

changing in the changing light, of pale greys, grey-green and white."

Perhaps when he named them, Captain James Cook saw, not only the knights riding on horseback with the poor knights of legend running alongside holding stirrups, but also the castles from which they had all emerged!

As well as the structure of these islands which gives them their very distinguished appearance, "one of the most striking features of their coastline is the many ranked and beautifully symmetrical zonation of intertidal communities. Bands of sessile shellfish and seaweeds run like white, red and brown ribbons around the shores, a striking expression of certain major factors operating throughout the whole littoral zone."

"They are islands of great biological interest". The seas around them are now an important marine reserve. "It is of paramount importance that the islands are guarded in their present category as a sanctuary sacrosanct".

My grateful thanks are extended to Dr Lucy Cranwell Smith, who, having read my original manuscript, offered constructive criticism and suggestions. She also gave of her very valuable time to copy for me three papers prepared by her and her colleague Dr Lucy B. Moore for Auckland Institute and Museum and the Royal Society.

As she knew that they would do, these papers have greatly enhanced my recollection.

As indicated by inverted commas I have used direct quotations from the Poor Knights paper.

Particularly appropriate are the descriptions of the general appearance of these islands, of the vertical cliffs, the lovely pale colours, and the wonderful intertidal zone. As I write that I can almost smell it, and find myself singing the Scottish song "The Road to the Isles" - "If you're thinkin' in your inner heart a braggart's in my step, you've never smelt the tangle (seaweeds) o' the isles".

These descriptions, scientifically accurate are as well poetically descriptive, and are their own finest tribute to the two Drs Lucy!

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## THE NAMING OF THE HEN AND CHICKENS AND THE POOR KNIGHTS

with a note on the Hon. Kitty Vane and her illustrious  
father Capt. Gilbert Mair, N.Z. Cross.

Katie Reynolds

As Lieutenant, later Captain, James Cook sailed round the coast of New Zealand, he named headlands, bays, islands and mountains, carefully recording details in his log. He had received his commission on 25 May 1768, taking command of barque Endeavour on the 28th at Deptford. After fitting, provisioning &c., and a delay because of adverse winds, Endeavour finally sailed from Plymouth Sound on 26 August.

In November 1769, sailing up Northland's East Coast he described Bream Bay, which they had named, he said, "from the success of our lines here". They had anchored and had caught "near one hundred fish, which the people call sea bream" - snapper. The North Head of the bay, "called Bream Head, is high land, and remarkable for several pointed rocks which stand in a range on top of it. I may also be known by some small islands which lie before it, called the Hen and Chickens, one of which is high and terminates in two peaks". (Cook)

On the 25th Endeavour sailed on, leaving Bream Bay at dawn. At noon they passed some small islands "to which I gave the name of the Poor Knights". He does not give a reason for this name. He mentions that they were three leagues distant (14.4 Km) and about 2 miles (3.12 Km) off the mainland shore. This means that they went inside the Poor Knights but that they were by no means close to them - about 9 miles (14.4 Km) in fact. They had only light airs at this time and progress was slow. Even under optimum conditions Endeavour could manage no more than 8 knots. As they slowly wafted along several Maori canoes (Ngatiwai) came off from the mainland and they traded. At last they got a helpful S. E. breeze, still light, and it was to be 3 p.m. on the 26th before they passed Cape Brett. Of this he wrote, "I gave it the name Cape Brett in honour of Sir Piercy", and continued. "At the distance of about a mile is a small high island or rock, which like several that have already been described, was perforated quite through, so as to appear like the arch of a bridge". Piercy Island. Thus did Cook, who had a good, often whimsical, sense of humour, create a geographical pun, no doubt thoroughly enjoyed by all his ships company.

Because he so often gave specific reasons for his geographical names, that very distinguished historian Professor J.C. Beaglehole wondered that in the case of the Poor Knights he did not do so. Beaglehole wrote, "This is one of Cook's unexplained names, and is rather baffling! A possible source is the Poor Knights of Windsor, the name by which the military knights of Windsor, who took a prominent and picturesque part in the Garter ceremonies were known. Banks, if not Cook would be familiar with that name".

The Military Knights of Windsor, who have residences in the castle and a small annual stipend, are the oldest military brotherhood in existence - Edward III 1349, and are the only military body in England entitled to wear the national badge of St. George. Beaglehole went on to mention the name of a dish, a pudding, traditionally known in parts of England and Europe as "Poor Knights". Its base was chunks of bread smothered in egg and then fried. French toast? Or even the old-fashioned bread and butter pudding - stale bread with butter and jam or fruit, with custard poured over it, to be baked in the oven. Surprisingly, Beaglehole went on to say "The islets in question are not much more than chunks of brown rock and clay!" Surely he could not have seen the Poor Knights for himself! Had he done so he would never have described them thus! He could not have failed to notice the splendid castellate form of the high - 100 metres and more - vertical rock faces and the beautiful pale colours - greys, greens and almost white of weathered lichen-covered rock. The soft colours are ever changing in the changing light. There is no clay! The Poor Knights are of volcanic origin, Rhyolite. Even from a distance - Cook's 3 leagues - the high vertical rock faces are discernible and remarkable. The islands are magical, splendid jewels set in restless seas of incredible blue. To compare them to the Poor

Knights of Windsor, standing proudly, old soldiers before their castle, sounds reasonable. To think that they resembled a chunky pudding seems less likely. And yet - in calm weather, which it was when Cook sailed by - the Knights are often swathed in mist. Quite often a long low cloud hovers above them. And, as it was dawn when Endeavour left Bream Bay, it would have been time for a mid-day meal when she approached the islands. They would be thinking of food.

However, there is another version. Some years ago the Hon. Kitty Vane told me that Captain Cook had named the Hen and Chickens for a Yorkshire folk name for the constellation Pleiades, the Seven Sisters. As Endeavour sailed by the appearance of these islands could well have suggested a hen with her chicks, stirring in the recollection of those on board, the old folk name.

The Poor Knights, Hon. Kitty Vane told me, were named for an old Yorkshire folk tale. In olden days, goes this legend, the noble knights rode horseback, while their poor relations of gentle birth the poor knights, ran alongside holding the stirrups. I have encountered a tale regarding this custom in an old English poem "Childe Walter".

The Hon. Kitty Vane, nee Kathleen Airini Mair, was the daughter of Captain Gilbert Mair, New Zealand Cross, and the widow of the Hon. Ralph Frederick Vane of the Durham Light Infantry. She was a personality in her own right, and a fine, very versatile artist. She spent much of her retirement on the Tutukaka-Matapouri coast. She was passionately fond of pohutukawa trees, and painted them often. "I'm a fool", she told me, "to love them so much!" In order to preserve a fine group of them she bought land at Matapouri and gave it as a reserve.

When the Goings of Tutukaka, at whose boarding house she used to stay, built a deep-sea fishing launch, they named it in her honour, Kitty Vane.

Later she built a home at Lang's Beach, Waipu and there she lived for the rest of her life. Wherever she was she always took a lively interest in the affairs of the community. Ever young at heart, she was known, as was her father before her, as a person of extraordinary generosity.

Her father, Captain Gilbert Mair, N.Z. Cross must rank as one of N.Z.'s most illustrious sons. He was born at his parents' home Deveron, in Whangarei, 1950 to Captain (sea) Gilbert Mair and his wife Elizabeth (nee Puckey). At this time they had left their trading/shipbuilding post at Te Wahapu, Bay of Islands, and had settled in Whangarei. Gilbert was the 8th of their 12 children. At the time of his birth, several Maori Chiefs visited the Mairs, bearing gifts and congratulatory messages. They honoured the infant by bestowing on him the name Tawatawhiti. Thereafter, to Maori and Pakeha alike he was known by this name, usually shortened to Tawa.

He was a fine soldier, a very brave man, and was possessed of many skills, including bushcraft and surveying. He and his older brother Major William Gilbert Mair, were known as compassionate, scrupulously just men, and were possessed of infinite patience. All members of this large family were completely bilingual, knowing intimately the Maori language and its idiom.

When Captain Gilbert Mair died, his beloved Arawas claimed his body, to be buried from their Rotorua Marae with full honours as their Rangatira.

I appreciate the Hon. Kitty Vane's source and explanations for Cook's

naming of the Hen and Chickens and the Poor Knights. Her grandfather Mair had settled in the Bay of Islands in 1825 and in 1827 had married the daughter of William Gilbert Puckey, carpenter/missionary. In the small settlements of the day there would still be talk of the great man Cook, with legends handed down to become almost family tradition. As the Hon. Kitty Vane spoke to me about these names I was aware that to her they were indeed Mair family "treasures".

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## THE WILDFLOWERS OF WAIKUMETE CEMETERY

A.E. Esler

Waikumete cemetery is 102 years old. When the expanding settlement of Auckland no longer had space to bury its dead near by, it acquired a 108 acre hill beside the railway at Glen Eden. The grave diggers' shovels were not the first to turn over this pale, grey clay that is sodden in winter and like concrete in summer. The surface was already pitted with holes left by the gum diggers. These gumlands were burnt frequently and grew stunted scrubland with manuka, ferns, sedges and orchids. Now the remaining manuka has overwhelmed the small plants, but some linger on in open places.

By 1970 the large numbers of garden plants established on the graves no longer needed to be tended because they had become naturalised. Many are African plants well accustomed to poor soils. They sprout from bulbs, corms and rhizomes, grow vigorously in winter, and blossom in spring into the greatest profusion of African plants growing together anywhere outside their homeland. As well as these, there are many from other countries adding to the splendour of Waikumete.

The bleakness of winter is brightened mainly by Mediterranean plants - first by the white, scented Narcissus tazetta and others of the same genus including the diminutive N. bulbicodium. This is also the time for snowflake (Leucojum aestivum), and for drifts of Allium triquetrum (onion weed to Aucklanders). The white Naples onion (A. neapolitanum) and the dainty pink A. roseum ssp. bulbiferum come later. All the while the African Oxalis purpurea spreads mats of pink-flowered plants in some places, and mauve in others.

Spring has arrived when the creamy Freesia refracta fills the air with its perfume. As it fades in September the similar-looking Sparaxis takes over. Watch for the rather ragged brown bracts beneath the flowers that helps to identify them. S. bulbifera, with flowers mostly whitish with streaks, has stamens on one side of the flower facing inwards. S. tricolor, with stamens around the style, has a yellow throat and a dark blotch above it, and is normally three coloured, as the name suggests.

By October the display is at its peak. There are still some Freesia and Sparaxis adding to the profusion of Watsonia flowers in white, cream and various pinks. They are mostly hybrids not clearly separable into