

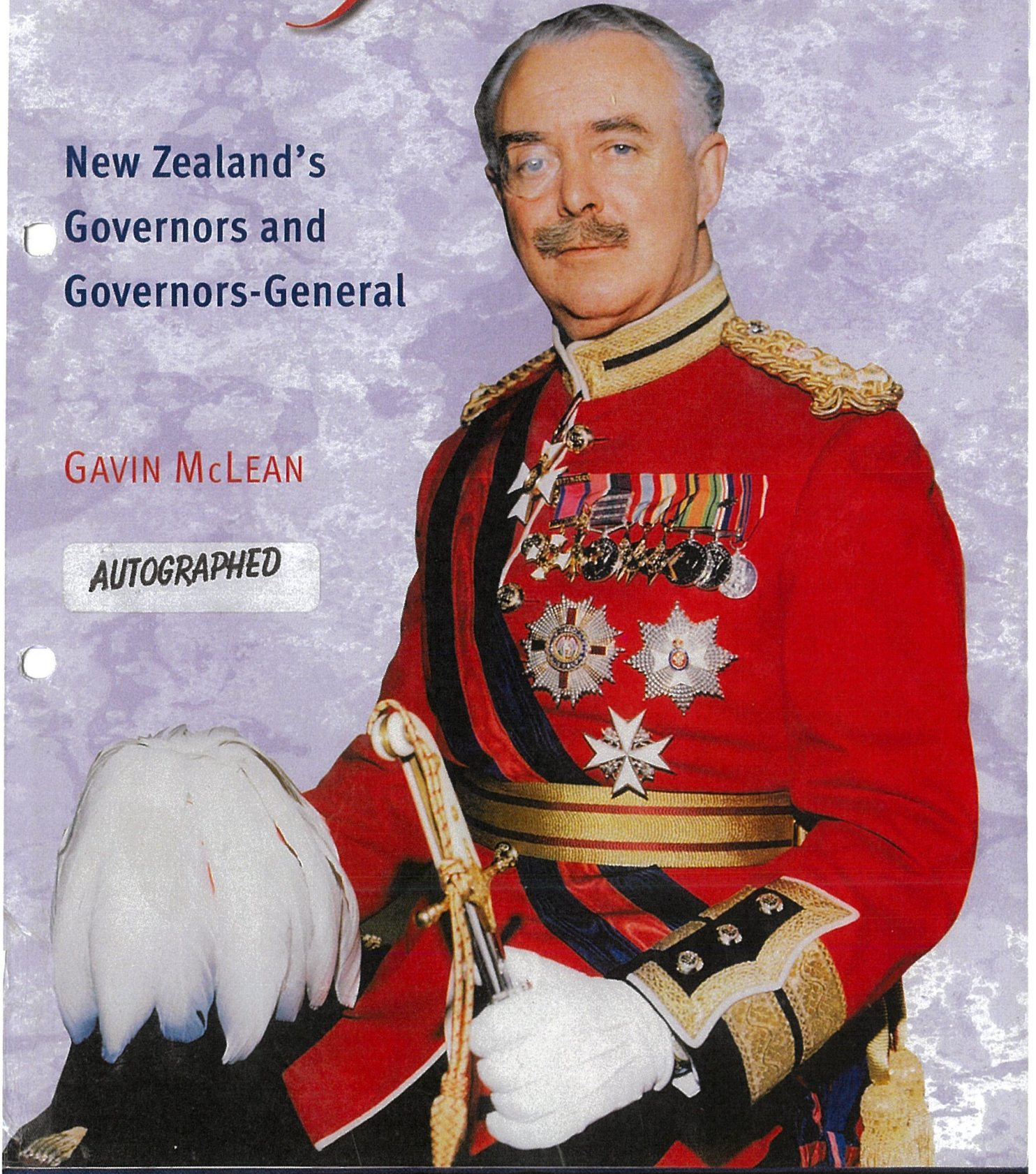
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THE GOVERNORS

New Zealand's
Governors and
Governors-General

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AUTOGRAPHED



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Blueprints of vice-regal carriages. *Government House Collection*

Half-title page

Sir Paul, Lady Reeves and Sophie the corgi promote 'Red Nose Day' in 1989.
Dominion Post Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, EP-1989-3211

Title page

Vice-regal farewells were big affairs. Hundreds gathered at the Wellington waterfront in 1952 when Sir Bernard Freyberg (circled on the bridge wing of the *Rangitane*) sailed after six eventful years in Government House.
Dominion Post Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, EP-1952-1401

occasion, some dressed in white trousers, white shirts and red sashes, others in white trousers and red shirts, and another row in blue shirts.¹¹⁶

The title and the knighthood were fine by Grey, but 'the last governor in the colonial service likely to curb his own powers' quickly agreed with the Charter's critics, and playing on the fear of Maori rebellion urged delay in the implementation of its provisions.¹¹⁷ Earl Grey acquiesced and in December 1847 introduced a Suspending Bill to the Commons. The killing of the Gilfillan family near Wanganui in April 1847 had also played into Grey's hands by heightening settler fears of open warfare. But if in Britain there was a reluctant acceptance of the need for delay, there was no such feeling in New Zealand – impatience soon manifested itself again, especially in the southern settlements.

Until the early 1850s Grey managed to keep the constitutionalists in check despite virulent criticism by Wellington's William Fox and Canterbury's increasingly intolerant Godley (who helped nudge demands from representative government to self-government). Under pressure from memorials, demonstrations and meetings, Grey sketched out a draft constitution for the Colonial Office in 1851. The lengthy despatch painted a picture of prosperity and peace and presented a plan for increased self-government with a heavy emphasis on the local level. Many years later he gave his constitutional sketching a romantic embellishment, 'claiming inspiration from a deep communion with nature, with sundry hints from the United States constitution thrown in', McIntock sneered.¹¹⁸ 'When my thoughts had bent to a shape, I went up to the mountains between Auckland and Wellington, camped on Ruapehu, in a little gipsy tent, and set to the task', Grey burred. 'A few Maoris accompanied me to carry the baggage; nobody else, for I could not have drawn the constitution with a cloud of advisers about me'.¹¹⁹

PROVINCIAL LIEUTENANT-GOVERNORS

THE 1846 CHARTER which elevated Grey to the title of governor-in-chief also made him governor of New Zealand's two provinces, New Ulster and New Munster. Each had a lieutenant-governor, although in practice Grey gave them little power – and in the case of Eyre, little peace.

New Ulster

MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE DEAN PITT

14 February 1848 – 8 January 1851

George Dean (he assumed the surname Pitt in 1818) was born in Ireland in 1781. He was commissioned into the 42nd Regiment in 1805, and later transferred to the 96th. He served in the West Indies (1807–9) and the Peninsular War (1811–14), being made a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB). He was superintendent of recruiting in the War Office when he came to New Zealand early in 1848 to command the forces. Despite his poor health, Grey appointed him lieutenant-governor of New Ulster in February 1848 and to the Legislative Council in 1849. A mere figurehead in these civil roles, Pitt died at Auckland in 1851.¹²⁰

LT-COL ROBERT HENRY WYNYARD, CB

26 April 1851 – 7 August 1853

Robert Wynyard, born at Windsor Castle in 1802 to parents serving in the royal household, made a significant contribution to New Zealand's vice-regal story. Robert followed his father into the army, serving in several countries. In 1842 he took command of the 58th Regiment, which went to Sydney two years later. From there in March 1845 Wynyard and a detachment were sent to the Bay of Islands to deal with Hone Heke and Kawiti. He fought at Ruapekapeka and was made CB in July 1846. In 1847, after a brief period back in Australia, he returned to New Zealand, where he and wife Anne were leading lights in the Auckland social scene.

In January 1851 Wynyard was appointed to command the forces in New Zealand, and he was made lieutenant-governor of New Ulster in April 1851. The pro-official party invited him to contest the new Auckland superintendency two years later. Wynyard (promoted to colonel in 1854) won,

but the Colonial Office made him resign the post after he became administrator on Grey's departure. Left the messy job of implementing the new constitutional arrangements (see the next chapter), Wynyard prevaricated until the Colonial Office approved the introduction of responsible government and the royal assent was given to appropriate legislation in April 1855.

In September 1855 Wynyard gladly resumed military duties on Governor Browne's assumption of office. Three years later the 58th was recalled to Britain, where Wynyard was promoted to major-general. In 1859 he was appointed to command the troops in Cape Colony, South Africa, again under Grey as governor, and between August 1859 and July 1860 he was acting governor and high commissioner during Grey's absence in Britain. In 1863, after another brief stint as an administrator, Wynyard returned to Britain. By then he was very ill, and he died at London a year later. Anne Wynyard returned to Auckland, where she was a prominent figure until her death in 1881.¹²¹

New Munster

EDWARD JOHN EYRE

28 January 1848 – 7 March 1853

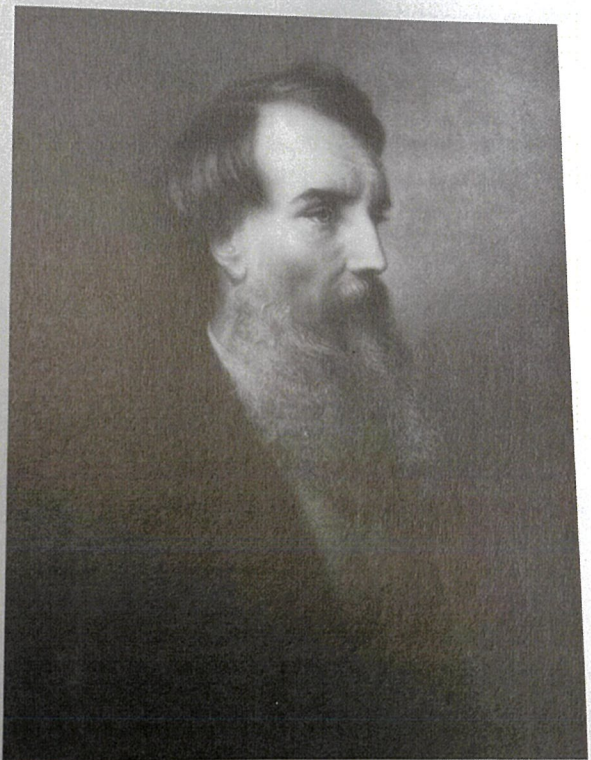
Edward Eyre was born at Whipsnade, Bedfordshire, in 1815, the son of a cleric. A tolerable scholar, he preferred the outdoor life, emigrating at age seventeen to Australia. There he divided his time between overlanding (driving sheep and cattle) and exploring, ruining himself financially in the process, but becoming a hero for his trek from Adelaide to Western Australia. In 1846, after a brief time back in Britain, Eyre accepted the lieutenant-governorship of New Munster under Grey, for whom he had been a minor official in South Australia.

Eyre was shocked by his accommodation, complaining: 'I got into my new house and found it a most dilapidated old one'.¹²² Eyre was a failure in Wellington – shy, physically awkward and considered aloof by many settlers. Grey hated him and treated him with contempt, especially after rushing down to Wellington after what the governor-in-chief considered grossly exaggerated accounts of destruction caused by the 1848 earthquake. As Grey negotiated with the settlers calling for representative government, he discovered that rather than Eyre having cultivated the ground for him, 'Mr Eyre has studiously avoided making the acquaintance of them, or of acquainting himself with their

sentiments with regard to the Legislative Institutions'.¹²³

By 1851 Grey's private secretary was reporting that His Excellency had sent the Colonial Office a report that 'will have the effect of preventing the possibility of his [Eyre's] succeeding the governor when he retires'.¹²⁴ In return, Eyre complained to the Colonial Office about Grey's treatment of him.¹²⁵

In 1854 Eyre was appointed lieutenant-governor of St Vincent in the Caribbean. There too his defective social skills got him offside with the white settlers. He did little better as temporary governor of Antigua. After a period of unemployment, Eyre was given another temporary posting in 1862: Jamaica, a colony going through a recession, exacerbating relations between the planters and their former slaves. The Colonial Office made him governor in 1864 but had to dismiss him two years later as a consequence of his bloody suppression of disturbances at Morant Bay. Victorian Britain was divided over 'the hero as murderer' – some wanted him tried for murder, others believed that he had saved the colony for the empire. Eyre was acquitted but never fully rehabilitated. He died in 1901 after a long period of semi-isolation in the Devonshire countryside.¹²⁶



Edward Eyre held the title lieutenant-governor of New Munster for five unhappy years, during which he was treated with contempt by Grey. Charles Mercier, Alexander Turnbull Library, C-016-003