

THE IRON PRIEST:  
WILLIAM WELLINGTON WILLOCK  
AND THE VISION OF ANGLICAN CANTERBURY

Ged Martin  
National University of Ireland, Galway

Jim McAloon  
Victoria University of Wellington

*December 2014*

**Downloaded from Project Canterbury**  
**<http://anglicanhistory.org>**

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

Preface	3
Introduction	4
The English Background	4
First Four Ships	10
Kaiapoi	17
'Organised Jumpers': The Anglican Church in Canterbury	24
Last Years	37
Conclusions	39

## PREFACE

This study began when Ged Martin, a retired academic in Ireland, discovered by chance that William Wellington Willock was a graduate of Magdalene College Cambridge and one of the first colonists in Canterbury. Despite a distinguished academic record and the fact that he was a cousin of British prime minister, Sir Robert Peel, this splendidly named personality seemed forgotten in both places. An initial reconstruction of his career was undertaken as an exploration of the National Library of New Zealand's on-line newspaper archive, Papers Past. This excellent website is not only easily searchable, but also enables users to download digitised text, so quickly making possible the accumulation of material outlining the public side of Willock's life in New Zealand.

Jim McAloon, of Victoria University Wellington, agreed to join the project to place Willock's activities in wider context. Jim McAloon has published widely in New Zealand history, and has particular interests in the formation of elites in the South Island, and in the history of the Anglican Church in New Zealand.

The authors have been fortunate to make contact with Patrick Willock, of Gisborne in New Zealand's North Island, who confirmed within twenty minutes of receiving an enquiring e-mail from Ireland that he was indeed W.W. Willock's great-great-grandson, and keen to help the project. We express warm appreciation to Patrick Willock for sharing family information, and to him and his wife Margot for their encouragement and hospitality. Thanks are also owed to Jean Turvey of the Kaiapoi District Historical Society and to Dr Ronald Hyam, Archivist of Magdalene College Cambridge.

Unfortunately, no portrait or photograph of William Wellington Willock is known to survive. However, we hope that an impression of his strong personality will emerge in the pages that follow.

## INTRODUCTION

Although he was a Canterbury pioneer who arrived on the First Four Ships and lived in the province for over thirty years, William Wellington Willock is not well remembered. At first sight this may seem odd, for he was both an Anglican clergyman and a landowner, and thus would seem central to the original purpose of the Canterbury project. Moreover, Willock was a relative of British prime minister Sir Robert Peel and was involved in the development of education in Canterbury, which ought to place him at a crossroads of political and social influence in the formative decades of colonisation. Willock's eclipse might be partly explained by his personality; he seems to have been taciturn and occasionally prickly. Perhaps a better explanation is that, although he was a conscientious pastor, his parish ministry was largely confined to the town of Kaiapoi, north of Christchurch, rather than one of the more prestigious urban parishes. His relationship with H.J.C. Harper, bishop from 1856, does not seem to have been close. Willock's strengths lay in unglamorous but essential dimensions of ecclesiastical administration, and as we shall see he was involved in breaking a scandal involving the diocesan finances. More generally, though, Willock's career was emblematic of the inevitable failure of the original vision of Canterbury as a province anchored on the Church of England in which its clergy would play a respected leadership role.

## THE ENGLISH BACKGROUND

William Wellington Willock was born on 18 June 1815, the day of the battle of Waterloo, which explains his resplendent name.<sup>1</sup> His family background was in the expanding commercial and manufacturing middle class. His grandfather, Borlase Willock, was the son of a Liverpool merchant, but the family may have been from Scotland, for Borlase Willock graduated from Glasgow University in 1781 before taking orders in the Church of England and entering Cambridge in 1787 as a mature student.<sup>2</sup> He was sufficiently notable in the family tradition for William Wellington Willock to name his only son 'Borlase', but his major contribution to the Willock story was to marry Anne Peel, daughter of a wealthy Lancashire cotton manufacturer. Indeed, Anne is said to have played a vital part in establishing the family fortunes by selecting a textile pattern, based on parsley, which proved to be a market winner and gave her father his nickname of Parsley Peel. Parsley Peel ploughed his profits into buying a block of land in Staffordshire, which included the country estate of Drayton

---

<sup>1</sup> Biographical information from G.R. Macdonald, 'Dictionary of Canterbury Biographies' (copy kindly supplied by the Canterbury Museum which holds this important manuscript source) [cited as DCantB], from Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis* (Willock searched via <http://venn.csi.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/search>), a concise dictionary of students at the University of Cambridge [cited as Venn] and from Alfred Cox, ed., *Men of Mark in New Zealand*, Christchurch, 1886, pp. 231-32. Another William Willock worked as a missionary in Antigua, and this may explain why Willock was so often referred to by his full name. Patrick Willock of Gisborne, whose help is gratefully acknowledged, has letters indicating that he was known as 'Wellington' within the family.

<sup>2</sup> Venn: Borlase Willock. W.E. Gladstone's father is an example of a Scottish merchant who settled in Liverpool: S.G. Checkland, *The Gladstones: A Family Biography 1764-1851*, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 10-21. Borlase Willock entered Cambridge as a "Ten Year Man", an arrangement that allowed clergy to acquire a divinity degree without having to spend much time in the University. D.A. Winstanley, *Early Victorian Cambridge*. Cambridge, 1955, pp. 153-54.

Manor, the manufacturing town of Tamworth and adjacent factory villages such as Fazeley. As Tamworth was a parliamentary borough, his son was able to embark on a political career, since the Peels in effect owned not only the borough but also the voters. In 1800, to secure his support, the prime minister William Pitt conferred the hereditary honour of a baronetcy upon the MP for Tamworth, who became the first Sir Robert Peel. His son, the second baronet, is regarded as the founder of the modern Conservative party, through his "Tamworth Manifesto" of 1834, and served as prime minister in 1834-35 and again from 1841 to 1846.<sup>3</sup>

Thus William Wellington Willock was a first cousin once removed of the prime minister: his grandmother, Anne Peel Willock, was the second Sir Robert Peel's aunt. In the prime minister's generation, the families were close. William Willock, Anne's younger son, reinforced the connection by marrying a distant relative, Elizabeth Peel of Penzance in Cornwall.<sup>4</sup> William the elder too became a textile manufacturer, and in 1819-20 was in partnership as a cotton spinner with two more relatives in Fazeley, at the gates of the Drayton Manor estate.<sup>5</sup> However, William Willock apparently relocated to Leeds soon after, for William Wellington Willock entered Leeds Grammar School in January 1829.<sup>6</sup> It is unlikely that William Wellington Willock knew his celebrated kinsman at all well: Sir Robert Peel was 27 years older and famously unapproachable. Peel retained massive amounts of his correspondence, but there are no letters from William Wellington Willock in the Peel Papers at the British Library. The relationship with Peel was certainly of no benefit to Willock's clerical career, and may even have been a handicap. Peel had been criticised in 1828 for appointing a cousin as postmaster of Manchester, even though it was charitably assumed that Robert Peel Willock shared his kinsman's administrative talents.<sup>7</sup> After the 1832 Reform Act, many politicians were careful to avoid even the appearance of favouring relatives. During his brief first term as prime minister, Sir Robert Peel established the Ecclesiastical Commission, a body that enabled the Church of England to reform itself, in an attempt to head off political intervention by its foes.<sup>8</sup> Thus during Peel's second term, 1841-46, while William Wellington Willock was still a young clergyman learning his trade, there was little prospect of government influence to help him secure preferment. An admiring journalist wrote soon after Peel's death in 1850 that 'perhaps there was never was a minister in this or any other country, at least in our time, who was so careful to avoid the charge of nepotism.' Indeed, the same writer reported that 'not a few of his relatives thought him needlessly patriotic and self-denying', even accusing him of being 'cold-hearted.'<sup>9</sup> It may be that William Wellington Willock was one of those, and these considerations may help to explain why he emigrated.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Norman Gash, *Mr Secretary Peel*, London, 1961, pp. 15-32.

<sup>4</sup> Gash, *Mr Secretary Peel*, pp. 34, 628; *Hogg's Instructor* (1852), p. 93 (via Google Books).

<sup>5</sup> *The Times* (London), 8 November 1819, 28 November 1820. The partners were J. Peel and C. Harding: William Willock's sister had married a Harding.

<sup>6</sup> *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, vol. 14, Leeds, 1906, p. 30 (via Google Books). Both this source and the Magdalene College Cambridge Admissions Register make clear that Willock's father resided in Leeds.

<sup>7</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 25 October 1828; *The Times*, 30 October 1828. R.P. Willock was godson of the first Sir Robert Peel and William Wellington Willock's uncle.

<sup>8</sup> Norman Gash, *Sir Robert Peel*, London, 1972, pp. 103-4.

<sup>9</sup> *Hogg's Instructor* (1852), p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> Willock was not alone in leaving the country. Another kinsman, Thomas Peel, was a founder of Western Australia in 1830.

G.R. Macdonald believed William Wellington Willock attended school at Hawkshead in Lancashire before entering Leeds Grammar School.<sup>11</sup> Since he was thirteen when he started at Leeds, he could only have spent a few childhood years at Hawkshead, which is part of the English Lake District: the admissions register of his Cambridge college confirms that the family were resident in Leeds in 1834, and presumably earlier since Leeds Grammar was primarily a day school. One of the mysteries about Willock's life is the fact that he went to Canterbury with the intention of farming, and it is unlikely that he would have committed himself to such a venture in a strange environment without some previous experience of agriculture. But his teens and his early adult years were spent in urban environments, so it is hard to see where he learned how to milk a cow.

The fact that Willock was sent to Leeds Grammar rather than to one of England's public schools — Sir Robert Peel, for instance, had been gentrified at Harrow — might suggest that his father's business was not especially successful, an impression reinforced by the fact that he had moved from cotton-spinning in the Midlands to the woollen textile capital of Yorkshire. Alternatively, the elder Willock may have been more secure in his northern middle class world and have seen little need for public schools. In any case, Leeds was a strong school academically (something which could not be said of most contemporary boarding schools) and it was also one of three North of England grammar schools which could compete for reserved awards, the Milner Scholarships, at Magdalene College Cambridge. Willock won a Milner Scholarship and matriculated at Cambridge in the autumn term of 1834.

Willock studied for Cambridge's most prestigious Honours degree, in mathematics. First Class graduates in mathematics were known as 'Wranglers' and successful candidates were ranked in order of achievement. At the close of the ten-term course, in 1838, Willock emerged as 44<sup>th</sup> Wrangler, a First Class Honours performance if some way from topping his year.<sup>12</sup> Magdalene elected him to 'the vacant Dennis Fellowship' on 13 March 1838. It was a minor Fellowship that carried only a notional stipend, but Willock remained formally a Fellow of Magdalene College until his death in 1882.<sup>13</sup> However, he did not stay long in Cambridge after graduation. On 1 November 1838, he was ordained as a priest of the Church

---

<sup>11</sup> DCantB.

<sup>12</sup> Presumably he worked hard at his studies: he is not recorded as a member of the College Boat Club, although he probably enjoyed rowing as a spectator sport. He rowed on the Atlantic when a passenger on the *Randolph*. When he was appointed as a judge at the Kaiapoi regatta in 1871, he is said to have protested that he had not watched a rowing race in thirty years. DCantB.

<sup>13</sup> Magdalene College Cambridge Admissions Register, 13 March 1838, copied kindly supplied by Dr Ronald Hyam. The two Dennis Fellowships originated in a bequest to Sheen Priory in Middlesex in 1511 by Hugh Dennis, Groom of the Stool (i.e. keeper of the king's privy). In 1543, following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the endowment was transferred to Magdalene College Cambridge, along with various obligations to pray for the souls of Henry VII and the Dennis family. In 1866, Willock told the Canterbury Synod that he 'objected to funds collected for one object being applied to another. At the offertory, contributions were given by the congregation for certain purposes, in the sight of God, and it was almost an act of sacrilege - to devote them to any object foreign to the intention of the donors.' Evidently this did not apply to the Dennis Fellowships. The stipend, derived from a rent-charge on a farm in Essex, was £6-13-4 a year, by the nineteenth century a token sum. The Dennis Fellowships were abolished in 1860, but not Willock's nominal status as a Fellow of Magdalene. P. Cunich et al., *A History of Magdalene College Cambridge 1428-1988*, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 43-44; *Timaru Herald*, 1 December 1866 (unless otherwise noted, New Zealand newspapers consulted via PapersPast).

of England in Ely Cathedral.<sup>14</sup> The next twelve years of his life are not entirely clear, but enough information can be disinterred to suggest that he might have concluded that his career was going nowhere in England.

In the late eighteenth century, Magdalene had been a hotbed of evangelical Protestantism, strongly reinforced by its connections to Yorkshire. Several of its students had become missionaries, most notably Samuel Marsden, the first clergyman to preach in New Zealand in 1814.<sup>15</sup> Willock may not have known of his notable predecessor, but he definitely did not share his brand of Christianity. An obituary in 1882 noted that when he arrived in Canterbury in 1850, Willock had been 'considered perhaps the most advanced high churchman in the district.'<sup>16</sup> Evidently Willock was inspired by the revival of liturgical ritual encouraged by the 'Tractarian' Oxford Movement that had begun in 1833. If, as seems likely, his enthusiasm for ritual developed while he was an undergraduate — for Anglican clergy seem to have chosen their factional allegiances before ordination — then Willock would have been a very early convert to a form of churchmanship that was slow to catch on in Cambridge, where attitudes to religion were far more rationalistic than at the rival university of Oxford.<sup>17</sup> Willock's High Church sympathies may have influenced his decision to join the Canterbury Association's settlement; the Association's founder, John Robert Godley, was of a similar religious disposition.

Venn's list of Cambridge alumni, apparently quoting from contemporary Clergy Lists, places him as curate of Ware, Hertfordshire from 1841 to 1844,<sup>18</sup> then as curate of St Philip's, Stepney in the East End of London in 1845 and finally at St Andrew's, Ancoats, Manchester, from 1847 to 1850, where his title was "perpetual curate". But an intriguing piece of additional information turns up in the unlikely source of a late-Victorian local history of south-east Essex. The writer, a farmer called Philip Benton, was an enthusiastic but haphazard chronicler who supplied a list of curates for the small town of Rayleigh, which included:

W. Wellington Willock, a relative of the late Sir Robert Peel. He was M.A. and fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and at one time Curate to Dr Hook, of Leeds. He married and left to go to Christchurch, New Zealand, as a Minister under Bishop Selwyn.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> *Ecclesiastical Gazette, or Monthly Register of the Affairs of the Church of England ...*, I (1839), issue of 10 December 1839, p. 114.

<sup>15</sup> Ronald Hyam, 'Peter Peckard, "universal benevolence", and the abolition of the slave trade' in Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire*, Cambridge, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> *Star* (Christchurch), 1 June 1882. The *Star* added that 'though he probably never relaxed his opinions on matters of ritual, he lived to see them too commonly held by those around him to attract any attention.' Willock rarely relaxed his opinions.

<sup>17</sup> There seems to have been little organised support for ritualism in Cambridge before 1837. Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2 vols, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1971, I, pp. 212-13.

<sup>18</sup> Patrick Willock supplies the information that his appointment at Ware dates from December 1842, although this may represent a belated formalisation. It is noteworthy that Ware was the location of St Edmund's College, one of the most important Roman Catholic seminaries in England. At a time when ritualist clergy in the Church of England were suspected as a Romish fifth-column (and some, including John Henry Newman, went over to Rome), it must be assumed that Willock's attachment to the Anglican Church was firm, and regarded as sufficiently solid to permit his appointment to a potentially dangerous curacy.

<sup>19</sup> Philip Benton, *The History of Rochford Hundred*, II, Rochford, Essex, 1888, p. 765.

There is enough confirmed information here to give credibility to the additional detail. Walter Farquhar Hook, who became vicar of Leeds in 1837, has been described as 'with the tractarians, but was never of them.'<sup>20</sup> Independently of the Oxford Movement, he had come to believe in both the sanctity and the utility of dignified church services, and can best be described as a moderate ritualist. He was also a precursor of the later Anglican idea of a team ministry, seeking to cover Leeds with a network of new churches.<sup>21</sup> Even if Willock had not hailed from Leeds, Hook would have been an obvious mentor for a young Cambridge graduate attracted to ritualistic practice. Willock's later assignments in Stepney and Ancoats, both impoverished urban areas, would be consistent with the inspiration of Hook. So too would be his later acceptance of a State-administered school system in New Zealand, something that Hook controversially espoused as early as 1846 — although, in Willock's case, acquiescence in the impossibility of Church control was reluctant. It is no coincidence that Hook was a founder member of the Canterbury Association.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, Benton's evidence might have been based on a simple misunderstanding — Willock was a Leeds man who had been ordained just as Hook was beginning his notable ministry there — it would certainly explain what he was doing in the two years between his ordination at the end of 1838 and his appointment to a curacy at Ware in 1841. Unfortunately, it is less simple to work out precisely when Willock served at Rayleigh, since Benton's recollections were light on dates. But some points stand out. First, there was a high turnover among curates in the eighteen-forties: Benton lists seven between 1840 and 1846 (one of whom died). Willock, fifth in order, could well have been there around 1845-47 when there seems to be a gap in his formal employment record. Rayleigh was within fifteen miles of the Eastern Counties Railway, so it is even possible that Willock doubled up from his base at Stepney. A further suggestive shred of evidence is the fact that the rector of Rayleigh from 1843, William Twyne, was a graduate of Magdalene and a near contemporary.<sup>23</sup> Benton's claim that Willock's marriage led to him to emigrate might seem plausible, although family tradition indicates that Willock was initially rejected as a Canterbury colonist because he lacked a wife. Willock married Sarah Ann Beever, daughter of a Salford solicitor, on 12 August 1850, three weeks before they sailed for New Zealand. She died at Kaiapoi in 1862.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 27 (1891), p. 278.

<sup>21</sup> Desmond Bowen, *The Idea of the Victorian Church: A Study of the Church of England 1833-1889*, Montreal, 1988, p. 25 and see also the article on W.F. Hook in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

<sup>22</sup> C.E. Carrington, *John Robert Godley of Canterbury*, Christchurch, 1950, p. 227.

<sup>23</sup> Venn. Twyne appears to have been resident in Rayleigh. He came from a wealthy land-owning background (he had been a Fellow-Commoner at Cambridge, a privileged but expensive status). Low-lying areas of Essex were regarded as unhealthy, and Twyne may have employed curates for short periods so he could take holidays. However, while this decoding of Benton would seem to point to Willock's having spent time at Rayleigh in the middle of the eighteen-forties, the additional information that he had married and left for New Zealand suggest some continuing contact with the Essex community. The *Randolph*, which took the Willocks to New Zealand, sailed early in September 1850. It may be that, after leaving Manchester, Willock returned to Essex for a short time. As a cabin passenger, Willock probably needed all the cash he could muster, while Rayleigh was located in one of England's major corn-growing areas where an intending 'colonist,' he would benefit from observing farming methods.

<sup>24</sup> DCantB. Passenger lists for the *Randolph* suggest that they travelled with a young son, but the date of their marriage makes this impossible:  
<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nzbound/randolph.htm#Passengers>. Patrick Willock supplies the information that Willock and Sarah Ann Beever married on 12 August 1850. She was the daughter

Willock's experience of industrial England was probably important in persuading him to embrace the Canterbury idyll; like Godley, he may well have been attracted by the idea that emigration could alleviate urban poverty and disorder. Another young clergyman with experience of parish work in Stepney was Thomas Jackson. Jackson had been appointed head of the teacher training college at Battersea in 1844, but Battersea was not far from Stepney and it is possible that the two men overlapped briefly. Energetic and misleadingly persuasive, Jackson would briefly and disastrously be designated Canterbury's first bishop.

Stepney was a challenging environment, but Manchester was a cauldron. Willock was in Manchester by June 1846,<sup>25</sup> just as the city descended into an unemployment crisis caused by a trade depression and worsened by the influx of starving people from Ireland. 1847 would be a 'terrible' year.<sup>26</sup> Willock's organisational skills were much needed and quickly recognised. In April 1847 he chaired a meeting at the Town Hall of the Soup Charity which, with subscriptions of £630, was evidently a big operation. It was a laudable venture but it was characteristically Victorian in also functioning as a form of social control. Willock oversaw an extension of its operations into the distribution of bread, with subscribers empowered to select the recipients. 'Separate tickets for the bread are to be prepared, coloured yellow, with the word 'bread' upon them, and they are to be distributed to subscribers in the proportion of one bread-ticket to two soup-tickets.'<sup>27</sup> Social distress re-awakened radical politics. Ancoats, Willock's parish, was a Chartist stronghold.<sup>28</sup> Historians have generally concluded that Chartism in Manchester had ceased to be a revolutionary threat by 1848, and the attempted capture of a workhouse in Ancoats in March was a pale pastiche of Paris in 1789.<sup>29</sup> Willock was a strong personality — his nickname, the "Iron Priest", apparently dated from his Manchester days and partly referred to his middle name honouring the Iron Duke<sup>30</sup> — but it would hardly be surprising if, now in his mid-thirties, he wondered where his life was going. In addition to its social and political turbulence, Manchester also embodied a religious

---

of a solicitor in Manchester's twin town of Salford. William Borlase Willock was born in November 1853 and was a pupil at Christ's College in 1870. He was described at the time of his marriage in 1882 as 'only son of the late William Wellington Willock': *Star*, 14 October 1870; 30 November 1882. Two daughters (Mary Augusta and Charlotte Ellen) followed. Sarah died at Kaiapoi in 1862, apparently giving birth to a girl, Elizabeth, who did not survive. Sarah's marriage portion seems to have provided capital to purchase land in Canterbury. William Wellington Willock married a second time in 1863, to Sarah Ann Tipping, whose family had arrived from Dundalk in Ireland the previous year. Surviving information about the second Mrs Willock shows her in a predictably stereotyped gender role, organising a 'capital entertainment, consisting of tea, cake, and fruit' for the Kaiapoi schoolchildren's treat, and receiving thanks 'for her services at the harmonium' in the Anglican church. *Star*, 5 March, 6 April 1869; information from Patrick Willock.

<sup>25</sup> He is listed among clergy attending the dedication of a church. *Manchester Guardian*, 27 June 1846. Patrick Willock has papers relating to the appointment dated April 1846.

<sup>26</sup> Donald Read, 'Chartism in Manchester' in Asa Briggs, ed., *Chartist Studies*, London, 1959, pp. 61-62.

<sup>27</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 23 April 1847. He was apparently also the 'Reverend Mr Willert' who deputised for the Dean of Manchester at a previous meeting in March, *Manchester Guardian*, 20 March 1847. In New Zealand, Willock chaired a committee that allocated work to deserving unemployed at Kaiapoi in 1864. The committee was 'fully alive to the fact that the administration of relief must be exercised with the greatest degree of circumspection.' *Timaru Herald*, 26 November 1864.

<sup>28</sup> A major Chartist meeting of 1840 had been held in Great Ancoats Street, on the edge of the suburb. Mark Hovell, *The Chartist Movement*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Manchester, 1925, p. 196. There were disturbances in Ancoats in 1848, and a mass arrest of 46 leading Chartists on conspiracy charges rounded up several of Willock's parishioners. *The Times*, 11 March 1848; *Manchester Guardian*, 3 June, 23 August 1848.

<sup>29</sup> *The Times*, 11 March 1848; John Saville, *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 141-43.

<sup>30</sup> DCantB.

diversity that jarred against Willock's belief in Anglican supremacy. In 1872 he contemptuously recalled that meetings of the Anti-Corn Law League, Manchester's mighty campaign for free trade, were unable to agree even on a version of the Lord's Prayer to open proceedings.<sup>31</sup> A province designed to filter out such irritations from its very being would have looked very attractive from the viewpoint of early-Victorian Manchester.

In 1847, Manchester had become the centre of the first new Church of England diocese to be created since the Reformation. The elevation of the city-centre parish church to cathedral status proved to be controversial, an episode that probably coloured Willock's subsequent and apparently uncharacteristic opposition to the Cathedral Square location for its Christchurch equivalent. Of more immediate import was the appointment of the first bishop, a former headmaster whose cold personality failed to inspire his clergy. Worse still, he was a determined opponent of ritual, and clergy like Willock could expect to be driven out of the diocese.<sup>32</sup> It was not unusual for a young clergyman who had won his spurs in an industrial parish to retreat to a less stressful and better paid country parsonage, but this avenue was, if not blocked, at least obstructed for Willock. The appointment of parish clergy was generally a property right owned by private patrons. Colleges accumulated these "advowsons" to provide for former Fellows, but Magdalene, the poorest institution in Cambridge, controlled very few, and Willock had held only a minor Fellowship. Most advowsons were held by landowners, who sought a congenial neighbour who would keep the parish quiet. While no radical, Willock could be prickly, and his attachment to ritual was likely to cause trouble. In any case, patrons tended to favour their own relatives, making Willock's connection with Sir Robert Peel a double handicap.

Hence it is not surprising that he was attracted to the Canterbury project, which, relying on Edward Gibbon Wakefield's ideas about systematic colonisation, aimed to construct an ideal England, purged of undesirable elements such as Chartists, and firmly under the moral leadership of Anglican clergy. They were planning, said the Bishop of Norwich, to 'move from these shores not merely a colony, but a church.' 'For the first time in the history of colonisation,' observed Lord Lyttelton, 'each colonist will find around him the Church, the clergyman and the schoolmaster he had been used to at home.'<sup>33</sup> Possibly Willock kept his intentions to himself: early in April 1850, five months before he sailed, he was elected to the committee of the Manchester branch of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 'for the ensuing year.'<sup>34</sup> However, it is unlikely that his decision to emigrate was triggered by the unexpected death of Sir Robert Peel, following a riding accident, on 2 July 1850, a mere nine weeks before the departure of the *Randolph*.

## FIRST FOUR SHIPS

The 761-ton *Randolph* sailed from Plymouth in the small hours of 8 September 1850. There were 34 cabin passengers ("colonists") out of a total of 210. Although in effect travelling first class, Willock was also working his passage, acting as one of two chaplains on board. He

---

<sup>31</sup> *Star* (Christchurch), 7 September 1872.

<sup>32</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, James Prince Lee.

<sup>33</sup> *The Times*, 18 April, 3 September 1850.

<sup>34</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 4 April 1850.

had with him letters from brother clergy in Manchester testifying that he 'lived piously, soberly, and honestly', and was 'worthy to be admitted to a benefice or cure of souls,' as well as a letter of introduction – despite their theological differences - from the Bishop of Manchester.<sup>35</sup>

As the *Randolph* sailed southward across the Atlantic, she encountered a French vessel and as the sea was calm, an officer and six of the passengers, including Willock, rowed across and were entertained with cigars and brandy. Communication was hampered by the inability of the visitors to speak much French (nobody expected French people to know English) but the French returned the visit and enjoyed 'a good dinner' on board the *Randolph*, although their hosts could offer only bottled ale to accompany it. On 21 October, the *Randolph* spotted another vessel some miles away. Once again, Willock volunteered as part of the crew that rowed the whaleboat on 'a very hot pull of about eight miles.' This time they had fallen with a British ship, en route from Liverpool to Buenos Aires, whose captain agreed to deliver a bag of letters. The visitors had lunch before rowing back to the *Randolph*, a total absence of six hours. The adventure was crowned by the sight of two whales.<sup>36</sup> The cabin passengers took the lead in staging a performance of Sheridan's comedy, *The Rivals*, but it would have been considered unseemly for a clergyman to take part in a play. However, the voyage was not entirely idyllic. James Wylde, who arrived in Canterbury in 1853, recorded that when 'the emigrants' (the steerage passengers) had complained about the food, Willock had angrily said to the captain, 'Put them in irons sir, put them in irons immediately.'<sup>37</sup> This may be a confusion with a better-attested episode, on 7 November, when there was a disturbance among the crew, one of whom assaulted the captain and another refused to take his turn at the wheel. The captain called on the passengers 'in the Queen's name,' to assist him in punishing the man who had disobeyed orders. When cutlasses were issued, presumably to the cabin passengers, the helmsman agreed to return to his duties, the mutiny fizzled out and two sailors who had been thrown in irons were released after a couple of hours. Whatever the nature of the incident, it was enough to transfer the Iron Priest's nickname to New Zealand.<sup>38</sup>

As the *Randolph* dropped anchor in Lyttelton Harbour on 19 December 1850, her passengers gathered on deck to sing "God Save the Queen".<sup>39</sup> For William Wellington Willock, the prospects would have seemed optimistic. Arriving in a colony that was to be guided by clergy, he was in fact one of just five clerics to arrive with the first settlers.<sup>40</sup> A

---

<sup>35</sup> Willock Papers, privately held.

<sup>36</sup> Henry Brett, *White Waves*, II, Auckland, 1928, pp. 71-72, quoting the diary of Charles Bridge. (Text consulted via [www.nzetc.org](http://www.nzetc.org))

<sup>37</sup> DCantB.

<sup>38</sup> Brett, *White Waves*, II, pp. 72-73. The near-mutiny was reported by the *Lyttelton Times*, 11 January 1851 (consulted via <http://Christchurchcitylibraries.com/Heritage/Newspapers/LytteltonTimes>). J. R. Godley, sitting as police magistrate, sentenced the three men who had disobeyed orders to brief terms of imprisonment at the first-ever session of the Canterbury courts on 20 December 1850. The voyage was a disappointment in another respect. A Great Circle route that would safely skirt Stewart Island required the ship to sail into southerly latitudes. Even though it was early summer, the weather was cold enough to kill livestock on board.

<sup>39</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 11 January 1851.

<sup>40</sup> The others were George Kingdon (b. 1821), who moved to New Plymouth in 1852, returned to England after 1860 and later changed his name to Kyngdon (Venn: George Theodosius Boughton Kingdon); Charles Edward Puckle, a former tradesman influenced by Bishop Jackson, who left Canterbury in 1854 ('a good man but not bright', according to Henry Sewell, W. David McIntyre, ed., *The Journal of Henry Sewell*, 2 vols, Christchurch, 1980, I, pp. 139n, 337) and Henry Jacobs (b. 1824) and later headmaster of Christ's College. (McIntyre, ed.,

bishop was due to follow, and Church endowments were built into the colonisation prospectus. Willock may have envisaged himself as a "squarson", farming his own land and surrounded by deferential parishioners who respected him as their spiritual leader. Other early Canterbury clergy, notably Archdeacons James Wilson and Octavius Mathias, followed this path. The reality was to be different. Where the Canterbury Association promoters had effectively promised the swift and painless replication of an English diocese, the Anglican church in the new settlement had no church buildings, little income, and few of the privileges of Establishment. Moreover, 'the laity were used to having the services of religion provided for them without much effort or expense on their part.... The Association propaganda had led the settlers to expect a similar provision in Canterbury. Only with great difficulty would the laity learn the "voluntary principle" of giving to build their churches and support their clergy which other denominations in England had long been accustomed to'.<sup>41</sup> Thomas Jackson had been designated bishop but 'as the result of a long and acrimonious dispute with the Association over his financial accounts' he resigned shortly after arriving in February 1851.<sup>42</sup> Selwyn exercised episcopal oversight over Canterbury from Auckland, and delegated two clergy (not including Willock) to act as his commissaries, but this was a temporary arrangement and one that lasted too long. Willock's was not the only clerical career that seemed to have stalled.<sup>43</sup> The Jackson debacle set back the formal organisation of the Church, and slow land sales put the prospective endowments under threat. The promised clerical stipends, £200 for a beneficed clergyman, dried up altogether in 1853, by which time the Canterbury Association in London had been reduced to 'borrowing' the endowment for the bishopric.<sup>44</sup>

Local tradition recorded that Willock conducted the first service on the Plains, 'in a wedge-shaped hut' erected on a triangular corner site.<sup>45</sup> Yet no regular clerical appointment came his way until he was instituted as curate at Kaiapoi in 1858. Others who came out after him quickly took over churches in key locations. Octavius Mathias arrived in 1851, to become officiating minister at the temporary church in Christchurch itself. A journalist in 1852 reported that the building, designed to hold 250 people, was crowded on Sunday mornings by worshippers summoned by a tenor bell rigged in a temporary frame and audible five miles away, while afternoon and evening services were also 'tolerably well filled.' Mathias was 'often assisted by the Rev. J. Wilson and the Rev. W. W. Willock, who reside on

---

*Journal of Sewell*, I, p. 139n.) Dudley was a controversial personality in the early years (see note 40 below) but died an honoured figure, *Star*, 29 August 1892. Although Jacobs is recalled for wrapping himself in a precarious ecclesiastical and academic dignity, it is worth noting that Willock was older than two of his fellow clerics from the First Four Ships, and socially superior to the third. The *Lyttelton Times*, 11 January 1851, named four, omitting Benjamin Dudley. It is a sign of changing scholarly criteria that none of them merits an entry in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.

<sup>41</sup> Marie Peters, *Christchurch, St Michael's: a study in Anglicanism in New Zealand, 1851-1972*, Christchurch, 1986, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Peters, *Christchurch, St Michael's*, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Peters, *Christchurch, St Michael's*, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> W. David McIntyre, 'Salvaging the Canterbury Plan: Henry Sewell and the Founding of Canterbury,' in Len Richardson and W. David McIntyre, eds, *Provincial Perspectives: Essays in Honour of W.J. Gardner*, Christchurch, 1980, pp. 36-60; McIntyre, ed., *Journal of Sewell*, I, p. 123. See also Edmund Bohan, 'Godley, FitzGerald and the Ideals of Pilgrim Canterbury' in Mark Stocker, ed., *Remembering Godley: A Portrait of Canterbury's Founder*, Christchurch, 2001, pp. 38-56

<sup>45</sup> Cox, ed., *Men of Mark*, p. 232. The church became St Michael and All Angels on Oxford Terrace.

their farms ... ; and also by the Rev. H. Jacobs, who resides at the parsonage, and is to take charge of the Grammar School, which is to be shortly built.<sup>46</sup> Wilson was a Scot, and by 1854 he was combining farming with a church of his own in the city.<sup>47</sup> Willock, on the other hand, appeared to Henry Sewell, who encountered him in 1853, as 'unbeneficed, a sort of unattached.'<sup>48</sup> In fact Selwyn entrusted him with pastoral responsibility for much of Banks Peninsula, districts which at that time had few if any church buildings.<sup>49</sup>

Why was Willock passed over for more prestigious positions? Mathias was older and more experienced, having been vicar of a Norfolk parish; no doubt this was one reason why Selwyn appointed him a commissary. Perhaps he and Willock had the same hope that in New Zealand each 'could hope to be a squire-parson, whereas in the old [country] he was only a squire's parson'.<sup>50</sup> But Mathias was, politically, probably more conservative than Willock, more cantankerous, and more inclined to neglect his spiritual responsibilities in favour of worldly pastoral investments.<sup>51</sup> Benjamin Dudley, who followed Willock to New Zealand in 1851, almost immediately became incumbent at Lyttelton, but he also was a decade older than Willock. Henry Sewell thought Dudley 'rather extreme in his views,' and attributed Dudley's unpopularity to his determination to force Nonconformists to send their children to Anglican schools. He was also regarded as a grasping landlord. But Dudley was also disliked for importing ritualistic practices; some had 'not been pleased with lofty candlesticks and bouquets on the altar.' Even the term was alien to most Protestants, who thought of the altar as a communion table, while they did not like to see and hear their churches 'with gorgeously embroidered offertory bags, with evergreen decorated crosses on the communion walls [sic], with richly laced cambric handkerchiefs over the chalice, and with the constant tolling of the bells.'<sup>52</sup> Canterbury was a distinctly High Church project, but not an extreme one. Willock's own ritualistic practices do not seem to have caused him any difficulties when he did eventually accept a cure at Kaiapoi: rather, it would be his successor, H.E. Carlyon, who was ousted from the parish in 1875 for his High Church ceremonial. Within five months of Carlyon's arrival, the parish was in uproar about his 'Romanising tendencies' and the 'mummery' of his services, which does not suggest that Willock's religious practices were particularly exotic.<sup>53</sup> It is possible that Willock was not a fluent preacher. He rarely spoke at meetings and never published a sermon, something that might have been

---

<sup>46</sup> *New Zealand Spectator and Cook's Strait Guardian*, 3 April 1852; McIntyre, ed., *Journal of Sewell*, I, p. 123n.

<sup>47</sup> McIntyre, ed., *Journal of Sewell*, I, p. 127n.

<sup>48</sup> McIntyre, ed., *Journal of Sewell*, I, pp. 268-69. Patrick Willock mentions a document appointing him to minister south of the Heathcote River in November 1851. But Sewell's evidence indicates that this was not a full-time ministry.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Blain, A Biographical Directory of Anglican Clergy in the South Pacific, [http://anglicanhistory.org/nz/blain\\_directory/directory.pdf](http://anglicanhistory.org/nz/blain_directory/directory.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Peters, *Christchurch, St Michael's*, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Peters, *Christchurch, St Michael's*, pp 13-14.

<sup>52</sup> McIntyre, ed., *Journal of Sewell*, I, pp. 124, 135, 163, 244; *New Zealand Spectator and Cook's Strait Guardian*, 6 October 1852. Dudley survived long enough to be hailed as 'one of the most generous and liberal of men' at his death in 1892, *Star*, 29 August 1892. C.R. Mackie (or Mackay), in Sewell's words 'the most cantankerous person we ever had to deal with', became vicar of Avonside in 1855, McIntyre, ed., *Journal of Sewell*, I, pp. 175-76.

<sup>53</sup> *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Henry John Chitty Harper.; *Star*, 8 June, 17 November 1875.

expected from a University graduate with high honours, although he could be pungent enough when he did hold forth.<sup>54</sup>

Canterbury in the 1850s offered little scope for ecclesiastical careers, then, but Willock did not abandon his clerical calling. He was a member of the Committee on Church Matters, which attempted to function as a kind of government-in-exile for the Anglican Church prior to the arrival of a bishop. He represented the views of his clerical brethren in lobbying Henry Sewell (sent to wind up the Canterbury Association) for transfer of control of the contested Church endowments. Sewell found him dogmatic but 'all in a wood about every thing' and subsiding into 'bewilderment and not knowing what-to-doiness.' But we need to bear in mind that Sewell's diary invariably records its author as the conquerer in every argument. He was invariably scornful in his dismissal of clerical abilities, although he later noted reports that that 'Willock is a man of ability.'<sup>55</sup> The blocking of his career was all the more frustrating for William Wellington Willock because colonial New Zealand was a young man's country. Both Selwyn and George Grey were in their early thirties when they became the country's bishop and governor; in Canterbury, John Robert Godley was a year older than Willock, J.E. FitzGerald three years his junior.<sup>56</sup> James Wylde, who met him in 1853, called Willock 'a most determined, self-willed man' who had emigrated 'like so many others to form an exclusive Church of England settlement.' Wylde was repelled by this 'man of iron will and iron constitution', adding: 'Authority was to him every thing; charity and loving kindness took second place.'<sup>57</sup>

That was certainly unfair. His advancement in the Church stalled, Willock concentrated on farming.<sup>58</sup> He selected his one hundred acres 'near the old bridge on the Heathcote,' and built a sod cottage in what became Albert Terrace, in the suburb of St Martins.<sup>59</sup> That property was later enlarged to more than 500 acres. He also had a grazing lease of 500 acres on the other side of the hill, as well as town lands in Lyttelton. In those early years, land surveys did not always match actual occupation. When a neighbour, John Hughes, built a house and depastured cattle on disputed land, Willock successfully sued him for trespass, winning £5 in damages. Perhaps the matter might have amicably settled by an exchange of claims, but Hughes was also being pursued by Godley for alleged illegal wood-cutting, and may have been regarded as a disruptive element.<sup>60</sup> However, Willock's readiness to resort to legal action probably underlined the impression that it was unwise to tangle with the Iron Priest. A year later, the *Lyttelton Times* declined to publish a letter about an unidentified case, Willock v. Taylor, because it was 'couched in language we cannot admit to

---

<sup>54</sup> In 1877, a parish meeting in Christchurch thanked Willock for preaching at their church in the absence of an incumbent. *Star*, 17 April 1877.

<sup>55</sup> McIntyre, ed., *Journal of Sewell*, I, pp. 269, 277, 283, 413.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, Harmondsworth, 1980 ed., p. 93, echoing Carrington, *John Robert Godley of Canterbury*, p. 138.

<sup>57</sup> DCantB. But we should note that Willock had invited Wylde to lunch after he had landed at Lyttelton.

<sup>58</sup> The *Star* remarked in 1892 that 'all the clergy, with one exception' bought land. The exception was perhaps Jacobs. *Star*, 29 August 1892.

<sup>59</sup> *New Zealand Spectator and Cook's Strait Guardian*, 3 April 1852; Gordon Ogilvie, *The Port Hills of Christchurch*, Wellington, 1978, p. 123 (consulted via Google Books). See also Colin Amodeo, *The Summer Ships*, Christchurch, 2001; Willock Papers.

<sup>60</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 16 August, 8 November 1851.

our columns.' The writer's allegation of 'unworthy motives' was defamatory and, as Willock was the plaintiff, he was presumably also the target.<sup>61</sup>

In fact, much of Willock's investment in land was not his personal property but formed part of the assets of his wife's marriage settlement. A married women's property act was decades in the future; middle-class women often had trusts settled on them by their fathers or husbands on marriage. Willock may have been the agent for his wife's marriage trust, but his control was limited. Sarah Willock must have been actively involved in farming operations, as well as bearing and bringing up a son and two daughters. She would die in 1862, soon after the birth of their younger daughter.<sup>62</sup>

'In his early days,' it was said in a tribute after Willock's death, 'when clergymen were few, and stipends small and irregular,' he could be 'seen milking his cows in the morning, before he went to his clerical duties, and in the evening he would return and milk the cows again.'<sup>63</sup> Those clerical duties involved walking from his house, over the hills to Governor's Bay; although he was regarded as a robust walker, that would have taken Willock at least two hours each way.<sup>64</sup> The range of Willock's agricultural activities was impressive. He and Sarah produced butter for sale in Lyttelton, and at an agricultural show in 1854, his cheese was 'very much and justly admired.'<sup>65</sup> Willock also won prizes for carrots, onions and strawberries.<sup>66</sup> However, he seems to have concentrated on large-scale arable farming. His samples of pearl wheat were 'much admired' at an agricultural exhibition in Christchurch in 1853.<sup>67</sup> In the summer of 1858, he shipped 1100 bushels of wheat to the North Island.<sup>68</sup> He could farm on such a scale by hiring labour. At a public meeting the previous year, Willock had raised the possibility of recruiting Chinese workers from New South Wales.<sup>69</sup> The idea was not pursued, and he probably appreciated that the province needed skilled labour: one of his employees, called McLaughlin, won a ploughing competition in 1854.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, it is likely that Willock helped work his own land. 'I have seen here clergymen ploughing,' Godley remarked in his farewell address in 1852, '... and no one thought the worse of them, but the contrary.'<sup>71</sup> In Willock's case, the admiration was not reciprocated.

Like many other colonists impatient to acquire land, Willock became a vigorous critic of the Canterbury Association and especially of its local agents. Godley undoubtedly had his virtues but 'powerfully conscious of his own moral rectitude and gentlemanly dignity, [he]

---

<sup>61</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 4 September 1852.

<sup>62</sup> Willock Papers.

<sup>63</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 18 April 1883.

<sup>64</sup> Amodeo, *The Summer Ships*.

<sup>65</sup> DCantB; *Lyttelton Times*, 20 May 1854.

<sup>66</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 31 December 1853, 12 December 1855.

<sup>67</sup> *Nelson Examiner*, 18 June 1853. These were pioneer days. Willock's neighbour on the Heathcote, Alexander Lean, set off with a companion inland looking for grazing land. A flood at their campsite on the Rakaia washed possessions downstream and triggered a rumour that the two men had been drowned. Willock was on his way to break the news to Lean's wife, Emma Proctor, when he met Lean returning from his travels and thought he was seeing a ghost. As Lean was acquiring land on the Rakaia in 1853-55, the story belongs to the early days on Canterbury. DCantB; *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Alexander Lean.

<sup>68</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 24 November, 11 December 1858.

<sup>69</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 24 September 1853.

<sup>70</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 25 October 1854.

<sup>71</sup> Carrington, *John Robert Godley of Canterbury*, p. 150.

could seem cold and priggish'.<sup>72</sup> Seeking to diminish any influence the Association might have with the Governor's Legislative Council in Auckland, in October 1851 Willock moved a motion at a meeting of the Society of Land Purchasers which demanded that when the Legislative Council was to vote on 'any public matter, it shall be necessary that a quorum be present of members entirely unconnected by official ties with the Association.' The chairman of the Society of Land Purchasers, W.G. Brittan, brushed the proposal aside, ruling it out of order since the Society's rules required a two-thirds majority of members to be present to consider amendments — Willock's demand for a quorum insultingly turned against him. Given how little land had been sold to how few proprietors, one journalist commented, 'there must have been very few persons present to allow Mr. Brittan so easily to get rid of a resolution which was evidently distasteful to him and those connected with the Association.'<sup>73</sup> Sewell found Willock 'violently anti-Godley' when they met in May 1853. Godley, according to Willock, was 'an imperious Despot perfectly autocratic, who ignored the existence of any body's opinions but his own.' The Council of Land Purchasers was a 'sham' controlled by Godley's lieutenant J E FitzGerald, and liable to be 'kicked and cuffed for disobedience.' Sewell was forced to agree: Godley's 'imperious majestic manner' and the 'overbearingness' of FitzGerald and Brittan had stoked deep-seated 'hatred' against the Canterbury Association.<sup>74</sup> Godley had memorably insisted that he 'would rather be governed by a Nero on the spot, than by a board of angels in London, because we could, if the worst came to the worst, cut off Nero's head, but we could not get at the board in London at all.' The founder of Canterbury had Sir George Grey in his sights, but it is not difficult to imagine William Wellington Willock entertaining very direct thoughts on the same theme.<sup>75</sup> Yet if Willock was no fan of Godley, he seems to have had a better relationship with James Edward FitzGerald, Godley's self-appointed lieutenant and first Superintendent of Canterbury. FitzGerald, known for his expansive visions, cherished as early as 1853 the hope of establishing a large agricultural school in the province. It would be particularly intended for working-class youths, for FitzGerald hoped that a large class of 'peasant proprietors' would emerge but recognised that agricultural skill had to be taught. The headmaster of the college would be a clergyman, well versed in agriculture and agricultural chemistry; FitzGerald hoped that Willock would accept the position.<sup>76</sup> It would be a quarter of a century before Canterbury Agricultural College would be established at Lincoln, fittingly enough near or on land that FitzGerald had once occupied, but the director would not be a clergyman.

---

<sup>72</sup> Bohan, 'Godley, FitzGerald and the Ideals of Pilgrim Canterbury', p. 38.

<sup>73</sup> *New Zealander*, 6 December 1851, quoting *Lyttelton Times*, 4, 18 October. It was not long before Brittan was critical of Godley, Carrington, *John Robert Godley of Canterbury*, p. 136; McIntyre, ed., *Journal of Sewell*, I, pp. 124-25. Brittan continued to serve as chief commissioner of Crown Lands and was described at his death in 1876 as 'the father of cricket in Canterbury.' *Star*, 19 July 1876.

<sup>74</sup> McIntyre, ed., *Journal of Sewell*, I, p. 269.

<sup>75</sup> Carrington, *John Robert Godley of Canterbury*, p. 132. Willock Papers; see also *Lyttelton Times*, 27 Dec 1854.

<sup>76</sup> Willock Papers; see also *Lyttelton Times*, 27 Dec 1854.

## KAIAPOI

The Church's position began to improve with the consecration, in 1856, of Henry John Chitty Harper as Bishop of Christchurch. In 1858, Willock finally acquired a church of his own, at Kaiapoi, one of the fastest-growing urban centres in the province.<sup>77</sup> He would be there for seventeen years. Kaiapoi was about 12 miles north of Christchurch, across the snow-fed Waimakariri river. It had been conceived as a planned town, and such early wealth as it enjoyed was based on timber, grain and wool.<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately, the parish was not without problems. Reflecting the frequent curse of congregationalism, local Church Trustees objected to diocesan control of their affairs, and in January 1857 were reported to be refusing to pay their clergyman the stipend voted to him at the annual church meeting. Maybe Kaiapoi needed an Iron Priest, although Bishop Harper was praised for his 'conciliating manners' which 'will tend to soften down the angry feelings which have hitherto caused so much heart-burning.'<sup>79</sup> Willock rented out his land on the Heathcote and seems to have acquired property in the town centre at Kaiapoi. Unfortunately, the Waimakariri river was prone to flooding, and in an 1865 inundation, Willock was the 'worst sufferer' as his property 'unfortunately, lies some feet lower than his neighbours'.<sup>80</sup> The construction of the railway bridge in 1872 seems to have worsened the problem, and further flooding in 1874 perhaps influenced Willock to resign his post and move to Christchurch, where he became in effect, if not in name, the diocesan finance officer. He formally resigned Kaiapoi on 1 June 1875, a few weeks short of his sixtieth birthday. It is a measure of the disappointment of his own hopes in emigrating that he finally acquired a job suited to his talents as a quasi-retirement appointment.<sup>81</sup> During his time at Kaiapoi, too, Willock had to deal with the death of his wife, Sarah, on 14 April 1862. A year later he married again, to Sarah Tipping, who had been born in County Louth, Ireland, in 1831 and who had emigrated with her parents to Kaiapoi.<sup>82</sup> The second Sarah became stepmother to William's young children, and the marriage trusts and inheritances which the first Sarah Willock had enjoyed were held for her children after her death, and controlled by her family in Manchester. Although there is every indication that Willock got on well with his Beevor in-laws, they disagreed on some important matters. Willock hoped to send his daughters to boarding school and his son to the province's leading

---

<sup>77</sup>DCantB. The *Lyttelton Times* in October 1857 had celebrated 'the rapid manner in which Kaiapoi has risen, and the important place which it now occupies as the commercial centre of the northern district of this province. In less than four years it has been changed from a wilderness to a thriving town.' Quoted *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 18 November 1857. When the Christchurch diocesan synod was established in 1859, Kaiapoi was one of the three communities (along with Christchurch city and Lyttelton) to be allocated a second elected lay member. *Otago Witness*, 2 July 1859.

<sup>78</sup> Pauline Wood, *Kaiapoi: A Search for Identity*, Rangiora, 1993, ch 3-4.

<sup>79</sup> McIntyre, ed., *Journal of Sewell*, II, pp. 122, 128; *Daily Southern Cross*, 20 February 1857, quoting *Lyttelton Times*, 31 January. Willock's predecessor at Kaiapoi, Reverend James Raven, may not have endeared himself to his north Canterbury parishioners by developing a property on the Opihi river near Timaru.

<sup>80</sup> *Wellington Evening Post*, 29 December 1865. Technically, flooding in the town was caused by the Kaiapoi river, a tributary of the Waimakariri.

<sup>81</sup> *Star*, 30 April 1872: Willock attended the official luncheon to mark opening of the 12-mile line from Christchurch. At a public meeting in 1874, local resident G.L. Mellish, the police magistrate with whom Willock would clash in 1875, blamed the railway bridge for obstructing the flow of water. For the 1874 floods, and Willock's appointment as a member of a delegation to the provincial government, *Star*, 7, 16 October 1874. His resignation was reported in the *Star*, 11 February 1875.

<sup>82</sup> Blain directory

grammar school, Christ's College. So far as the daughters were concerned, the Beevors wished to add the trust income to the capital they would receive on reaching 21. Clearly, a dowry was more important than education, and Willock and his second wife taught the girls at home 'with such additional teaching in music &c as can be had'.<sup>83</sup>

A couple of press reports of the annual parish meeting at Kaiapoi suggest that the church functioned much as if it had been dropped out of the sky from England, with the traditional complement of churchwardens and sidesmen, plus the more recent development of elected lay representatives to serve in the diocesan Synod. This was superficially true but there were many differences. As we have already noted, the Anglican church in New Zealand relied on the voluntary support of its members to a much greater than did the Established Church of England. Where the state governed much of the life of the Church of England, Bishop Selwyn had pioneered a relatively advanced constitution for the church in New Zealand, which took effect in 1857 and made it essentially self-governing, through a general and diocesan synods consisting of all clergy and elected laymen. The Anglican Church, in Canterbury at least, was, it seems, predominantly a middle and upper class denomination.<sup>84</sup> Desultory discussion at the 1871 Kaiapoi parish meeting indicates that worshippers were charged for seating in the church, which would suggest that only limited efforts were made to reach out beyond the local elite.<sup>85</sup> Although Willock took an interest in the Melanesian mission, and even represented the diocese of Melanesia at the General Synod in Wellington in 1874,<sup>86</sup> there is little indication that he ministered to Kaiapoi's Māori community, who were served by the New Zealand-born James Stack.<sup>87</sup>

As befitted a member of the town's social elite, Willock devoted a good deal of time to community affairs, although here any leadership role that he played probably owed less to institutional Anglican hegemony than to the fact that he was an educated man who could command his own time. He was a member of the committee set up to welcome Prince Alfred, Kaiapoi's first-ever royal visitor, in 1869. In the event, the triumphal arches were erected in vain, as the Prince did not show up, but four hundred local children gathered to consume the organisers' cake and ginger beer, and were addressed by Willock, a rare example of a public speech by him.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, he was drafted on to the committee planning the Kaiapoi regatta in 1872, and appointed a judge despite his protests that he had not witnessed a boat race in

---

<sup>83</sup> Willock Papers.

<sup>84</sup> Marie Peters, 'Legacy: A Colonial Church,' in Colin Brown, Marie Peters and Jane Teal, eds, *Shaping a Colonial Church: Bishop Harper and the Anglican Diocese of Christchurch, 1856-1890*, Christchurch, 2006, p. 247.

<sup>85</sup> *Star*, 6 April 1869; 17 April 1871. The received idea that the Canterbury elite was overwhelmingly Anglican is challenged by Jim McAloon, *No Idle Rich: The Wealthy in Canterbury and Otago 1840-1914*, Dunedin, 2002, p. 153. But this does not necessarily imply that Anglican clergy sought vigorously to compensate by reaching out to the wider community.

<sup>86</sup> *Star*, 17 September 1870, 21 September 1872, 16 May 1874.

<sup>87</sup> *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, James West Stack. Willock attended a 'great meeting' between local Māori and Bishop Harper in September 1859, at which Stack, acting as interpreter, negotiated a mission site at Tuahiwi, just north of Kaiapoi. Willock was also present at the dedication of the Tuahiwi church in 1867, a major ceremony that included eighteen Māori chiefs, seven clergy in their robes, along with the governor, Sir George Grey, and Moorhouse, the superintendent of Canterbury. J.W. Stack, *Koro* (Christchurch, 1909) chapters 3 and 5 (consulted via [http://anglicanhistory.org/nz/stack\\_koro1909/03.html](http://anglicanhistory.org/nz/stack_koro1909/03.html)). Ngai Tuahuriri had accepted harsh terms to cede their claims to north Canterbury in 1857. Harry C. Evison, *The Long Dispute: Māori Land Rights and European Colonisation in Southern New Zealand*, Christchurch, 1997, pp. 258-61.

<sup>88</sup> *Star*, 11 February, 22, 26 April 1869.

forty years. Unfortunately, when the day of the races arrived, the Waimakariri was in flood and the project failed.<sup>89</sup> Like many local notables throughout the country, Willock was involved in introducing exotic fauna for recreational pursuits. Mistrust of the turbulent Waimakariri probably explains why Willock released thirty trout into the Ashley River at Rangiora as part of an acclimatisation campaign. The experiment was a 'complete success,' as was a further release into the Cust above Kaiapoi itself in 1871; they both remained good trout rivers for over a century.<sup>90</sup> When the Waimakariri flooded Kaiapoi in 1874, Willock was a member of a deputation to the provincial government demanding flood prevention measures, but as his own property had been badly affected, this was hardly surprising.

In a society where administrative structures were being constructed from scratch, there was a fine line between acting as a community leader and serving the interests of government. Road boards were typically the first unit of local government, and as first chairman of the Kaiapoi road board in 1864, Willock was no doubt performing both functions. The Road Board existed for less than a year, before it petitioned the Provincial Council that Kaiapoi be declared a municipality; Willock stepped aside when the Municipal Council was elected.<sup>91</sup> But the fine line between social service and social control was illustrated in November 1864 when Willock was appointed as one of three commissioners to organise relief work in response to pleas from the local unemployed for government action, and apparently acted once again as chairman. True, the commissioners promptly approved work for all but two of the fifty applicants complaining of 'the supposed distress amongst the labouring classes at Kaiapoi.' They also reported that 'in conducting the inquiry no case of want of the necessaries of life has been brought to their notice' although they added that 'distress to some extent has prevailed' because so many of the men had been out of work for some time. Hence 'the present relief is not only desirable but also necessary to prevent immediate want,' and Willock and his colleagues had set applicants to work straightaway without waiting for further authorisation from Christchurch. However, the commissioners evidently did not trust some of the hard-luck stories they had heard, insisting that were 'fully alive to the fact that the administration of relief must be exercised with the greatest degree of circumspection.'<sup>92</sup> Evidently the fifty men had been subjected to an intrusive examination of their personal circumstances, and we can only guess whether the experience — which would have been routinely expected at the time — made them more or less prepared to accept the Reverend Mr Willock as a spiritual guide. The unemployed were dissatisfied with the wage rate and briefly went on strike before the Provincial superintendent threatened to deny all relief. Willock himself had been sympathetic to the men's argument but was directed by the Provincial Council to lower the relief wages.<sup>93</sup> A more benign episode occurred in 1872, when an itinerant Black worker called Fred King was found collapsed by the roadside suffering from fever. The local police sergeant appealed to Willock for help, and charitable

---

<sup>89</sup> *Star*, 5 January, 3 October, 27 December 1872.

<sup>90</sup> *Star*, 16 January, 11 May 1872. For other reports, *Star*, 11 December 1869, 6 January, 14 August 1872.

<sup>91</sup> DcandB; Pauline Wood, *Kaiapoi*, p 65.

<sup>92</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 26 November 1874. 32 married men with families received six days work a week, four married men who were childless were allocated five days and 12 single men four days. The pay was five shillings a day. Work was 'found close at hand of a most useful nature.'

<sup>93</sup> Pauline Wood, *Kaiapoi*, p. 66.

funds were forthcoming to provide accommodation and medical help for King.<sup>94</sup> Again, though, Willock's activities were much as would have been expected of a local notable; he would have suffered considerable reproach if he had not been forthcoming with assistance for Fred King.

The year of Willock's charity to Fred King also saw his last and delusively successful rearguard action in defence of an independent Anglican role in Canterbury. But within months of preventing the provincial Board of Education from taking control of Kaiapoi, he was forced to strike his colours and acquiesce when a public and essentially secular school system took over his own parochial buildings. From 1873 to 1875, William Wellington Willock, who normally kept such a low profile, found himself involved in three issues which cumulatively shattered whatever was left of the mirage of a Canterbury that was not only Anglican but respectful of clerical hegemony, a moral that he acknowledged himself with mordant bitterness. The three issues were disparate but inter-related: the Kaiapoi schools question, the issue of the site of Christchurch cathedral and the sad but bizarre episode of the diocesan embezzlement case. Willock's defeat over the schools issue influenced the position attitude he took on the other two. The setbacks must have been all the more galling because they were prefaced by a very satisfying victory.

### Kaiapoi Schools

Education was part of William Wellington Willock's personal identity. It seems to have been generally known in early Canterbury that he was 'a highly educated man who had taken the highest honours in Maths at Cambridge.'<sup>95</sup> He was a foundation Fellow of Christ's College, and in the early years examined boys in mathematics.<sup>96</sup> But Willock was not just interested in elite education: he had himself been helped to study at Cambridge by winning a scholarship.

In 1857 Willock had been inspector of schools for the province – he reported unfavourably on provincial educational facilities in the early part of that year.<sup>97</sup> Willock believed that 'children should have a higher education than was at present imparted to them,' adding: 'So far as he was concerned, he should like to see a child fitted to be an Astronomer' – an allusion to the Cambridge University Mathematics course that perhaps puzzled his Kaiapoi audience.<sup>98</sup> Denominational schools had predominated since the early 1850s, but successive Provincial Councils had become increasingly dissatisfied with subsidising denominational facilities which were often of low quality. A new Education Ordinance in 1871 aimed to supplant the denominational schools with local public schools. The effect was

---

<sup>94</sup> *West Coast Times*, 4 May 1872, quoting *Christchurch Press*, 19 April. Fred King was seeking work as a cook on a sheep station.

<sup>95</sup> DCantB, quoting diary of James Wylde, 1853.

<sup>96</sup> He is listed as a Fellow in the Appeal for funds in January 1856, in Robert Bateman Paul, *Letters from Canterbury, New Zealand*, London, 1857, pp. 144-51 (consulted via google books). DCantB records him examining in 1857, but it is unlikely that this was the only occasion.

<sup>97</sup> W H Scotter, 'Education, 1850-76' in W J Gardner, ed, *A History of Canterbury, vol. II*, Christchurch, 1971, p. 377.

<sup>98</sup> *Star*, 7 September 1872. Enrolment from *Star*, 5 March 1869, reporting the Kaiapoi school treat. 'Higher education' in Victorian times did not necessarily imply university study. The term loosely applied to all forms of post-primary schooling.

rapidly to switch funds from denominationalism to public provision.<sup>99</sup> The Ordinance allowed residents of a district to petition for the establishment of a publicly-funded school board, although local communities retained the right of veto.

A request for action from a group of Kaiapoi residents triggered a public meeting in September 1872 at which a prominent member of the Canterbury Provincial Council, William Montgomery, confronted a divided audience. The enrolment at Kaiapoi's Church of England school was about 120, and Willock was proud that the government's own inspector had reported on it 'in very flattering terms ... after an elaborate examination of those attending it.'<sup>100</sup> Although one critic claimed that with both an Anglican and a Wesleyan school, the town already possessed 'ample means of education,' others insisted that it was 'a notorious fact that half the children of the district, if not more, did not attend school' and could not have been accommodated anyway. Indeed, Rainsford Bavin, the Wesleyan minister, was prepared to render unto Caesar control of the secular aspect of education, a division that Willock himself could not countenance. There was considerable opposition to Canterbury's Education Ordinance as an expensive State invasion of the private sphere: one critic damned it as 'the most shameful, unjust and iniquitous law that had ever been passed.' The meeting ended in a narrow but temporary victory for Willock. In what may have been a pre-arranged manoeuvre, a questioner prompted Montgomery to declare that female ratepayers were qualified to vote. Willock then established a tactical point: his parsonage was exempt from rates, so was he barred from voting? The implication was that it would be perverse to allow women to take part but exclude the local clergyman. Montgomery avoided the trap, declaring that the Ordinance recognised the rights of clergy to participate, a point of which Willock was almost certainly aware. After the meeting had heard a series of attacks on the interventionist character of public education, Willock rose to denounce all forms of State and secular schooling. 'No one could deny that he had always endeavoured to advance the cause of education in the district,' he proclaimed, proudly stressing the reputation of the Anglican school. Children from Roman Catholic and Nonconformist families attended the school, none had been turned away, 'nor had any attempt been made to tamper with the religion of any child.' Asserting that the Anglican Church 'had nothing to fear from the extension of education,' he denounced the Ordinance 'simply because it did not provide for the proper religious instruction of the children.' Parents, he insisted, would not entrust even the reading of the Scriptures to a schoolmaster. Willock himself 'never could consent to Tom, Dick, or Harry — a Mormon, a Socinian, or a Roman Catholic — imparting religious instruction to his children at all events.' He praised the Education Act passed in 1870 by Gladstone's government in England for including denominational schools in a national education network 'notwithstanding the attempts of a small minority to destroy them.' Evidently he believed that a similar modified system of compulsory education might be developed in New Zealand. Willock told the meeting that 'they would find it to their benefit to have their neighbours' children educated,' but, he added in a final flourish, 'at the same time let them not make their children clever devils.'

---

<sup>99</sup> W H Scotter, 'Canterbury and the Development Policy of 1870' in Gardner, ed, *A History of Canterbury*, vol. II, pp 279-83.

<sup>100</sup> *Star*, 7 September 1872. Enrolment from *Star*, 5 March 1869, reporting the Kaiapoi school treat.

The proceedings terminated with chaotic rounds of voting which revealed a closely divided community. From the chair, Montgomery called for a show of hands on the main question, whether to create a local school district. The two scrutineers could not agree on the outcome, so in the unlikely surroundings of the Kaiapoi Mechanics' Institute, the meeting divided, parliamentary fashion, the ayes going to the right and the noes to the left. Montgomery declared victory, but Willock's allies successfully demanded a poll. If open voting could not determine the main issue, it was hardly likely to settle the second issue, the election of a school board, which also went to a poll, but not before it appeared that supporters of State education were well supported. A week later, Kaiapoi ratepayers rejected the school district, making the results for the board inoperative. With 52 votes, Willock was one vote short of topping the poll, but the Methodist Bavin was only five votes behind. On the face of it, Willock had salvaged some remnant of the original vision of a Canterbury community under Anglican leadership. But it was a fragile victory. As Edward Revell, a prominent local Orangeman, remarked, 'the position of the present two schools was very precarious' and they could be 'actually starved out' if Kaiapoi excluded itself from the provincial system.<sup>101</sup>

Four months later, Willock struck his colours. The Anglican school at Kaiapoi had a staff of three: a married couple and their daughter, and the trio were paid as a job lot. Such an arrangement was common enough in English village schools, where the husband and wife would be glad to find employment and ready to defer to the squire and parson. By the close of 1872, the problem at Kaiapoi was that the schoolmaster was 'disabled from work by serious illness' and the Anglican school committee had to face the reality that any replacement would cost them more than they could afford. With or without a school district, the Canterbury Board of Education was pressing ahead at Kaiapoi.<sup>102</sup> Scenting victory, the Board wrote to Willock on 8 January 1873 enquiring whether Kaiapoi's Anglican school might be made available as temporary premises pending the erection of a larger building. Five days later, he surrendered, totally and even gracefully. His committee would 'afford every facility in their power for the establishment of borough schools' and hoped they would be started 'without delay.'<sup>103</sup>

Barely two years earlier, in September 1870, Willock had helped block a well-meaning but idealistic proposal in the diocesan Synod to 'cooperate with other religious bodies in the work of the churches in this colony.'<sup>104</sup> Now he found himself working with the Wesleyan minister Rainsford Bavin to settle the details of the local district.<sup>105</sup> Willock was elected to the new district school committee and, in October 1873, barely a year after his transient triumph, he formed half of a two-person deputation sent to ask the Board of

---

<sup>101</sup> The public meeting was extensively reported in the *Star*, 7 September 1872, and the subsequent poll in the *Star*, 14 September. Revell, a local businessman, was the prominent critic of the ritualism of H.E. Carlyon and in 1878 became Grand Master of the Orange Lodge of the South Island. *Star*, 7 December 1875, 13 July 1878.

<sup>102</sup> *Star*, 24 December 1872.

<sup>103</sup> *Star*, 28 January 1873.

<sup>104</sup> *Star*, 17 September 1870. The proposer had made the tactical error of implying that the Anglican Church might recognise the validity of Nonconformist ordinations. Willock seconded a procedural motion to block discussion, which was carried 'on the voices.'

<sup>105</sup> *Star*, 11, 18 February, 4 March 1873.

Education to approve plans for new school buildings, 'in brick with stone quoins.'<sup>106</sup> He was back before the Board in November 1874 seeking approval for the hire of new staff.<sup>107</sup> He attended what may have been his final meeting of the school committee in February 1875, where it was agreed that 'the ministers of religion be allowed to give religious instruction in the different classrooms on Tuesday forenoons to children whose parents do not object to the same.' Willock himself was deputed to make the practical arrangements with his Methodist and Presbyterian counterparts.<sup>108</sup> Just over two years earlier, he had sneered at the idea of Tom, Dick and Harry giving religious instruction to his school children. Now it was his job to invite them in.

A hardly-effusive obituary of Willock a decade later credited him with being 'one of the first of his church to acquiesce in the system of State education,'<sup>109</sup> and his response was more likely to be one of acquiescence than of enthusiasm. Perhaps he recalled that W.F. Hook had embraced the idea of State-controlled schools a quarter of a century earlier. In bowing to the principle of a public education system, Willock was simply a little ahead of the trend of New Zealand politics. Canterbury was one of three provinces still sufficiently financially solvent to operate its own education system in the early eighteen-seventies. In 1871 the General Assembly had attempted to pass a New Zealand-wide Education Act, putting the provinces firmly on notice that the centralists would take action if the provinces failed to deliver.<sup>110</sup> In 1877, the year after the abolition of the provincial system, the system was standardised by an Education Act which excluded the churches altogether.<sup>111</sup> 'Anglican Canterbury was only as powerful as an Anglican elite was prepared to risk the hostility of other denominations or stand against the increasing secular liberalism of the age,' John Cookson has written, adding '— which is to say, hardly at all.'<sup>112</sup> In the Kaiapoi schools episode, Willock did make a bold, brief attempt to defy both the Nonconformists and the bureaucrats. His resistance quickly crumbled, and he made the best of his defeat. But it is noteworthy that he left Kaiapoi soon after, and his defeat at the hands of the Board of Education coloured his attitude to the next question in which he was involved, the issue of the site of Christchurch cathedral.

---

<sup>106</sup> *Star*, 15 May, 15 October 1873.

<sup>107</sup> *Star*, 24 November 1874.

<sup>108</sup> *Star*, 8 February 1875.

<sup>109</sup> *Star*, 1 June 1882.

<sup>110</sup> W.P. Morrell, *The Provincial System in New Zealand 1852-76*, rev. ed., Christchurch, 1964, pp. 226, 230, 233. The other provinces with flourishing school systems were Otago and Nelson.

<sup>111</sup> Jeanine Graham, 'Settler Society' in W.H. Oliver with B.R. Williams, eds, *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Wellington, 1981, p. 132.

<sup>112</sup> John Cookson, 'Pilgrims' Progress — Image, Identity and Myth in Christchurch', in John Cookson and Graeme Dunstall, eds, *Southern Capital: Christchurch. Towards a City Biography*, Christchurch, 2000, p. 18.

## 'ORGANISED JUMPERS': THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN CANTERBURY

Willock was a member of the Christchurch diocesan Synod from its establishment in 1859.<sup>113</sup> However, he seems to have contributed relatively infrequently to its proceedings, and his comments read like the terse interjections of someone who was impatient of discussion and resentful of criticism. At the Synod's first meeting, indeed, Willock got into a fight with Bishop Harper. The issue was trivial: how to notify parishioners of the names of candidates for election to the diocesan synod. The Synod was invited to agree that names should be read from the pulpit and also posted on the church door. Willock rose to object to the former, for unspecified reasons, and stated that if the motion was passed he would not obey it. 'The Bishop here rose and drew attention to a rubric of the church, by which ministers were bound to obey their Ordinary'.<sup>114</sup> Worse, Willock had been a member of the committee delegated to report on the matter and, it seems, having failed to persuade the committee of his views refused to be bound by the majority.<sup>115</sup> He continued to display an individualistic streak. When the Synod discussed the compilation of a New Zealand Hymnal in 1866, he made the sensible point that he favoured 'a book in which the hymns and the tunes were placed on the same page.' The project was overtaken by the success of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, published in England in 1861, which the Synod considered formally adopting in 1871 as the authorised hymnal for the diocese. Willock commented that he liked *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, used it at Kaiapoi and hoped that it would be voluntarily adopted by every parish, but he 'opposed having any particular book put upon him and his congregation.'<sup>116</sup> Willock's assertion of parochial autonomy may also have represented a defence of his own position within the Church, for standardisation of hymn singing might lead to demands for closer control of other practices, and we should recall that Willock was regarded in some quarters as an advanced ritualist. He was also conscious of ecclesiastical dignity, and when the press criticized a service held to open the 1874 Synod he bluntly condemned the report as 'very offensive.'<sup>117</sup>

Willock sometimes spoke as if he expected his opinion to be treated as authoritative in its own regard. We catch an echo of this in a comment he made in 1875 opposing a plan to erect a parsonage house at Cust, a small Canterbury community about 25 kilometres west of

---

<sup>113</sup> *Otago Witness*, 2 July 1859, quoting *Lyttelton Times*, 18 June. The first Synod comprised the Bishop, 16 clergy and 19 elected laity. The participation of laity in the institution should be noted. The Synod convened on 11 August, but some of the Otago representatives were unable to overcome travel problems. (*Otago Witness*, 13 August 1859) The *Lyttelton Times* characterised the proceedings as 'of a dreary kind, possessing only a limited interest; they are shortly reported in the papers, and may be said to be chiefly valuable for reference by those in future times anxious to see how a body of churchmen, accustomed to the routine of an old country, proceeded to form themselves into a living and self-governing church, retaining every characteristic which distinguishes the church with which they are allied, but altering of necessity those details of management which depend upon outward circumstances.' *Lyttelton Times*, 31 August 1859 quoted *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 10 September 1859. The lack of interest confirms how quickly Canterbury had moved away from its intended Anglican identity.

<sup>114</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 3 Sep 1859 p 5.

<sup>115</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 17 Aug 1859, p 4.

<sup>116</sup> *North Otago Times*, 11 December 1866; *Star*, 31 July 1872. One argument for standardisation was that worshippers attending a strange parish church were often unable to join in the singing as the hymnal used was unfamiliar. This seems to be a rare recognition by the Anglican Church of population mobility.

<sup>117</sup> *Star*, 22 October 1874. The choir was under-rehearsed.

Kaiapoi where he had ministered for eighteen years. At the time, Willock was facing criticism for his handling of a Church financial scandal, but he neither adopted a conciliatory air nor did he attempt to persuade the Synod by force of reasoning. 'As to the proposed site, he for one would not live upon it if the best house in the Province were erected for him, and an adequate salary provided.' It was a comment that was revealing both of his personality and his priorities.<sup>118</sup>

Many of his contributions dealt with predictably mainstream questions, such as supporting improvements in Sunday school teaching in 1870 and serving on a sub-committee at the General Synod of the Anglican Church in New Zealand in 1874, which rapidly and unsurprisingly decided not to recommend any changes in marriage law.<sup>119</sup> However, these were mostly incidental matters. Willock's substantive contributions to the proceedings of successive Synods related to financial matters, and it would be 'his knowledge of business' that the General Synod would recall in paying tribute to him after his death.<sup>120</sup> It was Willock who presented the reports of the Church Property Trust (he had been Secretary to the Trustees since before Harper had arrived), and of the Jackson Trust, Anglican Canterbury's sole positive legacy of the ephemeral bishop of Lyttelton. While the Synod focused its attention on the world that was to come, Willock kept a close eye on the clergy pension fund. He could take his brethren through a lengthy balance sheet, but on occasion it seems that his mere word was sufficient to block any proposal that he regarded as financially irresponsible.<sup>121</sup> In this regard, certainly, his mathematical training and ability was put to good use.

### Christchurch Cathedral

Willock's involvement in the issue of the cathedral site was characteristic of him in being partly financial in motivation, but it also revealed his wider attitudes about the fate of the Church in Canterbury, and of his frustration at his defeat over the Kaiapoi schools. The Canterbury Association plans had 'surprisingly... made no adequate financial provision for either a cathedral or the office of dean'.<sup>122</sup> The site for the cathedral had been identified by 1851 although it took until 1864 before the reserve for the Cathedral was finally confirmed by the Provincial Council.<sup>123</sup> In the meantime, St Michael's church in Oxford Terrace, half a mile from the Square, had served as a pro-cathedral. There had been much disputation over the cathedral: public and church meetings particularly debated whether the cathedral was a greater priority than building parish churches and whether the building should be of wood or stone. Those whose ideas were not wholeheartedly adopted often resigned from the relevant committee in protest; pique and petulance seem to have frequently characterized the discussions.<sup>124</sup> The cathedral foundations were laid in the first months of 1865, at a cost of

---

<sup>118</sup> *Star*, 23 October 1875.

<sup>119</sup> *Star*, 10 September 1870; *Wellington Independent*, 22, 27 May 1874.

<sup>120</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 18 April 1883.

<sup>121</sup> See, in particular, *Star*, 24 October 1874, also 9 February 1870, 12 January 1874. He was a trustee of both the Home and Melanesian mission funds. *Star*, 4 August 1871, *Wellington Independent*, 16 May 1874.

<sup>122</sup> Colin Brown, *Vision & reality: Christchurch's Cathedral in the Square*, Christchurch, 2000, p. 18

<sup>123</sup> Colin Brown, *Vision & reality* pp. 17-18, 22-23.

<sup>124</sup> Colin Brown, *Vision & reality* pp. 22-26.

some £5000; a year later, work halted for lack of money.<sup>125</sup> In September 1868, the Synod was told that 'during the past year no progress has been made in the erection of the Cathedral.'<sup>126</sup> Willock was not alone in suggesting that the site be abandoned in favour of some other site near the centre of the town. The City Council resolved, in November 1869, to seek to buy the existing site from the church, suggesting that the cathedral could be built on the St Michael's site.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, in July 1864 someone had written to the *Press* making such a suggestion; it may have been Willock. Proposals to sell the site were debated by a 'poorly attended meeting' of contributors to the fund in 1867, and at the 1868 synod.<sup>128</sup> The 1869 synod debated the matter again, essentially considering whether to accept the Council's proposal or not, and sell the site in Cathedral Square, tear down St Michael's and build the cathedral in Oxford Terrace.<sup>129</sup>

Willock was perhaps caught unawares by the way the issue was raised at the 1869 meeting, and had evidently not been consulted in advance. Indeed, the incumbent of Kaiapoi might well have objected to the proposal that was sprung upon him when he entered the meeting as an exercise in metropolitan arrogance. The church of St Michael and All Angels on Oxford Terrace dated from the earliest days of the Settlement, and plans were under active consideration in 1869 for its rebuilding.<sup>130</sup>

Although he was unenthusiastic about the motion (there were, he said, 'plenty of sites available for a cathedral'), he urged the Synod not to 'treat the present resolution with contempt.' Willock's major concern was not the eventual cost of building a cathedral, but rather that an increasingly secular public opinion would insist upon acquiring the existing site for civic purposes while the Church was still trying to raise funds for its construction.<sup>131</sup> There were probably lay Anglicans who thought of a cathedral as simply a large church that was the headquarters of a bishop, in which case the site reserved in Cathedral Square had a denominational marketing advantage, as well as constituting the last physical vestige of Church of England supremacy in the Canterbury Settlement. Others, like the evangelical farmer John Grigg, complained that debates about the cathedral 'were ignoring the great spiritual destitution which existed and concentrating their energies on the erection of this building'.<sup>132</sup> (Evidently, spiritual destitution was no barrier to Grigg amassing tens of thousands of acres near Ashburton; he would long be a critic of the cathedral).

But for William Wellington Willock, a cathedral was something more than a branding exercise; it was a place of a constant round of formal worship, of the kind that he had perhaps encountered at Lichfield as a boy and would certainly have experienced at Ely when he was ordained and as a curate in Manchester. Fundamentally, he was opposed to *any* city centre site: as he put it in 1873, 'he should prefer to see a cathedral erected in a more quiet spot than

---

<sup>125</sup> Colin Brown, *Vision & reality* p. 31.

<sup>126</sup> *Star*, 17 October 1868.

<sup>127</sup> Colin Brown, *Vision & reality* pp. 33, 37; G M McKenzie, *The history of Christchurch Cathedral*, Christchurch, 1931, pp. 36-37.

<sup>128</sup> Colin Brown, *Vision & reality* p. 39.

<sup>129</sup> *Star*, 6 November 1869.

<sup>130</sup> *Star*, 12 June, 15 December 1869.

<sup>131</sup> *Star*, 6 November 1869.

<sup>132</sup> Quoted in Colin Brown, *Vision & Reality*, p. 41.

Cathedral square.<sup>133</sup> His position was one of genuine devotion, and he disliked the "civic religion" dimension that he feared, not without reason, would come to characterise a cathedral in the Square; his view of the cathedral's role was however close to that of Bishop Harper and of the Dean, Henry Jacobs, 'a centre of unity for the diocese, a place for distinctly episcopal functions such as ordination, where worship was a central concern and a daily responsibility, and in which the cathedral choral tradition would be maintained'. Jacobs and Harper, like Willock, were strongly influenced by English experience.<sup>134</sup>

There was a downside of the position of the Anglican Church's established status in England. Over the centuries, the basic ecclesiastical unit, the parish, had also become part of the secular administrative machine. Annual parish meetings voted local rates to pay for a disparate range of activities from highway repairs through to the maintenance and running costs of the church itself. In country parishes, the ratepayers gathered in the Church annexe where the clergyman robed for service, hence the term "vestry", but in a town the size of Manchester the proceedings had to be held in the body of the church itself. Since Dissenters were legally entitled to participate as parishioners of the national Church, and because industrial areas were Nonconformist strongholds, these annual parish meetings had become riotous affairs by the eighteen-twenties. By the time Willock arrived in Manchester, such confrontations were becoming a memory, thanks to the reformist wave of the eighteen-thirties. Some administrative responsibilities, such as the relief of poverty, had been transferred to new authorities, and Manchester itself became a borough in 1838, and so the parish church ceased to be the centre of local government. Above all, Anglicans abandoned their futile attempts to impose church rates on citizens who conscientiously refused to pay. Of course, there was not much likelihood half a century later that the residents of Christchurch would invade an Anglican citadel to stage a political coup, but perhaps the memory lingered.

However, Manchester's downtown church unexpectedly became a renewed focus for turbulent discontent during Willock's time in the city and, bizarrely, as the result of factionalism within the Church of England itself. As already noted, in 1847 Manchester became the headquarters of the first Anglican diocese to be created in England in almost three centuries. The arrival of a bishop entailed raising the ancient parish church to cathedral status, which in turn required legislation to apportion existing ecclesiastical revenues. The issue of dividing up money split local Anglicans into two camps, an official faction that sought to prioritise the needs of the new cathedral and an Evangelical opposition that argued for channelling resources towards 'the spiritual needs of the town,' so that 'the gospel might be preached in every lane and alley and dark place.' On the Tuesday after Easter 1849, the day of the annual parish meeting, the issue came to a head, as it was known that the two parties planned to run rival candidates for church offices.

While there was evidently a major gulf between the cathedral authorities and the members of the Church Reform Society, left to themselves they might have settled their differences like Anglicans and gentlemen. Unfortunately, they did not get the chance. Manchester had escaped major social and political violence during the crisis year of 1848 that had just passed, but radical working class elements remained active and decided to use the

---

<sup>133</sup> *Star*, 20 February 1873.

<sup>134</sup> Colin Brown, *Vision & Reality*, p. 57

1849 meeting to dramatise their presence. A small group of Chartists attempted to take control of the meeting by convening the proceedings and installing one of their number as chairman. To achieve this, they needed to make the first move and, accordingly, they commenced moving resolutions even before daily worship had concluded, making inflammatory speeches while the choir was still intoning the service. 'It was a question to-day whether Christ should be again betrayed and crucified by the Judas Iscariots who had got hold of the money bags,' proclaimed one agitator.<sup>135</sup> With his cousin, R. Peel Willock junior, nominated as part of the official slate, Willock would certainly have known what was going on, and it is understandable that he concluded that the atmosphere of sanctity that he associated with the concept of a cathedral could not be guaranteed in the heart of a busy city.<sup>136</sup>

The crucial debate on the location of the Christchurch cathedral took place at a special meeting of the Synod convened in February 1873 to consider a formal offer by the Provincial Government to purchase the Cathedral Square site. For Willock, who was part of a two-man sub-committee on the issue, the gathering came just weeks had he had admitted defeat over the Kaiapoi school district. Once again, he supported a motion to sell the Cathedral Square site. Willock believed that it would take the diocese many years to raise the funds needed to build a cathedral: 'in his own town he was met with scorn and ridicule when he asked people to contribute.' Both the City Council and the Provincial Government had shown interest in buying the site. 'If they persisted in retaining the present site and did not make use of it, could they retain it if the public considered that it should be obtained for public purposes?' How could they withstand the allegation that they were standing in the way of progress? His preferred site would be at Cranmer Square, admittedly only a few hundred metres from the city centre, but across the Avon and adjacent to Christ's College and Hagley Park. Land was cheaper there, and space could be reserved to build an episcopal residence. Reviewing the challenge of funding the project and the futility of hanging on to a controversial site, William Wellington Willock was moved to pronounce his own damning verdict on the Canterbury project. 'It would be far better for them to recognise their true position — that they stood there in the eyes of the State nothing more than as a band of organised jumpers.' The Synod laughed at the sally. 'Jumpers' was a nickname given to a group of Welsh Methodists who had cavorted with joy in the belief that they had achieved salvation: a similar but longer-lasting term, 'Shakers,' described a parallel sect in the United States. But Willock's humour had a bitter tinge, as he urged his fellow Anglicans to face the fact that 'the Church of England was not the dominant church it was intended to be by the founders of the Canterbury settlement.'<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> Derek Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England: The Structure of Politics in Victorian Cities*, London, 1979 ed., pp. 37-43; W.R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850*, London, 1972, pp. 221-31; *Manchester Guardian*, 11 April 1849.

<sup>136</sup> R. Peel Willock junior was presumably the son of Robert Peel Willock, appointed postmaster of Manchester in 1828. It is also likely that he was the Willock referred to as a member of the platform party at a Town Hall meeting on the cathedral issue in January 1850, *Manchester Guardian*, 12 January 1850. Christchurch would become the only Anglican cathedral in New Zealand not to double as a parish church.

<sup>137</sup> *Star*, 20 February 1873. The Sumner Square site that Willock favoured adjoined Chester Street. It was not the site at the north end of Sumner Square acquired shortly after for the Normal School, *Star*, 19 February, 18 June 1873.

There is more than a little historical irony about Willock's open acknowledgement of the failure of Anglican Canterbury. Notwithstanding his plea of realism, the proposal to abandon Cathedral Square was defeated, and the diocese was soon moving ahead with fundraising and construction of its Gothic headquarters, with Willock serving on organising committees and generously subscribing £100 to pay for a column (his brother in law, John Fletcher of Ambleside, in England, gave another column).<sup>138</sup> On 26 May 1882 the great bell in the spire tolled across the city at the hour of Willock's funeral.<sup>139</sup> As early as 1914, Christchurch was embracing the visual symbol of the cathedral as evidence of its Englishness, a watered-down recollection of the Anglican project whose reality Willock had seen evaporate in his own lifetime.<sup>140</sup> And, in a further twist, Willock himself may have been responsible for the outcome. The motion to abandon Cathedral Square split the Synod down the middle, with seventeen members voting on each side — technically a defeat, confirmed when the bishop gave his casting vote against. But the vote split the Synod in another way. Fourteen hard-headed members of the nineteen laity present voted to sell, but twelve of the fifteen clergy opposed the move.<sup>141</sup> The Synod had laughed, but it may be that his fellow clerics did not feel flattered by their description as 'a band of organised jumpers.'

### The 1875 Embezzlement Case

Willock seems to have been disengaging himself from Kaiapoi well before his formal resignation in June 1875.<sup>142</sup> In March 1874 he put his lands on the Heathcote up for sale, his holding having grown over the years to 590 acres. Since he had occupied a parsonage house at Kaiapoi, the sale may have been to provide capital to buy a home of his own.<sup>143</sup> Outwardly, he gained new clerical honours. In February 1875, he was appointed to a vacant canonry, making him a member of the chapter of the unbuilt cathedral. This was an appropriate recognition of his seniority as well as a sensible way of appeasing a critic of the project.<sup>144</sup> Then, in October of that year, he was named as Archdeacon of Akaroa, responsible for the oversight of parishes from the Waimakariri in the north to the Rakaia in the south, excluding the metropolitan area of Christchurch itself.<sup>145</sup> Willock the ritualist took his archidiaconal

---

<sup>138</sup> *Star*, 19, 26 September 1873, 15 July 1874. For the £100 to pay for a column, *Star*, 24 August 1881; see also McKenzie, pp. 188, 211 and Colin Brown, *Vision & Reality*, pp 41-42.

<sup>139</sup> *Star*, 26 May 1882.

<sup>140</sup> John Cookson in Cookson and Dunstall, eds, *Southern Capital*, p. 17.

<sup>141</sup> *Star*, 20 February 1874.

<sup>142</sup> He was certainly spending time in Christchurch from the end of 1873 although the opening of the railway in 1872 would have made this possible from Kaiapoi. Willock attended a levee to welcome the new governor, Sir James Fergusson, in November 1873, and he was a judge at the Christchurch Horticultural Show soon afterwards. In January 1874 he was elected to the Council of the local Astronomical Society and in February he was appointed as one of the stewards for the regatta of the Christchurch Boating Club. *Star*, 12 November, 3 December 1873, 31 January, 27 February 1874. (Prior to the opening of the railway, road travel between Kaiapoi and Christchurch was not always easy. 'No one ... could possibly travel from Christchurch to Kaiapoi just now, without bearing a strong likeness to the pilgrims emerging from the Slough of Despond,' one journalist wrote in the wet winter of 1862. *Otago Witness*, 21 June 1862.)

<sup>143</sup> DCantB. Cox states that he moved first to Christchurch and then to Fendalton. Cox, *Men of Mark*, p. 232.

<sup>144</sup> *Star*, 11 February 1875.

<sup>145</sup> *Star*, 20 October 1875. Akaroa was probably chosen as a compliment to the Rhodes family, settlers there since 1839, and major benefactors of the cathedral. There was perhaps a hint of a spurious ecclesiastical link: Captain Owen Stanley of HMS *Britomart*, who had hoisted the Union Jack at Akaroa in 1840, was brother of

role seriously, finding fault with vestments and church furnishings on his visitations, but that is what Anglican archdeacons are for. Ecclesiastical preferment cloaked the central point that the Venerable Archdeacon Willock was now pre-eminently a Church bureaucrat. His election to the Christchurch Club in 1875 represented a tacit homage to the elite of squatters and merchants who now dominated Canterbury.<sup>146</sup> Primarily, Willock held 'the offices of Secretary and Treasurer to the Church Property Trustees,'<sup>147</sup> but there is a distinct impression that a number of part-time positions were stitched together to ensure him a continuing income and role. Fatefully, one of these was the post of Bursar at Christ's College, to which he was appointed in September 1874.<sup>148</sup> This would place him in the vortex of 1875 embezzlement case, the third of the issues from that period to throw light on the status of Anglicanism in Canterbury.

Canterbury's clone of an English public school, Christ's College, employed Oxford collegiate terminology for its administrative posts. The Bursar had overall charge of the finances, but the day-to-day handling of cash was in the hands of the Steward. He was Frederick Pavitt, who had been appointed in February 1866 and also acted for the Church Property Fund. As would be expected of a man who bore the title 'Diocesan Accountant,' Pavitt was a solid citizen, for instance serving in 1872 as foreman of the jury during the local assizes, 'a man of superior education and outward respectability' in the words of the judge who would sentence him for embezzlement.<sup>149</sup> In September 1874, the unsuspecting Church Property Trustees even agreed to increase his annual £250 salary.<sup>150</sup> Within months, it would become embarrassingly clear that too much trust and responsibility had been entrusted to one individual, and that the complex manner in which cash flowed through various diocesan and school accounts had presented a fatal and too easily disguised temptation to fraud.

Willock was alerted to a possible problem in the Christ's College accounts by Canon Cotterill, who was also involved in the financial affairs of the diocese.<sup>151</sup> On 28 April 1875, Willock began his examination of Pavitt's accounts: within a week, the Steward was remanded on embezzlement charges in the local police court. Finding 'alarming deficiencies'

---

the hugely popular Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Dean of Westminster. However, the connection may not have been widely known in New Zealand until Dean Stanley and other members of the family in England decided to present a memorial font to the cathedral to commemorate the connection. It remains a feature of the building. *Star*, 12 March 1880. Willock's appointment as archdeacon came just too late for possible confrontation with another ecclesiastic. The Reverend Edmund Nevill had died at Akaroa in February 1875, attended on his death bed by his brother S.T. Nevill, the Anglican bishop of Dunedin. According to local tradition, the bishop insisted that his brother be interred in the churchyard, even though Anglican burials were carried out in the local cemetery. Bishop Nevill was also a graduate of Magdalene College Cambridge, but this does not seem to have created any bond between the two clerics. E.R. Nevill, ed., *A Bishop's Diary: Samuel Tarratt Nevill*, Dunedin, 1922, mentions his brother's death but not the reputed funeral.

<sup>146</sup> DCantB.

<sup>147</sup> Cox, *Men of Mark*, p. 232.

<sup>148</sup> DCantB. But one newspaper reported Willock stating that he had been appointed Bursar on 7 February 1874. *Otago Witness*, 29 May 1875.

<sup>149</sup> *Star*, 22 May 1869, 6 April 1872, 8 July 1875. He was 'encored' when he sang a song at a 'Winter Entertainment' in 1870. *Star*, 18 June 1870. Ironically, a few months before his downfall, Pavitt was a witness in a court case that turned on whether the accused had used the word 'scoundrel.' *Star*, 28 December 1874.

<sup>150</sup> *Star*, 6 May 1875. Willock claimed not to know the extent of the pay rise. A report that Pavitt's salary had been raised to £400 would no doubt have been embarrassing if confirmed. *Evening Post* (Wellington), 7 May 1875.

<sup>151</sup> Cotterill's obituary appears in the *Star*, 30 June 1902. In 1875, he was Treasurer of the Clergy Stipend Fund and various missionary trusts. *Star*, 15 May 1875. In 1881 he was appointed Treasurer of the Cathedral.

in the books, and hearing that Harper was 'in the College library at the time,' Willock persuaded the bishop to go to Pavitt and demand that he settle the balance of the various accounts within twenty-four hours. Harper found Pavitt in bed 'apparently very ill' and was reluctant to press him for a full explanation.<sup>152</sup> Through the nightmare weeks that followed, Pavitt showed the symptoms of someone on the verge of a nervous breakdown who had lived for years with the knowledge that his deception would eventually be discovered.

On May the third, Harper and Willock decided to confront Pavitt, and once again found him in bed. By this time, Willock had secured access to bank accounts, and could precisely document a deficiency just short of £800. However, Bishop Harper admitted in evidence that the real loss to the diocese was 'something like £5000' and one report put it as high as £6800.<sup>153</sup> The cornered Steward could give no explanation of the figures, except to say that 'he had had very large losses in flax.' Calling his actions 'his sin,' Pavitt 'expressed great sorrow' and 'said he wished the Church Property Trustees to have everything he possessed.' He talked of a legacy that he expected to inherit from 'someone in England' which would yield between £3000 and £5000, but the two priests were not impressed when he could not produce any documentation to back up his expectations. The day after the bedroom meeting, he submitted a list of assets, including his pony and trap and even his furniture, which he wished to offer 'to diminish the loss occasioned by himself.'<sup>154</sup> Harper and Willock had to make a rapid decision whether to seek restitution or retribution. They chose the latter. Given the amount of money involved and scale of the breach of trust, the two clerics probably had no alternative but to opt for prosecution, but subsequent events suggest that it is possible some may have felt that the Iron Priest had made a very sudden leap from naivety to vengeance.

How had Frederick Pavitt got himself into such a mess? His initial explanation was bald but intriguing: 'he had taken the money to make up debts that had occurred through flax speculation, and that his reason for doing so was to shield Canon Cotterill, who had engaged with him in flax speculation.'<sup>155</sup> It was not until Pavitt read a statement from the dock, moments before receiving sentence, that the full story came out. In 1868 he had gone into business with a partner (evidently Cotterill) to process flax fibre for export. 'We had very little money with which to commence the enterprise, but the prospects of profit were so good that we had no difficulty in making arrangements with merchants here to advance money.' Reports from England of buoyant flax prices tempted the partners into over-expansion, and they quickly had three mills in operation. 'We soon found, however, that the advance for which we had agreed was not nearly sufficient to pay working expenses and from various causes there was great delay in shipping the material to England.' Worse still, by the time Pavitt's first consignment reached England, the price of flax had fallen by half. For an under-capitalised business employing eighty workmen and facing instalment payments on machinery, this was a crisis. However, Pavitt was also assured that 'the fall was only temporary, and that the price would soon rise again.' In the meantime, the best course of action was to lay off his workers and close down his factories until trade revived.

---

<sup>152</sup> *Star*, 7 July; *Otago Witness*, 29 May 1875.

<sup>153</sup> *Star*, 6 May, 7 July 1875; *Taranaki Herald*, 9 June 1875.

<sup>154</sup> *Otago Witness*, 29 May 1875; *Star*, 6 May, 7 July 1875.

<sup>155</sup> *Star*, 7 May 1875.

Unfortunately, suspending operations involved paying his employees what they were owed in wages. It was at that point that, as Pavitt put it, he was 'tempted to ... borrow out of money in my hands to tide over the pressing difficulty, hoping by such means to receive funds to replace what I had appropriated.' In fact, the price of flax continued to slide and, out of self-preservation, Pavitt's creditors pressed him to settle his debts. He helped himself to more Church funds and soon found himself too deeply implicated in fraud to put matters right.<sup>156</sup>

The involvement of Canon Cotterill in all of this was embarrassing. 'I was engaged with him in flax transactions,' Cotterill confirmed in evidence. 'They commenced in 1869, and I think everything was stopped about 1870. I never had the slightest suspicion that there was any pressure further than our own funds would bear, in connection with those transactions.' Publicly at least, nobody seems to have enquired what sort of accounts Pavitt signed off to his somnolent sleeping partner: had the Canon unknowingly benefited from the malversion of Church funds? Damaging, too, was Pavitt's apparently sincere explanation of his decision not to declare the business bankrupt as its affairs unravelled: 'had I then been the only person concerned, I should have done as others were doing to free myself of my obligations, but my partner being a clergyman with a large family, and in ill-health, I thought it not unlikely that such an humiliation would cost him his life.' One obvious comment would be that if Canon Cotterill had wished to avoid the risk of public shame, he should have steered clear of a speculative investment project. Pavitt also had a family to support, he was destroying himself with worry, but he received no mercy from the gentlemen of the cloth. 'How could you be induced to do this horrible thing?' Cotterill had asked him. 'Why did you not make known your difficulties to some of us, or got help from your brothers or your other friends[?]'<sup>157</sup> The good Canon might have asked himself the same question in another form: why indeed had Pavitt felt unable to turn to him for compassionate understanding?

In the face of the evidence marshalled by Willock and accepted by Pavitt, there was no room for doubt about the facts of the case. Counsel for the defence, Thomas Joynt, was one of the ablest and most persuasive barristers in New Zealand,<sup>158</sup> but he may have attempted to be too clever on this occasion. Rather than pleading that his client had never intended permanently to deprive his employers of their money, he advanced instead the technical argument that Willock and his colleagues were trustees of the Church Property Fund for religious purposes only and that, in any case, the election of trustees had been carried out 'in a manner contrary to the provisions of the Religious, Charitable, and Educational Trust Act, 1856, and that therefore they could not be described as the owners of the property said to be embezzled.' The judge brushed aside Joynt's argument on the common-sense grounds that Pavitt had clearly been siphoning off money that did not belong to him, whoever might have the legitimate claim to control it. Pavitt changed his plea to guilty, and was sentenced to ten years penal servitude.<sup>159</sup>

Willock had efficiently discharged a distasteful task, unravelling Pavitt's financial deceptions within days of the first alert that something was wrong, mobilising his bishop to confront the problem and acting as the key prosecution witness to secure conviction in the

---

<sup>156</sup> *Star*, 8 July 1875.

<sup>157</sup> *Star*, 7 July 1875.

<sup>158</sup> Obituary, *Star*, 5 September 1907.

<sup>159</sup> *Star*, 7, 8 July 1875.

courts. Some, however, were critical. As a correspondent in the *Star* put it, Pavitt had 'received what many persons openly considered to be an inordinate sentence' although the sentence was hardly Willock's fault.<sup>160</sup> Given the elastic financial ethics of a colonial society, some probably regarded Pavitt's actions as a case of unauthorised borrowing rather than outright theft. Pavitt had pleaded a reluctance to drag Canon Cotterill into bankruptcy, but the clergy had not hesitated in destroying the man they had themselves trusted to manage their finances for so long. On the other hand, the scale of Pavitt's debts meant that there was no realistic chance that he could reimburse the diocese for his defalcations, with or without the mystery legacy from England, but the speed of his downfall suggested that alternative and merciful strategies had not been considered. It seems that neither the trustees of the Church Property Fund nor the governors of Christ's College were summoned to discuss the matter. Most of all, there would have been a feeling that the clergy had massively failed in their duty to manage their own affairs. Thousands of pounds had vanished from their accounts over a period of five or six years before they noticed the problem. If this undercurrent of criticism did indeed exist, as the *Star's* correspondent implied and the subsequent Synod row confirmed, then much of this would have been directed against Willock himself, the more so as Bishop Harper had a reputation for avoiding confrontation. Willock might have prided himself on uncovering the Pavitt fraud within months of his appointment as Bursar. Others would have concentrated rather on the point that this efficient man of business had been a trustee of the Church Property Fund since September 1870, about the time when Pavitt had started to dip his hands into the diocesan treasury.

For all his recognition that Canterbury had long ceased to be an Anglican preserve, Willock would probably have shrugged off public censure as impertinent and uninformed. He was to discover, to his intense anger, that the same criticism had taken root within his own band of organised jumpers, and that on this issue, even lay Anglicans were prepared to stand up to their clergy. The October 1875 diocesan Synod was a grim and fractious gathering. In his opening address, on 19 October, Bishop Harper bleakly warned that 'the very unexpected and serious losses' caused by Pavitt's depredations would 'for a time injuriously affect our Church operations.' The resources of the Church Property Trust 'must needs be crippled for a while' and the construction of the cathedral set back by at least two years. Harper submitted a report by a commission he had established to investigate 'the defalcations of the late Church Steward,' but it quickly became clear that this did not satisfy the lay members of the Synod.<sup>161</sup> The following day, a lay member, G.L. Mellish, moved that the Synod create its own committee to look into the running of the Church Property Trust. Willock's decision to second the motion could have been a gesture either of bravado or of conciliation, even though the mere fact of proposing an independent investigation implied an affront to the bishop's own attempt to clean up the mess. But worse was to follow. Another lay member, G.L. Lee, tacked on an explicit amendment, mandating the committee to enquire 'whether the heavy losses sustained in the Church Property Trust Estate and Diocesan Funds by the defalcations of the late Steward are due to any neglect of proper supervision on the part of the trustees or

---

<sup>160</sup> *Star*, 22 September 1875, letter from 'Uncommon Sense'.

<sup>161</sup> *Star*, 20 October 1875. Construction work in Cathedral Square had reached window-sill level. Legislation to abolish the provinces had just passed through parliament, so the Canterbury authorities would have been inhibited for bidding for the site anyway.

officials ... and, if so, whether any legal liability will attach to such trustees or officials.' Apparently without consulting his seconder, Mellish accepted the amendment, and the Synod appointed a committee of seven, all of them laity, to fast-track a report.<sup>162</sup> As it began its deliberations, a major row erupted over ritualism, with a lay member delivering a passionately Protestant speech objecting to the creeping infiltration into church services of unacceptable ceremonial. The Synod, already unusually fractious as it dealt with an above-average number of minor squabbles, now reacted with alarm to the activities of Willock's successor at Kaiapoi, H.E. Carlyon. The clerical members were forced into a notably defensive stance, asserting their own loyalty to the principles of the Reformation but anxious to maintain flexibility in worship.<sup>163</sup> The investigating committee was definitely not operating in an atmosphere that was respectful of priestly infallibility.

G.L. Mellish, who chaired the committee, was already well informed about the embezzlement case. He was the Christchurch police magistrate, and had presided at Frederick Pavitt's committal proceedings on 6 May, when the sensational story had first broken. In a further hearing a week later, the court was told that six more charges were being preferred against the delinquent Steward.<sup>164</sup> Not only had Mellish occupied a ringside seat with access to the sorry detail, but he was also an outspoken personality who was accustomed to command. He was a former Army officer who served in the Crimea, and returned to the colours to fight in the New Zealand wars.<sup>165</sup> Given that Willock was also convinced of his innate personal authority, a clash between the two was highly likely. Furthermore, the two had been neighbours for the previous years: Mellish had only just been promoted to Christchurch, having served from 1868 to 1875 as resident magistrate at Kaiapoi.<sup>166</sup> He had served on the Anglican school committee in 1871, and was nominated for the abortive school board in 1872.<sup>167</sup> There is no evidence that they had ever clashed, but it is hard to imagine that the town of Kaiapoi was big enough to contain two such strong-minded personalities.

Certainly if Willock had expected to be hailed by the investigating committee as the fraud-busting saviour of the diocesan finances, he encountered a savage shock.<sup>168</sup> The flashpoint was a further embarrassing revelation about the relationship between the Trustees and their dishonest Steward, which Willock himself had to explain to the Synod. In 1868, two

---

<sup>162</sup> *Star*, 21 October 1875.

<sup>163</sup> *Star*, 22, 23 October 1875.

<sup>164</sup> *Star*, 6, 13 May 1875. (The *Star* was an evening newspaper, and reported morning court proceedings on the same day.)

<sup>165</sup> Obituary in *Timaru Herald*, 30 December 1881. George Lilly Mellish was 47 at the time of his death. On 26 May, Mellish had dismissed a charge against David Jobson who had violated railway by-laws by jumping aboard a moving train. His denunciation of railway staff as 'overbearing,' and his implication that Jobson was deserving of special treatment because he was a prominent local citizen were denounced as 'thoroughly contemptible.' *Timaru Herald*, 31 May 1875, and also *Star*, 26 May, *North Otago Times*, 5 June 1875.

<sup>166</sup> Mellish was appointed as temporary police magistrate in Christchurch in December 1874. He was still officially linked to Kaiapoi, where he was returning officer at a by-election, in February 1875, but was apparently confirmed in office by March. His comments in the Jobson case suggest that he was commuting by train between the two places for a few months. *Star*, 8 December, *Otago Witness*, 26 December 1874; *Timaru Herald*, 12 February 1875; *Star*, 24 March 1875.

<sup>167</sup> *Star*, 18 April 1871; 7, 14 September 1872. In 1874, Mellish and Willock were both members of a Kaiapoi deputation to lobby the Provincial Government to control the Waimakariri. *Star*, 16 October 1874.

<sup>168</sup> Willock's statement to the full Synod that he was ready 'to give the fullest information in his power on any point, God helping him so to do' may not have been the best moment to appeal to divine backing. *Star*, 30 October 1875.

years after his appointment, Pavitt had persuaded the Trustees 'that he could not properly carry out the duties of his office without having larger powers entrusted to him' and an authorisation was drawn up, 'giving large powers to the Church Steward.' Willock insisted that this had been done with the concurrence of three trustees who were prominent businessmen, 'not easily to be taken in.' Willock admitted frankly that they had been 'deceived, and most villainously deceived,' but he insisted that everyone had placed 'the most implicit confidence' in their employee, and Willock himself 'would have as soon suspected the Bishop of doing wrong as he would the late Steward.'<sup>169</sup> Members of the investigating committee, mindful no doubt that 1868 was the year Pavitt had branched out into the flax business, were not impressed. One remarked that the power of attorney document 'gave pretty comprehensive powers, and that Mr Pavitt appeared to have done just as he liked.' Willock flared up, saying 'he would allow no man to make such a statement in his presence.' Mellish had called him to order, saying 'he could not allow a member of the Committee to be spoken to in that way.' Willock was not accustomed to such a rebuke, and continued to fume about what he regarded as the insulting tone of the claim that no control had been exercised over Pavitt. 'I have never before been addressed in such a way,' he insisted later; 'neither will I take it from any man, no matter his position or where.' His instinctive reaction was to 'have taken up my hat and walked out', but he added: 'If I had withdrawn, and refused to give further evidence, it might have been said that I was trying to burke further inquiry.' Willock felt that he had been humiliated, and the affront to his dignity had to be revenged.<sup>170</sup>

On Thursday 28 October, one week after it was appointed, Mellish's committee submitted its findings to the Synod. Although it was 'quite unable to present an exhaustive report' on the entire management of diocesan property, the committee still managed to produce an extensive indictment of naively lax mismanagement. The Trustees were criticised for their imprudence in handing 'extraordinary' powers to Pavitt and for having 'failed to exercise sufficient supervision over his actions, or to examine for themselves into matters submitted by him to them for ratification.' They had not even checked the Steward's accounts against their own bank records. More broadly, the committee suspected that 'the Estate has suffered to a very large extent by want of care in dealing with the Property.' Leases had been let on unfavourable terms for indefensibly long periods, with some suspicion that kick-backs and favouritism had influenced the process. Sureties had not been enforced nor accounts properly audited. Some of the recommendations were openly insulting in their implication of managerial incompetence, such as the insistence 'that, to avoid complications which may arise, definite instructions in writing be given the Church Steward as to the duties required of him,' and Willock would testily insist that most of the obvious reforms had already been carried into effect. Cumulatively, the report was a frontal attack on clerical control of diocesan funds, culminating in a proposal for 'the appointment of a Commission of business men, especially chosen for their acquaintance with the subject' who would conduct a thorough review before the next Synod.<sup>171</sup> In summary, the suggestion was that Willock's forensic accounting had come a little late in the day.

---

<sup>169</sup> *Star*, 30 October 1875. One of the three businessmen, R.J.S. Harman, had helped organise a 'Fine Arts and Manufactures' Exhibition in 1871. McAloon, *No Idle Rich*, p. 161.

<sup>170</sup> *Star*, 3 November 1875.

<sup>171</sup> *Star*, 29 October 1875.

When the report came up for discussion the following day, Friday, it was clear that the clergy had determined that only a full-scale counter-attack could preserve their control over diocesan affairs. From the chair, Bishop Harper set the tone, suggesting that 'the time which the Committee had at their disposal, was not sufficient to warrant them in passing the severe censure they did.' As their bishop, he 'held himself responsible for the action of the Trustees, and therefore the severe censure applied to himself.' Since the Synod elected the Trustees, it too stood condemned, as did everyone who had held office, whether past or present. Having virtually redefined the report as an indictment of the entire Anglican population of Canterbury, Harper sweetly proposed that 'some action should be taken with regard to the adoption of the report.'

Mellish boldly proposed the report's adoption, but not one member rose to second him. It was the prelude to a wide-ranging and distinctly bad-tempered debate. Willock had a choice of positive responses to the squabble. On the one hand, he could have kept quiet. He was rarely a prominent speaker anyway, and on this occasion he might have maintained a high-minded silence. Equally, he might have attempted to rise above the acerbic atmosphere, admitted mistakes and called for conciliation and consensus. Magnanimity is a generous policy in victory, but it is an even more useful tactic in defeat. Characteristically, and fatally for his own reputation, Willock did neither. He scored a point in one clash with Mellish, pointing out that one block of land allegedly leased below the market value had in fact been let to a tenant on condition that he drained the property. But he immediately threw away his advantage by personalising the whole issue. 'The Ven. Archdeacon Willock said that when he was before the Committee, he was treated like some rowdy drunkard.' It was an ill-judged remark, for it conveyed the idea that Willock regarded the issue of the mismanagement of Church funds as secondary to a passing affront to his own status. Worse still, for a man who was standing upon his dignity, it was a remarkably cheap sneer. Obviously it was directed against Mellish, whose stock-in-trade as police magistrate was inflicting condign justice upon the city's inebriates. There can be little doubt that the gibe, duly reported in Friday evening's *Star*, reverberated around Christchurch that weekend. And anybody who knew the confrontational Mellish would have guessed that this would be one occasion upon which the dogmatic Willock would not be permitted the last word.

As the Synod moved into a grinding third week, Mellish was prepared to bide his time. He waited until Bishop Harper had conceded the main point at issue, accepting on Tuesday that 'there was a strong feeling in the Synod, and also amongst the public, that something further should be done' to investigate diocesan financial management. With his main aim of an independent commission achieved, Mellish promptly rose to his feet to settle the personal score. 'He observed in the reports in the newspapers that on Friday evening last, the Ven Archdeacon Willock said that he was treated like an old drunken rowdy before the Committee.' Mellish interpreted this comment as directed at himself. 'That is what I did say,' replied Willock. Mellish insisted 'this was a charge of such a nature that it was right the circumstances of the case should be placed before the public, in order that they might judge whether such a remark was justified or not.' He then outlined Willock's alleged angry response to the suggestion that Pavitt had been given carte blanche to help himself to Church funds. When Willock retorted that 'the Committee had come there with preconceived notions in their heads,' members called him to order and even the usually mild Bishop Harper told

him to keep to the point. The solicitor W.P. Cowlshaw urged Willock to withdraw his offensive comment, but he refused, adding, 'I was addressed as though I was being committed for contempt of court and given in charge of a policeman.'<sup>172</sup> As G.R. Macdonald wrote, Willock's assertion that his dignity was the central issue 'did not get much sympathy.' The *Southland Times* gleefully reported the story under the heading 'A Happy Family,' and by comparison ironically praised Christchurch's argumentative City Council for its 'use of sedate and proper language.'<sup>173</sup> This cannot have been a happy time for the ageing Willock.

## LAST YEARS

However, one activity during Willock's final years provided a positive outlet for his talents and training, and which connects him with modern-day New Zealand. In July 1873, he was appointed to Board of Governors of Canterbury College, and so became a founder of the University of Canterbury.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, according to G.R. Macdonald, he was also one of its first students, enrolling when classes began in 1873 in botany and zoology.<sup>175</sup> Certainly by the summer of 1874, he was well established as either an exhibitor of roses or a judge at local flower shows.<sup>176</sup> Thirty five years earlier, Willock had been elected to a Fellowship in an exclusively Anglican university. Now he adjusted to the existence of a college that was open to all faiths. When the question arose of affiliating with the federal University of New Zealand, it was Willock who proposed forming a common front with the University of Otago notwithstanding its Presbyterian ethos.<sup>177</sup> He was a frequent attender at College Board meetings until May of 1877, often turning out at short notice for specially convened sessions. Although, as was his wont, he rarely spoke, he took a close interest in all aspects of business, which led him to oppose a plan to give executive powers to committee chairmen. 'Personally he would say that from the practice of splitting up into committees, he was kept in profound ignorance of what was going on in other branches of the College, and he would certainly oppose anything tending still further to entangle matters.'<sup>178</sup> He took an interest in the Museum, which came under the Board's control. He wondered, for instance, 'if they could not put up buildings of less size, and erect one of a more ornamental character, and not occupy the splendid site by [a] building so intensely ugly in their character as the present.'<sup>179</sup> He did not object to Sunday opening of the Museum but insisted that it be closed on Good Friday and Christmas Day, although he later unsuccessfully supported a move to prevent the opening of an art exhibition on Sundays.<sup>180</sup> He took an interest in the teaching of science, urging that the Provincial Government spend money on apparatus for the teaching of chemistry.<sup>181</sup> And Canterbury College challenged his preconceptions in one other respect: it admitted women.

---

<sup>172</sup> *Star*, 3 November 1875.

<sup>173</sup> DCantB; *Southland Times*, 15 December 1875.

<sup>174</sup> *Star*, 10 July 1873.

<sup>175</sup> DCantB.

<sup>176</sup> *Star*, 13 November, 4, 11 December 1874.

<sup>177</sup> *Star*, 3 March 1874.

<sup>178</sup> *Star*, 30 April 1875.

<sup>179</sup> *Star*, 25 January 1875.

<sup>180</sup> *Star*, 13 June 1874, 31 May 1877.

<sup>181</sup> *Star*, 31 March 1875 and also 8 February 1875.

In October 1876, the Board was informed that female students were sometimes to be found in the classrooms as late as eleven o'clock at night, which Willock found 'most improper.' As W.J. Gardner commented, it was probably for the best that the approval of the Board of Governors was never formally sought for the admission of women to Canterbury College: the masterful Professor John Macmillan Brown had simply decided the matter for them. In fact, in 1876 there was only one formally matriculated female undergraduate and it is unlikely that the sixteen year-old Helen Connon faced any great risk of impropriety. Willock did not live to see Professor Brown marrying Miss Connon.<sup>182</sup>

William Wellington Willock was not permitted the time span to make much impression in his new role as archdeacon.<sup>183</sup> G.R. Macdonald discounts as unreliable gossip reports that his relations with Harper were poisonous, with an open breach only avoided by the bishop's forbearance.<sup>184</sup> In contrast with the acrid row over the Pavitt case, it is pleasant to note that Willock spoke in brief and conciliatory terms when the Synod of 1876 discussed how best to resolve disputes between clergy and parishioners, such as had arisen with his successor at Kaiapoi.<sup>185</sup> But when the annual Synod assembled again in October 1877, William Wellington Willock was not present. 'A resolution was passed expressing sympathy with the family of Archdeacon Willock, on account of his prolonged illness, and acknowledging the services he has rendered to the Diocese in various ways.' A later reference to 'paralysis' suggests he had suffered a stroke, and the tone of the Synod's resolution indicates that he was not expected to recover. His resignation from the Board of Governors of Canterbury College followed soon afterwards.<sup>186</sup>

William Wellington Willock died at his home in Fendalton on 23 May 1882, just short of his 67<sup>th</sup> birthday. He had been an invalid for nearly five years, which must have been the more frustrating to one of his active disposition. The obituary in the Christchurch *Star* was muted, noting that he was 'one of Canterbury's pilgrim fathers' and adding that 'his name and face were familiar throughout the Province, and wherever thoroughly known he was as thoroughly respected.' Willock was praised as 'one of the first of his church to acquiesce in the system of State education,' a generous tribute even if it only told half the story. Although thirty years earlier, he had been 'the most advanced high churchman' in Canterbury, and had 'probably never relaxed his opinions on matters of ritual, he lived to see them too commonly held by those around him to attract any attention.' In the diocesan Synod, 'his opinion carried that weight which attaches to the views of a man of strong character and sound common sense.' The notice concluded with a similarly tactful formula: 'we have lost in Mr Willock a clergyman of a sound, strong, practical, clear-headed type, that is by no means too common now-a-days.'<sup>187</sup> The formal notification of Willock's death to the General Synod of New Zealand the following year was even briefer, praising his support for missionary work and his

---

<sup>182</sup> *Star*, 13 October 1876; W.J. Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown: Studies in the Mid-Victorian Universities of Australasia*, Christchurch, 1979, pp. 82-83.

<sup>183</sup> E.g. *Star*, 10 June 1876 for Willock's presence at the dedication of a church.

<sup>184</sup> DCantB.

<sup>185</sup> *Star*, 28 October 1876.

<sup>186</sup> *Star*, 18 October 1877, 1 June 1882, 1 March 1878.

<sup>187</sup> *Star*, 1 June 1882.

'knowledge of business.'<sup>188</sup> The *Press*, however, was more generous, emphasising Willock's assiduous discharge of his priestly duties in the 1850s as well as his later involvement in community and diocesan affairs.<sup>189</sup> His funeral, at St Peter's Church in Upper Riccarton, drew a 'very long' procession of 'many old residents of the Plains' including many of the province's Anglican establishment, 'attending to pay the final token of respect to the late Archdeacon'.<sup>190</sup> His estate was sworn at just over £10,000, a very sizeable sum.<sup>191</sup> But in those days if you wanted a comfortable old age you had to provide it for yourself.

## CONCLUSIONS

'I often smile when I think of the ideal Canterbury of which our imagination dreamed,' remarked J.R. Godley as he prepared to depart in December 1852.<sup>192</sup> Godley could afford to be amused. Although there was an element of cut-and-run about his decision to leave its problems for others to resolve, he could claim to have successfully founded the Settlement. Moreover, he could be confident that influential friends in England would help re-launch his career. William Wellington Willock was also confronting the dissolution of the mirage and when James Wylde and Henry Sewell encountered him in 1853, they found a man who was angry at the gulf between his expectations and his opportunities. The underlying theme of his life in New Zealand for the next thirty years would be the process of adjusting to the failure of that ideal Anglican Canterbury. For much of the twentieth century, the history of New Zealand in the decades after the Treaty of Waitangi would be written around topics such as the governorship of Sir George Grey, the development of parliamentary politics, the rise and fall of the provinces, the economic programme of Julius Vogel and, towering over them all, the New Zealand wars. To a remarkable degree, William Wellington Willock seems to have lived a life that was unaffected by these issues and phases. More recently, historians have become interested in broader issues of race and gender relations. Willock seems to have little contact with Kaiapoi's small Māori community. Given that academics now regard Māori interpretations of Christianity as dynamic and autochthonous, not as something passively downloaded from their white pastors, it is perhaps for the best that the masterful Willock did not attempt to minister to them directly, although he was remembered for his wider, and probably administrative, support for missionary endeavour. For some women and men, colonial New Zealand formed a theatre for the redefinition of gender relations, but Willock leaned more towards the re-affirmation of traditional attitudes. His last recorded contribution to public debate came in 1877 when the governors of Canterbury College discussed boarding arrangements at the Girls' High School. In patriarchal and paternalist fashion, he commented that 'girls should be looked after in a thoroughly proper way.'<sup>193</sup> But of course, his life could not be insulated from the major developments that were shaping New Zealand. The whole failure of the vision of an Anglican Canterbury was a by-product of the collapse of Edward

---

<sup>188</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 18 April 1883. Detailed reports of the 1882 Christchurch diocesan Synod have not been traced.

<sup>189</sup> *Press*, 27 May 1882, p. 1.

<sup>190</sup> *Press*, 27 May 1882, p. 2.

<sup>191</sup> Blain directory.

<sup>192</sup> Carrington, *John Robert Godley of Canterbury*, p. 149.

<sup>193</sup> *Star*, 18 May 1877.

Gibbon Wakefield's phantasmagorical pyramid scheme of structured colonisation funded by land sales. Willock's defeat over the control of the Kaiapoi schools was part of the growth of State administrative structures, while his desire to abandon the city-centre cathedral site represented a wary recognition of the growing strength of electoral democracy. The dramatic crisis of the embezzlement case was itself a by-product of the instability of a colonial economy so heavily dependent on the production of a few staple products for a market half the world away. New Zealand's roller-coaster economy did not force Frederick Pavitt into dipping his hands into Church funds, but it did create the challenges that tempted an entrepreneurial gambler into straying across a thinly policed border of financial rectitude.

William Wellington Willock is not well remembered in Canterbury.<sup>194</sup> At family level, this was probably because each of his three children moved to the North Island, thereby exemplifying one of the underlying trends in New Zealand's demographic history since the late nineteenth century.<sup>195</sup> But there were probably also wider reasons why it would have been inconvenient to build Willock into the formative story of Canterbury. 'Each of the great Universities of the United Kingdom sent distinguished alumni to the new settlement,' the Christchurch *Star* proclaimed on the fiftieth anniversary of the First Four Ships, adding that 'they played a great and worthy part in our spiritual and intellectual life, on which their enlightened piety, liberal culture and ripe scholarship have left enduring marks.'<sup>196</sup> Here, then, was a meritocratic elaboration on the "best British" myth of the founding stock of colonial New Zealand. There was no more distinguished Cambridge alumnus in early Canterbury than William Wellington Willock, with his First Class honours degree and college Fellowship.

Why, then, did his career not prosper as he might have expected? With his intellectual ability, his determined personality, not to mention his kinship with a British prime minister, Willock might perhaps have played a far larger role in the development of Canterbury than was the case. That he did not suggests, perhaps, that even clergymen needed a degree of luck. Willock had a strong sense of duty as well as of his clerical dignity. He was a conscientious parish priest, but his real forte was administration. Diocesan administrators often have to say no, and Willock was not a gregarious or an emollient character. His sense of duty was reflected, also, in his generous support of church causes and in his involvement in civic affairs. He was far from obscurantist, as indicated by his record in university and museum administration.

Willock was a realist, and as such he had little interest in fostering the mythologies of Anglican Canterbury. The real significance of his career was that he did recognise, however reluctantly, the reality of what Canterbury had become. It was, he told the Synod in 1873, 'far better for them to recognise their true position' and face the humbling fact that 'the Church of

---

<sup>194</sup> There is a small residential street, Willock Place, in the area which his Christchurch farm once occupied, and a Willock Street in Kaiapoi.

<sup>195</sup> His daughter Mary Augusta married Reginald Marsh of Wellington in February 1881. He was a member of a gentry family from Westleigh Hall near Leigh in Lancashire. Charlotte Ellen married William McDonald Kebbell of Wellington on 30 August 1882. William Borlase Willock married Mary Florence Welborne Willis on 29 November 1882. He worked for the Bank of New Zealand which in 1884 transferred him to Gisborne, where a number of descendants still reside (2009). DCantB; *Star*, 25 February 1881, 31 August, 11 November 1882; *Ellesmere Guardian*, 14 April 1894; information from Patrick Willock, Gisborne. Sarah Willock, Willock's second wife, also seems to have moved to Gisborne, presumably to live with her step-son, where she died in 1918. *Poverty Bay Herald*, 22 June 1918.

<sup>196</sup> Quoted, Jim McAloon, 'The Christchurch Elite,' in Cookson and Dunstall, eds, *Southern Capital*, p. 194.

England was not the dominant church it was intended to be by the founders of the Canterbury settlement.<sup>197</sup> Hence he has faded anonymously into the sepia background of the folk images of the sturdy pilgrims disembarking from the First Four Ships, not because of any irrelevance to Canterbury but rather on account of his sometimes embittered acceptance of its reality. Perhaps this study may help not merely to rescue him but to throw some light on the adjustments required by the experience of colonisation.

---

<sup>197</sup> *Star*, 20 February 1873.