

The Rev. Samuel Marsden

1765-1838.

Elizabeth Marsden.

1772-1835.

Episode 7.

Adventures in New Zealand .

In all Samuel Marsden made seven trips to New Zealand and both he and the London Missionary Society made handsome profits from his trade with the Maori People.

His younger family members in Parramatta were always pleading with him to take them with him on one of these voyages. As they were accustomed to having Maori guests at Parramatta and a regular flow of Missionaries on their way from England to New Zealand would stay at their house, the Marsden girls were eager to see the new country for themselves.

The chance to escape from Parramatta and travel appealed to his two younger daughters. Their letters and diaries at this time show a great desire to visit strange and savage lands.

Mary was to make the first voyage with her father on his sixth voyage in 1830. She so impressed the High Chief King George that he asked for her hand in marriage to one of his sons. Mary wrote;

Dear Papa declined the Honour.

Mary returned from New Zealand with a ***Mere*** that had been used by the great Maori warrior Hongi Hika. This fearsome weapon is still a treasured heirloom of the Betts Family.

Martha would go with her father on his seventh voyage . There was never any danger from the Maoris as *Te Matenga* was too well known and trusted for any Maori to harm him or his family.

The Sydney Herald on 30 January 1837 wrote;

The Reverend Marsden proceeds to New Zealand tomorrow on a Religious matter. New Zealand was one of the earliest scenes of Mr. Marsden's labours in the cause of Religion and a spot in which he has ever taken a most lively interest.

On February 9 Martha wrote in her diary;

Went aboard The Pyramus and weighed anchor at 10 am. Reached the Heads at half past one. Was obliged to go below with sea-sickness. We had beautiful nights during the voyage and have enjoyed ourselves exceedingly.

The New Zealand coast was sighted on 21 February and at the Bay of Islands over one thousand Maoris assembled to greet *Te Matenga* and his daughter. They were pleased to see them and offered to build a grand house for them to live permanently. Samuel said that he would talk to his family about this when he returned to NSW.

In the next two months Samuel and Martha would travel throughout New Zealand and visit many settlements that had once been fortified villages but were now peaceful farms with flourishing orchards, fields of grain and herds of cattle. Martha would meet a Chief who had only a few years before, killed and eaten his enemies but was now a successful farmer who entertained his visitors with a meal of milk, bread and vegetables. Marta wrote;

This native may now be called wealthy. He owns a good house on several acres of land. It is well cultivated , producing crops of wheat,

potatoes and kumara. He makes use of the plough and his wheat field would bear comparison with some of our English lands. He said that he no longer has a thirst for blood and that instead of teaching his children about war, he teaches them “ the fear of the Lord.”

After many adventures, Martha recorded the arrival of **HMS Rattlesnake** and on 27 May Marsden and daughter were offered a passage to NSW. A passage was also arranged for a local Missionaries daughter, Miss Maryanne Williams who wished to visit friends in Sydney Town.

The Rattlesnake was a training ship for young RN Officers and they had been away from England for many months and were delighted to welcome aboard two attractive young 17 year girls.

The young ladies were also sure to enjoy the voyage.

The Misses Marsden and Williams were great favourites of the young Officers and one evening were discovered by the Rev Marsden, in the Officers Mess being entertained by all the young men who were not on duty. Such behavior was frowned on in Religious Society but Martha wrote:

Dear Papa was most understanding.

Needless to say, the two young ladies enjoyed an exciting passage home to Sydney Town. In her diary Martha wrote;

I had an exceeding good time.

It was SO good to be 17.

As the Rattlesnake entered the Heads the Captain asked Marsden

I think sir, that you look upon this as your last voyage to New Zealand.

Marsden replied;

No sir, I do not, for I intend to be off again very soon. The people of this Colony are becoming too fine for me now that I am too old to preach before them but I can talk to the Maoris.

Samuel Marsden would not return to New Zealand but his memory is held in respectful reverence by Maoris today.

In 1928, an elderly, well dressed and dignified Maori Chief was seen walking in the grounds of St. John's Church in Parramatta. He was asked by the Curate if he could help him in any way and the Maori said;

I am seeking the grave of Te Matenga.

He was taken to the place where Samuel rests beside his Dear Betsy and he asked if he could speak from the Pulpit of Marsden's own Church.

On the next Sunday he addressed the people of Parramatta and said that this place had been the centre of culture when New Zealand was still a savage wilderness. He said that the Maori people owed a great debt to ***Te Matenga*** and the words that he spoke are still remembered today by those who were privileged to hear them.

I was there but I do not remember his words as I was in a pram but my Mother and grandmother were there and they passed them on to me.

As I am writing this story I am remembering those words and it has given me much joy to be able to tell you about them.

I hope that my stories have given you some pleasure and have helped you to pass away some time in the slow days that we are experiencing at this time.

Let us hope that we will soon be back at the U3A Classes that we miss.

(John Imrie, 20-5-2020)