

TRANSCRIPT OF LETTER

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Isaac Baigent windlesham mills
Nelson newzealand

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June 14th 1853

Dear Brothers & sisters I now rite to you showing we are safe landed in new zealand and to tell you we are all quite well and i hope you are all the same we had a splendid run of 95 days from plymouth to Nelson – and i am glad to be able to tell you we found Edward and his family quite well. he met us at nelson and mary & Edward his eldest son came at night with the bullock dray so we staid in town all night the next day we went into the country about 20 miles with a dray and four bullocks to my Brothers house this was Saturday night monday begin to work at the saw mill Edward has got one circular saw and two upright saws at work it is winter here now with rather sharp frosts at night and in the morning – but the sun shines butiful all day which makes it very plesent i am not able to tell you any thing about the country yet for i have not had time to see about good carpenters get from 7 to 8 [symbol circles above] per day labours from 46 [same] upwards a good pair of shoes is 26 [same] shillings shoe makers is wanted very bad shoe making is a good buiseness out here my Elijah was very ill for the first five weeks of our passage but he is got quite strong again. my wife made me a present of another son on the 14th of april i cannot tell you his name yet for he have not yet got one his is eight weeks old, my wife is getting prety well at present she was very weak whn we left the ship -----

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I hope my father and mother is quite well tell them we are landed safe and all well. I give our love them both and send to my sister diner at Eversley and give our love to her tell her i will rite to her as soon as another vessel is coming to England. give our love to thomas & family tell him if he here Mr Lucena say anything about my not riting to them tell him to tell them i have not had time to know anything about the settlement yet. i am looking out for some feathers to sent if i can get any. and these i will rite to them when i have had time see the place so as i can give them a true account of the country give our love to all our friends and relations that enquire for us tell them we are safe arrived in a country were labourers is very scarce men cannot be got for money they are offering five shillings a day for to dig up potatoes. they grow very fine here. and two crops in the year, and oats bring two crops in the year. there is a very few [?] nataoes in nelson –

there is plenty of wild pigs in the woods and wild ducks & pigeons
plenty of fish. give our love to Mr and Mrs Eves hoping they
are quite well with there children tell them i will rite to
them before long when i know the country it is useless
to rite to anyone before – Edward is proposed as
a candidate for the town of nelson. To serve us a representative
in the town of nelson. He is respected by every one out here
both as a man of business and likewise to be trusted with there
wishes in the nelson constiturn x Eliza have got another
daughter three weeks at when we left the ship she is
doing very well we are all at Edwards at present, untill
he can build a house for us to go into ----

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give our love to your father and mother tell them
we are at home again and quite well this is a butiful
country for to come to no want of work here nor mony to pay
for it – tell them i shall rite to Mr Lucena soon and them
is will send a letter in their for her. we spoke a vessel –
about the line and sent a letter by it for Joseph – it was a –
french bark. We singnal'd a nother shop but not spoke to
one another all the voyage saw no shop the last eight weeks
i do not wonder that ships is not spoken with when i see
such a vast ocean. ther was a ship burst of vandeamens¹
land about a fortnight before us called the [crossed out]
muhomedshaw she was a emigrant ship but all lives
were saved and brought to newzealand quite safe
Daniel is quite well and siting by the fire singing while
i am now riting this he sends his love to you all –
we have a neat little church about half a mile from us
and a school whilch was built by Edward the clergyman
[unclear] nlot come more that once in three or four weeks –
he have to go from village to village ---

I have no more news to tell you at present untill
I rite again give you our love to all that enquire for us both
Friends and enemies tell them we are in newzealand safe
Give our love to all my relations tell all to rite to us –
our love to my parents and my wifes parents Brothers –
and sisters not forgetting me and except the same yourselves
from your ever affectionate Brothers and sisters –
Isaac & June & Daniel baigent With Eliza Robson

¹ Van Dieman's Land. British colony from 1803. Main penal colony in Australia from 1830s until abolition of transportation in 1853. Renamed Tasmania in 1856. Source: Wikipedia

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Nelson Newzealand Oct 9th 1860

Dear Brother

I Recd your letter in which you inform us of the arangment mach with my lamented Sister money & clothing that which had taken her a lifetime with prudence and industry to save for her future wants – as in the event of her death she had so honourably and so kindley and so sister like arranged should be divided between her Brothers and Sisters them ?having in equal portions – even writing all their names with the exception of my own – she knowing that I never should have taken any portion to myself being better of & out of the need of her small portion --- but now to ?austier your letter I must confess that I never had a greater difficulty to perform – and shall decline to do so till next mail - & then we shall send full instructions to my Brother Thomas

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having heard of my fathers death 8 weeks after it took place also of my sister dinah funeral affairs in almost as short a time with the full particulars of what took place after – to our astonishment and annoyance to think that scarcely had the earth covered her departed boddy than that my sister Elizabeth should lay claim to all of her clothing and otherwise make herself so disagreeable to those present some of whome had lived so many years with poor Dianah that they had become more like Brothers & Sisters to her rather than fellow servants after wittnessing the opening of her desk & hearing of the several names of the family distinctly read ?er and the way in which she had requested for the apportionment of what she had been possessed of I say can we wonder that they went home with heavy hearts and thoroughly disgusted with what they had wittnesed and heard – one proposed to burn the document then again to keep those abroad ignorant of her wish – and we suppose to divide the spoil amongst the few at home (how unj??rous how unkind how unlike the wish of the departed) not that either of us would have taken a single penny had we been made acquainted with my sisters affairs in an honest & honourable maner which

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ought to have been done before any steps were taken – and again hearing that my sister Elizabeth had taken upon herself to open the Boxes and share out the clothing we hear very much to the annoyance of my Brother Thomas and against his wish – may I ask were is the portion of my poor sister Eliza (?nay out of sight and out of mind) how much would she have thought of some little token of her sisters weaving apparel had it been a Callas a Broach or even a pocket handkerchief which could have been sent in a letter at small cost what a treasure it would have been to her – but no nothing for Eliza – although she has a legal rite to her fair portion – being made acquainted with the share Can you wonder that we cannot make up our minds what we shall do with what you state is coming to us in money although we know the amount that was in the Bank long before your letter arrived but as I stated before we shall send full instructions to Thomas next mail – I must say that we are very much surprised that Thomas in his letter to me acquainting us of dinah death not a word did he mention about her affairs which leads us to think that he is led by the nose in some way as other I hope he will not sell his Birthrite

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for a mess of pottage one thing seems strange to me you tell me that you & Thomas had settled the affairs of the old House which amounted to £14.12.0 and that Thomas had got the ?writing in his own hands I am thankful for it – but how is it that in Thomas letter he tells me that with the ten pounds I sent him & by putting a little more to it he had settled the same – I am extremely sorry that I have been ablidged to write in so plain a language but I feel it a sacred duty after hearing the above that you will not wonder and as I trust we shall get a full explanation to the same as speedily as possible with full particulars that led to the same trusting that you and all at home are in good health & may long continue so which this leaves all here at present with the exception of myself as I have had a short illness & kept my sself for a month and have now been out about a fortnight but not well yet although able to get about and take exercise I trust I shall be able to do a little work again in a week or two I recd the likeness? safe of father & mother and shall answer ?? letter shortly I fell very much ablidged to her for them as they well be kept in my family a long time with great care I shall now conclude hoping that

this unpleasant affair will be fully explained.
Believe me to remain your ever
affectionate Brother I Baigent

Notes

Historical context

First European visitors in 17th and 18th centuries. By 1840, the European population was about 2,000; the Maori population, 90,000. 1840 British sign Treaty of Waitangi with some Maori chiefs. 'New Zealand Wars' 1845 – 1872.

www.newzealandwars.co.nz : "The Wakefield Settlers. European migration to New Zealand really got underway after 1840. After 1839, increased waves of settlers arrived at the instigation of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, and his New Zealand Company. Wakefield planned to send hundreds of English migrants to new settlements in New Zealand, settlements modeled upon a vision of pre-industrial England that probably had never existed. Wakefield settlements were established at Wellington, Nelson, Wanganui, New Plymouth, Canterbury(Christchurch) and Otago (Dunedin). It is important to remember that Auckland was not a Wakefield settlement. These new settlements were ambitious in their planning, but the entire Wakefield scheme proved itself to be quite impractical. Little or no provision was made for Maori, or for conflict. Increasingly, land disputes began to dominate relations between Wakefield and Maori. This was fuelled in part by a deep-seated antagonism between the New Zealand Company and the newly-established Crown. Both were effectively struggling for control of New Zealand. Maori people were largely incidental to this, a point that was not lost on them."

Nelson is in the south-east of Tasman Bay at the top of South Island. It was settled in 1842. Within a year, 2,000 people had settled there with 250 houses built. In 1850, Nelson was the second largest town in New Zealand with 4,047 people. 1851 first church built. 1853 Nelson provincial government founded. 1856 Nelson College for Boys established.

Family history

The two letters were passed on to my mother, Sheila Parker, nee Banfield, after the death of her aunt (my godmother), Lilian Hynes, nee Banfield. My mother doesn't know where Lilian got them from.

The link to the Baigent family is as follows.

Sarah Anne Banfield, nee Baigent (1835-1900), a servant, married Uriah James Banfield (1835-1893), a blacksmith. Their 7th child, Harry Robert Banfield (1878-?), a greengrocer, had two children, George William Robert Banfield (1906-1932) and Lilian B Hynes (1916-?). Sheila Parker is George Banfield's only child. None of these people emigrated to New Zealand.

Sarah was the daughter of Thomas Baigent (1807-?), a bailiff, both born in Windlesham, Surrey. Census records show a large number of Baigents living in Windlesham. For the letters to be in the possession of the Banfields, I assume that this Thomas is the Thomas mentioned in the 1860 letter, i.e. the elder brother of the writer, Isaac.

The writer of the letters is Isaac Baigent. He is married to June/ Jane and has at least two sons, one just born on the voyage in 1853. He mentions 'my Elijah' who could be a son, or brother. (N.b. the internet ancestry records indicate that they had many children, born both in England and New Zealand.)

His 1853 letter mentions his brother Edward, Mary and their eldest son Edward, all already in New Zealand. The letter is signed by Daniel Baigent, another brother who seems to have emigrated with Isaac (who is listed on NCC website as buried in 1886, age 60). Eliza Robson, who has just had a daughter, is also with him and a signatory, but no husband is mentioned. The 1860 letter refers to a sister Eliza. He has a sister Dinah, who has died by the time of the 1860 letter (internet has Diana), and a brother Thomas, both of whom are in England with their parents. The parents have died by the time of the 1860 letter, and Isaac seems to treat Thomas as the head of the family. The 1860 letter is addressed to an unknown brother (all Thomas' brothers were in NZ), but refers to Thomas in the 3rd person; and it mentions another sister Elizabeth in England who has caused offence by her treatment of Dinah's belongings.

There is an internet record (on www.familysearch.org) that matches this in most (but not all) respects. Thomas (1807), Elizabeth (1809), Diana (1811), Edward (1813-1892), Sarah (1817), Isaac (1819-1902), Sophia (1822), Daniel (1826), Eliza (1829) are all the children of Thomas and Dorothy Baigent. These records appear to be posted by someone in New Zealand with knowledge of the deaths of the emigrants. Census records provide further confirmation: Isaac (1841 census) is married to Jane, and they live with Bong (sic) and Eliza Baigent, so Eliza could be his sister-in-law.

It is not possible to prove these links, as the repetition of the same names (Thomas & Sarah) in each generation makes it difficult to demonstrate absolutely that Sarah Anne Banfield is the daughter of the Thomas Baigent mentioned in this letter. But the possession of the letter in the Banfield family makes this fairly likely.

Baigents in Nelson

Nelson City Council's website (www.ncc.govt.nz) allows searches of all ships between 1842 and 1850. Edward Baigent is listed as arriving on board the Clifford on 11 May 1842, age 30, occupation 'sawyer' with his wife Mary Ann (age 30) and 5 children age 1 to 9. The Clifford sailed from Gravesend in Kent under Captain Joseph Sharp.

Rootsweb includes the record of Isaac's crossing. He sailed on the Maori, under Captain Petherbridge. The voyage took 93 days (Isaac's letter says 95), which was considered quick. Isaac (34), wife Jane (32), Amos (7), Eliab (4), Isaac (2), and brother Daniel (27), a sawyer. There is no mention of Eliza Robson. The ship arrived on 8 June 1853, and Isaac wrote his letter on 14 June.

It seems that the brother's family built a mansion at 114 Rutherford Street, Nelson, now a backpackers' hostel (www.thepalace.co.nz/history.htm). The website says, "Built at the turn of the Century with native New Zealand hardwoods, this magnificent building used to be the home of the extended Baigent family, one of the original European settler families in Nelson. They operated a timber yard at the bottom of the slope and the tall attic window at the front of the building used to be a clock tower." It includes the following photos:

There also seems to be several places in and around Nelson named after the Baigents, including Baigent Road, Baigent Way, Baigent Valley Road, Mount Baigent and Edward Baigent Bush.

Henry Baigent founded an important sawmill/ timber business in 1900s. He was

mayor of Nelson from 1901 to 1905. It's not clear if he is the son of Edward, Isaac or Daniel. There still seems to be a major sawmilling/ timber business today.

Philip Parker, May 2006

Extract found at: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~nzbound/nelson.htm>

THE MAORI. She left London and arrived Nelson 8 June 1853 - 93 day voyage

Sir Henry Brett "*White Wings*" Vol 1.,

The old *Maori*, as she was familiarly called, made several successful voyages to New Zealand in the early days. She was one of Willis, Gann and Co.'s ships, and made several voyages under the company's flag to Auckland, Lyttelton, Nelson, Wellington, and Dunedin, and in the sixties was chartered by the Shaw, Savill Co., to bring out immigrants..... the *Maori* was a ship of 800 tons, but for her size was a very slow sailer, her average passages occupying about 120 days. On one occasion, however, on her second voyage to Nelson, she reached port in 93 days, land to land 88. This was described by the Nelson paper as an extraordinarily quick passage, and, compared with other ships arriving in the fifties, it was remarkable."

List of Passengers. Assisted by Her Majesty's Government, landed at this Port, from the Ship "*Maori*" from London.

[Headings: Names / Ages etc. / Trades] Archives New Zealand

ARMSTRONG James Married 29 Quarryman
Anna Married 32
Mary Jane child 10
Bridget child 7
James child 2

ALLCOCK James Married 32 Labourer
Charlotte Married 40
Henry Seth Single 18 -do-
Esther Single 17
Isaac Single 15
Jane child 13
Eliza child 11
Lucy child 5 [twin]
James child 5 [twin]
David child 3 months
[margin note: Philip Alcock age 20 not arrived]

BAIGENT Isaac married 34 -do-
Jane married 32
Amos child 7
Eliab child 4 [male]
Isaac child 2
Daniel single 27 Sawyer

BLACKALL Mary single 35 Governess

CAMELON John married 27 Shepherd
Alice married 27
Elizabeth child 1

CONNER James single 22 Labourer

GILL Henry married 33 -do-
Edward child 8
Emily child 6

Mary child 4

[margin note: three Children were mentioned in the undertaking to pay]

GOLD Thomas married 29 Carpenter

Ann married 30

[margin note: This Name does not appear amongst any applications in this Office]

Mary Ann child 2.1/2

Thomas child 1.1/2

JAMES Levi married 29 Labourer

Mary married 32

Mary child 6

Amy child 5

Carried forward 7 married men; 6 married females; 4 single men; 2 single females; 8 male children; 11 female children

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JAMES Daniel child 2

John 3 months

LEAKY Daniel single 22 Laborer

Catherine single 14

MCDONALD Roderick single 30 Shepherd

MCKENZIE James single 24 Tailor

ROSS George married 25 Carver & Gilder

Jane married 20

[margin note, unfortunately illegible but reads Jane Ross"]

SKEATE Stephen single 17 Labourer

SHEPHERD Elizabeth single 22 None

WALKER John married 26 Labourer

Becky married 25

Mary Maria child 5

Ellen child 3.1/2

Jane child 2

Totals: 9 married males; 8 married females; 8 single males; 4 single females; 9 male children; 14 female children.

Signed: Chas. Logie, Immigration Officer

Custom House

This 18th day of June 1853.

Letter ref 17/53. UD191d

Custom House Nelson

18th June 1853

Sir,

I have the honor to report for the information of your Honor, that the Passengers as per inclosed Lists, assisted by His Majesty's Ggovt, have been safely landed with

their baggage at this port, from the Ship "*Maori*" Petherbridge ex London, and on inquiring it appears that Captain Petherbridge has treated them well and kindly throughout/ throughout the voyage -

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your Honor's

Most obedient Humble Servant

Chas Logie

Immigration Officer.

The above information on 'The Old *Maori*' courtesy of [Rosie](#). Posted 10 Sept. 2000

Extract from <http://www.begent.org/baigent.htm>

A "Baigent" overview by Jim Baigent

The name Baigent is often thought to be Flemish in origin, but there is no positive evidence to support this. One suggestion is that "Bai" translates into "besides" and "gent" is the river Gent in Belgium. However there is no known evidence to support this, but it is possible the family were originally "Walloons" : protestants from the Low Countries who sought refuge in England from religious persecution. It is known that in the mid 16th century there was immigration from France and Flanders - the Walloon area of what is now mostly western Belgium. Baigents name variants appeared in south east England at this time and there was a concentration in Southampton. Perhaps these immigrants were there the origin of the Baigents in Hampshire.

The current spelling has been in general use for some 200 years. Previously, it was spelt several ways e.g Bagen, Begant, Begent, Baijent; but the earliest records are usually Bagin. Before Victorian times, when illiteracy was the norm, spellings were of course the subjective judgement of the scribe, and totally unreliable. The name Bagin is on record from the origin of church records and many examples can be found in the 1500s.

Historically, and to some extent today, the Baigent name appears in West Surrey and East Hampshire. Most families have rural roots. In the last 200 years the name has spread into London and down to the Southampton / Portsmouth area. There were concentrations of Baigents in Rotherwick, Haslemere, Horsell, Farnham, Portsea, I.O.W., and a significant number in Windlesham. In Windlesham the name is immortalised in "Baigent's lane", Baigent's bridge" and "Baigent's" farm. However to date no connection has been established between our family and the proliferation of Windlesham Baigents.

During emigration to the colonies in the last 150 years, Baigents have settled in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. In Nelson, New Zealand, there is a large Baigent presence; all stemming from two brothers from Windlesham, who were involved with construction of several public buildings [Edward and Isaac]. There are numerous Baigents in Australia and 16 are listed in New South Wales alone (including my son David Ian Baigent). The name is also fairly widespread in Canada and the U.S.A. However to date, no direct connection has been found between our family and any Baigents overseas, with the exception of a family named "Branch" in South Africa, who are direct descendants of the author's great aunt Ellen Rhoda Baigent. Information is also emerging that two Baigent brothers who emigrated to New York around 1910, are direct descendants of William Baigent, born 1855, who is the author's great granduncle.

The current family of our Baigents all stem from Godalming, Surrey, with the previous generations coming from Chobham and Horsell, Surrey; and Rotherwick, Hampshire before that.

The Rotherwick Baigents go back to the civil war, when records are sparse: as there was clearly major disruption and relocation as people fled from the conflict.