

New Zealand Descendant Of The Famous Navigator?



In his Miramar garden: Jabez Atkinson, 1940

Captain James Cook: A portrait published in 1785. Was his son married?

There is a likeness, but he does not want to argue

"NOT IMPOSSIBLE" The Historian's View

WITH a twinkle in his eye, Dr. J. C. Beaglehole, an historical authority who is at present editing Cook's letters, and manuscripts relating to Cook's life, for publication, tells *The Listener* that Mr. Atkinson is unduly hard on historians.

However, he does not attempt to retaliate too severely. He disagrees with many of Mr. Atkinson's theories, notably about the social outlook and domestic infelicity of Captain Cook's wife. But the facts, generally speaking, he thinks are "not impossible."

It would be necessary, he said, first of all to substantiate the fact that the James Cook referred to really was the son of Captain James Cook, and not a relation of the many other Cooks connected with the Navy. There was for instance, a James Cook who also accompanied the charting expedition up the St. Lawrence, but who was no relation of the explorer's and never rose above the rank of commander.

This point satisfied, Dr. Beaglehole says it would then be necessary to confirm the baptismal register of Robert of Iling. The missing notice of the son James's marriage was less important. If the marriage had taken place at all it might quite easily have taken place in another parish. If it had not taken place (as Mr. Atkinson tentatively suggests) then that would not affect historical accuracy so long as the line of descent could be proven, legitimate or illegitimate.

Not All Settled Yet

"There is still a good deal of research to be done on Cook's life," said Dr. Beaglehole. New facts or information would be welcomed. "You can assure Mr. Atkinson that the historians will accept it, even if it does mean altering a few commas and semi-colons."

He does not place much emphasis on the question of social position raised by Mr. Atkinson. For one thing, when Cook returned from Canada his social position was not raised very much by his promotion to be Master—a position which did not carry with it the rank associated with the term in its present accepted sense. The Master was generally in charge

of a ship, under the Captain or Commander and Lieutenants. Cook's real rise to superior position did not take place until after the Seven Years' War. His work (with several others) on the St. Lawrence soundings had earned him the esteem of his immediate superiors. When the war was finished he was given independent charge of a small sloop, still with the rank of master, and sent to chart the Newfoundland coast.

Here, his work was so outstanding that it came to the attention of the Admiralty, and his observations of an eclipse of the sun attracted the notice of the Royal Society, whose minutes of proceedings record Cook's report. This finally made his name and secured for him the command of the *Endeavour*, which he sailed on the first Pacific voyage as a Lieutenant.

Plenty of Precedent

There was nothing new in this rise from the ranks, even for that period of naval history. Dr. Beaglehole mentions the similar promotion of Captain Bligh, or of Captain Clark, who sailed on Cook's first voyage as an able seaman before the mast, and accompanied Cook on the third voyage as a Captain.

These points, he considered, rather discounted the suggestion that Cook had married so far above his social position, and Dr. Beaglehole also very much doubted that Cook's wife had been as shrewish as Mr. Atkinson would make out. In fact, there was a story that Mrs. Cook, defending her husband from charges that he was glum, had said "he is never glum with me."

Captain Cook's Five Sons

Five sons is the strictly accurate total of Captain Cook's family. Dr. Beaglehole says that one died in 1768 aged one month, another died in 1772 aged four months, Nathaniel died aged 16 in a hurricane off Jamaica in 1780 (he had joined the Navy), Hugh went to Christ's College, Cambridge, and died of scarlet fever in 1793, aged 23. James was the eldest.

James, too, was in the Navy, and attained the rank of Commander. He had to hurry from Poole to Portsmouth to join a new command, and took passage in a small boat with a crowd of sailors. In rough water just out of Poole harbour the boat capsized, and all that was found of James was his body, washed up on the Isle of Wight, with his pockets emptied and a wound on his head.

A Question of Drink

A sixth direct relative has been recognised by the historians: Captain Cook's sister. Papers relating to her are in Auckland now. Dr. Beaglehole believes he has heard some story that drink was one of her failings, although that might or might not have some relation to Mr. Atkinson's theory about Robert's teetotalism and James's taste for a drop.

Making all allowances for minor discrepancies of fact in dates and small incident, Dr. Beaglehole was still not convinced that Mr. Atkinson's story was acceptable; but he repeated: "It is not impossible."



S. P. Andrew, photograph
Dr. J. C. Beaglehole

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

ANOTHER V.C.

To the Editor,
"The Listener"

Sir,—In your issue of December 10 you publish a letter by J.P.S., of Turua, Hauraki Plains, in which he says that Major Charles Heaphy won the Victoria Cross during the Maori War, and further states that "no other member of the New Zealand Colonial Defence Force received that honour during the Maori disturbances." This is incorrect, for Sergeant E. McKenna was awarded this supreme decoration for conspicuous gallantry in the Waikato on September 7, 1863. I cannot do better than refer J.P.S. to Mr. James Cowan's splendid book *Hero Stories of New Zealand*, which gives the full details of McKenna's action.

In after years he was stationmaster at Wanganui and Palmerston North, and on special occasions, such as Queen Victoria's birthday, he wore the Cross.

Yours, etc.,
J.G.W.

Feilding,
December 10, 1939.

[J.G.W. is right, but J.P.S. was not wrong. Heaphy was the only member of the New Zealand Colonial Defence Force to win the V.C. McKenna, when he was decorated, was a member of a British regiment, the 56th, in which he was a Colour-Sergeant.—Ed.]

GIVE ME BANDS

To the Editor,
"The Listener"

Sir,—Being interested in bands, I wish to say how much I love to hear their music over the air; nor after listening to the different classes and their great variety of music do I find much difference among them. The Salvation Army give about the brightest and merriest kind, of which I always want to hear more. Their monthly Sunday morning music has been heard by thousands, and there have been many helped and cheered. Some no doubt would rather hear the other bands with more popular and less sacred music. They all make a few little blunders, even the best, so please print this tribute in your paper.

STAN DAVIDSON.

Nelson,
December 11, 1939.

WOMEN AND THE WURLITZER

To the Editor,
"The Listener,"

Sir,—In your issue of December 8, "Hamiltonian" cites the names of several ladies in New Zealand who are expert performers on the Wurlitzer organ. I quite agree that those mentioned by him are excellent performers, but he has overlooked two more who, in my opinion, stand out from all others—viz., Mrs. Aldridge (née Phyllis Hanify), and Miss Jewel (whose Christian name I have forgotten). The former played frequently in conjunction with the orchestra at the De Luxe Theatre, Wellington, when I had the privilege of conducting there, and her ability was pre-eminent. But as a soloist on the instrument I have no hesitation in ranking Miss Jewel—for some years a member of the theatre staff—as the finest player I have heard.

Speaking facetiously of this instrument, one might say that if anything is calculated to set one's head in a whirl, it's a Wurlitzer—especially in that classical composition—

Just a song at twilight
When the lamps Were-lit-Sir.

Yours, etc.,
L. D. Austin.

Wellington,
December 6, 1939.