



Founder member 258, David Brown, joined 2 May 1940, established the Taranaki Branch in 1956, was the guest speaker at our recent National AGM held in New Plymouth. His speech outlining his NZ Founders experience is below.

David was presented with the book "The Battle of Waireka" by Graeme Kenyon. Since reading this book David has made contact with the author as they have lots of Nelson history in common.

## **NZ FOUNDERS SOCIETY AGM, NEW PLYMOUTH, 22 MARCH 2025**

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you. We are a nation of colonisers in a fortunate part of the globe inhabiting a group of islands thrust above the sea level since being parted from Gondwanaland some millions of years ago, perhaps to have that sea reclaim some land back again as our planet warms once more. Waves of colonists have settled here over more recent centuries from Polynesia, Europe, America and Asia a common history of which is yet to be completed. I have made a small contribution towards this.

My mother and her sister Kathleen, both daughters of Henry Otterson and Octavia Turton enrolled their families in the Founders Society in 1940, I was all of 8 at the time. One set of grandparents Hanson Turton, with wife Susannah, had arrived at Hokianga in 1840 part of the expansion of the Wesleyan Maori Mission, and the other. Francis and Jane Otterson at Nelson in 1842, initially setting up a Merchant Business before concentration on farming. Susannah Turton unfortunately died in 1849 soon after- the-~birth- of-their-fourth son-and- Hanson later married Mary Walsall, step daughter of fellow missionary Curt Schnackenberg at St Mary's New Plymouth in 1851, their third daughter Octavia became my grandmother.

In 1949 we all purchased Founders Debentures which in 1954 were relinquished in exchange for Life Memberships. I had been an active participant in the Junior Founders but was now at the beginning of a three-year stint in Taranaki where as an Oil Company rep. I travelled throughout the province with little knowledge of the 10 years that Hanson Turton had worked out of Ngamotu, founded the Grey Institute and travelled extensively, mainly on foot some by horse, canoe and coastal ship amongst the Maori tribes through even to Wanganui. I sought permission from the Dominion Council to form a Branch of the Society in New Plymouth in 1956 and organised a public meeting for that purpose but in the meantime my employers wanted me back in Wellington so I helped the meeting through the process of electing Officers and a committee and left them to it. I am very glad to see that it is amongst the active branches still functioning today.

I became married soon after returning to Wellington but lived in Upper Hutt (the cost of a first home in Wellington is not just a modern-day problem) so my connection to the Society became mostly attending business and social functions which utilised the old and new Wakefield House facilities. I concentrated on family and career, spent 10 years in Auckland then was transferred to Australia taking with me the family records which had come down to my mother and on to me. Gradually I worked on these mainly by accessing Papers Past on

line, greatly assisted by having two uncommon family names in TURTON and OTTERSON and the fact that each had been rather active. I had also been exposed to Maori history as a youngster, despite it being claimed that we were not taught it "in my days". I also bought or borrowed many of the books that were appearing at the end of the 20th Century on our revisited colonial history both Maori and Pakeha.

Returning to New Zealand in 2017 I had been under the impression that the Society had ceased to function while I was away but contact with Carolyn Adams-~~soon-erased-that idea -~~ and, joined ~~-up-with-~~ her-Remote -Branch being told my Membership number 258 was the lowest of any of the remaining Life Members. I eventually called a halt to my research and re-editing and had the three books printed last year for private distribution to family members. It is not available in retail book shops but I have sent copies to relevant national libraries in Australia, England and New Zealand.

Having virtually completed my research before I was aware there was a Founder's Annual Book Award, I did not apply but am pleased to hand to you this set of my books for your library. Puke Ariki here have a copy both the Digital and the Book form of the Turton History which you in the local branch can access; Rachel Sonius, their Information Services Officer is the contact person.

Both sets of ancestors made a larger contribution to the development of the nation than contemporary historians had accorded them; I have in no way emulated those achievements in my own life but I have enjoyed discovering and recording those achievements for their descendants.

Happy reading; you may come to the same conclusion that I have; that it will be a long time before we can achieve a single history of New Zealand. We are still to merge the paths taken since a land first settled by a highly intelligent but feudally ruled and tribal society still involved in slavery, utu cannibalism and bigamy without knowledge of The Enlightenment or access to metals and technology was overtaken by a gradually overwhelming flow of sealers, whalers then colonisers of all classes introducing muskets, iron axes and other metal tools and machines, alcohol, tobacco and diseases along with reading, writing, music, adequate clothing and Christian ideals. They proved to be quick learners and picked up the new skills and tools that interested them with ease but kept largely to their tribal inclinations. Their initial interest in the Wesleyan call to abandon those tribal customs and join the Brotherhood of Christ ceased when the intervention of Bishops Selwyn and Pompallier insisted that only followers of their faiths were the true tribe of God. Confusion, local prophets emerged, Ratana formed, Te Tiriti issues still confuse. And so, although we might not always give it that label, we remain a tribal nation to this day, each talking of rights not reconciliation or contribution. Still, this is a great country to be born in, to bring up a family in, to enjoy, perhaps we all need to put in the same heroic effort as our early ancestors of all races did before us, without the lingering tribal prejudices.

I wish all those still researching their own past good success in your endeavours.

Thank you.

David Brown