

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

Archdeacon Philip Walsh, 1843-1914

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Just below the chapel at St John's College, is the grave of Archdeacon Walsh – with a Celtic Cross to mark the grave. Who was he? What did he do? What were his interests? What was his influence on the Anglican Church? In what context did he carry out his ministry as a priest?

The Auckland Anglican Diocese, in the second half of the nineteenth century, was (apart from Auckland) entirely rural, often with muddy tracks through the endless bush. To get from Dargaville to Whangarei in the 1880s, Bishop Cowie took an overnight boat from Dargaville to Helensville, caught the morning train to Auckland, where he worked in his office for the rest of that day, and then travelled on an overnight boat to

Whangarei. Today, one makes the journey from Dargaville to Whangarei in less than an hour.

Philip Walsh was an Irishman, born in Kilcooley, in the south of Ireland, in County Tipperary. He was the son of an Anglican clergyman. In 1871 the Anglican Church gave up the unequal struggle of trying to convert the Irish, and disestablished the Anglican Church, which had basically required the Catholics to pay, by taxes, for a Church they did not want.

The Anglican Church at Kilcooley still stands today. Our daughter visited it in 2012, having received typical instruction on how to find it: 'You go up that hill past Mrs Giloolley's - the washing will be on the line, she always washes on Tuesdays. Then you come to a church. That's not the church you want, but go on a bit further, turn to the right, and the old church is there.' The church is no longer used today. Perhaps in Philip's time there the Anglicans knew it was impossible to convert the Irish Catholics.

Philip's parents sent him to school in France - either to protect him from the local Catholic children, or perhaps to receive a better education. In France he studied drawing, art and architecture, pursuits which remained with him for the rest of his life.

The political scene in Ireland would have weighed heavily on the Walsh family, and it was decided that young Philip should emigrate to New Zealand. Captain William C. Daldy, a trader, and an Auckland politician visited Great Britain in 1865 to recruit emigrants for the Auckland Province. One of the offices he set up for this

purpose was in County Tyrone. The Reverend R. A. Hall, a local vicar, became the promoter of a party of Anglicans who became known as the 'Bay of Islands Special Settlement.' The intention was for the group to settle just north of Kawakawa. Philip Walsh became a member of the group.

One hundred and ninety-two passengers set out on the clipper Mary Shepherd from London, in October 1865. The ship had to put into Portsmouth after encountering a severe gale in the English Channel. Some passengers left the vessel at Portsmouth. The ship arrived in the Bay of Islands on 11 February 1866, and 40 passengers disembarked there, including Philip Walsh and William Willis. They settled at Whangai, between Kawakawa and Opuā. The settlement was a disaster, with too many people trying to make a living in the bush on land that was not very fertile.

Despite the difficulties, Walsh designed a church for the settlement, known appropriately as 'St Patrick's in the Bush.' The building was dedicated by Bishop Cowie in April 1872. Willis and Walsh had made the furniture for the church. During his visits to Whangai, Cowie was so impressed with Willis and Walsh that he invited them to forgo their failing attempts at agriculture and turn to the ministry of the Church. So early in 1872 the two men went to St John's College in Auckland. They remained close friends until Walsh died in 1914. Willis eventually became Vicar of Cambridge and Archdeacon of Waikato.

Life at St John's College was very different in 1872 from what it is today. Dr Kinder was the Warden, and his report records the college activities: 'At 9 o'clock all the students, including my family, meet for morning prayers. The theology students read the lessons in turn. The morning is given to the theology students, and they are employed in Latin and Greek (4 days) and church history (2 days). At half past two, the

students meet again (except Wednesday and Saturday) and work till half past four. This time is given to the 39 Articles (2 days) and the Prayer Book (2 days).'

Dr Kinder mentioned the lack of a library, writing: 'A few books have presented to the College library and have been placed in the care of Mr Walsh as librarian.' Philip Walsh's duties as librarian were not onerous, as there were only 187 books and pamphlets in the library. A subsequent note in the Church Gazette of 1911 stated, 'The books belonging to the Cathedral Library have been arranged on the shelves of St John's College, and the late Dr Kinder's volumes, after being carefully sorted and packed by Archdeacon Walsh, are now in the process of being unpacked.' The foundation volumes of today's magnificent library, the John Kinder Theological Library, were first in the care of Philip Walsh.

Walsh was at St John's College for two years, and in December 1874 he was made deacon at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Symonds Street, Auckland. He was appointed as assistant at St Mary's New Plymouth, and resident in Waitara.

At the ordination service the preacher reminded the candidates 'that it would be their duty, as pastors, and evangelists, to search out and care for Christ's flock in every nook and corner of the parish or district committed to their charge.' Walsh's work of 'searching out and caring for Christ's flock' had begun earlier than his ordination to the Diaconate. Early in 1874, he had gone to Waitara, studying and working under Archdeacon Govett. There was no church building there.

In an early letter from Waitara, Walsh wrote, 'I am comfortably established in lodgings here. The house is about a mile from the township. I had great difficulty in getting lodgings at all ... it gave me great opportunity to become acquainted with many of the inhabitants ... I hold services in three

places on Sundays. I have to go considerable distances, the extreme distance between the two farthest places is about 35 miles. The people are glad to see me, and some have given tangible proof. One old lady has lent me a horse until I get one of my own.'

With no church building, Walsh bought a section (it appears that he paid for it himself), and even went to a local farm to cut piles for the building. The church was replaced in 1959, but relics remain today, including the old altar. Bishop Cowie wrote in 1887 that the old church 'is ecclesiastically correct and in good taste, like all Mr Walsh's churches, of which, happily, there are several in the Diocese.' Many of these churches remain to this day, including Christ Church Kihikihi, St Peter's Katikati, St Luke's Mt Albert, St Andrew's Inglewood, St Paul's Urenui, St Patricks-in-the-bush Whangai, Holy Trinity Pakaraka, St Matthew's Oramahoe and St David's Wiri. St Saviour's Kaitaia was burnt down in 1985.

Walsh was very much involved in the Waitara community: a member of the Temperance Association, Chaplain to the Taranaki Mounted Rifles, President of the Waitara Institute, a member of the Waitara Town Board, and captain of the Waitara Boating Club. He believed that Waitara needed a lifeboat service. At that time journeys around New Zealand were primarily by boat, even on the West Coast. There were many accounts of boating incidents. For example, when Bishop Cowie visited Gisborne, he was stepping across the gap between the boat and the wharf, when the plank on which he was walking broke, leaving him hanging by his fingertips until rescued!

Walsh left Waitara in 1882 to become temporary minister at St Mary's Parnell. He then went to Coromandel for a year, before leaving New Zealand in 1883, probably on the death of his father. On his return he made a major contribution as Vicar of Te Waimate, a parish that

stretched from Bream Head in the Bay of Islands to the mouth of the Hokianga harbour. Being single, he could journey and stay with families as he rode around his parish. When visiting Waiparera near the north head of the Hokianga, there was 'an unpleasant walk, through mud pools of water', and where he had 'a rough trip in the Te Aroha' which conveyed him to Taheke, where he 'arrived soon after dark.' He would then have had a 20-mile horseback trek back to Waimate.

One interesting journey was in the summer of 1887, travelling with Bishop Cowie to dedicate the new church which Walsh had designed at Kaitaia. With Walsh and the bishop in the travelling party were Eliza Cowie, Maria Maning (daughter of Judge Maning), Archdeacon Clarke, and the Rev'd H. P. Taua. The first day they went from Waimate to Kaeo and reported that 'in the afternoon heavy rain fell, making the track very muddy and slippery.' The next day they travelled 20 miles from Kaeo to Mangonui. Bishop Cowie stated that 'the road was very slippery, and much of it through water and mud ... By the time we reached the Taratara hill the drizzle had become a steady downpour, accompanied by violent gusts of wind. After three hours we dismounted in the rain to give the horses a little rest, and stood under shelter, such as it was, of a clump of tea tree, down in a hollow. Eliza and Miss Maning bore the fatigue with their accustomed courage, and laughed at the unpleasantness ... The wind and the rain continued with varying force until we reached Manganui (sic) ... The ladies had to be wrapped in blankets and go to bed, not having any dry clothes to put on.' Philip Walsh drew sketches of the trip which he gave to the bishop later. Today those sketches are in the John Kinder Theological Library.

There are several references in Bishop Cowie's writings that suggest that Philip Walsh received little money by way of a stipend. For example, in 1887 he wrote: 'Since 1882, Mr Walsh has held

several appointments, being always ready to go where he can be of most use, treating stipend as of little importance.' His work was acknowledged by his appointment as a Canon of St Mary's Cathedral in 1897, with the particular function being 'the improvement of ecclesiastical architecture in the Diocese.'

In 1890 Walsh was involved in an event which began back in 1845 during Heke's war. Three soldiers were killed during the battle of Okaihau, and nine in a subsequent battle at Lake Omapere, with the fighting then going on to Ohaewai. The twelve men were eventually reinterred in St Catherine's churchyard at Okaihau, in 1890, with Walsh taking the service.

In 1892 a crozier was given to Bishop Cowie 'and his successors' to mark Cowie's twenty-one years of service as bishop. The crozier is still in use today, having been rediscovered in Diocesan archives by Bishop John Paterson. Walsh was the instigator of this gift to Cowie.

In 1897, Walsh was responsible for negotiating with the Church Missionary Society to have the church, the cemetery and the Sunday School at Waimate handed over to the Diocesan trustees. In 1900 he was appointed Archdeacon of Waimate, following the death of Archdeacon E. B. Clarke. Bishop Cowie died in 1902 and was succeeded by Bishop Neligan. Walsh translated the Māori address of welcome to Neligan, and he also translated the new bishop's reply into Māori.

One of Philip Walsh's best-known works is the Marsden Cross. It was erected at Oihi to mark the spot where Samuel Marsden preached his Christmas Day sermon in 1814. Walsh was also instigator or designer of several other memorials including the east Window in St Mary's Parnell, in memory of Bishop Cowie and the window to the left of the pulpit in St Mary's, honouring Eliza Cowie. He himself is remembered by another window erected in 1919, in the choir of St Mary's.

Depicting St Columba, it reflects Walsh's Irish ancestry.

He was also the writer of several articles for the New Zealand Institute (later The Royal Society). These articles included 'The New Zealand Bush', 'The Winged Pilot of Hawaiki', 'Preserved Māori Heads', 'The Growth of Kumara', 'The use of Kokowai', 'The Passing of the Māori' and 'Māori Kites.' He was a keen conservationist, very concerned at the destruction of the New Zealand bush.

'The Winged Pilot of Hawiki' was a story borrowed from the Rev'd Wiki Te Paa of Hokianga. It explained how Māori discovered New Zealand, so far away from their normal voyages. Like many others of this period, Walsh was concerned that the Māori race was dying out. His paper 'The Passing of the Māori' reflects that concern.

He also wrote several popular stories for the New Zealand Herald including: 'The Bay of Island horses', 'A Māori Sanctuary', 'The Māori Race', and 'Māori War Trumpets.' As well, there were articles on Ninety Mile Beach, Hokianga, Paihia, Whangaroa, Kerikeri and Rangihoua. Children received his attention also, in stories for them. He used the penname of Brenach, writing 'The Irish Crocodile', 'Kapitaua-the story of Bean Rock', and 'Baldy's Romance.' It is most likely that he wrote several obituaries in the Church Gazette, again using a penname.

His most controversial work were the hatchments that depicted the British troops who fought against Māori during the New Zealand Wars. One set was placed in St Mary's, New Plymouth. These were so offensive that many Taranaki Māori would not enter the church. Since St Mary's became a Cathedral, the hatchments have been moved out of the church. The 58th Regiment that fought against Hone Heke in the Bay of Islands is honoured by a hatchment in St John's Church, Waimate, and there are also

several hatchments in St Andrew's Church, Cambridge.

Philip Walsh retired in 1909, at the age of 66 years. He had never married and had little money. He was invited to live with the Willis family in Cambridge. When Willis retired, Walsh spoke at his farewell: 'My knowledge of the Archdeacon goes back to 1864, when together we boarded the clipper Mary Shepherd; together we landed at the then important settlement of Kororareka, now known as Russell; together we took up sections at a place then well-known, called Whangai, in the Bay of Islands; together for some years we rowed to Russell for our stores, rowed back to the landing, carried all our stores and other materials on our backs to our holdings, where we competed in agriculture; later we went to St John's College where we competed in Theology; together we were made deacons; together we were ordained priests; and later we reached that equal dignity within the Church, that of Archdeacons. And now you see two old men, digging holes for fruit trees, of which future generations will eat the fruit.'

In 1914 Philip Walsh left the cold Waikato winters, and moved to Remuera to stay with Miss Clarke, sister of the man whom he succeeded as Archdeacon of Waimate. He died later that year and is buried at St John's College.

What was Philip Walsh like? There is the record of his artwork, his drawings, his architecture, his writings. There was his work as a priest.

But what was the man like? Archdeacon Willis, who perhaps knew him best, said of his old friend: 'He led a very regular and correct life, and was utterly incapable of an unworthy action ... His own tastes were highly cultivated, and I can remember him saying that if more care were taken to cultivate the higher tastes of the young there would be fewer lapses. He was a severe critic. I think he was too severe. Nothing ever escaped his notice. He once rebuked me for not noticing something as we walked together, saying 'Don't you keep your eyes open as you go along?' But this could have been the observation of an artist who constantly looked for everything, however small or consequential. He was a great lover of the Māori people. He had great social qualities and was a most interesting companion. He was a great lover of animals, especially of horses, and he was a good horseman. He was an enthusiastic gardener. He was clever with his hands; a good carpenter with a good set of tools and a turning lathe. An excellent oarsman who could sail a boat well, and knot and splice like an old salt.'

His grave just below the chapel at St John's College is marked with a Celtic Cross - the same cross, only smaller in size, than the one he had erected to mark Samuel Marsden's first sermon at Oihi. Is that Marsden Cross the chief sign we have today of Walsh's life and work?