This is the Thirty-ninth of an occasional series of articles by David Stone about incidents in the history of Swanton Morley and its church

**Henry Tacy Part 1: The Mission to the Maoris**

The next time that you go into All Saints’ Church, take a look at the pulpit and you will see that it bears a brass plate which reads “Sacred to the Memory of Henry Tacy and William Millett…….

who for 38 years and 33 years respectively as Rector and Curate of this parish …... faithfully

preached the Gospel of the grace of God.” This plate, together with the large inscription on the pulpit, dated1897, indicates that they were part of the Evangelistic movement which swept the country in the nineteenth century. Henry Tacy’s particular interest was in sending missionaries to the Maoris in New Zealand. His initial enthusiasm for this work arose during his time as a curate at Wymondham, and I was able to uncover a great deal about this period of his life. I imagine that his enthusiasm was undiminished when he was appointed as rector of Swanton Morley in September 1825, but there is less published evidence of this.

So, let us start by looking at Henry Tacy when he was first appointed curate at Wymondham in about May 1812. His patron was not an individual, but what was called an ‘Ecclesiastical Corporation’. I suspect that this was a group which had bought the advowson (the right to appoint the rector) in order to ensure that an ‘Evangelical’ got the job. The vicar of Wymondham was a very keen Evangelical called William Papillon. As you can see by his name, his family were descendants of the French Huguenots. Anyway, both Tacy and Papillon became active members of what later came to be called the *Church Missionary Society.* They were not founder members of the Norfolk and Norwich Group, which was founded in September 1813, but by 1818 they were both life members, and Tacy was on the committee. This was around the time that the first mission station was established in New Zealand.

The leading light in this project was the Rev. Samuel Marsden, who had already spent some years as a missionary in Australia. He was stationed at Parramatta, New South Wales, which is now a suburb of Sydney. However, his relationship with successive governors of the colony was somewhat stormy and he was disillusioned by his failure to evangelise either the convicts or the aborigines. So, he turned his interest toward the Maoris of New Zealand, whom he described as ‘a very superior people.’ and in November 1814 he undertook the first of the seven voyages that he made to New Zealand between 1814 and 1837. A mission was established at a place called Kerikeri on the Bay of Islands, which is situated just north of Auckland, and Henry Tacy became closely involved in supporting this.

**James Kemp and Henry Tacy Kemp**

There is nothing to indicate that Henry Tacy himself wished to go to New Zealand, but he was certainly keen to identify those from the Wymondham congregation who might be suitable for Marsden’s expeditions. Now it was considered highly desirable for missionaries to be married and it would seem that Henry Tacy played an active role in finding wives for his protégés. The first of these was a blacksmith called James Kemp. He married Charlotte Butcher in Wymondham on 16 November 1818, which was only a few weeks before they sailed for New Zealand. His initial role was to make and mend ploughshares, but he also took part in the mission’s evangelical efforts, for he had been educated at Wymondham Grammar School and he had received instruction on the Bible from Henry Tacy.

Now Henry Tacy engaged in a long correspondence with James Kemp and we are fortunate that the latter kept copies of all his letters. In fact they are held at the Old Mission House at Kerikeri, which was completed in 1822 and is said to be the oldest building in New Zealand. It was, in fact, later bought by James Kemp, and is sometimes referred to as *Kemp House*.

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mission_House_at_Kerikeri.jpg)

**The Mission House**

**at Kerikeri**

James and Charlotte Kemp’s first son was born in Kerikeri on 18 January 1821, and they named him Henry Tacy Kemp. He spoke both English and Maori from an early age. In 1834, he returned to England for a couple of years where he studied at the *Pottergate Academy* in Norwich. (It seems likely that this was the Drawing Academy which the artist, William Stevenson had opened at 100 Pottergate Street.) On returning to New Zealand he became an interpreter and his main activity, until 1862, was the purchase of Maori land on behalf of the Crown. Most notoriously he purchased most of South Island – some 20 million acres – from the Ngai Tahu people for £2,000! It was not until 1998 that this grievance was finally rectified. On a happier note, he also published an English- Maori phrase book, and translations into Maori of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Incidentally, the Kemps seemed to like naming their sons after those who had helped them, because two more of their sons were named William Papillon Kemp (b.1829) and Samuel Marsden Kemp (b.1834) respectively.

**George Clarke and Henry Tacy Clarke**

Returning to Henry Tacy, I have obtained a copy of one of his letters to James Kemp. It is dated 13 March 1822 and in it he talks about James’s family and friends in Wymondham. He also says that he expects to officiate at the marriage of one of these friends, a gun-maker called George Clarke, to Martha Elizabeth Blomefield, the very next day. This appears to be another marriage that Henry Tacy had arranged, for we find that he did indeed marry the young couple on 14 March 1822 – five weeks before they sailed for New Zealand.

On 17 April, the Clarkes left London for Gravesend and embarked on the *Heroine*, but unfortunately Martha suffered badly from sea-sickness and a chest infection. In fact it was only the fact that the ship stopped at Rio de Janiero that saved her life. They reached Hobart on 10 September and resumed their voyage on 6 October. Ten days later, almost six months to the day since they left England, they arrived at Parramatta in New South Wales where they met Samuel Marsden. He was determined that George Clarke should not go on to New Zealand until those awaiting him clearly understood that his role was to be that of teacher and not gunsmith. (There had been a lot of trading guns to the Maoris in the past.) It was also a time of serious inter-tribal warfare among the Maoris and of scandal at the mission. In the event, Marsden sailed for New Zealand on 19 June 1823, but the Clarkes remained behind and, ten days later, Martha gave birth to their first child, George Clarke Jnr. It was not until April 1824 that the Clarkes finally arrived at the Kerikeri mission. George Clarke established a school for Maori children and he rapidly learnt the Maori language. Their next son was born at Kerikeri in November 1825, and he was baptised Henry Tacy Clarke, so, taken together with Henry Tacy Kemp, the name of Henry Tacy must have been well known in the mission.

Next time I shall tell you a little more about the life of Henry Tacy Clarke before looking at the rest of Henry Tacy’s career.