

Australia, warned that 'we cannot arrive as yet at any conclusion with regard to our ultimate decision; when we have seen the other places we shall be better able to judge...'. They were so feted and made much of that, although 'doubtless very pleasant to be paid five guineas a day to eat and drink... the absolute deprivation of almost a single hour of privacy is underpaid at that amount'. But 'if our decision should leak out in any way, I daresay we should meet with a different reception from the disappointed province...'.

On the day after their arrival in Wellington they held their first meeting at noon in Government House when Murphy was appointed Chairman. As Docker later commented, 'Although I was named first in the commission I thought it expedient to cede the chairmanship to Sir Francis as it was evident we should get on better...'.²⁴ It was a wise decision. Apart from his title, Murphy had broader experience and higher standing in the legislature of his state than did Docker in New South Wales. Docker, henceforth, was more free to observe and photograph.

Members agreed also on general principles by which the various localities were to be appraised, such as their relative central position and access by sea and land, 'water capabilities', harbour approaches, depth of water, anchorage, protection from the prevailing winds, tides etc. Of comparable importance was the potential of the town itself, the resources of the surrounding country, its capability for defence, and, finally, natural disadvantages and the extent to which these were 'capable of removal or amelioration'.

The first Wellington witness was R.J. Duncan, manager of the New Zealand Steam Navigation Company, who had earlier agreed to make the company's newest vessel, the *Rangatira*, available to the Commission throughout the survey. Some evidence presented, although not in itself of the highest importance, is now of intriguing value to the local historian—for example, the fact that at the period of post-Crimean war artillery development, a battery on Ward Island could prevent the entry of a hostile vessel—'Wards Island would be the key of the Harbor'; but Major Coote's additional proposal for guns not merely at the Pilot Station but on Barrett's Reef might have daunted the most intrepid Royal Engineer of the period.²⁵

Not that any bland calm in Wellington's weather gave grounds for such an assumption. To Docker's disappointment it was most seasonal—'so bad, blowing a gale with constant showers that I have only got three pictures as yet'. He had, notwithstanding, 'a capital darkroom in a bathroom attached to my bedroom which enables me to prepare plates when I can get a moment of time. There is a very fine effect produced by snowy mountains in the background when the mist and cloud will allow you to see them.'