

Before we get started today I think we better address the elephant in the room. If you are listening to this at time of release, that is April 2020, the world has kinda gone bananas with the COVID-19 virus pandemic causing all sorts of havoc across the globe. As some of you will be aware, I live in New Zealand and as of right now we have been in lockdown for a week and that will be the case for at least another three. I'm sure you have all been getting those silly emails from companies you interacted with once 10 years ago telling you how their combating the virus, god knows I have, so I don't want to harp on too much but the fact of the matter is this: HANZ will still continue through the lockdown to the best of my ability. At this stage I have enough content to get us through to about end of May, start of June however after that I'm still formulating what I will do should I not be able to access research materials, which is a very real possibility. Additionally this podcast like many out there is funded in large part by two groups, myself and our fantastic Patrons. Unfortunately my ability to pump as much funds into this project as I have in the past has reduced fairly significantly due to the current situation. This doesn't mean I'm going to be out on the streets or anything, as I said HANZ will still continue as much as I can make it and all for free, all I ask is that if you have considered in the past to donate by becoming a Patron or buying merch and you have the means to do so, now would be the time. Links to Patreon and our merch are in the show notes. To those of you who are Patrons or bought merch, thank you. At this critical stage of world history you are very much helping in keeping this project alive. I am working hard to try get you more Patron episodes to make that contribution more worthwhile. Anyway, that's enough real world crap, lets crack into it!

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand. Episode 36: I Got a Burning Feeling. This podcast is supported by our amazing Patrons, such as Vee and Sara. If you want to support HANZ go to [patreon.com/historyaotearoa](https://patreon.com/historyaotearoa). Last time we did a dramatic retelling of the story of Ponga and Puhihuia, what I dubbed the Māori Paris and Helen of Troy. Except it's way better cause Puhihuia was badass and beat the shit out of her mum's mates. This time, well this time I've done something a bit cheeky. As some of you may know, last year I did an episode on the Pax Britannica podcast on Barnet Burns, an English sailor and trader who came to Aotearoa and had a pretty interesting life! For the next few episodes I'll be covering his life as told mostly by himself and the odd other source here and there. I understand that some of you will have already heard this, you may have even found HANZ through Pax Britannica due to that episode, which is awesome, thanks for joining us on this adventure! However, you may be thinking that you want to skip these episodes cause you have already heard the info in them and alright, fair enough but I will add that although I have used pretty much all the same audio, this is HANZ, not Pax Britannica meaning I've added some bits that I left out of that episode that I deemed either to be too much detail or too gruesome. In particular, the part where Burns goes into a fair amount of detail on the cannibalism he witnessed. So my advice would be to not skip these too hastily. As I just said, I have used a lot of the same audio so please excuse any slight difference in style as this was built for a slightly different audience. Hopefully though you enjoy this tale that incorporates nearly everything we have learned thus far about pre-European Māori culture.

Barnet Burns was born in around 1805, potentially in Liverpool. We don't really know what he was doing for his early years up until the age of 13 or 14 where he joined the crew of a trading ship and took to the seas. He spent some time doing that in and around Jamaica specifically until the ship returned to England and he was put into a Lancastrian school in London, which is basically a school practicing a specific method of education that we don't really care too much about. Again we lose sight of him for a bit, presumably cause all he was doing was getting the cane across his knuckles but

in 1827, when he is probably about 20 years old, he pops back up again sailing on the *Wilna* to Rio de Janeiro in modern Brazil.

This is probably a good time to explain that most of the information going forward is from Burns' own book, which starts with the *Wilna*. He actually wrote about his time here in New Zealand and it's pretty much the only source we have on him while he was here. So naturally we need to take a lot of it with a grain of salt as it can't really be corroborated with any other sources or evidence. It's all we got though so let's press on! It's not clear how long the *Wilna* and her crew intended to stay in Rio but Burns says there was a dispute between the captain and crew, what this was though, Burns doesn't remember, saying it was "something of very little consequence". The end result was certainly more consequential as the entire crew was released of service, including Burns himself. Thankfully for him though, Burns must have stayed somewhat out of the dispute and perhaps even distinguished himself at sea as he received a recommendation of good character from the captain, who also even put in a good word for him with another merchant. So clearly Burns had impressed the captain enough for him to go out of his way to help him. This merchant then eventually led Burns to becoming the steward on the *Nimrod*, which was bound for Sydney, Australia. It's interesting to note that Sydney is spelt S I D N E Y for some reason.

Once in Sydney, Burns must have been pretty sick of the seaman's life as he told the captain he wanted to remain in town for a bit. As such, he was discharged from service once again and given a recommendation of a merchant he should go see about getting work in town. Like back in Rio, this merchant didn't give him a job but it did lead him to getting employment at the Bank of Australia. These sort of repetitions appear a few times in Burns' book, especially in regards to numbers of people, which leads me to wonder how accurate his recount is. He was writing this book potentially a few years later, with the first copy appearing in 1835, so perhaps he just forgot or misremembered until some of the events blended together rather than it being a malicious attempt to distort the truth. Again, without any other sources to compare, it's hard to tell and we more or less have to take him at his word. Anyway, at the bank he was... uh... actually, he doesn't say which is kind of annoying! What we do know is that he stayed there for two years before being "persuaded by some old shipmates" to join them on a trip to the nearby land of New Zealand. Burns must have thought quite highly of his employer at the bank, a man by the name of W.H. M'Kensie, Esq. as Burns calls him because he writes that when M'Kensie was told that Burns wanted to resign to go back to a life at sea and onto New Zealand, M'Kensie, "behaved to me not only as a master, but acted in every way as my friend,". What that meant in reality, Burns doesn't say but this relationship obviously didn't sour over time as M'Kensie and Burns would cross paths again.

For now though, Burns jumped on the merchant ship *Elizabeth* and sailed for Aotearoa across the Tasman Sea to trade for harakeke, New Zealand flax. Flax of the New Zealand variety was an important material for Europeans in the area around this time and was of course even more important to Māori ever since their arrival in the mid-13th century. Both cultures used it for clothes and rope, the latter being of greater interest to Europeans in their sailing ships, among a variety of other things. The problem was that it was difficult to obtain harakeke in the form that allowed it to be weaved into useful items, it was a long and quite involved process that Māori had become very good at and of course in the natural European fashion, they had tried to replicate and shortcut this process for mass production. They would eventually somewhat succeed in this in 30 years time but for now the only way to get good muka, the end product of flax that could be woven, was to trade with Māori which naturally came with its own challenges. Burns seems to have thrived in this environment during the eight months he stayed though. He even overcame one of the major

hurdles in trading with Māori, the language barrier, as he “had an opportunity of acquiring the New Zealand language as fluently nearly as my own”.

Burns doesn't go into too much more detail on this period of his life other than the fact he gained a huge love of Aotearoa. So much so, in fact, that as soon as he returned to Sydney (now spelt correctly by the way) he would “procure a berth, if possible, as trading master for any merchant from whom I could get employment, either to return, or settle ashore, and trade on any of the islands, or stop on board of a ship.” So basically his options were to either just go on a brief trading stint, like he had just done but his preferred option was to settle down, set up a trading station and live in New Zealand, probably somewhat indefinitely. Clearly, for whatever reason, he really fell in love with this land, something you can see come up a few times in his book. Getting the trading station he wanted though wasn't a small ask, he would have to be trusted by his employer to act on his own independently, trading with Māori and keeping good relations with them without seeing anyone under his boss' employ or perhaps even seeing another Englishman or European for months. To get what he desired, Burns went back to his friend and former boss, M'Kenzie, which was previously spelt with an S but is now spelt with a Z. M'Kenzie gave Burns a name, Montifore who was a merchant looking to establish some trading stations in New Zealand for harakeke flax and of course he needed some people to run those stations. There was a catch though, Montifore didn't just want any Joe Convict off the Sydney streets to do this delicate work which required charisma, diplomacy, business sense and the ability to keep calm under the pressure of death when any possible help was thousands of miles and months away. Burns had already likely proven he had all these skills, working on various merchant vessels, ingratiating himself with the captains and working in a bank, however the most important thing Montifore was looking for was people who spoke Te Reo, the Māori language. And as we have talked about, Burns just so happened to have spent eight months in country learning that very language. As such, he managed to get a berth on Montifore's ship as a trading master, once again bound for Aotearoa.

Burns arrived back in New Zealand in February of 1831 at the age of 26, he was to be the sole trader for his employer in Mahia, a little out cropping of land at the northern end of Hawkes Bay on the North Island's east coast. Burns signed a contract with Montifore, which I found kinda interesting so I'm going to state it here in full, “It is hereby agreed between L. Baron Montifore, Esq., and Barnet Burns that the said Barnet Burns shall proceed in the schooner Darling, now about to sail to the port of Mahia in New Zealand, there and then to commence trading with the natives for flax and such trade as may be shipped under his charge per said vessel and in fact, to act as the sole and entire agent of the said L. Baron Montifore, at the aforesaid port of Mahia, or at any other port or place to which he may hereafter be directed to proceed. It is also understood that the said Barnet Burns is to be totally unconnected with any other establishment at New Zealand, or elsewhere: that of such trade as may be from time to time forwarded to him, he is to render a just and true account; and that he is in every way to use his utmost exertions to promote the interest of his employer. In consideration of which services, the said Baron Montifore hereby agrees to pay the said Barnet Burns the sum of 4 pound per month to commence on the date of his sailing from Sydney, together with a commission of 5 pound per cent on all flax to be valued 12 pound per ton weight. Should it be desired by the said Barnet Burns to relinquish the service of his above named employer, it is understood that the said L. Baron Montifore is to have sufficient notice of such intention to enable him to send a person down to take possession of whatever trade or flax might be on hand. It is also expected that at such places as the said Barnet Burns may remain for any length of time, he will make use of every conciliatory means in his power towards effecting a permanent and friendly intercourse with the natives and that he shall obey the instructions which may be from time to time forwarded to him by the said L. Baron Montifore.” In case you zoned out there are bit, his contract

stated all the usual things around conflicts of interest and notice of resignation along with that he should forward the interests of his employer by “effecting a permanent and friendly intercourse with the natives.” As you are likely aware, Europeans did not hold Māori or any indigenous peoples for that matter in high regard during this time given the language used when discussing them. Burns was to be paid 4 pounds a month, which is probably around 600-700 dollars in 2019 Kiwi money. He would also be paid a 5 pound commission on all flax valued at 12 pound per ton, so probably a few thousand in today money. Given that the ship had sailed from Australia, which was west of New Zealand, the ship needed to go through Cook Strait between the North and South Island to get to the east coast where Burns would be left. Along the way they dropped off other trading masters and built their houses for them, even trading with Māori a little bit too and perhaps a witness to some violent conflict. This may have been in “Taranackia” which is likely modern day Taranaki where he was told by local European settlers that they were on good terms with local iwi, tribes, but that neighbouring iwi had been posturing and they expected to come to blows soon. This was something that was not uncommon during the time and even before Europeans arrived after Captain Cook’s rediscovery of the islands about 60 years prior. They also stopped for provisions at what he calls Entry Island, modern Kapiti Island. Although it took them two weeks to cross the Tasman, Burns only reached Mahia after four months of travel from leaving Sydney. Which, by the way, was now consistently spelt correctly.

Burns actually describes how he felt upon his arrival which I think really illustrates what we have already discussed, “I arrived at my destination, Mahia, where I landed without a house being ready, a complete stranger, not a white man to be seen, not one residing within a hundred miles of me.” For all his experience and adventure so far, the mid-20s Barnet Burns was probably to be the most scared he had ever been in his life. This was made worse as the ship that brought him only stayed a couple of days and didn’t bother building him a house like it had for the other trading masters. Again, why this happened, he doesn’t mention. Instead, he had to take his trading goods to land via waka, canoe and leave in the local rangatira’s house. Rangatira being Te Reo for chief or noble. It’s at this point that Burns adds some more to his earlier thought of loneliness, “So here I was amongst a set of cannibals, trust wholly and solely to their mercy, not knowing the moment when they might take my trade from me, and not only my trade, but my life... The chief, whom I had particularly selected to trade with, left me; so I had the whole charge on my own hands. I was obliged to carry my musket and constantly sleep with it by my side; in fact I had to keep watch all the time. Then, for the first time since I took my fancy to visit New Zealand, I felt frightened at my situation; I knew I was not sure of my life an hour.” In short, Burns was in an unfamiliar land with unfamiliar people and constantly feared for his life. Māori at this time had the power, they controlled trade and had the military strength to back it up. If the rangatira wanted Burns dead, it would likely be done.

Thankfully for Burns though, he managed to gain the trust and protection of the rangatira called Awahi, who belonged to the Ngāti Kahungunu tribe. After Burns was settled in Awahi left to get flax to trade him for the goods he brought, stuff like blankets, tobacco, iron tools, wool, leather, oil and rum. Burns brought three more trade goods with him that were likely the thing that Awahi was most interested in, muskets and the shot and gunpowder to use them. To give you a brief summary of why he likely would have wanted those most, during this period the Musket Wars were raging. There were a series of intertribal conflicts sparked by the arms race instigated by European trading of gunpowder weapons to Māori. Iwi who possessed muskets had an inherent advantage over those that didn’t, who would have the weapons that had been used in Aotearoa for centuries. Weapons like taiaha, patu and tewhatewha, spears, clubs and a type of axe thingy which were all close range weapons in the style of warfare Māori were used to. So long range muskets gave a significant advantage or at least brought you up to par with your enemies. Anyway, back to Burns whose

trading of these items to Awahi and Ngāti Kahungunu apparently pleased all of them greatly, getting him off to a good start in establishing that “friendly intercourse”. It soon led to some intercourse of the other variety as Burns married Awahi’s daughter, Amotawa, eventually having three children with her throughout his time in Aotearoa.

This state of affairs of Burns trading various goods to the locals for flax continued for 11 months, not hearing anything from Montifore until a ship was sent to collect his flax. Montifore had sent a man by the name of Mr Sims with a letter that read, “Mr Burns, Sir-I have authorised Mr Sims to make such arrangements with you, relative to your stay, removal, or otherwise, at New Zealand, as he may deem most proper. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, L. Baron Montifore,”. So Sims was to assess Burns’ progress and decide if he should remain. Clearly Sims was not impressed with what he saw as he elected to shut down the station. Burns gave up his flax without pay and he was pretty pissed about it, as were the local iwi at the realisation that the flow of various European goods would cease. According to Burns they were so fucked off they were ready to fight the ships crew to get the flax back along with anything else they had. In fact, one person had tried to steal a cask of gunpowder from the ship but was caught and severely punished by his peers “according to their laws and habits”. At some point Burns’ wife was held captive on the ship, perhaps due to these tensions. And remember she was the rangatira or chiefs daughter so it was within the iwi’s interest not to be to brazen. Eventually all parties agreed that Burns would be paid in trade goods for his confiscated flax and that his wife would be released. It was at this point that Burns had a choice to make. Since he was relieved of service he could choose to get on the ship and return to Sydney, which Mr Sims was bound by his employer to facilitate, or he could remain in New Zealand with the people he had developed bonds with. Once again, Burns himself quite nicely captures his feelings in his book, “Words cannot express in what state my feelings were: suffice to say, it would have been better if I had been dead. The ship which contained all my friends and countrymen, leaving me at one side, and on the other, my wife, who would not quit her native country; and as she was on the point of lying-in, I could not bring myself to leave the country with the ship”. Burns was clearly torn between those he saw as his own going back to the familiar and staying in the strange land he had grown to love with his wife, though whether this was because he cared deeply for her or out of obligation, it isn’t clear. Whatever the case may be, all Burns could do was watch as the ship sailed out of Hawkes Bay and he was left at the edge of world, a European in a Māori society with an uncertain future.

Next time, we continue with Barnet Burns’ life in Aotearoa now faced with the prospect of having to remain here indefinitely. What will he do and how will he cope being in a world drastically different to his own? Not the world of kings, honour and Jesus but the world of rangatira, mana and Tānemahuta. Find out on the next exciting episode of HANZ!

If you want to send me feedback, ask a question, suggest a topic or just have a chinwag you can reach me through email at [historyaotearoa@gmail.com](mailto:historyaotearoa@gmail.com) or Twitter at History Aotearoa or Facebook at History Aotearoa New Zealand Podcast. This podcast is a one man band, if you enjoy listening to me talk history, you can support us through Patreon, buy merch from [historyaotearoa.com](http://historyaotearoa.com) or rate us on iTunes or your preferred podcast platform, it means a lot and helps us grow, spreading the story of Aotearoa New Zealand. As always, haere tu atu, hoki tu mai. See you next time!