

## **Revisiting missionary lives**

Each of our panellists are looking at aspects of missionary histories, with an emphasis on revisiting and revising familiar narratives and themes in existing historiography. Each will share their work writing a biography of a missionary subject, their approaches – across gender, memory, and intellectual histories – and their engagement with both public and private archives, held by a range of communities, including churches, family, whānau, hapū, and iwi. Each speaker will reflect on the gaps, omissions, and myths that shape their practice, and the varied traces – material, oral, documentary – of missionary lives.

# Rereading Henry Williams in the World of Early Nineteenth Century English Dissent

Samuel Carpenter

The Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionary Henry Williams (known to Māori as Karuwhā or Te Wiremu) is conventionally portrayed as a stern Anglican clergyman and former naval lieutenant who ran the mission like a ‘quarter-deck’, so leading it to some success in New Zealand. He is sometimes also portrayed as intentionally fudging the words of the Treaty to convince Māori to sign (with motives allegedly benign or self-interested). This paper conducts a close reading of largely unknown Williams family archival material and political texts from early nineteenth century Britain to reframe our understanding of Williams as, instead, an Englishman of Welsh ancestry shaped by the religious and political cultures of early nineteenth century Dissent, or Nonconformity. His father belonged to a middling class of merchants and textile manufacturers involved in Nottingham Corporation politics, while Henry was raised by his parents in Independent (Congregational) chapels rather than in the Church of England. Although, as a missionary, Williams’ character and personality were marked by Royal Navy service, and his diplomacy was evident in the Treaty negotiations, we cannot understand this evangelical missionary without attending closely to his English formation, including his inheritance of Dissenting politics and its concomitant understandings of English constitutional history. Drawing on these multiple and overlapping texts and contexts we can make better sense of Henry Williams’ actual personality, his religious sensibility, and his characterisation of the Treaty-te Tiriti o Waitangi as a ‘Magna Carta’ – a Great Charter of Māori and (especially) chiefly ‘Rank, Rights and Privileges’.

Dr Samuel Carpenter is a Lecturer in History and Research Fellow at Laidlaw College (Te Wānanga Amorangi), Auckland. Sam’s research focusses on the intersections of Christianity and Māori society, and on New Zealand political and religious history more generally. He has specialist research interests in te Tiriti o Waitangi—the Treaty of Waitangi and nineteenth century New Zealand political history. He is also embarked on a larger project to locate New Zealand history in its wider British empire, Pacific and intellectual contexts. He has recently completed the manuscript of ‘Karuwhā – A Life of Henry Williams’ and has recently published ‘Reconciling the Treaty/te Tiriti Through the Discourse of Civil Government/Kāwanatanga’ in the JNZS. [scarpenter@laidlaw.ac.nz](mailto:scarpenter@laidlaw.ac.nz)

## **A ‘Mild’ Woman: Jane Kendall and the limits of mission and empire historiography**

Felicity Barnes

Jane Kendall was a member of the first mission in New Zealand. Early mission history has been the site of much historical interest; however Jane, like other women connected to the mission, has not been at the centre of that interest. To some extent this reflects the perennial problem of women’s invisibility in the historical record. Yet there may be other factors at play. This paper considers the ways in which current historiographical preoccupations, particularly around mission and imperial history, have tended to obscure her experiences. It then asks how we might better understand one woman’s life within the broader sweep of these histories

Dr Felicity Barnes is a Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Auckland. A cultural historian, much of her work has been interested in issues of settler colonial identity, with a particular focus on the twentieth century. Her current research reaches back in time, to explore the worlds of an early mission settlement. [f.barnes@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:f.barnes@auckland.ac.nz)

# Pomāparia: The return of Bishop Pompallier in the life and work of Pa Henare Tate

Rowan Light

In 2002, the bodily remains of Bishop Jean-Baptise François Pompallier, the first Catholic bishop to the islands of New Zealand, were laid to rest in Motutu, in Hokianga, Te Tai Tokerau / Northland. The interment marked the end of an extraordinary journey that crossed worlds: Europe and the Pacific, Catholic Christianity and Te Ao Māori, faith and whakapapa. Central to this kaupapa was Pa Henare Tate, the Māori Catholic priest who organised and led the hīkoi tapu (pilgrimage) to France. This presentation will explore how I am reconstructing the return of Pompallier through kōrero (oral history), diocesan archives, and the private papers of Pa Henare now held at the Raiatea Centre in Motutu. In doing so, I reflect on the central role of Pa in the making of a new public remembrance of Pompallier, and the way that Pomāparia shaped Pa's own life and work.

## Biography

Rowan Light is a Senior Lecturer at Waipapa Taumata Rau. This presentation is part of a long-term oral history project with the Motutu community, recording stories of the repatriation of Pompallier. He published a history of the remembrance of Pompallier in *Journal of Religious History* in 2024: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/1467-9809.13017>.  
[rowan.light@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:rowan.light@auckland.ac.nz)