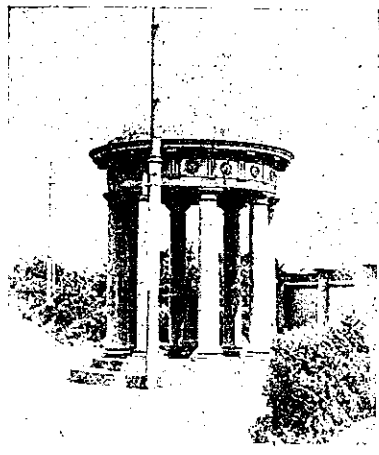


## WELLINGTON AND ITS YESTERDAYS

(Continued)

Nicholson, which the whalers turned to Port Nick, and the Maoris to Poneke. Until about twenty years or so ago it was believed that Captain Herd was the first white man to enter Wellington Harbour. Then one fine day the Harbour Board dredge brought up an old helmet, which, according to



J. W. JONES, PHOTO

Wellington's Lost Memorial. A Wakefield monument that lay forgotten & unpacked for twenty years

the Museum authorities, is a Spanish morion of the sixteenth century. How it came to reach the bottom of Wellington Harbour is as much a riddle as how a Tamil ship's bell of the eighth century came to be in use as a Maori cooking pot eighty years or so ago, or whence came the teak ship whose ruined hull was found up Ship Creek in South Westland a mile or so away from the sea and with trees growing through it. More navigators, it seems, than the history books know of have reached this country at different times. These relics point to some of them having failed to sail home again.

The only Spanish navigator known to have come to New Zealand is Malaspina in 1793. He did not come to Wellington, and obviously the date is too late for such headgear as the Museum's helmet. It has been suggested by Mr. Elsdon Best that it was possible that Juan Fernandez, discoverer of Crusoe's island, was here some three-quarters of a century before Tasman, and once made a voyage across the Pacific, apparently in 1576, but just where he got to has ever since been a matter of dispute among geographers. The only reference extant is contained in a memorial drawn up about 1609, by one Don Arias, an advocate of Santiago de Chile. Writing at the instance of the Franciscan Mission in Chile, and pointing out that the English and Dutch heretics were infecting "millions upon millions" with the "infernal poison," the good Don Arias urged his Most Catholic Majesty of Spain to further missionary zeal, particularly in a new land found by Fernandez. Of this he wrote:

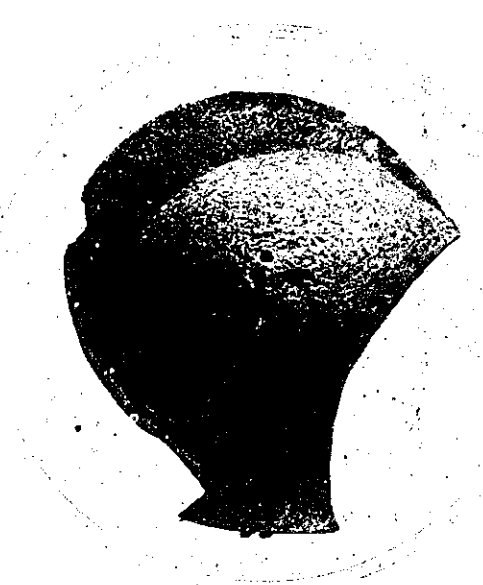
"The pilot, Juan Fernandez, sailed from the coast of Chile a little more than 40 degrees, in a small ship with certain of his companions; and navigating upon courses between the west and south-west, arrived in a month's time at a coast, which, as far as they could judge, appeared to be a continent (*tierra firme*), the land fertile and pleasant, inhabited by white people, well made, of our own stature, dressed with very good woven cloth, and so peaceable and kind that by every way in which they could

make themselves understood, they offered the Spaniards entertainment of the fruits and riches of their own country, which appeared to be in all parts good and fruitful. But having gone so lightly equipped, they were fully content for this time with having discovered the coast of this great continent so much desired, and they sailed to Chile with the intention of again returning to the same land, better provided; and determining till that could be done to keep the discovery secret. But the matter was delayed from day to day, till Juan Fernandez died, and with his death this important business fell into oblivion."

It has been pointed out that the Spaniards called anyone white who was not markedly darker in complexion than themselves, and Mr. Best has directed attention to the point that the Maoris wore "woven cloth," whereas the Polynesians did not. As for Fernandez sailing across in a month, he was such a skilful seaman that after one record voyage on the South Ameri-

fore we leave the city the reader's attention must be directed to the curious history of the drinking fountain outside the Basin Reserve. This fountain is a small replica of the Temple of Pomona, the Roman goddess fruit trees and fruits. It is altogether devoid of inscription, and until the other day not one Wellingtonian in a thousand knew that it was a monument to anyone, far less to the founder of the city, and the whole colonising scheme. A little over a year ago a question was raised in *The Dominion*, as to the fate of a monument that was to have been erected in Wellington to Sir William Molesworth, one of the leading spirits in the New Zealand Company. The fact emerged that this monument had never been erected, but lay rusting on the ground until it was finally buried years ago in the course of harbour reclamation work.

A search of newspaper files by a local historian revealed the fact that not only was the town board procrastinating over the Moles-



Is this Juan Fernandez's Visiting Card?  
A Spanish Morion dredged up in Wellington Harbour.

can coast he was actually brought before the Inquisition on a charge of witchcraft, but happily acquitted. Rusty iron helmets keep their own secrets, but this one looks almost as if it might be an entry by Juan Fernandez in Wellington's visiting book.

The Tamil bell mentioned above was found by the late Mr. Colenso in the North of Auckland in the early days. The Maoris who used it as a pot said they had found it among the roots of a tree that had fallen. The Tamil script is ancient, but has several times been translated. It gives the name of the vessel "Mohoyiden Buks" and the words "ship's bell." The Bishop of Dornakal, who was in New Zealand last year said the script was one that came into use in India about the eighth century, and was not used after about the twelfth century. The presence of the bell in New Zealand is an enigma on which no light at all has been thrown. It looks almost as if some Indian navigators reached here before ever the Maoris came, for their date of arrival is usually calculated as the middle of the fourteenth century.

Our jaunt around to Wellington's historic spots is halting over long at the Museum, and wondering from Wellington also, but be-

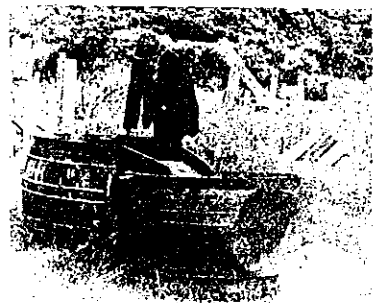
worth memorial in 1866, but that it also decided to defer erection of a memorial to Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who had died in Wellington four years before. This monument is the Basin Reserve fountain. It lay packed up in the yard of a warehouse for over twenty years, and when it was finally erected in 1885 nobody was at all certain which of the Wakefields it commemorated! Wellington certainly seems in this case to have acted on the principle of *Si monumentum requiris circumspice*.

Talking of the Wakefields reminds me that it was at Ngahauranga, halfway along the Hutt Road, that the Maoris on September 23 1839, decided at a korero with Colonel Wakefield to sell their lands, and a few days later duly received a varied assortment of Jews' harps and beads as payment for their birthright. The local Ngahauranga chief Wharepouri was all for selling, and beat down the opposition of Puakawa, who said they were fools to give their lands to the pakeha. A few months later, when some hundreds of immigrants had landed, Wharepouri was most despondent. He had had no idea there were so many white people in the world, and feared there would be no room left for the Maori,

Poor Wharepouri died in 1843, and until twelve years or so ago his canoe, now in a shed, stood upright on a knoll at Ngahauranga as a memorial to him. His end was hastened by a terrific fight he had one day with an Irish mailman. Before the fifty-five shake the now tiny stream at Ngahauranga was impassable at high tide, and one day Wharepouri was ferrying Wellington's first mailman to Petone across it. In mid-stream he stopped and demanded payment. The mailman refused; he was in the Queen's service, he said, and must be carried free. Wharepouri would not listen to such an argument. "We must fight to settle it," he said. The unlucky chief got such a drubbing that he died not long after.

Another picturesque chieftain of the early days was Wi Tako Ngatata, who, at the instigation of Te Rauparaha in 1835, had invited a hundred and fifty warriors of the Mta-Upoko tribe to a feast at Makara Beach, and there treacherously slaughtered and ate them—a surprise party in which the guests provided the luncheon. Thirty-seven years later this bloodthirsty chieftain's son became the Hon. Wiremu Tako Ngatata and a member of the Legislative Council. The event of 1835 was about the last great Maori massacre.

Who was Wellington's first white settler is a matter of dispute. A lonely white man was discovered by the advance party of the New Zealand Company in 1839, one Joe Robinson, living at the mouth of the Hutt River, where he had been for two years. Other whalers and traders, however, claim to have resided at the port for varying periods prior to that. It is clearly established on the other hand that the first piece of land to be farmed anywhere in the southern portion of the North Island was Mana Island, off the coast of Porirua. A Mr. John Bell, of Sydney, settled here between 1825 and 1830. He grew a crop of tobacco on the island in 1833, and in 1834 brought across from Sydney ten head of cattle and 102 sheep. As his Maori neighbours landed and helped themselves to his live-stock as they felt inclined the venture cannot have



H. MILNE, PHOTO.

Relics of ninety years back.  
Whalers' try-pots on Kapiti Island.

been a great success. Mr. Bell died, and according to E. J. Wakefield, Mrs. Bell, a white woman, who had come over from Sydney with him, went completely mad and lived among the Maoris in native fashion.

It must have been a lonely life for Mrs. Bell at the best, for none of the whalers at the stations roundabout is reported as having a white wife with him, and Mrs. Bell would thus appear to have been the first white woman in the Wellington district. The coast from