

The above title is a provocative reply to the heading appearing in the middle of our last Bulletin (Vol. 27 No 65, 1992/94) "How Little We Really Know About the Wakefields".

William Wakefield, the "founder of Wellington" is shown near the end of the family tree as being unmarried and childless. On both counts this is incorrect.

William Wakefield assisted his brother, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, in the famous "runaway marriage". However what is generally forgotten is that William fled to Paris and there married Emily Shelley-Sidney. They had eloped and both were willing partners. That, of course, is not to say the parents were happy with this arrangement.

After their marriage in 1826, William returned to England and was duly caught and imprisoned. Emily was thus separated from her new husband of a few days - for ever. While William was in prison Emily died, leaving a young daughter, Emily Charlotte, born of their union.

Naturally arrangements had to be made to care for the child and, as Emily's family would not recognise the marriage or child, it was placed in the care of the Wakefield relations.

After release from prison, William travelled abroad for some time before setting his sights for New Zealand. His business affairs in this country are well recorded in a number of books, so there is no need to relate them here.

In March 1840 William wrote to his relations in England asking that his daughter be sent to him in Wellington, which was done in 1842. It would have been very interesting to have observed them meeting, the father and the fourteen year old. William was probably a doting father, as Emily Charlotte informed relatives in England that he had sent to Sydney for her horse and she possessed a large Newfoundland dog.

In September 1846 Emily Charlotte married Edward William Stafford, a man much interested in politics, and later a Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Because Auckland was then the capital of the country, the Staffords lived a fair amount of their life there. Emily gathered many friends around her and apparently was one of the social butterflies of that period. However all was not well. Emily suffered from (then termed) delicate health - the dreaded word consumption being given as the cause of her death on 18 April 1857. Her father had predeceased her in 1848.

Emily Charlotte Stafford was laid to rest in St Stephen's churchyard, Judges Bay, Parnell, Auckland two days later by Bishop G. A. Selwyn. Her grave remains to this day - almost lonely and forgotten.

Stafford married again just two years later, under a bit of a social black cloud as apparently there was something "mysterious" about Emily's sudden death and his "hasty" remarriage. The subsequent removal of the capital to Wellington and his move with it helped to stem a little bit of the gossip.

Stafford's second wife was the daughter of Thomas H. Bartley of Auckland. Only metres away from Emily's grave is that of Bartley and his family.

Stafford was later knighted and it was this second wife who bore the title of "Lady" and not Emily, as recorded in at least one book on the history of Edward Gibbon Wakefield.

One has to feel sorry for Emily Charlotte - not knowing her mother; not meeting her father until her teens; cast aside from one set of grandparents; and almost constantly moving around the country. Therefore the compiler of the Wakefield family tree, as published in the Bulletin, has removed from our history the details of a very human love story. It is our loss and the Wakefields'.

John Webster.

TARANAKI FOUNDERS DAY

For our Taranaki Branch, the main event of the year is the honouring of the founders of our province, held on a Sunday as close as possible to March 31, the day upon which the first Plymouth Company ship, the "William Bryan", arrived here in 1841. The commemoration takes the form of a group attendance at one of our local churches followed by a luncheon.

This year's luncheon was attended by more than 40 members and featured, as guest speaker, our local chief librarian, Mr Lester Barker. Mr Barker spoke on the vast range of services and sources available through the modern public library, portraying that aspect to the most telling advantage by showing a small CD ROM disc upon which was recorded the entire Encyclopaedia Britannica, along with the ability to find any reference almost instantly and to print out, in colour, any material required.

The modern communications side of the Library's services was balanced by a reminder of its obligations in the conservation of history, when Mr Barker showed one volume from the embryo library of books brought to New Plymouth by the original settlers. No frivolous fiction or even light classics for our hard-working forebears! Their reading ranged from a set of encyclopaedias to learned manuals on animal husbandry and viticulture - understandable choices perhaps at a time and in a place when all that mattered was establishing a pocket of European civilisation on what they perceived to be a naturally inhospitable coastline.