

Last resting place and legacy of Charles Heaphy, VC

David J. Lowe, *University of Waikato, Hamilton [d.lowe_at_waikato.ac.nz]*

Introduction

Charles Heaphy is now recognised as a significant figure in the early European settlement of New Zealand and he also has an interesting geological connection that deserves wider recognition. Heaphy arrived in New Zealand on the *Tory* together with Ern(e)st Dieffenbach on 18th August, 1839, aged around 19 (his date of birth is not known accurately but it was probably late 1819 or 1820: Fitzgerald, 2007; Sharp, 2008). Employed then by Wakefield's New Zealand Company as a draughtsman, Heaphy was described by Sharp (2008, p. 25) as being a "general roustabout, explorer, surveyor, assistant naturalist, courier and verbal as well as visual propagandist". He went on to become best known as an excellent watercolour landscape artist (his early work showing "sensitivity to the clarity of the New Zealand light") (Sharp, 2008, p. 205), an explorer and surveyor, a parliamentarian, and for winning the Victoria Cross for his actions in the New Zealand (Maori land) wars. The last event took place near (modern-day) Te Awamutu in a skirmish on the banks of the Mangapiko Stream, which flows into the Waipa River, on a hot summer's afternoon in the Hamilton Basin on 11th February, 1864. The award of the VC – promoted by Heaphy's commanding officer Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Henry Havelock (himself a VC winner), and supported strongly by Sir George Grey (probably partly to improve the status of the militia as regular army soldiers were returning to Britain) – was announced in London on 8th February, 1867 (Standish, 1966; Sharp, 2008).



Plaque on Heaphy's headstone commemorating his VC

First geological map of Auckland

Geologically, Heaphy has been recognised belatedly and controversially for his work in mapping the Auckland Volcanic Field. This controversy was summarised by Hayward and Mason (2008) and reported earlier in detail by Mason (2002, 2003), and the following account derives mainly from those sources and from further information provided by Dr Bruce Hayward. Heaphy spent January, 1859, in the company of Ferdinand Hochstetter, who (temporarily) became a friend, examining the Auckland volcanoes. Julius Haast and Rev. A.G. Purchas were also present. Although lacking formal training in geology and having no university education, Heaphy had earlier presented a map of the volcanic field on 9th February,

1857, at a meeting in Auckland where he was employed as a surveyor (Mason, 2002). He then published in 1860 a map of the volcanic field in a paper in the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society (QJGS)* (Heaphy, 1860). That map (reproduced in Mason, 2003) was annotated "Geological sketch map of the Auckland district by C. Heaphy, 1857 (corrected to Feb^y, 1859)" and the accompanying text noted Hochstetter's input from their joint fieldwork in 1859. The map was displayed in 1862 at the International Exhibition in London together with acknowledgement to Hochstetter.

Subsequently, the publication of an English translation of Hochstetter's and A. Petermann's *Geological and Topographical Atlas of New Zealand* in August, 1864 (the original German version of the atlas was published in 1863), led to a heated public dispute with Heaphy over authorship. The translation had been undertaken by G.F. Fischer without Hochstetter's knowledge. Hochstetter's original version (1863) included a footnote accusing Heaphy of plagiarising him, stating that the map exhibited under Heaphy's name in London in 1862 "was entirely a copy and combination of my maps and surveys, without any acknowledgment of my authorship" (quoted in Mason, 2003) – but it turns out that Hochstetter was misinformed in this latter regard because Hochstetter had been acknowledged by Heaphy in the London display. (Regrettably, though, Hochstetter had not been informed about the publication or exhibition of Heaphy's map.) Hochstetter further claimed that Heaphy's 1860 map in the *QJGS* "is a very incomplete copy of my observations and maps ... [to which Heaphy has] ... introduced his own observations ... made previous to my arrival in New Zealand, but without possessing even the most elementary knowledge necessary for making a Geological Survey ..." (quoted in Mason, 2002). These were the criticisms in Hochstetter's 1863 atlas that appeared in Fischer's translated version of 1864.

The action by Hochstetter of 'getting his retaliation in first' with his criticism of Heaphy galvanized a strong response from Heaphy and supporters, and letters in support of Heaphy were published in the Auckland newspapers. Eventually, editorials in both the *New Zealander* and the *Daily Southern Cross* on 27th and 29th August, 1864, concluded (after the maps had been compared) that in fact Hochstetter had plagiarised Heaphy (quoted in Mason, 2002): "... we have received satisfactory demonstration that not only are these charges untrue, but the worthy doctor [Hochstetter] has himself been the plagiarist and the copier." (*Daily Southern Cross* 29th August, 1864); "...we could not have believed that our German acquaintance has allowed himself to fall into such a depth of falsification, for the sake of gratifying a very gratuitous spleen ... We have proved the painful fact of Dr. Hochsteter's ungrateful tergiversation and deception ..." (*New Zealander* 27th August, 1864).

Hochstetter's reaction to those compelling final phrases was reported in a letter he sent to Julius Haast (20th November, 1864): ... "The last letters brought me Heaphy's despicable actions under the title 'Major Heaphy and Dr. Hochstetter': lies from beginning to end." (quoted in Mason, 2003). Hochstetter, however, also noted in this letter that "... if I had an inkling that Fischer had translated the text of the Atlas, I should have asked him to suppress the sentence against Heaphy, for one has to guard oneself against a scandal with such kinds of people ...". That he regretted Fischer's inclusion of the criticism of Heaphy in the 1864 English version of the atlas seems evident with its omission later from Hochstetter's (1867) book on New Zealand.

Public support for Hochstetter was manifested in the form of two letters written by Fischer and Haast. Fischer wrote a rather defensive letter that was published in both Auckland papers early in September, 1864; Haast published a more convincing letter in *The Lyttelton Times* on 10th September, 1864, under a pseudonym 'Fair Play' (Mason, 2003). Although Mason (2003) suggested that Haast possibly did not know at that time the full facts regarding the evidence against Hochstetter, Haast's letter suggests otherwise (B.W. Hayward pers. comm., 2009). Haast quite rightly pointed out firstly that the maps would appear superficially the same because both had been based on the same "official topographical maps of the district", and secondly that the editors were not equipped to comment on the geological aspects, and had not actually made any such comments (B.W. Hayward pers. comm., 2009). Haast also noted that work by Hochstetter, as a well-trained and experienced geologist, should carry more weight than that of an amateur such as Heaphy, even though it was conceded that the latter "possesses some elementary knowledge". Hochstetter himself apparently prepared a written response, which he sent to Fischer to pass on to the newspapers. By the time the letter arrived, however, the controversy had died down and Fischer decided it better not to rekindle the debate and so Hochstetter's letter was not published (B.W. Hayward pers. comm., 2009) (see also Mason, 2003).

Nevertheless, the conclusion of both editorials in 1864 that Hochstetter was (in part) the copier, not Heaphy, has subsequently been supported by the recent work of Hayward and Mason (2008). They concluded that (1) Heaphy deserves the credit of being the first to map the Auckland volcanoes, (2) Hochstetter did not adequately acknowledge Heaphy's intellectual input to his subsequent (and more professional) map, and (3) that the map of "The Isthmus [sic] of Auckland with its extinct Volcanoes" should nowadays be attributed to Heaphy and Hochstetter together (Hayward and Mason, 2008).

This affair and many other aspects of Heaphy's versatile life have been documented by Iain Sharp in an excellent and very readable biography "Heaphy" (Sharp, 2008), which was a finalist in the 2009 Montana New Zealand Book Awards. In some ways the controversy mirrors Heaphy's life: he was undoubtedly a multi-faceted and talented individual yet, according to Sharp (2008, p. 209) ... "In the end it is his contradictions that come home most forcefully. He [Heaphy] was simultaneously ambitious and servile, duplicitous and honourable, a pragmatist and a dreamer, an optimist and a disappointed man. Although he became almost as familiar with the New Zealand back country as his Maori companions, he thought continually of Europe. As he aged, he was increasingly proud of his status as an early [European] settler, yet throughout his life we find him reluctant to settle in any one spot for long."

Heaphy's last resting place

On page 201, Sharp (2008) recorded that Heaphy by the end of May 1881 was very ill and hence resigned from all his positions in June and moved (via Sydney) to Brisbane in the hope that the warmer climate might help prolong his life. However, he died on 3rd August, 1881, and Heaphy was buried in what was once the city's main cemetery located on the slopes of Mount Coot-tha in Brisbane's suburb of Toowong, bordering Mount Coot-tha Botanic Gardens and the Brisbane Forest Park. Toowong today adjoins the suburb of St. Lucia which hosts the

University of Queensland on a bend on the Brisbane River not far from the city centre. Heaphy's grave lay unattended for nearly 80 years, being marked only by the number '252', until discovered in 1960 by a determined descendant of a niece of Heaphy's widow Catherine ('Kate') Churton (Sharp, 2008). Although officially opened in 1875, some burials took place at Toowong Cemetery from 1871.

I happened to be in Toowong in October, 2009, and I visited the cemetery. A member of staff was quickly able to provide me with the grave's location, which is recorded as a military grave. An aerial view of the site is available at https://online.brisbane.qld.gov.au/cemeteries/cemeteries_step3.jsp?mapdisplay=133378. I took some photographs of the grave and surrounds, and especially of the headstone which was erected by the New Zealand Government in 1961 (Fitzgerald, 2007). So, Heaphy ended up in Australia. But I was pleased to see near his last resting place a botanical connection with New Zealand in the form of (probably) Queensland kauri trees (*Agathis robusta*) not many metres upslope from the grave. At least at genus level he remains connected with northern North Island where he spent much of his adventurous life – New Zealand kauri forests (*A. australis*) form vivid centrepieces in several of Heaphy's best paintings (recorded as 'cowdie').

Heaphy's legacy

I sometimes think of Heaphy, his artistry, and his map of Auckland's volcanoes when I run or walk along Heaphy Terrace that borders Claudelands Park in Hamilton. A new auditorium in the associated Claudelands Events Centre has been named the Charles Heaphy Room. The Charles Heaphy Building sits on the corner of Knox and Anglesea streets in downtown Hamilton. Such recognition in Hamilton seems appropriate because the city was founded in August, 1864, the same year that Heaphy's VC-winning actions took place about 20 km to the south, and the same month the authorship of his pioneering Auckland map became a talking point in the press. In northwest Nelson the Heaphy River and the Heaphy Track (which I tramped in 1975) also commemorate Heaphy's heritage.

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Photo above: David Lowe alongside Heaphy's last resting place



Photo above: Heaphy's grave in Toowong Cemetery is just to the left of the figure. Note the tall Queensland kauri trees in the background at middle and left