 1843. It was a boarding school, probably also with some day pupils, which taught academic and practical subjects. Girls, for example, learnt reading in Māori and English, history, arithmetic and domestic duties.

**Elizabeth Colenso** left her husband for Auckland in 1853 and went to the Ashwells to teach at the Mission School in Taupiri in 1854, her daughter Fanny soon joining her as well. She is probably one of the women in the school doorway in Bruno Hamel's 1859 photograph (p6). At the outbreak of the Waikato war in 1861 Elizabeth took her children to England to continue their education. The Taupiri school closed in 1863 when the wars forced Ashwell to leave. William Isaac Spencer took photographs in 1863 when he was army surgeon with the 18th Royal Irish: he would later become mayor of Napier, skilled microscopist and scientific friend of William Colenso.

The Taupiri mission was a picturesque place, drawn, painted and photographed by many: a selection follows.

1843



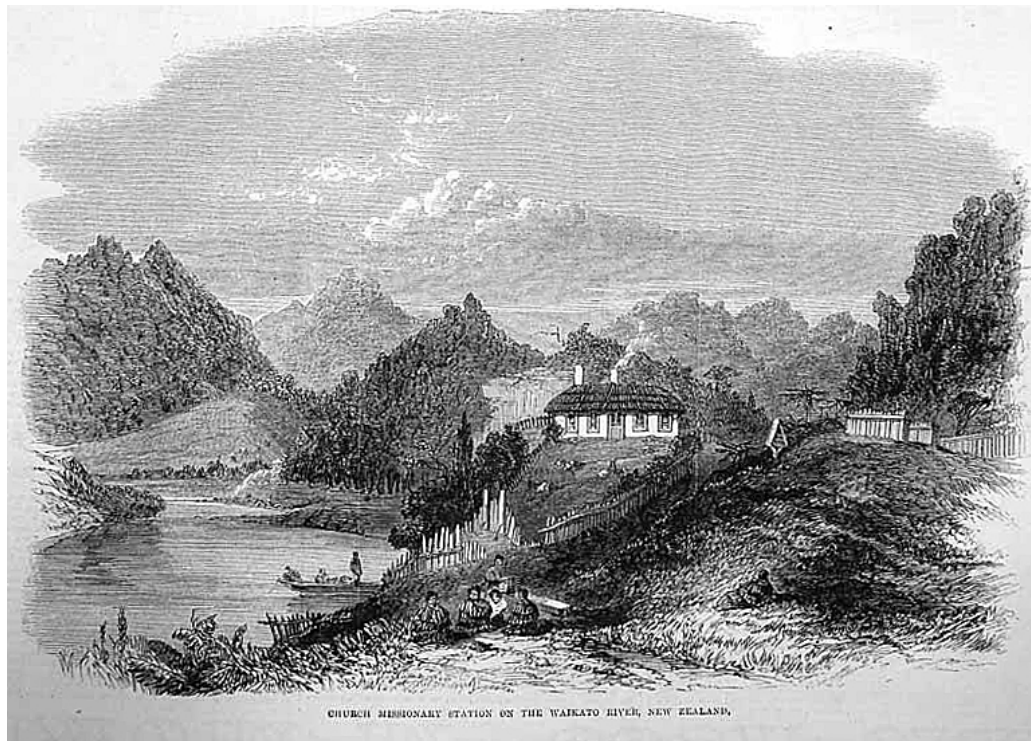
Ashworth, Edward 1814-1896: Church Missionary Station, Mr Ashwell — Pepepe (paypaypay) on the Waikato River New Zealand, 1843.  
Inset: "Architecture New Zealandic, 3 or 4 feet high to the eaves, lined with reeds, kakaho." Alexander Turnbull Library, A 208-002.

1847

From the *Illustrated London News* of  
30 January 1864

The mission-house of Pepepe is one of the most picturesque spots on the River Waikato. It is situated on a rocky knoll, overhanging the broad river, not far from its junction with the Waipa, and is surrounded by green, mossy slopes, and glens of tree ferns, while dark and sombre forests close the steep sides of the adjoining hills. At some little distance, near the neighbouring native village, is the church, and further on down the river is the pah of the late renowned chief and Maori King, Te Whero-where. All the banks of the Waikato are thickly peopled with the native inhabitants, and the Waikato are the most powerful and numerous of the New Zealand tribes.

The accompanying engraving, from a drawing made on the spot by Mr G.F. Angas,\* represents the picturesque scenery on the Waikato, near its junction with the Waipa River. The Waikato here is broad and deep, and flows majestically along between alluvial plains of the richest soil, which are bounded on the right by the high range of Taupiri. In the dis-



tance are seen the mountains of Pirongia, near Kawhia, on the west coast. The village on the riverbank is called Wakarepa, and the district around has long been famous for its plantations of the “kumera”, or sweet potato, the choicest vegetable of the New Zealander. In the foreground is a “patuka”, or storehouse, in which maize, seeds, &c., are kept in security from the

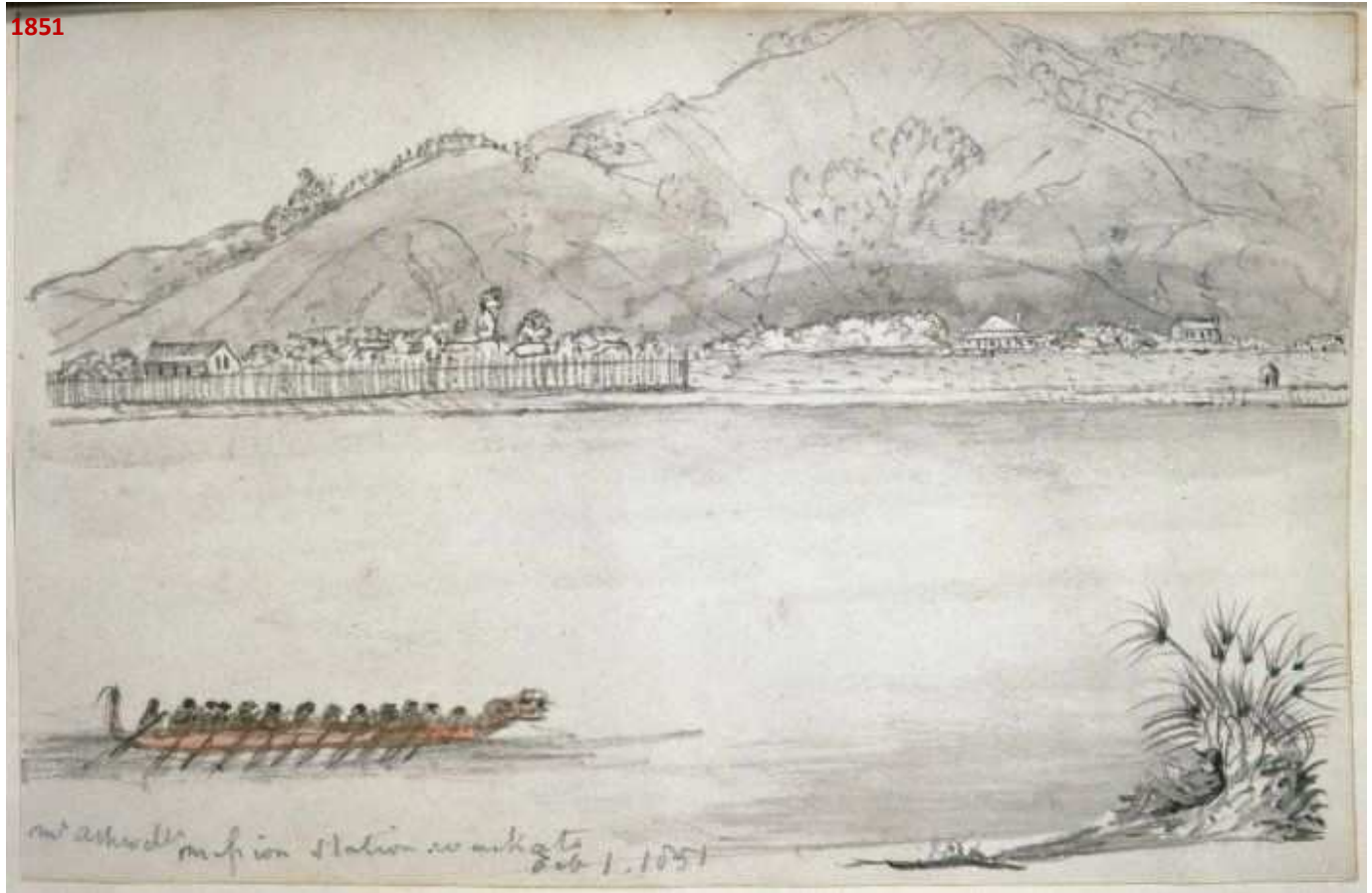
rats. Not far from this spot are the principal strongholds and settlements of the powerful Waikato tribes, who are the foremost in opposing the British rule in New Zealand, and are at this moment carrying on their unequal warfare with a valour and determination worthy of a better cause.

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\* Angas was in NZ in 1847

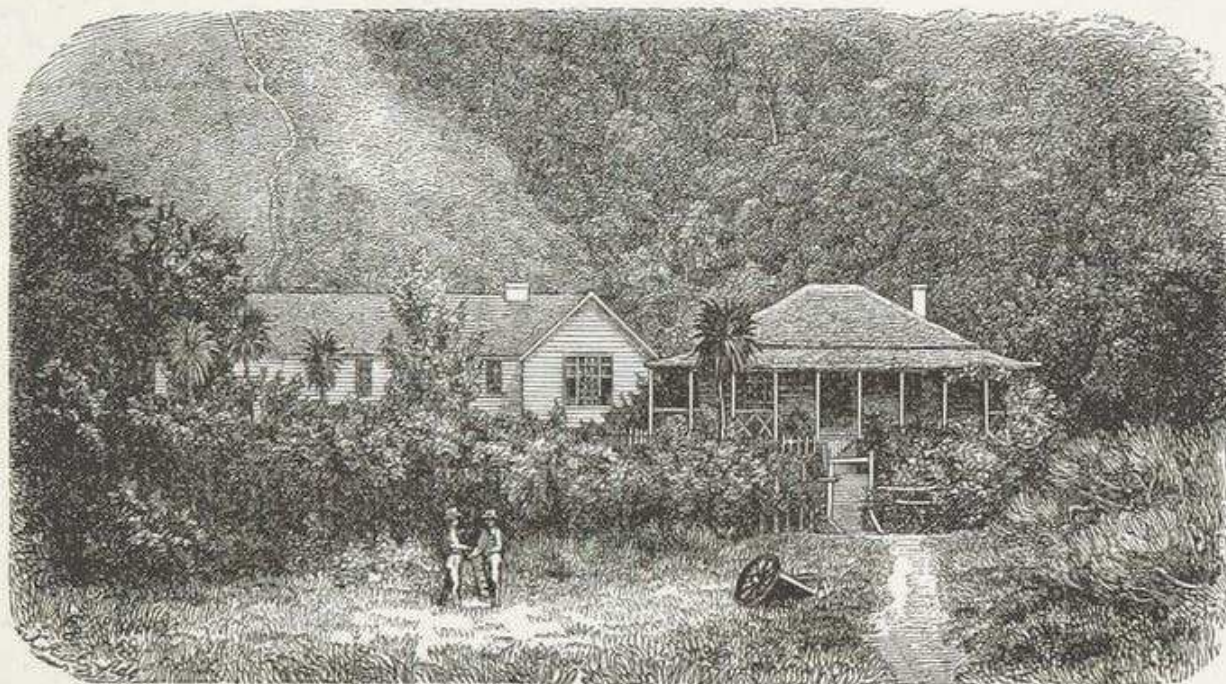


1851



Taylor, Richard, 1805-1873: Mr Ashwell's mission station, Waikato. Feb 1, 1851. National Library Reference Number: E-296-q-089-1

1858



Kaitotehe, Mission Station of the Rev. Mr. Ashwell at the Taupiri.

Hochstetter, Ferdinand Christian von. 1867. "New Zealand, its physical geography, geology and natural history, with special reference to the results of Government Expeditions in the provinces of Auckland and Nelson ... Translated from the German original ... by E. Sauter ... With additions. Stuttgart.

Hochstetter was in NZ in 1858. The school can now be seen.

1859



Ashwell's mission school at Taupiri, 1859. Photograph Bruno Hamel. National Library Reference Number: PA1-o-207-06. Elizabeth Colenso may be one of the women in the doorway



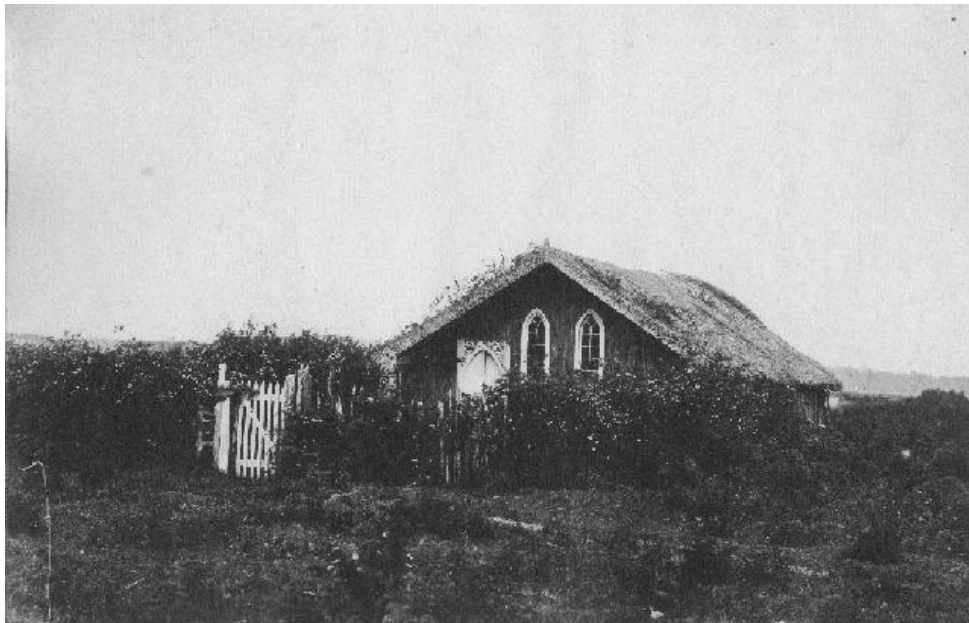
1863



Benjamin Ashwell's Mission House, Taupiri, 1863, Photographed by William Isaac Spencer, Collection of Hawke's Bay Museums Trust, Ruawharo Tā-ū-rangi, 5597 - 43



1863



Maori church at Taupiri December 1863, Photographed by William Isaac Spencer,  
Collection of Hawke's Bay Museums Trust, Ruawhara Tā-ū-rangi, 5597 – 42

## Colenso's map?

In *eColenso* September 2016 I noted,

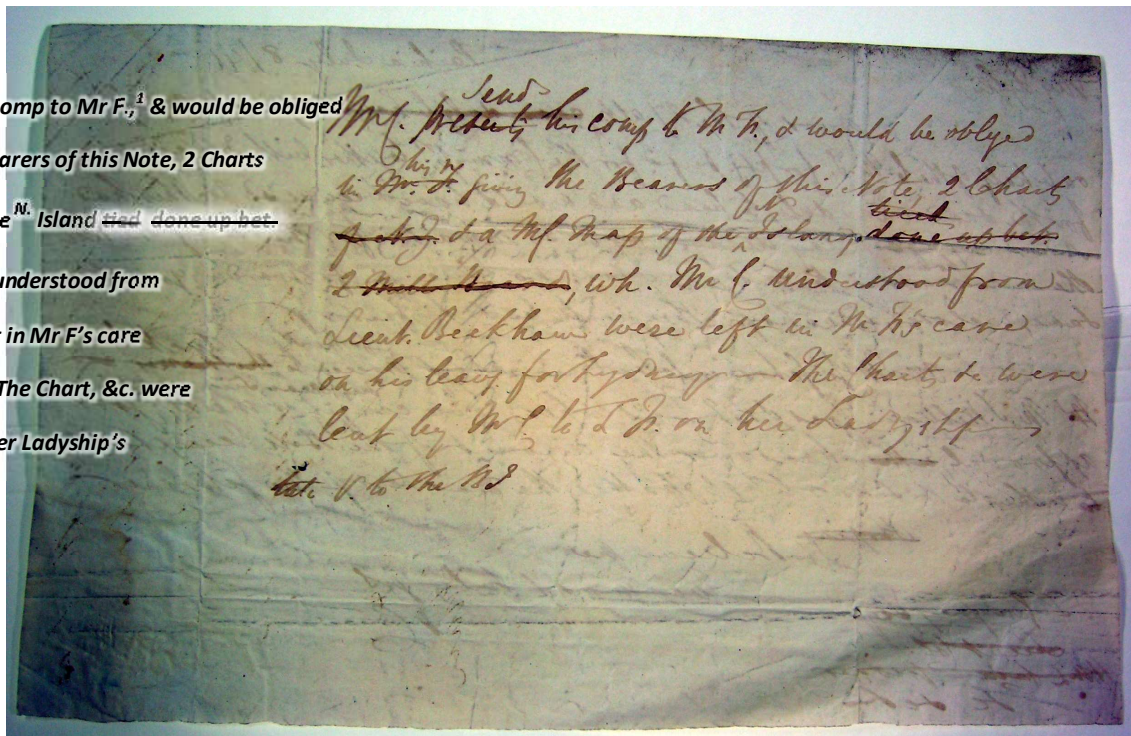
... a tantalizing entry in a letter from Busby (in Sydney) to Colenso dated 4 July 1840 [ATL Ms-0585],

*Clint the Engraver is engraving your map in copperplate, "from the latest and best information"—but without mentioning any names. I expected to be able to send you a copy per Columbine but I find it will not be ready for a week.*

I could not find any Clint map associated with Colenso but speculated that Colenso's sketch maps of Northland and Poverty Bay may have formed the basis for the map Clint would engrave for him in 1840.

A scrap of paper in the Turnbull Library may refer to Colenso's Clint map (see next page). It appears to be a draft of a letter, perhaps to Samuel Hayward Ford, written after May 1841 when Lady Jane Franklin left the Bay of Islands ►►►

Mr C. ~~presents~~ sends his comp to Mr F.,<sup>1</sup> & would be obliged  
 in ~~Mr F.~~ his giving the Bearers of this Note, 2 Charts  
~~of N.Z.~~ & a Ms. Map of the <sup>N.</sup> Island ~~and done up bet~~  
~~2 Mill Boards~~, wh. Mr C. understood from  
 Lieut. Beckham<sup>2</sup> were left in Mr F's care  
 on his leavg. for Sydney. The Chart, &c. were  
 lent by Mr C. to L F.<sup>3</sup> on her Ladyship's  
 late V.<sup>4</sup> to the Nl.



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 lent by Mr C. to L F. on her Ladyship's  
 late V. to the Nl.

1. Mr F. = perhaps Samuel Hayward Ford, medical missionary with the Anglican Church Missionary Society, who arrived at the Paihia Mission Station in 1837. The Fords left Paihia for Te Wahapu in 1842. Lady Jane had injured her ankle in Port Nicholson and Ford may have attended her in the Bay of Islands. He preferred being addressed as Mister, because he was not a doctor but a surgeon.
2. Lieut Beckham = Thomas Beckham, magistrate at Kororareka.
3. L F. = Lady Franklin.
4. V. = visit or voyage.

# The Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute *aka* The Knife Grinders Society <sup>1</sup>

The Rev. William Colenso was for many years the rather obsessional life and soul of the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute as the reports of its meetings in the *Hawke's Bay Herald* and the Napier *Daily Telegraph* attest.

His relationship with the *Herald* began well: the old printer rolling up his sleeves and helping the newly arrived proprietor James Wood with the first issue. Wood and he became political opponents, however, and by 1881 Colenso would write to his friend David Balfour (28 March 1881), "You... will never again see a line of mine in the *Herald*—indeed, I have *not looked at one* for this year!!" He wrote later to Andrew Luff (14 October 1883), "As you take in the '*Herald*' you will have seen their usual 'skit' upon us—or rather me—which creates some talk here & fault finding w. them (W. & Pirani) and tends to do them harm; all hands are now tolerably sure that those skits are manufactured in their office."

"W" is Richard Thomas Walker, by then editor of the *Herald*, and probably the author of the "skits": a series of satirical "letters to

the editor" on Colenso and the HBPI (*Hawke's Bay Herald* 8 February, 17 May, 10 October 1883, 6 February 1884). Henry Charles Pirani was compositor at the *Herald*.

The 1883 AGM was held on 6 February, The Bishop elected President, Dr Spencer Vice-President and Colenso Honorary Secretary. The first scientific meeting was held on 14 May, when the programme was,

1. "Contributions towards a better Knowledge of the Maori Race:" Part v.—"On the Hawaiki of the Maoris and the Greenstone Legends," division 1, by W. Colenso, F.L.S.

2. Specimens, mostly Conchological and Geological, a donation to the Museum, in part collected at the Barrier Island (Thames) by Mr. C. P. Winkelmann, and part at Jervis Island (near the Equator, in long. 160° W.), by Mr. Henry Winkelmann, were shown. Living larvæ, chrysalides, and (artificially reared) imago of *Pyrameis gonerilla*, originally captured by the honorary secretary in the Seventy-mile Bush, were also shown; and also a fine specimen of *Torpedo fairchildii*.

On 17 May the *Herald* pounced.

## THE KNIFE GRINDERS' SOCIETY.

On Monday night this Society held their First Ordinary Meeting for this Year. We were highly delighted to see that most of the dignitaries of the Order were present, from the C.K.G.—(Chief Knife Grinder!)—down to the I.S.—(Indefatigable Secretary!!), also a good sprinkling of the fair sex!!! But we were grieved that more Members were not there, to have enjoyed the rich treat provided by the all-pervading Indefatigable Secretary!—

As usual, the Indefatigable Secretary had it nearly all to himself; and was brimful of self-satisfaction.—He read Papers;—he exhibited Knives;—he did some knife-grinding; and he took a hand at the Wheel! First he read an interesting Paper translated by himself from the ancient Moresco; (a language of which the Indefatigable has a Dictionary in preparation!—though he has not proceeded with it far!!) The Paper gave an interesting account of the manners and customs of the ancient Morescos; and described the recondite manner of engraving

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1. See also *eColenso* June 2010.

upon the broad blades of their daggers. The Indefatigable whispered it about that this Paper was only the first of a long series of similar delightful Papers!!!! Every one of course at once simmered over with the pleasure of anticipation;—and a cordial vote of Thanks was instantly passed to the Secretary.

A most remarkable circumstance was related by the Secretary! It was that through its raining very hard at the time he was puzzling over some Moresco idioms all his paper got saturated, and he had been obliged to write on pocket handkerchiefs!!

The Secretary showed round several curious things;— a Toledo blade, beautifully embellished (*navaja para matar*); a Spanish knife from Seville with a curiously shaped handle (*cochillo para comer*); and a sword in the handle of which were embedded several black beetles of a kind now extinct. This last excited much admiration, (they were so captivating,) especially among the ladies, several of whom had betrayed signs of drowsiness during the reading by the Secretary of his interesting Paper!

One of the Members asked whether anything was known about the make and mode of grinding of the knives used in the Phoenix Park murders?

Another Member was about to reply, when he was interrupted by the Indefatigable Secretary, who urged that no one should be allowed to answer anything but himself. He did all the knife-grinding and should do all the talking also. He said that the knives in question were Egyptian, of very old make, and had been taken over to Dublin by some Gipseys.

A vote of thanks was passed to the Secretary for his reply, and it was resolved *unanimously* that in future no Member should speak until it was ascertained whether the Secretary wished to be heard instead.

The resolution was heartily acknowledged by the Indefatigable, who evidently deemed it only what he was entitled to. He promised to produce something very interesting at next meeting— *Chronological, Mineralogical, Physiological, Geological, Paleological, Archæological, Paleontological*, and other 'ogicals.—MAY WE BE THERE!

## Ruination in the name of Jesus

In his *Wairarapa Times-Age* (20 March 2018) review of my book *Mr. Colenso's Wairarapa* Mick Ludden referred to the Rev. William Colenso's "bullying, judgmental proselytising and condemnations of the sexual mores and 'heathen superstitions' of the 'savages' he spent so much energy undermining, thereby compromising their heritage, culture and mana". He cited as examples Colenso's "dismissive mockery of the Ngararahuarau legend and his criminal vandalism of the pou-pou tipuna at Hurunuiorangi".

Using today's ethics to make moral judgments about men's actions in an earlier age is a brave business and Mr Ludden is clearly not a timid man—for such passionate writing often reveals more about the writer than about his subject.

Nowhere in his extant writing did Colenso use the word "savages" for Māori and one would be surprised if he had, such was his respect for their heritage, culture and mana. He did not mock the Ngararahuarau legend, but simply pointed out that the reported bones of the taniwha were actually white stones.

He did, on the other hand, wilfully damage a sculpture at Hurunuiorangi and in doing so sustained a long tradition of the destruction of culturally significant icons by zealots. Of 29 April 1851 Colenso reported to the Church Missionary Society,

*Thence on to Hurunuiorangi, which village we reached by sunset. The Natives of this village, who had preceded us, had already erected a screen fence for my tent in a corner of their newly fenced pa; on entering which, and*



*looking-up, I saw, a monstrous human image as large as life, obscenely carved on the upper part of one of the large totara posts of the pa, about 10 feet from the ground. I felt vexed at this, because while such hideous and obscene figures are, alas! too common on all their old pas, this pa is not only new, but erected chiefly by Baptized Natives. I also believed that this image was meant to represent some one of their old ancestors (as is generally the case), and, therefore, I knew it to be useless to ask the villagers to remove any portion of it; so, watching an opportunity, I seized our axe, and mounting the fence began to lop away to the infinite amusement of my own lads,—the delight of the better informed,—and the chagrin of the baser-minded of the villagers, one or two of whom murmured greatly. Having finished this without interruption, save a volley of words, I descended; & my tent being now pitched, I held Service in the open air....*

Axing the penis off the newly carved Hurunuiorangi pou was by today's standards a vandalistic act. But it was one in a tradition of such destructiveness that persists in the demolition of the iconic Bamiyan buddhas by the Taliban, the destruction of the temple at Palmyra by Isis, the removal of the Cecil Rhodes statue from the University of Capetown, the beheading of the John Ballance statue in the gardens at Whanganui and banishing Robert E Lee from a Dallas park.

The perpetrators of such sabotage are zealots, usually—not always—religious zealots, blessed with the cosy satisfaction that their way is the right way and that others must, perforce, be wrong.

It is a fine old Christian tradition. The title of this essay is borrowed from Bettany Hughes's review of *The Darkening Age: The Christian Destruction of the Classical World* by Catherine Nixey (*New York Times International Edition* 2–3 June 2018). In his review of the same book Tim Whitmarsh wrote (*Guardian* 28 December 2017),

“Nixey describes how she was brought up in her youth to think of late-antique and medieval Christians as enlightened curators of the classical heritage, diligently copying philosophical texts and poems throughout the ages so that they were saved from oblivion. (But) early Christians were much more likely to close down the academies, shut temples, loot and destroy artwork, forbid traditional practices and burn books.... Many ancient Christians believed that the world we inhabit is a perilous place, crowded with malevolent supernatural beings, who sometimes manifest themselves in the form of fake gods. It is the Christian's duty to root these out. Destroying a “pagan” statue or burning a book, then, is a no more violent act than amputating a gangrenous limb: you save the healthy whole by preventing the spread of the infection. If you think that a marble statue is possessed by a demon, then it makes a kind of sense to dig out its eyes and score a cross in its forehead.”



Sculptures are powerful icons and defacing them sends a powerful message. Colenso was a nineteenth century

Christian missionary, of a time when Britons considered themselves at the peak of civilisation, bearing a moral duty to educate and enlighten the rest of the world. He was not alone in bowdlerising Māori art. He was a man of his times, a Christian zealot.

In that respect Mr Ludden has a point.

In later life, however, Colenso was an enlightened nineteenth century polymath who would have been ashamed to have added to the sorry array of felled, mutilated, neutered, featureless icons of other cultures.

# Colenso's house



◀ The fence is up, but the trees, of which he was later very proud, are not yet in evidence.

Tennyson Street, Napier. Rhodes, Beatrice, fl 1978: Photographs. Ref: PA1-q-193-062. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. records/22825312 .

This, by an unknown photographer in 1861, shows Colenso's house and servants' cottage on Colenso Hill, described in a letter to his nephew on 26 February 1895, "House, a wooden one, never painted since erection in 1859 (and then only outside!) no bath-room, no W.C., no lavatory, a plain and shabby-looking old Hermitage!"



Norman Potts was born in Christchurch in 1886, two years before the death of his grandfather, Canterbury runholder, conservationist and naturalist Thomas Henry Potts. Norman's father, Ambrose, one of Thomas and Emma Potts' thirteen children, managed a large sheep station near Waipukurau in central Hawke's Bay, where young Norman spent his childhood. One of his early memories was of a trip with his mother to Napier, during which she pointed out a white-bearded old man walking along the street. She said he was Mr Colenso, the famous botanist, diarist and printer who, when his Maori workers at Paihia rebelled at their tedious printing tasks, would pursue them back to their villages and drive them back to work.

—Excerpt from *"Biographical Sketch – Norman Ambrose Potts (1886-1970)"*. Val Smith.  
[NEW ZEALAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER, 10 December 2012, pp 21-22.]

*Colenso recalled a milder version in his "Fifty years ago in New Zealand",*

"Finding I was advancing very slowly, and the work long and heavy, I engaged three steady Christian Maoris, (adult and tattooed chiefs from Te Kawakawa,) Andrew, Joseph, and Hamo, to work as pressmen. But while, at first, willing to learn and to work (*in their way*), they caused me so much trouble and anxiety, and also loss, (besides their getting to dislike the work, as being wholly unsuitable to their habits, there was so much standing, and that too in one place,) that I was obliged to dismiss them and to do without them, and go on, as before, *alone!* The youthful Maoris of that day would not work at all, and could not be trusted. Indeed I had tried some sharp intelligent Maori youths (sons of neighbouring and friendly chiefs) during the past year to roll the forms, while engaged in printing the gospel of St. Luke, and some other smaller works; but they soon got tired and left me, just as they were severally becoming useful; this was in a great measure owing to their being obliged to stand so long in one spot at their work. As a bit of curiosity I may mention, that the wages I paid to those three men, as agreed upon between us, was 3s. each per week, and their food,—this latter mainly consisting of potatoes and other edible roots of Maori cultivating. Three were engaged, as while two (in turn) worked at Press, the third did the simple cooking, getting water, shell-fish and firewood."

**A letter from the editor to members of the Colenso Society**

*12 January 2019*

*Dear members*

*Things tend to follow a natural course and I sense that the Colenso Society has run its. Activities like this should never be regarded as permanent: they have their rise, plateau and decline.*

*After discussion with the Executive I inform you the Society will now be wound up, the remaining funds to go to a suitable related cause.*

*I will continue with occasional publication of "eColenso" as interesting material surfaces.*

*Thank you for your interest and support over the years since 2010. I have found this amateur adventure in the murk of history rather fascinating.*

*Happy New Year.*

*Ian St George*