

between individuals or groups, the legacies of inadequate interpreting, and the undertones in myths and legends. For instance, in *From Hongi Hika to Hone Heke*, he reluctantly repeated the conventional story that Heke had cut down the flagstaff three times at Kororareka. He always felt uneasy when accepting such oft-repeated statements and usually preferred to put them to the test of further enquiry. However, in this one case and after consulting other historians, he decided to follow the main current and credit Heke with three separate assaults on the flagstaff. But the doubts remained. When working on a more detailed but still unpublished study of Kororareka itself he found these doubts confirmed and that Heke had in fact cut it down four times. The one thing he could do to make amends was to apologise to Heke's memory.

Only rarely did his native scepticism desert him and allow him to fall into this sort of error. His historical imagination, sharpened by this scepticism, would usually give him a nudge that something did not quite hang together or that some element seemed to be missing. He would then be off on another of his intensive searches. He did not begin this sort of research with any pre-ordained thesis or with many preconceptions but was urged on by a need to understand why. So he always found himself covering a lot of ground. Because understanding can sometimes be slow in coming, he could never be content but would go on devilling in the Library or continue discussing his uncertainties with a multitude of correspondents until satisfied that the particular circumstance was not going to yield up its secret.

Sometimes, as with most of his kind, time compelled him to take his primary sources at their face value. A case in point occurs in his *War in the Tussock*, published in 1961 for the Historic Places Trust. This reconstructed the operations against Te Kooti in 1869 that culminated in the attack on Te Porere near the headwaters of the Wanganui River. He repeats, but with the cautionary 'according to his own account', Lieutenant-Colonel McDonnell's statement that he had accepted command of the Taupo field force only under the pressure and promises of financial reward from the Defence Minister, Donald McLean, and at the request of friends and the Premier, William Fox, alike. At that time McDonnell did not hold any military appointment but was, at the government's request, visiting some of the tribes that had fought for the Queen to learn what their present expectations were and what they thought of the new government. In fact it was the Government Agent for Hawkes Bay, J. D. Ormond, who made the new appointment and then asked the Defence Minister for his approval. The question of McDonnell's pay was not mentioned at the time, he was already drawing £500 per annum while engaged on this programme of visitation, and the amount of the pay he was to draw for taking on this command was not decided until some three and a half months after the appointment had been made. It was then fixed at 2 guineas