

Celebrating 175 years of Manchester Unity in New Zealand

The formative years...

The "Martha Ridgeway" sailed into Nelson Harbour on the 4th of April 1842 - five long months after leaving Liverpool. They had to clamber up over the Port Hills with their belongings to reach the scanty settlement which consisted of a collection of tents and a few wooden buildings amongst the swamp and fern.

The first meeting in the Province of Nelson (and indeed in New Zealand) took place on the 7th of April 1842 at 4pm, 200 yards below the present Saltwater Bridge, in the dense fern.



*Early Settlers Monument,
Nelson*

Meetings were held regularly in the open air while the members searched for suitable premises. Eventually Mr Henderson's Red House (so named because it was built of red gin cases) was found to contain a small room that was at least habitable, and this was placed at the disposal of the Lodge.

In those days the principle benefit of the Society was the Funeral Benefit, but as young men they had no thought of the need for such a benefit for many years.

However, a Maori Chief, Rangihaeata, was giving some trouble so in June 1843 a party lead by Captain Arthur Wakefield set out to deal with the matter.

Fighting broke out and Captain Wakefield, along with members of his party were massacred by the Maoris. Among those killed was Eli Cropper, one of the original nine members, who was a married man with one child.

This led to the formation of the Widows and Orphans Fund, which continued as a voluntary fund until 1874 when it was incorporated in the ordinary funds to which all members contributed.

To be continued.....

**Excerpts from the Booklet "Trials and Triumphs" -
1842 to 2017**

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