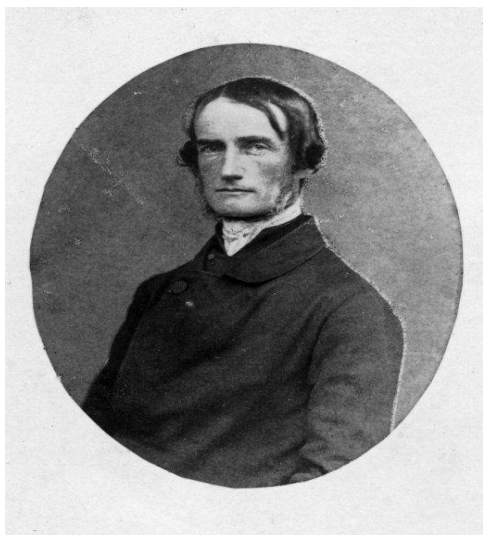


The Anglican Historical Society of New Zealand *Te Rōpu Hītori o te Hāhi Mihinare ki Aotearoa*

Bishops Hadfield and Wallis: a reassessment?

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(AHS Newsletter 60, December 2016)



When **Octavius Hadfield** retired as the second Bishop of Wellington in 1893 at the age of 79, he left a reputation as one of the great figures in New Zealand church history. Hadfield's reputation is a remarkable one: as the great missionary on the Kapiti coast, the first to be ordained priest in New Zealand, the man whose health was such that he turned down the offer to become the first Bishop of Wellington in 1858 but lived long enough to accept it the second time around in 1870, and in the end served as primate from 1890 to 1893. He then lived for another 11 years until his death in 1904 at the age of 93.

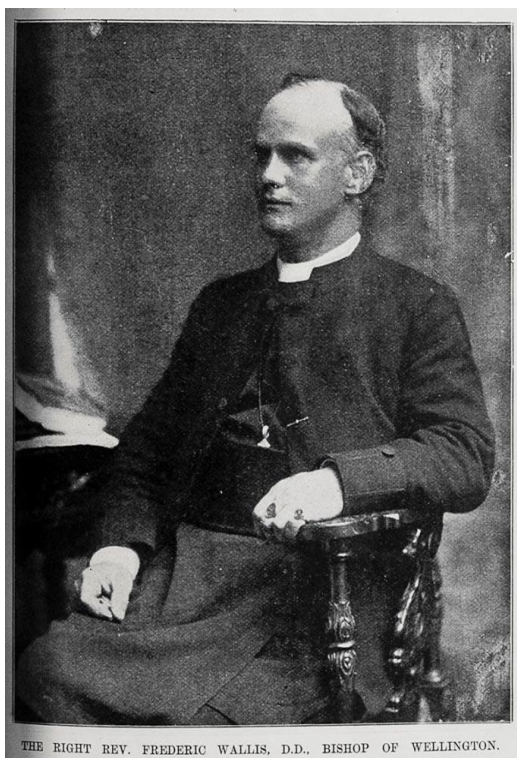
However, he left behind a diocese that was not in good heart. With only 20 parishes and only a modest number of church buildings, it had nothing like the infrastructure demanded of New Zealand's third largest diocese. Wellington diocese had the most unfavourable clergy/people ratio. All this despite Hadfield, the great missionary, once observing that he would deem his episcopate a failure if he should 'fail to

stir up and enlist more zeal for extending the ministrations of the Church to all the outlying districts of the Diocese.' ¹ Because 'the diocese, and not the parish, was the unit of church life for every loyal member of the Church'² he launched the General Church Fund in 1879 to support clergy in new districts. A select committee 'to enquire into and report upon, those parts of the Diocese where population has recently increased and are now beyond the reach of clergymen in charge of parochial districts ...' reported in 1892 that eight new parochial and missionary districts were required i.e., in Waimate Plains, Waitotara, the Wanganui country areas, Ongo-Apiti, Pohangina, Foxton, Pauatahanui, and Pahiatua.³

Hadfield, by this time, was an old man 'to some extent out of tune with contemporary trends of thought, and the infirmities of age were growing upon him' ⁴ and although he was a good administrator, he had 'a reputation for being austere and dictatorial as he grappled with growing problems created by a rapidly expanding settler population and the need for more clergy and church buildings.' ⁵ Faced with the need to choose his successor, the diocese had argued the merits of a New Zealand clergyman against those of one from England. While the Synod acknowledged good men were to be found in New Zealand, it concluded that no one was 'so pre-eminent among his fellows as to come up to the ideal which they had formed.' Urged by the laity, after three unsuccessful nominations, the Diocese looked to England for a successor and delegated its rights of appointment to the Archbishop of York and Bishop of Durham with

the very specific brief that 'he must **not** at any time have held a cure of souls in New Zealand; he must be 'physically strong and active ... age between thirty-five and forty-five ... of some University distinction.'⁶

Frederic Wallis, Dean of Gonville and Caius



THE RIGHT REV. FREDERIC WALLIS, D.D., BISHOP OF WELLINGTON.

College, in Cambridge,⁷ met these requirements and, in 1895, was chosen as Wellington's third bishop and remained in office until 1911. He was to preside over the Diocese during its period of greatest growth. The facts speak for themselves: thirty new parishes were established, a third of them in the city where the population had more than doubled.⁸ The Diocese was also enriched by the talent evident in the clergy he brought from England. Purchas, writing just a few years after Wallis's departure, concluded that: 'His episcopate coincided with a rapid expansion of settlement in the more distant portions of the diocese, and he was able to man his parochial charges and missionary districts with able clergy from Cambridge. Under his administration the diocese made solid progress, and became, instead of the weakest, one of the strongest members of the New Zealand Church.'⁹

Monaghan, the diocesan historian, makes a comparison between Hadfield and Wallis which is useful as it analyses the challenge faced by the late colonial church as it grappled with issues of leadership: 'It would be difficult to find a greater contrast between two men holding the same office than that between Octavius Hadfield and his successor to the See of Wellington. One was familiar with colonial life from the earliest pioneer days and inured to all its hardships and makeshift ways: the other had spent most of his life in the cloistered colleges and halls of an ancient university: one had been denied the fellowship in learning which a university alone can give and had trodden alone, unrecognised and unknown, the paths of philosophy: the other, with an examination brain, had gained the highest prizes and honours a university could give. One had mixed with all sorts and conditions of men in the rough and tumble of pioneer life and had gained a remarkable insight into the motives which rule their actions: the other had experienced little of the world outside college halls and cathedral cloisters. One was independent and always prepared to back his judgment with a vigour which made him suspect of autocracy: the other deferred to the guidance and opinions of others and seemed endowed with a naivete which was sometimes embarrassing.'¹⁰

Between 1895 and 1911, 72 clergy joined the diocese, 48 of them coming directly from overseas (mostly from Britain). Two-thirds were under 35 years of age. Thirty-two held degrees from British universities (especially Cambridge), most had also spent time in a theological college. Another seven were non-graduates who had been trained at St Augustine's College, Canterbury, and its affiliates. The retention rate was encouragingly high, half remained in the diocese for more than twenty years.

The group included several men who were to become significant figures in succeeding

decades. Among them were clergy like A. M. Johnson, a scholar who was Vicar of St Paul's for 18 years and Archdeacon of Wellington; Herbert Watson, a long-time Vicar of St Peter's and Archdeacon of Wairarapa; George Woodward, who spent 15 years in each of the important parishes of Karori and Palmerston North; and Arthur Hansell, who spent similar periods in Karori and Lower Hutt. There were a number of scholars in the group. Apart from Johnson, Harold Anson and Arthur Payne spent time as Wardens of St John's College. Richard Hobday, a keen student of social issues, became a confidant of Walter Nash.

In 1901 there were only three parishes and one district in Wellington and, together, they could accommodate only 2,850 people in churches and 450 in rooms. Nearly half the inhabitants of the city professed membership of the Church, but 'there is not room in our churches and church-rooms for more than one person in six of our own people, or one in thirteen of the whole population.'¹¹ 'It is a shame to us that Wellington should be behind all other cities in the colony in church-accommodation, and that the multitudes which are constantly pouring into this city should be without the means of grace which were within their reach in the homes they have left.' A sub-committee considered that church sites or buildings should be acquired in Kelburn, Berhampore, Taranaki Street, Mitchelltown, Creswick, and Day's Bay. Like Neligan in Auckland, Wallis questioned the appropriateness of conventional church buildings, noting that, for 'the poorer classes', beautiful services held little attraction – they needed 'something far simpler, more homely', and for such people mission rooms were required.¹²

The remainder of the parochial districts were established, many of them in recently cleared bush country in the north of the Diocese.¹³ Completion of the Main Trunk Railway in 1908 had spurred development in the Taihape area.

Monaghan writes eloquently of this transition: 'Many of the larger settlements were now prosperous townships. There was communication by rail throughout most of the Diocese and the bush lands were being pushed further and further back. All fear of trouble from the Māori had disappeared. Large tracts of country land were cleared of stumps and logs, and fine homesteads and farmhouses appeared amidst well-kept pasture lands. The railways brought supplies within easy reach of the settlements; roads and bridges had been built linking the settlements together and bullock teams were seen only in the back country. The opening of creameries and cheese and butter factories and the export of frozen meat gave an assurance of prosperity and a great impetus to the improvement of the farmlands. The whole Province was moving forward on a floodtide of confidence and hope.'¹⁴

The statistics for this period (1891-1911) are compelling. The population of the Diocese more than doubled, as did the Wellington-Hutt area (which increased by 112 per cent). The urban area grew even faster than Auckland and it is not at all surprising that so many urban parishes were established in this period.¹⁵ The population in the provincial areas doubled: thousands flooded into the Wanganui-Rangitikei, Manawatu-Horowhenua and South Taranaki regions. However, the growth did not follow an even pattern. Because of the boom in the dairy industry, the population of South Taranaki grew by 40 per cent in the five years 1891-96, but at less than half that rate thereafter. Wanganui-Rangitikei grew consistently, its population increasing by around 25 per cent every five years. In Manawatu-Horowhenua, the highest rates of increase were recorded in the periods 1891-96 and 1901-06. Within these twenty years, the number of parishes in the provincial areas increased by twenty.

The parochial growth in Wellington in this period was the most impressive in the country and, by 1911, Wellington had become New Zealand's second largest diocese. An extraordinary number of churches were built, most designed by

Frederick de Jersey Clere, the diocesan architect, who, with his associates, built 109 churches between 1881 and 1933 (about 75 per cent before 1911), most of them for the Anglican Church.

Endnotes

¹ Cited by H.W. Monaghan, *From Age to Age: The Story of the Church of England in the Diocese of Wellington 1858-1958*, Wellington: Standing Committee of the Diocese of Wellington, 1957. p. 85.

² Monaghan, p.84.

³ Wellington Synod Proceedings 1892, pp.79-81.

⁴ W.P. Morrell, *The Anglican Church in New Zealand: A History*, Dunedin: Church of the Province of New Zealand, 1973, p.114.

⁵ June Starke, 'Octavius Hadfield' (H2) in DNZB, vol. 1.

⁶ Letter of request to the Archbishop of York, referred to in *Church Chronicle*, quoted by the *Church Gazette*, August 1893, p.123.

⁷ Monaghan, p.87. Frederic Wallis (1853-1928), Lecturer in Divinity at Cambridge 1874-94, Fellow (1878-94) and Dean (1881-94) of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, Bishop of Wellington (1895-1911). On his return to England, appointed Archdeacon of Wiltshire (1911-12) and then of Sherborne (1916-19) in the Diocese of Salisbury, whose Bishop (1885-1911), John Wordsworth, was his wife's uncle by marriage and took part in, and preached at, Wallis's consecration.

⁸ Between 1891 and 1911, Wellington City's population increased from 31,021 to 65,758; that of the Wellington area from 33,224 to 74,258; and, if the Hutt Valley is included, from 42,845 to 90,887.

⁹ H.T.Purchas, *The English Church in New Zealand*, Christchurch: Simpson & Williams, 1914, p.227.

¹⁰ Monaghan, pp. 87-8.

¹¹ Wellington Synod Proceedings 1901, p. 85.

¹² Wellington Synod Proceedings 1902, p. 55.

¹³ From 61,272 (1891) to 124,081 (1911). In this same period the Anglican population also doubled, increasing from 27,041 to 55,423.

¹⁴ Monaghan, pp. 93-4.

¹⁵ Seven new parochial districts were formed between 1891 and 1911: St Thomas' (1896), Petone (1897), Wadestown (1904), Kilbirnie (1905), Khandallah (1906), Brooklyn (1909), and Island Bay (1909).