

## Thomas Shepherd and the First New Zealand Company



THE LASTING SUCCESSES of Edward Gibbon Wakefield's scheme for the systematic colonisation of New Zealand, starting in 1839 with the founding of the Port Nicholson settlement in what is now Wellington, are well-documented.<sup>1</sup> Despite the sometimes dubious means by which his land-trading and settlement organisation — the New Zealand Company — obtained territory from the indigenous Māori population, Wakefield could boast in 1845 (five years after the establishment of Crown Colony government in New Zealand) that he still wielded more power than the colony's governor. And as if to demonstrate this point, the New Zealand Company was instrumental in having the country's second governor, Robert FitzRoy, recalled in 1845 on the basis that he was an obstacle to its designs.<sup>2</sup> However, the often spectacular growth in the size of the company settlements in New Zealand in the 1840s and 1850s can easily lead to the impression that this success was, if not necessarily relatively easily achieved, at least partially inevitable.<sup>3</sup> After all, Māori land was portrayed by its agents as easily obtainable,<sup>4</sup> the landscape and climate were suitable for British settlement,<sup>5</sup> and there were seemingly few obstacles to founding viable and enduring towns.

Wakefield's enterprise was not the first venture which attempted the systematic colonisation of parts of New Zealand. In the 1820s, an earlier incarnation of the New Zealand Company endeavoured to found a colony in the country, but its diminutive scale, inadequate planning, poor intelligence and limited financial resources militated against its success. Although this first New Zealand Company was scorned by its later namesake,<sup>6</sup> as well as by the press at the time,<sup>7</sup> its failures offered important lessons for Wakefield's much more ambitious enterprise in New Zealand in the following decades.

The conception of the first New Zealand Company took place in the byzantine world of London clubs, lodges and coffee houses in the 1820s. These were the venues where business was often transacted, and new ventures proposed — some to great enthusiasm, and others to pointed disinterest. The mix of men inhabiting these places included minor politicians, businessmen, the odd prominent clergyman and a smattering of aristocrats.<sup>8</sup> These establishments reverberated with conversation (and no doubt a good degree of bluster), but they were also where sources of capital might be tapped. Although no records exist, it is reasonable to deduce that the scale of capital on offer was modest. Industrialisation was in full swing in Britain at the time and was a destination for larger amounts of investment.<sup>9</sup> The fact that the sort of ventures sometimes proposed in these places were highly speculative, and therefore only attracted what could be termed disposable capital — the sort of amount that an investor could afford to lose if, as was often the case, the enterprise failed — also points to modest sums being at stake.

As a rule of thumb, the further away the prospective enterprise was from the heart of the British Empire in London, the proportionately greater the risk, and the more speculative the information on which investment was based. In this case, the vacuum of good intelligence about New Zealand was filled with an ample supply of often highly imaginative conjecture. The idea of New Zealand as an idyllic, spacious, South Pacific paradise endowed with fertile soils, a temperate climate, docile natives and stout British yeoman deriving their prosperity directly from the land, was prominent at the time.<sup>10</sup> It was the sort of vision that served as an antidote to the overcrowded, polluted industrial cities that were expanding around Britain.

The recovery of an idealised rustic past had become almost a fixation for some British nostalgics from the late eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Just as this vision was fading from sight in England it seemed that it could be enacted in New Zealand.<sup>12</sup> There was a sense that the romanticised rural archetype (which, of course, never really existed in England) could be transposed to and rejuvenated in New Zealand.<sup>13</sup> The possibility of the redemption of virtuous rural British national character, together with the opportunity for making a profit through establishing an 'instant' colony in New Zealand, made such an enterprise increasingly appealing.

Other considerations were taken into account when colonising schemes were discussed, although they tended to be less influential. These included the need for the extension of European civilisation, the prosthetising of Christianity and the relief of 'surplus' population in Britain.<sup>14</sup> On this latter point, one member of the House of Commons, for example, recommended that the British government consider measures such as 'emigration upon an extended scale' to 'prevent the injurious effects ... upon the condition of the labouring classes of this country' brought about by overcrowding and poverty. Sending hundreds or even thousands of the poor to the colonies was 'the only means by which the evils to be apprehended from the continued increase of the pauper population ... could be averted'.<sup>15</sup> Although these were all minor considerations in their own right, they contributed to the concoction of motives behind many proposed and actual settlement schemes in the early nineteenth century.

However, the notion of prospective colonies as places where some of Britain's poor could be deposited did not find universal favour. Surely, reasoned Robert Gourlay, the Scottish colonial reformer and one of the earliest nineteenth-century advocates of systematic settlement, planned British colonies should be peopled not with paupers but by a group carried to the colony by a 'tide of commerce' who possessed 'all the strength and order and refinement' that British society had attained by the early 1820s.<sup>16</sup>

The problem was that such idealism, based on the ambitious belief that a reasonable cross-section of British society could be despatched to far-off territories and achieve prosperity as a result, repeatedly came up against the fact that most of Britain's colonies offered the mother country no economic advantage at all. A contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*, writing in an 1825 edition, challenged the supporters of planned migration 'to point out a single benefit of any sort whatever' that might be derived from possessing colonies

for settlement: ‘They are productive of heavy expense to Great Britain, but of nothing else.’<sup>17</sup> Yet, in spite of such occasional rebuffs, by the middle of the decade a number of schemes for establishing settlements in New Zealand were being devised.<sup>18</sup>

Of these various proposed enterprises, the New Zealand Company was the most carefully planned and well financed. At its core was an assembly of merchants, ship-owners, financiers and politicians, many of whom had either previous experience in or contact with the East India Company, which in this era served as a template for British mercantile and political expansion. The East India Company had been formed in the early seventeenth century, and by the beginning of the 1800s had grown to become a vast commercial conglomerate, wielding considerable political and military power throughout much of the Indian sub-continent. Its intimate contacts with successive British governments ensured that it enjoyed the full gamut of special rights and privileges, from guaranteed monopolies to the protection of trade routes by the Royal Navy. Its capital — derived from shareholdings — proved to be a perennial source of finance, aiding unprecedented expansion for more than two centuries.<sup>19</sup>

Here, then, was the archetype for any company looking to establish a commercially viable settlement in a new colony, and as early as 1823<sup>20</sup> a suggestion that such an approach might be applied to New Zealand appeared in an anonymously authored work entitled *To the People of England: An Address on the Colonization of New Zealand*.<sup>21</sup> This book made reference to the ‘known intention of several friends of humanity to colonize the Island [sic] of New Zealand; for which purpose it is confidently stated that active preparations are making’. In addition to the usually cited benefits of extending civilisation and Christianity to New Zealand, this embryonic plan promised ‘great wealth to many adventurers’.<sup>22</sup>

Although its author’s identity was concealed, it is highly likely that *To the People of England* was written by someone with a vested interest in an imminent attempt to establish the sort of enterprising community in New Zealand that was prescribed in its text. The book consciously appealed to an especially wide range of interest groups, portraying the proposed colonising company variously as a source of profit for entrepreneurs, a remedy for poverty and over-crowding, a propagator of Christianity and the source of a more prosperous future for all those would-be settlers who signed up to the scheme. Not for the last time, this plan for the systematic colonisation of New Zealand involved its advocates dressing up commercialism as humanitarianism.

In 1825, a group of 16 directors formed the basis of the New Zealand Company, and in March of that year two of these men — Edward Littleton and John Lambton — met with the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Lord Bathurst, seeking official British support for their venture.

Littleton and Lambton were the two most prominent directors, but others<sup>23</sup> included John William Buckle, who was the company’s solicitor;<sup>24</sup> George Lyall, a member of the House of Commons<sup>25</sup> and a merchant;<sup>26</sup> Stewart Marjoribanks, a politician and a founder of the Pacific Pearl Company;<sup>27</sup> George Palmer, also a member of the House of Commons and a partner in the

East India Company; Edward Ellice, Lambton's brother-in-law, a member of the House of Commons, and also a director of the Canada Company;<sup>28</sup> Admiral Sir Courtenay Boyle;<sup>29</sup> James Pattison, who was chairman of the East India Company in 1818 and 1822;<sup>30</sup> and Robert Torrens, a political economist, later a founder of the colony of South Australia.<sup>31</sup>

Littleton, the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Hatherton, was a wealthy landowner (he received rents from over 280 properties),<sup>32</sup> a member of the House of Commons for Staffordshire, and then a member of the House of Lords. His parliamentary career spanned 51 years.<sup>33</sup> In Parliament, he was known mostly for his advocacy for free trade and Catholic emancipation, and it was through his membership of the House of Commons that he was able to secure contact with Bathurst.

Like Littleton, Lambton, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Durham, entered the House of Commons in 1812, and was also the inheritor of considerable family wealth.<sup>34</sup> Lambton was better connected politically; his father-in-law, Lord Grey, was a long-serving and senior member of the Whig party.<sup>35</sup> Both men were active and successful managers of their business interests, and the prospect of securing more landholdings inexpensively, albeit in a country on the other side of the world, must have been alluring to them. It was this opportunity that saw them in Bathurst's office in March 1825, hoping to secure the official backing, protection and maybe even financial underwriting of the British government.

Rather than simply approach Bathurst with a general plea for support, Littleton and Lambton were specifically after something resembling a monopoly right to trade with New Zealand for a period of 31 years. This was no small request, given that New Zealand was not even part of the British Empire<sup>36</sup> and had a negligible British population.<sup>37</sup> From the company's perspective, though, there was a substantial financial risk in establishing 'new and adventurous paths to prosperity',<sup>38</sup> and all idealism aside, some assistance from the government was an entirely reasonable expectation.<sup>39</sup> However, the immediate problem the New Zealand Company faced was that it was not offering a unique proposition to the government. Indeed, there was at this time a backlog of around 30 Bills before the House of Commons for joint-stock companies of this nature,<sup>40</sup> and there were strong signs that officials were waning in their enthusiasm for such schemes.

Admittedly, Bathurst had initially shown some passing interest in the proposal from the New Zealand Company, but this was far from an offer of the government's endorsement of its scheme. The president of the Board of Trade also apparently gave the company his 'blessing' before abandoning it.<sup>41</sup> So official encouragement was there, lurking somewhere in the background, but it was hesitant and did not materialise into anything more certain.

Regardless of what the government did or did not do to support the New Zealand Company, its directors had all the impetus they needed to proceed with their scheme in the form of £20,000 of capital which had been raised to back the venture.<sup>42</sup> Official sanction and guarantees would have encouraged more investment,<sup>43</sup> but £20,000 was sufficient for the company at least to begin to activate its plans.

Lambton and Littleton may have contributed from their own fortunes, but it is possible that the venture received capital from the Quaker bankers John

Wakefield and Sons of Kendal, Westmoreland.<sup>44</sup> John Wakefield was a relation of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, and it is possible — although there is no direct evidence — that in the bank financing this venture, Edward was introduced to some of the specifics of an attempt at colonising. While such possibilities are speculative, they are by no means improbable.

Two ships — the *Rosanna* and the *Lambton* — were acquired by the company's directors, and Captain James Herd, who had previously sailed around parts of New Zealand, was put in charge of the expedition.<sup>45</sup> Others on the voyage included six company officials, along with merchants, an interpreter, clerical workers, carpenters, blacksmiths, stone masons, wheelwrights, flax dressers, bakers, shoemakers, ploughmen and a cooper.<sup>46</sup> In 1988, Una Shepherd Price, one of the descendants of the intending settlers, produced a list of the passengers on the New Zealand Company expedition, together with their occupations:

Thos. Shepherd, wife and 5 children  
Brought up in the Nursery Trade & land surveying, highly recommended to the Directors,  
Salary £400 pr Annum to increase to £500 at the discretion of the Directors.

Richard Bell  
Master in the Merchant Service, Employed also as a Surveyor of Harbours, Coasts ...  
Salary £200 p. Ann.

Luther Lechmere  
Clerk and Secretary to the Concern. Was some time employed by one of the Directors ...  
Salary £120.

Arthur Hay  
Surgeon Salary £150

Thos. Kendall  
Interpreter and a Joiner Salary £70

James Sharp  
Assistant Clerk. Salary not fixed, Left to the Superintendent's discretion.

John McLean  
Joiner

Benjn Nesbit  
do

James Law  
do Salaries £73.10 each

George Nimmo  
do

Alexr Lorimer  
do

David Flemming

Colin Gillies  
Ship Carpenters. Salaries £34 each.

Wm Benson

Andrew Thompson  
Blacksmith ... Salary £73.10

Robert Archibald  
Stone mason Salary £73.10

William Oliphant  
do Salary £73.10

James Smith and child  
Wheelwright Salary £52.10

Alexr McClaren  
Turner Salary £42

Domas McDowal  
Flax dresser & Gardener Salary £63

Austin Waterson  
Baker Salary £73.10

John Durie  
Shoemaker Salary £42

Robert Bell (Wife and Child)  
Salary £52.10

Andrew Bennett  
Salary £52.10

William [L]atto  
Ploughmen Salary £52.10

George Tod  
Salary £42.10

John Tod  
Salary £52.10

Samuel Sydenham (Wife and child)  
Cooper. Salary £52.10.<sup>47</sup>

The task of locating and herding this collection of would-be colonists had fallen to the nurseryman Thomas Shepherd, an unlikely coloniser who was grandly designated the ‘Agricultural Superintendent to the New Zealand Company’.<sup>48</sup> He found a ready flock of ‘useful’ potential migrants among rural

Scots who were competing with (and losing to) the forces of industrialisation that were transforming Britain's economy. This growing pool of skilled unemployed made Shepherd's job much less difficult than it might have been had there been a sufficient supply of well-paid employment in Scotland.

Nonetheless, Shepherd still insisted in most cases on obtaining personal references for every person who was prepared to become part of the New Zealand Company settlement.<sup>49</sup> The undertaking to start a colony was risky enough without persons of dubious character potentially contaminating the settlement even before it got a chance to stand on its own feet.

Partly in an effort to garner more support in the region for its scheme, in October 1824 the company publicised its plans to set up a colony in New Zealand in the New South Wales press. The response certainly achieved the desired effect. The editor of the *Australian* advised readers that the proposed scheme was one that should be lauded. 'We shall rejoice exceedingly', he wrote that month, 'to hear of an industrious and thriving colony of Europeans established in the islands of New Zealand.' However, the caveat was added that 'the first settlers will undoubtedly have to contend with many difficulties, and to submit to numerous privations'.<sup>50</sup>

Any thought of privations were brushed aside, though, when the *Rosanna* left England for Sydney in mid-September 1825, loaded with settlers and with every sort of provision that might be necessary to start a community from scratch in a foreign land. Roughly two weeks later, the *Lambton* departed for the same destination, also heavily loaded with a cargo of supplies for the company's prospective settlers. On 10 January 1826, the Australian newspapers reported that the *Rosanna* 'had arrived with settlers on account of the new Company which has obtained a charter to settle in New Zealand', and that the vessel was 'provided with arms, and intended to cruise, for the protection of the settlers, and to fish, for the space of three years'.<sup>51</sup>

Shepherd kept a detailed journal of the New Zealand leg of the voyage, tracing the experiences of the would-be settlers. This party of expectant immigrants reached Stewart Island on 5 March 1826, and as a keen botanist Shepherd was immediately impressed with the location. The area seemed 'full of luxuriant vegetation', and he was 'struck with astonishment' at the 'beautiful appearance' of the coast, writing excitedly of the 'New varieties [of plants that] opened to view every few yards as we advanced'. However, this horticultural exhilaration was abruptly interrupted by the crack of a gun firing from somewhere on shore. The *Rosanna's* crew and passengers had assumed that the island was deserted, but this was evidently not the case. Their concern subsided only once some of the ship's occupants went on shore to investigate. 'On landing', Shepherd later explained, 'I saw the man which was seen walking on the beach and who fired the gun, and was informed by him that no less than thirteen of his party were in the neighbourhood sealing for a Gentleman at Cidny [Sydney]'.<sup>52</sup>

The more Shepherd explored Stewart Island, the less he came to see it as anything other than a source of botanical interest. The hope that this might be where the New Zealand Company colony would be planted waned. It appears that Shepherd was gradually disheartened by a combination of circumstances.



First, the island was already occupied, and in an environment where possession was ten-tenths of the law, this cast a different complexion on the prospects of a virgin settlement being established in the vicinity. Then there was the question of the ability of the terrain to sustain a permanent population. ‘The land in this place’, he noted with markedly reduced enthusiasm, ‘is of a spongy nature, being generally composed of decayed timber and vegetable substances; may be cultivated but at a great expense owing to so much wood upon it.’<sup>53</sup> The more Shepherd trekked into the hinterland and along the coast, the more realistic his appraisal of the region became. ‘The trees do not look so luxuriant and healthy’, he noted. ‘Several barron [sic] hills tower above the lower wooded ones; two of them are of a Sugar loaf shape and had the appearance to be of white rocks covered in places with black earth. The country much more open than what we have formerly seen. Many of the trees are upon the decay and looks [sic] as if the Sea breezes had blasted them.’<sup>54</sup>

Shepherd’s faith in Stewart Island as a potential location for the New Zealand Company settlement finally deserted him after he and most of the other passengers had returned to the *Rosanna*, which lay anchored in the harbour. Five boats with sealers rowed out to the vessel and asked for assistance. For the past 12 weeks, they said, they had not had anything to eat apart from what they were able to scavenge from the island. They explained that they were part of a sealing party that had been put on the island by a Sydney trader, and had run out of provisions ‘owing [to] the Vessel not having come at the appointed time’. Their pleas fell on deaf ears, though: ‘They were not supplied, knowing they could find plenty of fish and potatoes upon the Island and because the payment was uncertain’, Shepherd wrote frostily, justifying his stance by claiming that these sealers were ‘suspicious characters’, who lent a faintly ominous air to the area.<sup>55</sup> More disconcerting from the point of view of the planned company settlement, however, was the testimony of these sealers regarding the island’s meagre resources.

Given that his first flush of enthusiasm had now all but disappeared, Shepherd concluded that Stewart Island was a poor choice for the company’s inaugural settlement. ‘It is certainly true’, Shepherd advised the directors in London, ‘that a considerable quantity of useful timber, some Flax, Seals and Fish may be had here but not a sufficiency to induce any company to form a Settlement. We are informed that it rains Nine Months out of Twelve ... which would be injurious to the growth of most kinds of Vegetables and were corn to grow upon it would be impossible to harvest it.’<sup>56</sup>

From the deck of the *Rosanna*, Shepherd and his fellow travellers had little opportunity to see any Māori. It was only after spending time on shore that their first encounters with some of the country’s indigenous people took place. There was nothing out of the ordinary in Shepherd’s description of Māori physical traits, and his mildly derisory tone was in keeping with the tenor of many European accounts in this era. However, this horticulturalist-cum-explorer and coloniser was fascinated by a former compatriot whose name he gave only as Tommy, and who had been adopted by the local Māori community. In a long conversation with him, Shepherd recorded how the Englishman was ‘taken by the Natives when a boy about 16 years of age, since which he had married



a chief's daughter and afterwards [sic] was made a chief himself. He is very much tattooed, is otherwise very fair, is very conversive [sic].<sup>57</sup> It was a sight very few Europeans had seen before — a cultural miscegenation whose rarity lay in the fact that the Englishman had been subsumed by the native to such a considerable degree. This was the antithesis of the civilising effects that a European presence was supposed to have on Māori.

With their initial hopes subdued by the failure of Stewart Island to live up to their expectations, the passengers on the *Rosanna* headed to the east coast of the South Island. After unfavourable winds and opposing tides, the ship entered Otago harbour (known at the time as Port Oxley) on 4 May. As soon as it dropped anchor, about 100 Māori paddled out to see it, with some clambering on board to meet the visitors. They were told that there would be no trading that day, but that if they came back the following day, the ship's crew 'wold [sic] purch. [purchase] all the flax they had and Potatoes & Pigs as well'. When the Māori duly departed, Herd gathered the ship's passengers and crew together and issued a set of instructions that he felt would ensure the safety of those on his ship:

First, that no person would be allowed to bring any Women on Board, Second, that No public quarrel should be allowed, third that no person should sell their cloths to the natives nor trade with them directly or indirectly without being liable to pay the same price for such goods as they might want in future the retail price at Sydney. Fourthly, that the Settlers should watch in regular order with the sailors night and day so long as we remained in this Harbour.<sup>58</sup>

As it turned out, the following day the visitors did considerable trade with the local Māori, whom Shepherd said were fair in their dealings with them.

Initially, this area looked to be a better contender for the site of the company's inaugural settlement than Stewart Island. Shepherd, together with the company surveyor (and former naval captain) Richard Bell, set out the next day to explore the land bordering the harbour. They were 'agreeably surprised' at what they saw. Shepherd wrote that evening how, as the pair walked further inland, 'instead of woods on each side as we had all the way up we saw a fine open Country, chiefly covered with flax plants, Fern grass and a few small shrubs, which might be easily burnt down and made ready for the Plough. This land is of excellent quality [sic], being a rich deep brown Stround loam, capable of producing grass and corn in the greatest perfection'.<sup>59</sup>

However, while the terrain appeared agreeable, with its resemblance to parts of rural England, Shepherd was still hesitant. He concluded that 'It is probable this situation will be made a desirable settlement at some future period as there are plenty of Flax, Timber for building and firewood ec. And Plenty of fish & good land. We have seen a number of whales in the Harbour.'<sup>60</sup> For the present, though, Otago was not quite what Shepherd had in mind. He did not spell out his reservations, but they were enough to convince him that better prospects lay ahead, and so the group sailed on.

On the evening of Friday, 19 May, the *Rosanna* anchored at Cloudy Bay — another stopover that was considered only half-seriously as a place where the company settlement might be established. The land gave the appearance of

being reasonably fertile, the harbour was considered ‘excellent’ and there were ample sources of fresh water. Yet, it again looks as though the appearance of Māori in these arcadian settings dampened any possibility of the New Zealand Company’s colony being planted there. Shepherd described the houses of the local hapū as ‘miserable looking places’, and when he and his party travelled to a Māori settlement on the opposite side of the harbour they were received ‘at first with a good deal of indifference’. The only reason why the group from the *Rosanna* were not fearful of being attacked by their hosts was because, as Shepherd later wrote, ‘we were well armed and on our guard’.<sup>61</sup> Here, Shepherd was inadvertently disclosing one of the underlying reasons for deeming a succession of sites as unsuitable: the presence of Māori in the vicinity and the perceived threat that they posed to British settlement.

The *Rosanna* crossed Cook Strait on 25 May and entered what is now Wellington Harbour early that evening. Over the next few days, while Herd surveyed the harbour, Shepherd explored the land along the shore and concluded that the southern end of the harbour was the area ‘most preferable for a settlement as it is well sheltered by Hills, a good beach for near two miles in front of us and the best part of this large harbour for Ships to lay anchor and the greater variety of land and not likely to be inundated’.<sup>62</sup> It was good, but not good enough in the estimation of the company men on the ship, and so, yet again, the company vessels sailed off in search of a better location.

At this point, Shepherd’s journal goes quiet. No reason is given, but he picked up his commentary only when the *Rosanna* reached White Island and the Coromandel, and even then only in a much more summarised form. It was as if his hopes of founding a settlement anywhere in New Zealand had evaporated, and he was now merely going through the motions. At Mercury Bay, he identified ‘several thousand acres of good land fit for cultivation’, and in the Firth of Thames he reported ‘several square miles of this land which was of the very best quality [sic]’.<sup>63</sup> Some of the territory in the Hauraki Gulf similarly impressed Shepherd. ‘No part of New Zealand’, he commented briefly, ‘have we seen nor heard of equal [sic] to this for a commercial settlement nor for agricultural purposes.’<sup>64</sup> Once more, however, niggling reservations prevented the setting up a colony at any of the locations.

The *Rosanna* and the *Lambton* reached the Bay of Islands — in what was to be the penultimate stopover of their New Zealand voyage — in October 1826. What Shepherd carefully avoided mentioning in the increasingly repetitive surveys of the various locations he visited was the fate of the company’s planned scheme. Others, though, were more forthcoming. At the end of the month the missionary Henry Williams, who was at Paihia at the time, made mention in his journal of the two New Zealand Company ships arriving in the Bay of Islands. Eager for the chance of contact with his fellow countrymen, Williams rowed out to the *Rosanna* and met with its captain and passengers. That evening, when back on shore, Williams put his thoughts on the company to paper. ‘Captain Herd, who has charge of the expedition’, he concluded, ‘seems to despair of success. His account is very interesting. But they have not landed to remain any time, as the natives behaved with hostility towards them and felt disposed to take the vessels or to attack them at Wangaroa [sic].’<sup>65</sup>

William Williams (Henry's brother) was no less pessimistic in his estimation of the company's prospects. He could not foresee 'the least probability of their succeeding [sic]'.<sup>66</sup> After talking with many of those on the company's ships, William was unable to summon even a modicum of hope for the settlement scheme. 'The New Zealand Company is likely to fall to the ground', was his blunt prognosis. 'The settlers ... arrived at the river Thames, where they remained for fifteen weeks, and there they would have established themselves had they not been intimidated by the natives. The people at first were very civil, but at length they began to form designs against the vessel, which most likely would have succeeded [sic] had not the people been much on their guard.' The effects of such imminent danger on the prospective settlers could not be mitigated in their minds, and to make matters so much worse, William estimated that the costs of the expedition overall had risen to £80,000, while the entire quantity of flax they had acquired since arriving at Stewart Island (an undertaking aimed at offsetting the expense of the expedition) was worth at best a quarter that.<sup>67</sup> If the presence of Māori did not ruin the plans of these migrants, bankruptcy certainly would.

From the Bay of Islands, the *Rosanna* and the *Lambton* sailed north, rounding the northern tip of the North Island with Herd setting a course for Hokianga, where he had previously traded. He surveyed parts of that harbour, and on 26 January 1827 purchased a plot of land at Rawene (for some time after known as Herd's Point) in the name of the New Zealand Company. The price Herd negotiated was 'Five Muskets, Fifty three Pounds Powder, Four Pair Blankets, Three Hundred Flints, and Four Musket Cartridge Boxes'. The deed which supposedly made the deal official was translated and witnessed by the missionary Thomas Kendall and, given his dependent relationships with most of the chiefs in the region, it was reasonable for Herd to conclude that the transaction was a fair one to both parties.<sup>68</sup> Herd could at least now report back to his superiors in London that he had acquired some land in the company's name. After a fashion, he had therefore discharged the letter if not the spirit of his duties.

Having previously raised a gentle warning about this settlement scheme, the Australian press felt fully justified in passing a much harsher verdict on the company's endeavours in New Zealand when the *Rosanna* sailed into Port Jackson in February 1827. 'It is clear they have failed' was the abrupt conclusion of one journalist. Herd was observed trying to dispose of his cargo 'to the best advantage and then return to England'. His mood was said to be 'rather wrathful now that the hopes of the Company are blighted'.<sup>69</sup>

Herd's fury stemmed from an article that had recently appeared in the *Sydney Gazette*, declaring that 'It is a matter of surprise to us, that the English Public should suffer themselves to be so gulled by representations which prove to be founded in any thing but truth and accuracy'.<sup>70</sup> As the company's agent, Herd took this as a personal slight — though, to be fair, he could hardly be held solely responsible. From its inception, the company had been undermined by deficient intelligence on New Zealand. When Herd defended himself and his employers by citing the supposedly reliable sources on which the company had drawn to form its estimation of the country, a Sydney journalist retorted by telling the captain that 'we had seen some of the most perverted and untrue

tales in every pamphlet printed in reference to any part of Australasia', adding that some of the articles 'were a scandal to the party who wrote them'.<sup>71</sup> It was the sort of caution that would have gone unheeded by the company. Its sights had been firmly fixed on New Zealand, and it had not wanted to be distracted by naysayers.

The notion that a nervous assembly of novice settlers could survive in New Zealand's often brutish and unforgiving physical and cultural environment was obviously untenable to anyone who knew the country well enough. In March 1827, a Hobart newspaper seemed to confirm this view. It attributed the failure of the *Rosanna's* expedition to 'A design ... formed by the natives to seize upon this vessel', and claimed that 'The hostility of the natives rendered it necessary that the Company's servants should sleep on board nightly; and every man on board was obliged to take his nightly turn on watch'. An interpreter on the *Rosanna* had apparently discovered that a party of Māori were keen to liberate the ship of its several tons of gunpowder that Herd had intended to use to pay for land for the proposed settlement.<sup>72</sup> The veracity of such claims is impossible to determine, but they are at least suggestive of the company's designs going awry as the theory of planned settlement failed to materialise in the way that its backers and prospective settlers had envisaged.

There was no way of describing the fate of the aborted New Zealand Company scheme other than as a failure. Herd had 'entirely abandoned all the views entertained by the Company of fixing a permanent establishment' in New Zealand (the Rawene purchase — which was later contested by Māori — was never used by the company to found a settlement), while Shepherd much earlier on seemed to have abandoned any notion of securing a colony in New Zealand. The lean consolation for the immigrants who had parted with everything of their former lives to start afresh in the much-vaunted Antipodean settlement was that their passage back to England had been guaranteed by the company, and this promise, at least, was fulfilled.<sup>73</sup>

Edward Jerningham Wakefield, the precocious son of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, looked down his nose at the efforts of these amateur colonisers, and was disdainful of their allegedly unethical methods — a position of high hypocrisy considering his family's subsequent reputation for ethically lax land deals. He claimed in 1845 that lawyers in Sydney had designed forms for the first New Zealand Company's land transactions which, 'when its blanks for the names of places were filled up, was signed by the mark of certain chiefs in consideration of a trifling payment. It became the model of a vast number of contracts for the sale of land to Europeans, into which natives were induced to enter by the number of Whites who now straggled into New Zealand. ... This mode of acquiring land from savages is now well known as *land-sharking*; a name which implies preying on the weakness of childish ignorance.' Māori, from what Wakefield junior could see, were innocent victims in these schemes: 'Although the natives were even unconscious of the purport of the deeds which they executed, because they had not even conceived the idea of private property in land according to European notions, they nevertheless set great store by the European goods paid to them for signing the deeds. Of these commodities muskets and gunpowder formed the principal item.'<sup>74</sup>

Wakefield's charges against the inaugural New Zealand Company were inaccurate and unfair. For its many shortcomings, the company had acted largely with propriety, especially in its attempts at acquiring Māori land. If anything, circumstances left company agents out of pocket in its transactions with some chiefs who undoubtedly emerged better off after these deals. But noble intentions, as everyone involved discovered, gave no assurance of eventual success. Moreover, the eventual failure of the first New Zealand Company served as an instructive lesson for later systematic colonisers on the importance of three key tenets for a successful colonising scheme: acquiring sufficient quantities of land for settlement; obtaining enough capital to underwrite the venture; and devising a scheme which went beyond the notion of depositing settlers on a stretch of terrain and hoping that a colony would somehow flourish.

Wakefield junior's dismissal of the inaugural New Zealand Company can be attributed to youthful indiscretion (he was just 19 when he arrived in New Zealand in 1839), but it must also be regarded as ironic, given the connections between the New Zealand Company of the 1820s and the colonising enterprise which Edward Gibbon Wakefield directed. These links — which were mainly in the form of certain shared personnel — are especially significant because they enabled Wakefield's organisation to learn from some of the experiences of its predecessor.

Lambton, who in 1833 became the Earl of Durham, was appointed governor of the New Zealand Association (Wakefield's earlier version of the New Zealand Company) in December 1837. Durham had been recommended to Wakefield by Torrens,<sup>75</sup> who had also been a director of the first New Zealand Company. The familiarity that Durham had with the failure of the earlier colonising venture would have been invaluable when Wakefield was planning his scheme, although it must be noted that Wakefield could prove to be stubborn when it came to listening to advice that went against his own instincts.<sup>76</sup>

Wakefield saw that Durham's role in the 1825 company was something that could benefit his association, as he indicated in a letter to Durham in September 1837.<sup>77</sup> However, it was Durham's political connections which were of more value. He arranged a meeting, for example, with Prime Minister Lord Melbourne, which was also attended by Lord Howick,<sup>78</sup> (a Cabinet minister who had once been undersecretary for the colonies, and who was related to Durham through Earl Grey). Durham was thus Wakefield's conduit to the highest levels of the British political establishment.

Wakefield's earnest but ultimately fruitless efforts to secure from the British government both a monopoly right to colonise New Zealand and a Royal Charter can also be seen as an attempt to avoid the problems that the first New Zealand Company encountered by undertaking a colonising venture without any official backing. And although Wakefield had turned his back on the direct involvement of Lyall and Torrens in his association, both of these former directors of the 1825 New Zealand Company supported the New Zealand Bill in the House of Commons during its introduction in 1838 — the proposed legislation which would grant Wakefield the government backing he craved, but which eventually failed to pass into law.<sup>79</sup>

Wakefield's scheme was far more well conceived, intricate and expansive than anything that had preceded it. However, it is reasonable to conclude that Durham's role as the New Zealand Association's governor from the close of 1837 allowed the association to draw from some of the practical experiences of the 1825 New Zealand Company, particularly on the need to establish strong connections with the British government and the Colonial Office, and to obtain their official sanction for the proposed enterprise. Ironically, though, the importance of this lesson, if not lost on Wakefield, was eventually relegated as a concern following the failure of the passage of the New Zealand Bill in the House of Commons in 1838. Eventually, Wakefield's association (and later company) found itself pitted against the very administration from which it had earlier sought endorsement. By then the challenges it faced dwarfed those that had once faced the first New Zealand Company.

PAUL MOON

*Auckland University of Technology*

## NOTES

1 See, for example, E.G. Wakefield, *The British Colonization of New Zealand: Being an Account of the Principles, Objects, and Plans of the New Zealand Association: Together with Particulars Concerning the Position, Extent, Soil and Climate, Natural Productions, and Native Inhabitants of New Zealand*, London, 1837; E.G. Wakefield, *Mr. Dandeson Coates and the New Zealand Association: in a Letter to the Right Hon. Lord Glenelg*, London, c.1837; E.G. Wakefield, *A letter from Sydney and Other Writings*, London, 1829; E.G. Wakefield, ed., *A View of the Art of Colonization with Present Reference to the British Empire: in Letters Between a Statesman and a Colonist*, London, 1849; Henry William Petre, *An Account of the Settlements of the New Zealand Company*, London, 1842; Philip Temple, *A Sort of Conscience: The Wakefields*, Auckland, 2002; A.W.P. Whimpress, 'The Wakefield Model of Systematic Colonisation in South Australia: An Examination with Particular Reference to its Economic Aspects', PhD thesis, University of South Australia, 2008; Edward R. Kittrell, 'Wakefield's Scheme of Systematic Colonization and Classical Economics', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 32, 1 (1973), pp.87–111; W.K. Hastings, 'The Wakefield Colonisation Plan and Constitutional Development in South Australia, Canada and New Zealand', *Journal of Legal History*, 11, 2 (1990), pp.279–99; Patricia Burns, *Fatal Success: A History of the New Zealand Company*, Auckland, 1989.

2 G.W. Hope, 30 May 1845, *British Hansard*, London, 1845, p.1088; *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator*, 8 February 1845.

3 Although growth did not equate in every instance to financial success. See G.R. Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand: An Economic History*, New York, 1985, pp.24–25.

4 Ian Wards, *The Shadow of the Land: A Study of British Policy and Racial Conflict in New Zealand, 1832–1852*, Wellington, 1968, p.304; Stuart Banner, 'Two Properties, One Land: Law and Space in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *Law & Social Inquiry*, 24, 4 (1999), pp.821, 826–27.

5 Ernest Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand, With Contributions to the Geography, Botany, and Natural History of that Country*, Vol. 1, London, 1843, pp.139–40; Charles Heaphy, *Narrative of a Residence in Various Parts of New Zealand*, London, 1842, p.3; Temple, p.233.

6 E.J. Wakefield, *Adventure in New Zealand from 1839 to 1844*, vol. 1, London, 1845, pp.5–6.

7 See, for example, *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 16 February 1827, p.3.

8 Edward R. Kittrell, "'Laissez Faire" in English Classical Economics', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27, 4 (1966), pp.610–20; A.G.L. Shaw, 'British Attitudes to the Colonies, ca. 1820–1850', *Journal of British Studies*, 9, 1 (1969), pp.71–95.

9 Richard K. Fleischman and Lee D. Parker, 'British Entrepreneurs and Pre-Industrial Revolution Evidence of Cost Management', *Accounting Review*, 66, 2 (1991), pp.361–75.

10 John Savage, *Some Account of New Zealand; Particularly the Bay of Islands and Surrounding Country*, London, 1807, pp.54–63; John Liddiard Nicholas, *Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand*, Vol. 1, London, 1817, pp.220–47; Donald Cowie, 'The Empire Through New Zealand Eyes', *Political Quarterly*, 9, 4 (1938), pp.575–85.

11 Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740–1860*, Berkeley, 1986, pp.73–104; Lucienne Loh, 'Beyond English Fields: Refiguring Colonial Nostalgia in a Cosmopolitan World', PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008, ch. 2. This longing for an idealised bucolic past is also evident in the works of poets and artists of the period, such as George Crabbe and John Constable.

12 This sense of a disappearing rural ideal was captured in Thomas Gray's famous 'Elegy written in a country churchyard' (1751). J. Gray, 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard', in Christopher Ricks, ed., *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, Oxford, 1999, pp.278–79.

13 The ideal was encapsulated variously in the works of people like Gilpin and Clare. See William Gilpin, *An Essay on Prints*, London, 1802, p.xii; John Clare, 'Noon', in John Goodridge, ed., *The Works of John Clare*, Ware, 1995, p.10.

14 E.G. Wakefield, *A Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations*, New York, 1834, pp.198–99, 288; Anonymous, *To the People of England: An Address on the Colonization of New Zealand*, London, 1824; Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, 'Trajectories of Protection: Protectorates of Aborigines in early 19th Century Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand', *New Zealand Geographer*, 64, 3 (2008), pp.205–20; E.J. Wakefield, ed., *The Founders of Canterbury*, Vol.1, Christchurch, 1868, pp.126, 190; Eileen P. Sullivan, 'Liberalism and Imperialism: J. S. Mill's Defense of the British Empire', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44, 4 (1983), pp.599–617;



Edward R. Kittrell, 'Wakefield and Classical Rent Theory', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 25, 2 (1966), pp.141–52; Helen Taft Manning, 'Lord Durham and the New Zealand Company', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 6, 1 (1972), p.2.

15 W. Horton, House of Commons Debate, 24 June 1828, *Hansard*, series 2, vol. 19, London, 1828, pp.1501–3.

16 Robert. Gourlay, *General Introduction to Statistical Account of Upper Canada: Compiled with a View to a Grand System of Emigration*, London, 1822, p.cxcii

17 J.R. McCulloch, cited in Angus J. Harrop, *England and New Zealand from Tasman to the Taranaki War*, London, 1926, p.30.

18 C. De Thierry to Bathurst, 21 April 1824, in Robert McNab, *Murihiku: A History of the South Island of New Zealand and the Islands Adjacent and Lying to the South, from 1642 to 1835*, Wellington, 1909, p.358; T. and D. Asquith to Bathurst, 11 April 1825, in *ibid*, pp.359–60; *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 3 March 1825, p.2.

19 H.V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756–1833*, Cambridge, 2006, pp.87ff.

20 Although it was not published until early 1824. The author's introduction is dated 18 December 1823.

21 Anonymous, *To the People of England: An Address on the Colonization of New Zealand*, London, 1824.

22 *ibid.*, in Angus J. Harrop, *England and New Zealand from Tasman to the Taranaki War*, p.7.

23 Details contained in H. McDonnell, 'The Rosanna Settlers: with Captain Herd on the Coast of New Zealand 1826–7: including Thomas Shepherd's Journal and his Coastal Views', transcript, Wellington, March 2002, ch. 3.

24 Buckle was also a partner in the ship-owning firm of Buckle, Buckle, Bagster and Buchanan. See J.M.R. Cameron, 'Traders, Government Officials and the Occupation of Melville Island in 1824', *Great Circle*, 7, 2 (1985), pp.88–89.

25 *London Gazette*, 2 July 1841, p.1722.

26 Lyall became Chairman of the East India Company in 1830.

27 Benjamin Disraeli, *An Inquiry into the Plans, Progress, and Policy of the American Mining Companies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, London, 1825, pp.25, 72.

28 *Canada Company, Charter of Incorporation, 19 August 1826*, London, 1832, pp.5, 21.

29 Admiralty Office, *A List of Flag Officers and Other Commissioned Officers of Her Majesty's Fleet*, London, 1826, pp.14, 127.

30 As an example of his earlier involvement in the East India Company, see *The Protests of the Honourable W.F. Elphinstone, James Pattison, esq. et al*, London, 1812.

31 As an example of his work at his time, see R. Torrens, *An Essay on the Production of Wealth*, London, 1821.

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33 Littleton served in the House of Commons from 1812 to 1834, and in the House of Lords from 1835 to 1863.

34 John Colville, *Those Lambtons! A Most Unusual Family*, London, 1988, p.27, cited in Richard Wolfe, *A Society of Gentlemen: The Untold Story of the First New Zealand Company*, Auckland, 2007, p.46.

35 Grey served as British Prime Minister from 1830 to 1834.

36 Wolfe, p.53.

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41 Douglas Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia 1829–1857*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Melbourne, 1967, p.33.

42 R.A.A. Sherrin and J.H. Wallace, *Early History of New Zealand, from Earliest Times to 1845*,

Auckland, 1890, p.288.

43 At least one investor pulled out when the British government failed to offer any material support. See Wolfe, p.71.

44 McDonnell, ch. 3; J.D. Marshall and Carol A. Dyhouse, 'Social Transition in Kendal and Westmorland, c. 1760–1860', *Northern History*, 12 (1976), pp.127–57.

45 As a fragmentary insight into the captain's character, Marsden was impressed with the assistance Herd offered him in the Bay of Islands. See J. R. Elder, ed., *The Letters and Journals of Samuel Marsden, 1765–1838*, Dunedin, 1932, pp.438–39.

46 McDonnell, pp.19–20.

47 U.S. Price, *My Family of Shepherds*, Sydney, 1988, p.3, in Archives Office, New South Wales: 4/6665.3, cited in McDonnell, ch. 4.

48 Geoff Park, *Theatre Country: Essays on Landscape and Whenua*, Wellington, 2006, p.41.

49 Transcripts of some of these reference appear in McDonnell, pp.25–26.

50 *Australian*, 21 October 1824, p.2.

51 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 10 January 1826, p.2.

52 Shepherd, in McDonnell, pp.33–34.

53 *ibid.*, p.36.

54 *ibid.*, p.39.

55 *ibid.*, pp.40–41.

56 *ibid.*, p.44.

57 *ibid.*, p.45.

58 *ibid.*, p.49.

59 *ibid.*, p.50.

60 *ibid.*

61 *ibid.*, pp.54–55.

62 *ibid.*, pp.59–60.

63 *ibid.*, p.62.

64 *ibid.*, p.63.

65 Henry Williams, 27 October 1826, in Caroline Fitzgerald, *Te Wiremu: Henry Williams Early Years in the North*, Wellington, 2011, p.76.

66 William Williams, 6, 7 November 1826, in McDonnell, p.71.

67 *ibid.*, pp.71–72.

68 New Zealand Company Deed of Purchase, 26 January 1827, NZC 38/1, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

69 *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 16 February 1827, p.3.

70 *ibid.*

71 *ibid.*

72 *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*, 9 March 1827, p.4.

73 *ibid.*

74 E.J. Wakefield, *Adventure in New Zealand from 1839 to 1844*, Vol. 1, pp.5–6.

75 Manning, pp.3–4.

76 As an example, Wakefield rejected Torrens's recommendation that Lyall, Marjoribanks and Palmer be appointed to the board of the New Zealand Association. See *ibid.*, p.3.

77 E.G. Wakefield to Durham, 2 September 1837, Durham Papers, MS 140, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

78 Howick was later the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl Grey.

79 Manning, p.10. The Bill was defeated in June 1838.