

The Rev. Samuel Marsden.

1765-1838

Adventures in New Zealand.

Episode 6.

To most New Zealand people it comes as a surprise to find, in Australia, that old charges of cruelty and avarice are still remembered against Samuel Marsden. Despite the faults that must, inevitably accompany a character as strong as Marsden's, it must be recognized that he was a product of his time.

The Maori People and most New Zealanders will ever be in his debt for the services he gave to their Country.

One must understand the weaknesses of the Missionary system of this time but believe that most of the men working in the field were imbued with high ideals and honest motives. In the inevitable clash of cultures, it is well to remember that the Missionary was the only buffer between the Maori People and the rapacious Traders and Whalers who brought misery and disease to most regions of the Pacific.

In 1813 Marsden was finally able to turn his attention to Missionary work in New Zealand. He realized an old ambition by planting the English Flag over the first Missionary settlement in a new land, This adventure would take him away from his religious duties and his family in NSW for long periods on several occasions and it enabled him to set free the Evangelistic impulses that had been unfulfilled in NSW.

His journals and letters, at this time, reveal a childlike joy in these new experiences and physical challenges he was facing. He exhibited a fresh confidence in the new role to which he felt called to by God.

He had been writing to the London Missionary Society since 1805, asking that they provide funds for the purchase of a suitable trading ship-- without much success. In 1813 he decided that he would purchase such a ship with his own money.

He was soon the proud owner of *The Active*, which he purchased for £1,400. He sold some of his sheep for £900 and signed a note for £500. The London Missionary Society would, much later, contribute £500 a year to his venture but only when it had become very profitable.

Marsden's letters, at this time, indicate that he wanted this ship to produce, by trade, profits for the London Missionary Society. He also wanted to stimulate the wealth and industry of the Maoris, who he regarded as *a superior race of people*. He believed that such activities would wean them away from warfare and cannibalism to new Christian practices. Marsden had many talks with Governor Lachlan Macquarie and both men agreed that there were many advantages to be had by having trade with New Zealand. This would help to break down the mutual distrust which had resulted in many bloody encounters between Traders and Maoris.

There was much to do before the first voyage of *The Active* and Marsden was a very busy man. There were written instructions for his new Captain Dillon and his crew emphasizing *the aim of promoting a friendly intercourse with the New Zealand people*

Marsden would not be going on this first voyage and he wanted to be sure that the Captain and the crew would act well.

1. Quarrels were to be avoided at all costs.
2. Maori women were not to come aboard the ship.
3. At sea. Church Services were to be held on each Sunday.
4. No buying or selling was to be done on Sunday.

5. Sailors were to be clean and do no work on Sunday when in Port.

The first voyage of *The Active* from 14 March to 22 August 1814 saw good trading and friendly connections being made with local Chiefs at the Bay of Plenty.

The profit from this trip was £300 and much knowledge was gained and there were no incidents which would prove to be good for future trips.

Captain Dillon was instructed to inform the Chiefs that Marsden would visit them soon and to invite them to return aboard *the Active* to NSW. Three Chiefs accepted this invitation and with several members of their families came to Pt Jackson where they received a warm welcome and would stay at the Marsden residence at Parramatta for three months.

When they returned to their home they sailed with The Rev. Marsden and three Missionaries who would live in New Zealand.

1. The Rev. Hall to assist in the building of houses .
2. The Rev. King to teach the making of flax into cordage and clothing.
3. The Rev. Kendall to open schools for the children.
4. A Convict Blacksmith sent by Governor Macquarie to teach his skills.

Macquarie presented the Chiefs with Military Uniforms and more importantly, six head of cattle. Marsden gave them a stallion and two mares.

Marsden was aware of leaving his crippled wife but Elizabeth and all his family insisted that it was his duty to go and that they were quite capable of managing until he would return. Letters written by the

Marsden girls at this time indicate that they were looking forward to a period of – *Freedom from Papa and all his activities*.

It was a busy time as *The Active* prepared for this important voyage.

Marsden wrote;

I told all the Maori sailors that I would pay for their services at the same rate as the Europeans according to the work that they would do. At this they were astonished and much gratified. They received two months wages in advance to enable them to buy such things as they wanted.

This did not endear him to Traders and Employers in Sydney Town. It earned both respect and loyalty from the New Zealand people.

On the 28 November 1814 *The Active*, with its assorted crew, sailed from Port Jackson and after a rough crossing, was in sight of New Zealand on the 16 December.

The three Chiefs, *Rautara, Hongi Hika* and *Korokoro* went ashore dressed in their gifted Military Uniforms and soon returned with several parties who stated that the visitors were very welcome. *The Active* entered *Whangaroa Harbour* and dropped anchor at *Matauri Bay*.

Despite the fact that several bloody massacres had taken place in this area Samuel Marsden went ashore accompanied by John Nicholson, a gentleman who had offered to record the Historic events as they happened. Following a display by many armed Maoris, the two men would spend the night ashore unprotected. They wrapped themselves in their greatcoats and slept, as directed, at the side of the High Chief. Marsden Wrote;

The night was clear, the stars were shone brightly and the sea was in our front and was smooth. Around us were numerous spears stuck upright in the ground and groups of natives lying in all directions, like a flock of sheep upon the grass. I view our present situation with new sensations and feelings that I cannot express. Surrounded by cannibals who had murdered and devoured our Countrymen. I wondered at the mysteries of Providence and how these things could be.

In the morning there was much activity as the local Chiefs brought their tribes and families and assembled to hear Samuel Marsden speak to them about the many advantages of Peace, Agriculture and Trade.

The ever watchful *Chief Rautara* had briefed Marsden and introduced him to the other Chiefs. Marsden presented them with gifts of axes and cotton cloth. The three Missionaries were then introduced.

The horses and cattle were then unloaded and Samuel rode a horse up and down the beach. Some of the Maoris fled in terror at this strange sight as this was the first horse to be seen in their land.

The man from Parramatta was creating a heroic image amongst the New Zealand people that would long survive him.

A one acre block of land was fenced and a flagpole erected. This was to be the site of the first Church.

On the 25 December, Christmas Day, The Rev. Samuel Marsden preached the first Religious Service ever held in New Zealand.

Marsden's words were;

In this manner, The Gospel has been introduced into New Zealand and I pray that the Glory of it may never depart from it's inhabitants till time shall be no more.

At *Oiho* in the *Bay of Islands* stands *The Marsden Cross* bearing this inscription;

On Christmas Day 1814

The first Christian Service in New Zealand

Was held on this spot

By the Rev. Samuel Marsden.

Marsden now needed timber for the building of the Church and houses and he sailed to Kawakawa and purchased some from Chief Tara who told him that he wanted to receive the knowledge that would improve the lives of his people. Marsden signed a contract to build a Mission on Tara's land on his next voyage.

Contracts were signed and the timber was delivered on the 6 January.

Marsden now addressed the Chiefs on the advantages of the British Justice system and the need for Juries to determine guilt or innocence. The Chiefs asked that the British Government send a Magistrate to New Zealand as soon possible.

The Chiefs were impressed that Marsden always insisted that all Trade was to be done with Contracts. The name *Te Matenga* was to be respected and trusted by all Maoris.

When *The Active* finally sailed for Sydney Town on 26 February 1815 Marsden had arranged for eight young Maoris, the sons of Chiefs, to sail with him to be educated in Parramatta.

How different was this to the treatment of Aborigines in NSW.

Samuel Marsden made a second trip to New Zealand in 1819 and he found a few problems with the three Missionaries.

Hall and King were now engaged in private trade and were buying firearms from American Whalers and selling these to Maoris who were using them to attack other tribes.

The Missionaries were drinking heavily and living with Maori women.

They had gone Native.

In fact, the Maoris believed that it was not normal to live alone and had only been accepted when they began to live as others did.

These wayward sons were taken back to Parramatta where the good Minister would try to *save their souls from damnation*.

Future Missionaries were to always be married men with their wives.

If you have enjoyed this story there is more which I will tell you about next time.

Maybe we will all be together again and I will be able to be with you.

(John Imrie, 18/5/2020)