



The Rev. Samuel Ironside established what was called the Cloudy Bay Mission at Ngakuta Bay, at the head of Port Underwood, on December 20, 1840.

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## Samuel Ironside's Work Was Widely Appreciated.

My home is at Tua Marina and from my front porch I can see, about 15 miles away in a north-easterly direction, the entrance to Port Underwood, and the hills at the back of Ngakuta Bay, while not a mile and a half away in a north-westerly direction, I see the sun shining on the monument where Mr Ironside buried the victims of the Wairau Massacre of June 17, 1843. Quite close to my home flows the Wairau River up which he rowed with a crew of whalers on that occasion.

On the need to establish a Mission in this area it can be mentioned that Captain Cook has recorded that on the three occasions on which he made his headquarters at Ship Cove from 1769, there was a numerous population of Maoris in the neighbourhood.

White settlement commenced with the arrival of Captain John Guard in 1827, when he discovered the entrance to Tory Channel and set up his whaling station at Te Awaiti. Captain Guard stayed there only a short time. As Port Underwood was handier to the run of whales through the Strait, he shifted and set up his station at Kakapo Bay, where his descendants live to this day.

The Methodist Mission, from its recommencement at Hokianga in 1827, gradually worked its way down the west coast of the North Island until by 1839 stations had been established as far south as Kawhia.

### VISIT BY SUPERINTENDENT

About this time the Mission headquarters was being visited by natives from the South Island asking that missionaries be sent to them also. So during May, 1839, Port Underwood and Te Awaiti were visited by the Rev. J. H. Bumby, superintendent of the Mission, and the Rev. John Hobbs, to spy out the land, as it were. They were not the first clergymen to see the place, however, as during April, 1836, the Rev. Wm. White, of our Mission, on board a ship that had put in through stress of weather, was in Port Underwood for one day; but he has left no record of what he saw.

A year later in June, 1837, the place had a one-day visit from the Rev. Samuel Marsden, of the Anglican Mission, on his last visit to New Zealand. From his report we read this:—

From the Thames I proceeded to Cloudy Bay and Cooks Straits. A missionary is wanted in Cooks Straits. I was informed there were 1500 natives there, besides the whalers.

As a result of Mr Bumby's visit, he wrote a lengthy report of what he found in Port Underwood, and though he was very shocked at the vicious way of life of the whalers he met there, he was very pleased to find that the natives had accepted the Christian faith.

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One paragraph of his report says:—

"The Europeans belonging to the several whaling establishments of the place are numerous, many of them, of course, have no wish for the light of the Gospel lest the hidden things of darkness in which they revel and delight should be revealed and they should be ashamed. I am persuaded that if Missionary operations were commenced here, there would be more opposition from civilised Europeans than from the untutored barbarians."

And of the natives Mr Bumby reported —

"They observe the Sabbath and worship God. They meet twice a day and as a substitute for church bells they had old musket barrels suspended by cords and struck by stones. A few of the young people can read and all are anxious to learn. As we left one place numbers followed the boat, up to their middles in water in order to see books. We found in the possession of some lads a few fragments of the New Testament, so dirty with use as to be scarcely legible, but preserved with the greatest care. One of them having learned to write a little, and having got some paper began to multiply copies. There was no difficulty in deciding that a missionary ought to reside among these people."

Upon returning to Hokianga Mr Bumby lost no time in arranging that a missionary should be sent to Cloudy Bay, and the Rev. Samuel Ironside was appointed.

## **IRNSIDE THE MAN**

Now let us take a look at this Samuel Ironside.

A son of a Methodist local preacher, he was born in Sheffield on September 9, 1814, and early in life decided to be a missionary. He worked to that end, and in 1838 he and his young wife left England on board the barque James for Hokianga. When he landed in March, 1839, he was only 24 years of age, and his wife had not yet reached her 21st birthday. He has been described as a sturdy young fellow, of fine physique, absolutely fearless, well fitted to grapple with the conditions amongst an uncivilised people, and to face the situation created by the inrush of a European population.

He picked up the Maori language with such extraordinary ease that he was able to read the Morning Lesson in the native tongue only six weeks after his arrival. He was a man full of fire and energy, the very type to set down among the rough whalers and the natives in their vicinity. Also, most fortunately for those interested in history, he used a ready pen, and his quarterly reports to the Mission Secretaries in London make very interesting reading today.

Mr Fiebig at the Connexional office has very kindly allowed me to see the copies of those reports that he has on file. Mr Ironside may have been young in years, but the clear, lucid English in which he expresses himself, and the well thought out logic of

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his reasoning proves him to have been a man well above the average. He did not confine his writing just to his reports either, as, during his old age in 1890 and 91 with his diaries beside him, he wrote a series of 27 long articles for the church paper the New Zealand Methodist. As his own copies of the paper came to hand, Mr Ironside carefully clipped the articles out and pasted them in a scrap-book, making any necessary corrections as he did so. Thanks to the good offices of Mr Ironside's grandson, I had that scrapbook on loan some years ago, and now by quoting from those articles, and also from his earlier reports, I propose to let Mr Ironside tell you his own story, as it were.

### **PERILOUS TRAVEL**

Showing the difficulties of travel in those years, the Ironsides left the Hokianga on May 19 and did not arrive at Port Underwood until December 23. They had no difficulty in getting as far as the Rev. Mr Whiteley's Station at Kawhia, and then their troubles started. Mr Ironside has this to say:—

"In October an opportunity offered to charter the schooner Hannah of 28 tons to take us to Cloudy Bay. The property of a Polish Jew, her sails were worn and patched, her cable a rotten rope, and the only boat she carried was leaky and broken on the port side. If, in an emergency, the captain might wish to anchor, there was no prospect of the anchor holding and to escape with safety by means of the boat would verge on the miraculous. In this deathtrap we embarked. As we left the harbour on a falling tide, the wind failed and the vessel refused to answer her helm. We could neither cross the bar, nor get back into harbour and the current carried us on to a sandspit over which the sea was furiously breaking. To lighten the vessel so that she might drift further inshore, the crew threw the deck load of mission stores and furniture overboard. Boxes, chairs and chests of drawers were washing about in the surf. Happily, no lives were lost, and the goods were not materially damaged, save and except a cask of crockery which was entirely broken up, but the vessel was driven high and dry on shore and is now a total wreck.'

### **ARRIVAL AT THE PORT**

Then Mr Ironside goes on:—

"After another two months of weary waiting, a favourable opportunity of moving away occurred, which we eagerly took advantage of. The barque Magnet came to load with timber, boards, scantling and other builders' stuff, for the little city of Wellington just entering upon the race of progress. For a little extra payment, the captain agreed to take me and mine, with our goods and chattels, and land us at Port Underwood, Cloudy Bay, en route to his destination at Port Nicholson. When the vessel was loaded holds full, decks lumbered up, it was found she was

drawing a little over 13ft., and as there was less than 18ft. on the bar at low water, it was evident that there v/as a risk attending our crossing, especially if there was a swell on, as is usually the case. We waited patiently for a fair wind and smooth sea so as to lessen the risk. We were tantalised from day to day with wind from the sea, and only light airs from the land during the night and then the tide did not serve.

"At length a good land wind blew one night and the tide just on the ebb, we put to sea in hope and trust. The channel lay very near that terrible south sand spit over which could be seen the white foam of the breakers, but very shortly we were over the bar in safety.

"After about a week's fine weather sailing we entered Port Underwood, and anchored off Kakapo, Guard's Bay, on December 20, 1840. We were expeditiously and unceremoniously landed on the beach and the Magnet pursued her voyage to Port Nichol-son."

## **A ROUGH "HOME"**

"The only place of shelter my dear wife and I could obtain on landing from the Magnet was an old disused native cooking 'place, built of rough slabs of timber, and roofed in with the same material. There was enough and to spare of ventilation. The slabs were not joined together, but were put up Maori fashion, any-how. You could thrust your hand between the slabs and see the stars here and there through the roof. There was neither chimney nor window in the building, nor flooring save that which nature had provided. We remained in these undesirable quarters for two or three weeks, surrounded by some scores of whalers of nearly all nations, English, French, Americans, Colonials—some of them escapees from Botany Bay and Van Diemen's Land, and some hundreds of Maoris. Of the two races the Maoris were, on the whole, more desirable neighbours than the others.

"I had early proof of the fitness of my coming here to mission work. On the morning of Christmas Day, five days after our arrival, I married five of the white people to the native women with whom they had been living. One of them was the principal storekeeper, a native of the Netherlands, the most decent and respectable man on the station. We afterwards took our Christmas dinner with him. We could not have the orthodox dish of roast beef. That was an unattainable luxury. I only saw it upon our table about twice during the whole of our three years residence there. But we had plum pudding, and a very good one, prepared by a Maori cook."

## THOUGHT FOR MAORIS

Mr Ironside spent some weeks looking around and deciding on his course of action and then on February 14, as a vessel was about to sail for Sydney, he sent off his first report to the Mission secretaries in London. Here are some extracts from that first report:—

"I have at length fixed on Ngakuta at the head of this bay for my station, which I think is, on the whole, the best place. It is distant about 4 or 5 hours journey from all the natives of Queen Charlotte Sound and quite as convenient for the natives of this Bay. So that I have under my immediate superintendence, the natives of two very important harbours. There are about 60 Europeans living in Cloudy Bay, but at 6 miles distant by water. They were all very glad at my coming to them and were seemingly very desirous of hearing the Gospel. But the place I have fixed on did not meet with their cordial approbation, they wished me to be nearer them. But had I done so, I should not have been advantageously placed for the natives. And as I consider myself especially a missionary to the natives, I felt myself bound to consider their interests first. However, I shall do what I can towards benefiting my countrymen; to this end I have established an English service on Sunday afternoons, which is attended by a few. I purpose when I have got a boat to visit them at their own places once a week and recommend to them the 'one thing needful.' But I have far greater hopes of the Natives than of our countrymen; their desire for instruction is intense. I have been visited by Natives from a distance of 80 and 100 miles who come solely for religious instruction; Prayer Books, Hymn Books and Testaments are very greatly needed. My heart bleeds to think of their earnestness and I am not able to supply their wants. I have not a single Testament to dispose of, nor any Hymn Book, and hundreds around me are daily begging. Some were here yesterday from a distance of 40 miles praying for books, but they returned empty away as I had none for them. I have several times been offered pigs and potatoes in payment and they think it hard that I will neither give nor sell books, for they cannot bring themselves to believe that I, a Missionary, should be without. All this is pleasing but very painful.

## FULLY EMPLOYED

"I will now give you an outline of my labours:—Sunday morning we have a prayer meeting. At 9 a.m. school in which we have five classes.

1. A Bible Class.
2. A class of old men learning to read.
3. A class of young men learning the Catechism.

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4. A female class learning the Catechism; they are also met every week by Mrs Ironside; she purposes to teach them to sew and knit as well as read and write.

5. A class of children.

"School over we have public service. At 1 p.m. I meet a class of Natives and two others are con-ducted by steady young men. At 2 p.m. I have an English service and the Natives have school at the same time. At 5 p.m. we have an Evening Service. On Monday we have school morning and evening. Tuesday morning school and in the evening I meet the Society. Wednesday morning school, evening prayer meeting, Thursday school morning and evening, Friday and Saturday school morning and evening preaching.

"I am, as you see, fully employed. Besides this I have repeated calls to visit and relieve the sick every day. But I am happy in my work."

He ends the report by saying:—

"I expected greater trials when I came out."

In saying this he was a bit premature; the trials, in plenty, came later.

## Historic Church, "Ebenezer", Opened At Port Underwood.



Rev. SAMUEL IRONSIDE

In later days when writing his reminiscences Mr Ironside gave greater detail of the bay and site of the Mission. He says then:—

"Its native name was Ngakuta. Captain Buck of the mission schooner Triton at his first visit to us, named it Pisgah Vale. There was a small triangular block of some 150 acres of level land, chiefly wooded and gradually rising up into the hills that surrounded it on the north, east and west. A little to the left of the spot fixed on as the site of the church and mission house was the narrow barren saddle of the dividing range, 400 or 500 feet high, at the foot of which on the other side was a cove stretching in from Queen Charlotte Sound. A climb and a descent, taking up about 45 minutes, took me from Ngakuta to the Sound, a distance by water of 40 or 50 miles.

"By keeping a boat at the head of each cove, I thus had command over a large sphere of labour, embracing all Port Underwood and both channels of the Sound, thence on to Admiralty Bay and Pelorus Sound. From 20 to 30 native villages and the whaling stations were formed into a circuit. I gave occasional attention to the regions beyond at D'Urville Island and Blind Bay. Between D'Urville's Island and the mainland runs the celebrated French Pass through which I took my whale boat, with my Maori crew on several occasions when I visited the native settlements of Blind Bay."

## **RISING TIDE OF HOPE**

It is most noticeable when going through Mr Ironside's reports to note the rising tide of hope in his writings during the first two years. He was convinced that everything was going well. Here are some extracts from May 3, 1841:—

"I am happy to say that things every way continue to improve. The public means of grace are regularly attended by hundreds."

And again:—

"There are eight congregations in the circuit so far, and in every instance they are flourishing. The schools also are in a prosperous state. There is one connected with every congregation. About 150 read the new Testament on Scripture lessons. Others are learning the alphabet. I have on the Station here a very interesting class of old men, averaging from 50 to 70 years of age diligently learning to read. Old warriors of more than half a century take their place in the class and are as attentive as the rest. . .

## **"GREATEST AFFLICTION"**

"We have not yet been five months here and the Station is entirely new, both to the natives and ourselves, and we have got a very neat village around us. The houses wattled with supplejack and plastered with white clay present a pleasing appearance.

"One of my greatest afflictions is being obliged to see the distress of the people for Testaments and Hymn Books, without the ability to supply them. A fortnight ago I received 18 Testaments from Kawhia and was informed that was my share, so that now I have one Testament for every hundred individuals; before I received this supply none of my native assistants in any of the villages had one. O that I had a thousand for my Circuit alone."

However, shortly after this in March, 1842, Mr Ironside received an allocation of 450 copies and his report of the distribution of them makes most interesting reading, but it would take me too long to tell.

## **CHURCH CALLED "EBENEZER"**

During the autumn of 1842 plans began to take shape for the erection of the chapel, which was one of the brightest spots and highlights of the Cloudy Bay Mission. It is first mentioned in a report to the secretaries on May 10 when Mr Ironside says:--

"The natives are now busily engaged in putting up a Chapel, its size is 66 x 36ft., the posts are very substantial and it is to be lined with reeds. They work very

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well when superintended and so I am obliged to give a great deal of time towards that object."

Later in more detail he says:—

"As is common with all church building committees many discussions took place. There was no architect or practical builder to guide us in the great undertaking, but all were willing and earnest. There were five leading tribes and it was resolved to divide the work into five portions, each tribe to be responsible for its share. The size (outside measurement) was 66ft. x 36ft. and about 12ft. up to the wall plate. Prom 100 to 150 men gave all their time and labour to the work for months. The wives attended to the gardens and cultivations, and brought in food supplies for them.

"The frame of the building was of long huge slabs of pine, two to three inches in thickness. Large and lofty pines grew in the hills behind and a good many of these were felled for the purpose and cross cut to the required length. They were then hauled out by main force and dragged to the church site with the aid of blocks and tackle lent by the whaling ships. The work went merrily on, sawpits were constructed, each trunk was cut down into three or four slabs. These were adzed to a perfect smoothness as though done by a carpenter's plane. They were set up for the walls, about a foot apart from each other, the interstices being filled with wattle from the supplejack vine which grows luxuriously in the forests, then plastered over with mortar. We gathered shells in great quantities from the beach and burned them for lime.

"The whole interior was lined with tall reeds, which grew in plenty about the swamps. The women exercised their ingenuity and patience in staining each reed with various pigments and the combination of colours was just beautiful.

"I worked with the men, as an amateur clerk of works, and gave directions as much as my many other duties would permit me. A carpenter from one of the whaling stations, a young man of respectable parents, who was with us for a month, worked making the pulpit and communion, fixing the doors and windows. There were eight large sashes, four on each side. These, with the doors, I had obtained from Port Nicholson. The carpenter's wages, with the cost of the windows and doors, and pine boards for the pulpit and communion amounted to £40. This v/as the whole sum with which the Missionary Committee was debited. The money value of the church could not have been less than £1400 to £1500. As a crowning achievement of the work I had 'Ebenezer' painted in large capitals on a board and affixed to the front gable."

## GRAND OPENING DAY

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"Friday, August 5, 1842, was our grand church opening day. There was an immense gathering of the clans from far and near all full of high and holy expectation. All the villages in the Sound, the Pelorus River and the distant D'Urville's Island as well as those in Cloudy Bay furnished their quota of worshippers."

"The service was exceedingly interesting, a sermon was preached from I Samuel vii, verse 12: "Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

"No collection was made, the people had not silver or gold to give. They had been willing helpers in building the church for the preceding five months and had exhausted their resources.

"Saturday the 6th was devoted to the examination of candidates for baptism who had been meeting in class on probation for more than 12 months.

"On Sunday at 9 a.m. the candidates were gathered and all arranged in rows in front of the pulpit. The bell was then rung and the people flocked in. Between the prayers and the sermon I received into the visible church one hundred and sixty-three adults and thirty children. After dinner not the least interesting part of our opening was the marriage of forty couples, who had been living together in a heathen state."

Mr Ironside ends his account of the proceedings by saying:—

"Thus closed one of the most interesting Sabbaths the South Island of New Zealand has ever witnessed."

## Detailed Events In a Missionary's Life.

The best account that I have seen of Mr Ironside's work and the extent of the Mission before the trouble started, is contained in his report to the Secretaries, written in the form of a letter and dated January 7, 1843. It gives such an insight into the work that I will give it in full.

He commences:—

"Rev. and Dear Fathers,—

"It is some time since I wrote last to you, but opportunities of communicating with England either direct, or by way of Sydney occur but seldom. As I have now been two years in this Circuit, it may perhaps be advisable to lay before you a statement of the numbers of Chapels, Members of Society, and Hearers composing it, especially as I believe no regular account of these Chapels, etc., has ever reached you:

"1. Pisgah Vale. This is the principal place. Here we have a Noble Chapel, built during the past year, capable of accommodating 800 persons with ease. It is much larger than the Mangungu Chapel. All the work except doors, windows, pulpit, etc., done by natives. Forty pounds will cover all the expenses of its erection, and were not carpenters' work very dear, this would have been much less. There are about 120 members of the Society here.

"2. Wekenui. A village in what is called Tory Channel, i.e., the south entrance of Queen Charlotte Sound. Here we have a substantial chapel, say 35ft. x 25ft. opened last August, by our friend Mr Aldred, of Port Nicholson, when here on his return from the Chatham Islands. This building has cost the Society nothing but a pair or two of hinges, and a few nails. There are about 50 members of the Society.

"3. Te Awaiti. The next village up the Sound from Wekenui. Here is a very good place of worship, 40ft. by 30ft. built last year, entirely by natives, has cost nothing at all to the Society. This is the principal residence of the European whalers who frequent the Sound, and I should feel great pleasure were I able to say that my fellow countrymen were half as anxious about God and religion as the 30 native members of the Society who reside here are. They would lose nothing were they to copy the example of their New Zealand neighbours.

"4. Te Tio and Puhe. Two small villages further up the south entrance of the Sound, at each place is a small chapel built last year, free of expense to the Society. Number of members of the Society about 30.

"5. Wakakamea. Passing through the channel which separates the north and south entrances of the Sound, the next village at which there are Wesleyans is

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Wakakara-mea. Here is an excellent place of worship, built a year and a half ago 30ft. x 30ft. The Society supplied nails, hinges, and a lock for the door. Everything else was done by the natives. We have here some very zealous members, who endeavour as far as in them lies, to get and do good. They number about 40.

"6. Pukaramu and Puarere. Two small villages higher up the north entrance, at each of which there are chapels and about 20 members of the Society.

"7. Te Waiopiopi. Another village in the Sound, where a chapel has been lately erected, free of expense, and about 30 members of the Society.

"8. Mangareporepo. A good chapel, 30 members of the Society.

"9. Mokopeke. A substantial building, lately opened, and a very lively Society of members, in number 50.

"10. Oamaru. Here a large chapel is in course of erection. I expect soon to be sent for to open it. The Society numbers 30 or thereabouts.

"This, I consider, a very fair Circuit for one Missionary, and if he do his duty among them, he will not eat the bread of idleness. But I have other places at a still greater distance to attend to, and knowing your embarrassed circumstances, I have not dared to ask for help for them. Though I am sure the want is urgent, for the distance, and the dangerous travelling (by boat out at sea) and the numerous engagements nearer home, render my visits to these places like angels. There is:

"11. Te Hoiere, i.e., Pelorus Sound. At Punekerua, the principal village here, they have got a very good chapel built, which I had the pleasure of opening last October. It is perhaps 40ft. x 25ft. There are upwards of 60 members and on trial here, but pastoral oversight is much needed. I have lately sent David Beecham and his wife Priscilla to reside among them, but the people are very urgent for a Missionary. Many heathen reside in the neighbourhood and they remain deaf to our call to them to put away their false gods and believe in 'the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.' They say that when they can have a Preacher for themselves they will consider the matter.

"12. Rangitoto or D'Urville's Island, is still further distant. Here at Te Horea, one of the villages of the Island, they have a very neat place of worship, 40 x 25 about. There are more than 40 baptized members living here, without pastoral oversight, except what I, at a distance of 70 or 80 miles by sea, can render them. If a Missionary were to be sent to them to take charge of this place and Pelorus Sound he would find plenty of work among them, and would be a great blessing.

"13. At the Motueka, in Blind Bay or Tasman's Gulf, 25 miles from Nelson the Company's second settlement, there are 70 baptized members of the Society and

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more than 20 on trial. This place is 150 miles from Cloudy Bay and all by sea, for there is no way of getting over land by the coast. I have only been able to make one visit to this place and two to Nelson. But you will agree with me that the place should be occupied. I am glad to hear that the District has determined to send there the first spare man.

"At Nelson, there are at least 20 Wesleyans, with notes of removal from the Superintendents of the Circuits, whence they came, but unless a Missionary gets among them soon, they will lose their religion, and backslide from the ways of God. At a late visit which I made the members were quite in pain because I could not say positively that a Missionary would be sent to reside among them. They say they should not have left their homes in England had they known that there was no Wesleyan Mission within a hundred miles of the settlement they were coming to.

"In this Circuit, then, as it at present stands, there are sixteen Chapels at least. The whole of them have not cost the Society £60, and if the subscriptions of the natives for the Testaments they have received be taken into account, they have not cost £30. There are 30 local preachers and leaders. More than 600 members and on trial and perhaps 1500 hearers. When I came among them two years since there were not 30 members. Property was not safe, the natives would pilfer anything and everything upon which they could lay their hands. Now captains of ships never miss anything; they have left things about purposely, but the natives are too honest to meddle with them.

"On referring to the register I find that I have married on this station, during the last two years, 171 couples, baptized 613 adults and 155 infants.

"I beg to remain,  
*"Yours faithfully,*  
*"SAMUEL IRONSIDE."*

## EFFORT TO LOCATE SITES

Now just to comment a little on that report, I can say that I have tried to locate the site of all those chapels, but so far without complete success. I knew an old Maori, since dead, who was well up in the lore of the Rangitane tribe of the Sounds, but my efforts to get his help were of no avail. He was not willing. To anyone today travelling in the steamer along Tory Channel to Picton, it seems almost incredible that in the early days there was such a large Maori population in those parts, and that along the length of the Channel and in the north entrance there were eleven places of worship belonging to our Church.

Another astonishing thing is to read the report of the Schools for 1842:—

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Cloudy Bay, 150 adults and 35 children;  
Te Awaiti, 116 adults and 40 children;  
Totaranui, 175 adults and 63 children were attending schools.

That last entry gives anyone food for thought. Totaranui is now known as Ship Cove, the headquarters of Captain Cook on his voyages to New Zealand, and where his monument stands. Today it is a scenic reserve of 1700 acres, bushed to the water's edge, with no person living within miles, and yet we read of 175 adults and 63 children attending school there. Truly times have changed'

Also on two occasions I have had the opportunity of seeing the Marriage and Baptismal Register of the Cloudy Bay Mission, which is still in existence, and entries in that prove that Mr Ironside ventured even further afield in his whale boat than Motueka. One entry is for marriages at Massacre Bay, and another for marriages at Aorere, Massacre Bay. The latter being, I feel sure, the site of the place now known as Collingwood, which is probably 50 miles beyond Motueka.

The last entry in the register is of interest also, in that it is a Maori marriage conducted on May 14, 1843, at Kaituna, Pelorus Sound, where today stands the little town of Have-lock, proving that Mr Ironside found his way through all the intricate channels to the very head of Pelorus Sound.

## **LONG ABSENCES**

A fortnight after writing that report, that is, on January 23, 1843, Mr Ironside again writes to the Secretaries and forwards entries from his Journal for the previous four months The first entry is of September 11, 1842, and says:—

"As the wind is boisterous the natives from a distance have not been able to come in their canoes so that our company this morning was small. After an early service I went to Robin Hoods Bay and addressed a numerous company of attentive natives."

September 15:

"Preparing for another journey to the other side of the Straits. (Actually Mr Ironside meant Tasman Bay, not the Strait). It is not more than nine weeks since I returned home from a seven weeks absence, and the natives of Motueka and Blind Bay, are expecting me to visit them. It is a trial to leave my dear wife lonely so much, but I must be ready when duty calls."

Then on October 8 he says:

"Late last night I arrived at home (from Motueka) and found my dear wife as well as when I left and, of course, very thankful for the preserving care of God. We arrived at Motueka on Thursday, the 22nd of September, after a quick

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passage of four days (hauling up our boat each night on the beach); the wind was strong but favourable. Once or twice we were in danger, but the Lord was with us. On Sunday 25th at Motueka 37 adults besides children were introduced into the visible church by baptism. I was on the whole gratified with the state of the natives there; though they suffer seriously from want of pastoral oversight.

"On our way home we spent a few days at Nelson, the New Zealand Company's second settlement. I waited on Mr Reay, the Church minister lately arrived there. I found him very pious. We had a long conversation on several important subjects. The Sabbath I spent in Nelson, October 2nd, I preached four times. In the morning to about 40 natives on the beach, twice in the open air to the English in different parts of the settlement and again in the evening, in a private house to a very crowded company. I felt very tired at night but very happy. I wish we had a Missionary here. There is abundance of work for one.

"On the Wednesday night after leaving Nelson we arrived at the Pelorus Sound and on the Thursday we had a baptismal service. Between 30 and 49 professing their faith were baptised. We opened the large substantial chapel during our stay. It was erected by the natives without any expense at all to the Society. When we had finished our business at the Pelorus we made all haste home and were glad to find all well."

Back at home at Ngakuta on November 13 he says this:—

"This has been a good day. I heard one of the natives preach his trial sermon as a Local Preacher this evening and he certainly exceeded my expectations."

Then on January 22, 1843, is this entry:—

"Addressed a very interesting and attentive congregation of Americans and English this morning at Ocean Bay on the parable of the Pharisee and Publican. There were about 40 of them; they belong to a whaling ship refitting in the Bay. I learnt afterwards that several of them were members of the American Methodist Society and were subject to a good deal of ridicule from their ungodly shipmates."

## **Grim Events Wreck Samuel Ironside's High Hopes.**

It is difficult in a small compass to give a clear account of the events that caused the abandonment of the Mission after two years of advancement and progress. The brutal murder by Richard Cook, a white whaler, of a Maori woman, Kuika, and her child and the gross miscarriage of justice by which the murderer was allowed to go scot free, got the Maoris worked up into a ferment.

Kuika was a chieftainess of rank, and she was one of those whom Mr Ironside had married on Christmas Day, 1840, five days after his arrival. Her grave is still to be seen in Kakapo Bay.

Her husband was the Dutchman James Wynen, Ironside's friend, the principal storekeeper there. Mr Wynen spent his declining years at Richmond and is buried there.

Another event that led up to the abandonment of the Mission was the illegal surveying of the Wairau Plain by the New Zealand Company, which led up to the Wairau Massacre, when Captain Wakefield and other leaders of the Nelson settlement lost their lives.

There is ample evidence to prove that Mr Ironside did his best to get wiser counsels to prevail, and it can be said with some truth that he was the one person who emerged from that affair with honour. I will not go into details—you can read all about it in your history books—but for the part that Mr Ironside played in the aftermath he will be held in everlasting respect.

### **DELAYED BY STORM**

The clash when 22 men were killed at Tua Marina took place on Saturday, June 17, 1843. News of it reached Mr Ironside next day (Sunday afternoon, and he at once determined that it was his duty to go and investigate and decently bury the dead. He says:

"On Monday, the 19th, a strong SE gale was blowing and a heavy sea was rolling up the Bay. I attempted to get my boat out, but was obliged to give it up. Even if I had succeeded it would have been madness to strive 15 to 20 miles in the teeth of the wind and sea.

"Next morning, Tuesday, we managed with difficulty to launch the boat and with a strong crew of white men pulled down to Kakapo Bay. There were the old chiefs Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata and a tumultuous mob of their followers, wind and weather bound, exultant at their unexpected victory and yet alarmed at the consequences when the Government should hear.

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"As it was utterly impossible to venture out in the whale boat across the dozen miles of open sea to the mouth of the Wairau and the bar would be dangerous, I landed in the cove and went to see the old chiefs. They were sullen, and evidently in dread of the action of the authorities; but they justified their conduct. The magistrate, they said, had begun it by wanting to handcuff them and threatening them with the war party if they resisted.

"I then said I wished to go, seek out and decently bury the slain, and I supposed they had no objection. "What do you want to go for?" was the reply;

"Better leave them to the wild pigs; but you can go if you like."

### **MARVELLOUS ESCAPE**

"We could do nothing that day, so returned to Ngakuta, dispirited and anxious. Next morning we ventured out at considerable risk, got over the bar at the river's mouth. I wondered afterwards at our temerity and our marvellous escape."

Mr Ironside describes rowing up the river and the two days they spent at their mournful task, and then ends his description by saying:

"We then left the melancholy scene."

Years later, when writing his reminiscences he ends his description of the events with a sentence that we at Tua Marina are very proud of. It is this:

"I am glad that a Wesleyan Church is erected near the spot and a good congregation is gathered there." That proves he was still interested and was informed about our locality as late as 1890, when he was a very old man.

To those who seek a fuller understanding of the events and the scene of the massacre, I recommend a study of Mr C. B. Brereton's fine model in the Nelson Institute. This was pre-pared only after thorough research into the history of the affair and ex-acting examinations and measurements made at Tua Marina, a task in which I was privileged to assist.

### **STATION DESERTED**

To resume the story: Mr Ironside got back home to Ngakuta Bay two days later and says:—

"We found the station deserted, all the houses in the village stripped of everything, and my poor wife in great alarm for my safety. The few days of my absence must have been just terrible for her.

"I went over to the Sound where the natives were encamped, till all the tribe could be gathered from the Pelorus, D'Urville's Island and other places in the Straits.

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"I was in hopes I might persuade them to return to the station. But no. They would not forsake their old chief. They would go with him and defend him. Beyond the four or five native domestics attached to us at Ngakuta we were left alone.

The natives had abandoned their homes at Cloudy Bay and were only waiting at Totaranui (Ship Cove) for a fair wind to take their canoes, laden with all their household goods, over the Straits to Kapiti.

"So the pleasant, well sheltered coves of the Sounds, which had been the happy homes of hundreds of Christian natives, were left to solitude. I had no crew to take me about, if there had been natives to visit. The two or three silent Sabbaths my wife and I spent on the old station were wretched indeed.

"As soon as it could be arranged I took her over to Wellington, leaving the place in charge of one I was glad to call my friend 'Paramena' who was the best native teacher I ever heard."

I have had an opportunity of seeing copies of the two reports Mr Ironside sent off to the Secretaries in London, one on June 25 immediately after returning from Tua Marina, and the other written on July 5, after considering things more fully. Pages and pages of them, most fascinating documents, written with the events fresh in his mind I will only quote one paragraph, in which he voices some of his disappointment:—

"We had 600 members of the Society, and I was indulging the hope that having at last got the rough work over and the expensive business of forming the Circuit completed, you would have heard from time to time of the progress in piety of the Members; of the gradual advance of Christianity in the District, and all this with less expense than in the three previous years of this Circuit's existence. But all appears dark and mysterious—the fair prospect is beclouded, and the station will very probably be broken up—all the expenditure in a manner thrown away, and this unhappy state of things is brought about (I cannot resist the conviction) thro' the Colonisation schemes of the New Zealand Company."

There is little more to add about the Cloudy Bay Mission proper. A Mr Jenkins, a salaried teacher, was sent over from Wellington to look after the property and to minister to the few remaining natives; but that only lasted a few years and then the place was abandoned entirely.

## NGAKUTA TODAY

The average person visiting Ngakuta today would find very little of interest, but there are still traces of the old Mission days if you know what to look for. There are two ways of getting there. One is by the weekly mail launch from Blenheim, down the

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river and across Cloudy Bay. The launch delivers mail and goods to every settler, but there is no time to go ashore and explore. The more usual and interesting way is to hire a special launch at Picton and travel down to Tory Channel, and into Onapua Inlet, where you land in a very sheltered little bay. This is the bay where Mr Ironside kept his whaleboat in which he travelled all over the Sounds and to Nelson. It is very pleasing to know that this bay is known officially as Missionary Bay. On land, a well graded track leads up a ridge and you learn that this is Missionary Ridge.

The saddle at the top is 900ft. above sea level and from there a wonderful view is to be seen along the full length of the eastern arm of Port Underwood. Ngakuta Bay lies at the foot.

Part way down the harbour is a flat topped island with a lone macrocarpa tree on it. This tree marks the spot on which a flagstaff was erected for the hoisting of the flag while the proclamation was being read when Queen Victoria's sovereignty over the South Island was proclaimed on June 17, 1840, following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the obtaining of the signatures of the South Island chiefs. Away in the distance one sees the breakers on the Cloudy Bay beach, with the flat land of the Wairau Plain beyond.

On leaving the saddle another pleasing thing is to learn that the ridge leading down to Ngakuta is named Ironside Ridge.

### **HALLOWED GROUND**

On arriving at the bottom and reaching the site of Ebenezer Church you feel you are standing on hallowed ground.

Of the actual church no trace remains. A house was erected on the site in 1877, but when I first visited the spot in 1935 that house had disappeared and all that remained were the chimney foundations.

Behind the church site is a flat of from 15 to 20 acres where the native village stood in the 1840s, while behind that in a gully grew the pine trees that were used in building the church. To the east is a patch of several acres of swampy ground where no doubt grew the rushes that were used for the thatch and the raupo for the interior reedwork of the church.

Mr Ironside selected a very fine site for his house, on the highest part of the flat ground and giving him a very fine view down the Bay. We know just a little about this Mission House. In the Minutes of the Annual District Meeting held at Kawhia on January 13, 1842, we read:—

"At Cloudy Bay a piece of land containing about 20 acres has been tapued for the Society and a native plastered house with weatherboard iron has been built."

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In one article Mr Ironside mentions "Our comfortable house of six rooms, the walls of which were coloured by Mrs Ironside's ingenuity, one blue, one orange, one pink, etc."

### **PICTURE OF THE MISSION**

It is interesting to know that a pen and ink sketch of this Mission house is in existence, the only picture of any part of the Mission as far as I am aware. A reproduction of it appeared in the Methodist Times of May 31, 1941, and in an accompanying article the late Mr Rugby Pratt has this to say:—

"After remaining hidden for a century amongst the manuscript papers of Dr Henry Weekes, there has recently been discovered, a sketch of the Mission House erected at Ngakuta Bay, Port Underwood, early in 1841 for occupancy by the Rev. Samuel and Mrs Ironside. Dr Weekes was surgeon superintendent on board the Plymouth Company's barque William Bryan. He made the sketch on Wednesday, 24, March, 1841, on which day he was entertained by Mr and Mrs Ironside. The barque was then in Port Underwood en route to New Plymouth where, seven days later, she disembarked the pioneer settlers of Taranaki."

Sad to say, no trace of that house is to be seen today. Up till quite recently two low mounds were noticeable, these being the crumbled remains of the two clay and stone chimneys, but recent clearing and ploughing operations have removed all traces of them, though on the hillside nearby is still visible the pit from which came the clay for the chimneys. I have in my possession a stone from the foundation of one of the main chimneys of the house.

The one relic of the Mission that will stand the test of time is the place where the boat was kept. A low cliff about 10ft. high borders the beach. This cliff was excavated back the required length and width for the boat and a thatched roof put over the top. The roof has long since disappeared and the sides have crumbled a bit, but the place is still well defined, and a fisherman had his nets drying in it when last I saw it.

### **FATE OF THE CHURCH**

I think I ought to say something about the fate of Ebenezer Church itself.

Recently a very interesting suggestion has come to light that during 1849, the year after Mr Ironside was transferred to Nelson from Wellington, he was instrumental in having the church removed and re-erected at Motueka.

I have been unable to find any evidence to support that suggestion.

The late Mr C. A. MacDonald in his "Pages from the Past" says:—

"It seems proper to outline the sad fate of the 'Church of Ebenezer' which was erected with such loving care at Ngakuta. The station was entirely abandoned about 1845 and the building, constructed of green timber uprights thrust into the

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ground, fell into rapid decay, collapsed, and was finally removed by persons in need of a plank or two, or for firewood. In 1877 Messrs Joseph and James Flood built a house upon the exact spot unearthing the ends of the old church uprights as they excavated for their piles."

By the very nature of its construction the church would have been very difficult to dismantle and re-erect under the conditions obtaining in those days. Being of native construction, after the raupo and reed work of the interior and the supplejack wattling and lime plaster of the outside had been chopped off and discarded, all that would be left to shift would be the huge slabs of the upright framework and rafters.

As the Messrs Flood unearthed the ends of the uprights in 1877 I think it is safe to assume that the church ended its days on its original site.

Another way of looking at it is this:

We know that Mr Ironside was very proud of his church. We know also that he was very happy in Nelson from 1848 to 55. In his reminiscences he wrote several articles about his life in Nelson. I think if he had been instrumental in having the church shifted to Motueka he would at least have written one article about it; but I have been unable to find any mention at all in his writings of what became of the church.

When I visited Ngakuta in 1935, the late Mr Arthur Flood assured me that the church bell was still in the Bay. That, I think, is very significant as before watches and clocks were common the church bell was a very important feature in any community and it seems unlikely that the church would be removed and the bell left behind.

## **Rev. Samuel Ironside Reports Marked Progress Of His Work.**

After leaving Port Underwood, Mr Ironside was appointed to the European work in Wellington. There were several reasons for this, one was that Mrs Ironside's health had suffered so severely from what she had gone through that it was necessary she should live somewhere where she could have the services of a doctor and be near to English society.

Another reason was that in Wellington he could still do very useful work in keeping in touch with the natives who had fled across Cook Strait to Kapiti and Porirua Harbour, and he would thus, to a certain extent, be keeping up his former mission work.

I do not wish to say much about Mr Ironside's stay in Wellington, but one episode is worth recording.

Te Rauparaha lived where Plimmerton now is until, owing to his intrigues, he was taken prisoner one early morning by a party of blue jackets from a ship-of-war.

Te Rangihaeata had built a "pa", the earthworks of which can still be seen on the hillside just behind the Anglican Church at Pahautanui. From there he was harassing and murdering the settlers in the Hutt Valley and at Johnsonville. He was even threatening to attack the little town of Wellington.

Just when things were at their worst towards the end of 1844, Mr Ironside was set down by the District Meeting to be shifted to some other station. On this becoming known the Wellington people rose up in arms; they argued that Mr Ironside was the one man who had any influence with the natives and if he were removed they didn't know what might happen. They hastily got up a petition which was largely signed, praying that Mr Ironside be not removed until the native troubles had eased.

The petition had the desired effect, and he stayed in Wellington until 1848. It is interesting to know that that petition has been carefully preserved. I have seen it. It is a beautiful document, carefully drawn up on parchment like a land title deed and signed by all the leading citizens of Wellington.

Towards the end of 1844, while he was still in Wellington, the friends and relatives in Nelson of those killed at Tua Marina made a presentation to Mr Ironside to show their esteem towards him for what he had done on that occasion. The present took the form of a handsome edition of the Bible in three volumes.

On February 20, 1845 Mr Ironside returned thanks in a letter of some length, one paragraph of which is as follows:—"It would have been much more gratifying to me could I have been of service as mediator before the affair had arrived at its dire extremity, but unfortunately, I knew not of it until it was too late."

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In 1848 Mr Ironside was transferred to Nelson, and in his Reminiscences he describes it in this happy way:—

"So it came to pass that, after nearly six years of hard but happy toil in Wellington I was removed to Nelson. I had visited it on several occasions when in charge of Cloudy Bay; had been charmed with its climate and scenery, knew and loved many of its people, so I accepted the appointment readily.

"There was no regular mail or passenger service between Wellington and Nelson in those days. We had to depend on chance and uncertain opportunities. These were increasing yearly, but we were often put to no little inconvenience in getting to and fro. On one occasion, when I had been some years in Nelson, returning from the District Meeting in Wellington, I took passage (Hobson's choice) in a cutter rigged vessel of some thirty tons, belonging to a German gardener settled in Nelson.

"She was a dull sailer, her cabin accommodation was of the roughest, her table provision of the scantiest but as we expected to make the voyage in two or three days and I was anxious to get back to my home and work, I put myself on board.

"We were fourteen days on the passage. The clumsy old tub would not make headway in a light wind; it required a smart breeze to drive her along. We made slow progress, some days no progress at all. Our purser's stores soon gave out. We had left Wellington twelve days before Christmas, feeling assured that we should be at the dear home at least a week before the high festival. But Christmas Day found us becalmed in the centre of Tasman Bay with Croixelles Harbour away to the east, Pepin Island and our desired haven away to the south.

"Our Christmas dinner was not a luxurious one. We had some coarse hard biscuit alive with weevils, and some very dark brown sugar, more dark than brown, the sole remainder of our ship's stores. Our cook did the best he could with his scanty, dirty materials. The biscuit was broken up into shreds and cleansed from its unpleasant live stock, thoroughly soaked in boiling water, the black sugar mixed up with it and dished up for the table.

"That was all—well, it was that or nothing. It satisfied our hunger and we were thankful. But it was not pleasant to squat on the deck afterwards and see in the dim distance to the southeast the blue smoke hanging over Nelson, where the goose had been roasted, the pudding boiled, the mince pies baked, for the happy groups gathered round the family tables. I tried to preach to myself a sermon from a favourite text of mine: Hebrew X, 36: "Ye have need of patience."

We in the Marlborough district have a high regard for Mr Ironside's work during the time he was in Nelson from 1848-55. Following the trouble in 1843 our district was a

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"No man's land" for five years. No one wanted to live there as it had such gruesome memories. It was not until 1848 that the Governor, Sir George Grey, bought the district legally. Surveys commenced again and the land was gradually taken up.

One of the first settlers to move down from Nelson was a Methodist local preacher, Mr William Robinson. This is what Mr Ironside has to say about him:— "William Robinson, who migrated from Waimea, Nelson, to the Wairau in the very early days, before townships were formed, and at whose cattle farm I found a hospitable home on my visits to the Maoris in the neighbourhood," etc.

During one of these visits in 1853 Mr Ironside was thrown off his horse and broke his leg. He was laid up at "Rose Tree Cottage," the Robinsons' home, for six weeks, and on leaving he presented Mrs Robinson with a suitably inscribed hymn book. That hymn book is a very valued possession in a certain home to this day.

It was at the Robinsons' home, "Rose Tree Cottage," on October 3, 1850, that Mr Ironside held the first service for the newly arrived settlers on the Wairau Plain, before the towns of Blenheim and Picton had come into existence. Two years ago, in 1950, a service was held on the site of "Rose Tree Cottage" to commemorate the centenary of that event, and at the same time a tablet was unveiled in our Rapaura Church nearby to honour Mr William Robinson, our first local preacher.

During Mr Ironside's seven years in Nelson his heart was still at Ngakuta and with the few Maoris left behind in the district, as this ex-tract shows:—

"On my appointment to Nelson I sought out the remnant who had been left behind. I visited them as I had opportunity—sometimes on horse-back, through the Waimea—the Black scrub and down the Wairau Valley— sometimes across the hills and down the Pelorus Valley—and sometimes by chance ships visiting the Sound. The claims of the Nelson circuit prevented me giving them all the attention I wished, but when I left Nelson in 1855 there were 200 in regular fellowship with us."

The new cathedral that is being built in Nelson is taking the place of an easier one opened on December 14, 1851, during the time Mr Ironside was stationed in Nelson. This is what Mr Ironside has to say, and I think it is a little sidelight on him-self as well:—

"When Christchurch, beautifully situated on the little hill in the centre of the city, was ready for dedication, the good, hardworking, noble Bishop Selwyn came for the purpose. There was a great crowd of worshippers. As was usual in those days, other churches sent their peoples to swell the numbers. Our church was closed for the occasion. As the Bishop was eloquently referring to the difficulties and dangers of Nelson's early years, and the melancholy fate of some of its best

men at the Wairau eight years before, I found myself taken aback at the pointed references to myself, and the services I was enabled to render on that disastrous occasion. He was, thought, unusually complimentary, I felt the blushes tingling my cheeks, and wished to hide myself from the gaze of my fellow worshippers. I suppose it was right that public reference should be made to it, but I would much rather have been away when it was done."

I said earlier that Mr Ironside was very happy while he was stationed in Nelson. When in April, 1855, he was transferred to New Plymouth the Nelson people proved by their actions that they were sorry he was leaving the newspaper of the day reports the farewell at great length, but one paragraph puts the matter in a nutshell. It is this :—

"As a suitable Testimonial cannot be purchased in Nelson, it is the wish of the subscribers, that you should, with this purse, containing 75 sovereigns, procure as early as possible a Piece of Plate bearing the following inscription :—

**'Presented to the Rev. Samuel Ironside,  
Wesleyan Minister, by  
his friends and wellwishers,  
on the occasion of his leaving the  
Province of Nelson, New Zealand,  
in testimony of their great respect for his high character, Christian  
philanthropy and eminent usefulness, during his residence among them.'"**

Mr Ironside spent those 75 sovereigns as requested, because this paragraph appeared in the paper 13 months later: "We have been requested to state that the silver Tea Service subscribed for as a Testimonial to the above-named gentleman upon the occasion of his removal from this settlement about twelve months since, has arrived in the Inchinnan and until the departure of that vessel for Taranaki may be viewed at the store of Messrs Moore and Company."

In conclusion I would like to say that for the purposes of this paper I have drawn on three sources of information: There are the actual reports sent to London by Mr Ironside while he was living at Ngakuta Bay. Then in old age, he wrote a very fine series of articles about his mission days in New Zealand. The other information is what I, living near the spot, have been able to gather over the years.

I hope I have been able to record something interesting about the rugged old Methodist pioneer, who laid the foundations of our Church life in the northern part of the South Island. We in Marlborough in particular owe a lot to him. For 15 years from 1840 to 1855 he was the one representative of our Church who ministered in our area, first as a missionary to the Maoris and later to the struggling settlers after white settlement began.

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Port Underwood from Ironside Ridge.  
Ngakuta Bay the site of the Mission Station is at bottom right.

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