

## Page 3. First years of the CMS mission

### Troubled beginnings

From the start there were many disagreements between the early Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries. **Thomas Kendall set up a school, produced the first examples of written Māori and published the first Māori dictionary.** However his skills were lost to the mission after he was suspended for adultery in 1822. More missionaries arrived, including the Reverend John Butler, who became superintendent of the mission. Marsden suspended him in 1823 after accusing him of drunkenness.

A new mission station was opened at Kerikeri in 1819 under the sponsorship of Hongi Hika, who demanded guns in return. The missionaries depended for food and shelter on trading with their Māori hosts, and when Māori insisted on being paid in muskets, the missionaries supplied them. This trade contributed to the devastating musket wars of the early 1820s.

### Henry Williams

In 1823 the Reverend Henry Williams, a retired naval captain, arrived to lead the mission. He encouraged the missionaries to become fluent in Māori, and to teach Māori to read and write in their own language. In 1826 Henry's brother William arrived, and he greatly advanced Thomas Kendall's work in developing a written form of the Māori language. Williams's wife Jane, and other missionary wives, helped to create a more stable community with neat cottages, schools and medical care.

### Enchanter's wand

Charles Darwin, the author of the theory of evolution, visited the missionary settlement at Waimate in 1835. He saw 'large gardens, with every fruit and vegetable which England produces ... Around the farm-yard there were stables, a threshing-barn with its winnowing machine, a blacksmith's forge, and on the ground ploughshares and other tools ... native workmanship, taught by the missionaries, has effected this change; the lesson of the missionaries is the enchanter's

The first inland mission station at Waimate North, established in 1830, included a productive farm, so the missionaries were no longer totally dependent on Māori for food. The launching of a mission schooner enabled them to travel beyond the Bay of Islands.

As a result of the musket wars, tribes living near the mission station brought back thousands of captives and slaves from other areas. William Williams says it was these 'persons of little note'<sup>2</sup> who became some of the first Christian converts.

### Political influence

As the missionaries' reputations grew, some became trusted go-betweens for Māori in their dealings with government, traders and the law. Henry Williams gained support among many Māori for opposing the activities of grog-sellers, gun-runners and other non-religious Europeans in the Bay of Islands. The CMS

wand. The house has been built, the windows framed, the fields ploughed, and even the trees grafted, by a New Zealander [a Māori].'<sup>1</sup>

deliberately set up a mission at Paihia, directly opposite the notoriously lawless settlement of Kororāreka (later Russell), to contrast Christianity with the decadent forms of European life.

Henry Williams was accused of unfairly manipulating Māori by buying large areas of their land. He defended his actions as trying to provide for his large family. He has also been criticised for convincing Māori to sign the Treaty of Waitangi – although he probably did this out of a sense of responsibility towards them.

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**Footnotes:**

Charles Darwin, (last accessed 18 May 2010).

William Williams, *Christianity among the New Zealanders*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989, p. 126 (originally published 1867).

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**How to cite this page:**

Peter J. Lineham, 'Missions and missionaries - First years of the CMS mission', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/missions-and-missionaries/page-3> (accessed 9 October 2017) Story by Peter J. Lineham, published 5 May 2011, updated 13 Mar 2017