THE DREAM AND THE REALITY: ENGLISH VILLAGE IMMIGRANTS TO NEW ZEALAND IN THE 1870's

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SOCIAL BACKGROUND

As a background to the social realities that lay behind much of the emigration from nineteenth century rural England, we cannot do better than turn to the Tolpuddle martyrs of 1834 – even though they have no connection with New Zealand. Briefly, the story concerns a little group of farm labourers who, following the example of their urban brethren, formed a trade union in order to work to better their miserable conditions. The Government decided to make an example of them, because it did not wish to see Trade Unionism spread to the countryside. Six members of this little group in rural Dorsetshire were arrested and put on trial under an Act of 1797 forbidding 'administering or taking unlawful oaths' for seditious purposes. Five of the six were Methodists, three of them lay preachers. All were convicted, sentenced to seven years' transportation, and shipped to Australia. While in prison, waiting to be put on board a convict ship, one of the group, George Loveless, wrote a 'Hymn of Freedom' which he managed to smuggle from prison to friends outside. One verse will be enough to show that these men felt that it was the social order of rural England that was on trial, rather than those who protested against it:

> God is our Guide! No swords we draw,
> We kindle not war's battle fires,
> By reason, union, justice, law,
> We claim the birthright of our sires:
> We raise the watchword, 'Liberty'
> We will, we will, we will be free!

There were many in England who would not accept the ferocious sentence imposed on these men, and a year or two of continuous agitation, demonstration and petitions eventually brought about their release and return to England. But the conditions against which they had protested were not so easily set right.

To get the feel of the world that shaped our English Village immigrants of the 1870's, I want to go back briefly a year or two earlier than the Tolpuddle Martyrs. The 19th century saw a steady deepening of class division in both city and country — for the countryside there was a continued development of the division of rural society into the three tiers of landlord, farmer and landless labourer, partly as a result of the continued

decline of the yeoman, the owner-occupier of a small holding, and partly through a further extension of enclosures, which removed the labourer's claims of property in the land. Twice in the 19th Century the labourers were provoked to widespread revolt against their social and economic position and both of their revolts have implications for New Zealand immigration.

The year 1830 saw the 'Swing' riots sweep over southern and eastern England. There was widespread arson of ricks and barns, destruction of threshing machines which were putting men out of work, and threatening anonymous letters, demanding higher wages — usually crudely written (most rural labourers were illiterate), and in a number of cases signed 'Captain Swing'. The government sent troops to quell the disorders, and meted out brutal punishment; 19 rural workers were executed, nearly 500 transported to Australia, and hundreds more imprisoned.

This rising of the rural proletariat caused real fear to the propertied classes, and was an important factor in convincing England's political leaders that 'the humbler classes', including 'Hodge, the village labourer', must be given schooling, with a strong emphasis on 'Christian obedience' to their superiors, if widespread revolution was to be avoided. The subsequent rapid spread of Anglican 'National' schools through rural England – with steadily increasing State support – owed a good deal to the 'Swing' riots. And New Zealand immigration owed something also, for among those who night by night watched the ricks and barns of East Anglia going up in flames was Edward Gibbon Wakefield. His pamphlet *Swing Unmasked* gives a vivid picture of these suffering villagers:

> What is that defective being with calfless legs and stooping shoulders, weak in body and mind, inert, pusillanimous, and stupid, whose premature wrinkles and furtive glance tell of misery and degradation. That is an English peasant or pauper: for the words are synonymous. His sire was a pauper, and his mother's milk wanted nourishment.

Wakefield, and his fellow colonial reformers saw *planned immigration* as the answer to this rural discontent. The 'Swing' riots strengthened their case, and therefore may be said to have contributed something to the colonisation of New Zealand.

The second mass revolt of the English village labourer came in 1872. In the 40 years since the 'Swing' riots, there had been some significant changes in rural England. The mid-Century is known as the 'Golden Age' of English Agriculture – both landlords and farmers enjoyed ever increasing wealth — but labourers continued to be poorly paid, and miserably housed and fed. Squire, farmer, and clergyman had drawn closer together, leaving the labourer isolated. Farmers and their wives began increasing to ape the gentry – shooting, riding to the hunt, playing the piano, dressing fine, and paying social calls.

Meanwhile, the resentment of the village labourer was silently growing. He saw himself increasingly despised socially by his immediate employer, the farmer. He resented the ostentatious displays of luxury while he remained in want, and was

humiliated by various new developments, including harsh new Game Laws, which empowered a policeman to search his person without a warrant. The steady spread of literacy among these labourers increased their feeling that they were undervalued, as also did the non-conformist chapels, to which they were increasingly turning, in their resentment at the Anglican Church's subservience to the masters of the existing social order.

Joseph Arch

Their revolt, which took the country almost completely by surprise, swept over South-East England in the early months of 1872. Its main leader was Joseph Arch, a Methodist lay preacher, and a contract hedger and ditcher by calling. Unlike the 'Swing' riots, the 'Revolt of the Field' was a responsible, well organised Trade Union Movement, made possible by the now widespread literacy of the rural labourers, and the experience in public speaking and social organisation provided by the non-conformist chapels.

Since 1871 New Zealand had been trying desperately to recruit rural labourers for its great development programme — but with little success. Now, when the farmers hit back at their labourers with 'lock-outs' of all who refused to leave the union, a great flow of immigration began — and 1874, the year of the great 'lock-out' over much of southern and eastern England proved the greatest recruitment year of New Zealand immigration history.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLE: STOCKLAND, DEVONSHIRE

Having briefly sketched the general background, I propose to proceed by means of specific examples of immigrants and immigrant families — looking at their Old World backgrounds and their motives for emigrating, and following through to see how things worked out in the new land. And in order to emphasise the diversity of the English rural world, I will start with a group from a district which was not affected by either the 'Swing' riots or Arch's 'Revolt of the Field', because its social arrangements did not consist of the typical squire, farmers, labourers. This group came from the hills and vales of rural Devon, from Stockland, on the Dorset border, not very far from Tolpuddle. While searching in 1971, in preparation for a visit to England in the following year, I uncovered the fact that a family party of 23 members had left the parish of Stockland to sail for New Zealand by the *Dallam Tower* in December 1874. It was my privilege to visit Stockland on a showery afternoon in early winter 1972, and to enjoy its beauty of low hills and wandering lanes, of hedges, woods and copses. I was most fortunate to get something of the feel of the past of the parish, through

handling the parish registers, which carry the family tree of the emigrant party back to the 17th Century, and through talking to a cousin of members of the immigrant party, old Willie James Bond, born in 1879, from whose memories, shared with me in the firelight of a centuries-old hearth, I built up a vivid picture of the life that immigrant party left a century ago. On my return to New Zealand, I was able to locate descendants of that immigrant party through a letter to the *Listener*. This led on to a family reunion at which I met some 500 members of the clan. With just this little sketch of background, let me now briefly outline the history of Stockland, and explain how it came to contribute to the settlement of rural New Zealand.

Stockland was not settled till the late Middle Ages. At the time of the Norman Conquest, 900 years ago, a great deal of the usable land of Devon was completely uninhabited. Even for those times the county was very under-developed, with the scattered patches of cleared land almost lost in a great sea of uncolonised forest. In the mid twelfth century, a great colonisation movement, which was to last for about 200 years, got under way. Much of this colonisation was the work of free peasants, working in terms of charter from the Lord of the manor, which granted them each a piece of land, on condition that they reclaim it from the waste. As they worked, these colonists created a new landscape of small enclosed fields surrounded by hedge banks, for their aim was to create individual farms, not the open fields characteristic of the earlier clearings. Between the thousands of new farms wound narrow lanes in an irregular network, vastly different to the regular patterns and straight lines which surveyors were to create in other counties during the great enclosure movement of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In Devon, this colonisation movement quickly demonstrated the advantages of individual farming over communal farming, which continued to be the pattern over most of England. Not only did the colonisation movement give Devon its characteristic agrarian landscape of the meandering, narrow hedged lane, and the isolated farmstead, often at the end of a track, but it also had a deep and abiding effect on the county's social structure. The ownership of land remained more widely diffused in Devon than almost anywhere else in England. Stockland, which is in south-east Devon, on the Dorset border, is an excellent example of the results of this forest colonisation. In the 1870's, as today, the village was rather straggling in nature, built on rolling slopes above a spacious 14th century church, but much of the population of the parish lived in scattered farmsteads, joined by narrow winding lanes. Professor Hoskins the authority on Devon local history, describes it as 'a good example of land cleared piece-meal and directly from the forest'. The parish has a long history of smallholding, doubtless dating from the original clearance of the forest. The dispersed holding of its 5,849 acres is clearly evident in the 1873 Return of Owners of Land, which shows 52 owners of holdings over one acre living in the parish. Of these, 28 had less than 5 acres, and only 4 had over 100 acres, the largest being 288 acres. The patronage of the vicarage living was also widely dispersed. In 1688 the then owner of the great tithes and advowson had sold them to 56 owners of land in the parish, and the incumbent of the 1870s had been presented to the vicarage in 1869 by about 10 free holders who had been able to prove their rights.

From his childhood and early life, old Willie Bond (born 1879) described life in Stockland as it must have been throughout Victorian times. Farming on the small holdings was basically dairying. The small holders made cottage cheese, keeping pigs on the whey, and also skimmed cream and made butter. To fatten the pigs, barley meal was bought to supplement the whey. When ready for killing, the pig was sold to the butcher, and the smallholder usually took only the head, trotters, chitterlings, liver and lights for himself, though a better off man might sometimes keep a quarter of the beast. The Stockland folk were expert at supplementing their diet by catching game, as, due to the way land was held in the parish, poaching was not an issue. Every farmlet had some apple trees, often grafted to give both cider and cooking apples on the same tree. Every home had a press for making cider, which was kept in hogshead barrels, and sold in considerable quantities to the brewers. To further supplement the household income, the women regularly tramped the six miles to Honiton, carrying baskets of butter, chicken and eggs to market. The parish had 61 acres of common on which people used to run goats, and from which the poor used to cut their firewood. The overall picture is of a thrifty, hardworking community, engaged in farming that was predominantly subsistence in nature.

The root cause of the 1874 emigration from Stockland was undoubtedly land hunger. Stockland's soils are not particularly fertile, and with growth in population, the land had been subdivided into small farmlets from which only a miserable living could be wrung. Before they left, the Strawbridge-Bond party of 23 had been living in three households, on three farmlets totalling 56 acres altogether. The parish records show that when news came that they had been granted free passages to New Zealand, two young Strawbridge men (one aged 29, the other 22) promptly got married in the parish church, and their brides accompanied them to New Zealand. Immediately they had left, there was another flurry of weddings in Stockland, doubtless made possible by the emigrants having vacated farms and homes.

From family traditions, it seems that the decision to venture to New Zealand was based upon good reports sent home from three members of the clan, single young men, who had gone to the colony in the early 1860s (first one, and then, on his recommendation, the other two). One of these was reported to have been an adventurer, who had been to sea both as a whaler and a smuggler. What we have here is not an untypical migration chain. Adventurous unencumbered, single young men moving first, and families following later, on having assurances sent to them about the prospects.

The contribution made by this clan to the settling of the land in New Zealand is too diverse and complex to recount, but one clear pattern is worth mentioning – a steady 'drift north'. The three young men of the 1860s went to the South Island. The

1874 party divided between the Wairarapa and Manawatu. From there, in due course, groups moved North to Taranaki, and later to the Waikato, where one of the farm properties perpetuates the name of Stockland. Old Devonshire customs, such as the making of cider, persisted for many years. The Stockland background was clearly a good preparation for the clan's involvement in the bush settlement era of the North Island. Various members of the clan worked in the timber milling industry, on the way towards taking up land. The fact that Stockland produced all its own timber must have been some preparation for this work. Stockland's subsistence type of farming could scarcely be bettered as a preparation for New Zealand frontier life. Coming from New Zealand small-farming stock myself, I must say that I felt very much at home at the clan reunion.

Having told you so much about these Stockland people, I must again emphasise that in some very important ways, they are quite untypical of our English immmigrant land settlers. Their great migration of 12,000 miles to New Zealand was only a repetition of what their ancestors had done five or six centuries earlier, in first occupying Stockland, and what more remote ancestors must have done repeatedly right back in the mists of the forgotten past. It was a clan movement to relieve pressure of population by occupying and breaking in, new soil in the virgin waste. It was a case of free men moving to recreate their way of life in a new settlement on new land. But the greater part of 19th century rural England was organised on social and economic patterns utterly unlike those of Stockland. By far the greater number of our land settlers from Victorian England had never owned a stick of real estate in the land of their birth, had never had a vote for their country's parliament, and in general had not even been consulted in the parish pump affairs of their own home district, or in the planning of the day by day work of the farms on which they had laboured. The migration of these 'serfs of the plough' was a quest not only for freehold land, but also for the recovery of human dignity by escaping from galling social and economic oppression. Their desire was not to recreate the patterns of their home parish, but build a new society of free men.

Taking England as a whole, only about one-tenth of the land was held by owner-occupiers, as at Stockland. More was in the hands of Institutions, such as the Crown, the Church, the Universities. But three-quarters of England was in the hands of affluent proprietors who in the main lived on their rents and left the farming of their land to tenant farmers. These landowners varied in standing, from small local squires to powerful aristocrats displaying their affluence in great country houses. They developed a leisured way of life, of which riding, hunting, shooting and house parties formed an important part. They have a small place in the history of New Zealand land settlement, for from the lower ranks, and especially the younger sons, come some of the squatters who quickly covered our open country grasslands with their sheep in the 1840s and 1850s. While our squatters managed their properties themselves, and were

in general deeply involved in the daily round of work (instead of leasing out to tenants as the English gentry did) they did model their homes and social life on that of the home land landowners.

The second tier of rural English society consisted of the tenant farmers. Most of them leased a farm of from 100 to 300 acres, and provided all the livestock and equipment for its working. As we have already seen, in the good years of the mid 19th century many of them became quite affluent and some began to ape the life-style of the gentry, ceasing to take any part in the actual labour of farming, and giving much of their time to social life. Many of them did emigrate, especially in the hard times earlier in the century, and in the great depression of English agriculture, beginning in the late 1870s – but only a minority of these found their way to New Zealand. As men with a little capital, most of the farmer emigrants were more attracted to North America, where free land was often offered as bait to attract the man with some means.

The lowest tier of rural English society were the farm labourers, of whom there were over one and a quarter millio in the mid 19th century. Because the New Zealand settlements failed to attract many English farmers, they wooed the farm labourers, with assisted or free passages, and with the prospect of good wages, and an easy road to land ownership. This process of persuading the farm labourer to come to the colony was begun by Wakefield's New Zealand Company in the 1840s, it was continued by the Provinces, once they were set up, and it had its greatest successes in the 1870s, when the General Government took it up, as part of Vogel's great development scheme. From the 1840s, through to the early 1870s it was the constant complaint of New Zealand immigration agents, that they could not persuade the ignorant, apathetic rural labourers to move, even though the New Zealand settlements were crying out for their labour. Then, in the 1870s, came Joseph Arch's 'Revolt of the Field', which stirred large areas of rural England, and packed the hundreds of immigrant ships of the Vogel immigration drive with skilled farm labourers.

SETTLING IN NEW ZEALAND

I want now to give you some glimpses of what it meant to settle on the land in Mid-Victorian New Zealand, through the eyes of a prominent leader of the Revolt of the Field, who became deeply involved in immigration to New Zealand. Christopher Holloway was born in a farm labourers' cottage in the Oxfordshire village of Wooton in 1828. When the Revolt broke out in 1872, he was an experienced farm labourer, and an active Methodist local preacher, with clear leadership talents. He threw in his lot with the union movement from the start, and quickly became its most prominent leader in Oxfordshire. In 1873 the New Zealand authorities succeeded in enlisting him to recruit a shipload of farm labourers for the colony. He was to sail with his party,

and travel through New Zealand at the government's expense, so that he could return to England and make known the new country's attractions. Holloway set about recruiting with a will, addressing meetings on village greens, in chapels, and out in the open fields and the highways and byways. He was so successful that the New Zealand government had to divide his party between two ships the steamer *Mongol* (one of the few steamers used for New Zealand immigrants in the 1870s) and the sailing ship *Seimitar*. I could tell you many interesting stories about the recruiting of this party, and their journey to the new land, but we must now move quickly to the story of settling on the land in the new country.

R.M.S. Mongol, 2000 tons. San Francisco Mail Services, Sydney, N.Z. 1874. Photo: Layton Collection, Turnbull Library.

Holloway reached Dunedin on the *Mongol* in February 1874, and immediately found that he was to be treated as a visitor of the highest importance, and consulted and courted by the greatest in the land. He was met by the Superintendent of Otago, accommodated in Dunedin's best hotel, and given every assistance in planning and carrying out his tour. This treatment was repeated in each province; and in Wellington he was given the earnest attention of the Premier, Vogel, and key members of his administration. It must have been a strange experience for a man who a year or two

before had been a despised, ill-paid English farm labourer. By the time he set sail for London on the 24 November, Holloway had travelled 6,430 miles in New Zealand, and there can scarcely have been anyone who had a better first-hand knowledge of how land settlement was going in the colony. Throughout his journeys, he sent a steady flow of reports back to England, to be published in the newspaper of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union. He was also well reported in our New Zealand press, and a copy of a diary he kept is held in our Turnbull Library.

Holloway was always interested in the accounts of men who had left England as penniless farm labourers, and made good in New Zealand, and his letters home have many outlines of such careers. Let me quote two examples of these; men Holloway visited farming near Ashburton, in April 1874, as reported on in the *Labourers' Union Chronicle* of 25 July, 1874.

... I came across a Mr Joseph Hunt, formerly of Great Rollright, in my own county of Oxfordshire. He tole me that he was working in that village for 8s a week — house rent to pay, and a wife and three children to support out of that. He had heard of New Zealand, and Joe thought within himself that he couldn't worse his position by removing to another locality... In the year 1856 he bade farewell to Old England and after a long voyage he landed safely in New Zealand, with 2½d in his pocket... He set to work in real good earnest, and being a sober, energetic and persevering man, determined to get on if possible. He succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations; and today I had the pleasure of visiting him in his own freehold house, which he has erected upon his own freehold farm of 210 acres. He has given his children a good education and I thought within myself, as I sat with my friend at the tea-table, what would have been Joseph's prospects had he remained an agricultural labourer in Great Rollright, in England? In all probability he would have been over head and ears in the baker's and grocer's debt, without any possibility of paying it; with the Chipping Norton union staring him hard in the face, and the prospect of being buried in a pauper's grave... On the morrow, after leaving Mr Hunt, I called upon Mr Church, a small farmer; he is brother of Mrs Taylor, our General Secretary's wife. He was formerly a carman, in London, but not succeeding so well in life as he could wish, he emigrated to New Zealand a few years ago. On his arrival in the colony, he did as every man should do who wishes to make his way out here, that is, pitched into the first employment which presented itself, determined, in the first place to get a knowledge of colonial life, and work his way upwards, if possible. And what has been the result? — why this — when I visited him today he was owner and occupier of a very fine fertile farm, well fenced and watered, of 200 acres of land, and has succeeded in placing himself in very easy and comfortable circumstances. He, too, has in his turn become an employer of labour. I was very agreeably surprised to find that Joseph Smith, a young man who came out with me in the "Mongol" from Chesterton, Oxfordshire, had been engaged by Mr Church to work for him at £50 a year, with board and lodging — and my word they do live here, no red-herring diet, but beef or mutton three times a day. Smith laboured at home for 12s or 14s a week, and kept himself ...

In Otago and Canterbury, Holloway became aware of two styles of farming, that of the squatters, with their large sheep runs, and palatial homesteads, and that of the 'cockatoo' small farmers, of whom Hunt and Church are good examples. Holloway gives a good account of an evening he spent in his hotel in Palmerston, Otago, with a group of squatters. From their conversation, Holloway gained an insight into squatter life. In his diary he remarked that some persons were very bitter against the squatters but his own view was that they should receive fair consideration for having opened up the country when population was scarce, though they should not be allowed to stand in the way of progress when the land was required for closer settlement. In the course of time the group turned to a good deal of grumbling about 'the government — the brokeness of the land, etc.', but Holloway was amused to notice that when someone asked about the time, these gentlemen all pulled out valuable gold watches. Having listened to the opinions freely expresssed and the advice very generously given, Holloway records that 'I very quietly resolve to think for myself and draw my own conclusions'.

HOLLOWAY IN TARANAKI

For our last glimpse of New Zealand through Holloway's eyes, we will follow him to Taranaki in August 1874. Though much of the province was still under forest, and its progress had been delayed by poor communications and wars with the Maoris, Holloway was perceptive enough to see that it had a great deal to offer the class of men he represented. After travelling through the undeveloped southern parts of Taranaki, Holloway spent some time in New Plymouth visiting the settled districts. On the afternoon of the weekly market day, Saturday 15 August, he was visited in his hotel by 20 or 30 old settlers, and he remarks that 'really it was amusing as well as instructive' to hear them one by one tell of their impoverished arrival, the struggles and difficulties of their early days in the settlement, and the comfortable circumstances which had eventually rewarded their energy and perseverance. As he rode out day by day to the various farming districts, Holloway gained a more detailed understanding of what they had accomplished. Among the examples which he recorded at some length was that of Peter Elliot, who had emigrated from Devon with the first party of settlers more than 30 years before. As he looked around Elliot's farm, Elliot told how he had arrived one pound in debt, and with his wife and child had made his first home in a shanty so wretched and exposed that he awoke one morning to find 'one of Captain Cook's descendants (a wild pig)' stretched at his feet. By dint of hard work he had prospered, and the farm which he showed Holloway was one which he had bought for a thousand pounds after the war. It was a fine property, well stocked with sheep and cattle, and had a first-rate dairy. Besides this he had other farms on which he had established his sons. While out on one of these rural rides on a calm sunny day Holloway's thoughts turned to the contrast between the recent days of war and the tranquility which he was enjoying, with

> ... the larks singing joyously over head, the sheep and cattle quietly grazing in the well fenced paddocks, and the jolly settler whistling behind his plough as he turned over the fertile soil ...

While in Taranaki, Holloway had perhaps his closest look at one of the most important settlement developments of the 1870s, the assault on the great North Island bush. In the first three decades of settlement the colonists concentrated on the open country, and most of them appear to have feared and shunned the bush. In the 1870s the task of clearing and settling the lowland forest was at last tackled in real earnest, and bush land came to be favoured by small men of limited means. Many of the immigrants recruited by Holloway's union were to find their future in the bush clearings. In Taranaki, the first serious bush settlement was Inglewood, and the work of clearing the township site was in its early stages, when Holloway rode out to see it on 20 August, 1874. The men Holloway found working there were from the Revolt of the Field in Kent, from a labourer's union which was in bitter conflict with the National Union that Holloway represented. But these Old World problems could be forgotten in the colony, and the men were happy to see Holloway, and describe to him the 'tip top' wages they were earning, and the prospects they saw before them. I have followed the careers of some members of this party, and found how they saved money bush felling, road making, and working for the farmers in the older settled districts, until they had enough capital to take up bush land, and carve out farms for themselves. I will let one of these Kentish immigrants at Inglewood tell how he was setting about it, in a letter which he wrote about three weeks after Holloway had visited the place. His name is George Tapp. He had been a member of the executive of the Kentish union of the Revolt, and the secretary of the union branch at Lamberhurst in the Weald of Kent. He was a single man, a farm labourer of 28 years when he emigrated. He wrote home on 8 September, 1874.

> The Government here employed several of us at bush felling at 5s per day (lose no time) until we got a little experienced at the work, and then they put small contracts to us, and men, if good hands, can earn from 10s to 11s per day. There are plenty of small contract jobs here that men can take, both ground and bush work. Wages are from 6s to 8s per day, day work. We have a deal of rain, being winter, so that a man cannot always get a full week in. The people tell me such weather lasts about two months. I have been working at bush felling, but have left that, and am with the survey in the bush, at 6s per day, eight hours per day, lose no time, that being very good for a few weeks in the wet season. In summer time a man can do much better ... There are no paupers here, no half-starved homes. Everybody gets plenty to eat... Any working man here can get some land and build himself a house if he likes. Nearly every man in the province is the owner of land; most working men have from 50 to 100 acres, and some more. They keep cows on it, and in a few years live entirely on their own land ... I hope you will let all my old mates see this, and all the Union members, and tell them I am much pleased with my change, and never intend coming back to England to work again. If I do come it will only be for a holiday.

George Tapp's success in becoming a landowner is apparent from the *Return of Freeholders of New Zealand 1882*, which shows that by that date he owned the freehold of 71 acres in Taranaki County.

Let us now follow the progress of a member of Holloway's immigrant party on the *Mongol*, as a further illustration of how a labouring man could make his way, and become a freeholder farming his own land. Joseph Johnson was a 37-year-old shepherd from the village of Grandborough in Warwickshire, and emigrated with his wife Louisa, and five daughters, aged 5 months to 11 years. The family had been active members of the Grandborough Primitive Methodist Chapel. The voyage was tragic for the Johnsons, for measles and scarlet fever were rampant on the *Mongol*, and they lost four of their five children, only the infant surviving to start the new life with them near Dunedin. However, four daughters and two sons were to be born to them in New Zealand. Joseph and Louisa entered vigorously into the opportunities offered by the new land. On 28 October 1874, Louisa wrote home to her friends at Grandborough, from Careys Bay on Otago Harbour:

> We were pleased to hear that you were getting on so well at the chapel, and to hear the good news of all our old friends ... Joe says he wishes someone would pay him to come over for some of you. He is going sixty miles in a steamboat today, up the country, shearing. I shall feel very lonely while he is away, but I do not mind if he gets along well; he has plenty of work. The land is dear here. He will see the country by going. He earned 2.15s. last week, and said he had worked harder in the old country for 15s. If you want to come out of bondage into liberty come out here. I was out waiting on a poor woman last week, and she gave me 30s ... I have done some sewing and always got twice what I charged for it. I made a plain skirt and charged 1s for it, and they sent 2s. You would get 10s for making a dress ... I wish a lot from Grandborough would come. Joe says he would get you all such a meal as you never had at home. Come and try him ... If you ever come, start about the time that we started, as it is still then. We never had storm all the voyage. We should have come over beautifully if it had not been for the fever. You would never think you were in a foreign country if you were here ... We have not received any papers. We felt sadly disappointed, as we wanted to know how the Union was going on ... I am so pleased to hear you are so strong in Union. Joe thinks of sending one to the Union, but he wanted to see the *Chronicle* first, as you said the lock-out was to be settled. We have *Reynolds* paper sometimes and see a little news from home ...

Joseph's shepherd skills were an asset in a land whose staple export at this time was wool. From Otago the Johnsons moved north to Kakaramea, on Taranaki's Patea coast, at this time a squatter district. They were employed to cook on a sheep station; but probably Joseph was also called upon for his shepherd skills. When Joseph bought land at Ngaere, he would travel the 30 miles from Kakaramea on weekends, to begin the work of clearing, and to build a whare. In the early 1880s (probably late 1881) he finally moved with his family to reside on his land. For some years thereafter the family's money income came mainly from fungus and cocksfoot seed. The export to China of an edible fungus which grew profusely on bush-burn logs had been pioneered in the 1870s by Chew Chong, a Chinese-born merchant who had settled Taranaki. The sale of his 'Taranaki wool' was a great help to many Taranaki bush pioneers. Cocksfoot seed was the main constituent in the first grassing of bush-burn clearings, and so was in steady demand while bush settlement continued. The

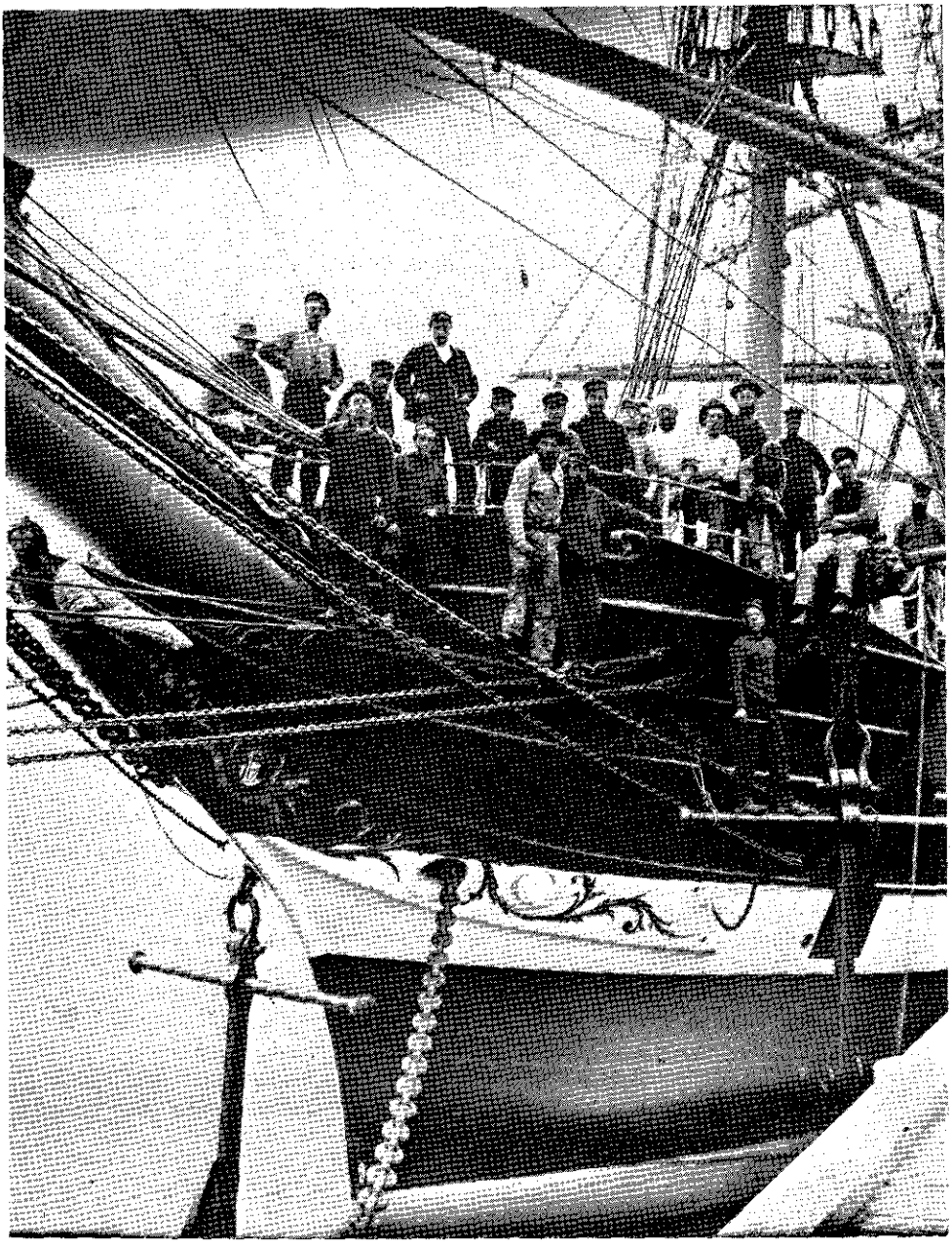
whole Johnson family helped to gather the precious cocksfoot seed harvest. It was cut with reap hooks, flailed and sieved. Joseph taught his team to sing lustily together as they worked, drawing on the repertoire of hymns he had learned in the chapel choir back in Grandborough. The rise of the dairy industry brought more prosperous times. Joseph sold a corner of his farm as the site for the local dairy factory. In continuation of traditions brought from the old world, the family have played a continuous active part in Taranaki chapel life, since the mid 1880s with the Plymouth Brethren. The Johnson's story is a further example of the 'drift north'. Joseph and Louisa's moves from Otago to Kakaramea and on to Ngaere were followed by migrations in the next generation from Taranaki to the Waikato.

ASCOTT-UNDER-WYNCHWOOD TO HOROWHENUA

As my final example, I have chosen a story which links the Revolt of the Field in England, and the 'drift north' in New Zealand, with the Horowhenua district. On 31 December 1874 the ship *Crusader* arrived in Lyttelton with a shipload of immigrants, including a large party of members of Joseph Arch's union, led by a member of the executive of Arch's union George Allington. Among Allington's party were several families from the little village of Ascott-under-Wynchwood, in the Cotswold hills of West Oxfordshire, including John Timms, 33 year old farm labourer, who had been secretary of the Ascott branch of the union. Some fifty years later, in the 1920s, members of this party formed the 'Clipper Ship' "Crusader" Association, which held annual rallies in Christchurch, and published a very interesting little book *The Clipper Ship Crusader*. At the time the book was published (1929) the President of the Association was the son of John Timms, the former Ascott branch secretary — John Timms Junior. John Junior contributed to the book an article entitled 'A story Reminiscent of My First Plum Pudding' from which I will quote a few extracts. The first is his account of how the union came to Ascott-under-Wynchwood:

> It happened this way: A number of boys, among whom was "yours truly" were playing marbles in the middle of the street (and where is the boy who has never played marbles), when our youthful attention was attracted to some unusual sound coming from a distance down the street. A scramble was made for our marbles, and a race ensued in the direction of the sound. When we reached the scene, we found that the sound which had attracted us was no less than a man singing about Unionism. He would sing a verse of his song, and then the chorus, and the chorus was repeated so often that it became so vividly impressed upon my memory that I remember it to this day ... These were the words as far as I can remember it:—
>
> > 'Oh, come and join our Unionhood,
> > For we are bound to do you good,
> > Oh come and join each heart and hand,
> > Oh come and join our Union band!'

The coming of the Union to Ascott-under-Wychwood was to lead to events which, probably for the only time in its history, brought the village to the attention of the whole nation. John Timms tells the story in the book, but having researched it carefully in the original sources, I can say he has got a number of his details wrong. I



Immigrant Ship 1870's "Otaki". Photo: De Maus Collection. Turnbull Library.

will briefly summarise what happened. In April 1873 The Ascott branch of the union called a strike in support of a claim for an increase of two shillings a week in the farm labourer's miserable wage. Farmer Robert Hambidge, who had the parish's largest farm, found two young men from another village who were prepared to come and work for him. One morning, when the strike was three weeks old, and all the farmers were away at a horse fair in Gloucestershire, a group of women from the village waylaid Hambidge's two non-union labourers and tried to persuade them to leave the work, — it was all very friendly, the women even offered to buy the two young chaps a farewell drink. The young men refused this offer, but went off, only to return later with a policeman from the neighbourhood, under whose protection they went to their work. The women, however, were in due course summoned to appear before the Chipping Norton Petty Sessions, on a charge laid by Hambidge of their having breached a recent harsh law designed to restrict picketing.

The case was tried on 21 May, 1873 before two rich, land-holding clerical magistrates, (commonly known as squarsons) the Revs. Thomas Harris and W. E. D. Carter. Hambidge's two labourers gave evidence that the women had carried sticks and threatened violence — this the women, and their union, strongly denied, and one is left with the strong impression that the two men had been persuaded or bribed to give false evidence. The upshot was that of the 17 women charged, 16 were sentenced to imprisonment — 7 of them to 10 days hard labour, 9 to 7 days hard labour. The labourers present at the trial were so angry at this, that they went home for their mates, and returned to besiege the Police Station where the women were being held, pelting it heavily with stones. When at last the crowd dispersed, the police hustled the women (two of them with babies at the breast) into an open, horse-drawn drag, and hurried them across country, in the early hours of the morning, to Oxford gaol.

The union blazoned these happenings abroad, and the women's case was taken up by the national press, and on the floor of the House of Commons. Finally, the Queen issued a pardon, but the warrant did not reach the prison until the last sentences had expired. The Union, represented by Arch and other national leaders, took the women home in triumph, and used their case to the full in their propaganda against the injustices of rural England. The wealth of Hambidge, and the convicting magistrates, and the respectability of the women 'martyrs' (several of whom were prominent members of the village Sunday School) made the case ideal for the Union's purposes. Correspondents from the *Times* and other newspapers had helped by visiting Ascott, and describing the problems of a village from which a large number of mothers had been swept off to prison. Let us now return to young John Timms, to see how he experienced his first plum pudding: –

> When the women were committed to prison, the question arose as to what was to become of their children. But the question didn't long remain in doubt, as the Agricultural Union ... soon came to the rescue, and made arrangements for the feeding of the children whilst their mothers were in gaol, irrespective of whether their fathers were Union members or not.

> The children never had such a time in their lives. They had their stomachs filled for once, and I think they were full all the time their mothers were away in prison...
>
> It was on a Sunday that a general invitation was sent to other children of the village to come along and join in the disposal of the good things that were being provided for the little ones, whose mothers were sent to prison, and "yours truly" joined the throng...
>
> The table was almost groaning under the weight of a big bowl of soup, and joints of good old English roast beef and boiled legs of mutton, with cabbage, potatoes and turnips...
>
> Presently, a gentleman asked us if we would like to go on to the green and have a run ... and I believe some half-dozen boys did go out, but as they were not followed by any large numbers, they quickly returned, and just in time to see one of the largest plum puddings, I think, I have ever seen. And it was a *plum pudding*, with the emphasis on plums!

Besides the Timms family, the emigrants from Ascott-under-Wychwood on the *Crusader* included two who had had members among the imprisoned women. One of these was the Pratley family, consisting of 31-year-old farm labourer Frederick Pratley, his wife Mary, also 31, and their six children. Mary was one of the women 'martyrs', and the youngest child of the family on The *Crusader's* immigrant list, one-year-old Thomas, had been the baby at breast who was imprisoned with her, and who had suffered with her, because she could not feed him on account of the heavy cold she caught on the night journey to prison.

Frederick Pratley had a successful career in Canterbury, eventually farming a property near Temuka. But at least one member of the family joined the 'drift north', for in his 'plum pudding' reminiscences, John Timms gives us a little snippet of information on the whereabouts in 1929, of the former Oxford prison inmate, Thomas Pratley. He writes, 'The then baby referred to is at present living in Levin, a small town in the North Island'.

This sample of stories should enable us to draw some conclusions on the question implicit in our title. How well did the reality of colonial New Zealand fulfil the dreams of the aspiring English rural emigrant? Insofar as that dream included a greater measure of personal freedom and economic opportunity, better chances to achieve the well-being of ample food, clothing and shelter, and the possibility of a penniless new arrival making his way to home and farm ownership, it would seem that for many of them the reality was a reasonable fulfilment of their hopes.