Nau mai, welcome, haere mai to Taranaki Cathedral's churchyard. This sacred space is an important part of New Plymouth, Taranaki and Aotearoa/New Zealand's heritage. On the monuments of our ancestors lies a sometimes uncomfortable, but very real, indication of our local history.

A visitor recently asked, "Why do all the graves look so new?" The answer is that we believe in honouring those who have gone before us, and expressing our respect through the good stewardship of their memorials. This end, a small group started work in 2011. Grateful acknowledgement is made to John Pickerling, whose meticulous research and hand graft has involved all those who have been involved or donated to this cause. Our work to ensure that this is a beautiful and well-kept place has included:

- Restoration of the cathedral lych gate
- Establishment of a policy for ongoing maintenance
- The installation of floodlighting in 2013
- Wholesale careful restoration of damaged monuments and railings
- The installation of a beautiful Garden of Remembrance in 2013, for the burial of ashes

May you know God's peace as you explore this historic churchyard.

Ngī mā hi!  Jamie Allen, First Dean of Taranaki CHURCHYARD HIGHLIGHTS

Numbers refer to map overhead

William Bolland.

Appointed by Bishop Selwyn as the first vicar of St Mary's, William and his wife, Julia, were among the first to be buried in New Plymouth in December 1843. His daughter, Mary Dora, died in 1846 aged two months. William Bolland, aged 27, died of typhus caught from a visiting St John's Theological College student. In his three years' work he saw St Mary's built in stone, the chapel built at Te Henui, and a Sunday School opened. He also built a hospital and hostel for the Māori. After his death Jane and their son Emest returned to England.

Henry Gowett

...was second vicar of St Mary's and first cousin to William Bolland. In contrast to his cousin his ministry lasted 50 years. Gowett cared for the English settlers and the Māori people, regularly travelling between Waitara and Opunake. During the Land Wars he was chaplain to the British troops, holding special services for them in St Mary's. After the battle of Mahoeiti he officiated at the burial of six Wakaito chiefs in the church grounds. In 1869 Gowett was appointed Archdeacon of Taranaki in the diocese of Auckland by the first General Synod and this gave him further responsibilities. He and his wife Mary were generous benefactors of St Mary's.

George and Mary Robinson

...arrived in 1841 on the Oriental. George built the original St Mary's church and also the Colonial Hospital, now The Gables. In the early days he was New Plymouth's only architect and was responsible for many of the town's first buildings. They had no children and the parishioners erected the memorial in gratitude of his contribution and fine wood carving in the church. In 1950 his wife's memorial was remade in white marble.

Wellington Carrington

...was a surveyor who first visited New Zealand in 1835. In 1840 he was appointed chief assistant surveyor to the New Zealand Company and joined his brothers Frederic and Cotman in New Plymouth. A frequent Māori speaker, he was employed in negotiations with the Māori during the Land Wars and also, in 1861 at the attack on Parihaka where he acted as Interpreter for Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi. His first marriage to Mere E Motu in 1844 was the second entry in St Mary's marriage register.

The Captain Henry King family plot.

Henry King, with his wife Mary Anne and son William, arrived on the Amelia Thompson in 1841. Henry had had a distinguished career in the Royal Navy and became the Plymouth Company's Chief Commissioner and the town's first magistrate. Along with his brother-in-law, George Cutfield, they purchased 350 acres and developed and farmed Brooklands Estate. Henry laid the foundation stone of St Mary's on Lady Day, 16 March 1845. In 1860 their son, William Cutfield King, (pictured with his wife Eliza) was elected rector of the Grey and Bethells. He joined the Taranaki Militia but was shot and killed while checking on cattle left on his farm at Woodleigh, so he never took his seat in the New Zealand Parliament. His wife Eliza raised their two daughters and went on to be one of New Zealand's most famous feminists.

Richard Brown

...arrived in New Plymouth in April 1841. A fiery Irishman and early merchant he almost caused the destruction of the town when he struck a Māori, Witiwaka Rangiora, with his whip, knocking him out. A hawk by Witiwaka's supporters followed, and a threat to burn the town if he died was avoided when the victim recovered. By 1860 he was a trustee of the New Plymouth Savings Bank and editor of the Taranaki Herald. Later he was made captain of the Native Contingent.

Ann Shaw (née Lye)

...met James Shaw on the William Bryan as they travelled to New Plymouth and they were married soon after arrival. Her parents, James and Jane Shaw and the remaining six children arrived later on the Amelia Thompson. Father and son worked as carpenters and boat builders from a base beside the Huatoki River. They built the first surf boats which unloaded the early ships.

Robert and Mary Parrs

...arrived on the Blenheim in 1842. Robert was trader, dealer, Provincial Council member and government land purchaser as he struggled to support his family during the difficult early days of the settlement. After the Land Wars his ability in Te reo Māori enabled him to work as Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate, always trying to help both Māori and settler through the hard times of the aftermath of war and land confiscation. He was active at St Mary's as churchwarden, choir member and trustee.

The Foreman plot.

Richard and Matilda Foreman, previously Solé née Gore, arrived on the Oriental with twelve children from their previous marriages. The headstone for their daughter-in-law, Matilda, who married their son Richard, dramatically shows the effects of the appalling conditions in the town in the winter of 1860. The entire household, including Matilda, was struck down with three of her children dying in a six week period.

The Hamerton and Devens infants.

These cousins were victims of the squalid and overcrowded conditions in the town. Their mothers chose not to be evacuated to Nelson. Food was short and epidemics were rampant in a cold wet winter. There were 93 civilian deaths in the first year of the war. William Devens arrived on the William Bryan in 1841 and brought a small flock of Southdown sheep with him.

John and Mary Weston

...and their family arrived in 1830 on the Mariner. They were farmers at Omata. Son Henry Weston bought the Taranaki Herald in 1867 and owned it until his death in 1922. In 1919 Henry Weston and his nephews built the lychee gate and the eastern stone wall of the churchyard. Two memorials on the lychee gate wall record the family names.

Rev Henry Brown

...and his wife Sophia with their ten children arrived in New Plymouth on the Eclipse in 1830. The house of Henry's calling at Omata was not burnt down when war broke out in 1860. Later Sophia and her younger children were evacuated to Nelson while Henry and his two older sons remained in New Plymouth. The boys joined the Volunteers and Francis Brown, aged 16, was killed at the battle of Mahoeiti. Henry was a friend and missionary to both the Māori and settlers. He was known as Pastor Brown, the ‘backblocks’ clergyman.

Māori Chiefs’ Grave.

The Christian Māori chiefs Wetini Tapotu, his son Hemi Tapotu, Whararang, Hakoa, and two others were killed at the Battle of Mahoeiti. Their funeral was held at noon on 8 November 1860 and the service was read in Te reo Māori by Archdeacon Grevett. 45 other Māori, killed in the battle, were buried in a mass grave at Mahoeiti. The memorial stone was erected in 1930.

George Patterson

...a civil engineer, established an early saw mill and joined the Militia. In 1864, while roaming beyond the town he and his horse were shot and tomahawked. A plaque on the plot of Patterson and Crankleys Roads marks the site of his violent death. His wife Susannah died the same year leaving her six children orphaned. One of his sons, John Patterson, became a prominent South Taranaki farmer and is credited with starting the sharemiking system.

William Halse

...and his wife Harriet arrived on the Amelia Thompson in 1841. He was an agent of the New Zealand Company and later Commissioner of Crown Lands. A lover of horse-racing, he embezzled £20,000, then took his own life by strychnine when found out.

St Mary's Oak.

The churchyard oak tree has grown from an acorn sent by the Rev. Charles Saberton from Yorkshire to his brother in New Plymouth. It is believed to have been planted in 1899. During the 1930s the tree lost a massive lower limb in a violent storm. In 2008 concerns were raised about the danger the tree posed, and following advice, the Vestry agreed to have it removed. This decision led to a storm of public protest, and after further consultation, the present pruning system was put in place.

Unknown Salkier’s Wooden Cross.

Even a conflict among a relatively small population such as the land wars saw the deaths of combatants whose identity was unknown. Originally many memorials were wooden - this fragment is one of which remains.

Guide to the Historic Churchyard of Taranaki Cathedral New Plymouth, NZ

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