

First Immigrant Ships



PART OF LAMBTON HARBOUR, PORT NICHOLSON, NEW ZEALAND.
COMPREHENDING ABOUT ONE THIRD OF THE WATER FRONTAGE OF
THE TOWN OF WELLINGTON.

- Early Wellington Town -

Part of Lambton Harbour, Port Nicholson, New Zealand painted by Henry William PETRE in 1842
Original held and digitised by the British Library.

The First Immigrant Ships

Port Nicholson, the Waitemata, and beyond.

by Anthony G. Flude ©2001

The British barque *Rosanna* is believed to have been the first immigrant ship to enter the harbour at Port Nicholson, (Wellington) in the year 1826. Captain James Herd had on board 25 immigrants and his orders from the members of a fledgling, unformed *New Zealand Association* in London, were to find a suitable site for settlement in New Zealand.

Unimpressed with the foreshore and surrounding countryside, the ship sailed northwards to Hokianga, in the Bay of Islands, where a landing was made. Here, the would-be settlers became alarmed at the stories of the ferocious Maori natives who lived in the area, imploring the Captain to take them on to Sydney, Australia. The first attempts at a settlement had failed.

Edward Gibbon Wakefield was the driving force behind the future governing body of the *New Zealand Company* and it was his propaganda that enticed many settlers to leave their native England and Scotland to begin a new life on the other side of the world. Wakefield first described New Zealand as "the fittest country in the world for colonisation" to a House of Commons Committee. In 1837, the New Zealand Association was properly set up to colonise New Zealand along Wakefield's recommendations; approval being given by the government committee "to found and govern a settlement in New Zealand."

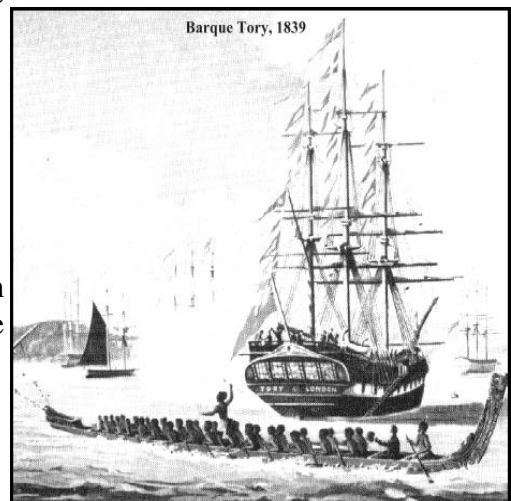
The British government expected the company to subscribe capital for the venture; restrictions were imposed that prior Maori consent must be given to any settlement. The association was subsequently dissolved and the New Zealand Company founded with a nominal capital of £400,000. In December, 1838, the government appointed *Captain William Hobson* to be the new Governor of New Zealand and negotiate with the Maori chiefs over the acquisition of sovereignty of New Zealand for the British crown.

The company began its an advertising campaign in 1839 in all the National newspapers throughout England and Scotland for settlers and trades people to emigrate to New Zealand aboard the company vessels.

Colonel William Wakefield was ordered to sail in the barque *Tory*, a fast 382-ton vessel which left Gravesend on the 5th May, 1839, on an expedition to select a suitable landing site for the vessels and to purchase land from the Maori. Thirty-five people were on board including Edward Wakefield and a Maori named Neti, who was to act as interpreter between the parties.

Arriving in Cook Strait, the *Tory* put into the whaling station at Te Awaiti, then sailed for Port Nicholson where they were met by the two leading chiefs, Te Puni and Wharepouru.

On the 30th September a deal was struck over the sale of land between the New Zealand Company agent, Wakefield



and the Maori chiefs. This was formalised with the raising of the British flag at Petone to a 20-gun salute from the *Tory* anchored in the bay.

Amazingly, before any assurances had reached England from Wakefield that the land had been purchased, three fully laden vessels with provisions and passengers, had already set sail for New Zealand. The ship's Captains had no idea where their emigrant passengers were to make a landing in the new colony, or whether agreement had been reached with the Maori to receive a large group of settlers. Their instructions were to sail for Port Hardy, D'Urville Island (Cook Strait) and await for directions, when Wakefield would meet them aboard the 'Tory'.

The immigrant ships the *Oriental*, *Aurora*, and *Adelaide*, chartered by the New Zealand Company, were already on the high seas. Together they had aboard over 800 emigrants wishing to establish the first colony of white settlers in New Zealand.

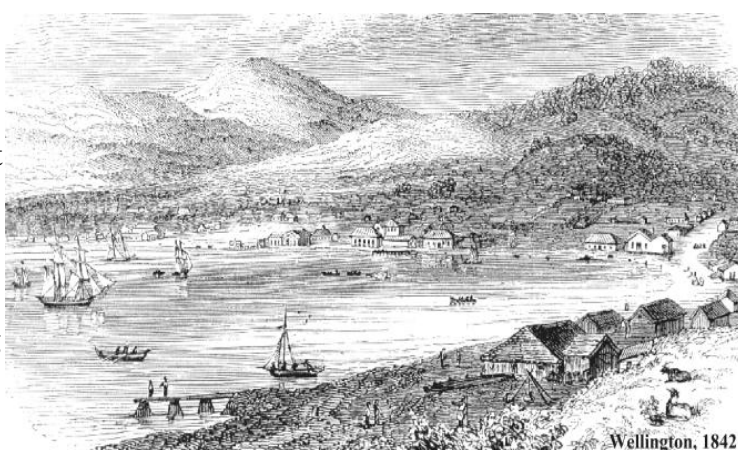
The *Aurora*, a vessel of 550 tons under the command of Captain Heale, carried 58 male passengers and 90 females, having left London Docks on the 18th September, 1839, the same day as the *Adelaide*. The *Oriental* had sailed three days earlier arriving at Petone on the 22nd January the following year after a passage from Britain to New Zealand of 126 days.

The *William Bryan* was the first of the New Zealand (Plymouth) Company's ships to arrive at the settlement of New Plymouth. This pioneer vessel left Plymouth Sound, England on November 19th 1840 and anchored in Cloudy Bay, Cooks Strait on March 19th (20th in the NZC records) 1841. From here Mr Cutfield, who was in charge of the expedition, hired a cutter to take him to Wellington where he visited Colonel Wakefield. At his request, Mr Cutfield was given a Pilot to guide them to the Taranaki settlement. After receiving orders to make ready to proceed to Taranaki on March 25th, *William Bryan* set sail three days later on March 28th and arrived on March 30th. Mr (Dicky) Barrett had arranged for the building of houses to accommodate the new arrivals and they commenced, almost immediately, to move their belongings to the site of the new town - New Plymouth. Arriving on board this ship was the Tucker Family. A descendant, Eric Donald Tucker later married Dorothy Margaret, youngest of Arthur & Annie Harnett's girls, in May, 1959. (p.8).

The *Oriental* sailed again from Plymouth under the command of William Wilson, on the 22nd June 1841 and arrived at New Plymouth on 7th November, after having first called at Port Nicholson (Wellington). There were only 90 emigrants aboard, and only one cabin passenger - Mr Charles Armitage Brown, the friend of Keats, the poet. Sixteen other cabin passengers had left the ship at Port Nicholson including the *Wilton family*.

The *Duke of Roxburgh* followed the other ships in early October, 1839, departing from Plymouth while the *Bengal Merchant* was also due to sail from Glasgow on October 31st with 161 emigrants.

Each of these ships arrived within three months, the journey taking between 124 and 172 days. The *New Zealand Company* surveyors had only arrived a few weeks before and none of the land at Petone had been prepared, leaving the arriving emigrants disappointed and disillusioned. The men went ashore to work for the company, (the only employer), erecting a wharf and building wooden huts and raupo shelters along the foreshore, helped by the local Maori.



The families and children stayed aboard until these were completed when they disembarked with their belongings in the ships longboats, riding through the surf onto the beach.

On the 13th August, 1840, the barque *London* chartered by the *New Zealand Company*, sailed from the Port of London bound for Port Nicholson with 228 emigrants aboard. She arrived on the 12th December, 1840. There had been four infant deaths during the voyage and six new births. (see "*Circular Saw Line*"). Astonished by the number of settlers arriving, the local Maori asked if the 'whole tribe' had come out from England? Little did they realise that this was only the beginning of the settlement of New Zealand. On the 2nd January 1842 the *London* under the command of Thomas Atwood, sailed from Gravesend bound again for Port Nicholson with 280 *New Zealand Company* emigrants including the *Chamberlain Family*, as well as 23 cabin passengers aboard. She arrived 120 days later on the 1st May 1842; (See the incorporated log of Capt. Atwood and diary of passenger Charles Empson. Also see "*No Simple Passage*" authored by Jenny R. Jones recording events and people on this voyage).

On the 2nd of October 1841 the *Clifton* under the command of Captain Cox, sailed from London with 286 steerage immigrants including the *Bird Family* and the *Kibblewhite Family*, and 5 cabin passengers including the doctor, arriving at Port Nicholson on the 17th February 1842

Two years earlier on February 24th 1840, the 350 ton barque *Platina* sailed from Gravesend under the command of Captain Wycherley for Port Nicholson. In the cargo hold was a pre-fabricated house which was to be the residence of the Governor, Captain William Hobson RN.

He had not decided where he was going to place the *capital* of New Zealand. Port Nicholson seemed to be the logical place for the Governor to reside as the population of white Europeans numbered some 4,000 immigrants and settlers at that time.

Captain Hobson had, however, signed the Treaty of Waitangi with the Maori chiefs in the Bay of Islands, from where he had travelled down in the *Tory* to the Waitemata at the instigation of the Rev. Henry Williams. He was extremely impressed with the Waitemata harbour and the surrounding countryside.

He decided that the new *capital* was to be set up here and not sited in Wellington as recommended by the *New Zealand Company*. He ordered the *Platina* to sail to Auckland from Port Nicholson, where his 16 room pre-fabricated house, made of Norwegian timber, was unloaded and erected on a site chosen by him overlooking the harbour. He named his capital "Auckland" after his patron and former commander, Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India at that time.

Three days later, the barque *Anna Watson* with the various government officials, including Felton Matthew, surveyor-general and Captain Symonds, chief magistrate and 32 mechanics with their wives and children who had remained in the Bay of Islands, sailed up the Waitemata to the new seat of Government for New Zealand. The Union Jack flag was raised on September, 18th, 1840, to a 15 gun salute from the *Platina*.

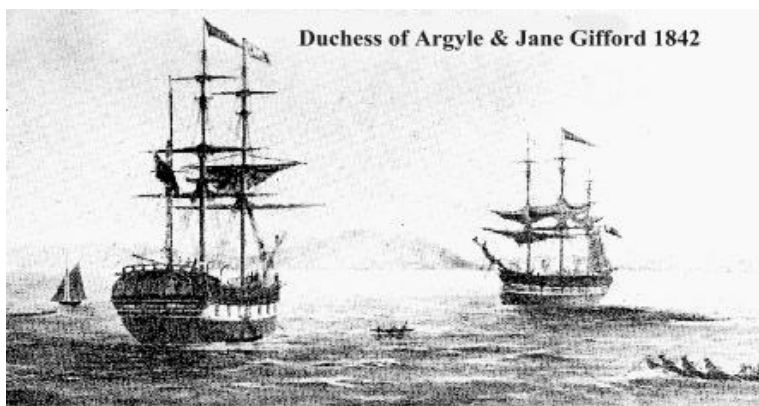
Finding some success with their venture, the company continued to advertise for emigrants. Two ships made ready for passage of emigrants to the Waitemata Harbour and the capital, Auckland.

Their passengers comprised a mixture of family groups, no old people, just middle aged and young married families and their children; a few widows with adult sons and several single women who were sisters or cousins of adult male migrants.

All of the males had a trade, farm servants, labourers, gardeners, blacksmiths, carpenters, joiners, millwrights, masons and bricklayers. The single women had been employed as dairymaids, seamstresses or domestic servants.

The barques, the *Duchess of Argyle*, (667 tons) and *Jane Gifford*, (558 tons), left the Port of Glasgow on June 9th and June 18th, 1842. The 'Duchess' carried 172 men, 171 women and 192 children and the 'Jane Gifford' 82 men, 81 women and 92 children, the vessels arriving on October 9th. During the long arduous journey there had been 34 deaths between the two ships, many of them small children and babies in arms. There were 16 new births recorded in the log.

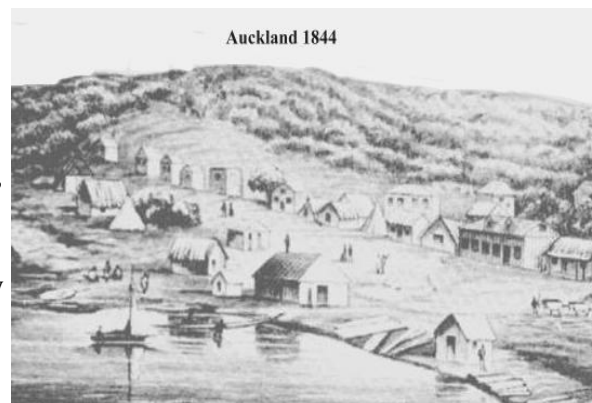
Disembarking began using the ship's boats taking the passengers into Mechanic's Bay. It was low tide and the longboats grounded in the soft mud. The boatloads of migrants were forced to carry their children and boxes on their shoulders, while knee deep in the soft mud which lay between them and the sandy beach. The families crowded into the thirty rhaupo huts erected along the foreshore.



There was shortage of builders in Auckland and Captain Hobson, thinking to recruit some, advertised in the Wellington newspapers. He was accused of "enticing labourers and carpenters from Wellington" by the *New Zealand Company* but solved the problem by bringing 30 master builders from Australia aboard the *Chelydra* to build his new city.

The first solid wooden house, built for the traders Logan & Brown in O'Connell Street, Auckland, was named "Acacia Cottage."

The immigrant ship *Westminster* left Plymouth in December, 1842 and arrived in Auckland the following April. The passenger manifest listed some 79 families aboard, who were to find life difficult in the new colony with little work on offer. Late in 1843, the new Governor, Captain Robert Fitzroy, RN, his wife and three children arrived aboard the barque *Bangalore*. He was no politician and after lobbying by the *New Zealand Company* to the British Colonial Office, was ordered to be replaced after only fourteen months as Governor. Fitzroy returned to the British navy where he later gained the rank of Admiral.



Captain George Grey, then aged 32, took up the position as Governor of New Zealand.

The soldiers aboard the *Ramillies* were known as the "Fencibles" and were recruited from British soldiers who had been put on half-pay in the reserve. The British government was running out of money and suggested that these men could be sent out to New Zealand as settlers. Each would be given a cottage and one acre of land in New Zealand, which would become freehold after seven years. Officers would be put back on full pay and granted 40 acres of land and a two-storey house.

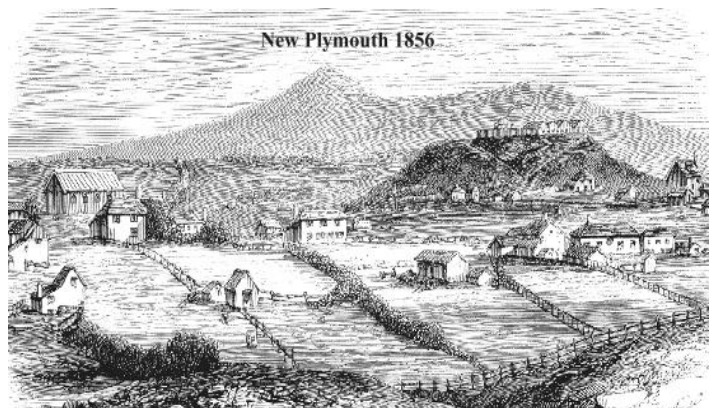
The *Ramillies* left Tilbury Docks on April 14th, 1847, arriving at Auckland in August much to the surprise of the New Zealand military, who knew nothing of the arrangements. There was no land or cottages assigned for them and they were billeted in Albert Barracks while a new army quarters was built at Onehunga. Meanwhile, there was no soldiering; the men worked on building the new roads. In time, the cottages were built at last and the land awarded to each family. The government had kept the British Colonial Office promises.

Other immigrant ships arrived with more soldiers. The *Minerva* arrived in July, 1847 with troops from northern England. The *Sir Robert Sale* left Cork, Ireland, left three days later, with the first consignment of passengers from Southern Ireland who were taken to St. John's College for a meal and welcome to their new country on arrival in Auckland.

Wakefield had not been idle since his first arrival in New Zealand. He had travelled to many other areas where he had bargained with the local Maori for land to be settled by the new arrivals.

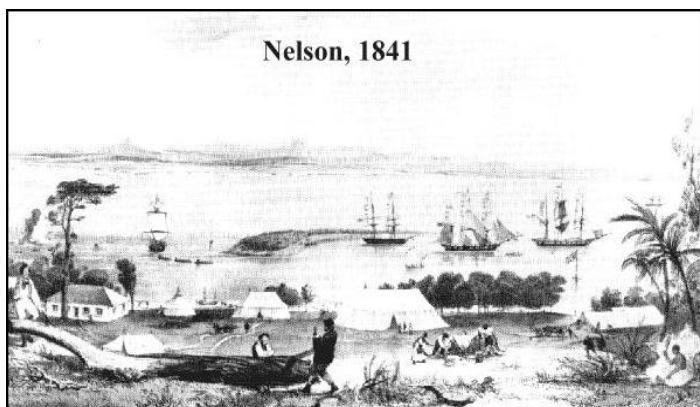
The *Plymouth Company* was an off-shoot of the *New Zealand Company* and was set up to arrange and accommodate emigrants arriving at the colony from Devon and Cornwall.

The barque 312-ton *William Bryan* left Plymouth with 148 families aboard and anchored off the Cook Strait Whaling Station on the 20th March 1841. The Captain was advised that their final destination was to be Taranaki where they were to be landed at Moturoa Beach.



By the 6th April all the cargo from the vessel had been successfully floated ashore and its passengers had all been landed.

Storehouses and an agent's residence had been rafted ashore from the vessel to the beach which fronted Mount Eliot. Half the passengers from the ship were women and children, who lived, as best they could, in raupo houses built for them along the shoreline.



The immigrant vessel, *Amelia Thompson* with 187 passengers was closely followed by the *Regina*, *Oriental*, *Timandra*, *Blenheim* and in July 1842, the *Essex*. each landing their passengers in Taranaki.

During the 1841 period, new settlements sprang up on both islands of New Zealand. Three ships were dispatched from England to carry out a survey for the new Nelson settlement. The barques *Whitby*, *Will Watch* and the brig *Arrow* left with 59 officials

and labourers. The *Will Watch* carried 45 labourers, while the cargo hold of the *Arrow* was packed with stores of all kinds for the settlers.

The first two vessels sailed on the 2nd May, 1841 from Gravesend but the *Arrow* did not get away until the 21st. All three vessels arrived at Port Nicholson when there was some argument over the site. The expedition crossed Cook Strait to explore the district, when it was finally agreed that the settlement would be located in the S.E. corner of Wakatu Bay.

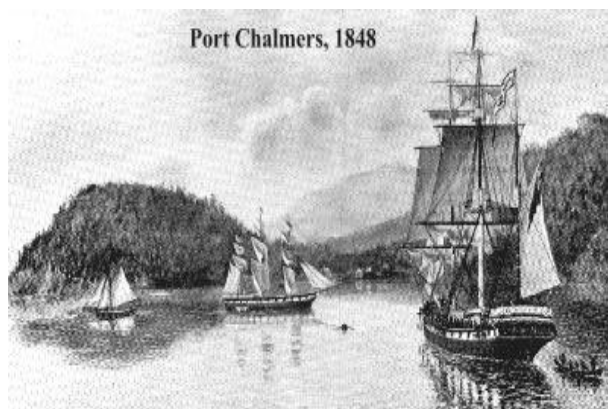
Late October 1841, saw a second migrant wave of ships heading for Nelson, New Zealand. The small brig *Lloyds* carried the wives and children of the men sent out in the first settlers. She was accompanied by the *Lord Auckland*, *Fifeshire*, *Mary Ann*, the four ships carrying some 764 people bound for the settlement.

The *Lloyd* was reported on arrival as being badly overcrowded with poor and cramped conditions during the voyage which resulted in the death of 65 children. The Captain and doctor were both censured by Captain Wakefield, who refused to sign the clearance certificate so neither could claim his pay.

The first ships to bring German immigrants to Nelson were the *St. Pauli* and the *Skiold* arriving on the 14th June, 1843, with a total of 288 passengers.

The Free Church of Scotland were influenced by Edward Wakefield's praise of the new colony and the promises of a settlement. Committees were set up in Edinburgh and Glasgow and urged on by the Rev. Thomas Burns, two ships were chartered by the church to make the journey.

The *Philip Laing* carried 247 emigrants and the *John Wickliffe* 97 families. They left England on the 27th November and the 14th December, 1847 bound for Otago Harbour and the new settlement of Dunedin.



The 'John Wickliffe' was the store ship for the expedition and was heavily laden with a vast supply of goods. There were thousands of bricks and slates, tools for the plumbers and painters, blacksmiths and wheel-wright's supplies, wheelbarrows, spades, pickaxes, guns and a large consignment of general provisions. Cash, gold and silver, to the value of £500, was carefully locked away in the ships strongroom.

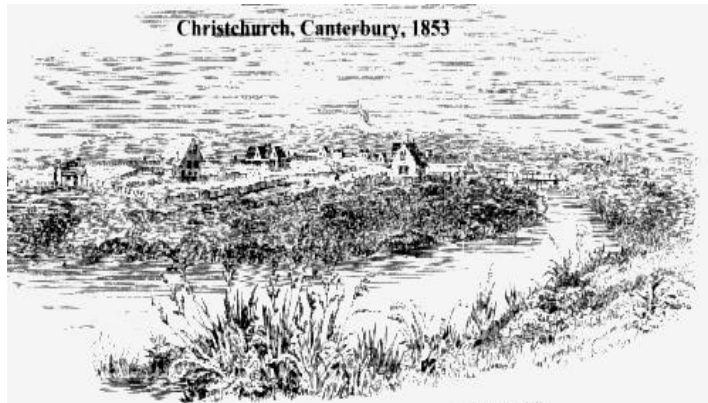
The "Philip Laing" entered Otago Harbour on the 15th April 1848, just 23 days after the arrival of the "John Wickliffe". These vessels were followed by the immigrant ships *Victory*, *Blundell* and *Bernicia*.

The Canterbury Association was formed by the Church of England. In 1849, Captain Thomas, a surveyor, who had come out with the Wellington settlers, was sent to Lyttelton to plan the layout of a new settlement. In 1850, J.R. Godley arrived as head of the Association, to prepare the way for the settlers and build a barracks to house them on arrival.

Assembled at the Port of Plymouth were 782 emigrants who were aboard the four ships which sailed for New Zealand on the 8th September, 1850. Their cargo included several pre-fabricated houses, a church organ and a printing press. Cabin passengers paid £42 and the steerage passengers £15 each (numbering 575), many assisted from church association funds.

The *Charlotte Jane*, the *Randolph*, the *Sir George Seymour* and the *Cressy* left Plymouth on the 7th and 8th September, 1850. Governor and Lady Grey, aboard the government brig *Fly* greeted the emigrants as they came to anchor in Lyttelton Harbour.

There was only a bridle path over the Port Hills and soon the passengers, loaded with their personal belongings, began the trek to the settlement and the end of their long journey. Others with large boxes or goods, took the sea route to Sumner and up the river aboard the small steamers, where freight was charged out at 30/- a ton.



A further 16 ships were dispatched by the Canterbury Association bringing a further 2,500 people into the settlement before the end of 1850, among them the vessels *Castle Eden*, *Isabella Hercus*, and *Travancore*.

While the bulk of the settlers to New Zealand came from England, Scotland and Ireland, many tradesmen came from across the Tasman in Australia, arriving in small groups aboard every ship that arrived from Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

Emigrant ships and families continued to arrive in New Zealand from Europe and England over the next few years; emigration to the colony reached a peak in the 1870's.

"*London*", barque, 388 tons sailed from Gravesend 17 November, 1841 under the command of Captain Joseph Gibson and arrived Nelson 10 April, 1842 after a comfortable passage. 162 emigrants and 23 cabin passengers (15 adults & 8 children) landed two days later including seven French priests bound for Wellington. The surgeon-superintendent was Joseph Wilson and he came out with his wife and six children. Deaths: 8 males and 4 females. Births: 1 male & 1 female. Wilson was the superintendent/surgeon. pages 23 & 24 *Pioneer Passengers*.

The 656 ton barque **Harkaway**, under the command of James Graham sailed from London on the 17th April 1858 with 31 cabin passengers and 62 steerage immigrants including the **Whetton (Whatton) Family** (parents and 5 daughters), and arrived at Wellington 14th August 1858.

The 792 ton Ship **Jura** under the command of Captain Chambers with Dr Stuart as Surgeon Superintendent, sailed London (The Downs) October 3rd 1860 with 11 cabin passengers and steerage immigrants including the **Harnett brothers**, the **Parker Family** and Emily Parker's brother **William Robinson**. They arrived in Auckland January 15th 1861. In Newspapers past see a report of the arrival of the *Jura* in *The Southern Cross* dated January 17, 1860

The Orient Line's Royal Mail Steamship "**Garonne**" sailed from Gravesend, London on the 25 November 1885 carrying on board the two families of Claude and his younger brother **Reginald Rawlings**. Their original destination was Hobart, Tasmania but they were somehow persuaded during the voyage to continue on to Auckland, New Zealand. Because Cape voyages were discontinued in 1883, their route would have taken them via Gibraltar, Port Said and the Suez.

The "**Garonne**" was built in 1871 by R.Napier & Sons, Glasgow for the South American trade of the Pacific Steam Navigation Co. In 1878 she was bought by the newly formed Orient Steam Navigation Co. She was a 3,876 gross ton ship, length 382.1ft x beam 41.4ft (116,45m x 12,62m), clipper stem, one funnel, three masts, iron construction, single screw with a speed of 12 knots. There was accommodation for 72-1st, 92-2nd and 265-3rd class passengers. Launched in April 1871, she sailed from Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo and Valparaiso on 29/6/1891. She commenced her first sailing from London to Melbourne and Sydney for the Orient Line on 17th April 1878 and continued on this service, sometimes via Suez and

sometimes via the Cape. Early in 1889 she pioneered cruises to the Norwegian fjords and Scandinavian capitals but returned to the Australia run for a single voyage in June 1889 as a replacement for the "Ormuz" which was taking part in the Spithead review. She was employed on cruising until 1897 when she was sold to V.Porter of Liverpool, but immediately resold to F.Waterhouse of Seattle. She was broken up in 1905 at Genoa. [*South Atlantic Seaway* by N.R.P.Bonsor] [*North Star to Southern Cross* by John M.Maber] Bonsor states that she was sold to the US government in 1898 and was wrecked in Jan.1901.

