***[PIONEERS OF PORT UNDERWOOD](http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/name-444316.html)***

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One day, in August 1840, Eliza Beard stood waving on the beach at Port Underwood. She was five years old, and never forgot that day. Her mother, Mary Ann Beard, 30, and her three brothers, Henry, Charles and William, were also waving. Her father, William Beard, 33, with his friends Wilton, Baldick and Hall, was rowing out towards the Wairau Bar. They had been indentured, by a firm of Sydney solicitors, to make a settlement on the Wairau plain, at a site some miles up the Wairau River, later Clovernook Farm. They were taking a second load of timber from Ocean Bay to the site.

William and Mary Ann Beard, (nee Coleman) had both been baptised and married at St. George's Church, King Stanley, a hill country farming village near Stroud, Gloucestershire. They and their nephew, Thomas Cagley, 17, left from Bristol on the Bussorah Merchant (531 tons, Captain Montcrieff) 15 May, 1839. The Bounty Scheme, whereby the Australian Government, increasingly concerned that their settlers were mostly released convicts, sought to attract emigrants from England. Applicants had to be near 30 years of age or younger, of good character, farmers or artisans, healthy and industrious, and arrive in the colony with £10.0.0. A bounty of £30.0.0. was granted each family, to defray travelling expenses.

Their ship arrived in Sydney 3 September, 1839. William Beard was familiar with cattle, so he began driving herds to and from the outback. Sometimes he was absent from home for weeks. On one of these expeditions he met George Baldick. Baldick said he had arranged with Unwin & Co., Sydney solicitors, to supervise the transport of a cargo of cattle to Port Underwood, New Zealand, then known as Cloudy Bay, and drive them over to the Wairau plain. Unwin held a title to the plain, which he believed was genuine. He had acquired it from a Captain Blenkinsopp of the whaler Caroline. This gentleman, latterly in financial difficulty, had mortgaged his New Zealand estate to Unwin. Shortly afterward, Blenkinsopp was drowned near South Australia, whereupon Unwin took possession of the title. But how had Blenkinsopp come to own this title in the first place? The Maori chief, Te Rauparaha, overlord of tribes and lands around Cook Strait, needed a cannon to make him more powerful. Blenkinsopp, in return, wanted the Wairau plain. The chief, unable to read or write, or sign his name, made his mark on the agreement. Blenkinsopp also signed it and the deal was made. Both parties retained a copy. Here we may question if Te Rauparaha was, in fact, legal owner of the plain in the first place, because he had taken other tribes' land by force, terrorizing and beating them into submission. Later, when news of Blenkinsopp's drowning trickled back to New Zealand, Te Rauparaha conveniently claimed he had been tricked into putting his mark on the agreement, which he believed merely gave permission for the Caroline to gather wood and water from Cloudy Bay. He little knew that Blenkinsopp's copy was safe in the office of Unwin & Co in Sydney.

Certainly, Wilton, Baldick, Hall and Beard believed they were on a lawful mission, carrying out Unwin's instructions. About June 1840, the four families, with cattle, boarded the Hope, a barque of 600 tons under Captain Coombes, in Sydney and set out for Ocean Bay, Port Underwood. The Hope usually plied between Sydney, Nelson and Lima, Peru. The journey to New Zealand took no more than 14 days. They disembarked and the ship carried on to Port Nicholson (Wellington), arriving about 13 June 1840.

In 1840 Ocean Bay's population comprised some Maoris and about 5 whaling gangs, most of whom had landed there from Canada, America, France, England and Sydney. Some, not all, were tough characters, but usually hospitable and pleased to welcome newcomers with news from other parts. Houses built of reeds and rushes by the Maoris were equipped with our families' own pots, pans, tin and crockery dishes. A few missionaries, Rev. William White and some Maori converts, had occasionally called there since 1838. They estimated there to be some 100 Maoris and 30 Europeans living there at the time.

Soon after settling, the men began driving the cattle over to the plain. Edward Jemingham Wakefield, in Adventure in New Zealand mentioned this briefly:

"News had been heard of the arrival of a shipload of cattle in Cloudy Bay, with the agent of a Sydney firm, who claimed the Wairau plains near that place……The agent, Mr Wilton, had however, been prevented from driving his cattle onto the plains by our old friends the Cloudy Bay natives, who denied the sale altogether; and the cattle were running, by sufferance, on the hills close to Port Underwood."

Leaving the cattle, they returned to Ocean Bay to begin the transportation of building materials. To reach the site, it was necessary to row across many miles of open sea, over the Wairau Bar and up the Wairau River.

Having erected the frame of the building, they returned to Ocean Bay for further supplies. So far they had had no more bother with the Maoris. On the second trip they intended finishing off the building, in readiness for the families. They rowed away through the heads of Port Underwood. According to information in Old Marlborough, by T Lindsay Buick, they reached the mouth of the Wairau River, which was then commanded by Te Rauparaha's old pah, but what transpired from then on has never been told, and now never will. No tidings reached Mary Ann or the other wives for some days, until a number of Maoris arrived at the Port and were somewhat boisterous in their manner. One of them was wearing a pair of boots, which Mrs Baldick thought she recognized. They were fastened with a piece of braid which she had given her husband, as a substitute for a broken bootlace, just before he had left home. When questioned, the Maoris reported that the boat had capsized and that all the men had drowned. A search party found damning evidence that the men had, in fact, been done to death.

What actually happened that day at the Wairau Bar? The report in the NZ Gazette and Britannia Spectator of 24 October 1840 reads:

"A week beforehand reports of the murder reached Wellington. A party of military stationed there boarded the "Brougham", Lieut. Best commanding the party. They were accompanied by the Police Magistrate, Michael Murphy, Capt Chaffers and two police officers. They made a thorough investigation, were convinced of foul play, but could prove nothing. Rauparaha, quite agitated to see the soldiers, asked why they had come. October 30th the "Brougham" returned to Wellington."

E J Wakefield also mentioned the tragedy in Adventure in New Zealand:

"On the morning of the 7th (October) we sailed for Cloudy Bay…and anchored at night in the cove above Jackie Guard's…Guard had got a new house, which he had built as a grog shop, to accommodate the increasing whaling traffic of me Bay…A startling piece of news was conveyed to us while here. Mr wilton, the agent of a Sydney house, whom I have already described as prevented by the natives from entering Wairau plain with his cattle, had lost his life at the mouth of the river, together with the rest of a boat's crew. Whether this had happened by the upsetting of the boat or in another way, no one of the party remained alive to say; but bloodstained clothes, and some of the articles which had been in the boat, found dry on the beach, led the white people to opine that mere had been some foul play; and that the fragments of me boat also found upon the beach, were only a device to support the story of their being accidentally drowned…A vessel from Sydney, which had been loading oil from the station, was also lying here (Jackson's Bay)…As he was going to visit Port Nicholson immediately, I despatched by him an account of the suspicious occurrences at Wairau to Colonel Wakefield and to Mr Murphy (Magistrate)…On the 19th having made another attempt to proceed to the northward, …we drifted back (to Jackson's Bay). The Company's barque, Brougham, had anchored in the afternoon and we went on board to hear the news. Mr Murphy was on board, attended by Lieutenant Best and the soldiers…but it appeared that however suspicious…no very clear evidence could be found.. The Cloudy Bay natives stated their opinion that Mr Wilton and his party had been murdered by the aboriginal natives whom they described to be still existing as fugitives there, as well as at the Pelorus River…. Nothing more, however, was ever said officially about the affair…(This and other factors) excited a considerable degree of ill-feeling among the whalers…They had still to protect themselves against the frequent insolence and rapacity of Rauparaha, Rangihaeata, Tungia and the other bullies among the Kawia chiefs, and the nonchalant hushing up of the Wilton affair was well calculated to make them, as well as the natives, consider the legal authority in the islands to be powerless and inefficient."

Whatever happened, the four men had perished. Back at Ocean Bay, to make her plight worse, Mary Ann Beard was about to give birth to her daughter, Jane. She left no written word of her grief, but we can imagine her despair and fears for their future, in that wild and isolated bay, 12,000 miles from her family in Gloucester. An attempt was also made to investigate the tragedy by a Sydney man-o-war, but nothing came of that either, and the culprits went free.

Back in Sydney, Mr Unwin, shocked by the whole affair, gave up all idea of settlement and sold his copy of the agreement, which had been sold to Captain Wakefield beforehand. Adventure in New Zealand records:

"The agent of a Sydney firm…had written to Colonel Wakefield, informing him that they held the original of the deed by which Rauparaha, Rangihaeata, and other chiefs had made that district over to Captain Blenkinsopp many years before. So it appeared that the deed sold to Colonel Wakefield at Hokianga by his widow (Te Pehi's daughter) was possibly only a copy".

All the foregoing, and a certain amount of skulduggery, played a large part in the causes of Wairau incident, an infinitely greater tragedy and one of the most shameful episodes in New Zealand history.

But how were the Beards to survive in Ocean Bay? James Hogan, a young carpenter of good character living at the Port, already knew the family. He lost no time in proposing to Mary Ann who was still, at 33, young and good looking. Even supposing romance was a little thin, expediency won the day. Hogan, a protestant from Londonderry in Northern Ireland, had left his country because of religious persecution and found his way to the east coast of America. He signed on as ship's carpenter on a whaling vessel, bound for the Antipodes in search of better whaling grounds.

On the arrival of a permanent missionary, Rev. Samuel Ironside, Mary Ann Beard remarried to James Hogan at a service in Mr Wynen's home, at nearby Kakapo Bay, on 27 December 1840. On Christmas Day, at the age of 13 weeks, baby Jane had been baptised by Ironside. According to his diary:

"After about a week's fine weather sailing, we entered Port Underwood and anchored off Kakapo, Guard's Bay, on 20th December, 1840. We were expeditiously and unceremoniously landed on the beach and the 'Magnet' pursued her voyage to Port Nicholson".

Soon after, the Ironsides decided on Ngakuta Bay for their mission, and a building serving as a home, school and church was erected, with help from Maoris and Europeans. In 1842 Ebeneezer Church was completed and consecrated. The tragic Wairau incident at Tua Marina in June 1843, where 22 Europeans and 4 Maoris lost their lives, dealt Port Underwood a staggering blow. Fearing Te Rauparaha and his tribe would descend upon them, the white settlers fled back to Sydney, Wellington or Nelson, and the mission was eventually deserted.

James and Mary Ann Hogan decided on Nelson, where the New Zealand Company had established a settlement in 1842. At first, they lived in the Wood area, where the price of land was minimal, but later, when required to pay a further £300, they moved over to Motueka, which was opened up in 1843.

A Motueka census of 1845 lists James Hogan as Church of England, with 6 acres of land, living in an earth house. The 1849 census shows them still there, in a wooden building with one acre of potatoes and one cattle beast. In addition to the five Beard children, Mary Ann and James had another five. Eliza Beard, who remembered her father rowing away to his death at Wairau Bar, married George Pickett Graham, well-known pioneer of Collingwood. His family gave part of their name, together with the Bains, to the district Bainham. Much sought after as a midwife, she risked her life many times, crossing the Aorere River in flood to deliver a baby. She had a large family of her own and lived to 93. Jane Beard, born posthumously in 1840, married John McKinna of Collingwood, had a large family and lived to 78. Of the Hogans, Mary Ann (Polly), born 1844, married Colonel Henry Harris Baber and made her way as a singer on the London stage. Charlotte, born 1845, married W G Cullen, Nelson. James, born 1850, married Angelina Maule. Emma, born 1852, married Charles Tunnicliffe and had 10 children, one of whom was my father. They lived in Blenheim and their descendants still live in Marlborough. Ellen, born 1854, married George Wilson of Oamaru.

It is 150 years since the Halls, Wiltons, Baldicks and Beards came to Port Underwood. We will remember them.

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