

Prince Alfred and the Hokitika Free Lunch (....Applause)*

Richard Till

The visit to Christchurch by Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh in 1869 was cause for great celebration amongst the general population. A busy schedule of events met the Prince at the wharf in Lyttelton and continued wherever he went. Processions of trades, bands, Maoris and the services formed the largest procession Christchurch had seen, the streets were littered with triumphal arches, banners and “thickets of bunting”. The Prince attended luncheon at the town hall and later a ball and supper.

My knowledge of the Prince’s visit came through discovering these events as I searched for formal dinners prepared in Christchurch around that time. A copy of Charles Elme Francatelli’s *The Modern Cook* of 1864 had taken my interest. He is often described as the first celebrity chef on account of his four cookbooks and his high profile appointments - Crockford’s Club, Coventry Club, Reform Club and St James’ Hotel. For a brief period he was the chef to the royal household of Queen Victoria and, in *The Modern Cook*, describes how to cook and present food as he had at Royal Banquets. This book was hugely popular (29 editions) and spread far and wide the knowledge of how to entertain in the manner of the highest society.

I was interested to see if I could find any evidence of influence from Mr Francatelli’s book in the menus presented to the Royal Prince at the formal dinners in Christchurch. However, in searching for details of these dinners, I was almost immediately distracted by another dinner that took place to mark his visit. This was a meal made for the citizenry, by the citizenry. One thousand five hundred of a total population at the time of almost 10,000 were fed at Barnard’s Horse Repository in Cashel Street. The project was started by the Popular Amusement and Entertainment Society, but it was so warmly received by the public that the event took on a life of its own, and large contributions in cash and kind poured in on the Committee. The event is described in the 1879 publication *Canterbury Sketches* by C. L. Innes:

* A paper presented at the 2008 N.Z. Food History Symposium, Christchurch.

The street outside the Repository was crowded by an eager, hungry, and not altogether good-tempered crowd before the doors were opened. The inside of the building was tastefully decorated with evergreens; the tables were set out in four rows on the ground floor, running the length of the building, groaning under every description of eatables, including roast beef, plum-pudding, together with plenty of good Colonial beer. There was seating for 500 people. At 1.30 p.m., the doors opened, and a rush ensued, the building being immediately filled. The doors were then closed until those seated had dined, when they retired by the other door opening into Hereford street—their places being immediately filled by others; in this way, not less than 1500 persons were regaled with a comfortable dinner.

The scale of endeavour took my fancy and immediately upon reading of the dinner, I resolved to attempt to feed a greater proportion (more than 60,000) of modern-day Christchurch in a similarly organised event. I trialed the concept with groups seeking to do fund-raising with dinner events for around 300 people, and in the first big test of the idea’s currency, the King Country town of Taumararui is holding a community dinner on March 3, 2012, with an attendance of 6,000 planned for.

Although my research is limited, it does not take much looking to find evidence of these events in 19th century New Zealand. It seems that this was a relatively common kind of public entertainment in Victorian times. One of the earliest was that held in Hokitika in 1868.

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In 1867, the year before Alfred’s visit to Christchurch, he had made a previous visit to the Colonies, and in December of that year, in Melbourne, a “free banquet” had been organised to mark his visit. Unfortunately, the banquet was a disaster, the food was insufficient for the numbers that turned up, the day was hot and dusty, there was insufficient water, and the Prince didn’t show up. After an hour waiting for his regal presence, a signal to eat was final given and a brief orgy by famished and irritated diners polished off the food in a few moments. The general unrest was sufficient to require the police to clear the site.

A few months later, on the 12th of March 1868, while Alfred was attending a function to raise money for the Sydney Sailor’s Home, an Irish legal clerk by

the name of Henry James O'Farrell attempted to kill the Duke with a revolver. The bullet entered close to the spine, but Alfred survived, and returned to England, cancelling his intended visit to New Zealand.

O'Farrell, who was hanged on the 27th of April, was thought to have belonged to the branch of Irish Nationalists known as the Fenians, a group that was particularly strong in Hokitika, which had a large Irish population of residents and gold-diggers.

On the 8th of March, a few days prior to the attempted assassination, one thousand people had protested in Hokitika when it was heard that three Fenians had been hanged in Manchester, England. It was this hanging that is thought to have prompted the assassination attempt on Alfred.

When news of Alfred's injury reached New Zealand, there was major concern that unrest would break out on the West Coast, hundreds of special constables were sworn in, and the 18th Royal Irish regiment was put on alert.

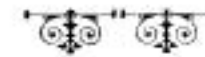
It was in this uneasy climate, that the *West Coast Times* on 28th March 1868 reported the planning of a "Free Banquet" at Hokitika for residents and local diggers. The event, which clearly sought to allay some of the tensions within the community, was:

.... initiated by Mr Bartlett, proprietor of the Duke of Edinburgh Theatre, to commemorate the escape of the Duke from death by assassination, will, we are convinced, prove a complete success. Mr Bartlett detailed his plan to the Council last evening, and we feel sure that the inhabitants of Hokitika will feel a loyal pride in supporting the scheme most liberally. Already several munificent donations have been promised...

A committee was set up, but it was James Bartlett (the secretary), together with a Mr Kenrick and Mr Pizzey who set to work creating the event. Mr Pizzey's presence on the committee was probably an indication of at least one component of the banquet - he ran the Phoenix brewery, Hokitika - "Brewers, bottlers, and importers of the best English malt and hops."

Subsequent issues of the newspaper, on the 9th, 10th, 11th and 13th of April, listed the contributions to the banquet and the names of the contributors. The lists make interesting reading. The scale of the donations is impressive, although undoubtedly Mr Goulstone, who gave "nothing", would have been

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sorely irritated by the jibe. The lists also give an impression as to the likely menu for the banquet - what appears to be a dominance of meat, bread, and booze, overhung by flags and bunting.

Contributions to the 1868 Hokitika Free Banquet

Goldfields secretary, £10	W. Roberts (B.N.Z.) £1 1s
Dunning Bros, Case of fruit	Isaacs, calico for decorations
A Friend, a quantity of eggs	Randle (Big Paddock), 1 pig
McBeth, calico for table-cloths	Campbell, 1 sheep
Captain Bowman, 1 dozen loaves bread	La Petite Marion Nathan* £1 1s
Mark Sprot, one bullock	C.E. Button, 1 hhd ale
J.J. Bartlett, 1 hhd ale	G.W. Harvey, 1 hhd ale
Brown and Klein, "Evening Star", 100 loaves	Brown and Klein "Evening Star" Advertising and Printing
Cr Boyle £5	P. Solomon, Café de Paris, 6 roast geese
Mee and Marks, £5	His Worship the Mayor £5
Carey and Gillies, Sundries	Cr Paterson, 1 cwt raisins
A. Mowatt, 1 sack flour	Munson, table-cloths
Fitzsimmons, 1 cooked ham	Orr and Co., 6 cheese
Tait Bros., 1 sheep	C. O'Leary, flags
A. Dyson, 1 case of porter	J. Stonebridge, 12 dozen pastry
Graves and Co., flags	Hirsch, loan of crockery
Goulstone, nothing	R. Walker, 1 barrel of ale
Moss, 1 flag	J. Ross, 1 bag potatoes, 1 case fruit
Airth, lends spring van	Frost, cakes
Dr Roberts, boiled round beef	Mr Winter, County Paymaster, 10s 6d
Trautvetter, 10s 6d	McKay, flags
Moffat, 2 sheep	A Friend, table-cloths
Cameron, British Hotel, 1 plum pudding	Glynn and Ingles, 30 yards stuff for flags
Wood and Co., 10s 6d	Jones and Co., 1 sheep

* La Petite Marion was an actress with the "Nathan Troupe". The *West Coast Times* reported on the 2nd January 1868, that in the Irish drama of "Andy Blake", she "sustained the character of Andy, with such affecting pathos as to draw tears into the eyes of many of the audience."

Devon, 10s 6d	Cr Higgin, £1 1s
Fergusson, 1 bullock	McLevy, 1 pig
Hughes, loan of dray	Collins, 3 roast ducks
Malpas, 1 boiled ham	Mulligan and Halligan, table-cloths
Owen, Stafford Town, £1 1s	A. Walker, a quantity of fruit
Lewis, loan of glass, &c.	T.R. Proctor, £2 2s
Williams & Co., sundries	Alman & Co, flags
J.R. Crerar, £1 1s	Taylor and Settle £2 2s
Professor Allen, 10s	Weir & Co., loan of glass crockery, &c.
G. Cozens, 1 roll of preserved beef , cooked	Smith (Kanieri Tramway), green stuff for decorations
Pollock & Co., 1 ham	J. Solomon, 1 case confectionary
J. Mulverhill, 10s	T. Munro, 1 doz. boxes sardines
Mrs Bartlett, table linen	McDuff, 12 doz. pastry
J. Wagner, cooked poultry	A Friend, £1 1s
Mr Brown, Sydney, 10s	J. White (agent P. & N.Z. Co.) £1
Spence Bros. and Co., 2 cases porter	Royse, Mudie and Co., 2 cases porter
M. Cassius, 1 case wine	Salaman (pianist), 5s
Shepperd (Cobb and Co), 4 geese	Kellock, 2 cords firewood
J.H. Williams, £2 2s	Cullen Bros, 1 case porter
Hudson, Cleveland Hotel, 1 cooked ham , 1 do tongue	Mr Frew and Mr Anderson, services laying out reserve*
W.S. Lockhart, 1 bag sugar	Eike, 15s
Smith, Weld-street, free baking	S.M. South, £2 2s
Haskell, 10s 6d	James Price, 1 sheep
Constabulary, band service	R. Levy, currants and spice
Louisson, 1 case champagne	Bladier and Marshall, 1 sack of lettuce
James Kennedy, 1 case wine	Dr Ryley, £2 2s
Dooly, 1 barrel ginger beer	Marks and Fuerst, tobacco and pipes
Sandiland, free baking	Alfred Cleave, 20lbs biscuit
W. Evans, 1 case porter	J. Pringle, pickles
Ross, 1 salad	J.R Anderson, mustard, pepper, salt and vinegar

* The banquet was originally planned to be held on the town reserve.

J. Bevan, 1 case *port*
 Spicer and Murray, £1 1s
 Potter, free *baking*
 Mulligan and Halligan, *Turkey twill for flags*
 Aldred Dunning, *salad*
 McCarthy, case *porter*
 Holmes, £1 1s
 McKellar, case of *claret*
 Jones, case of *apples*
 Gawne, 1 dozen *salmon*
 Mrs Dodd, half-dozen *wine*
 Shaw (iron-monger), *wooden taps*
 Cowlshaw and Plaisted, a quantity of *knives and forks*
 Bond, half dozen *wine*
 Millar, case *claret*
 Peake, case *claret*
 Whale, case *fruit*
 Chrystal, 1 dozen *bread*
 Cheffins and Whitten, 1 case *champagne*
 Mr Guinness, Greymouth, 10s
 Mrs Greenfield, 5s
 Bell, 2s 6d
 Seelen, 10s
 W. Allen 10s 6d
 Eymer, 4 dozen *matches*
 J. Wilson, 2s 6d
 J.R. Barnard, 10s
 Mrs Burgett, 10s 6d
 Coevanwitch, 5s
 Selby, 5s
 Hughes, one case of *fruit*
 Wright 2s 6d

Mendelson, *tobacco* and 1 case *pipes*
 N, Jacobson, case *apples*
 McGain, 1 *ham*
 J.B. Clarke, loan of *plates, dishes, knives and forks*, etc
 E.W. Jones, 25 *loaves*
 G. Preshaw, 25 *loaves*
 White and Piric, *towels*
 Haworth, *timber*
 Rollins, 25lbs *sausages*
 A friend, 5s
 Robeck, 10s 6d
 Fane, 2 doz. *ale*
 A Friend, 1 tin *candied peel*, 2 gals *vinegar*
 N. Jacobson, case *apples*
 Church, case *lobsters*
 North, 10s
 Lazar (Town Clerk), 10s 6d
 Hawson, £1 1s
 J. Roscow, £1 1s
 Meyerstein, *knives and forks and steel*
 Campbell, 2s 6d.
 Plock, *cigars*
 Parker 5s
 Cross, half case of *porter*
 R.F. Luks, fifty *loaves*
 A friend, 5s
 Reuben Hart, 5s
 Captain White £1 1s
 Herman, 2s 6d
 Smethurst, two bottle *champagne*
 H. Levy, 2s 6d
 W.L. Rees £1 1s

Samuels, 5s
 Higgin, extra, *isinglass*
 C Veith, case *ale*
 Linton, tin of *mustard*
 Holmes, extra work in *painting and decorating*.
 Findlay and Hayworth, extra *timber*

Bobbett (Hau Hau) 1 *sheep*
 Shappere, 5s
 R. Mills, case *porter*
 Hine, case of *wine, flag, cheese*
 Salmon, services in *painting and decorating*

The meat donations were mainly beef and sheep, with some pigs, hams, ducks and geese. There is only one contribution of poultry, presumably because they were too valuable as egg producers. Butter is a notable absence from the list.

The two fish contributions are salmon and tinned sardines, but there are no fresh sea fish or seafood. March is at the tail end of fruit picking time and this would explain the cases of apples and fruit. There were very few vegetable contributions, although there were potatoes, a sack of lettuce and several offers of "salad". Large quantities of raisins and flour presumably went into plum puddings.

Many contributions were for beverages. Ale, porter (a dark beer) and ginger beer were available in bulk, together with a surprisingly large and sophisticated offering of wine, including claret, and champagne (remember that this is Hokitika in 1868!).

The menu therefore could have been a selection of meat accompanied by bread, pickles and mustard, together with potatoes and salad. Some of the flour could have gone into meat or fruit pies. For dessert there was fruit and plum pudding. All of this accompanied by an inebriating selection of alcoholic beverage, and all, as shall be seen, consumed in 20 minutes!

On Easter Monday, the 13th of April, the day of the banquet, the *West Coast Times* reported that:

The preparations for the Free Banquet are nearly completed. The whole of the pit and stalls of the Duke of Edinburgh Theatre has been boarded over, and tables erected that will accommodate about 350 persons at a time. The theatre has been tastefully decorated with ferns and evergreens, and over the principal table float the national flags of England, Ireland, and Scotland. His Worship the Mayor, supported by the representatives of the General

Government in Hokitika, we believe, will open the banquet. The public will be admitted by 350 at a time, and allowed half-an-hour for luncheon. They will retire by the Tancred street entrance, and in a few minutes, when the tables have been relaid, another lot will be admitted and so on. In little more than two hours 1400 persons will have an opportunity of participating in the banquet, or rather luncheon. It is expected that the contributions already sent in or promised will suffice for that number. Mrs Cameron, who has kindly undertaken the making of the plum-pudding, has put in a gold, a silver, and a tape ring, in accordance with the custom that prevails in the north of England. The success of the undertaking is mainly due to the indefatigable exertions of Messrs Bartlett, Kenrick, and Pizzey, who have laboured night and day to ensure it.

The banquet was held on Easter Monday, the 13th April, and following the banquet, in the evening, the Duke of Edinburgh Theatre utilised the boarding-up of the pit to hold a "Grand Plain and Fancy Dress Ball" at 5 shillings admission. The following day, the West Coast Times was able to proudly report:

In the inside of the Theatre all was a great success. The indefatigable exertions of Messrs Bartlett, Kenrick, and Pizzey, resulted in an achievement worthy of Hokitika alone. Tho ceilings were decorated with festoons of ferns and evergreens, and the walls opposite the stage were hung with appropriate devices, such as "Unity", "Concord", "Peace." The Theatre was tastefully decorated, whilst over the Municipal table waved the national flags of England, Ireland, and Scotland. The interior of the Theatre presented a coup d'oeil, most attractive, and at the same time most interesting. Arrangements had been made by the Working Committee Messrs Bartlett, Kenrick, and Pizzey to have everything in smooth working order. The ceilings were most elaborately ornamented with wreaths of evergreens, and the front of the private boxes handsomely draped with "The Red, White, and Blue", with the arms of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Ranged in the front of the stage in the foremost rows of the dress-circle, were the children attending the various schools in Hokitika. These children sang at intervals in a style that reflects the greatest credit on their respective masters, and also created no little interest in the audience. The community outside were admitted by about 340 at a time, so that there might be no overcrowding. At about one o'clock, every one of the first lot having taken his place, His Worship the Mayor stepped forward and said:-

Gentlemen - In the name and in the behalf of the citizens of Hokitika, amongst

whom I am fortunate enough to hold the chief civic position - in the name of the loyal citizens of Hokitika I bid you Welcome to this banquet. I think it is a very proper, useful, and loyal custom that we should at this time invite you to participate in our loyal rejoicings. (Great cheering.) I can only hope that the demonstration on this Easter Monday will prove the forerunner of a custom that will obtain here that on every Easter Monday the good people of Hokitika will invite their digging brethren to share their hospitality with them. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) I am quite sure that the citizens of Hokitika will be content to afford their digging brethren everything in their power to make their short stay in town agreeable. (Deafening cheers.) I am sorry to say that there has been one drawback to the success of our entertainment, and that is, that at the first it was thought that an open-air demonstration would have been more acceptable, but our committee, wisely foreseeing what might be the state of the weather ("Very wisely!" from several voices) determined to hold it in the theatre. I am sure, gentlemen, you are much indebted to our worthy friend Mr Bartlett ("Three cheers for Mr Bartlett") for his, on this, as on every other occasion when a commodious building has been required, having granted us the use of his spacious and elegant Theatre. (Three cheers again for Mr Bartlett.) Gentlemen, I do not intend, and indeed it would be very improper, for me to detain you with any lengthened remarks. There is but a limited time for all, and I will give you an opportunity to make the best use of it. I trust that next Easter will witness the inhabitants of Hokitika and the West Coast at perfect peace, and pressing their digging friends to partake of their hospitality that there will be no Fenianism then to disturb the quiet that reigns in our midst. (Cheers, and vociferous applause.) With these few remarks I call upon you to pitch into the meal provided for you as hard as you can, and in about twenty minutes clear out, I will give you a short sketch of our programme: - The band will play the National Anthem, the audience joining in the second part of the refrain, the Rev. Mr Cannell will then say grace, and after that you must make the most of your time. (Cheers.)

The band then struck up the National Anthem, the entire audience rising uncovered en masse, and joining in the refrain.

The Rev. W. Cannell having said grace, the first portion admitted fell to work with a zeal and assiduity seldom equalled and never surpassed. During the time this was taking place the children in the boxes were entertained with fruit and sundries, and being wound up, their enthusiasm rose to the occasion, much to the delight of those in the body of the house, and there cannot be a doubt but that they retired home aerated with loyalty and ginger beer.

Ere many minutes had elapsed, upwards of 350 of Her Most Gracious Majesty's liege subjects had partaken of the Free Banquet. Notice was intimated by His Worship the Mayor, in a few brief and appropriate remarks, that their place would have to be occupied by others who were then waiting outside, His Worship having first called upon them to fill their glasses, and to drink to her Most Gracious Majesty and Royal Family, which was drunk amidst deafening applause.

The company then retired, and made way for others, and so on, until the last company - the Freemasons, Oddfellows, and Foresters sat down to a comfortable repast.

Cheers for "The Queen", "The Duke", "The Mayor", "Mr Bartlett", and "Mr Button", were given by the several companies participating in the Banquet.

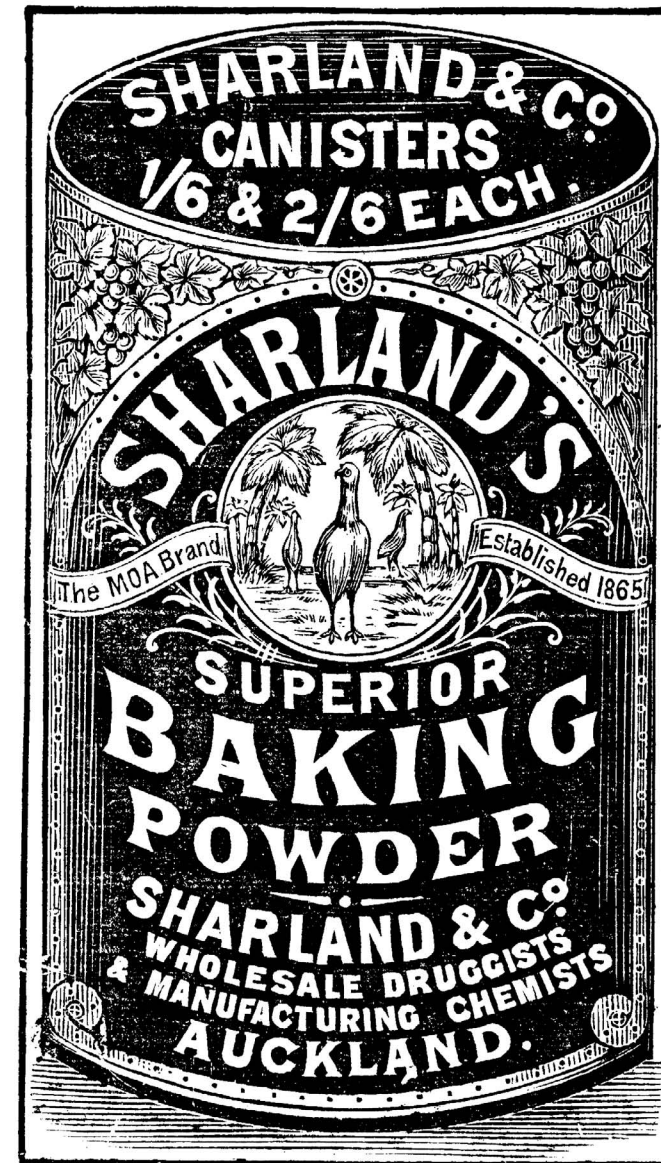
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When I last saw it, the list of donations for the Taumaranui banquet had a similar look and feel (although alcohol-free, so there are no cases of champagne). Victorian "free banquets" were for the most part a celebration that is born of a strong and already existent community spirit, but (in part like that in Hokitika) the King Country event of 2012 is seen as a way to enhance, or possibly rebuild, a sense of community.

As is described in accounts of the planning of the 1869 Christchurch event, the Taumaranui dinner has taken on a life of its own as the participants take ownership of the idea. It will bear very little similarity to the Victorian model that inspired it, or very little resemblance to the event in my minds eye as I pitched the idea to a room of community leaders. The only similarities to either will be that it is a meal born of many small contributions combined in an organised way. Christchurch and the 60,000 is only a short leap away.

References

The Hokitika Free Banquet can be followed through <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast>



Advertisement from Henry H. Tipler's Cookery Guide, Wellington (1892).