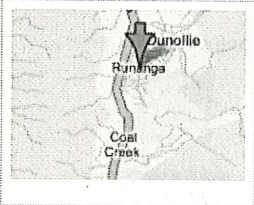




Today in History

◀ 19 January ▶



1967 19 killed in Strongman mine explosion at Runanga

Nineteen men were killed when an explosion ripped through the state-run Strongman coal mine at Runanga just after 10 a.m. An investigation concluded that safety regulations had not been followed and that a shot had been incorrectly fired.

Located just north of Greymouth, the Strongman mine (New Zealand's largest underground coal mine) had enjoyed an impeccable safety record since its opening in 1939. All that changed in January 1967 when an explosion sent a fireball through a section of the mine. There were 240 men working in the mine at the time. A greater death toll was avoided only because the fireball hit a wet patch in the tunnel near the explosion. This caused it to slow and then extinguish itself.

Smoke and firedamp (methane gas produced by coal) made the search for survivors and bodies hazardous. When mixed with a certain level of air, firedamp becomes highly explosive. Those involved in the rescue were at constant risk of another explosion. Fourteen bodies were recovered on the day of the explosion. It took another three weeks to retrieve two more bodies. The tunnel was sealed off before the last two could be recovered. A number of the men involved in the rescue received the British Empire Medal for their bravery.

An inquiry into the disaster concluded that at least two mining regulations had been broken. The government was ordered to pay compensation to the families of the victims.

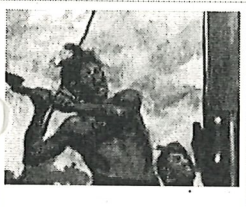
New Zealand's worst mining disaster remains the explosion at Brunnerton on the West Coast in 1896 in which 65 were killed.

Internal links

[New Zealand disasters timeline](#) [1967 - key events](#) [Strongman coal mine disaster memorial](#)

External links

[Strongman mine disaster \(Chch City Libraries\)](#) [The miners' work \(Te Ara\)](#) [Mining accidents \(Te Ara\)](#) [Coal mining \(1966 encyclopaedia\)](#)



1845 Hone Heke cuts down the British flagstaff - again

Initially supportive of the Treaty of Waitangi, **Hone Heke became increasingly disenchanted with the effects of European colonisation.** He expressed this through repeated assaults on the symbol of British power. This was his third attack on the flagstaff on the hill above Kororareka (Russell).

Hone Heke chopping down the British flag at Kororareka is an enduring image from New Zealand history. Traditional interpretations portrayed him as a 'rebel' who was finally subdued by 'good Governor George Grey'. This view failed to acknowledge the complexities of the conflict and the unresolved issue of Maori authority in the period after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Hone Heke had been the first Maori to sign the Treaty.

**Heke's first assault on the flagstaff came in July 1844 when Te Haratua, his right-hand man, chopped it down. The British re-erected the flagstaff, but it was felled again on 10 January 1845. Heke's third assault followed on the 19th. A fourth attack on the flagstaff on 11 March resulted in the outbreak of war in the north.**

Sometimes referred to as 'Hone Heke's rebellion' or the 'Flagstaff War', this was no simple matter of Maori versus British. It was a three-sided war in which two factions of Ngapuhi fought against each other. Hone Heke and Kawiti fought against both the Crown and other Ngapuhi led by Tamati Waka Nene. The fighting ended in January 1846.

Image: Hone Heke fells the flagstaff at Kororareka

Internal links

[Kororareka](#) [Treaty events 1800-49 - Treaty timeline](#) [Hone Heke](#) [Origins of the Northern War](#)

External links

[Heke's war in the North \(Te Ao Hou\)](#) [Hone Heke biography \(DNZB\)](#) [European Contact \(Te Ara\)](#)

Timeline Se

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day of the  
date below  
birthday?

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Sidney Hollan

Holland became PM in 1949. A year later he abolished the Legislative Council, and in 1951, after winning the Waterfront Dispute, he increased his majority in a snap election.

more

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THIS WEEK'S QUIZ

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28 February  
1945 Kiwi  
soldier faces  
Nazi firing  
squad



1 March 1901  
Skippers  
Bridge opened



2 March 1865  
Missionary Carl  
Volkner killed  
at Opotiki



3 March 1960  
Barry Crump's  
novel *A good  
keen man*  
published



4 March 1855  
Legendary  
sheep rustler  
James  
Mackenzie  
caught



5 March 1830  
Outbreak of the  
Girls' War at  
Kororareka



6 March 1947  
Debut  
performance of  
NZ Symphony  
Orchestra

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