

# Pomara in London 1846

Robin Skinner

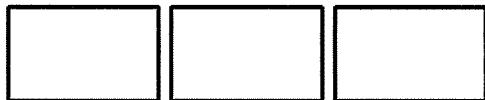
Manurere: Travelling Māori: The Third Annual Toihuarewa Māori Research Symposium, Te Herenga Waka Marae, Friday 12 November 2010

George French Angas<sup>1</sup> was the English-born son of the Chairman of the South Australian Company, George Fife Angas.



In late August 1844, he came to New Zealand, where – over the remainder of the year – he visited the region near Wellington and he traveled through the interior of the North Island venturing through the Waikato area as far south as Taupō, sketching, painting and writing as he went.<sup>2</sup> These images, of course, were later exhibited in London and were published in a celebrated series of lithographs.

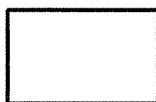
Prior to arrival, Angas was clearly enthusiastic for NZ and on his way here from Sydney, he read recent works on New Zealand by Charles Terry and Ernest Dieffenbach.



Between September and December 1844 he travelled extensively through the North Island.



Map



ANIMATION

Angas journeyed to New Zealand in order to collect material for publication and it seems that this was possibly the motivation for his venture to the southern hemisphere generally.

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<sup>1</sup> George French Angas (1822–1886)

<sup>2</sup> For commentary on Angas and his life, see: G.C. Peterson and S.M. Mead, *Portraits of the New Zealand Maori Painted in 1844 by George French Angas* (Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1972); John Tregenza, *George French Angas: artist, traveller and naturalist, 1822–1886* (Adelaide: Art Gallery Board of South Australia, 1980); Moira Long, 'Angas, George French 1822–1886,' in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Volume One, 1769–1869* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1990), 5–6; Susan Mary Campbell, 'George French Angas: "describing, prescribing, inscribing",' (Master's thesis, University of Auckland, 2000). See also, George French Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand: being an artist's impressions of countries and people at the antipodes*, 2 v., orig. pub. 1847 (Wellington: Reed, 1969).

In 1845 an Adelaide newspaper stated that his initial journey to Australia was made in order to produce a volume entitled *South Australia Illustrated*.<sup>3</sup> Angas later stated that his aim in writing and illustrating *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand* (1847) was:

...to describe faithfully impressions of life and scenes in countries only now emerging from a primitive state of barbarism; but which the energy and enterprise of British colonists, and the benign influence of Christianity combined, will eventually render the peaceful abodes of civilised and prosperous communities.<sup>4</sup>

Despite his enthusiasm for Māori material culture, Angas was not opposed to New Zealand's colonisation. He thought the decline of their arts and culture was inevitable.<sup>5</sup> In *Savage Life and Scenes*, he observed the "ancient arts and customs" (including architecture) were "rapidly becoming obsolete".<sup>6</sup> He expected that Māori would disappear as they became assimilated within British society.

Throughout his New Zealand journey, he made a series of drawings and watercolours, which he later exhibited in Australia and London.



And following the exhibition some were reproduced as lithographs in large folio editions, including: *The New Zealanders Illustrated*.<sup>7</sup>



until portrait.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Mr. George French Angas,' *The South Australian Resister* (28 Jan 1845): 3. The volume was later produced in 1847.

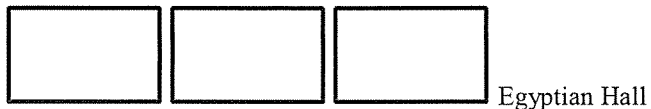
<sup>4</sup> Angas, *Savage Life*, 1: vii–viii.

<sup>5</sup> Bell, *Colonial Constructs*, 22–24. This view was shared by others. See Rev. J. Morgan's comments on "native carving and architecture" in Angas, *Catalogue of Paintings*, 26.

<sup>6</sup> "Amidst the ruins of Waitahanui [near Taupo], I had enriched my portfolio with several sketches of the architectural remains of a people whose ancient arts and customs are rapidly becoming obsolete..." Ref. Angas, *Savage Life*, 2: 127.

<sup>7</sup> George French Angas, *The New Zealanders Illustrated* (London: Thomas Mclean, 1847).

In London, after an early showing at a British and Foreign Institution meeting<sup>8</sup> and strategically presenting his exhibits to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert,<sup>9</sup> Angas exhibited his watercolours of New Zealand and South Australia for three months in a rentable space at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly from 6 April to 23 June 1846.<sup>10</sup>



The exhibition provided many with their first detailed exposure to representations of Māori, their architecture and other examples of their material culture. The exhibition was reviewed widely.

Angas produced an exhibition catalogue in London listing, and sometimes describing, the items displayed from New Zealand and South Australia.<sup>11</sup> He included almost thirty Māori words and expressions. Almost all of his images from New Zealand relate to Māori. While most were portraits, thirty-five of the approximately one hundred and forty paintings specifically illustrated Māori pā, monuments, houses, stores and tombs.<sup>12</sup>

### Reception to Angas's Exhibition

The reviewers in the press found the exhibition a revelation. The reviewer in *The Times* explicitly noted that “hitherto but few persons have had any definite ideas” about New Zealand or the New Zealanders.<sup>13</sup> While there had been numerous illustrations and descriptions of the material culture of Māori in European publications since the return of Cook, relatively few readers in the 1840s would have been familiar with this work.

Despite the publicity for the colony of New Zealand generated by the New Zealand Company, the popular perception of the New Zealander was formed out of memorable, sensationalised accounts of war and anthropophagy. Many English house museums exhibited items from the Pacific including “the inevitable curios from Cook’s voyages”.<sup>14</sup> The so-called ‘Wairau massacre’ was widely reported in 1844. Accounts of the later conflict between British troops and Ngā Puhi in the North of New Zealand in 1845 and 1846 had also begun to appear. The ‘Northern War’ (or ‘Heke’s War’) that began in March 1845 with the sacking of the town of Kororāreka, continued for ten months until January the following year. Reports of Māori resistance were so

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<sup>8</sup> Tregenza, *George French Angas*, 13 n. 30.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Court Circular,’ *The Times* (4 Apr 1846): 6. Angas mentioned this in his early advertising.

<sup>10</sup> The exhibition was held in the large room at the Egyptian Hall, 6 April–23 June 1846. Ref. advertisements in *The Times* (4 Apr 1846): 1; (23 Jun 1846): 1. On the Egyptian Hall, see, Oettermann, *Panorama*, 127–31.

<sup>11</sup> The catalogue to the exhibition includes titles of the exhibits (with translation of Māori and indigenous Australian words) and commentary on specific exhibits. Ref. George French Angas, *A Catalogue of Paintings by George French Angas, illustrative of the natives and scenery of New Zealand and South Australia: also sketches in Brazil, Cape Verde Islands, New South Wales, &c. &c.* (London: W. Nicol, 1846). I am grateful to Sylvia Carr, Pictures Branch, National Library of Australia for making a copy of this available.

<sup>12</sup> For discussion of the depiction of Angas’s portraits, see, Bell, *Colonial Constructs*, 9–27. Many of Angas’s images include backgrounds showing buildings or pā views.

<sup>13</sup> ‘New Zealand, Australia, &c.,’ *The Times* (6 Apr 1846): 3.

<sup>14</sup> Altick, *Shows of London*, 428–29.

frequent that the names of Rauparaha, Rangihaeata, Hōne Heke<sup>15</sup> and Kawiti<sup>16</sup> became well known through the British press. Heke was specifically discussed in Angas's catalogue.<sup>17</sup>

At mid-afternoon on each day of the exhibition, Angas exhibited a young Māori man named 'Hemi Pomara', who was variously reported to be the orphaned son (or grandson) of a Chatham Islands chief.<sup>18</sup> He was probably, more correctly, named Pōmare. He was no doubt related to Wiremu Piti Pomare (aka Pomare Ngatata) who moved onto the Chatham Islands in 1835.<sup>19</sup> The striking presence of this person, who Angas referred to in his 1847 publication, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand* as "My young New Zealander",<sup>20</sup> made a significant contribution to the exhibition's success.

In 1844 Angas had taken Pōmare to Sydney where he placed him in a school.<sup>21</sup> In September 1845, Angas set out for London, taking Pōmare with him. Displaying exotic peoples was common in London in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Sanid 'Bushman' from Southern Africa, and Ojibwe and Iowa people from North America had been exhibited at the Egyptian Hall shortly before Angas's exhibition. They were the subject of mixed commentary.<sup>23</sup> In London in 1855, the President of the Ethnological Society, Dr John Conolly, observed that these people were looked upon as curiosities rather than in ethnographical terms.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hōne Wiremu Heke Pōkai, Ngā Puhi leader (?–1850).

<sup>16</sup> Te Ruki Kawiti, Ngā Puhi leader (?–1854)

<sup>17</sup> "His late acts of cutting down the British flag-staff, and the destruction of the settlement of Koro-rarika, with the determined manner in which he has held out so long against the British troops, have caused the name of Heki to be known throughout the globe." Ref. Angas, *A Catalogue of Paintings*: 6. The "refractory chief" was also mentioned in review in the *Illustrated London News*. Ref. 'The New Zealand and South Australian Exhibition,' *ILN* 8 (18 Apr 1846): 253.

<sup>18</sup> An advertising handbill held at the National Library of Australia, includes a pasted image of a Māori in costume. ANL ref. F/Broadside F4218.

<sup>19</sup> 'Pomara' was probably Wiremu Naera Pōmare, the son or nephew of the chief, Pōmare Ngātata, of the Ngāti Mutunga iwi (tribe). Pōmare Ngātata was one of the Te Āti Awa leaders who went to the Chatham Islands in 1835. His brother, Te Waka-tīwai, had been killed at the Battle of Haowhenua in 1834. Pōmare Ngātata took the name Wiremu Piti Pōmare when he converted to Christianity in 1844. Wiremu Naera Pōmare succeeded Wiremu Piti Pōmare as chief in 1851. He was later the father of the doctor and leader, Sir Māui Pōmare. Ref. pers comm. Miria Pōmare, Takapu wāhia; see also, Angela Ballara, 'Pōmare, Wiremu Piti ? –1851,' in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Volume One, 1769–1869* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1990), 348–49; Michael King, *Moriori: a people rediscovered* (Auckland: Penguin, 1989), 71.

<sup>20</sup> Angas, *Savage Life*, 2: 247.

<sup>21</sup> 'Mr. G.F. Angas,' *Melbourne Argus* (31 Jul 1846): 2. Pōmare is referred to as "the son of the chief Pomare".

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 20 'The Noble Savage Reconsidered,' in Altick, *The Shows of London*.

<sup>23</sup> See for example, [Charles Dickens], 'The Amusements of the People,' *Household Words* 1 (1850): 58; [Charles Dickens], 'The Noble Savage,' *Household Words* 7 (1853): 168. A family of Laplanders with a house and reindeer, eighteen year-old Siamese twins and numerous freaks were also exhibited there. Ref. Oettermann, *Panorama*, 129–31; *The London Encyclopædia*, eds. Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert (London: Macmillan, 1983), 255.

<sup>24</sup> In 1855 Dr John Conolly, who was a leading expert on the treatment of the insane and who was president of the Ethnological Society, gave a lecture on the London exhibitions of distant peoples. He observed that these people were looked upon, "as objects of curiosity or of unfruitful wonder, rather than as manifestations of human intellect and modifications of human development in various parts of the same globe and illustrative of man's unwritten history and progress." He continued, "...very interesting specimens of the inhabitants of countries little known to us arrive nearly every year, are exhibited for a time, are even invited for inspection in fashionable drawing-rooms among the novelties of the Spring, and depart; having gained small notice from the ethnologist, and excited no moral interest even among the most serious or the most philanthropic portion of our countrymen. They arrive in a state of barbarism, and without possessions or knowledge; and they depart from civilized communities equally

The accounts in the press suggest that this was not the case with Pōmare. His arresting countenance made a strong and favourable impression of those who met him. As I said earlier, before the show's opening Queen and Prince Albert were shown the paintings and exhibits, and at that time they were presented with Pomare. In mid-April, *The Times* reported that Angas and Pomare (wearing native costume) attended a soiree for members of the Royal Society given by the Marquis of Northampton.<sup>25</sup> It would have been an impressive introduction to London society.

The exhibition was reviewed in London journals. The reviewer in *The Spectator* pronounced it the most interesting exhibition of the season. He noted that there were portraits of Hōne Heke, Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata and he listed costumes, scenery, dwellings, weapons, implements, dresses, carvings, canoe models, bird specimens and minerals, but made no mention of Pomare.<sup>26</sup>

### Angas's Exhibition Reviewed in *The Times*

However, the review in *The Times* mentioned the Māori artefacts on display and Pōmare.

It described the works on display as "curious". The review listed "views of landscapes, buildings, temples, tombs, and curious buildings... curious specimens of warlike weapons, some specimens of rude yet not inelegant manufactures of the countries explored..." In addition, the reviewer referred to the exhibition catalogue as a "curious document". In the eighteenth century, the word *curious* meant being "made with great care", as well as its present meaning of "exciting curiosity".<sup>27</sup>

On Pomare, *The Times* reported:

The collection also contains some curious specimens of warlike weapons, some specimens of rude yet not inelegant manufactures of the countries explored, many specimens of birds, &c., the whole being intended and certainly serving to illustrate the description of those countries and to develop their history, character, and capabilities. There was also present in the exhibition-room a young lad, about 14 years of age, grandson of the celebrated New Zealand Chief Pomara, and son of a celebrated chief who

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ignorant and equally destitute." John Conolly, *The Ethnological Exhibitions of London: Read at a meeting of the Ethnological Society* (London: John Churchill, 1855), 6–7.

<sup>25</sup> Pōmare was presented to the Queen and Prince Albert along with the other exhibits before the show's opening. Ref. 'Court Circular.' In mid-April, it was reported that he attended a soiree given by the Marquis of Northampton. Ref. 'The New Zealand and South Australian Exhibition': 253. He attended a meeting of the Royal Society with Angas. Ref. 'The Royal Society,' *The Times* (6 Apr 1846): 5. **Spencer Joshua Alwyne Compton, 2nd Marquess of Northampton** (2 January 1790 – 17 January 1851), was president of the Royal Society at that time. CHECK <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/searches/subjectView.asp?ID=P6300>

<sup>26</sup> 'New Exhibitions: Mr Angas's pictures of New Zealand and Australia,' *The Spectator* (1846): 346. This text is included as Appendix F.

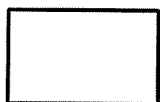
<sup>27</sup> See also, Nicholas Thomas, 'Licensed Curiosity: Cook's Pacific Voyages,' in *Cultures of Collecting*, ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 122.

was slain in battle and devoured by the warriors of a hostile tribe. This youth is exceedingly intelligent, and exhibits strong proofs of intellectual capacity.<sup>28</sup>

While the reviewer praised Angas's achievement in difficult conditions and the quality of the work, he stated that the real value of the work related to the "antiquities and present character and manners of the country..." The exhibits indicated that not only were Māori an ancient race, but that they were likely to continue. Angas's commentary, however, probably predicted differently.

### Angas's Exhibition Reviewed in the *Illustrated London News*

The *Illustrated London News* also reviewed the exhibition.<sup>29</sup> The reviewer wrote on the images of the New Zealand landscape, Māori buildings, the beauty of Māori women, the quality of Māori handwriting, and Pomare.



women and handwriting.

The reviewer wrote:

But the living attraction of the Exhibition is a New Zealand youth, about fourteen years of age, and named James Pomara; he is the grandson of Pomara, a chief of the Chathams Islands; has been educated in New South Wales, speaks English fluently, and is a very intelligent person. He was present at the last *soirée* of given by the Marquis of Northampton, where he excited considerable interest among the *savans*.

The image accompanying the article in the *Illustrated London News* showed Pomare standing cloaked, holding a taiaha and wearing a tiki around his neck. Presumably, these objects were unfamiliar to the wood block engraver. To contemporary eyes they now appear crudely represented. As illustrated, his hair was a pastiche of European notions of Oriental hairstyling. There can be no certainty whether this was due to a hairdresser or the illustrator. Unlike the reviewer in *The Times*, the writer in the illustrated magazine did not refer to savagery or to cannibalism. Instead Pōmare's education, his fluency in English and his obvious intelligence were acknowledged.



ILN

Angas included a watercolour of Pōmare in the exhibition, noting in the catalogue that he was wearing a kaitaka – or finest flax garment. His autograph was displayed.<sup>30</sup> The image was not published as a lithograph, and was

<sup>28</sup> 'New Zealand, Australia, &c.,' *The Times* (6 Apr 1846): 3.

<sup>29</sup> 'The New Zealand and South Australian Exhibition': 253.

<sup>30</sup> Following the exhibition, this disappeared from public view, although it resurfaced at a London art auction in 1997. Ref. Phillips International Auctioneers & Valuers, *Watercolours and Miniatures: 11am Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 1997, 101 New Bond Street, London* (London: Phillips International Auctioneers & Valuers, 1997), lot 77 p. 28.

in private collections until 2006/07 when it was purchased by the Alexander Turnbull Library. [Auctioned in 1997.]



Pomara portrait

### **The New Zealand Journal Reacts**

There was an uneasy interaction between George French Angas's father, George Angas, and the New Zealand Association/Company.<sup>31</sup> And it seems likely that George French Angas probably had limited connection with the New Zealand Company. In addition, his exhibition may have irritated the Company directors. A positive account of Māori and their material culture, not only countered the Company's rhetoric on 'savagery', it had the potential to undermine the programme for colonisation. The review of Angas's show in the Company's fortnightly magazine, *The New Zealand Journal*, indicates that the Company's agents were aware of this.<sup>32</sup> The two column length review, included little discussion of Angas's exhibition, instead referring it to people who were interested in geography and ethnology. While praising Angas's achievement, the reviewer stressed that Māori were in decline. He wrote, "every day is witness to their decline, under the influence of a rapidly increasing civilisation, it follows that every successor of Mr. Angas, be his talents and attainments what they may, will have less to communicate."<sup>33</sup> Over three quarters of the column space was devoted to tallying New Zealand's abundant natural assets.

The next issue of the *New Zealand Journal* on 9 May 1846 – a month after the exhibition began – included items which described Māori houses and the Māori adoption of European ways.

The article of houses may have been published to counter the illustrations on show at the Egyptian Hall.<sup>34</sup> The report quoted a passage from E.J. Wakefield's *Adventure in New Zealand*<sup>35</sup> which described the whare puni (sleeping house) as "most repulsive to a European". [REVIEW LATER] A reader, who was familiar with Angas's show, may have found it difficult to reconcile this description with the watercolours of the elaborately decorated, magisterial carved houses. While there was no explicit link made in the article to Angas's show, the insertion of an item about domestic housing of Māori was unusual.

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<sup>31</sup> Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who was not happy with the implementation of the colonising system in South Australia, severed connection with Angas's Australian Land Company in 1835. Ref. Temple, *Sort of Conscience*, 168–70. Nevertheless, in 1840 George Fife Angas had invested in Wakefield's scheme for New Zealand. Ref. Temple, *Sort of Conscience*, 326. In 1849 Wakefield declared George Fife Angas and his fellow commissioner in the South Australian scheme, Robert Torrens, to be "ignorant careless amateurs." Ref. E.G. Wakefield, *A View of the Art of Colonization* (London: Parker, 1849), cited in Burns, *Fatal Success*, 40 n. 8.

<sup>32</sup> 'Mr. Angas's New Zealand and Australian Gallery,' *NZJ* 6 (25 Apr 1846): 91–92.

<sup>33</sup> 'Mr. Angas's New Zealand and Australian Gallery': 91.

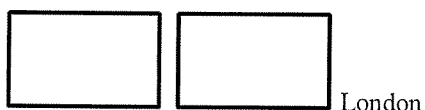
<sup>34</sup> 'Native Houses,' *NZJ* 6 (9 May 1846): 105.

<sup>35</sup> Edward Jerningham Wakefield, *Adventure in New Zealand, from 1839 to 1844: with some account of the beginning of the British colonization of the islands*. 2 v. (London: John Murray, 1845).

Another item, which was copied from the *New Zealand Spectator* in Wellington, was probably included to overwrite the earlier claim by missionaries that colonisation was bad for indigenous populations.<sup>36</sup> The article argued that colonisation was the most effective agent for elevating the New Zealander in the 'scale of existence', and that the missionaries, in comparison, had been ineffective. Readers were encouraged to ponder the change that would result, if over a 30 year period, Maori children were trained to speak, and to act, as Englishmen. We may speculate that this item was possibly prompted by the favourable press coverage that Pomare had attracted. It seems to me that this was very possibly the case.

#### **After the exhibition.**

I can find no records of Pomara's response to London or to the people he met there, but no doubt it was an exciting and overwhelming experience, and his observations were probably comparable to those of Te Mahanga recorded by John Savage in London in 1805.



Following the exhibition Pōmare went to sea under the protection of a Caleb Angus [Angas? Father of G Fife Angus], although the ship was wrecked at Barbadoes. Later Pomare joined the *Eliza*, where he was the victim of assault. The *Times* reported the case:

The lad was then introduced into the witnesses' box. He was attired in a midshipman's uniform, purchased for him by Mr. Angus, and his intelligent open countenance prepossessed every one in his favour. The particular assault complained of was committed while at sea. The lad, who suffered much from rheumatism and pain, was treated very roughly, and one day he was directed by the mate to take a marling spike on to the main yard. The lad was directed to wait a minute by the man on the yard, and the mate called him down again, and after abusing the lad, said he would give him a rope's end, and gave him a severe flogging with the bight of a thick rope. The lad threatened to complain to the master of the ship, on which the mate said he would prevent him doing that, and after striking him with his fists about the head and face, kicked him severely. Pomara said he would make the mate suffer for his ill treatment when he reached England, and the mate beat him again, and caused the blood to flow from his nose and mouth. Pomara was disabled for some time afterwards. The lad's statement having been confirmed by a seaman, Mr. Pelham after cross-examining the witnesses, addressed the magistrate for the defendant, and submitted that the boy was insolent, and that the punishment was not excessive. Mr. Ballantine said the law did not give any power to mates of ships to correct any one, and he considered the defendant had been guilty of a very cruel and atrocious assault on a friendless lad. It was not surprising that mutinies were sometimes heard of, when such cruelties as those complained of were practised. He fined the mate

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<sup>36</sup> 'Native Civilisation,' *NZJ* 6 (9 May 1846): 103.



£5 which was instantly paid. The lad Pomara will return to his native land with Mr. Eyre, the new Lieutenant Governor of New Zealand..<sup>37</sup>

Pomara returned to Sydney with Piri Kawau in 1847.<sup>38</sup> They continued on with the Governor arriving in Auckland on 12 July 1847 on the 'Pestonjee Bomanjee'.<sup>39</sup>



Auckland

He possibly returned to Wellington on 7 August 1847.<sup>40</sup> Of his later time, I have no information.

About a year afterwards, Angas wrote a work entitled *Pomara a tale of real life* although all copies appear to be lost.<sup>41</sup>



GFA portrait

He later published a poem entitled 'Pomara's Farewell to England'.<sup>42</sup>



Poem

So who was Pomara?



Family tree

as need.

2526 words

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<sup>37</sup> In November 1846 a seaman was charged in court with assaulting Pōmare while at sea. The court report noted that Pōmare's "intelligent open countenance prepossessed every one in his favour." Ref. 'Police... Thames,' *The Times* (30 Nov 1846): 7.

<sup>38</sup> Having left Gravesend about 1 Feb 1847, Pomari [sic.] and Peri Kawau arrived in Sydney on the *Glentanner* on 18 June 1847 after 132 days at sea. 'Sydney Shipping,' *The New Zealander* (10 Jul 1847): 2. For information on Peri/Piri, see, 'New Zealand,' *ILN* 6 (21 Jun 1845): 388.

<sup>39</sup> 'Shipping List', *Daily Southern Cross*, 17 Jul 1847, p. 2/

<sup>40</sup> Peri Kawau and 13 other natives were reported to arrive that day with Erye on the Pestonjee Bomanjee, *Spectator* 11 Aug 1847, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> No extant copy has been located.

<sup>42</sup> George French Angas, 'Pomara's Farewell to England,' in *The Wreck of the 'Admella', and other poems* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1874), 44–46.

